Criminal Justice Data: Past, Present and Future

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Criminal Justice Data: Past, Present and Future

- Historical perspective on our work
  - Both accomplishments and challenges
- Observations on our current environment

- Set the stage for our conference agenda
- Key opportunities and challenges for the future
Historical Perspective: President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice

- Helped shape the landscape of criminal justice as we know it today
- Recommended...
  - Basic changes in the operations of criminal justice agencies
  - Coordinated and cooperative approach to crime control
  - Coordinated information systems and statistical reporting
  - Operational and basic research on crime and justice
  - Eliminate injustices so that the system of criminal justice can win the respect and cooperation of all citizens
Historical Perspective: U.S. Department of Justice Symposium on the 30th Anniversary of the Commission

- Assembly took place in Washington, DC in 1997
  - Report published in 1999
- Reflected on the status/implementation of the Commission’s recommendations
- Celebrated transformational change in the criminal justice system
  - Data and information collection/sharing arguably the most transformative areas of change
    - Emergence and harnessing of information technology
    - Livescan, AFIS and the promise of NIBRS
Historical Perspective: U.S. Department of Justice 30th Anniversary of the Commission Symposium

- BUT... Acknowledged many problems/challenges persisted
- Some recognizable; some obscure

- Inherent fragmentation in the criminal justice system
- Information/data silos
- Limited strategic vision
- Limited, sometimes poorly coordinated resources
Fast Forward to Today

- Same persistent challenges remain
  - Fragmentation; silos; focus on the short-term; resource constraints
  - Widespread calls for reform, but lack of agreement on implementation

- But, the present environment also is characterized by unique opportunity
  - Widespread recognition that collaboration and cooperation are key
Opportunities for the Future: “Unique” Confluence of Events

- Evidence-based, data-driven movement
  - Data matters; operational and strategic
- Multiple calls for reform
  - Recognition that criminal justice system can be fairer and more equitable
  - Decision making behavior within criminal justice agencies remains poorly understood
  - Widespread recognition that data/statistical systems need modernization
- Unprecedented technological capabilities

Do we have the will and diligence to shape the future?
But Change is Difficult

- “System” remains a misnomer
  - Implies central authority; inherent coordination
- Criminal justice system is fragmented
  - Spread across different branches and levels of government
  - Numerous and autonomous criminal justice organizations
  - Significant investment in legacy environments making it costly to share information or expand data collection/sharing
- Resources remain limited
A Collaborative/Information Sharing Environment

- **An attitude** that values the need to work together and share
- **A behavior** promoted by governing bodies
- **A recognition** that information is an asset that should be shared but also safeguarded
- **A commitment** present in all communities of interest to adopt practices, standards, tools, and initiatives that make information sharing easier and less costly to implement
Promoting a Modernized Data Infrastructure and Effective Information Sharing Environment

- Data collection and information sharing for **strategic**, as well as tactical purposes
- Not only on crime incidents, offenders and victims, but also on operational and decision-making behavior within criminal justice agencies
- Practitioners, policy makers, technologists and researchers must be at the table
- Requires leadership that values and promotes collaboration and strategic, data-driven solutions