

Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA) Data Collection and Reporting Plan

Introduction

The Arizona Criminal Justice Commission (ACJC) is committed to complying with the Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA) as stipulated under Public Law 113-242. This revised plan addresses the DCRA data collection infrastructure, data collection methods, and data reporting methods to ensure complete decedent records are reported to the ACJC, demonstrating an understanding of DCRA reporting requirements and our intention to gather the required data.

DCRA Data Collection Infrastructure

1.1. Arizona has a death-in-custody reporting process, requiring state and local agencies to report the related data to the ACJC as the designated state entity.

1.2. There are approximately 200 non-federal law enforcement agencies, municipal or county jails, lockup facilities, state or contract prisons, and state-run/contract boot camp facilities in Arizona.

1.3. Currently, there are no known agencies that are not actively participating in the state's DCRA data collection. However, the ACJC will periodically review and monitor reporting activities to identify any potential non-reporting entities. The ACJC currently requires each agency to actively report each quarter whether an incident occurred or not. The ACJC Reporting Tool provides an additional mechanism for agencies to report when no incidents occur during each quarterly reporting period. As a result, the agency can more easily identify when an agency neglects to report for the quarter.

1.4. If any non-reporting entities are identified, the ACJC will establish lines of communication with them and encourage them to start reporting. This includes providing training, resources, and technical assistance to ensure compliance.

1.5. The ACJC provides training and technical assistance (TTA) to assist state and local agencies in reporting DCRA data. This includes training for DCRA points of contact, standardized reporting templates, guidance documents, and direct assistance to address any questions or concerns. Technical assistance includes troubleshooting any reporting issues in the ACJC Reporting Tool, the secure, online application for reporting DCRA incidents to the ACJC.

1.6. Currently, the ACJC does not require TTA from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) in complying with the requirements of DCRA. However, we will maintain open communication with BJA and request assistance if needed in the future. The ACJC conducts follow-up with agencies if and when BJA identifies an unreported case and when previously reported incidents require updates in the BJA reporting system (e.g., pending medical examiner report information).

1.7. The ACJC has created a web-based reporting system within the ACJC Reporting Tool. This secure online report form allows agencies to report decedent and event data directly to ACJC, ensuring timely and accurate data submission. In April 2023, the ACJC deployed the latest update to the DCRA reporting form. Up to the date of deployment, the ACJC performed a comprehensive review of the prior form with the most current DCRA technical specifications. The latest version of the reporting form is now in full compliance of all DCRA reporting requirements.

The ACJC will continue to work with the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation & Reentry (ADCRR) to securely transfer quarterly batch extracts to the ACJC for submission to the BJA. External to the ACJC Reporting Tool, the quarterly batch extract will expedite the processing of incidents required for reporting from the ADCRR.

Data Collection Methods

2.1. The ACJC has identified DCRA points of contact within each reporting agency to be responsible for DCRA data collection from state and local agencies. Points of contact are notified via email quarterly to report in the ACJC Reporting Tool, and delinquent agencies will be identified and contacted to report incidents or provide “No Incident” reports.

2.2. The ACJC collects reportable death data from various reporting entities through the web-based reporting system, which the DCRA points of contact use to complete and submit the required information. The online report form captures essential data elements, including decedent demographics, cause of death, location and circumstances of death, and actions taken by the agency following the death. The most recent update of the online report went live on April 1, 2023 to align with federal reporting requirements.

2.3. Some challenges Arizona faces in collecting and reporting DCRA data include discrepancies, incomplete data, and communication gaps between agencies. To overcome these challenges, the ACJC has established a Data Quality Assurance (DQA) team to review and verify the accuracy of the submitted data and to work closely with the DCRA points of contact in addressing any discrepancies or inconsistencies.

2.4. Arizona uses a combination of data collection tools for DCRA data, including the web-based reporting system, administrative records, and a centralized data management system to ensure efficient and accurate data collection and reporting.

Data Reporting Methods

3.1. Agencies will report DCRA data into the ACJC Reporting System quarterly, ensuring timely updates and accurate records. The ADCRR will provide a quarterly batch data extract to fulfill the state prison reporting requirement.

3.2. DCRA data is reported to BJA through manual data entry in the Performance Measurement Tool (PMT) or the data import feature in the PMT, as required.

3.3. The ACJC has a process for reviewing and cleaning records before submission to BJA. The Data Quality Assurance (DQA) team is responsible for conducting a thorough review of the records and addressing any inconsistencies or errors.

3.4. Any missing or incorrect data identified by the DQA team will be reported back to the submitting agencies along with a request to correct any deficiencies. Agencies are required to respond promptly to such requests to ensure that all data submitted to BJA is accurate and complete.

3.5. The ACJC has a process for tracking and updating the status of records that are open or pending investigation. The DCRA points of contact regularly update the centralized data management system with the latest information, and the ACJC reviews and monitors the status of all records to ensure timely closure and reporting of cases. The DQA staff have the ability to re-open a submitted incident report for any agency requesting to update information within the finalized report. Upon resubmission of the report, the DQA staff will report any updated information to the BJA through the PMT.