



**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
COURT SERVICES AND OFFENDER SUPERVISION AGENCY &  
PRETRIAL SERVICES AGENCY  
RESEARCH REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**REVIEW RECOMMENDATION STATEMENT**

**DATE: May 12, 2010**

**I. RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUMMARY**

**Principal Researcher:** Jennifer Fratello (Associate Research Director, Center on Youth Justice, Vera Institute of Justice), with Angela Browne (Senior Fellow, Vera Institute of Justice), Suzanne Agha (Senior Research Associate, Vera Institute of Justice), Ben Estep (Research Associate, Vera Institute of Justice), Erica Drucker (Program Associate, Vera Institute of Justice), and Nicolas Wical (Research Analyst, Vera Institute of Justice).

**Title:** The Juvenile and Criminal Justice System Data Indicators Project,

**Institution:** Center on Youth Justice, Vera Institute of Justice

**Description:** This project is intended to develop and disseminate monthly data indicator reports for the District of Columbia's (DC) juvenile and criminal justice systems. The project will be completed by September 31, 2010 and will employ analysis of secondary data collected from DC criminal justice agencies.

This study pertains to PSA only.

**Type of Data and Analysis:** The researchers are requesting aggregate statistics without unique identifiers covering the entire population served by PSA.

**Subjects:** In order to populate monthly indicator reports for the District, researchers request the following variables from PSA:

1. Number of individuals released to supervision at their initial hearing ;and
2. Combined number of individuals who either are rearrested or 'fail to appear'.

These data are requested for the months of October, November, December 2009, and January, February, March, 2010.

**CSOSA/PSA RESEARCH REVIEW COMMITTEE  
EXPEDITED REVIEW RECOMMENDATION STATEMENT**

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**II. RECOMMENDATION**

The RRC recommendation for this study:

**Support**                       Support with Conditions                       Do Not Support

The RRC recommends support of this request as described in the researchers' proposal.

**III. SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

**Regulatory:**

- The proposed research shows no evidence of non-compliance with Agency policies pertaining to research.

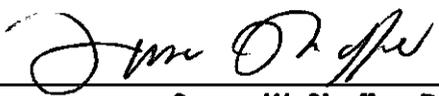
**Benefits to Agency:**

The proposed research is consistent with Agency priorities and/or interests as follows:

- Results of this project include pilot monthly data indicator reports covering DC's juvenile and criminal justice systems, which are intended to be continued once the pilot phase is completed. Such regular reporting for the justice partner agencies could be beneficial for systemic planning purposes.
- Participation in this effort will require minimal PSA staff resources.

**Related Issues or Concerns:**

- None

<b>I ACCEPT the RRC recommendation</b>  	<b>I DO NOT ACCEPT the RRC recommendation</b>
<b>Susan W. Shaffer, Director, DC Pretrial Services Agency</b>	
Comments:	

**Data request from Vera Institute of Justice to PSA:  
"Juvenile and Criminal Justice System Data Indicators  
Project"**

**Submitted April 12, 2010**

## Summary Statement

Following is a list of the names and affiliations of all staff on this project: Jennifer Fratello (Associate Research Director, Center on Youth Justice, Vera Institute of Justice), Angela Browne (Senior Fellow, Vera Institute of Justice), Suzanne Agha (Senior Research Associate, Vera Institute of Justice), Ben Estep (Research Associate, Vera Institute of Justice), Erica Drucker (Program Associate, Vera Institute of Justice), and Nicolas Wical (Research Analyst, Vera Institute of Justice)

This project, *The Juvenile and Criminal Justice System Data Indicators Project*, is intended to develop and disseminate monthly data indicator reports for the District of Columbia's (DC) juvenile and criminal justice systems. The project will be completed by September 31, 2010 and will employ analysis of secondary data collected from DC criminal justice agencies.

This project does not require selection of a sample, instead we are requesting aggregate statistics without unique identifiers covering the entire population served by PSA. In order to populate monthly indicator reports for the District, we will need the following variables from PSA: number of people released to supervision at their initial hearing and combined number of people who are either rearrested or 'fail to appear'. We are requesting these variables for the months of October, November, December 2009 and January, February, March, 2010.

