



Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA)
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
FY 2023 State Implementation Plan

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I. Introduction

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) was established in 1978 and serves as the justice planning and policymaking agency for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. PCCD also serves as Pennsylvania's State Administering Agency (SAA) for federal and state grant funds. For 45 years, PCCD has supported programs and practices that promote justice for all people and communities of Pennsylvania.

Since 1978, PCCD has supported justice system improvements, victim services and compensation, and other initiatives responsive to the needs of practitioners, communities, and the Commonwealth.

Over the course of its history, the agency has been charged with administering a wide range of programs and funding streams related to its mission. As the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's justice planning and policymaking agency, PCCD brings together a wide range of people and perspectives necessary to understand issues facing communities, identify potential solutions, and invest in strategies that can make a difference. PCCD's governance structure consists of an overarching Commission, two training boards, the School Safety and Security Committee (SSSC), and six Advisory Committees:

- Children's Advocacy Center Advisory Committee;
- County Adult Probation and Parole Advisory Committee;
- Criminal Justice Advisory Committee;
- Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Advisory Committee;
- Mental Health and Justice Advisory Committee; and
- Victims' Services Advisory Committee.

The Commission and its related Advisory Committees are comprised of subject matter experts, practitioners, and community members who are well-attuned to the public safety challenges and opportunities faced by Pennsylvania's communities. PCCD's funding support is guided by the agency's [*Strategic Framework*](#), developed every four years in collaboration with PCCD leadership and a committee comprised of Advisory Committee Chairs to ensure alignment with respective Advisory Committee priorities and responsibilities. PCCD also routinely seeks feedback and input from stakeholders on funding, policy, and programmatic strategies via surveys and other mechanisms.

The agency's work is guided by core values of service, integrity, collaboration, innovation, and preparedness. PCCD is also committed to ensuring impact, fairness, transparency, quality, and equity in how the agency conducts business and allocates resources.

II. Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA) Background

The Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA; Pub. L. No. 113-242) requires states to report information to the U.S. Attorney General regarding the death of any person who is detained, under arrest, in the process of being arrested, en route to be incarcerated, or is incarcerated at a municipal or county jail, state prison, state-run boot camp prison, boot camp prison that is contracted out by the state, any state or local contract facility, or other local or state correctional facility (including any juvenile facility).

As Pennsylvania's SAA, PCCD is responsible for collecting death-in-custody data from state and local entities including law enforcement agencies, local jails, correctional institutions, medical examiners, and other state agencies on a quarterly basis. PCCD is also responsible for compiling and aggregating data collected from these entities for submission to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). Each quarter, PCCD must submit a report to DOJ/BJA that does one of the following:

- (1) Report all deaths in custody that occurred in Pennsylvania during the corresponding quarter, including basic information about the circumstances of those deaths; or
- (2) Affirm that no deaths in custody occurred during the reporting period.

PCCD provides required data and information related to each death-in-custody incident using BJA's Performance Measurement Tool (PMT), including:

- The decedent's name, date of birth, gender, race, and ethnicity;
- The date, time, and location of the death;
- The law enforcement or correctional agency that detained, arrested, or was in the process of arresting the deceased; and
- A brief description of the circumstances surrounding the death.

PCCD works closely with reporting entities providing DCRA incident data to ensure compliance with required PMT reporting fields. If PCCD does not have enough information to complete certain data elements, the status is entered as "unknown" data values (when allowed in the PMT). For cases that remain under investigation, the "manner of death" is reported as "unavailable, investigation pending," and PCCD specifies when the information is expected to be available. Once the information is available, PCCD staff work with counterparts at BJA to ensure reports are updated appropriately.

III. Pennsylvania DCRA Data Collection Infrastructure

PCCD is responsible for DCRA data collection within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. While Pennsylvania does not have a death-in-custody reporting law, PCCD, in partnership with stakeholders, [developed an infrastructure](#) to collect data in compliance with DCRA requirements. PCCD works with justice system stakeholders through effective informal agreements that provide information regarding death-in-custody cases. These stakeholders include, but are not limited to, the PA State Police (PSP), PA Department of Corrections (PA DOC), local law enforcement agencies, county jails, and the PA Department of Human Services' (DHS) Bureau of Juvenile Justice Services.

