

ATTACHMENT 3
Survey Cover Letter

MEMORANDUM

Date: [Date]

To: Directors, State Criminal Record Repositories

From: James P. Lynch, Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice

Subject: Survey of Criminal History Information Systems

I am writing to seek your assistance in providing information to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), U.S. Department of Justice, on the status of state held criminal records. Approximately every two years, since 1989, *The Survey of State Criminal History Information Systems*, has captured a snapshot of the continuing growth, ongoing improvements, and practices associated with the initiation and updating of state criminal records.

As in the past, survey responses will be compiled by SEARCH, the National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics. A copy of the 2010 survey questionnaire is attached. A password-protected section of the SEARCH Web site is available for those states that wish to provide their survey responses online. The survey may also be printed out and returned by mail or fax. Responses should reflect conditions as of **December 31, 2010**. Those wishing to utilize the online response option to fill out the survey can visit <http://www.search.org/surveys/repository/> and use the password **[password]** to gain access. The online survey allows each section to be completed independently by the appropriate staff person. Respondents using the online survey tool to enter 2010 data can view previously submitted 2008 data for comparison purposes.

Those wishing to print and fill out the attached version of the survey can mail the completed survey to:

Ms. Nina Byrom
SEARCH
7311 Greenhaven Drive, Suite 145
Sacramento, CA 95831-3586

The survey can also be faxed to Ms. Byrom at 916-392-8440.

Statistical data presented in past surveys has supported and provided insight to both State and Federal legislative efforts that involve the use of criminal history records. Prominent among these is the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, which mandated the

development of the National Instant Criminal Background Check System. Further, the survey provides trend data demonstrating the correlation between continuing federal funding incentives such as the Bureau of Justice Statistics administered National Criminal History Improvement Program and documented results.

Your past cooperation and assistance with this effort has provided a wealth of useful data for law- and policymakers, researchers, justice practitioners and others who depend on survey data to craft responsible laws, policies and procedures, and to prepare informative reports and other educational materials. For your information the published 2008 survey is available at <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=1755>.

Your contributions to the Web-enabled Survey of State Criminal History Information Systems make it a useful resource to users both within and outside of the criminal justice community.

Please contact Dennis DeBacco at 916-392-2550 X-325 (email: Dennis@search.org) if you have any questions or comments about the survey, or if you need more information. Thank you in advance for your assistance and cooperation with this important effort.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement

Why the information is being collected. Among the many operations related to the criminal justice statistics function of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is the administration of the National Criminal History Improvement Program (NCHIP), established by the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act (Brady Act). Since 1989, *The Survey of State Criminal History Information Systems* has provided state and federal lawmakers, policymakers, state criminal record agency administrators, researchers and others with the only comprehensive data available on the number and completeness of state-maintained criminal history records, the backbone of the nation's criminal record information sharing network. Survey information has supported and helped gauge the efficacy of initiatives, NCHIP among them, designed to improve criminal history records to support firearm suitability determinations, sex offender and domestic violence protection order registries. The *Survey of State Criminal History Information Systems* is essential to assessing the impact of the NCHIP program nationally. The survey falls within the statutory mission of BJS under Title 42 U.S.C. Section 3732, to wit, the collection and analysis of statistical information regarding the operation of the criminal justice system at the Federal, state, and local levels.

Use of information. The collected statistics are used by state and federal lawmakers to identify areas of funding need and to gauge the efficacy of programs implemented to improve criminal record quality at the state and national levels. State Police, Public Safety and Attorney General's, the agencies that typically administer the state criminal record repositories use survey data to compare their progress with that of other states, to learn the status of operational and technological trends, to become aware of methods implemented by other states to improve record quality by promoting increased reporting from local justice jurisdictions and as the impetus for examining their own operations and services. Researchers use the data to support scholarly investigations into issues associated with the use of criminal history records for both criminal and non-criminal justice purposes.

Burden estimate. Data for the *Survey of State Criminal History Information Systems* have traditionally been collected on paper survey forms that were mailed (and emailed in PDF format) to criminal history record repository managers. Managers completed the survey forms and mailed or faxed them back to SEARCH. Data were compiled manually. Final survey results and analysis were published in paper-report format. For this survey, respondents will have access to online, password-protect reporting forms. This survey is designed to allow respondents to submit individual sections, consequently eliminating the need to compile the full survey before submitting it. The survey will be sent to criminal history repositories in 56 jurisdictions including the 50 States, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the N. Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The average time required for each agency to complete the survey is estimated at 6.3 hours. The estimated burden is based on the average reported by 5 states that reviewed the survey. Based on the estimates provided by the 5 reviewing states the average cost burden per state is \$193. This collection will primarily require

information that is already generated and maintained by the respondents. There is no additional cost to respondents other than the cost of filling out the survey form.

Confidentiality. The data collected are in the public domain and not subject to confidentiality guarantees. Collected data are primarily statistics of an administrative nature, and do not allow for the identification of any individual. Each responding state will be provided with a unique password to ensure that only its representatives provide information to the survey.