



A Strategic Action Plan for DSS-J

Submitted to LPSCC by the DSS-J Policy Committee
Prepared by Peter Ozanne and Elizabeth Davies
January 2010

Executive Summary

In 1996, Multnomah County's Board of Commissioners and public safety officials obtained voter approval of a \$7.5 million bond to improve information technology among the county's law enforcement and justice agencies. This bond money was used to fund the development of DSS-J, a common data warehouse that would integrate public safety data from local sources while allowing individual agencies to continue their operations and data systems without interference.

Over the past decade, DSS-J has allowed users to query justice agency data, track events such as criminal incidents, arrests, case dispositions and criminal histories, and respond to requests for research regarding operational and policy issues affecting the public safety system. The system is used by research analysts and DSS-J staff to evaluate programs and policies, design and generate recurring reports, and provide relevant notifications to partners in the justice system.

In its FY 2010 adopted budget, Multnomah County's Board of Commissioners formally transferred responsibility for the administration of DSS-J to the County's Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC), which agreed to oversee the development of DSS-J through a Policy Committee and ensure data security through a Security Committee. This Policy Committee, recognizing the tremendous benefit already demonstrated by this data warehouse, also determined that an action plan was needed to identify strategies that would improve the administration and operation of DSS-J and ensure the realization of the system's full potential. Those strategies seek to:

1. Increase the overall demand for public safety data;
2. Expand the use of DSS-J data in reports used by LPSCC and its member agencies;
3. Establish clear lines of authority and refine the organizational structure of DSS-J;
4. Reduce the technology costs associated with DSS-J;
5. Improve the accessibility of DSS-J's data tools;
6. Improve the breadth, depth, and accuracy of data in DSS-J and
7. Capitalize on the knowledge and expertise of DSS-J staff and users.

The Policy Committee believes that the implementation of these strategies will (a) improve the focus and direction of DSS-J, (b) ensure the realization of the system's full potential of this critical public safety data system (c) justify the county's continuing financial support for the system and (d) most importantly, ensure that Multnomah County's public safety polices and practices are data-driven, evidence-based and cost-effective in reducing crime and recidivism.

A Strategic Action Plan for DSS-J

Multnomah County's Decision Support System - Justice (DSS-J), as the foundation for data-driven policy making and evidence-based practices in public safety, represents one of the County's most valuable assets. However, growing technological costs and years of budget cuts have prevented realization of the full value of this critical interagency data system. In light of a pressing need to increase the cost-effectiveness of local government, including the public safety system, and Multnomah County's strong commitment to data-driven policies and evidence-based practices, the DSS-J Policy Committee developed a Strategic Action Plan that (a) reviews the development of the system; (b) discusses its current operation and uses and (c) identifies strategic actions that could improve the administration and operation of DSS-J and ensure the realization of the system's full potential.

History of DSS-J

In 1996, Multnomah County's Board of Commissioners and public safety officials obtained voter approval of a \$7.5 million Criminal Justice Information Technology Bond to improve information technology among the county's law enforcement and justice agencies. In June 1997, following a review of 22 requests for funding by nine agencies, a committee chaired by District Attorney Mike Schrunk recommended a proposal by the Local Public Safety Coordinate Council (LPSCC) to develop a repository for public safety data extracted from the county's key justice agencies: DSS-J.

DSS-J was envisioned as a data warehouse that would regularly extract *copies* of public safety data from local sources and then integrate those data into a central, linked repository while allowing individual agencies to continue their operations and data systems without interference.¹ Research analysts could then access public safety data that was mutually-intelligible and stored in a common format, making analysis and evaluation more accurate and efficient. Justice professionals could also use the data included in the warehouse to track offenders throughout the system and to manage their caseloads better. Ultimately, LPSCC Council Members and other agency heads would use the reports and analysis gleaned from DSS-J to inform budget decisions and ensure programs and policies are evidence-based and supported by data.

In order to realize this vision, DSS-J was designed to provide users with:

- a simple, cost-effective way to access public safety data;
- accurate and adaptable reporting of aggregate public safety statistics;
- complete and reliable tracking of individual cases and offenders across justice agencies and throughout the public safety system;
- case linking that allows for in-depth analysis of system-wide issues; and
- reports that support effective case management.

By 2000, DSS-J was fully operational, with administrative oversight provided by LPSCC through a DSS-J Policy Committee chaired by Jim Hennings, Executive Director of Metropolitan Public Defenders, with technical support and ongoing system maintenance provided by Multnomah County's Information Technology Division (County IT).

¹ A common *operational* data system was judged to be prohibitively expensive and would cause intolerable disruption to daily justice operations; see Riles, Suzanne B. (2000). Increasing Justice Program Evaluation Capacity with a Data Warehouse. Honolulu, HI: American Evaluation Association Conference.

