

B. Collection of Information Employing Statistical Methods

1. Potential Respondent Universe

The potential NCRP universe is all movements and yearend population status of all offenders in custody the 50 states' prison systems and all movements and yearend population status of all offenders under the post-prison release supervision (also known as parole) in the 50 states. The NCRP universe is defined by cohorts, specifically:

- All offenders admitted into state prisons during a year;
- All offenders released from state prisons during a year;
- All offenders held in state prisons at yearend;
- All offenders entering post-prison supervision, or parole, in the 50 states during a year;
- All offenders discharged from parole in the 50 states during a year;
- All offenders on parole at yearend in the 50 states.

Movements of federal prisoners are excluded from the NCRP because BJS obtains these data directly from the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) in its Federal Justice Statistics Program (FJSP), a collection of administrative records from federal criminal justice agencies that BJS uses to track federal criminal case processing. Persons sentenced to prison in the District of Columbia Superior Court enter federal prison, and their movements are tracked by the BOP.

The NCRP collects administrative records on each prisoner movement (or yearend status) through state departments of corrections. There are 57 total possible respondents in the NCRP data collection universe including the department of corrections (DOC) in each of the 50 states, the California Division of Juvenile Justice, and 6 separate contacts for parole data in those states (Georgia, Massachusetts, Nevada, New York, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina) where the DOC does not keep data on parolees. Federal data, and data on prisoners from the District of Columbia are separately obtained outside of the NCRP through the BJS Federal Justice Statistics Program, so no burden is placed on the Bureau of Prisons in relation to NCRP. Currently 39 states provide data on prison admissions and 39 on prison releases, 36 provide information on releases from parole supervision, and 39 provide information on the year-end stock prison population, but these numbers are expected to increase as additional states are encouraged to participate (see item B.3., "Methods to Maximize Response," below).

2. Procedures for Information Collection

The data collection agent for NCRP asks states to upload data files in any format to a secure server via SFTP. All respondents currently provide data in electronic format, and no manual submissions are expected in the future. States are contacted during January for data from the previous calendar year, and asked to submit their NCRP data by March 31, although BJS and its data collection agent work with states to develop a schedule for data submission that meets states' individual needs.

3. Methods to Maximize Response

BJS has made efforts to make the NCRP request for data as clear and concise as possible, given the need to specify a record layout for each submission and formats for data elements. The BJS collection agent has separated the collection formats into two groupings: One for states that routinely submit data and a second one for new or lapsed NCRP states. The request to new or lapsed states provides an overview of the submission process, introduces states to the collection agent's processes, and provides a set of answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the NCRP. (See attachments J and K). The staff of both BJS and the NCRP data collection agent are available to assist respondents with the data collection.

States which have not previously submitted NCRP data in full or particular files, or which are returning to data submission after a long period of non-participation, are provided with an option to submit data in any format, as the data collection agent has the capacity to convert state formats into NCRP formats. This reduces burden on submitting states. By comparison, the states that have routinely submitted NCRP data and already have established programs for generating the NCRP data can continue to use their established programs. Should a state that had been a long-time NCRP contributor change the underlying information system that they use to generate NCRP data, they are given the option to submit NCRP records in a format that reduces their burden, and the data collection agent will convert the submission into the NCRP format. BJS and its collection agent maintain contact with data providers solely for the purposes of submission follow-up and clarification. Examples of this follow-up contact from data reporting year 2011 can be found in Appendix L.

BJS has taken steps to more directly engage the field of corrections data providers and researchers about issues that are germane to understanding prison population change. In conjunction with the National Institute of Corrections (NIC)'s Institutional Corrections Research Network (ICRN), in March 2010, BJS and NIC held data providers and corrections researchers' workshop in Baltimore, attended by 55 representatives from 41 states. The NIC's ICRN includes researchers in state departments of corrections who also are NCRP data providers. At the meeting, BJS presented its plans for improving the NCRP, including its approach to assessing the reliability of the NCRP data, for linking NCRP data, and planned publications. Providers from several states gave presentations about how they use the data they provide to NCRP to address policy research questions in their states. Providers participated in an information-sharing forum among themselves at which they discussed concerns about corrections research issues in their states, use and misuse of state corrections data, and ways to enhance communication among themselves about their common concerns. BJS used the opportunity to discuss with state researchers the key policy issues in their states, to learn from their presentations about their uses of the data about potential issues that NCRP could address, and to more firmly establish the connections between the data providers and BJS' data collection agent. Since the meeting, eight states that had never submitted or had lapsed in submission for several years, began submitting NCRP data: Idaho, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Wyoming. An additional four states (Arizona, Illinois, Maine, and New Hampshire) are actively working on the data extracts for the 2011 report year.

BJS and NIC's ICRN are co-sponsoring a second workshop in Aurora, Colorado in October 2012 for NCRP data providers and other department of corrections researchers to reinvigorate interest and encourage increased participation in NCRP, introduce the anticipated enhancement of the parole release records, and identify ways to make the data more relevant and useful to state correctional researchers.

