

# Dane County Criminal Justice Council Data-Sharing Project Progress Report

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The Dane County Criminal Justice Council (CJC) partnered with the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) to support the CJC's goal of using data and analytics to improve the criminal justice system. Since its involvement starting in the spring of 2016, NCCD has focused on facilitating the development of a strong multisystem, multilayer data culture; supporting the transfer of data between the CJC constituent agencies, including the development of an exploratory memorandum of understanding (MOU); creating a strategic work plan; providing technical support to the CJC, including the CJC research team; and discussing markers of success and key research questions to address using the data. Overall, the CJC has made remarkable progress with respect to cross-agency data sharing; the early successes in these data-sharing efforts will help to shape the project and promote strong data culture in Dane County.

## **NCCD**    **About NCCD**

NCCD's mission is to promote just and equitable social systems for individuals, families, and communities through research, public policy, and practice. NCCD has partnered with agencies throughout the United States and internationally to facilitate innovative approaches to public safety using cost-effective, research-based policies, strategies, and programs. Our studies and policy recommendations continue to revolutionize the field of criminal justice.

NCCD's current and previous work demonstrate the organization's commitment to working with communities and government agencies to address complex justice reform issues. Our organization has worked effectively with a variety of law enforcement and social service agencies and with community-based service providers to review and implement changes based on data and research findings; explore and address racial and ethnic disparities; and review gender-specific programming and treatment. In addition, NCCD has decades of experience evaluating juvenile and criminal justice system reforms and programs that reduce criminal behavior among adult and juvenile populations. We have been a leader in designing criminal justice interventions, providing technical assistance and training during implementation, and evaluating effectiveness. Our work spans a range of scopes, from local to multisite, multistate projects, and we are known for our capacity to perform evidence-based research and evaluation. NCCD has expertise in research design and methodology, statistical data analysis, survey design, gender-specific programs, best practices, community participatory research, participant observation, interviewing, reviewing documented research, and producing analysis and reports that are appropriate for diverse audiences. To learn more about NCCD, please visit [www.nccdglobal.org](http://www.nccdglobal.org).



### **About the Dane County Criminal Justice Council**

Dane County's Criminal Justice Council comprises executive-level criminal justice leaders, including the presiding judge, sheriff, district attorney, clerk of courts, county executive, and county board chair, as well as stakeholders from law enforcement, defense, municipal

judiciary, and corrections. The CJC was created in Chapter 15 of the Dane County Code of Ordinances in 2008 and became a staff-supported collaborative council in 2010.

In July 2015, the CJC amended the Code of Ordinances to specify and update the mission of the CJC, which reads: “The Dane County Criminal Justice Council shall: (a) provide an on-going forum for collaboration and coordinated leadership among criminal justice agencies, (b) Facilitate the implementation of effective, efficient, data-driven criminal justice policies and practices that maximize justice, equity, and the safety of the public, (c) Monitor and ensure accountability of the criminal justice system, (d) Provide program oversight for criminal justice initiatives” (Dane County Ordinance 15.46).

The Dane County CJC is served by the equity and CJC coordinator and a research analyst at the direction of the CJC, with the CJC coordinator supervising the work.

Over the last six years, the CJC has partnered with criminal justice experts from across the nation to help inform and enhance policy decisions. Partners include The Institute for Justice Planning, The Sentencing Project, Center for Effective Public Policy, Urban Institute, Government Alliance on Racial Equity, The Vera Institute of Justice, and the Pretrial Justice Institute.

According to the CJC website, as the CJC develops performance measurements and “markers of success,” they look toward newly forged data-sharing agreements to assist in a performance management plan that includes a process for analysis and evaluation of results across all systems.



### **Process Kickoff and Preparation**

In June 2016, NCCD presented at the Criminal Justice Council meeting to highlight the benefits and challenges of initiating cross-agency data sharing. Integrating and analyzing information at critical involvement points—from arrest to court action to detainment to release—is essential to understanding the criminal justice system in Dane County as a whole.

Anticipated challenges to integrating this information included the following.

