

# **SEARCH, The National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics**

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**SEARCH Overview Briefing**



[search.org](http://search.org)

# 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).

# SEARCH Key Issue Area – Justice Information Sharing

- 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

# SEARCH Key Issue Area – Justice Information Sharing

- **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.*

# SEARCH Key Issue Area – Rap Sheets and Background Checks

- 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.*

# SEARCH Key Issue Area – Privacy, Security, & Accuracy

- 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.

# SEARCH Key Issue Area – Privacy, Security, & Accuracy

- **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.

# SEARCH Key Issue Area – Emergency Communications

- 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.*

# SEARCH Key Issue Area – Emergency 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.

# SEARCH Key Issue Area – High-Tech Crime & Online Exploitation

- 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](http://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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