



## Transcript: Interview With Kristen Mahoney Executive Director, Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention

The Bureau of Justice Assistance Justice Podcast Series is designed to provide the latest information in justice innovations, practices, and perspectives from the field of criminal justice. In this edition, James H. Burch II, Acting Director of the Bureau of Justice Assistance, is joined by Kristen Mahoney, the Executive Director for the state of Maryland's Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention which advises the Governor on criminal justice policy matters and administers several key funding streams that come in to the state of Maryland.

**Jim Burch:** Hello friends and colleagues, I'm Jim Burch for the Bureau of Justice Assistance [BJA] and welcome to another edition of BJA's Justice Podcast Series. Today, we are going to invite you to join in our conversation with Kristen Mahoney, the Executive Director for the state of Maryland's Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, which advises the Governor on criminal justice policy matters and administers several key funding streams that come in to the state of Maryland, such as the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grants Program, or JAG Program. In August of this year, 2011, Maryland's Governor O'Malley announced that the total crime rate in the state is at its lowest level since 1975.<sup>1</sup> According to the 2010 year-end crime data that was compiled by the Maryland State Police and then submitted to the FBI for use in the Uniform Crime Reporting Program, total crime in Maryland went down 5.1 percent. Further, the violent crime rate in Maryland has decreased 6 percent, while property crime decreased by 4.9 percent. Since 2006, total crime in Maryland has decreased 17 percent, and violent crime has also decreased 17 percent. With these reductions, crime in Maryland has reached its lowest level since modern crime tracking began in 1975.

Kristin, thanks so much for being here with us today. Before we begin our conversation, I just want to commend you and Governor O'Malley for all of the work that you have done in the state of Maryland. Maryland's crime reductions are in fact very impressive, and I know many of our listeners are eager to hear about some of the strategies that you all have implemented that may have contributed to these results.

I want to start off by asking you to talk a little bit about the information that was included in the Governor's press release.

The press release says that both violent crime and property crime rates, that is per 100,000 people in Maryland, are at an all-time low, which is incredible. The release then goes on to talk about, "The declines in crime come at a time when state and local law enforcement agencies are intensifying their use of technology and information sharing." Can you tell us a little bit about some of the ways that you have utilized technology to fight crime in the state of Maryland? And as a follow up, why do you think that the use of technology is intensifying now?

**Director Mahoney:** Well, Jim, thanks for having me.

Governor O'Malley established some policy goals for the state of Maryland, and one is to reduce violent crime by 20 percent by the year 2012, and we are about 85 percent of the way there now, sitting in the last of part of 2011. To get to that goal, the state had to establish some crime-fighting strategies that would help the state and locals impact violent crime and end crime statewide. And our first strategy is identifying high-risk offenders, holding them accountable, and improving outcomes for offenders through reentry services. Our second strategy is effecting, enhancing warrant service to swiftly remove violent offenders from the street. The third strategy is to maximize the use of DNA; the fourth strategy is to expand efforts to reduce illegal gun use; and the fifth strategy is to modernize crime fighting and information sharing by maximizing the best available technology. So we—all these crime-fighting strategies are rolled up and implemented everyday by Maryland's public safety leaders, the Maryland State Police, the Department of Home Probation, and the Department of Juvenile Services, to impact violent crime.

The technology piece is the most critical [component] because it links silos of information that for generations have not been sharing information. For example, we know that license plate readers [LPRs] are really important tools in recovering stolen vehicles, identifying stolen vehicles, identifying absconders, but standing alone, license plate readers just assist that one police officer in his vehicle or in her vehicle. In Maryland, the Governor challenged us to use Justice Assistance Act Grant funding to purchase 200 new license plate readers; get them out to all of our local departments. And through the use of technology available to us today that maybe wasn't

<sup>1</sup> All statistics mentioned in this podcast came from the Maryland Governor's press releases called, "Maryland Continues Historic Reductions in Crime." This press release is available online at [www.governor.maryland.gov/pressreleases/110817.asp](http://www.governor.maryland.gov/pressreleases/110817.asp).

available 5–10 years ago when license plate readers came out, we now have all of our license plate readers in Maryland networked—over 300 license plate readers in Maryland are networked—and the results, the images, the photographs that they take of these license plates are warehoused at our state’s fusion center. And local law enforcement who are interested in looking for a particular license plate, absconder, or someone in an Amber Alert, someone in a Silver Alert, a Blue Alert, a person wanted for questioning, a missing person—we are able to query that database at the Maryland fusion center and support local law enforcement’s efforts to locate those individuals.

