

Law Enforcement Records Management Systems

A Public Safety Primer

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1.0 Introduction

A law enforcement agency needs a Records Management System (RMS) to enter information regarding criminal events that occur in their jurisdiction.

The organized information can be easily transmitted to the agency's State and/or the Federal criminal statistic repository. In addition to transmitting crime data, or for an agency that is not required to transmit crime statistics, the following benefits are also available with a Records Management Systems:

- provide real time information to dispatchers
- better manage staffing requirements by shifts, locations and day of the week
- provide an investigator resource
- provide a history of department activity
- provide information to the governing boards and commissions
- provide public information to the media and the public
- help the agency to define its public service policies for non-criminal activity

2.0 Components of a Records Management System

A Records Management System is a comprehensive computer program designed to enter and track crime statistical data and provide the agency management staff with the information needed to manage the agency. It is important that the Records Management System be able to send the required data fields to the State (and ultimately, the Federal) crime statistics repositories. Even if the agency is currently not required (based on State guidelines) to transmit statistical data, it may be a future requirement. It is also important that the Records Management System have a user interface that is easy to navigate and that presents important data immediately for the user.

2.1 System Architecture

The type of hardware and software is dependent on the size of the agency. A single PC (equipped with a modem) with an operating system of Microsoft Windows will provide a sufficient platform for a small agency's RMS tracking needs and State/Federal UCR needs. Larger agencies or multi-agency organizations may require file servers, networks, mainframe computers, or, generally, more sophisticated hardware and software.

2.2 Security

Juvenile names entered into an RMS need to be identified and protected by restricting access to such names, making them available for reference by appropriate users of the system. Juvenile and other sensitive nature case file and/or other contact information must also be identified and supported through a restricted access mechanism. Other security issues are: System access security (login protection), user level security (user permission of add/edit/delete), query only access (other agency or public access) and Administrative security (security and system management).

2.3 Query Capabilities

A RMS needs to provide the ability to perform searches (queries) based on one or more criteria (data field) in any combination including "wild card" searches for partially known data. For example, a

query could be executed in RMS to locate the owner of a green Ford van that has a badly dented front left fender that was reported to be involved in any incident between March 3, 1999, through December 31, 2002, with a license plate number containing the digits "423." The query capability should search through data fields and text narrative fields to locate all references of the above example.

2.4 Reporting Capability

A wide variety of reports including summary, statistical and detailed reports should be readily available to the user. In addition to reports that are provided with the RMS, the user needs to be able to create unique reports based on specific criteria.

2.5 Interface Capabilities

The RMS needs to be able to easily receive data from a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system and should support and/or provide output to other information sources like Jail Management, neighboring agencies, Regional and State based data warehouses, Court systems, Imaging systems, Fingerprint systems, etc.

2.6 State and Federal Reporting with Automatic Transfer Capability

Statistics have been collected on crimes since 1930 via the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program. Over the years, the development of a national data collection effort has been established and expanded by the FBI, the IACP (International Association of Chiefs of Police), the National Sheriff's Association, and various other local, state, and federal criminal justice agencies. Because of the growing challenge of increased crime, the UCR Program has been studied and revised to meet the current and future needs of the law enforcement community. The revision of the UCR Program led to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS).

Crime statistics are gathered on city, state, and federal levels and, ultimately, provide a nationwide view of crime as it is reported by law enforcement agencies throughout the country. The data is used to indicate the levels and nature of crime and to provide a reliable management tool for decision makers of the criminal justice community. NIBRS provides law enforcement with the tool to fight crime by producing detailed, accurate, and meaningful data.

For more detailed information regarding UCR and NIBRS, check out the following Web site:

www.search.org/nibrs/standards.asp

Some of the information found at this site:

- Requirements for Participation in NIBRS
- Differences Between NIBRS and the Traditional UCR System
- Data Collection Guidelines
- Computer Data Submission Specifications (including the required data fields)
- More...

In addition to the UCR and NIBRS, there are other State reporting repositories (juvenile only crimes, property loss/recovery, jail statistics, etc.) to which an agency may transmit statistical data.

