SEARCH, The National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics

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SEARCH Overview Briefing
SEARCH At a Glance

• SEARCH is a nonprofit membership organization of governor appointees from the States and territories.

• SEARCH works with State, local, and tribal justice and public safety agencies/practitioners to support:
  – Information sharing
  – Interoperability
  – Communications
  – Information technology
  – High-tech crime investigations
  – Criminal record systems needs
SEARCH Members

• SEARCH Members are State-level justice officials responsible for operational decisions and policy on managing criminal justice and criminal history information.

• SEARCH Members oversee:
  – Justice information sharing efforts in their states;
  – The National Criminal History Improvement Program (NCHIP);
  and
  – The National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) operations within their State.
    – For qualifying states, that also includes the NICS Act Record Improvement Program (NARIP).
Enterprise-wide information sharing equals enhanced public safety.

Information sharing is critical for day-to-day operations, such as:
- Patrol officers checking a suspect’s criminal history
- Judges making bail and sentencing decisions
- Conducting background checks for criminal and non-criminal justice purposes

Information sharing is critical for emergency response, including:
- Enabling first responders from multiple jurisdictions to communicate during an emergency
• **Use SEARCH as a resource when developing and reviewing legislation relating to:**
  
  – Information sharing and communications solutions to help State, local, tribal, and federal agencies better predict, prevent, respond to, and recover from criminal activity, natural disasters, terrorist, or hazard-type events; and

  – Efforts to make timely and accurate information available to front-line criminal justice practitioners (law enforcement officers, judges, probation and parole officers, treatment providers, healthcare professionals, and others).

**Effective information sharing programs are essential to successful criminal justice reform, as they will enable frontline practitioners to make better decisions about sentencing, police accountability, and reentry programs.**
Criminal history records ("rap sheets") play a vital role in both criminal justice and civil decisionmaking.

These records are critical for:

- Conducting effective investigations
- Making decisions to protect vulnerable populations
- Making informed firearms transaction decisions
- Proper sentencing of offenders
- Developing strategies to help former offenders re-enter society successfully
SEARCH Key Issue Area – Rap Sheets and Background Checks

• **Use SEARCH as a resource when developing or reviewing legislation relating to:**
  – Background checks for both civil and criminal justice decisionmaking,
    • *including solutions for efficient, affordable, and effective background checks for employment and firearms transaction decisions;*
  – Understanding the framework that Congress and the states have established to govern the exchange of criminal justice information for background screening; and
  – Improvements to criminal history record system information sharing,
    • *including how local and State justice agencies manage and exchange information with one another.*
Accurately identifying individuals is fundamental to the effective and efficient functioning of the justice system.

Fingerprints and other biological identifiers to establish identification help to ensure accurate criminal history records.

It is essential that justice agencies protect the privacy and civil liberties of individuals whose records are shared electronically.
• **Use SEARCH as a resource when developing or reviewing legislation relating to:**
  
  – Ways to improve the accuracy of criminal history records;

  – Fingerprints and other biological identifiers to establish positive identification; and

  – Practices that justice agencies use to protect the privacy and civil liberties of individuals whose records are shared electronically.
Emergency communications have always been an integral part of the public safety response to day-to-day, large-scale, multi-agency, and multi-jurisdictional incidents.

Emergency communications cover:
- Field communications (radio, mobile data, broadband, operability, and interoperability)
- Communications center communications (9-1-1 and dispatch)

Transmitting critical information in life-threatening and emergency situations requires a solid investment in both 9-1-1 dispatch center and field communications.
Use SEARCH as a resource when developing or reviewing legislation relating to:

- Ways to enhance interoperability and information sharing among first responders in emergency situations.
• Law enforcement investigators must be equipped and trained in high-tech approaches to effectively combat technology and web-based criminal activity.

• Advanced techniques will:
  – Support law enforcement investigations and
  – Lead to successful prosecutions of online child exploitation.
SEARCH Key Issue Area – High-Tech Crime & Online Exploitation

• Use SEARCH as a resource when developing or reviewing legislation relating to:
  – Approaches that law enforcement investigators can use to effectively combat technology and web-based criminal activity; and
  
  – Techniques that support investigations and successful prosecutions of online child exploitation.

SEARCH has a long-standing national program of providing mission-critical training and technical assistance to law enforcement, including Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force members.
SEARCH As a Resource for Solutions to Information Sharing Challenges

• SEARCH’s staff of professionals provides technical assistance and training across the country to address challenges that stakeholders face in justice information sharing, emergency communications, high-tech crime investigations, and criminal history law and policy.

• SEARCH continues to focus on innovative, collaborative solutions to justice information sharing challenges.
  – SEARCH supports the Open Justice Broker Consortium, (www.ojbc.org), a nonprofit membership organization of government agencies and jurisdictions, dedicated to improving justice information sharing through the reuse of low-cost, standards-based integration software.
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