**Jim Burch:** That’s great. I want to ask you one followup question about the license plate reader data. You mentioned it stays within the state in the fusion center. Are there particular privacy policies associated with that LPR data and how it’s maintained and how long it is maintained?

**Director Mahoney:** Yes, when the Governor suggested to us that we network our license plate reader system, we spoke to experts in the field who had attempted to do it—maybe at a county level or a city level. We reviewed some of the International Association of Chiefs of Police [IACP] documentation on this and established a steering group that is chaired by a retired judge, and we established policies, privacy policies in particular and access policies, that would ensure that that data was protected and not utilized improperly.

**Jim Burch:** Oh, that’s great, Kristen. It’s great to hear that you all were able to make use of the IACP’s resources in thinking about how you were going to handle LPR data, or license plate reader data. Well, let’s talk a little bit property crime overall. Can you tell us a little bit about what Maryland is doing in that area specifically?

**Director Mahoney:** You know, we targeted some specific areas in property crime where we thought we could have an impact—specifically, with breaking and entering and theft. We have been working with our automated pawnshop database, which requires all pawnshops in Maryland to provide their records—their daily transactions electronically to the Maryland State Police, and then we make those records available to all local law enforcement, and that system is called the “RAPID system” [Regional Automated Property Information Database]. It required a piece of state legislation that Governor O’Malley sponsored to ensure that all pawnshops provide this information to the RAPID database. And then that pawn data is accessible to all local law enforcement. So, now, instead of having to go through a hundred thousand paper records of pawnshop transactions, you can just search for “red Fender® guitar” in the RAPID database and see what red Fender guitars were pawned in the last 30 days and where they are.

And that RAPID database was funded by my office, the Governor’s Office of Crime Control & Prevention. We are the State Administering Agency [SAA] for the Byrne JAG award grant program. And that RAPID database was funded by our office using JAG funding, so that all law enforcement [officers] have access to these pawn records. And when you can get at that stolen property at pawnshops, you can really start to impact major theft rings throughout the state, and that was a big part of our property crime reduction.

**Jim Burch:** That’s great. And so, as I understand that then, if there’s a theft in the southern part of the state and that property is then taken to a pawnshop in the northern part of the state—say, Baltimore—you would know that. Investigators in the southern part of the state would know the equipment was pawned somewhere.

**Director Mahoney:** Correct. They could search the RAPID system and see if any similar equipment is there. Once you start looking for links like that, you can really start implementing more data-driven policing because these pawned items—these stolen items that are pawned—are often also associated with motor vehicle theft, they are associated with street robberies, they are associated with homicides, they are associated with shootings. So, property crime—working at that—is a very good way to solve a larger crime problem, and it can impact violent crime.

**Jim Burch:** Thanks Kristin. It’s great to hear about that particular database, and it certainly sounds like it has some great utility within the state. So, we’ve talked a lot thus far about some of the ways that technology has been used to decrease crime at the state level. Can you provide us with an example of how a local law enforcement agency, maybe a city or a county within the state of Maryland, has leveraged technology to impact crime within their neighborhoods?

**Director Mahoney:** I want to highlight the Anne Arundel Police Department because one of the first things Governor O’Malley asked us to implement was a system that would provide immediate training and technical assistance to law enforcements that want to implement data-driven policing practices. So, with the University of Maryland, we have established a program called CompStat on Demand. And the individuals at the University of Maryland CompStat on Demand program will go into any law enforcement agency in Maryland and do a soup-to-nuts assessment of their records management system, their CompStat or CrimeStat system, their crime analysis system, and they will give them a candid and confidential evaluation of how they believe the agency is using crime statistics to fight crime and how they can use crime data to improve their crime fight and improve their outcomes. And Chief Teare in the Anne Arundel Police Department has really embraced the CompStat on Demand program. He has invited the consultants back over and over again to provide feedback and technical assistance and support for his crime analysis unit. Adding to—so we used Justice Assistance Act Grant funding to support that CompStat on Demand contract with the University of Maryland. We renew it every year. They’ve probably done about 25 individual agency thorough assessments. They are about 40–50 pages long, and they really do provide a blueprint for chiefs on how to improve their intelligence-based or data-driven crime fight.

