



Background

The Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA) (Public Law 113-242) requires all states to report to the Attorney General information regarding the death of any person who is detained, under arrest, in the process of being arrested, en route to be incarcerated, or incarcerated. As part of their state Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) reporting, State Administering Agencies (SAAs) are responsible for collecting DCRA data on a quarterly basis from state and local entities and submitting that data to the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). Beginning with Fiscal Year 2022, JAG solicitation proposals now require SAAs to submit a plan for DCRA data collection and reporting in accordance with Public Law 113-242 as part of their solicitation response. Through their plan, SAAs are required to demonstrate an understanding of DCRA reporting requirements and explain how their state intends to gather the required data should it receive funding.

DCRA State Implementation Plans

SAAs should work closely with state and local agencies to develop and implement a quality DCRA State Implementation Plan. As part of this plan, SAAs should have policies and procedures in place as well as agreements with state and local agencies to ensure complete decedent records are reported to the SAA in a timely manner.

When developing a DCRA State Implementation Plan, SAAs should consider their data collection infrastructure, data collection methods, data reporting methods, and the answers to key questions related to each of these elements. SAAs may use these elements as a guide when writing their plans to demonstrate their understanding of reporting and their plan to adhere to requirements.

1. DCRA Data Collection Infrastructure

- Does your state have a death-in-custody reporting law, requiring state and local agencies to report the related data to a state entity?
- How many non-federal law enforcement agencies, municipal or county jails or lockup facilities, state or contract prisons, or state-run/contract boot camp facilities are in your state?
- Are there any agencies that are not actively participating in your state's DCRA data collection?
- If agencies are not actively participating in your state's DCRA data collection, establish lines of communication and encourage non-reporting entities to start reporting.
- Do you provide training or technical assistance (TTA) to assist state and local agencies with reporting DCRA data?
- Do you need TTA from BJA as it relates to complying with the requirements of DCRA?

2. Data Collection Methods

- Who within your agency is responsible for DCRA data collection from state/local agencies?
- Examine your methods for collecting reportable death data from each type of reporting entity (e.g., local law enforcement, local jails/lockup, and state correctional institutions).
- What challenges does your state face in collecting and reporting DCRA data? What can be done to overcome those challenges?
- What data collection tools does your state use for DCRA data (e.g., spreadsheets, administrative records, data systems, etc.)?

3. Data Reporting Methods

- How is DCRA data reported to BJA (e.g., manual data entry in the Performance Measurement Tool [PMT] or the data import feature in the PMT)?
- Does your agency have a process for reviewing and cleaning records prior to submission to BJA?
- Does your agency have a process for tracking and updating the status of records that are open or pending investigation?

Data Collection Best Practices

BJA data collection requires thorough understanding of a program's performance measures. Before developing a DCRA State Implementation Plan, SAAs should review DCRA performance measures, focusing on the numbers, narratives, or other data that needs to be collected—being mindful that poor quality or inaccurate data will result in flawed output. Each SAA should consider assigning one (or more) staff member(s) to coordinate DCRA data collection and reporting.

Resources

BJA has developed [DCRA website](#) that includes many resources for DCRA reporting including a simple reporting template for submitting bulk uploads, [Reporting Guidance and FAQs](#), and a [DCRA Primer](#) document. The BJA Tier 4 Helpdesk is another avenue for support. The helpdesk can be reached via phone at 1-888-252-6867 or by email at bjapmt@usdoj.gov.

For all other questions, contact your BJA JAG Grant Manager: <https://bja.ojp.gov/contact-us>.