

## **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 of all offenders under the post-custody community supervision (PCCS; formerly 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 PCCS in the 50 states during a year;
- All offenders discharged from PCCS in the 50 states during a year

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, 6 separate contacts for PCCS data in those states (Alabama, Georgia, Massachusetts, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina) where the DOC does not keep data on persons on PCCS, and the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency for the District of Columbia, which tracks PCCS data for Washington, DC. 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. For data year 2013, 44 states provided data on prison admissions and releases, 43 provided information on the year-end stock prison population, 26 provided records on entries to PCCS, and 29 on exits from PCCS. These numbers are expected to increase as states are encouraged to provide more NCRP record types (see item B.3., "Methods to Maximize Response," below).

BJS does not sample states for inclusion in NCRP, but rather tries to obtain data from all states due to wide variation in the laws, sentencing practices, and socioeconomic and racial/ethnic populations of the states. Failure to capture states with smaller prison populations will only enhance the effects of the large states when the offense, time served, admission and release type distributions are presented at a national level. By collecting data from each state, BJS is able to track individual jurisdictional changes in sentencing practices (including initiatives such as the Second Chance Act (SCA), Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI), and California's Public Safety Realignment (PSR) and answer requests from state legislators.

### **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's data collection agent will continue to make the annual request for NCRP data as clear and concise as possible, accepting data in any format so that states do not need to labor over meeting specific BJS submission standards. BJS and its collection agent maintain contact with data providers solely for the purposes of submission follow-up and clarification, and are careful to not place undue burden on respondents. Examples of this follow-up contact from data reporting year 2014 can be found in Appendix H.

Since the previous OMB clearance for NCRP, BJS and its data collection agent have had considerable success in engaging states to participate in NCRP. Forty-nine states provided at least one type of NCRP record in 2011 and 2012, and multiple states submitting data for the first time offered to give previous years' data to extend their records. BJS made participation in NCRP a deliverable in its FY2014 award to the state statistical analysis center at the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, encouraging the staff to work with overburdened colleagues at the Illinois Department of Corrections to process the data. Illinois is ready to submit data back to 2004, when it ceased contributing to NCRP, and it will represent the 50<sup>th</sup> state.

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 2015, BJS and NIC held data providers and corrections researchers' workshop in Aurora, Colorado, attended by 60 representatives from 43 states. This was the fourth such meeting sponsored by BJS, and has proved to be very popular with the state data providers as a way to share best practices on data collection, information systems, and getting DOC administrators to use the statistics they develop in policy discussions. At the 2015 meeting, BJS presented its plans for improving the NCRP through its linkage to other administrative datasets, as well as methods to use NCRP in the evaluation of JRI initiatives' effects on state prison populations. Dr. Ryken Grattet of the University of California at Davis served as the keynote speaker, and discussed the use of county-level data in assessing the performance of California's Public Safety Realignment policy. Providers from several states gave presentations about how they use their data to address policy research questions in their states, including studies on prisoner misconduct, management of sex offenders, and the development of digital dashboards to provide more timely data to administrators and legislators. 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. The meeting, which BJS hopes to continue on an annual basis, has also accelerated submission of the NCRP data in the months and weeks leading up to the event.

After obtaining OMB clearance in our 2012 package, BJS requested states to add variables on veterans' status and FBI fingerprint IDs, as well as records capturing entries to PCCS in their submission of 2012 data (collected starting January 1, 2013). This was a major change to the NCRP collection, and some states required 2-3 years to change data extraction programs to include this new information. For this reason, if OMB approves of the expansion of NCRP to include probation records for states with combined probation/parole agencies in the current package, BJS intends to wait until 2017 (collection of

2016 prison data) before all changes are introduced as a single request. In the meantime, we will discuss the approved changes at our data providers meetings to give state data providers advance notice. We anticipate some states will have an easier time providing data than others, but we will continue to accept whatever data can be submitted.

During the upcoming collection cycle, BJS will make efforts to maintain 50-state participation in the NCRP, as well as to encourage states not submitting certain record types to consider beginning to do so. It will also work with individual jurisdictions to improve data quality, and embark on a project to review and reclassify offense codes from each state into the standardized BJS format. The crosswalks between the states' offenses and BJS's codes are updated each year when new laws are passed, but older laws and those that have been modified require review to ensure they are still converted to the correct BJS offense category.

#### 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 during the next 3 years, notably: 9-digit social security number (SSN); address of record of inmate prior to imprisonment; and custodial security level of imprisoned offenders. BJS requests clearance to add these data elements in 2016 (request for calendar year 2015 data).

BJS conducted a telephone survey of NCRP respondents under the OMB generic clearance #1121-0339 (Generic Clearance for Cognitive, Pilot and Field Studies for Bureau of Justice Statistics Data Collection Activities) during the spring of 2014 to determine the availability, quality, and feasibility of obtaining SSN and address of record data from the states to improve linkage of NCRP with other data sources. Of the 54 jurisdictions that responded to the telephone interviews, 43 reported that their data systems recorded 9-digit SSN at least 50% (and in most cases, at least 90%) for their current offenders. Only 3 agencies performed external validation on the SSN data in their system, and many respondents raised serious concerns about data quality, including multiple SSNs for an offender and potential privacy issues if inmates gave erroneous SSNs.

31 state DOCs and 3 state parole agencies said that they would definitely or probably provide 9-digit SSN to NCRP if the variable was requested, most needing BJS to make a formal request which they would forward to legal or privacy offices in the DOC or the state's attorney general. An additional 5 jurisdictions responded that they might be able to respond. Six jurisdictions gave hard refusals due to state law or DOC policy, and an additional 6 said it was unlikely that they would be allowed to release the information. Two (Florida and Illinois) did not respond to the interviews, and three did not know whether they would be permitted to provide the variable since it had never been requested before.

During the same telephone interview, BJS asked respondents whether they would be able to supply inmates' address of residence prior to imprisonment. All but three of the responding jurisdictions (Massachusetts parole, Montana DOC, and Oregon DOC) said that they captured this information and would be able to provide it in their NCRP submission. The physical security level at which an inmate is housed is basic operational data that is available and easily accessible for all inmates, according to informal conversations with 8 respondents.

#### 5. Contact Information

The Corrections Statistics Unit at BJS 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. BJS contacts for the NCRP include:

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