There are currently 1,553 non-federal law enforcement agencies in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. These law enforcement agencies consist of the PA State Police, regional police departments, municipal police departments, housing authority police departments, college and university police departments, sheriff departments, park police, and others. In addition, other entities in the Commonwealth that are required to submit DCRA information include 65 county correctional facilities (jails), 23 State Correctional Institutions (SCIs), one adult boot camp, four secure Youth Development Centers, and one Youth Forestry Camp.

Pennsylvania ranks among the top states in the nation for the sheer volume of law enforcement and justice-related agencies; and, as a Commonwealth, much of the responsibility and oversight of these agencies is addressed at the local level. This structure, coupled with the self-reporting nature of DCRA reporting procedures, mean that PCCD relies on covered agencies and entities to comply with the law's provisions and protocols. PCCD is unaware of any agencies who do not actively participate in the agency's DCRA data collection efforts. Through partnerships with PSP and the PA Chiefs of Police Association (PCPA), PCCD has established lines of communication to encourage entities to comply with the federal DCRA law.

PCCD also provides training and technical assistance as needed to assist state and local agencies with understanding their responsibilities under the law and reporting DCRA data. As an example, PCCD presented to the PA DOC County-State Liaison Committee in 2022 to relay guidance on the reporting of county jail inmate deaths. PCCD has offered training regarding DCRA to attendees of the PA Justice Network/PA Chiefs of Police Conference (both virtually and in-person) several times during their bi-annual conferences. Additionally, PCCD communicates regularly to local police chiefs through the PCPA, provides email updates to county wardens and deputy wardens, and has regular email and phone communications with PSP, DOC, and DHS. PCCD also provides one-on-one technical assistance as requested.

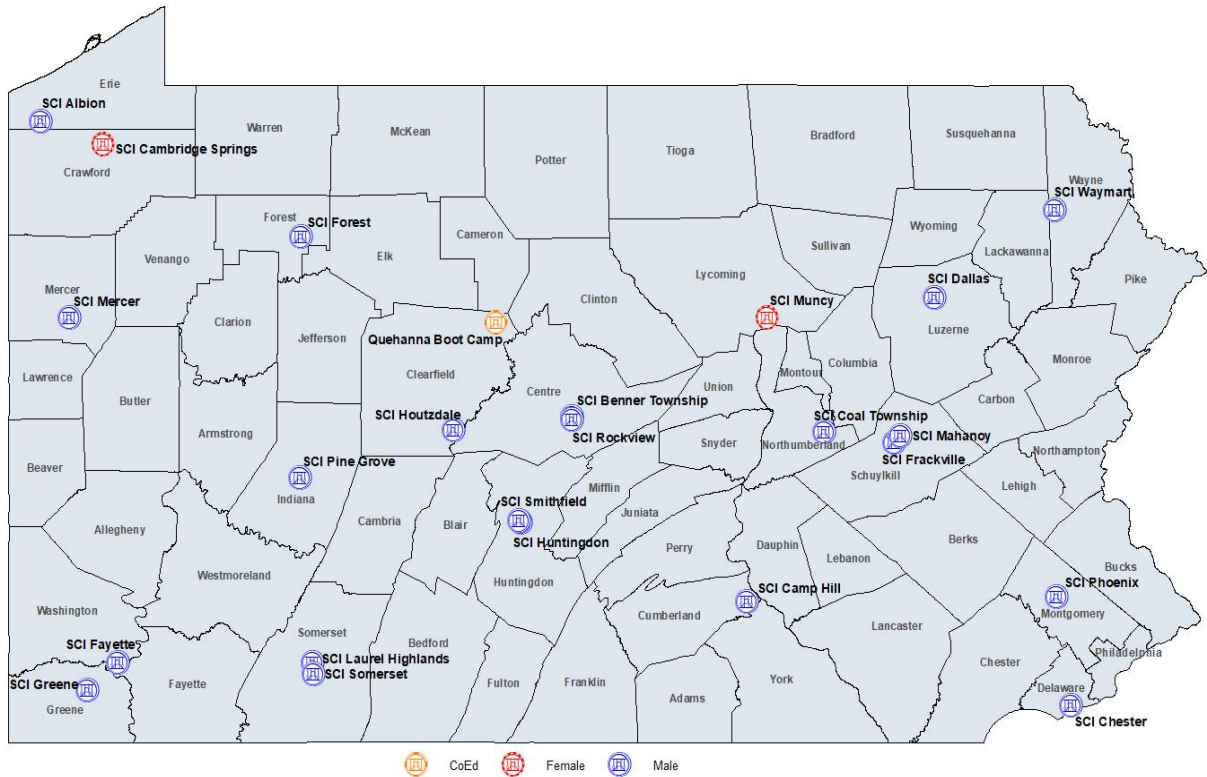
A map of current PA municipal and regional police jurisdictions can be found here: [Police Jurisdictions \(arcgis.com\)](#). Pennsylvania's county correctional facilities are listed below along with a map that displays the locations of all SCIs.