In its FY 2010 adopted budget, Multnomah County's Board of Commissioners formally transferred responsibility for the administration of DSS-J to the County's Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC), which agreed to oversee the development of DSS-J through a Policy Committee and ensure data security through a Security Committee. At the same time, LPSCC also hired a Public Safety System Analyst² based on a recommendation from the 2008 Multnomah County Public Safety System Planning Report, which described the short-term need to:

Enhance criminal justice research capacity. Fund a dedicated, independent systems researcher to examine cross-agency criminal justice system data to identify and quantify improvements to the criminal justice system.³

For the past decade, DSS-J has become a critical asset of the county's public safety system. In a 2006 report, LPSCC listed DSS-J first among its 11 major initiatives over the preceding decade, reflecting the importance of this data warehouse to the county's public safety community.

Current Operation and Uses of DSS-J

DSS-J extracts data nightly from the databases of participating justice agencies⁴ and then links that data together for storage in a common database. This process enables DSS-J to provide information in a timely and cost-effective manner that would otherwise be unavailable or would require too much time and effort to make the task feasible.

DSS-J's data warehouse permits the development of aggregate statistics on cases, defendants and offenders as they cycle through each agency. Users of DSS-J are able to query justice agency data and track events such as criminal incidents, arrests, case dispositions and criminal histories. The system also allows research staff at LPSCC and affected justice agencies to respond to requests for research regarding operational and policy issues affecting those agencies or the entire public safety system. In the first half of 2009, the DSS-J Online Application was accessed by 36 users, who represent 11 different agencies, both internal and external to the county. These analysts have used DSS-J to generate reports, evaluate programs, and inform policy⁵:

Development of Reports and Evaluation Tools

With Multnomah County's strong commitment to evidence-based practices, evaluations of public safety strategies and programs have become a precondition of county funding and increasingly of outside grant funding. The importance of outcome evaluations in validating public safety strategies and programs and the need for system-wide, interagency outcome data to conduct these evaluations, makes DSS-J extremely valuable to Multnomah County.

² Elizabeth Davies was hired to fill the position of Public Safety System Analyst on July 1, 2009. County IT continues to provide DSS-J with technical staffing and support.

³ Crime and Justice Institute, Multnomah County Public Safety System Planning Report, 2008, p. 17

⁴ Participating agencies include the Oregon Judicial Department, the Sheriff's Office, the District Attorney's Office, the Portland Police Bureau and the State Department of Corrections.

⁵ For further examples of the research reports and special projects generated by DSS-J and its staff, see **Appendix A** to this plan.

In its 10 Year Report, LPSCC cited numerous examples of influential research based upon data generated by DSS-J, including the Support Services Division's report, "If Crime Is Down, Why Is Our Workload Up?" (March 2000) by Jim Carlson, LPSSC's October 2003 report, "A Focused Look at Sentencing in Multnomah County: Addressing Over-Representation of Racial and Ethnic Minorities," and the Budget Office Evaluation, "Overdose Trends in Multnomah County" (2005) by Matt Nice. DSS-J was also used to track failure to appear rates of defendants' released on recognizance for the purpose of validating the Department of Community Justice's "Recog" risk assessment instrument and to evaluate the success of the STOP Drug Court; DSS-J staff are currently working with analysts from DCJ and LPSCC to develop a standardized FTA report that would allow users to track court appearance rates for a variety of offender sub-populations.

DSS-J has also been integral in the development of the Sentencing Support Tool, which was designed as part of an effort to (1) promote the use of evidence-based practices in a sentencing process that traditionally fails to focus on "what works;" and 2) encourage consideration and advocacy of evidence-based practices based on the outcomes of *actual* sentencing decisions in Multnomah County. The tool allows judges, attorneys and other justice professionals to examine recidivism rates for similar offenders (age, ethnicity, gender and criminal history) that were given different sentences. The results of the Sentencing support tool are routinely used as part of presentence investigation reports, and the impact on recidivism is a required subject in PSI reports. Although the tool cannot be used to determine the "best sentence" or causation, it invites further analysis and discussion of what sentences are most likely to reduce recidivism for a certain population of people.⁶

Design and Generation of Recurring Publications

Data obtained through DSS-J has also been used to generate weekly, monthly and annual reports of public safety data. Examples include:

- Weekly probation notification reports for judges, listing offenders on bench probation who were recently arrested or booked into jail;
- Monthly reports of defendants held in jail for more than 90 days, permitting the Circuit Court, the District Attorneys Office and public defense attorneys to identify delays in court proceedings and the unnecessary use of jail;
- Reports for the Circuit Court on jail sentences for Driving Under the Influence of Intoxicants (DUI) to determine the extent to which these sentences change as a result of subsequent DUI convictions;
- MCSO monthly jail statistics reports;
- Status reports on the County's Court Appearance Notification System;
- Data on protective orders in the Sheriff's jail management system database (aka SWIS – Sheriff's Warrant Information System), which enables searches for protective, restraining and stalking orders; and
- LPSCC's Safety Priorities Brief, a monthly report that tracks key trends and processes in the county's public safety system.⁷

⁶ For more on the Sentencing Support Tool, see Strategy 1 of this plan and Judge Michael Marcus's Smart Sentencing website, available at <http://www.smartsentencing.info/whatwrks.html>

⁷ For a discussion of improvements to the Safety Priority Brief, see Strategy 2 in this plan.

