

## #5: 2016 Survey Reveals State Practices in Using Mobile Technology to Capture and Transmit Fingerprints

By Becki Goggins

*This is the fifth in a series of blogs that explore the results of the **Survey of State Criminal History Information Systems, 2016**, a biennial national survey that represents the most current and detailed snapshot of the data, trends, policies, practices, and operations of criminal history records repositories nationwide. SEARCH, with support of the Bureau of Justice Statistics ([BJS](#)), U.S. Department of Justice, has conducted these surveys since 1989. BJS published the most recent edition of the survey in February 2018; it provides a snapshot of these systems as of December 31, 2016.*

As a part of the *Survey of State Criminal History Information Systems, 2016*, SEARCH queried states about their practices related to using mobile fingerprint technology (MFT) and rapid identification (Rapid ID) services. The survey responses regarding these practices are summarized below.

### Mobile Fingerprint Technology

Many local law enforcement and public safety agencies, courts, and correctional and detention facilities use mobile technology to capture and transmit fingerprints to facilitate inquiries of their state criminal history records repository and related justice information systems. These inquiries are used principally to verify or establish positive identification of subjects whose identity is unknown or questionable.

These remote and hand-held devices allow an officer or other criminal justice official to capture one or more fingerprints to positively verify or establish the identity of a subject through state Automated Fingerprint Identification Systems (AFIS) and the FBI's Next Generation Identification ([NGI](#)) System. The devices—which feature fingerprint scanners that are typically about the size of a postage stamp—are commonly used by law enforcement for identification purposes during traffic stops, when serving warrants,

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#### Editor's Note:

Learn more about the [biennial national survey](#) of state criminal history information systems, conducted by SEARCH and published by BJS

See our [blog](#) announcing the release of the 2016 survey

Access the 2016 [survey](#)

See other blogs in this series, which highlight key survey findings

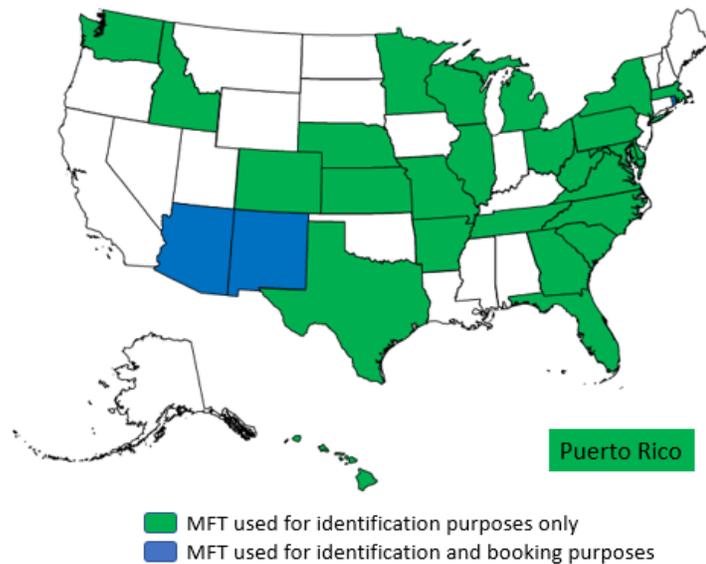
or during cite and release events and can even be used to establish the identity of deceased crime or accident victims. Courts can use them to verify the identity of defendants appearing before them at critical events, such as sentencing, and correctional agencies often employ the technology to verify the identity of inmates at intake, booking, transfer, and release.

As of year-end 2016, 30 states and Puerto Rico reported using mobile fingerprint technology for remote identification and booking purposes, as illustrated in the map.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to establishing identity with biometric precision, mobile fingerprint readers have other advantages:

- **They can be used in the field to establish identity without requiring that a subject be transported to a booking facility for fingerprinting.** This is especially helpful when subjects are cited and released; using MFT ensures that the arresting event can be biometrically supported for inclusion in a state’s criminal history repository. Rapid identification of suspects significantly contributes to officer and public safety by enabling the officer in the field to quickly establish the identity of wanted persons and other subjects of interest.
- **The technology also enables law enforcement to quickly *exclude* people from consideration when they are incorrectly suspected of being a wanted party or other subject of interest.** With MFT, officers can remotely correct a misidentification without having to transport the person to a central booking facility for traditional fingerprinting.
- **Remotely capturing fingerprints of arrested subjects is effective during major events where law enforcement agencies are deployed to ensure public safety.** If multiple arrests are made, officers can book and fingerprint subjects in temporary holding facilities without the immediate need to transport subjects to distant agency detention centers.
- **Remote and handheld fingerprint devices are relatively inexpensive and easy-to-use,** and do not require the space, computer networking, and other infrastructure required for traditional livescan devices.