Figure 1: Pennsylvania County Correctional Institutions

Adams County Adult Correctional Complex 45 Major Bell Lane Gettysburg, PA 17325-8265	Erie County Prison 1618 Ash Street Erie, PA 16503-2168	Philadelphia Department of Prisons Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility (CFCF) 7901 State Road Philadelphia, PA 19136-3407
Allegheny County Jail 950 2nd Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15219-3100	Fayette County Prison 12 Court Street Uniontown, PA 15401-3502	Philadelphia Department of Prisons Policy & Audit Division 8201 State Road Philadelphia, PA 19136-2912
Armstrong County Jail 171 Staley's Court Road Kittanning, PA 16201-3709	Franklin County Jail 1804 Opportunity Avenue Chambersburg, PA 17201-7841	Philadelphia Department of Prisons Philadelphia Industrial Correctional Center (PICC) 8301 State Road Philadelphia, PA 19136-2914
Beaver County Jail 6000 Woodlawn Blvd. Aliquippa, PA 15001-2482	Greene County Prison 855 Rolling Meadows Road Waynesburg, PA 15370-6727	Philadelphia Department of Prisons Riverside Correctional Facility (RCF) 8151 State Road Philadelphia, PA 19136-2910
Bedford County Correctional Facility 425 Imrlertown Road, Suite 1 Bedford, PA 15522-8437	Huntingdon County Prison 300 Church Street Huntingdon, PA 16652-1434	Pike County Correctional Facility 175 Pike County Boulevard Lords Valley, PA 18428-9151
Berks County Jail System 1287 County Welfare Road Leesport, PA 19533-9197	Indiana County Jail 665 Hood School Road Indiana, PA 15701-6506	Potter County Jail 102 East Second Street Coudersport, PA 16915-1744
Blair County Prison 419 Market Square Alley Hollidaysburg, PA 16648-1872	Jefferson County Jail 578 Service Center Road Brookville, PA 15825-7166	Schuylkill County Prison 230 Sanderson Street Pottsville, PA 17901-1758
Bradford County Correctional Facility 15927 Route 6 Troy, PA 16947-9440	Elk County Prison 225 Center Street, P.O. Box 448 Ridgway, PA 15853-0448	Northumberland County Jail 720 Northumberland County Drive Coal Township, PA 17866
Bucks County Department of Corrections Bucks County Correctional Facility Bucks County Mens/Womens CCC 1730 South Easton Road Doylestown, PA 18901-2885	Lackawanna County Prison 1371 N. Washington Avenue Scranton, PA 18509-2840	Perry County Prison 300 South Carlisle Street, P.O. Box 520 New Bloomfield, PA 17068-0520
Butler County Prison 202 South Washington Street Butler, PA 16001-5752	Lancaster County Prison 625 East King Street Lancaster, PA 17602-3911	Snyder County Prison 600 Old Colony Road Selingsgrove, PA 17870-8610
Cambria County Prison 425 Manor Drive Ebensburg, PA 15931-4917	Lawrence County Corrections 111 South Milton Street New Castle, PA 16101-3524	Somerset County Jail 127 E. Fairview Street Somerset, PA 15501-1410
Carbon County Correctional Facility 331 Broad Street Nesquehoning, PA 18240-1801	Lebanon County Correctional Facility 730 East Walnut Street Lebanon, PA 17042-5655	Susquehanna County Correctional Facility 137 Ellsworth Drive Montrose, PA 18801-8912
Centre County Correctional Facility 700 Rishel Hill Road Belleville, PA 16823	Lehigh County Department of Corrections Lehigh County Jail 38 North 4th Street Allentown, PA 18102-3448	Tioga County Prison 1768 Shumway Hill Road Wellsboro, PA 16901-6838
Chester County Prison 501 South Wawaset Road West Chester, PA 19382-6762	Luzerne County Correctional Facility 99 Water Street Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702-2500	Union County Jail 103 South 2nd Street Lewisburg, PA 17837-1903
Clarion County Corrections 309 Amsler Avenue, Suite 2 Shippensburg, PA 16254-4807	Lycoming County Prison 277 West Third Street Williamsport, PA 17701-6427	Venango County Prison 1186 Elk Street Franklin, PA 16323-1247
Clearfield County Jail 115 Twenty-first Street Clearfield, PA 16830-3216	McKean County Prison 17013 Route 6 Smethport, PA 16749-4023	Warren County Prison 407 Market Street Warren, PA 16365-1763
Clinton County Correctional Facility 58 Pine Mtn. Road, P.O. Box 419 McElhattan, PA 17748-0419	Mercer County Prison 55 Thompson Road Mercer, PA 16137-5637	Washington County Correctional Facility 100 West Cherry Avenue Washington, PA 15301-6820
Columbia County Prison 721 Iron Street Bloomsburg, PA 17815-2719	Mifflin County Correctional Facility 103 West Market Street Lewistown, PA 17044-2130	Wayne County Correctional Facility 44 Mid-Wayne Drive Honesdale, PA 18431

