

Information Sharing Between Corrections and Law Enforcement:

10 Operational Strategies from the Field to Promote Safety in Facilities and Communities

Introduction

Institutional corrections—agencies that operate jails and prisons—and law enforcement agencies routinely work together to prevent and mitigate crime and violence by leveraging their respective areas of expertise through information-sharing practices at the state and local levels. With funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, a component of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs, The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center interviewed senior public safety officials from 30 state and local corrections and law enforcement agencies to better understand effective information-sharing partnership models.¹ This brief highlights key strategies jurisdictions and agencies can implement to strengthen their own operations through information sharing.

Information Commonly Available Among Law Enforcement and Corrections Agencies

Effective information sharing starts with a clear understanding of what information each agency collects and how it can support shared goals. Law enforcement and corrections agencies often have access to complementary information but may not be completely aware of the full breadth of information held by partner agencies. The chart below outlines the types of information unique to each public safety entity, which agencies can use to build new or enhance existing partnerships and make strategic decisions about what information to share or request.

Unique to law enforcement

- Monikers/nicknames from the community
- Photograph of individual from arrest
- Address at time of arrest(s)
- Prior police contact and incident reports (including body-worn camera video and observations at time of arrest related to mental health crisis)
- Social media intel
- Peer affiliations in the community, including peer groups and street gang affiliations
- Information available through intelligence or fusion centers on threats to security and public safety
- Patterns of crime (e.g., drug trafficking)
- Known addresses in the community

Unique to corrections

- Monikers/nicknames inside of the facility
- Photographs of tattoos, particularly related to gangs/Security Threat Groups (STG)
- Photograph of individual from intake
- Risk and needs assessments
- Mental health, behavioral health, and medical health needs
- Classification and reasoning
- Disciplinary and infraction records
- Peer affiliations and gang or other STG membership during incarceration (including evidence of validated membership)
- Communication, such as phone calls, mail, and visits (including financial transactions)
- Family history
- Housing history prior to incarceration
- Employment history prior to and during incarceration
- Education history prior to and during incarceration
- Program participation during incarceration
- Prior substance use and mental health treatment participation
- Reentry plan, including release date, address, and referrals in the community

Information-Sharing Strategies to Strengthen Operations

The following examples illustrate effective strategies for information sharing to strengthen both law enforcement and corrections operations gleaned from interviews with senior public safety officials representing departments of corrections and law enforcement agencies across the country.

1

Establish agreed-upon goals and protocols that define the types of information appropriate to share and how the information is shared and accessed by creating memoranda of understanding or data sharing agreements to formalize partnerships.

The New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision has information sharing written into state correctional law, which requires the department to share information with local law enforcement agencies about the release of individuals into their communities at least 48 hours prior to their release from incarceration.²

2

Utilize intelligence from law enforcement to help determine housing and classification at intake to support safety inside correctional facilities, particularly information related to group or gang affiliation and related conflicts.

The Suffolk County, Massachusetts, Sheriff's Department uses police reports, criminal history, previous incarcerations, education, and employment history, as well as other pertinent information, to help determine level of risk and classification for individuals upon their commitment to its facilities.

3

Identify how contraband is introduced into correctional facilities.

When investigators at the Kansas City, Missouri, Police Department receive information about plans to bring contraband inside correctional facilities, they share this intelligence immediately with their jail and prison facility partners. This allows corrections partners to respond in real time and intercept at the facility.

Similarly, the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation, and Reentry's (ADCRR) Office of Inspector General investigates the introduction of contraband and dangerous drugs into their facilities in collaboration with other ADCRR work groups and, as necessary, partners with local and federal law enforcement agencies. Sharing intelligence through these internal and external partnerships helps them successfully identify methods and sources of contraband introduction, as well as individuals with substance use treatment needs among the prison population (see strategy 7).

4

Share information about crime in the community and inside correctional facilities regularly and promptly to inform decision-making and resource allocation for coordinated crime prevention.

In Massachusetts, the Boston Regional Intelligence Center sees significant correlation between activity in the community and activity inside correctional facilities and helps analyze details learned from phone calls and data patterns to inform police and corrections action. Similarly, the Oakland, California, Police Department shares information about gang violence occurring on the street with the county jail to advise them of potential impacts inside the facility and prepare them to make housing modifications as necessary.

5

Leverage intelligence to aid in serious criminal investigations.

The Washington State Department of Corrections supported a local police department in identifying a deceased individual through individual records they had of specific tattoos and markings. This information sharing resulted in law enforcement notifying the individual's next of kin and moving forward with their investigation.