Cost Savings and Benefits

Although it is difficult to quantify the cost-savings and benefits to the public safety system of having DSS-J, it is generally accepted that each report generated through DSS-J would take analysts significantly more time to complete. For example, one DSS-J staff member can put together the Jail Longevity Report in three hours, compared to the previous process that took two analysts three to four days to complete.

Further, once a standard report has been developed in DSS-J, it can be used to generate recurring reports simply by selecting new parameters (such as a date range or filter). DSS-J has helped standardized methodology for certain activities, has provided notifications that lead to faster case processing, and has helped to ensure that the County evaluates its programs with reliable data.

Strategic Actions in FY 2010 and 2011 to Improve DSS-J

Over the past ten years, DSS-J had proven a valuable resource to Multnomah County. However, there are several strategies⁸ that, if implemented, could make DSS-J an even more effective and useful tool to a wider variety of analysts. Subject to the approval of LPSCC, the DSS-J Policy Committee recommends that the following actions be taken in fiscal years 2010 and 2011 in order to realize the full potential of DSS-J and to reduce the cost to the County of this critical asset:

Strategy 1: Increase the overall demand for public safety data

Multnomah County has a long tradition of demanding data and analysis to support the development, implementation and evaluation of public safety strategies, policies and programs. Although this demand for quantitative analysis is not unique, relatively few local governments have been willing to invest in an integrated database as complex, versatile and easy to use as DSS-J. Over the past decade, the system has made public safety data more accessible to all justice partners and has revealed inconsistencies between data reporting that encourage coordination and agreement among source systems. With this shift toward greater data accessibility and consistency also emerges an increased demand for greater transparency and accountability: no longer mysterious and accessible to only a select few, public safety data (and analysis) can be requested by policy makers and County officials to test the philosophies, opinions and anecdotes typically used to support budget, policy and individual sentencing, release and probation violation decisions.

Despite this wealth of public safety data and ever-increasing accessibility and accuracy, many programs within the County still do not utilize DSS-J or the cross-agency data available in its warehouse to measure program performance. For example, the Sentencing Support Tool (see page 4) has advanced data transparency and accessibility and empowered justice professionals to understand how their decisions impact community and offender outcomes. Unfortunately, only a handful of judges, attorneys, and other justice professionals actually make use of this tool.

⁸ A summary of these strategies can be found in **Appendix B**.

For DSS-J to realize its potential as the foundation for data-driven public safety policy, Multnomah County's policy makers and justice professionals must continue to demand meaningful data and statistics to support their policies and practices. The demand for data by the county's leaders is essential to ensuring DSS-J's value to the county and to justifying the county's substantial ongoing investment in this data system.

Action

- Urge the Board of County Commissioners and LPSCC's Executive Committee to continue to demand system-wide data and analysis from affected justice agencies and LPSCC as a *precondition* to their support for new or existing public safety strategies, programs and budget requests; examples of system-wide data that should be included in these analyses are recidivism, re-arrest, failure-to-appear and program completion. The burden of providing data should be placed on the proponent of the new policy or program. Such persistent demand for data and analysis will ensure that the value of DSS-J is fully realized and encourage the adoption of data-driven public safety policies and evidence-based practices that reduce crime and recidivism.

Lead: Peter Ozanne

Strategy 2: Expand the use of DSS-J data in reports used by LPSCC and its member agencies

All reports generated by DSS-J should be relevant, accurate, objective, visually compelling and understandable to non-professionals, but with sufficient background and analysis to engage justice professionals. These reports should encourage a robust exchange of ideas among affected agencies and interested stakeholders regarding the causes of and solutions to problems in public safety, based upon data rather than opinion or anecdote. Reports with these features will not only increase the likelihood of identifying and solving operational and systemic problems in public safety; such reports will increase the demand by justice policy makers and professionals for even more relevant data and reports, leading to greater reliance on DSS-J and more effective public safety policies and practices.

The Safety Priority Brief is a notable example of a report with this potential. Using data pulled from DSS-J and other sources, the monthly Brief displays a set of key trends and developments throughout the public safety system and is intended to alert policy makers to inefficient or ineffective processes, operations, programs and policies and to help identify changes to improve system efficiency and effectiveness. However, a recent survey of readers of the Brief revealed a demand for additional analysis and in-depth commentary regarding the significance of public safety trends and developments tracked by the report. The survey recommended that LPSCC staff expand the Brief to include an analytical quarterly supplement, which would include narrative and analysis that suggests (a) the causes of problematic trends and developments in the public safety system, (b) inefficient or ineffective policies, strategies and practices that may be contributing to these trends and (c) potential improvements in these policies, strategies and practices.

In order to realize the full potential of this report and others generated through DSS-J, analysts must have more time to analyze data and spend less time collecting and managing data. For example, while DSS-J Online offers many reports that feed directly

into the Brief, an analyst still must take the time to rerun several reports each month, copy and paste the data into Excel, check it for accuracy, and then generate a graph. If this process could be further automated by establishing a direct connection between the data and the Excel chart used to generate the graphs in the Brief, then the analyst would have more time to spend on additional analysis.