And, in addition to that, we have worked with the city of Baltimore on its Safe Surrender program, which was something that was started by the United States Marshals, where the city uses technology available to it to search warrant databases and find those nonviolent offenders, who have warrants out for their arrest that are just really old and sitting on the books and people haven’t really been acting on them. And maybe if people were given a chance to appear before a judge, pay a small fine, or even just get a probation before judgment, that warrant could come right off the books, and it would prevent—

people maybe are not applying for jobs because they know they have this open warrant.

So, we established the Safe Surrender program with Baltimore and the United States Marshals, and we provide the funding for the technology and the overtime for that program to be implemented and, just in the short time that they ran it—it was just for like a weekend—they were able to close probably 2,000 nonviolent offender warrants. And you couple that with the warrant initiatives we did last summer with Prince George’s County and Baltimore—and these were strategic, tactical warrant initiatives. They were not “Here’s a bunch of overtimes, good luck, have fun, guys, girls.” This was “Pick your thousand most violent offenders who have open warrants—I know you’re busy; now, I’m going to give you some Justice Assistant Act Grant funding to strategically go and find those individuals who need to be brought to justice.” And we just finished an initiative with Prince George’s County. Five hundred individuals were arrested; another 250 detainees were placed on individuals that were in prison—so nearly 1,000 individuals in Prince George’s County in 28 days, violent offenders. And in Baltimore City—same thing—we provided funding for some strategic analysis of who are the worst of the worst with open warrants. And they were able to execute about a thousand open warrants in the month of June in Baltimore City. Both jurisdictions have had really great results in terms of low violence throughout the summer months because we have removed nearly 2,000 violent offenders off Maryland streets, and that’s using crime analysis, and that’s using the overtime funding. We have told jurisdictions in Maryland that if anyone wants a crime analyst, we will provide Justice Assistance Act Grant funding to support the hiring of those positions. And, as a result, we have funded 53 crime analysts throughout the state that support all the crime-fighting efforts of sheriffs and police officers on the street. They are the ones that are designing the master plans, and the troopers and the police officers and the sheriffs are out implementing those plans. It’s been a terrific, tremendous partnership.

**Jim Burch:** I think one of the things that I love most about what you were saying, in terms of why technology is being used so prevalently in Maryland, is that you started out by answering that question by talking about the goals and the strategies of the state, and it’s just so great to see a place where the use of technology is really driven by the strategies and the goals that you’ve identified, as opposed to the other way around where, really, technology seems to be pushing the strategies. And so it’s great to see that true data-driven approach at the state level.

You’ve talked a little bit to us already about some of the specific examples of the technology that’s in use today. And I remember reading in the press release, there was a reference to—I believe it was more than a hundred disparate databases are connected through a portal of some kind or a dashboard

of some kind. Can you tell us a little bit more about that technology and how it’s used?

**Director Mahoney:** Yes, we call that the public safety or Criminal Justice Dashboard. The Criminal Justice Dashboard is the answer to everyone’s question of “what am I going to do with the 92 different usernames and the 92 different passwords that I have to maintain to access all of this mission-critical data.” It is a deterrent to intelligence-based policing when detectives and investigators and crime analysts have to maintain 92 different passwords or 100 different passwords to access this data. So, in Maryland, our “mad scientists” responded to that challenge by figuring out a way to just have our first responders, law enforcement, using their NCIC access log on, and that one logon enables them to access over 92 different databases. So, what this means is, you log on using your NCIC username and password and you put in an offender’s name that you are interested in learning about—maybe you have an open warrant for this individual—and everything the state of Maryland knows about that person immediately comes up on your computer screen via an offender prospectus, so their criminal history information comes up, whether or not they’ve ever had a protective order, whether or not they’ve ever been in prison, who their probation agent is, what their probation status is, whether they’ve had a hunting license, whether they’ve ever applied for a business license to be a mortician or one of the other businesses that the state of Maryland regulates, and every single state-supported data system is integrated into the dashboard. And just last week, we were told that the dashboard hit an all-time high for daily queries—68,000 queries were made last Wednesday—68,000 hits of connecting the dots, of trying to identify previously—people that had been allowed to remain anonymous. The dashboard enables us to get a very quick picture of who they are, where they live, where they receive their driver’s license information; it has all of the pictures we’ve ever taken of them, from the Division of Corrections, parole and probation, motor vehicles, and very quickly that offender loses his anonymity, and law enforcement then can begin to prioritize resources and determine what next steps to take.