Crawford County Correctional Facility 2100 Independence Drive Saegertown, PA 16433-5040	Monroe County Correctional Facility 4250 Manor Drive Stroudsburg, PA 18360-9441	Westmoreland County Prison 3000 South Grande Boulevard Greensburg, PA 15601-9176
Cumberland County Prison 1101 Claremont Road Carlisle, PA 17015-8561	Montgomery County Correctional Facility 60 Eagleville Road Eagleville, PA 19403-1400	Wyoming County Correctional Facility 10 Stark Street Tunkhannock, PA 18657-1207
Dauphin County Prison 501 Mall Road Harrisburg, PA 17111-1202	Montour County Prison 255 Church Street Danville, PA 17821-1907	York County Prison 3400 Concord Road York, PA 17402-9007
Delaware County George W. Hill Correctional Facility 500 Cheyney Road, P.O. Box 23 Thornton, PA 19373-0023	Northampton County Jail 666 Walnut Street Easton, PA 18042-4481	

Figure 2: Pennsylvania State Correctional Institutions



IV. DCRA Data Collection Methods

PCCD has an extensive track record of fostering coordination between and among federal, state, and local partners. PCCD receives information regarding death-in-custody cases through effective informal agreements with various external stakeholders.

1. Arrest-Related Deaths

PA Uniform Crime Reporting (PAUCR) Agencies

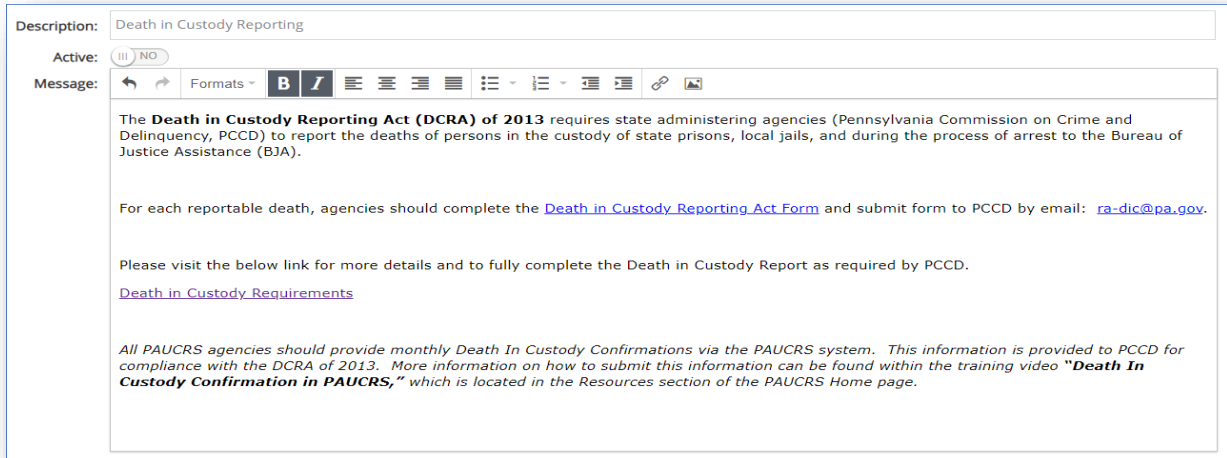
Per the [PA Department of Community and Economic Development](#), Pennsylvania has more police departments than any other state in the country and 83% of the state's municipal police departments have less than 10 officers. There are currently 1,553 law enforcement agencies in Pennsylvania required to submit data into the PA Uniform Crime Reporting (PAUCR) System, which is maintained by PSP.

The PAUCR Program serves as the state repository for the collection of crime statistics for the Commonwealth. Its primary objective is to generate reliable information for use in law enforcement administration, operation, and management, and also serves as a vehicle for collecting death-in-custody data. Pursuant to state law, PCCD is prohibited from administering any grant to a local law enforcement agency that fails to report their criminal justice statistics to the PAUCR program (see [PA Uniform Crime Reporting Act](#)).

Given this context, it seemed natural for PCCD and PSP to form a partnership to utilize the PAUCR System to convey DCRA requirements to local law enforcement agencies across Pennsylvania. In July 2023, PCCD and PSP collaborated to develop a consent message that provides more guidance to agencies on the information they are required to provide in the PAUCR System relating to deaths in custody, as well as how to report the required information to PCCD (see below). A similar message will be displayed for agencies as they transition to the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS).

Historically, the number of reportable incidents by law enforcement agencies, excluding PSP, vary quarter to quarter. In 2022, these agencies reported a total of 13 deaths in custody.

Figure 3: PAUCR System Consent Message



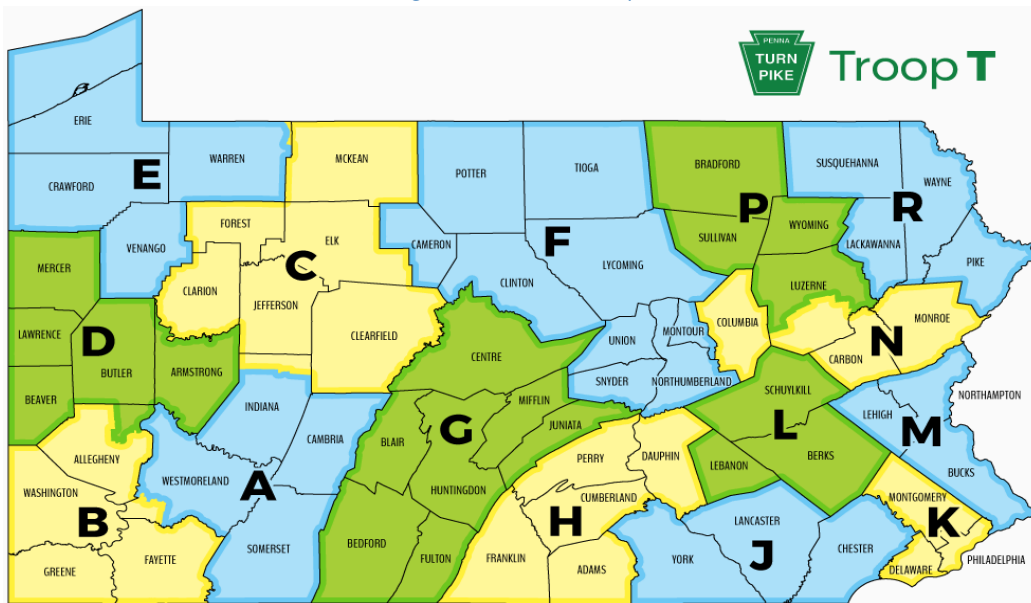
For example, each time an agency logs into the PAUCR System, a consent message is generated prior to accessing the system. For an agency to continue in the system, they must acknowledge the language contained within the consent. In concert with the consent message notification, the PSP also recently provided a training resource for agencies regarding DCRA reporting requirements and the PAUCR System. A link to the training video can be found here: [PSP Training Video](#)

For reportable deaths, agencies are also directed through the PSP website to complete the [Death in Custody Reporting Act Form](#) and submit it to PCCD through an email account specific to DCRA reporting. As linked to earlier in this plan, PCCD has also established a detailed [webpage](#) explaining Death in Custody Reporting, and directs all traffic and/or questions to that webpage.

Pennsylvania State Police (PSP)

In addition to assisting PCCD in collecting data from municipal law enforcement agencies, PSP is also subject to DCRA requirements. There are currently 16 PSP Troops comprised of 87 individual PSP stations.

Figure 4: PSP Troops



PCCD worked with PSP's Records Management Section to develop a process to automate reporting by troopers. PCCD provided the necessary information regarding DCRA reporting for the submission of complete and accurate records. It is now included in PSP's records management system (RMS) and the agency provides extracts of information to PCCD on a quarterly basis. The RMS Death in Custody extracts include data queried from RMS about persons who died in custody and their related custom data, sudden death data, and demographic data. The RMS Death in Custody extracts are generated quarterly on the 15th of the month after the end of a calendar year quarter (i.e., Jan. 15, Apr. 15, Jul. 15, Oct. 15). The extracts are uploaded to a secure website as Excel files that can be further analyzed and aggregated by PCCD staff for federal DCRA reporting purposes.

PSP's process for handling a death in custody began with defining the required information to capture. Pursuant to DCRA, a 'death in custody' is defined as the death of any person who is detained, under arrest, or is in the process of being arrested; or is en route to be incarcerated or is incarcerated at a municipal or county jail, state prison, state-run boot camp prison, boot camp prison that is contracted out by the state, any state or local contract facility, or other local or state correctional facility (including any juvenile facility).

Regulations were then promulgated within PSP's Records Management Section specifying reporting requirements. A Sudden Death Details Page is required to be completed in its entirety for any non-traffic death investigated by the PSP. This Sudden Death Details Page is comprehensive and documents injuries, laboratory/forensic analysis, and other investigative discoveries. Additionally, any death that meets the above criteria of death in custody requires the completion of additional fields.

Once completed, the report is submitted for supervisory approval. During this process, the supervisor reviews the report to ensure a detailed investigation, thorough documentation, and adherence to applicable regulations. Any deficiencies or discrepancies noted by the supervisor are addressed and corrected. If the supervisor fails to notice that any requirements were omitted and mistakenly approves the report, there are additional safeguards and quality control checks to ensure that PSP reporting is accurate. In addition, PSP maintains internal dashboards to audit the information contained within the reports to ensure adherence to regulations.

Once the approval process is completed and all investigative/reporting requirements have been satisfied, the information is marked as ready for extraction. The reports selected for this extract is determined by the information contained within the Sudden Death Details Page. The extract contains detailed investigative information from the report, documenting the circumstances surrounding the death in custody. Notification of any failures or errors with the extract are sent to several resource accounts for action. After reviews are completed, the approved extract is uploaded to a secure File Transfer Protocol (FTP) site on a quarterly basis and accessible by appropriate PCCD staff. Historically, the number of PSP reportable incidents vary quarter to quarter. In 2022, PSP reported a total of 6 deaths in custody.

2. Jail-Based Deaths

County Correctional Facilities

In November 2019, PCCD collaborated with PA DOC's Office of County Inspections and Services to inform all county wardens and deputy wardens of DCRA requirements. This communication included advising county jails of PCCD's designation as the agency responsible for reporting any deaths occurring while an individual is in the custody of any correctional facility to BJA pursuant to the law. The communication also detailed the reporting process for county correctional facilities. The PA DOC County Inspection and Services Office continues to serve as the liaison between county jails and PCCD. On behalf of PCCD, PA DOC continues to send communications out as requested by PCCD, including a twice-a-year update for new wardens and/or deputy wardens to be properly informed of DCRA requirements. County correctional facilities are also directed to complete the [Death in Custody Reporting Act Form](#) as included on [PCCD's Death in Custody webpage](#) and submit it to PCCD through a designated email account.

Historically, the number of reportable incidents in county jails vary quarter to quarter. In 2022, county jails reported a total of 41 deaths in custody.