Actions

- Determine feasibility of establishing a direct DSS-J feed into data analysis software (e.g., Excel, SPSS).
Lead: County IT
- Develop dashboard reporting, mapping and other features on the DSS-J web tool that would help analysts identify trends that they want to investigate further.
Lead: Elizabeth Davies / County IT / PSAT
- Identify additional data and topical areas (such as domestic violence) to include as a supplement to the monthly Safety Priorities Brief.
Lead: Elizabeth Davies
- Explore opportunities to use DSS-J data for regular updates on performance measures included in agency program offers.
Lead: Elizabeth Davies / County IT / Budget Office Rep

Strategy 3: Establish clear lines of authority and refine the organizational structure of DSS-J

In the past, responsibility for the administration and direction of DSS-J has fallen to County IT and two oversight committees⁹. This structure allowed those involved with the system to address issues as they emerged and to maintain a basic operating standard for DSS-J. It also provided a point of continuity in a changing political landscape and among shifting DSS-J funding sources. County IT staff have described the challenge of maintaining such a large and complex data system and expressed regret that DSS-J has lacked consistent champions to guide the direction of future projects and initiatives. In FY 2010, the funding for DSS-J was consolidated and assigned to LPSCC, whose leadership and staff members are prepared to guide and oversee DSS-J's future direction.

Actions

- While retaining the essence of DSS-J's prior organization, formalize the following four-tiered organizational structure in order to (a) bring more focus and direction to the Council's efforts to improve and maintain the system and (b) ensure that the appropriate people and organization participate in the decisions necessary to accomplish these objectives.
Lead: Peter Ozanne

1. Chaired by Commissioner Judy Shiprack and Trial Court Administrator Doug Bray, the DSS-J Policy Committee is made up of representatives of those county justice agencies most likely to rely on DSS-J, including the Sheriff's Office, the District Attorney's Office and the Department of Community Justice, as well as the Circuit Court, the Portland Police Bureau, the Gresham Police Department and LPSCC's staff. The Policy

⁹ A list of committee members can be found in **Appendix C**.

Committee also includes a representative of County IT to serve as a technical consultant to the committee. Additional agency representatives will be added to this committee as the uses and applications of DSS-J increase. In effect, serving as a board of directors of DSS-J, the Policy Committee will guide the development and improvement of the system and oversee its administration on behalf of LPSCC.

2. DSS-J Security Committee is responsible for proposing to the Policy Committee access restrictions for DSS-J data and for approving access to DSS-J and its related data. If the committee is ever unable to determine whether access should be granted to an individual or institution, the matter is forwarded to the Policy Committee.
3. The Senior Advisory Team is be made up of senior researchers and data users from agencies represented on the Policy Committee, County IT staff responsible for the maintenance and development of DSS-J, and LPSCC's staff. This team will advise the Policy Committee regarding the direction, improvement and use of DSS-J.
4. DSS-J users on the Public Safety Analysts Team, a group composed of analysts from across the justice system, will advise the Senior Advisory Team and LPSCC's staff on (a) the current operation and expanded use of DSS-J, (b) potential improvements to the system, (c) the development of analytical justice system reports using DSS-J, (d) the collection and use of public safety data and (e) the feasibility of proposed projects involving DSS-J.

Strategy 4: Reduce the technology costs associated with DSS-J

DSS-J was developed ten years ago using state-of-the-art technology and tools. At the time, DSS-J was envisioned to be the first of many data warehouses to fill research and reporting needs. Since that time, some of the County priorities and strategies have been modified and plans have changed. With the development of a Strategic Action Plan for DSS-J, there is an opportunity to review the DSS-J technology platform and plan for its future to ensure that DSS-J is able to meet the business needs of the users with cost-effective and stable solutions.

There are two major reasons why this review and assessment should be done as part of DSS-J's strategic planning process. First, strategic planning may identify new capabilities, options and uses for the DSS-J data and system. There is no guarantee that the current technology platform will support this new or modified vision, or that it will be able to provide the services at an acceptable cost. Secondly, the uniqueness of the DSS-J technology platform is resulting in rapidly escalating costs of operation. Ten years ago, other applications used this same technology, so the operational costs could be shared. Those applications have been steadily moving to other technologies, leaving DSS-J as the sole application remaining – with no one to share in the operational costs. Each year, licensing and support costs rise and DSS-J bears all of those increased costs.

Action

- Critically assess the DSS-J technology platform with an eye to the expanding and changing business needs, technology options and cost control requirements. Based on that assessment, recommend an appropriate “toolset” to ensure that DSS-J keeps pace with the LPSCC strategic goals.

Lead: County IT

Strategy 5: Improve the accessibility of DSS-J's data tools

Analysts can access DSS-J data in one of two ways: (1) by logging online to DSS-J's password-protected website and running one of the many existing reports or (2) by using Cognos to directly access DSS-J and develop a customized query for extracting DSS-J data.

1. DSS-J Online. This online data tool allows general users of DSS-J to easily access DSS-J data through a series of over 30 pre-made, customizable reports. The website is easy to navigate, processes data requests quickly, and offers several tools for displaying and exporting data. Users who routinely need the same data each month find the webtool especially handy; they can run an identical report each month without worrying about whether statistics will be consistent across time.