States and Territories Using Mobile Fingerprint Technology



<sup>1</sup> See table 11e in the 2016 survey.

## Rapid Identification (Rapid ID)

Rapid ID technology enables authorized users to instantly search local, state, and federal AFIS databases to confirm the identity of a person via fingerprints captured using mobile or tethered fingerprint devices—and to query various criminal justice databases for additional information about the individual. Rapid ID searches, for example, can include:

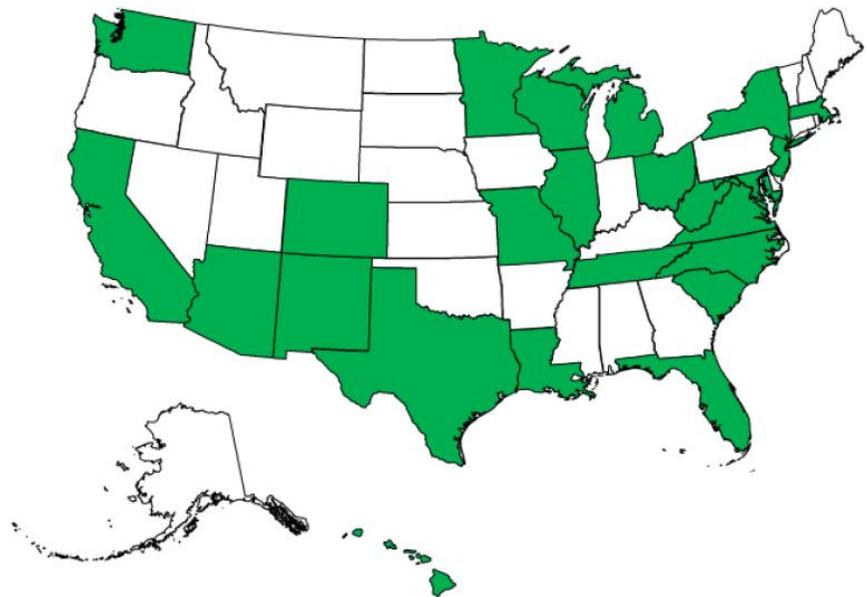
- criminal history record information
- outstanding warrants
- sex offender status
- probation and parole supervision status
- caution indicators, and
- mugshots.

Rapid ID also allows authorized users to search the FBI’s Repository of Individuals of Special Concern (RISC), which was introduced in 2011, and is accessible to law enforcement officers nationwide. The search, which is conducted through the FBI’s NGI system, promotes officer safety and situational awareness by providing on-scene access to a national repository of wants and warrants. RISC searches also return data from the NCIC Immigration Violator file, the Known or Appropriately Suspected Terrorists file, and information concerning convicted sex offenders.<sup>2</sup>

By year-end 2016, 25 states had deployed Rapid ID. (See green-shaded states.)

States that have deployed Rapid ID conducted nearly 2 million searches in 2016, which produced more than 1.1 million “hits” or positive identifications.<sup>3</sup> The numbers vary widely from state to state, which possibly reflects variations in how broadly the technology is deployed and the operational context in which it is deployed. In correctional

**States Using Rapid ID Technology**



<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/repository-for-individuals-of-special-concern-brochure.pdf/view>

<sup>3</sup> See Table 11e in the 2016 Survey. A “hit” is a positive database search response to a Rapid ID inquiry that is conducted using a subject’s fingerprints.

facilities, for example, MFT and Rapid ID technology is often used to verify the identity of inmates when they enter and exit the facility, and at various points when inmates—

- are transported to appear in court
- transfer to another unit within the same facility
- are administered medications, and
- are in other circumstances where positive identification is crucial.

Similarly, probation and parole clients might have their identity regularly confirmed as they seek and receive various services and meet with their case manager.

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*SEARCH staff continue to analyze the results of the 2016 Survey with the intention of making the data more accessible by creating dashboards and interactive displays. If you have suggestions for topics you would like to see highlighted, or if you have specific questions about survey findings, please contact Becki Goggins ([becki@search.org](mailto:becki@search.org)) or Dennis DeBacco ([dennis@search.org](mailto:dennis@search.org)).*



#### **About the Author**

Ms. Becki Goggins is Director of Law and Policy at SEARCH. She oversees our work in the areas of criminal history records, development of laws and policies concerning the use of justice information and protection of privacy, implementation of evidence-based practices, and the use of technology to improve justice information sharing. As an organization, SEARCH was originally founded to facilitate the exchange of criminal history record information (CHRI) between the states. Learn more about SEARCH's work with [criminal history records](#) and the [surveys we conduct](#) on CHRI issues.