

Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority DCRA Implementation Plan FY 2025

Over the past year, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) has worked steadily to expand and improve its stewardship of death in custody reporting, having recently formalized its audit procedures. It is also engaging in research into deaths in custody outside the scope of DCRA reporting. This document summarizes the Illinois implementation of death in custody reporting in the requested format.

DCRA Data Collection Infrastructure

Illinois has 982 law enforcement agencies, including those in charge of local and county jails, as well as 46 State-run correctional facilities, including 29 prisons and 17 other facilities, including transition centers, boot camps, and reception programs. Finally, there are 4 state-run youth detention centers and various county youth detention centers (generally under the auspices of the county sheriff.) Under state law, all are required to participate in death-in-custody reporting, and by and large, compliance appears good except for training issues.

Illinois has two overlapping state laws mandating the reporting of deaths in custody. The first, the Illinois Uniform Crime Report Act, mandates that law enforcement (including jails operated by county sheriffs) report all deaths in custody to the Illinois State Police (ISP), who are required to submit these data to the ICJIA. The second, the Reporting on Death in Custody Act, mandates that all law enforcement and all prisons report all deaths in custody to ICJIA. To comply with both laws and ensure complete data, ICJIA has taken the approach of supporting direct reporting to ICJIA as well as data provided via ISP.

ICJIA provides TTA with agencies upon request, we maintain frequent professional contact with the Illinois Department of Corrections, and applicable office of the Illinois State Police. On a quarterly basis, ICJIA staff audit submitted records for missing fields, as well as reviewing submitted reports against media reports and externally maintained lists of custodial deaths. Where gaps are found, ICJIA directly contacts law enforcement agencies / correctional facilities in cooperation with ISP. Agencies are also able to reach out to ICJIA staff via the ICJIA website for TTA and do so 2-3 per quarter.

ICJIA does not require additional TTA from BJA at this time. It has and does avail BJA staff when questions arise about the reportability of specific cases.

Data Collection Methods

Death in Custody data is collected via the following methods:

1. The preferred format for data submission is via a secured Qualtrics form hosted by ICJIA and accessible via its website page.
2. ICJIA staff retrieve data in tabular format from the Illinois State Police nibrs.com web platform that includes Illinois arrest-related death reports.
3. Illinois Department of Corrections staff submit a spreadsheet and, where applicable, additional incident reports for any deaths in custody via e-mail. (These are likely to transition to the Qualtrics form in the near future.)
4. ICJIA staff contact Juvenile Detention Centers to solicit responses via the Qualtrics form.

ICJIA staff then process the data primarily with a set of standardized scripts and compile it for submission to BJA under federal law as well as publication on its website as required by state law.

Particular challenges that Illinois faces in collecting and reporting relate primarily to the number of agencies in the State and the need for consistent training to ensure awareness of the reporting procedures for smaller agencies and juvenile detention centers. Because smaller agencies and juvenile detention centers frequently have no deaths in custody for extended periods of time, reporting is less consistent. ICJIA addresses this challenge via its reporting and in collaboration with the Illinois State Police.

Data Reporting Methods

ICJIA reports deaths in custody to BJA via the file PMT data import tool. ICJIA retains a database of all reported deaths in custody, which is also published on its website.

Since July of 2024, ICJIA has conducted an audit of records in the database concurrently with preparation and submission of the quarterly PMT report, the audit includes:

1. Checks for missing fields and unresolved pending investigations.
2. Media review and matching of reported cases, including both news article searches and media compiled databases maintained by Washington Post and Injustice Watch.
3. ICJIA solicits updated and/or missing reports from applicable agencies. This occurs roughly concurrently with the submission of data to BJA. Received updates are then incorporated into the next update cycle.
4. ICJIA does not directly clean any data besides minimal standardization of formatting, conducted via R script, and condensing/redaction of narratives that occurs manually. ICJIA primarily relies on reporting agencies to update/complete reporting based on our audit record update solicitation.