One of the limitations of DSS-J online lies in its user-friendly and simple construction; by providing consistent reports, it also limits analysts' ability to modify the parameters and link data according to their specific research question. For example, an analyst could use DSS-J Online to examine the number of people booked for a person crime in a given month, but could not use it to analyze that individual's length of stay in the jail or the final disposition of their case. As a result, analysts often use Cognos or other “power” tools to access the appropriate data or make special requests of other analysts (including DSS-J IT staff) to collect the data.

The online tool may also be too complex for users who either are not familiar with certain aspects of the public safety system or do not have the same in-depth data knowledge as expert DSS-J users. For example, users seeking information about the DA's issuing practices may be unaware that selecting case “review date” would result in considerably different results than selecting case “start date.”

One opportunity for improving DSS-J Online would be to provide more extensive user training and system documentation. Currently, when a new user gains access to the system, he or she will typically meet for a few hours with the DSS-J customer advocate to learn the basics of system navigation and terminology. However, there is no user's manual, online training, or data dictionary for novice and veteran users to *reference*. This lack of ongoing and formal training and support for county analysts may lead some users to abandon use of the web tool.

2. Cognos. This tool provides advanced users of DSS-J with complete and direct access to available data and, as a result, with greater ability to construct queries, link information between systems, set parameters, and group values according to their specifications. Although Cognos does not have “pre-made” reports to the extent offered by DSS-J Online, users have the ability to save their reports for future reference. Cognos users can also alter report formatting and print directly from the screen.

Unfortunately, new users of Cognos face a steep learning curve and even after “mastering” the software, may find it difficult to use. Analysts cannot write or edit queries and instead must rely on a pick list of options that makes constructing certain reports arduous, especially if several filters need to be applied. Further, it is difficult to look up the list of values associated with a field; analysts typically need to know the exact wording of a value in order to filter correctly.¹⁰ Further, once a query has been written, analysts do not have the ability to easily and consistently share these files with colleagues – although there is a shared drive, a lack of naming conventions and required descriptors make it difficult for analysts to know which file to use.

These technical difficulties also point to a need for training in using this software. DSS-J staff members do not routinely train analysts in how to use Cognos, in part because there are so few Cognos licenses available that DSS-J staff members rarely encounter new users to the system. Regardless, current and new analysts do not have access to any training materials or to a data dictionary, requiring them to learn Cognos through trial-and-error and through assistance from other Cognos users.

Actions

- Survey current and prospective users of DSS-J to determine (a) the extent to which agency managers, practitioners and researchers rely on DSS-J, (b) how to increase the accessibility and “user friendliness” of DSS-J and (c) how DSS-J can be changed to meet more of the operational needs of justice agencies and the research needs of the county.
Lead: Elizabeth Davies
- Expand the number of DSS-J “General Users” by examining the list of current users who have logged in over the past six months and identifying additional agencies or users.
Lead: Elizabeth Davies / Gail McKeel
- Expand the number of DSS-J advanced users, either by replacing Cognos with another software (such as SQL Query Analyzer) or by obtaining additional Cognos licenses and ensuring that distribution is fair to all agencies (i.e., preference given to analysts from agencies in which no other analyst has access to Cognos).
Lead: County IT
- Develop a data dictionary and training manual for General Users of DSS-J Online and Power Users of Cognos (or its replacement).
Lead: Elizabeth Davies / County IT

¹⁰ For example, in order to look up cases associated with a specific attorney, analysts must know exactly how that attorney’s name is entered into the system: Joe Smith could be listed as “Joe Smith,” “Smith, Joe,” “Smith, Joe A.,” “Smith, Joe A.,” and other similar combinations.

Strategy 6: Improve the breadth, depth, and accuracy of data in DSS-J

Breadth: DSS-J currently collects data from six major sources.¹¹ Together, these systems represent most of the agencies that offenders will encounter as they move throughout the justice system, from the time an incident is first reported (BOEC), to the arrest (PPDS), to the booking and pre-trial custody (SWIS), to the District Attorney's charging decision (CRIMES), to the final case disposition (OJIN). However, there are significant gaps in this continuum that DSS-J must fill in order to fully represent the justice system:

- *CIS-DOC:* Although DSS-J receives data from DOC on a regular basis, most of the data has yet to be validated and linked with other system data. CIS data includes information on inmates within Oregon Department of Corrections (such as housing placement, length of stay, classification, etc.) as well as post-prison clients placed on community supervision.
- *Gresham Police Department:* Over 11,000 crimes were reported last year in Gresham; about seven percent of the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office bookings result from arrests made by Gresham Police. Despite the significant levels of crime in Gresham, DSS-J does not collect data from the Gresham Police Department. Integration of this data may be delayed as the current system is incorporated into PPDS's new data management system.
- *LEDS:* The Oregon LEDS (Law Enforcement Data System) contains the state's criminal history database and includes information on offenders for crimes committed outside of Multnomah County; data from this system is not currently available in DSS-J. Previous attempts to integrate this data have met with failure due to LEDS' strict access and data security requirements.
- *MPD:* Metropolitan Public Defenders keeps data on clients, caseloads, and other information that would provide a more complete image of people's journey through the justice system; data from this system is not currently available in DSS-J.

