




Often we come across headlines such as:

"WANTED MURDERER  
RELEASED"

"SUSPECTED TERRORIST  
ESCAPES DETECTION"

"YOUTH MOLESTED BY  
TEACHER WITH CRIMINAL  
RECORD"



Once is too often. But terrorists and criminals can be tracked—no matter where they are. . .IF the justice and public safety agencies across the country could just share the information that is the lifeblood of criminal justice and public safety.

When leading policymakers in any given jurisdiction come to a common agreement that this problem should be resolved, it will be. Real changes must be made to our justice system now! Pushing criminal justice information sharing to the back burner will delay the solution to a critical national problem. With the support of policymakers to push for funding and initiatives in this area, the competent staffs of justice organizations will quickly rise to the occasion and make critical justice information sharing happen.

#### Sources for Information Sharing

[www.it.ojp.gov](http://www.it.ojp.gov) — Office of Justice Programs of the U.S. Department of Justice

[www.search.org](http://www.search.org) — SEARCH is a consortium of the states focused on helping identify and solve the information management challenges facing state and local justice and public safety agencies

[www.jisp.us](http://www.jisp.us) — Justice Information Sharing Professionals

[www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org) — National Governor's Association project on justice information sharing

[www.ijis.org](http://www.ijis.org) — Consortium of companies engaged in helping state and local governments learn about the technology to help make systems interoperable

[www.nascio.org](http://www.nascio.org) — National Association of State CIO's

# WHY CAN'T WE SHARE?

The Need To Share  
Information Electronically Is  
A National Imperative—

Terrorists Could Be Hiding  
Between The "Information Silos"

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A NATIONAL ISSUE  
A NATIONAL SOLUTION



# A NATIONAL ISSUE

There is a serious problem with the failure to share information in support of homeland security and the administration of justice throughout our nation.

- Agencies are not able to electronically match criminal dispositions with arrest information—leaving information gaps on potentially dangerous people.
- It can take weeks for a warrant issued by a court to be recorded in the police "Wanted Persons" system. This is because in most parts of the nation, law enforcement, prosecution, court and corrections agencies use systems that operate independently and with no exchange of computerized data between them.

As it stands, the criminal history records in the U.S. are accurate and complete only about 60% of the time! Compare this to the financial world. Billions of transactions occur there daily with far more accuracy and efficiency than justice/law enforcement agencies that are unable to track a single criminal from Illinois to Ohio.

Why, then, isn't this vital criminal justice information being shared more effectively? It is sometimes shared on paper, but this is a highly inefficient way of sharing time-critical information resulting in the following inefficiencies:

- Unneeded duplication of effort
- Time delays for availability of information
- Data entry errors
- Jurisdictional liabilities

Information sharing must occur electronically so that it can be entered once, be accurate and be shared many times with many organizations.

But we have some *systemic problems* to solve:

- Justice agencies—even in the same county—use computers that can't "talk" to each other.
- Law enforcement and justice agencies are wary of the misuse of their data and have a concern that other agencies will not preserve the integrity of their information.
- Data integration and organized information sharing is not a priority for many law enforcement or justice agencies. There is no pressure because no one holds the agencies responsible for doing business in a more timely and effective manner.

NO COMMUNITY CAN BE LEFT  
BEHIND, OR IT WILL BECOME A  
SAFE HAVEN FOR THE CAREER  
CRIMINAL OR TERRORIST

# A NATIONAL SOLUTION

Computer technology has evolved greatly in the past few years making the exchange of data among different computer systems much easier and cheaper. But technology is not the problem. A high-level national commitment, coupled with use of new the technology is critical if we are to have a positive effect on the justice and law enforcement processes and be able to share vital justice data. In addition, the following are absolutely necessary to achieve successful information sharing:

- A coordinated national strategy must be embraced.
- Leadership must be provided by elected and appointed officials in all three branches of government at the local, state and federal level.
- Law enforcement agencies must submit fingerprints electronically and have them searched against other state and FBI fingerprint files to identify offenders.
- Courts and prosecutors must report dispositions electronically to appropriate state repositories, to be matched against other arrest reports.
- When an arrest warrant is issued for a person, law enforcement officials need to be able to query the appropriate justice databases to know whether this person is subject to arrest in another jurisdiction.

Policymakers need to:

- Understand why the resolution of this problem is an important priority.
- Learn to present the return on investment and other benefits that make information sharing a reality.
- Bring stakeholders together to pursue real information sharing in their jurisdiction.
- Call for an assessment of the extent to which justice and public safety information sharing has been computerized in their jurisdiction.
- Advocate for the allocation of funding to these issues based on the return on investment; a persuasive case.
- Sponsor legislation to facilitate information sharing between justice and public safety agencies at all levels.