**Jim Burch:** That’s great, and the press release makes reference to how technology has also assisted you in encouraging more cross-border collaboration, particularly with your neighboring jurisdictions of Virginia and Washington, D.C. Can you talk a little about that collaboration?

**Director Mahoney:** Sure, I noted that strategy one is identifying high-risk offenders and holding them accountable, and in Maryland, Governor O’Malley challenged us to identify the most high-risk offenders of the 70,000 people that are on parole and probation: which offenders are most likely to continue to become part of the violent crime problem and which ones require the most attention. So, of those 70,000, using a data-driven approach, working with the University

<sup>2</sup> Ensuring Fairness and Equity in the Criminal Justice System is an initiative that addresses the social context underlying America’s criminal justice and corrections policies in order to break the cycle of successive involvement of generations of offenders in the criminal justice system and reduce recidivism. Through this project, BJA will invest in the entire court process to encourage policymakers and practitioners to examine front-end decisionmaking practices. By considering the roles that prosecution, pre-trial service programs, adjudication, and sentencing can play in making the criminal justice process more effective, justice, fairness, and public safety will be enhanced.

of Pennsylvania, Dr. Burke and Dr. Sherman, who's now at Maryland, we were able to put together a forecasting model to figure out who are our most high-risk offenders. And of the 70,000 using that model, we found that really, there are only about 2,500 that are most at-risk offenders that are on parole and probation and require the highest level of supervision.

Along those lines, when we talk about heightened supervision, we recognize that the criminals have no boundaries. So because Maryland is right beside the District of Columbia, you can see when you do mapping—and we use a lot of our Byrne JAG funding to do some statewide crime analysis through Washington College (we have a contract with them; they provide maps on demand for us), and they recently mapped for us the Maryland offenders under parole and probation supervision who live in the District of Columbia and District of Columbia offenders who are under the supervision of CSOSA, which is the District's version of parole and probation, who live in Maryland. So these individuals are constantly crossing back and forth and are largely on the honor system. So, for example, if I said to you, "Jim"—you are the probationer—"were you okay last night? Last week? Have you been arrested in the last week or so?" I am a probation agent—I have a huge case load—I really don't have time to be looking up everybody's criminal record every day, every morning, so I'm going to ask you, have you been arrested? "Nope, everything's fine—haven't been arrested—everything's good." In fact, the individual was arrested last night in D.C. But we would never know that because there was no information sharing going on between the District of Columbia and Maryland regarding probationers.

So, in 2008, Governor O'Malley and then Mayor Fenty and then Governor Kaine agreed to share live arrest information across border[s]. So that means that if an individual under Maryland supervision goes to the District and gets arrested, that arrest notification immediately goes to the Maryland probation agent assigned to that case, who can take immediate action. So again, we're back to using technology to identify high-risk offenders and removing anonymity, and it has had a tremendous impact in the District. We have promised Chief Lanier that we do not want Maryland offenders to be part of her problem, so we try to keep all of our probationers on this system—in this system—and holding them accountable. And it's worked so well that we have had other states sign on. We just signed a memorandum of understanding [MOU] with the state of Delaware on August 18. That Governor and Governor O'Malley met in Salisbury, Maryland, and agreed that they would share arrest information on these probationers to hold them accountable. And, in November, we are looking forward to announcing a similar MOU with some of our western neighbors—maybe in Ohio or Pennsylvania [or] West Virginia. We are working with them right now. But it has had a tremendous impact to letting the offenders know that they're not on the honor system. And Maryland and D.C. and Delaware and Pennsylvania and West Virginia are sharing all the information necessary to hold these offenders accountable.

**Jim Burch:** That's great, and the sharing is bidirectional, I assume. Right? So Maryland and D.C. can access your system and search your system when needed?

**Director Mahoney:** Yes. So step one is to share the information and have the arrest notices go back and forth. Step two is then to operationalize it and decide whether it makes sense for some of the District's CSOSA agents to come to Maryland and do some joint home visits in communities that are experiencing high crime. It makes sense for CSOSA and Maryland Division of Parole and Probation to come together, identify violent offenders that live in that community that are under the supervision of either group, and conduct those home visits with the local law enforcement. It sends a powerful message to the offenders that community supervision is important, it can have an impact, and it's not a get-out-of-jail-free card. It means something.

**Jim Burch:** So, this is all just fantastic, but I imagine that there are people listening to this podcast right now that are saying: there's no way that we could implement things like this in our state or our city or our county because of the financial situation that we are in or the economic situation that we are in. How did you manage to do this with the economic situation being what it is? Tell me what your funding strategies were.

