

SAC AND JRSA HISTORY

In 1968, the U.S. Congress passed the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act. Declaring that “crime is a local problem that demands local solutions,” the legislation created the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) to provide funding to states for improving the criminal justice system. A considerable amount of funding flowed to state and local agencies through the LEAA program.

The National Criminal Justice Information and Statistics Service (NCJISS) was established under LEAA to collect, evaluate, publish, and disseminate statistics and other information on law enforcement. The agency was to “provide expert assistance to states and local communities in their development of statistical systems; collection, publication, and dissemination of technical and substantive statistical data to the criminal justice community; statistical support to the administration of LEAA in program development, implementation, and evaluation; and national leadership in the development of statistical research methods in the field of criminal justice.” The service began operating in 1970; in 1972, it announced the founding of the Comprehensive Data Systems (CDS) program.

CREATION OF SACs

The CDS program had three principal goals: to enhance the ability of law enforcement and criminal justice administrators to fight crime on the local level; to provide better tools for assessing, reporting, and planning activities from a policy perspective at the state level; and to set in motion mechanisms for producing national crime statistics and establishing uniform policies for systems development and statistical analysis.

States received federal funding under the CDS program to:

- establish Statistical Analysis Centers as the nucleus for coordinating each state’s criminal justice system and statistics activities;
- create Offender-Based Transaction Statistics (OBTS) and Computerized Criminal Histories (CCH) to systematically collect offender-based data from all major criminal justice agencies, from arrest through final disposition; and
- establish a uniform crime reporting (UCR) system at the state level for collecting and reporting law enforcement data to the FBI for inclusion in its national program.

The CDS guidelines established six objectives for the SACs:

- provide objective analysis of criminal justice data, including data collected by operating agencies;
- generate statistical reports on crime and the processing of criminal offenders in support of planning agencies;
- coordinate technical assistance in support of the CDS program in the state;
- collect, analyze, and disseminate management and administrative statistics on the criminal justice resources expended in the state;
- promote the orderly development of criminal justice information and statistical systems in the state; and

- provide uniform data on criminal justice processes for the preparation of national statistical reports.

In 1972, SACs were established in seven states, and three existing statistical agencies were officially designated as Statistical Analysis Centers.

CREATION OF JRSA

The SACs created the Criminal Justice Statistics Association (CJSA) in 1974 to promote the exchange of information among the SACs and enable them to work together toward common goals, and to serve as a liaison between the state agencies and Justice Department. By 1976, when the Association was incorporated as a 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization, 34 states and the District of Columbia had Statistical Analysis Centers.

Upon termination of LEAA in 1980, 41 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico had SACs. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), which was established in 1979, took over the Federal role in funding SAC research and statistics activities, although BJS funds are not designed to fully support the SACs. Many states had already begun to fully or partially fund their SACs, whose primary role is to collect, analyze, and disseminate policy-relevant data for state decision makers. BJS provides funds for the SACs under the State Justice Statistics Program. Each year BJS solicits proposals from SACS for projects that fall under a broad spectrum of criminal justice themes.

In 1991, CJSA changed its name to the Justice Research and Statistics Association (JRSA), to better reflect the expansion of roles over the years on the part of both the SACs and the Association. Today there are SACs in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Northern Mariana Islands. The primary goal of the SACs continues to be producing data and research that are relevant to the state legislative and programmatic decisions in the area of criminal justice and, increasingly, juvenile justice.

The SACs are located in a variety of settings. While the majority are housed within the State Administering Agency, some are in offices of the Governor or Attorney General, in Departments of Corrections, Law Enforcement or Public Safety, or in academic institutions. Contact information for all the SACs is available on the JRSA web site at www.jrsa.org, along with links to their web sites and links to the Bureau of Justice Statistics and other Justice Department agencies.