2.7 Basic Statistical Data Modules

A Records Management System is comprised of “modules” which are simply sections of data grouped by relevance. Each module captures a particular set of data, however, the information (fields) contained in a module needs to be made available to the other modules. For example, an individual’s name is entered into the Names module, but needs to be listed as the owner of a particular car within the Vehicles module. Following is a description of the basic module data that can be collected in RMS modules:

Administrative

Data consisting of unique agency information, such as agency name, address, phone numbers, ORI Number, officer badge numbers and names, personnel data, etc.

Names

Data fields pertaining to a name involved in an incident. A name can be an individual (an adult or a juvenile) or a non-individual (a business, a gang, etc.). Name information includes addresses, phone numbers, identification documents, general physical characteristics, etc.

Incident

An “incident” is defined as one or more offenses committed by the same offender (or group of offenders). An incident module is a database table of all data fields pertaining to the incident that occurred including:

- how the incident was made known to the law enforcement agency
- in general, what crime was reported
- when and where the crime occurred
- who (victims, officers, offenders, witnesses, etc.) was involved in the crime (links to Names)
- State and/or Federal offense codes and statutes or ordinances involved
- various detailed narrative reports provided about the incident pictures or other documents
- arrests
- vehicles

Victim

Since more than one victim can be involved in an incident, a Victim Sequence Number is assigned to each victim. In addition to the sequence number, the following information should be gathered for each victim:

- the UCR offense code(s) which were perpetrated against the victim
- type of victim (individual, business, government, etc.)
- personal characteristics (age, sex, race, etc.)
- resident status
- type of injury
- offender number(s) (see Offender)

- relationship of victim to offender number

Offender

Since more than one offender can be involved in an incident, an Offender Sequence Number is assigned to each offender. If nothing is known about the offender, the number is "00." Other information about offenders include:

- age, sex, and race of offender

Arrest

The data fields regarding all persons apprehended for all criminal offenses.

- arrestee sequence number (to accommodate more than one person arrested per incident)
- arrest transaction number refers to the arrest report number (can be the Incident Number relating to the arrest or a separate arrest number assigned by the agency)
- arrest date
- type of arrest (i.e., summoned or cited)
- offense code for which the arrestee was apprehended
- arrestee personal characteristics (age, sex, race, etc.)
- disposition of an arrestee under 18 (juvenile)

Property

Property data fields describe the type, value, and quantity of property involved in an incident. This module also tracks what happens to the property, i.e., burned, forged, destroyed, recovered, etc., and the associated dates.

2.8 Other Data Modules

Other modules can be used within a Records Management System that are useful in data tracking as well as time and resource management. Following is a list and description of other possible RMS data modules:

Citations

Written tickets issued by a law enforcement officer when a crime is committed. This module is useful when multiple citations are automatically linked to names and vehicles.

Vehicles

A repository for cars, trucks, motorcycles, etc., involved in citations or incidents. Data tracked could be VIN (Vehicle Identification Number), License Plate Number, Make, Model, Year, distinguishing features, etc. Vehicles can be linked to names.

Jail Management

Details about a person's stay at a jail. Jail data collection provides for tracking of the following:

- multiple charges
- booking information
- rebook information
- beginning dates, expected release and sentence end dates
- prisoner accounting (for purchases and deposits)
- Jail activities (medication, court dates, etc.)
- inmate housing movements
- electronic fingerprint and mug shots

Warrants

Provides tracking of the warrant services with a check to determine if the person who was issued the warrant is in jail.

Civil Process

Provides logs of service attempts including who, where, and when. Also provides accounting management for fees incurred for the process event.

Services Billing

Tracks chargeable services (such as false alarm incidents, funerals, gun permits, various licenses).

Case Management

Provides tracking of an incident (case) through the law enforcement system.

Property Management

Provides for extended tracking of property items the department has in custody that may or may not be related to an incident. Includes the ability to track all of the handling movement of the property (chain of custody) while in the department's possession.

Law Enforcement Employees Management

Collects and tracks information relating to all employees of an agency.

LEOKA (Law Enforcement Officers Killed or Assaulted)

Tracks information pertaining to line-of-duty felonious or accidental killings of and assaults on sworn law enforcement officers.

