

What is the Death in Custody Reporting Act?

Originally passed in 2000, the [Death in Custody Reporting Act](#) (DCRA) requires the Attorney General to collect information regarding the death of any person who is under arrest, is en route to be incarcerated, or is incarcerated at a municipal or county jail, state prison, or other local or state correctional facility (including any juvenile facility). These death-in-custody data were originally captured by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) Mortality in Correctional Institutions (MCI).

DCRA was reauthorized in 2014, and “the law enforcement agency that detained, arrested, or was in the process of arresting the deceased” was added as a new requirement.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) required states to begin collecting mortality data for the Department of Justice (DOJ) in 2018. State Administering Agencies (SAAs) are collecting data on a quarterly basis from local entities including local jails, law enforcement agencies, medical examiners, and other state agencies. SAAs are responsible for compiling and aggregating the data for submission to BJA. Federal agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), continue to report deaths that occur in their custody to BJS on an annual basis.

Why are the DCRA requirements important?

The requirements set forth in DCRA provide an opportunity to identify deaths and develop solutions to avoid them in custody, including preventable deaths such as suicide. Knowing the circumstances and number of fatalities are crucial to developing policies and program changes that could reduce the number of in-custody fatalities.

Am I required to report?

- Are you a federal agency, including BOP? If yes, you are required to report deaths that occur in your custody directly to BJS on an annual basis. Additional information can be found on the [BJS website](#).
- Are you a state department of corrections, local jail, state/local law enforcement agency, or tribal entity? If yes, you are required to report death information on a quarterly basis to a centralized state agency. Contact your SAA for more information about the reporting guidelines. Additional information can be found at: <https://www.ojp.gov/funding/state-administering-agencies/overview>. To locate your SAA, visit: <https://www.ncja.org/agency-directory>.
- Are you an SAA? If yes, you are responsible for compiling and submitting data to BJA on a quarterly basis to comply with all applicable DCRA requirements.

DCRA Timeline

2000



DCRA passed

Requires reporting of (a) the name, gender, race, ethnicity, and age of the deceased; (b) the date, time, and location of death; and (c) a brief description of the circumstances surrounding the death of any person in the process of arrest; en route to be incarcerated; incarcerated at a municipal or county jail, state prison, or other local or state correctional facility, including juvenile facilities.

2014



DCRA reauthorized

Requires reporting of the “law enforcement agency that detained, arrested, or was in the process of arresting the deceased” in addition to the original reporting requirements. Also requires the Attorney General to study DCRA data and report on the means by which the data can be used to reduce the number of in-custody deaths.

2018



BJA begins collecting mortality data

State Administering Agencies are collecting data on a quarterly basis from local entities including local jails, law enforcement agencies, medical examiners, and other state agencies. Federal agencies continue to report in-custody death information to BJS annually.

	State Administering Agencies
Where do I report?	Directly to BJA via the Performance Measurement Tool (PMT): https://ojpsso.ojp.gov/ . Contact the PMT Helpdesk for assistance with your PMT account at: bjapmt@ojp.usdoj.gov .
What measures do I report?	DCRA performance measures can be found on the BJA Performance Measure web page .
When do I report?	Quarterly – <i>You have 30 days after the end of the reporting period to enter data in the PMT.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First quarter is October 1–December 31; reporting is due January 31. • Second quarter is January 1–March 31; reporting is due April 30. • Third quarter is April 1–June 30; reporting is due July 31. • Fourth quarter is July 1–September 30; reporting is due October 31.

What data must be reported?

For each quarter, states must either (1) report all deaths in custody that occurred in their jurisdictions during the corresponding quarter and provide basic information about the circumstances of those deaths or (2) affirm that no deaths in custody occurred in the states during the reporting period.

A state must answer the questions related to deaths in custody in the Performance Measurement Tool and submit the information by the reporting deadline. The reporting deadline is the last day of the month following the close of the quarter. For each quarter, BJA will send two reminders for reporting prior to the reporting deadline.

For each death in custody, a state must enter the following information into BJA’s PMT:

- 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 involved
- Manner of death

States must answer all questions in the PMT related to deaths in custody before they can submit the information. If a state does not have sufficient information to complete one of the questions, then the state may select the “unknown” answer, if available, and then specify when it anticipates obtaining the information.

Related Resources:

- [Death in Custody Reporting Act Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Death in Custody Reporting Act Performance Measures Training 2019](#)
- [Death in Custody Bulk Upload Guidance](#)
- [Required Elements for DCRA Reporting](#)
- [The National Criminal Justice Association \(NCJA\)](#)
 - NCJA provides national level training and technical assistance and is dedicated to helping justice agencies develop and implement effective policy, practices, and programs.