Depth: In addition to including data from additional sources in DSS-J, the system also needs to allow users to quickly and accurately link data from different systems in order to explore the associations between system activities and outcomes. As the CJIS 2008 Feasibility Study indicates,

Justice partners need the ability to access complete and accurate information through the justice process... DSSJ provides some valuable interagency statistics, but there is a need for summary information that is not available in DSSJ... This information is unavailable largely because the cross-agency linking that is required to provide this analysis is not available (pp. 46-47).

¹¹ Portland Police Data System (PPDS), Sheriff's Warrants Identification System (SWIS), MCDA's Case Management System (CRIMES), Oregon Judicial Information Network (OJIN), Bureau of Emergency Communications data system (BOEC), and Department of Corrections Information System (CIS-DOC).

Several existing reports in DSS-J would benefit from the inclusion of cross-agency data, such as Recidivism reports, Sentencing Support Tools, and the FTA report (in development).

Accuracy: Although the data in DSS-J has been validated to ensure that the codes and links are made correctly, the system still encounters data anomalies, often as the result of differing methodologies between systems, similar names for vastly different variables and delays in data entry. In order to maintain confidence in DSS-J's data, inconsistencies in data across agency databases must be systematically addressed.

Actions

- Determine the feasibility of including data from GPD, LEADS, and MPD within DSS-J. If feasible, begin process of obtaining permissions and validating data.
Lead: County IT / DSS-J Security Committee
- Continue to validate DOC data and ensure that most appropriate data is sourced from the DOC system in order to make corrections and community corrections data accessible to analysts and other DSS-J users through the Web tool and Cognos (or its replacement).
Lead: Gail McKeel and Diana Manthe
- Expand data linking between systems by training DSS-J advanced users how to link data between systems in Cognos and by encouraging DSS-J General Users to make requests of DSS-J staff when they would like to collect cross-agency, linked data.
Lead: County IT / Elizabeth Davies
- Develop a shared drive or website for DSS-J users to report and help troubleshoot data problems and anomalies. County IT will be responsible for ensuring that all problems reported are resolved or forwarded onto to the appropriate source agency.
Lead: County IT / Elizabeth Davies
- Enhance the Sentencing Support Tool by allowing users to access common combinations of dispositions (versus independent sentencing elements) and by including more offender-based variables (such as program outcomes and risk and need assessments) and more sophisticated measures of recidivism (such as frequency and severity).
Lead: Sentencing Support Focus Group/ Elizabeth Davies / DSS-J County IT

Strategy 7: Capitalize on the knowledge and expertise of DSS-J staff and users

LPSCC Council Members often point out that although the County has a wealth of public safety data, what is really needed are individuals who ask the right questions and know how to use existing data and resources to find the right answers. Indeed, a 2006 LPSCC report described how “staffing cuts over the past several years have reduced capacity for new projects and [led to] a large backlog of unmet [research] requests”¹²

Although analytical capacity can always be expanded by hiring additional staff, the County must also empower its existing arsenal of research analysts with

¹² LPSCC, 10 Year Report 1996 – 2006, p. 8.

additional resources and with opportunities to network and communicate with others in the public safety system; analysts and technical experts must be placed into situations where they can observe (and participate in) relevant policy discussions, answer questions about data, offer recommendations and learn more from policy makers, program managers, and each other.

Agency analysts are typically absent from LPSCC meetings and other policy discussions where the seed for many of these “right questions” forms. An analyst conversant with public safety data could respond to policy discussions and broad questions with clarity and specificity: “Yes, we have the data to research this policy, and “Yes, I can work on that with another analyst.” The current process, at best, involves a relay in which questions are passed on to the analyst through a series of managers; at worst, the question is never conveyed to an analyst and never answered.

Several analysts and DSS-J IT staff could also provide technical assistance on existing County initiatives involving improvements to public safety data. For example, in April 2007, LPSCC’s Executive Committee voted to become the sponsoring agency for a new interagency Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS)¹³, which would provide real time connectivity among justice agencies throughout Multnomah County to support both public safety operations and policy making. In 2008, MTG Management Consultants, the contractor selected to develop a design for such a system, produced a series of reports that evaluated the feasibility of a Multnomah County CJIS and established an implementation plan. Although the county’s fiscal circumstances and the absence of outside grant funding have thus far prevented this multimillion dollar IT project from going forward, the feasibility report includes recommendations for several incremental changes that could be implemented regardless of whether a CJIS is eventually developed. For example, the report calls for more advanced notification and subscription capabilities; although these notices would be easier to facilitate under an integrated system, they are still possible using existing resources.¹⁴ DSS-J staff could serve as an important resource in evaluating the feasibility of some of those recommendations within the existing system.