**Director Mahoney:** Well, the first thing you have to do is plan and, as the State Administering Agency, the Governor has charged us with figuring out ways to impact violent crime. And I think that when we told our state agencies—the Maryland State Police, and the Division of Parole and Probation, the Division of Corrections, Juvenile Services—that the Governor expected them to kind of back up the public safety dump truck and provide whatever resources possible to local government—that was unusual. I think people are kind of used to staying in their lane, doing their thing, doing their thing well, but not figuring out a way that, you know—why can't the Division of Juvenile Services and the Division of Parole and Probation conduct home visits together? I mean, they're going to the same house. Doesn't it make sense for them to go together? And why can't the Maryland State Police forensic lab reach out to local law enforcement and establish ways to prioritize their forensic services? So we make sure that the big cases and the most violent offenders have their evidence ready on the day that people are supposed to go to court, so we can get them through the justice system quickly. We already have the license plate reader technology. Everybody has invested in that. Everybody agrees that it's the way to go to impact motor vehicle theft, so networking it is a minimal cost. And so that's where the state steps in and says we'll supply Justice Assistance Act Grant funding to network; you guys at the local level do all the heavy lifting: operating the systems, making the arrests, making it work in communities.

We're always looking for ways to support law enforcement and communities where they have unexpected gaps in funding or just impossible goals to meet, so we were very fortunate under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to receive that funding. It was critical for the Prince George's County local law enforcement agencies. That county has 24 or 25 small police departments in addition to its large county police department. And the county had recently upgraded its radio system to a 700MHz system. Police radios cost \$4–5,000 a radio. Some of those local law enforcement agencies in Prince



George's County did not have it in their budget to throw out the old radios and find the new ones to communicate countywide. But the county was going up on 700[MHz], and the locals were just going to have to revert back to patches and phones and cell phones, and that's certainly not the way to run one of our largest county police departments in the country, so the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act enabled my office to provide the funding to make all 24 of those small municipal police departments interoperable with the Prince George's County Police Department and the Prince George's County Fire Department. So, just like that, in one fell swoop, we identified a gap and we were able to provide the funding for that technology and that county, which is right beside the District of Columbia, which is a large metropolitan county. Now all of the first responders can speak to each other.

**Jim Burch:** That's fantastic. And you were able to do that without any additional or new money. It was really with funding streams that were already coming into the state anyway.

**Director Mahoney:** Correct. And when you're the state administering agency, it's your responsibility to know who your customers are, know what's working in your customers' communities, and figure out ways to move their strategies and move their goals on a parallel course with the state. And I think that all law enforcement in Maryland, the prosecutors' offices in Maryland, the nonprofit agencies in Maryland, the public defender in Maryland—all of our stakeholders know that our goal and the way we measure our success is by our grantees' success and by our sub-recipients' success.

**Jim Burch:** So, we've talked about some really exciting programs and strategies here today. Is there a place on the web where our listeners can go to get more information about these things?

**Director Mahoney:** Sure. If you just go to the Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention it will come right up. I think that's probably the easiest way to do it.

**Jim Burch:** Oh, great. Thanks, Kristin. So the web site then for your office would be [www.goccp.maryland.gov](http://www.goccp.maryland.gov). The press release that we've talked about here today was issued on August 17, 2011. It's titled "Maryland Continues Historic Reductions in Crime" and the line that I'll leave our listeners with today from the press release says: "Currently, both violent crime and the property crime rates per 100,000 people (in Maryland) are the lowest ever on record in the state of Maryland." And that's truly impressive. Kristen, thank you for being here with us today.

**Director Mahoney:** Thanks, Jim.

**Closing:** Thank you for taking the time to join us for this conversation. If you found the discussion interesting, we encourage you to visit the BJA web site for more innovative ideas and best practices at [www.ojp.gov/BJA](http://www.ojp.gov/BJA).

From all of us here at BJA, thank you for tuning in to today's podcast. We hope you will join us again for another edition of BJA's Justice Podcast Series.

## CONTACT US

Bureau of Justice Assistance  
Office of Justice Programs  
810 Seventh Street NW.  
Washington, DC 20531  
Phone: 202-616-6500  
Toll free: 1-866-859-2687  
E-mail: [AskBJA@usdoj.gov](mailto:AskBJA@usdoj.gov)  
Web site: [www.ojp.gov/BJA](http://www.ojp.gov/BJA)