Our goal is to make the data exchange process as easy for the Agency as possible. We have the capability to accept data in most commonly used formats (Excel, SPSS, SAS, Adobe Acrobat, Microsoft Word, and others) and are happy to accept the data through whatever means are most convenient to you and meet your standards (e.g., email, regular mail, or other means). It would be helpful for us to have contact with a person who could address any questions we have once we have received the data. There is no risk for human subjects in this project, as no direct contact with subjects is involved, the data we are requesting will have no identifying information, and we are only requesting data in the aggregate format.

Results of this project will be: (1) pilot monthly data indicator reports covering DC's juvenile and criminal justice systems and (2) two additional written reports, described below. The goal is to turn the production of these reports over to the District of Columbia after the pilot project is completed. The following three deliverables will result from this project: (1) a report summarizing each agency's data collection, current reporting procedures, and available measures on variables included in the indicators; (2) a technical guide defining indicators, with detailed procedures for collecting, compiling, and reporting the data, so this process can be taken-over and sustained by a District agency<sup>1</sup>; and (3) production and dissemination of two pilot monthly indicator reports covering the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

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<sup>1</sup> We will also ensure that staff for the agency who assumes responsibility for this report are well-informed about all aspects of the process and will provide ongoing assistance in this effort as needed as we transition the work to the District.

## **Detailed Description**

The Vera Institute of Justice combines expertise in research, demonstration projects, and technical assistance to support leaders in government and civil society as they improve the systems people rely on for justice and safety. Vera is an independent, non-partisan, nonprofit center for justice policy and practice with permanent offices in New York City and Washington, DC. Our projects and initiatives, typically conducted in close partnership with local, state, or national officials, are located across the United States and around the world. One of the strengths of Vera's DC office is its proximity to stakeholders and administrators in the District of Columbia and its ability to work closely with a range of non-profit and government stakeholders to respond to the unique challenges and needs facing the District.

This data request is in support of *The DC Juvenile and Criminal Justice Indicators Project*—a one year project funded by the Justice Grants Administration in close collaboration with the Executive Office of the Mayor. Vera is working with diverse District and Federal agencies to develop and pilot monthly data indicator reports of DC's juvenile and criminal justice systems. More details about the project follow.

### ***Literature Review***

Justice systems—whether in the juvenile or adult context—are complex in any jurisdiction. These systems are often operationally divided among several agencies including, but not limited to, law enforcement, probation, detention/jail, court, correctional facilities, and social services. Each agency plays its respective—and largely independent—role in responding to young people or adults at various points of the systems. Agencies frequently have differing objectives, priorities, oversight structures, data collection processes, and perspectives on the system, based on their unique position within it. This system fragmentation generally results in a silo effect, with lack of communication, data sharing, and coordination between the different agencies and stakeholders. This is particularly challenging in DC, where a unique structure with an unusually large number of agencies is further split along jurisdictional and funding lines (District versus Federal). In a 2001 General Accounting Office report (D.C. Criminal Justice System: Better Coordination Needed Among Participating Agencies, GAO-01-187, Mar. 30, 2001), analysts found more than 70 non-integrated data systems in use in the District's criminal justice system alone and stressed the need for greater coordination among agencies, and a more unified, holistic, view of criminal and juvenile justice operations.

The impetus for this project was a concern that the diverse organizations with responsibility in the DC criminal and juvenile justice systems needed to better share data and coordinate efforts in order to ensure sound and effective system functioning. Currently, there is no unified and readily available snapshot of basic, aggregate information spanning the multiple agencies and covering the entirety of the DC juvenile and criminal justice systems from the point of arrest to court disposition.

Through our work with multiple jurisdictions, Vera has learned firsthand how powerful it can be to develop—and then actively use—indicators that allow for a snapshot of the system. By collecting indicators across the system as a whole, officials can begin to identify key areas of

need and strategize methods for ensuring the system operates more effectively from start to finish with the goal of better serving people in the community while protecting public safety.

### ***Research Method***

Once Vera staff have negotiated the terms of the data-sharing agreements and ensured that agreements are satisfactory to all parties involved, Vera research staff will collect aggregated data from juvenile and criminal justice agencies and calculate the indicators for pilot reports.

### ***Significance of anticipated results and contribution to the advancement of knowledge***

Vera has extensive experience working in diverse jurisdictions across the county to develop juvenile and criminal justice system indicators in close cooperation with participating agencies. If actively used by stakeholders and officials, indicators can help oversight bodies identify and respond when a demographic shift or policy change is beginning to have an impact on the system. By designing and sharing monthly indicator reports that span the various points of each system, local officials will be in a better position to examine justice practices holistically, collaboratively pinpoint system needs, implement data-driven reforms, and—over time—think through further refinements in the kinds of indicators and technologies that this cluster of work promotes.