3.0 Who Uses A Records Management System?

Below is a description of the law enforcement personnel and how they use a Records Management System.

Data Entry/Records Personnel are responsible for typing the required information into the correct data fields of the RMS to complete the electronic incident records, process state and/or federal reports, citations and the like. They typically also provide service to the public for incident report requests, summary information for media, requests from other agencies, and officer queries.

Dispatchers can use the RMS to quickly access information about previous calls at a specific location or related to an individual. The RMS also becomes a tool to check dispositions of former cases or for providing investigator information to officers.

Investigators use the RMS to help solve a case by looking for incident information with similar modus operandi, researching suspect people or vehicles, reviewing previous dispositions regarding a suspect, etc.

Patrol Officers enter reports or use the system to follow up on open files regarding vehicles or suspects etc.

Department Heads use the RMS to review the currently open case, respond to the public and/or commissions regarding the department's activity in general or toward a specific incident.

Administrative Staff/Supervisors use the RMS to develop officer activity information, local crime statistics, shift management, personnel reviews, etc.

4.0 RMS And Law Enforcement Terms To Know

ACH	The Arrest Charge Number provides ranking order of the charges for which the person was arrested.
ADN	An arrest-related code, arrest disposition, indicating how the arrestee was handled or referred following an arrest.
Arresting Agency	The NCIC or ORI number of the agency that performed the arrest functions.
Booking Agency	The NCIC or ORI number of the agency where the arrested individual was booked.
Case Number	The numeric identifier assigned to a particular incident. May be synonymous with the incident number.
CCD	The Charge Codes indicate the origin for the type of charge that was assigned.
Chain of Custody	A series of log entries that indicate control, contact and movement of a piece of property while in the custody of the agency.
Controlling Agency	The NCIC or ORI number of the agency that is in control of the original incident or case information.
Criminal Activity	The level of the infraction – felony, gross misdemeanor, misdemeanor, petty misdemeanor, warrant, other
GEO Code	The geographical designator or map number reflecting a location.
GOC	The General Offense Character indicates the code of the offense at the time of the arrest.
Incident	An event, call for service or request for response where a law enforcement department responds and generates a report of the actions.
Incident Number	The number assigned by the agency to each Incident Report to identify it uniquely. This number can be up to 12 characters and can be the actual case number (OCA) or another number.
ISN	The Incident Sequence Number is a sequential number assigned to multiple offenses occurring for one case.
JDN	An arrest-related code, juvenile disposition, indicating how a juvenile was processed following a booking event.
Juvenile	An individual under 18 years of age.
Location Grid Number	The locally defined identifier reflecting a specific area of the community or a specific location.
Modus Operandi	The specific "method of operating" characteristics pertaining to the method a particular criminal uses to commit a particular crime.
NCIC	The National Computer Information Center is responsible for setting standards and maintaining the national database repositories used to collect crime data.
NCIC Number	The agency identifier number assigned at the federal level by the National Computer Information Center (NCIC) giving a unique number to each agency. This number, together with the Case Number, allow a multi-agency Records Management System to assign the same Case Number to different cases.
NIBRS	National Incident-Based Reporting System
ORI Number	An identifying number assigned to the law enforcement agency by the National Computer Information Center (NCIC).
PRC	The Property Recovery Code indicates where an item was recovered (within or outside of a jurisdiction).
PSN	The Person Sequence Number is a unique sequential number used to define each individual arrested in a specific case. The values cannot be reused for an incident.
PTC	The Property Type Code defines property items into like classifications.
RVL	The Recovered Value is the monetary value of the property when it was recovered.
STU	The Statute/Ordinance Number is the code assigned to the specific offense as listed in the agency's legal ordinance book or a state statute.
SVL	Stolen Value is the monetary value of a property item that was reported as stolen.
TSN	The Type Sequence Number is a sequential number used to identify property.
UCR	The Uniform Crime Reporting Program
UCR Offense Codes	The three-digit code used for identifying offenses. The codes are unique to NIBRS but were derived from the four-digit NCIC Uniform Offense Classification (UOC) Codes.