6

Help incarcerated individuals address outstanding warrants and pending legal issues prior to release.

The Alabama Law Enforcement Agency will soon pilot an effort that facilitates information sharing in Alabama Department of Corrections reentry facilities where they provide incarcerated people with information regarding outstanding traffic citations and the accompanying contact information for the court. State leaders in Alabama are also working to extend data sharing from municipal and state courts to better identify other outstanding issues, such as failure to appear in court or a warrant for a minor misdemeanor, and help facilitate a resolution of those outstanding criminal cases prior to release. Resolving these issues before release will enable people to obtain identification and reduce the risk of rearrest for misdemeanor offenses.

7

Apply information from law enforcement to identify underlying needs and aid in developing treatment plans for people in custody.

The Yavapai County, Arizona, Sheriff's Office trains law enforcement officers to look beyond the incident itself; report observations related to risk factors such as erratic behavior or suicidal ideation; and recognize and document potential behavioral, mental health, medical, or housing needs. Their multiagency information-sharing database allows law enforcement officers to input information that other officers and responders can access on the scene, such as details about a person's chronic needs that may inform their response. Information logged by law enforcement can also help corrections staff develop case plans. These notes, available through the county's information-sharing database, can aid corrections in supporting stable medication access or other treatment as necessary.

8

Convene partners through interagency workgroups and designate information-sharing liaisons for consistent and timely collaboration.

The New York City Police Department fosters consistent communication between partners that is strengthened by embedding personnel in some agencies, including local and state corrections agencies, to support interagency collaboration. Partner agencies also have daily phone calls to discuss significant activity and developments. This standing meeting gives the partners access to timely and critical information and helps combat challenges that arise due to staff turnover.

9

Give staff the training and resources they need to build relationships, maintain protocols, and promote sustainability of the partnership.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina, Police Department (CMPD) hosts the CMPD Command College and invites leaders from other states and regional law enforcement agencies to develop leadership, media training, and community relationship skills. This is an opportunity for law enforcement leaders to build their networks across departments and better support interagency work with corrections and other partners.

10

Address community public safety concerns through direct communication from partner agencies.

Leaders in Essex, Vermont, hosted a community forum to discuss community members' concerns about the release of an individual involved in a high-profile case. Both the Essex Police Department and Vermont Department of Corrections were present to answer general questions about available systems of reentry support and how to welcome people back to the community.

Lessons Learned for Implementation

Corrections and law enforcement agency leaders articulated several key lessons learned to implement effective information sharing.

1

Invest in activities that bridge gaps and long-standing silos, recognizing historical operational and structural gaps between corrections and law enforcement that can make collaboration challenging.

2

Address data system incompatibility to resolve challenges, especially in smaller municipalities that may rely on paper records.

3

Mitigate the impact of leadership turnover and staffing shortages by creating operations policies and procedures that ensure information sharing continuity.

4

Apply risk-focused approaches by aligning information sharing with evidence-based practices, focusing resources (i.e., intensive supervision and services) on people at the highest risk of reoffending.³

5

Protect public safety by safeguarding sensitive information, protecting the integrity of ongoing investigations, and matching efforts to risk level.

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Endnotes

1. The interviews took place between August and November 2022 with follow-up interviews with stakeholders in Alabama in April 2025. Thank you to the following agencies for sharing insights: Alabama Department of Corrections; Alabama Law Enforcement Agency; Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation & Reentry; Boston, Massachusetts, Police Department; Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina, Police Department; Cobb County, Georgia, Sheriff's Office; Durham, North Carolina, Community Safety Department; Durham County, North Carolina, Justice Services Department; Essex, Vermont, Community Justice Center; Illinois Department of Corrections; Indianapolis, Indiana, Metropolitan Police Department; Ithaca, New York, Police Department; Kansas City, Missouri, Police Department; Louisville, Kentucky, Metro Police Department; Madison, Wisconsin, Police Department; Marion County, Indiana, Reentry Coalition; Mesa, Arizona, Police Department; Minnesota Department of Corrections; Metropolitan Nashville, Tennessee, Police Department; New York City, New York, Police Department; New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision; North Carolina Department of Adult Corrections; Oakland, California, Police Department; Oregon Department of Corrections; South Bend, Indiana, Police Department; Suffolk County, Massachusetts, Sheriff's Office; Vermont Department of Corrections; Washington State Department of Corrections; Yakima, Washington, Police Department; and Yavapai County, Arizona, Sheriff's Office.
2. N.Y. Correction Law § 149.
3. James Bonta and D.A. Andrews, *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*, 6th Ed. (New York: Routledge, 2017), 178-182.



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