As the County explores the feasibility of a CJIS, individual agencies are in the process of updating their own data management systems; most notably, Portland Police and the Oregon Judicial Department intend to update their systems (PPDS and OJIN, respectively) in the next few years in order to make data entry, management, and analysis more efficient and effective. While any improvements to these systems will likely improve communication and data sharing between systems, some improvements may be overlooked because they *only* benefit communication and data sharing between systems. DSS-J staff already has identified several improvements that could be made to communication and data sharing, they simply need a forum for sharing their recommendations; for example, as PPDS expands officers’ use of electronic reports, programmers could also prompt the system to automatically assign new arrest case numbers to any report filed. This small change would instantly increase the ability of DSS-J staff and other IT staff to link data between PPDS, SWIS, OJIN, and CRIMES.

¹³ The name “CJIS” was subsequently changed to “RJNet”; for the purposes of this report, the system will be referred to as “CJIS.”

¹⁴ For example, MCSO recently developed a notice that is sent to judges when inmates are released from the Oregon State Hospital and will be returning to jail.

Actions

- Subject to further analysis and a determination of feasibility, begin to address the needs identified in the CJIS feasibility study for increases in interagency data and connectivity.
Lead: Elizabeth Davies / County IT / Public Safety Plan Workgroup
- Use DSS-J database knowledge to provide technical assistance and suggestions as individual agencies change their existing systems.
Lead: County IT
- Encourage data analysts and program managers to attend policy-level meetings (such as LPSCC, CJAC, etc.) in order to stimulate the development of relevant research questions.
Lead: Elizabeth Davies
- Encourage additional analysts to use DSS-J and consult County IT for help in creating their own reports (rather than making special requests on already limited DSS-J IT staff time).
See Strategy 5.
- Formalize the DSS-J project request process and prioritize DSS-J staff time for certain projects.
Lead: County IT

Conclusion

In light of a pressing need to increase the cost-effectiveness of local government, including the public safety system, and because of Multnomah County's strong commitment to data-driven policies and evidence-based practices, the DSS-J Policy Committee recommends that LPSCC approve this Strategic Action Plan and direct its implementation without delay. The Policy Committee believes that the implementation of this plan will (a) improve the focus and direction of DSS-J, (b) ensure the realization of the system's full potential of this critical public safety data system, (c) justify the county's continuing financial support for the system and (d) most importantly, ensure that Multnomah County's public safety policies and practices are data-driven, evidence-based and cost-effective in reducing crime and recidivism.

The Policy Committee would like to thank Matt O'Keefe, Judge Michael Marcus, Shea Marshman, Charlene Rhyne and Liang Wu for their thoughtful feedback on this plan.

Appendix A: Specific Agency Projects

Department of Community Justice

- Produced several custom extracts of recidivism data for DCJ researchers
- Provided data on potential impact to the County's public safety system based on the implementation of Measure 57 in January 2009.
- Provide custom extract of data to support project to validate the recog tool used by the pre-trial release staff.
- Provide users with number of reported assaults and robberies for 3 calendar years to be used in a grant proposal.
- Provide users with a list of offenders booked under various categories of local control.
- Provided data to the Department of Community Justice researching the effectiveness of jail sanctions vs. offenders with no jail sanctions and how the cohorts from each group fared.
- Provided data to the Department of Community Justice researching the effectiveness of Project 57 – a joint project between the Portland Police and Sheriff's office whereby PPB funds 57 beds to be used specifically to hold offenders arrested on livability crimes until their arraignment. The data included selecting offenders booked in August 2004 who would have been P57 offenders based on their charges and FTA data related to those offenders.
- Provided extract of persons convicted of menacing, harassment or interfering with making a report who were then placed on formal or bench probation.

Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (CJAC)

- Continued to provide a monthly list of deputy district attorneys and defense attorneys assigned to inmates who have been house in County jails for over 90 days. Report distributed to MCSO, District Attorney, Circuit Court, Metropolitan Public Defender's office. (This eliminates the need for staff in the Public Defender's office and District Attorney's office to look up these cases manually and determine the attorneys assigned to the case.)
- Provide data regarding weekend matrix releases and outcomes of those cases. Data was to be used in determining the feasibility of staffing a weekend arraignment court.
- Determined the number of people released from jail pre-trial who then failed to appear for their court event. This required extracting data from 2 different computer systems (SWIS and OJIN) and programmatically creating a link between the two.
- Determined the number of people released from jail pre-trial, broken down by the type of pre-trial release (Recog, Bail, Matrix, etc.)
- Determined the number of people sitting in jail with a meth charge associated to their case.

Multnomah County Circuit Court

- Created and expanded the use of an automated email notification for judges with offenders on bench probation alerting them of new law enforcement contact during the probation period.
- Created custom reports regarding DUI sentencing related to jail days over a span of 8 years and recidivism rate for those offenders.
- Routinely provided a list of SID numbers missing in OJIN for offenders.
- Provided statistics on misdemeanor case outcomes for calendar year 2008 for Judge Ed Jones.