### ***Benefits of research and/or participation to PSA***

PSA's participation in this project is vital to the project's completion. PSA plays a critical role in the District's criminal justice system. To have utility, it is essential that the indicators report includes the variables requested here. PSA's participation will help ensure that the report presents the most complete picture possible and will help enhance coordination and information sharing across DC criminal justice agencies.

These reports will provide a much-needed holistic view of DC's criminal justice system, from the point of arrest through disposition. It represents an important improvement in system coordination and will help to reduce the degree of fragmentation in the system.

In addition, we believe that all DC criminal justice agencies, including PSA, may benefit from the unified, system-wide view the report will provide. Over time, the report may enhance information available to the Agency, provide some perspective about how changes at earlier system points may affect case flow into PSA, and how the Agency's functioning may affect the functioning of later points in the system. In combination with their own data system/reports, this report will better position all agencies, PSA included, to examine justice practices holistically, to pinpoint system needs and implement data-driven reforms.

### ***Resources required from the Agency***

Vera's goal is to complete this project for the District while making this process as simple as possible for the Agency. To complete the indicators report, we will need the following variables from PSA: number of people released to supervision at their initial hearing and combined number of people who are either rearrested or 'fail to appear'. We are requesting these variables for the months of October, November, December 2009 and January, February, March, 2010. These data can be in most commonly used formats (e.g., Excel, SPSS, SAS, Microsoft Word, Adobe Acrobat) and we can receive the data in whatever manner is most convenient for you (email, regular mail, , etc). **All of the data we are requesting are in**

**aggregate form; none include identifiers.** In addition, we would request contact information for someone with knowledge of the data for any questions that may arise once we receive it.

***Potential risk and benefits to subjects***

As noted above, ALL of the data we are requesting are in aggregate form and none include identifiers. There is no risk for human subjects, as (a) no direct contact with subjects is involved, (b) the data we are requesting will have no identifying information, and (c) we are only requesting data in the aggregate format. Subjects may benefit from the improved level of understanding of system operations and associated system reforms facilitated by the reports.

***Steps to minimize potential risks***

(Not applicable.)

***Procedures to protect identifiable data***

(Not applicable. No individually identifiable or individual level data are being requested.)

***Description of anticipated effects of research on Agency***

We do not anticipate that this project will have any immediate effects on Agency programs or operations. As stated above, we would like to make the data request process as easy as possible and cause the least possible disruption to Agency functioning. Vera's goal is to produce pilot indicator reports that will provide a holistic and unified view of DC's criminal justice system not provided elsewhere. It is possible that the perspective provided by this report may prove useful to PSA in planning operations and programs over time.

***Relevant research materials***

**Appendix B** contains letters of support for this project from multiple stakeholders in DC (including PSA) and elsewhere, **Appendix C** contains resumes for all Vera staff on the project, and **Appendix D** contains descriptions of similar work undertaken by Vera internationally and in other jurisdictions.

***Statement indicating that copies of all deliverables will be provided to PSA***

The three written deliverables for this project are: (1) A Summary Report describing each agency's data collection and reporting for variables (e.g., the source of the variables) included in the indicator reports, (2) the technical guide to producing the reports, and (3) the pilot Monthly Indicator Reports themselves. Vera will provide copies of the section of the Summary Report of data collection/reporting and technical guide pertaining to PSA to the Agency so it can be fact checked for accuracy. After the pilot versions of the reports have been created and *before* they are publically released, each agency contributing data also will be provided a copy of the section of the report which includes their data to review.

The specific method for disseminating the pilot Monthly Indicator Reports is being finalized by the Executive Office of the Mayor. Each agency submitting data for the reports will receive final copies of the reports.

***Statement that copies of datasets will be provided to PSA at the conclusion of the project***

(Not Applicable. We are not requesting any datasets.)

**\*\*Please see Appendix A for IRB information**

### **Appendix A. Explanation of exemption from IRB review**

The "Juvenile and Criminal Justice System Data Indicators Project" was reviewed by Vera's IRB and they decided the project was exempt from a full IRB review. Documentation is available upon request.

### **Appendix B. Letters of Support**

Please see below.