During the upcoming collection cycle, BJS will make efforts to expand participation in the NCRP to all 50 states (and has provided an estimate of the maximum burden hours that would be required to get complete participation by all state). To address issues related to nonresponse and using the NCRP in generating national-level estimates of key quantities (such as admissions by type, age, race, sex, offense; releases by type, age, race, sex, offense; etc.) BJS will complete work initiated during the past year to develop, test, and implement methods for weighting the NCRP data to national control totals (obtained from the NPS data). In the past, BJS has employed a ratio adjustment method to weight up demographic and offense data to the control totals obtained in the National Prisoner Statistics data collection. In this current project, BJS has been testing an information theoretic approach of weighting the NCRP prison admission, prison release, and prison yearend stock population to NPS totals. This method create uniform weights

that yield the required NPS aggregate characteristics (types of prison admissions or releases, race and sex distribution of the yearend population) when applied to the NCRP records.

4. Test of Procedures or Methods

As described in Part A, Item 2 of this submission, BJS proposes to add several items to the NCRP, notably: the FBI identification number; the date and type of admission to parole/post-confinement community supervision; the county of release from parole/post-confinement community supervision; any previous military service; and date and type of final military service discharge. In addition, BJS is proposing to add an additional category to the current variable of parole supervision status at the time of release from parole to bring NCRP into line with BJS' Annual Survey of Parole (OMB control #1121-0064).

As demonstrated by BJS' Annual Survey of Parole, all states' departments of corrections or parole departments can report number of parolees admitted during the last year by the method of entry, so they will be able to provide the date and type of admission onto parole on the individual level for NCRP. Parole release variables, including type of supervision at release and county of release are also available for individuals; discussions with nine states' data providers to ascertain the availability of the proposed parole items, along with the FBI number and veterans status variables (described below), confirmed that all could be provided to NCRP without a significant increase in the response burden.

BJS is requesting the FBI identification number for the purposes of linking records of prisoners' movements among states and to improve its capacity to measure recidivism as a return to prison. We are reasonably confident that states will be able to provide this number. Through BJS' Survey of State Criminal History Information Systems (OMB control #1121-0312) it has learned that all fifty states make use of the FBI's Interstate Identification Index (III) through the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). This system allows states to search a nationwide repository of fingerprint-supported criminal history records for persons arrested for felonies or serious misdemeanors, and to participate in III, state information systems must have a criminal history record format compatible with the III system so that searches of the system from other states will result in standardized records; FBI number is captured by each state for these records. Four NCRP states have adopted the FBI number in lieu of a state ID number and use it in reporting the state ID data for NCRP. Since identification variables are generally located in the same database as demographic variables such as those currently provided by states to the NCRP, we anticipate that the addition of FBI identification number will result in only a minor, one-time increase in burden as states modify the programs they use to create NCRP extracts.

Based on prior BJS efforts and discussions with stakeholders from the Veterans Administration who work with departments of corrections, BJS has concluded that these measures are generally collected at intake as reported by the inmate and recording in information systems. These variables comport with questions from BJS' Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities (OMB control #1121-0152) and the Department of Health and Human Services' National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH; OMB control #0930-0110). In addition, BJS contacted Dr. James McGuire, the National Director of the Veterans Health Administration's Justice Programs and asked for his feedback on the proposed items; while he felt that there might be some underreporting of veteran status upon entry to prison, he thought the addition of these variables would be valuable and would adequately describe the service and era of military service. In 1998, BJS conducted an inventory of state corrections information systems. At that time, 45 departments of corrections could identify whether a prisoner had served in the U.S. military, and 41 could give information on the inmate's last military discharge. As stated above, BJS has confirmed the availability of military status information the information systems of 9 state data providers during discussions on the availability of all proposed new variables. Each respondent said that providing these items would not add appreciably to their burden.

Appendices B and C describe the construction of the NCRP prison term records. The different prison record types are linked using the inmate identification number or, if that value is unreliable or not available, the inmate's age, sex, and admission date. As mentioned in the Needs and Uses section, the construction of term records using the different types of NCRP records will serve as a reliability assessment both on the variables within each inmate's records as well as on the overall state submission of the different record types. Unlinked, or ambiguous term records (e.g. – no record of an inmate in the yearend census or being released during the year) will yield a measure of nonresponse, which can be addressed with the data providers or accommodated through statistical methods. Inherent in the code to construct term records are quality control checks to identify ambiguous term records, as well as methods to resolve the most simple types of ambiguity (example: multiple admission records from the same day – one admission record is deleted).

BJA plans to undertake methodological research investigating alternative methods for using NCRP data to generate national-level estimates of characteristics of the prison population. While NCRP now includes more than 90 percent of all persons admitted or released from prisons annually and 80 percent of prisoners in custody at yearend, many persons may treat the tables as nationally representative simply because no suitable alternative exists. The intended methodological studies are expected to more rigorously address how NCRP data might be adjusted to generate representative national-level estimates, along with an associated error term. Simultaneously, BJA intends to recruit full participation in the NCRP by all states that provide data to NPS-1 (refer to item B.3., above, "Methods to maximize response").

5. Contact Information

The Corrections Statistics Unit at BJA is responsible for the overall design and management of the activities related to the NCRP collection including: data collection; data elements, definitions, and counting rules; and data analysis and dissemination. BJA contacts for the NCRP include:

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