

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For many years, the State of Hawaii has been committed to maintaining centralized, automated records of all criminal offenders, available to all criminal justice agencies, whether at the state or local level. This system has been administered by the Hawaii Criminal Justice Data Center ("data center"), along with other centralized support functions. More recently, the State has initiated a process to procure and implement, on a statewide basis, an automated fingerprint identification system (AFIS). Such a system has the potential to significantly increase the ability of the criminal justice system to successfully identify and prosecute criminal offenders.

The Legislature has demonstrated a high level of interest in ensuring the success of both of the above initiatives. Therefore, through a provision in Act 390 of the Supplemental Appropriations Act of 1988, the Legislature directed the Office of the Legislative Auditor to perform a study of the State Criminal Justice Information and Identification Program (ATG231), as administered by the data center. In addition, Senate Concurrent Resolution Number 3, Senate Draft 1, also adopted by the 1988 Legislature, requested that the Legislative Auditor study the feasibility of interfacing Hawaii's new AFIS with systems developed by member states of the Western Legislative Conference. This report satisfies both of the above directives.

The report focuses on the following major areas: the role of the Criminal Justice Data Interagency Board; the organization and operational effectiveness of the data center; the design and operating effectiveness of the State's centralized criminal justice information system, known as the "Offender-Based Transaction Statistics/Computerized Criminal History" (OBTS/CCH) system; the interfaces and degree of integration between OBTS/CCH and individual agencies' information systems; the communications network supporting OBTS/CCH; the current processing environment and potential alternatives, including the use of a computer dedicated completely to criminal justice systems; and the current AFIS implementation effort, including the feasibility of connectivity with other western states. A number of significant findings and recommendations were identified for each of the above areas and are described in the body of the report. In addition, a coordinated plan of action is presented that would immediately address concerns and deficiencies in the current systems, and, over the longer term, develop truly integrated systems to support all criminal justice agencies effectively. This plan of action is detailed in Chapter 3. Very specific tasks are identified for accomplishment during 1989 and 1990, and a general direction established for later years.

The State faces a crossroads decision. As its highest priority, the State faces a crossroads decision regarding the board and OBTS/CCH. The board itself is due to expire on June 30, 1989, under a current sunset clause. Because of its lack of achievements to date, many of its members question the advisability of extending its term of life. OBTS/CCH is in danger of dying a slower, but still permanent death, owing to design limitations and inefficiencies, chronic data entry backlogs resulting in major gaps in criminal records, widespread user dissatisfaction, and an ever-increasing number of systems development projects at the agency level that circumvent OBTS/CCH instead of incorporating it into their design. In the absence of a clear strategy, a plan of action, and a renewal of commitment, the demise of both the board and OBTS/CCH is a conceivable development.

Recommended plan of action. As an alternative to the above scenario, which would be highly disadvantageous to the State, this report strongly recommends a more active, planned process that strengthens the board's role, commits resources to overcome the deficiencies of existing systems and achieve effective integration, and attains the full participation of criminal justice agencies. The action plan that is presented in this report initiates a process to establish a strategic direction for the State's criminal justice information systems, defines tasks and projects to be accomplished, assigns responsibilities, and provides a timetable for completing these efforts.

In regard to the board and OBTS/CCH, basic components of this action plan are as follows:

- The board is retained, its membership structure is clarified, and it is granted expanded authority to set policy and make binding decisions regarding criminal justice information systems throughout the State. The board would directly oversee activities of the data center and establish effective user group participation in information systems decisions. Enabling legislation is required during the upcoming session, both to extend the life of the board and increase the scope of its powers and responsibilities as outlined above.
- At the outset, effective leadership is provided through the Attorney General to initiate and oversee the effort envisioned in the action plan. As part of its expanded authority, the board is expected to eventually assume this leadership role from the Attorney General.
- OBTS/CCH is retained, with several project teams established immediately to resolve its most significant design and operating deficiencies. This includes efforts to eliminate the data entry backlogs and establish effective automated interfaces with as many agency systems as possible. These tasks will occupy much of the first year of the action plan.
- A long-range effort is initiated to overhaul OBTS/CCH and develop a more effective central criminal information system that: (1) achieves integration and compatibility with agencies' operational systems and (2) provides complete and timely centralized criminal history records and statistical reports.

Through both legislative and administrative actions, the State must commit sufficient resources to implement the action plan, including support of required state and local agency activities at all levels. Agencies will also need to commit their best efforts to accomplishing the objectives of the action plan and assisting in the development of an enhanced OBTS/CCH, submerging personality differences and animosities that may have arisen over the years.

Findings and recommendations from the other areas of review are also incorporated into this action plan. For the data center itself, one major finding is that its responsibilities have grown at a faster rate than resources have been made available to it. Consequently, its effectiveness at fulfilling both old and new responsibilities has suffered. It is recommended that, after AFIS, the data center acquire no new responsibilities and instead concentrate on consolidating its current functions, improving its level of service, and planning its longer term organizational direction. In the action plan, the data center plays a key role in facilitating many of the recommended tasks or projects, but is directly accountable to the board for all of these activities.

Dedicated computer resources. Current computer hardware and data communications support for centralized criminal justice information systems are found to be adequate in most respects. Certain recommendations for improvement are identified and incorporated into the action plan. Over the long term, it may be advantageous for the State to consider establishing a dedicated computer to support its criminal justice systems, using an established computer operations site. The action plan includes a step to study the feasibility of establishing a dedicated computer, once the more urgent problems with OBTS/CCH and the board have been resolved. Finally, the report finds that significant efforts are already underway to improve data communications connectivity between criminal justice system users and the major supporting computer facilities. These efforts are supported and included in the action plan.

AFIS. A partial review of the AFIS selection process indicates that, to date, the State's approach has generally been professional and objective. However, some concerns about this process and the selection result are noted in the report. In particular, the winning vendor selection appears to complicate efforts to achieve connectivity with other western states. This is due to the fact that no other western state uses the system that has been selected by Hawaii. Furthermore, the preliminary findings of this report appear to indicate that the cost effectiveness of achieving interstate connectivity is questionable at this time. In the action plan, it is recommended that efforts be concentrated at present on implementing the new AFIS system throughout the State and developing an effective central support function at the data center. Only at a later date should attention be focused on achieving connectivity with other states. By that time, because of efforts underway at the national level to interconnect different automated fingerprint identification systems, the State of Hawaii may be able to establish connectivity with other states much more readily, and at less cost, than is now possible.