- Data are collected separately by agencies and siloed.
- Identifiers may not be available to link datasets together.
- Some data systems may be rudimentary or difficult to access.
- Necessary data security and clearances are in place.
- Conducting the work may strain agency resources.

While these challenges present unique barriers to achieving the goals of the project, they are not insurmountable; NCCD shared examples of successful criminal justice data-sharing initiatives from Multnomah County, Oregon; Allegheny County, Pennsylvania; and Johnson County, Kansas. Cross-system data sharing in criminal justice can lead to a better understanding of the criminal

justice system; the ability to identify areas of strength; improvement of data collection and accuracy of data; creating efficient use of resources through targeting and reduced redundancy; better decision making; building trust between agencies, stakeholders, and the community; and improving public safety.

The cross-agency data-sharing project speaks to several key points of the CJC's mission: public safety, collaborative and coordinated leadership, data-driven policies and practices to maximize justice and equity, accountability, and oversight of initiatives. At the completion of the kickoff meeting, stakeholders were energized to engage in this new and exciting endeavor while considering the unique challenges and barriers that may arise in the process.



### **Data System Inventory Questions**

NCCD developed a data system inventory for data experts from each constituent agency of the Criminal Justice Council. This two-page fillable PDF was designed to help inform the CJC on the types of systems used by each agency, the type of information stored in the systems, identifiers that could be used to match data across agencies, the structure and file type of the data, available documentation to guide understanding of the data, and existing reporting that could be used to vet the research analyst's work. The data system inventory was presented and explained at the CJC meeting in September 2016. Data experts from each agency completed the inventory and returned the form to the CJC research team. The data inventory was used to prepare for receiving data extracts from each agency, to set forth an analysis plan and validation process, and to strategize how certain datasets could be linked across agencies.



### **Development of Exploratory MOU**

In September 2016, NCCD facilitated a discussion during the Criminal Justice Council meeting on the development of an MOU to support the goals of the data-sharing project. The MOU is a critical step to begin any data-sharing work and requires significant consideration and cooperation by all agencies involved. During the discussion, NCCD shared a sample MOU to help agency representatives think critically about what should be considered as part of the MOU. Because this was the first extensive, cross-agency data-sharing effort by the CJC, the agreement was to develop an exploratory MOU to examine the feasibility of data matching and to revisit the MOU in the future after determining feasibility.

The lack of common identifiers to track individuals among criminal justice agencies involved in the data-sharing effort was one challenge CJC overcame while developing the MOU. This limitation added to the complexity of the MOU; it had to be robust enough to include different ways that the CJC research team could match datasets while balancing each agency's data privacy considerations.

By the CJC meeting in January 2017, the initial MOU was established and agreed upon by the Dane County Sheriff's Office, the Dane County Office of the District Attorney, the Madison Police Department, the Dane County 5-City Consortium (Middleton, Sun Prairie, Monona, Verona, and Fitchburg police departments), the Dane County Clerk of Courts, and the Dane County Circuit Court Judges. The CJC research analyst and equity coordinator worked with the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) to establish a separate MOU to comply with DOC's data-sharing policies. As of February 2018, this separate MOU was cleared by Dane County Corporation Counsel, and the DOC and the CJC research team are actively collaborating to obtain a data extract and conduct initial analyses.



### **Initial Data Extracts and Analysis**

Dane County Criminal Justice Council constituent agencies successfully provided datasets to the CJC research team. The agencies providing data extracts included the Dane County Sheriff's Office; Dane County Office of the District Attorney; Madison Police Department; Dane County 5-City Consortium; Dane County Clerk of Courts; and Dane County Circuit Court Judges. The datasets ranged in size, maturity, and complexity. Additionally, because each agency uses its own data structures and identifiers, the CJC research team invested time and resources to fully understand the extract. The data inventory provided by each agency helped to guide the data exploration process of the CJC research team. It is worth noting that some agencies have a devoted analyst team, while others have more limited resources to devote to data and analytics. The data experts from each agency served as invaluable resources in this process, and their knowledge and expertise was leveraged to move the data exploration forward.