- Created an automated email notification for judges with offenders on bench probation alerting them of new law enforcement contact during the probation period.
- Provided a list of SID numbers missing in OJIN for offenders on community probation.
- Participated in the feasibility phase of the State's proposed development of a state-wide sentencing support tool based on the model developed for DSSJ. We provided extensive documentation on the complexities of the person linking process, and how successful linking in this type of system is highly dependant on having data from multiple sources for validation purposes. Because our linking process is so well-established, and has been through years of refinement, we saved the State's project lead many weeks of effort in re-discovering pros, cons and pitfalls that we've already had to address.
- Provided a recidivism report, broken down by crime category, for offenders with cases filed within the past 2 years in Multnomah County Circuit Court. This would not have been possible using OJIN data directly since, unlike DSSJ, OJIN is case-based and not offender-based. And, because of our linking process, offenders that may appear as separate individuals in OJIN, can be joined under one person record in DSSJ.

Multnomah County District Attorney's Office

- DA's office has requested that the probation judge report be sent to them so issuing deputies can see if someone on a new arrest is on bench probation.
- Provided custom reports concerning Project 57 offenders

Multnomah County Sheriff's Office

- Provide data about impact to jails if previously cited-in-lieu Class A misdemeanors were to start being booked.
- Provided a spreadsheet of all charges in their lookup table for records management. To be used to help clean up the charge table details.
- Created a list of INS holds by charge disposition for 2007 bookings.
- Provided a list of ORS numbers that were non-bookable prior to July 2009
- Provided a list of inmates serving time on misdemeanor sentences only to Capt. Bobbi Luna.
- Provided a list of arrests/bookings between 2004 – 2006 for a group of persons from City Center Concern.
- Provided a count of bookings where the booking reason was a Detainer, and the case had a hold of PROB or APRO (probation violations) and the case had a charge of PCS II (ORS 475.840 or 475.992 w/ a modifier of P2) for Records Unit Supervisor.
- Provided information on U.S. Marshal holds in support of MCSO re-negotiating their contract with the U.S. Marshal's office.
- Provided statistics regarding the number of bookings, by booking type and by hour during a 3-week period. Used to help determine workload impacting staffing requirements.
- Determined the number of people currently in jail on murder charges and their assigned facilities. Requested by MCSO Records Supervisor after an inmate was beaten by a cellmate. This report was used to help explain why it was not possible to house these inmates in their own cells (due to the large number of inmates with these charges).
- Created a report listing all persons who had been in jail over the past 5 years for murder or aggravated murder, and a separate list of all persons who had been in jail over the past 5 years for attempted murder or attempted aggravated murder.
- Created a file of states of birth for inmates born in the U.S. Requested by MCSO staff in response to a LEDS /FBI audit requirement.

Auditor's Office:

- Provided extract of drug and non-drug arrests by offender zip code for Multnomah County addresses; provided the same data for arrest zip codes in Multnomah County for FY 05/06. This information was going to be used to evaluate where best to spend tax dollars on intervention and treatment programs for the County based on locations with high numbers of offenders living in their community.
- Provided a list of offenders who had been released from jail on their own recognizance, and subsequently failed to appear for their arraignment. This required extracting data from 2 different computer systems (SWIS and OJIN) and programmatically creating a link between the two. Without DSSJ, this would have taken hundreds of man-hours to manually extract and compare the data from these systems.

Other Agencies

- Provide data for LPSCC analyst used to analyze stream of offenders through the criminal justice system.
Provided arrest information for index crimes in 2005 broken down by felony and misdemeanor for the Criminal Justice Commission in Salem.
- NPC Research was given a grant to study the effectiveness of Multnomah County's drug court (STOP = Sanctions, Treatment, Opportunity, Progress). Their study included identifying a cohort group of over 20,000 offenders who either participated in the STOP program, or were eligible but declined to participate. DSSJ was able to provide them with demographic, arrest, prosecution outcome and booking information. Without DSSJ, this would have taken thousands of man-hours to manually extract and compare the data from four different computer systems.

Appendix B: Summary of Strategic Actions

Strategy 1: Increase the overall demand for public safety data

1. Urge the Board of County Commissioners and LPSCC's Executive Committee to continue to demand system-wide data and analysis from affected justice agencies and LPSCC as a precondition to their support for new or existing public safety strategies, programs and budget requests; examples of system-wide data that should be included in these analyses are recidivism, re-arrest, failure-to-appear and program completion. The burden of providing data should be placed on the proponent of the new policy or program. Such persistent demand for data and analysis will ensure that the value of DSS-J is fully realized and encourage the adoption of data-driven public safety policies and evidence-based practices that reduce crime and recidivism.

Lead: Peter Ozanne

Strategy 2: Expand the use of DSS-J data in reports used by LPSCC and its member agencies

2. Determine feasibility of establishing a direct DSS-J feed into data analysis software (e.g., Excel, SPSS)

Lead: County IT

3. Develop dashboard reporting, mapping and other features on the DSS-J web tool that would help analysts identify trends that they want to investigate further.

Lead: Elizabeth Davies / County IT / PSAT

4. Identify additional data and topical areas (such as domestic violence) to include as a supplement to the monthly Safety Priorities Brief.

Lead: Elizabeth Davies

5. Explore opportunities to use DSS-J data for regular updates on performance measures included in agency program offers.

Lead: Elizabeth Davies / County IT / