BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE

DEATH IN CUSTODY REPORTING ACT (DCRA)
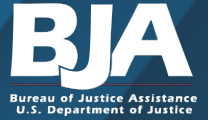
REPORTING DEATHS FROM THE FULL UNIVERSE

September 2023

Reporting Deaths from the Full Universe

This is part of a training series of videos designed to help states comply with the Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA; Public Law 113-242).

This video will cover the following topics:

- Universe of reporting agencies

- Open source

- Medical examiners/coroners

- Zero reports

Universe of Reporting Agencies

The universe of reporting agencies may include but is not limited to:

- Local Law Enforcement Agencies/Facilities
  - Police Departments
  - Sheriff Offices
  - Municipal or County Jails
  - Lock-up/Holding Cells
- State Law Enforcement Agencies and Correctional Facilities
  - State Police
  - Highway Patrol
  - State Prisons
    - Private Facilities under Contract with the State
  - State-run Boot Camp Prisons
  - Contracted Boot Camp Prisons
- Other Local or State Correctional Facilities
  - Juvenile Facilities
  - Halfway Houses or Treatment Facilities (operated by or under contract with the state)

A state's universe of reporting agencies may include any agency with police or arresting powers.
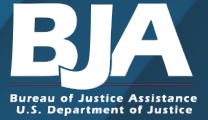
How to Determine Your Universe of Reporting Agencies

State Administering Agencies (SAAs) can use the following resources to help determine their universe of reporting agencies.

- Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies

- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program

- BJS National Prisoner Statistics (NPS) Program

- BJS Annual Survey of Jails (ASJ)

Contracted Out-of-State Facilities

If a state contracts with an out-of-state facility to house incarcerated individuals, the state that is in physical possession of the decedent is responsible for reporting the death in custody.

Example: Idaho Department of Correction contracts with Saguaro Correctional Center in Eloy, AZ. Although these incarcerated individuals are under the jurisdiction of Idaho, Arizona's SAA should report any deaths in custody at the facility.*

*This example is provided for illustrative purposes only and is not intended to imply any known reportable death.

Open Source

- Refers to free, publicly accessible databases that collect and compile information for awareness and use in research.
- Open-source databases that collect law enforcement data include but are not limited to:
  - o Mapping Police Violence
  - o Washington Post Fatal Force

Disclaimer: The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) does not endorse or sponsor open-source data. However, SAAs are encouraged to use the information as necessary to report accurate and complete death in custody data to BJA.
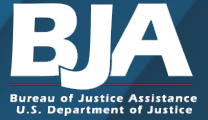
Open Source Example

The Washington Post Fatal Force

- Since January 1, 2015, *The Washington Post* has logged fatal police shootings in the United States via their Fatal Force Database.

- Individuals can search the database using several variables such as victim's name, victim's age, victim's race, city, state, police department, and year of shooting.

- The database is user-friendly and provides links to news sources. The data can also be exported to an Excel file.
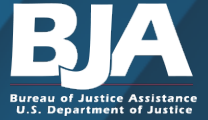
Disclaimer: BJA does not endorse or sponsor open-source data. However, SAAs are encouraged to use the information as necessary to report accurate and complete death in custody data to BJA.

Medical Examiners/Coroners

- Consider partnering with medical examiners/coroners (ME/Cs) as a source of DCRA data.

- Some states have laws in place that require all "in-custody" and "arrest-related" deaths to be investigated and/or reported to ME/Cs.

- When working with ME/Cs, take care to see what gaps they have in their data.

Zero Report

- If reporting "0" deaths during a reporting period, BJA will reach out to SAAs to confirm that they have not identified any deaths using their current data collection practices.

- BJA recommends that state and local agencies submit zero reports to the SAAs in any reporting period that a death does not occur as a best practice for a more comprehensive data collection.

Key Takeaways

States should move toward collecting data from the full universe of reporting agencies. Please ensure you collect data on and report deaths from each of the main categories:

- Arrest-related deaths
- Jail-related deaths
- Prison-related deaths

Contact Information

BJA PMT Helpdesk

Monday–Friday
8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Eastern Time
Closed on Federal Holidays
bjapmt@usdoj.gov

Contact Information

Justice Information Resource Network

202–842–9330
www.jirn.org
DCRA@jirn.org

DCRA
DEATH IN CUSTODY REPORTING ACT PROGRAM

Thank you for your hard work and dedication.