

Analysis of Publicly Available Court Data
Court Data Professional Interview

Screener/Scheduling

Hi, I'm calling you from the [National Center for State Courts in Williamsburg, VA -OR- Urban Institute in Washington, D.C.]. We're currently working with the Bureau of Justice Statistics to assess the availability of state court data nationwide. Through this evaluation, we are interested in learning about the data your agency collects and its accessibility. Your name was given to us by [name and position title of State Court Leader] as someone knowledgeable about court data access.

Your participation is voluntary and your answers will be confidential. You may choose not to answer any specific questions and end your participation at any time. We have a few introductory questions.

- **What is your role at _____ (name of agency)?**
- **How long have you been in this position?**
- We would like to talk to someone who can provide information about:
 - The judicial data available at your office
 - What areas of the state are included
 - What data elements are available and how they are coded and recorded
 - How to request and access the data
- **Would you be the right person to speak to? Is there someone else who might want to join us?**
- **Do you have time to talk right now? If not, when would be a convenient time to schedule an interview?**

(If contact can continue, proceed. If contact prefers to schedule another time, record that here, and call back on that date to continue the interview).

Substantive Questions

Overview

It would be great if you could give us a brief overview of the data your agency maintains on judicial proceedings for criminal cases (both misdemeanors and felonies).

- **How are the data stored -- by defendant, court case or some other way? (offense, defendant, aggregate only)**
- **Which points in the judicial process do these data cover?**
 - o Arrest
 - o Filing
 - o Disposition
 - o Sentencing
- **Where does your data on criminal cases come from?**

- [If they get their data from courts] **Which type of courts? (general jurisdiction, limited jurisdiction, appeals)**
- [If they get their data from law enforcement] **Which type of agencies? (local, state)**
- **Does your agency collect information on civil cases?**
 - **If so, can it be linked to corresponding criminal cases?**
 - **Can you identify tort, contract, and real property cases in your civil data?**

Coverage

- **Do all of the courts/agencies in the state report their data to you?**
 - [If not] **Which ones do not?**
 - **What percentage of cases statewide are not covered?**

Data Completeness

- **When criminal cases are reported to you, is there general agreement about which data elements are mandatory?**
- **How many criminal cases are filed and disposed in a year?**
 - **How many are felonies? Misdemeanors?**
 - **Can you send me any annual reports or other documentation you may have with this information?**
- [For criminal records depositories]
 - **About what percentage of arrests are missing a disposition?**
 - **About what percentage of dispositions are missing an arrest?**
- [For criminal records depositories and sentencing commissions]
 - **Are there any types of criminal cases that are NOT reported to you?**

Data Standardization

- **Do you produce analytic datasets?**
- **Does your database use standardized data elements? Standardized codes?**
 - **Can you send me documentation or description of the fields and codes in your database?**
- **In practice, to what degree do courts code things the same way or do they have local coding practices? How do you know?**

Data Requests and Access

- **What restrictions do you have for online public access to your data? (e.g., fees, attorney-only access)**
 - [If fees] **Can they be waived or reduced for research purposes?**

- [If attorney-only access] **Would your state allow access for research purposes?**
- **What steps would be needed for BJS to access these data in a non-online format (e.g., requesting a data extract)?**
 - **Is there a request form?**
 - **Is there a review process?**
- **Are there any fees for data extract requests?**
 - [If yes] **Are they waived or reduced for research purposes?**
 - **How long does it typically take to get a request approved? (i.e., days, weeks, months) to process a request?**

Closing

Those are all the questions I have today. I may need to follow-up with you at a later time. What is the best way to get in touch with you?

- **What is your email address?**

Thank you so much for taking time to talk to me today.