

## Questions and Answers

### **BJS FY26 Criminal History Record Assessment and Research Program (CHRAP) O-BJS-2026-172685**

**Q1.** Does the awardee obtain the data or does BJS provide it?

**A1.** BJS obtains and provides the necessary data to the recipient.

**Q2.** Where do the criminal history data come from and how does BJS obtain them?

**A2.** BJS uses criminal history data collected from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and state record repositories to study recidivism patterns and criminal careers of various offenders, including persons on probation or discharged from prison. Each state has a central repository that maintains criminal history records within their jurisdiction and operates a system for disseminating those records. The FBI also maintains a repository from the federal justice system and U.S. territories. The repository also contains records from state, local, and tribal agencies that the FBI is responsible for disseminating. The content of these administrative records varies among FBI and state repositories and the recipient of funds will assist BJS with converting these data into datasets for statistical analysis.

Nlets, the International Justice and Public Safety Network, operates a computerized message switching system that links federal, state, and local agencies to exchange criminal justice information. Nlets provides a secure, automated process for criminal justice agencies to collect multistate criminal history information on offenders. To address state-by-state differences in the structure of each criminal history record format, Nlets also provides information services that electronically parse (i.e., extract) key data elements from the criminal history records (i.e., rap sheets) for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the FBI into a relational database structure with a uniform record layout. As an Nlets federal member, BJS uses these systems to generate criminal history datasets on cohorts of offenders to produce statistics on recidivism and criminal careers. BJS also uses these data to identify systemic differences between states in the content, structure, and completeness of criminal history records.

**Q3.** What information is available in these data?

**A3.** Nlets generates parsed rap sheet datasets that include the following tables:

- 1) **Demographic**—subject information, including sex, race, and Hispanic origin, and place of birth.
- 2) **Arrest**—arrest information, including the date of offense, date of arrest, arrest offenses, arresting agency name, and arrest disposition.

- 3) **Prosecution**—charge information, including the date of prosecution disposition, offense charges, and type of prosecution disposition.
- 4) **Court**—court disposition information, including the court offenses, court agency name, adjudication outcome, date of disposition, and sentence.
- 5) **Supervision**—custody information, including the date of entry or release from correctional supervision and the name of the correctional agency.

**Q4.** What was the CCHRRD and what did it do?

**A4.** In 2009, BJS initiated the Conversion of Criminal History Records into Research Databases (CCHRRD) project to enhance the research potential of the parsed rap sheet datasets generated by Nlets. Because the format of state- and federal-specific text fields in the parsed datasets did not support multistate statistical analysis, the CCHRRD project developed computer programs, including programming code (e.g., syntax) and crosswalk tables, to transform the text fields (e.g., demographic characteristics, offense descriptions, and case outcomes) into research files with nationally standardized numeric codes. Depending on the information reported on each state's criminal history record, the coding rules within the crosswalks rely on multiple fields (e.g., state statutes, National Crime Information Center (NCIC) offense codes, and offense descriptions) in the dataset to arrive at the appropriate BJS standardized code. This process combines a series of data processing rules that can be modified to produce customized research files.

A set of crosswalk tables hold BJS's national recode of state- and federal-specific data fields found in the rap sheet datasets. The state offense fields (originally state statutes or offenses descriptions) in the datasets are mapped into a standardized set of BJS offense categories. Similarly, state court disposition fields are mapped into a standardized set of BJS court disposition categories. The crosswalks provide consistent data coding across studies and reduce the time and effort to standardize a subsequent parsed dataset when the text fields (e.g., offense and court descriptions) in the criminal history data match the same text fields encountered in datasets from previous studies. The crosswalk tables are updated each time new datasets are run through this system and new coding rules are integrated.

The computer programs also convert the standardized dataset into a set of research extracts, including a research dataset and criminal history summary file that can be analyzed with standard statistical software packages (e.g., R, SPSS, or STATA). The criminal history summary file provides aggregate statistical counts of arrests, convictions, and incarcerations, along with temporal information about events of

interest in a subject's criminal career before and after a particular event (e.g., a release from prison).

The research extracts exclude certain records from the standardized dataset such as correctional transfers, criminal offender registrations, and other administrative or procedural actions embedded in the offense text descriptions in the criminal history data that do not refer to actual arrest charges.

BJS first used this system in 2011 to conduct recidivism studies of state prisoners released in 2005 and federal offenders placed on community supervision in 2005, with 5-year follow-up periods.