Throughout the data exploration process, the CJC research team has discovered barriers and gaps and has worked to address these challenges directly with each agency. The CJC research team has also kept the CJC apprised on the progress of the data analysis efforts during regularly scheduled CJC meetings.

The Dane County CJC has achieved significant success in moving the cross-agency data-sharing process forward.



## Checking in on the Data-Sharing Progress

The collaborating Criminal Justice Council agencies have contributed to the early success of the data-sharing project. The CJC has achieved stakeholder engagement, completion of the data inventory, and establishment of the initial MOU in all agencies. The CJC research team has completed initial data analyses for six agencies; analyses for three of those agencies have been incorporated into dashboards on the CJC website.

Agency	Stakeholder Engagement	Data Inventory	Initial MOU Established	Data Extract	Data Exploration	Initial Data Analyses	Initial Dashboards Developed
Dane County Sheriff's Office	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dane County Office of the District Attorney	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Madison Police Department	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dane County 5-City Consortium	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dane County Clerk of Courts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Dane County Circuit Court Judges	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Wisconsin Department of Corrections	✓	✓	✓				



## Developing a Work Plan

NCCD worked with the Criminal Justice Council to develop a workplan for the cross-agency data-sharing project to guide the work from 2017 through 2019. Each year of the plan highlights specific goals of the data-sharing project. Overall, the CJC has made steady progress on the workplan; NCCD recommends revisiting the workplan to adjust timelines and goals as needed.



## Establishing CJC Web Presence

The Criminal Justice Council achieved a notable accomplishment by developing an independent Dane County CJC website (<https://cjc.countyofdane.com/>). This website features key information about the CJC that, in the past, was difficult for the average resident to discover or navigate. It includes information on the purpose and goals of the CJC, meeting schedules, news articles, and data and dashboards. The data and dashboards section of the website will feature analyses to answer key questions about the criminal justice system in Dane County driven by the cross-agency data-sharing efforts. Current dashboards are related to arrest demographics, arrest trends, and the Dane County Jail population. These are all possible due to the leadership shown by the CJC, the data-sharing project, and the commitment to data-driven justice. The available dashboards will continue to grow as the project progresses.



## Next Steps

Once the Criminal Justice Council research team secures data from all CJC agencies and explores matching capabilities across agency datasets, the next steps will be identifying key questions for the CJC to explore and building analysis datasets to answer those questions. The stakeholder engagement, MOU, data infrastructure, and cross-agency linkages position CJC well to develop measurable and meaningful system reform goals.

NCCD provided the CJC research team with guidance for developing meaningful data-driven measures. Data-driven practice improvement starts with identifying and prioritizing system goals. These data help subject-matter experts develop action plans to focus system improvement. After selecting the measures of interest, analysis must be conducted to establish the baseline or current state of the measure. At that time, the CJC should examine the measure and decide what change they would like to see within the measure and what efforts or initiatives may help to drive that change. Analysis should be re-generated at key points in time to determine whether efforts are effective.

NCCD recommends that the CJC review the MOU on an annual basis. The review process should take into consideration any changes in legislation or privacy laws that may affect the data-sharing agreements. The review process should also consider expanding the MOU to support more in-depth analyses to answer key questions that can impact policy change.

NCCD also recommends checking in on the workplan status on a monthly or quarterly basis. Many parts of the workplan are heavily dependent on preceding steps, and the plan may require adjustments when unanticipated delays or barriers are encountered.



### **Project Outlook**

Overall, the Criminal Justice Council has made outstanding progress with respect to the cross-agency data-sharing project. The commitment of the CJC members to cooperate and work collaboratively has undoubtedly contributed to early wins observed in this effort. Clearly these stakeholders are prioritizing the use of data for the county's criminal justice system; they are responsive and willing to devote limited resources to the urgency of this effort

Conducting cross-agency data-sharing is a challenging endeavor; in NCCD's experience, the Dane County CJC has made quick and significant progress, especially given the limited agency resources available for the data-sharing efforts. The pragmatic approach that the CJC has taken to harness the power of systems data across agencies will play a key role in achieving the county's goals for improving the criminal justice system.