

E.A.S.I.C.A.P.

Export Automation System for Information on Crimes And Prosecutions

Proposal:

Missoula County should implement an automated computer system to regularly export data on crimes and prosecutions.

Rationale:

The Initiative #2 Community Oversight Committee is required to submit a report containing information on the arrests and prosecutions for adult marijuana crimes every six months, with the first report submitted to the County and community in November 2007.

The Missoula County Attorney, the Missoula City Attorney's office, the University Department of Public Safety, the Missoula County Sheriff's Department, and the Missoula Police Department all made efforts to cooperate with the data gathering process. Nevertheless, gathering this information for the November 2007 report, as required by the initiative, proved difficult.

The report recommended a technology approach to aid in future data collection efforts:

Therefore, we recommend that a simple software system be developed whereby anonymous marijuana incident data can be automatically exported on a monthly basis to a delimited format that may be tracked, analyzed, aggregated, and reported by the committee to the Board of County Commissioners and the public, such that all may have a clearer picture of the effects of public policy.

Montana law guarantees access to the data required to comply with the initiative's reporting requirements. All that remains is to eliminate the human work currently required to extract the information, and instead make computers do the work for us all.

The goal is to make everyone's role in producing the required semi-annual reports as easy as possible. Perhaps even more importantly, such an automated system will lend greater transparency to the carriage of justice and aid government officials in analyzing effects and costs of criminal justice policies.

Developing an automated data export system may require some initial technical work, but will hopefully eliminate the manual request and collection process forever. I-2 Committee chair John Masterson has experience in developing automated computer systems and has volunteered to work with County staff to accomplish the objective described below.

Since some data are likely easier to extract than others, there will be diminishing returns associated with automating every bit of the process or special formatting of the data, and so efforts should be made to find the "sweet spot" of maximum effectiveness with minimal work.

Benefits:

The direct benefit of this system will be a savings of staff time involved with collecting data for the semi-annual reports required by Initiative #2.

However, the benefits of developing this system go far beyond implementation reporting on Initiative #2. As envisioned, the system will export generalized crime and prosecution data, not just marijuana-related data, which will bring about additional benefits:

For example:

- Advocacy groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence could access timely data relevant to their respective missions.
- Law enforcement agencies could more easily identify trends with regards to the commission of crimes.
- Government administrators could more easily identify resource expenditure trends associated with enforcement and prosecutions.
- Montana has some of the strongest open government laws in the world, and the system would encourage the public at large to feel more confident of open government in Missoula County.

Objective:

Both city and county data criminal justice reside in the new records management system (RMS). Our assumption is that the RMS has some sort of structured query language (SQL) database at its core. If that is the case, basic delimited export should be easily implemented.

Response:

Missoula County employs a Records Management System (“RMS”) which originates with calls for service from the 9-1-1 Center.

1. The RMS does capture data on calls for services for the Missoula County Sheriff's Department and the Missoula Police Department.
2. The RMS does not capture data from the University Department of Public Safety since they are not dispatched by 9-1-1.
3. The RMS does not capture “disposition data” from the offices of the Missoula County Attorney, Missoula City Attorney nor from Municipal, justice or District Courts.

As for which data can and should be made available, special care will need to be taken to ensure only *public* criminal justice information is included; MCA Title 44, Chapter 5 provides guidance on this topic. Pending exploratory planning with RMS administrative staff, it would seem that the following information would be a good start:

1. Time and date of arrest/citation
2. Agency involvement (city, county, state, County drug task force, etc)
3. Age of arrestee
4. Gender of arrestee
5. Racial/ethnic origin of arrestee
6. Crime(s) with which the arrestee is charged, including felony/misdemeanor status
7. If a drug crime, quantity of contraband
8. Location of incident
9. Disposition of the incident

Response: RMS can generate a monthly automated download (Excel spreadsheet) providing the following information:

1. Time and date of arrest/citation
2. ~~Agency involvement (city, county, state, County drug task force, etc)~~ involved: City Police or County Sheriff
3. Age of arrestee
4. Gender of arrestee
5. Racial/ethnic origin of arrestee
6. ~~Crime(s) with which the arrestee is charged, including felony/misdemeanor status~~ Felony or misdemeanor charge recommended by arresting officer
7. If a drug crime, ~~quantity~~ type of drug/contraband

8. Location of incident
9. Disposition of the incident

Next Steps:

A meeting should be convened as soon as feasible to explore viability of this proposal. Participants should include at least an RMS technician, a representative of the county and/or city attorney's office, and I-2 committee chair John Masterson.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

John Masterson

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