**Q5.** Can you provide more details about the activities of the FY 2026 CHRARP?

**A5.** The FY 2026 CHRARP will thoroughly examine the content and attributes of the criminal history data, identifying and documenting differences in the composition of the arrest, prosecution, court, and supervision information within and across jurisdictions. The recipient will work with BJS to identify potential data quality issues and obtain feedback from federal, state, and tribal agencies as needed about these issues. The recipient will develop methods to successfully transform 100% of the data fields found in the parsed rap sheet datasets into BJS's standardized values and work with BJS to identify existing offense classification tables from state and federal agencies and prior CHRARP projects that could assist with the standardization tasks for this project. Applicants are encouraged to propose cost-efficient methods and innovative solutions when converting state- and federal-specific data fields within the existing uniform coding structure and account for variations in administrative records when analyzing multistate data.

As states may periodically change the structure and content of their criminal history records, the content and format of the information found in the parsed rap sheet datasets may change over time. The recipient will be required to update the crosswalk tables and programming logic to accommodate any necessary modifications to the coding rules during the project period.

The recipient will transform each standardized dataset into a set of research extracts, including a research dataset and criminal history summary file, according to BJS's specifications. The computer program updates and revisions developed by the recipient to create research extracts must adapt to the varying research needs of BJS.

**Q6.** Will the awardee of the FY 2026 CHRARP create new databases, codes, and systems?

**A6.** The recipient will use and modify as needed the computer programs from the CCHRRD project and the FY 2015 and FY 2020 CHRARPs (provided by BJS). BJS will consider alternative approaches for development during the FY 2026 CHRARP project period if cost- and time-efficient. If the cost to process two parsed datasets for the two studies is less than originally budgeted, the remaining funds may be used to prepare standardized datasets and research extracts for additional studies.

After receiving the parsed rap sheet dataset for each study, the recipient will use a small portion of the funding to determine how well the current coding rules standardize the data to update or create new rules as necessary.

**Q7.** What is the [Recidivism Patterns Explorer](#) tool and how will the awardee process the data for upload to this tool?

**A7.** Following the release of the first report for each of the two studies, BJS plans to add the study results to the Recidivism Patterns Explorer, a web-based tool on the BJS website that allows users to generate customized statistical tables and graphs. The recipient of funds will provide BJS with the variables from the research extracts needed to populate recidivism estimates and standard errors in the data analysis tools. The recipient will also provide technical assistance with producing the generalized variance functions to generate standard errors for the estimates provided by the tools.

The Recidivism Patterns Explorer tool utilizes the aggregate data and summary statistics. It does not use individual-level data. The awardee will provide the aggregate data and code necessary for the data analysis tools.

**Q8.** What are the data retention requirements?

**A8.** Information regarding Data Management Plan Requirements can be found [here](#). For the FY 2026 CHRARP, the recipient must provide to BJS all data, research datasets, research extracts, codes, programs, and other products created at the end of the project period. Award recipients must comply with all special conditions and award terms, which include securely destroying copies of materials that include identifiable or nonpublic data before award closeout, after receiving BJS authorization, and providing written certification of such disposition. BJS adheres to applicable federal regulations and record retention schedules.

**Q9.** Can de-identified data (removed of PII) be processed outside of the approved secure environment? Can tokenization be used for processing data outside a secure environment?

**A9.** Award recipients must adhere to the requirements in 28 C.F.R. § 22: Confidentiality of Identifiable Research and Statistical Information and terms in data use agreements

with data providers, as applicable. Information identifiable to a private person, defined in 28 CFR § 22.2, extends beyond directly identifiable information. All identifiable information must be collected, processed, transferred, and stored using secure systems and procedures and subject to the applicable requirements in 28 C.F.R. § 22. Identifiable information cannot be processed or transferred outside a secure environment. Award recipients must describe their data handling and security processes and methods in a privacy certificate (28 CFR § 22.23) and data management plan. BJS must approve all statistical methods and data protection procedures, including the proposed use of tokenization.

**Q10.** Can AI be used for processing and coding data?

**A10.** No. Current OJP AI policy does not allow AI to be used with any restricted-use or unpublished data, nor to produce official statistics.

**Q11.** The NOFOs for the [FY 2015](#) and [FY 2020](#) CHRARPs provide links to the documentation for these programs. Is there one available for the FY 2026 CHRARP?

**A11.** Documentation for the FY 2020 CHRARP, the most recent program, is not yet available. However, as this program was built upon the work of the CCHRRD and FY 2015 CHRARP, that information can provide additional background of the history and development of the CHRARP programs. Please see linked documentation provided in the [FY 2015 CHRARP](#) and the [FY 2020 CHRARP](#) NOFOs. All relevant documents, databases, codes, crosswalks, and other components of the existing processing program will be made available to the recipient.

**Q12.** Budget guidance allows consultants and subcontractors. Can a consultant or subcontractor act in a key personnel role?

**A12.** Yes, consultants and subcontractors can be key personnel for the program. Consultants and subcontractors must adhere to the same requirements as all project staff. Any activity with restricted data must be performed in the primary's secure environment.