3. Prison-Based Deaths

PA Department of Corrections (PA DOC)

Upon notification of the requirement for PCCD to begin reporting all PA DOC inmate deaths to BJA, PCCD and PA DOC's Bureau of Health Care Services collaborated to develop a process to meet these requirements. The Bureau of Healthcare Services

developed a spreadsheet based on the information needed to complete death in custody reporting. A spreadsheet is submitted to PCCD quarterly, which includes an average of 46 reportable deaths; the majority of these deaths occur due to natural causes attributed to an aging population. In 2022, PA DOC reported a total of 185 deaths in custody. PA DOC has historically faced challenges in providing complete records to PCCD; specifically, the PA DOC has difficulty obtaining the ethnicity of the decedent and the required brief description of the circumstances leading to the death. PCCD continues to work closely with counterparts at PA DOC to identify ways to improve the consistency with which death-in-custody incidents are tracked and reported to help Pennsylvania continue to make progress in achieving full DCRA compliance.

V. Pennsylvania's DCRA Data Reporting Methods

To improve DCRA compliance, PCCD has designated a lead staff for the data collection and reporting of death-in-custody records. This lead staff is a supervisor in PCCD's Office of Justice Programs' Unit of Criminal Justice System Improvements (OJP-CJSI). OJP-CJSI is responsible for the administration and oversight of numerous state and federal funding streams and assumed responsibility for the agency's DCRA compliance efforts in 2019.

OJP-CJSI staff review all records that are received and ensures the information is complete prior to submitting the data in BJA's PMT quarterly. If a record is not complete, staff contacts the agency who submitted the form for more information or clarification.

PCCD submits DCRA data to BJA mainly using the data import feature in the PMT. Staff utilize the manual data entry to update records and to enter records that were submitted by agencies for previous reporting periods, in accordance with BJA policies and procedures.

PCCD maintains a spreadsheet of all records that were submitted in the PMT to easily track which records still are pending investigation and others that may need additional follow-up.

VI. Future Direction

PCCD has made substantial progress in the full implementation of DCRA requirements, but further improvements are currently underway. Specifically, PCCD will utilize additional regionally assigned OJP-CJSI staff to proactively follow-up on incomplete report submissions and to provide technical assistance to agencies as needed to facilitate reporting.

Further, OJP-CJSI staff are working in partnership with PCCD's Office of Research, Evaluation, and Strategic Policy Development (ORESPD) to develop a public-facing DCRA data dashboard to display aggregated death-in-custody information. (Note: ORESPD serves as PA's Statistical Analysis Center.) The purpose of the dashboard will be two-fold: 1) to increase general awareness of deaths that occur in custody in Pennsylvania; and 2) to educate agencies on their need to report. In the past, PCCD has seen improvement in fingerprint compliance efforts statewide by creating similar public-facing dashboards and would seek to replicate that success.

The increase in DCRA data reporting to PCCD has also generated an increase in PA Right-to-Know Law (RTKL) requests from reporters and other interested parties throughout the state that are interested in learning more about deaths in custody. PCCD receives RTKL requests quarterly along with many inquiries from the media, state legislators, and state membership organizations. A public-facing dashboard displaying aggregated data should improve transparency and mitigate the need for individual data draws. However, in accordance with RTKL, PCCD will continue to respond timely to RTKL requests ensuring full transparency of data received.

PCCD plans to continue consulting with relevant law enforcement, jail, and state correction membership organizations for the improvement of DCRA reporting in Pennsylvania. With the recent hire of a dedicated Communications Director, PCCD intends to utilize social media, newsletters, and other means to promote reporting throughout the state. Pennsylvania is also committed to providing continuous training through collaborations with key criminal justice stakeholders. Below are scheduled PSP UCR/NIBRS training courses for of the remainder of 2023 that will include DCRA reporting requirements:

Figure 5: 2023 DCRA Reporting Requirement Trainings

Course	Dates
Summary UCR	September 13, 2023
NIBRS	September 20-21, 2023
Summary UCR	November 14, 2023
NIBRS	November 15-16, 2023
Summary UCR	December 12, 2023
NIBRS	December 13-14, 2023

PCCD has earned a reputation as a leader in state criminal and juvenile justice matters, including efforts related to DCRA reporting. As part of the agency's commitment to comply with Byrne Justice Assistance Grant funding requirements and achieve full compliance with DCRA, PCCD plans to increase agency capacity to take on this work, including dedicating staff resources to support justice-related entities.