

***The Challenges of Using Criminal  
History Records Data for Research:  
A Perspective from Maine***

***October 22, 2009***

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# PROJECT OVERVIEW

**October 2007** - Maine Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) & Maine Department of Public Safety (DPS) awarded a grant from the Justice Research & Statistics Association (JRSA)

**Purpose** - develop capacity to analyze CHR data on statewide basis in Maine

*Specific focus on characteristics of drug offenders  
(profile)*

**ME** - one of six states to receive awards (GA, IA, OH, SC, & UT)

# BACKGROUND OF CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORDS SYSTEM

## Processing Activities:

Accuracy and completeness of  
information

Quality control for images

Technical searches – identification  
purposes

FBI submissions

# DRUG OFFENSE DATA EXTRACT

## Developed Model Extract

- SAC worked with DPS Senior Program Analyst to build the drug offense extract from the Criminal History Record Information System (CHRI).
- DPS added previous arrest information (2006 drug arrestee's other arrests from 2003 to 2005) to the query.

# DRUG CODES IN THE CHRI

## Drug Codes

- CHRI has a Name Index variable that categorizes all offenses. All drug offenses are categorized as “Drugs” in the Name Index variable field.
- The query was further designed to capture other non-drug offenses associated with the drug arrest.

# DRUG OFFENSE DATA EXTRACT

## Considerations

- Duplicate Issues - if a person is arrested once, but has both a criminal card and a USAC in the system, that arrest will show up twice in the extract.
- A hierarchy of source documents, i.e.: criminal card, USAC, etc. – was used to ensure that only one ‘person source’ is pulled per arrest.

# DATA QUALITY ISSUES

## Incompleteness

- A significant number of records were missing a state identification number (SID), an FBI number, an Arrest Case Number, disposition information, and certain demographic information, such as gender and race.

# DATA QUALITY ISSUES

## Drug Statutes

- Maine drug statutes cover a range of drugs making it difficult to isolate certain problem drugs.
- In Maine, there are four common schedule drug categories – W, X, Y and Z.
- Each of these schedules contains a variety of drug types, and some statutes actually combine schedules.

# DATA QUALITY ISSUES

## Civil Arrests

- Civil drug arrests are not entered in the CHRI, confounding an attempt to compare the number of drug arrests in the CHRI to those reported to the FBI in the 2006 uniform crime reports (UCR).
- In 2006, UCR drug arrests totaled 5,795, compared to 3,760 in the CHRI.

# DATA QUALITY ISSUES

## Adequate Sentencing Information

- The lack of adequate disposition and sentencing data in the CHRI posed a substantial challenge to the final analysis.
- The SAC was not able to analyze disposition information due to incompleteness, and sentencing information was not available during the project.

# DRUG OFFENSE ANALYSIS

**Cohort: Examined Individuals with a drug offense in 2006**

- Arrests, Charges & Dispositions
- Age, Gender & # of offenses
- Type & Class of offense
- Non-drug charges leveled at time of the drug arrest
- Drug arrests by law enforcement agency (LEA)

# DRUG ARRESTS & CHARGES (2006)

# of Individuals Arrested for a Drug Offense	<b>3,298</b>
Arrests/Individual	<b>1.14</b>
% of Individuals arrested just once	<b>88%</b>
# of Arrests per Individual - Range	<b>1 to 7</b>
# of Charges (Drug & non-Drug) at Arrest	<b>7,403</b>
% of Drug Arrests with just one Charge	<b>47.5%</b>
# of Charges (Drug & non-Drug) per arrest Range	<b>1 to 33</b>

# No. of Drug Offenders Arrested in 2006

	GA	IA	ME	OH	SC	UT
No. of drug offenders	54,544	11,062	3,298	36,500	23,230	15,551
No. in sample	n/a	1,575	n/a	3,000	n/a	1,500

# DRUG CHARGES BY STATUTE IN 2006

## (N=5,461)

Top 5 Drug Charges	Number & Frequency	Class
1. Unlawful Possession of Scheduled Drug	2,556 (46.8%)	85.9% (D & E)
2. Unlawful Trafficking in Scheduled Drugs	798 (14.6%)	80.0% (B & C)
3. Unlawful Furnishing Scheduled Drug	315 (5.8%)	70.1% (D)
4. Aggravated Trafficking of Scheduled Drugs	260 (4.8%)	87.3% (A & B)
5. Unlawful Possession of Oxycodone	217 (4.0%)	100% (C)
5. Cultivating Marijuana	217 (4.0%)	94.0% (D & E)

\* These charges account for 79.9% of all drug charges in 2006.

# Types of Drug Charges (Percentages by State)

Offense type	GA	IA	ME	OH	SC	UT
Possession (including felony)	66.0	60.0	55.4	54.7	60.4	51.5
Sale	2.3	0.3	n/a	< 1	0	7.2
Manufacturing	n/a	1.3	4.4	1.5	0	0.7
Distribution/Trafficking	28.8	10.5	30.9	19.6	7.3	
Paraphernalia	1.4	14.5	3.7	20.0	8.4	39.1
Other	3.7	5.0	5.5	3.8	2.5	1.6
Unknown/Miscellaneous	<0.1	8.4		<1	21.4	

## Type of Drug (Percentages by State)

Drug type	IA	ME	SC	UT
Marijuana	24.0	6.2	41.7	16.7
Cocaine	3.3	3.6	19.1	4.4
Heroin	0	3.3	0.2	1.4
Methamphetamine	6.3	0.9	0.1	11.1
Other/unknown/not specified	66.5	86.0	38.9	66.3

Georgia and Ohio could not provide data on type of drug.

## Non-drug Charges Filed with Instant Drug Offense (Percentages by State)

Offense type	IA	ME	OH	SC	UT
Violent Felony	5.1	1.5	2.8	4.9	6.6
Other Felony	19.7	19.9	35.0	13.2	19.9
Misdemeanor	75.2	78.7	49.2	81.9	22.8
Unknown/Misc			13.0		50.7

Georgia could not provide information on felonies vs. misdemeanors.

# DISPOSITIONS (2006)

- Of 3,298 individuals arrested for a drug crime in 2006:
  - 1,452 (44.0%) had some type of disposition recorded for at least one arrest
  
- Of 3,760 drug crime arrests in 2006:
  - 1,592 (42.3%) had at least one disposition recorded in the CHRI

# ARRESTS & CHARGES (2003-05)

# of Individuals Arrested for a Drug Offense in 2006 who were arrested for any type of offense during 2003-05	<b>1,143</b>
% of Individuals Arrested for a Drug Offense in 2006 who were arrested for any type of offense during 2003-05	<b>34.7%</b>
# of Arrests (2003-05)	<b>2,453</b>
# of Arrests per Individual - Range	<b>1 to 34</b>
# of Charges (Drug & non-Drug) at Arrest	<b>4,246</b>
% of Individuals arrested (03-05) with a Drug Charge	<b>28.1%</b>

# General challenges when working with C.H. records

- Arrest records with no dispositions
- Disposition records with no corresponding arrest
- Missing information
- Inconsistencies in data, such as different birth dates for same individual for different arrest events

## Specific to the study of drug offenses and offenders

- State drug statutes do not correspond easily to specific offenses or drug types

# QUESTIONS

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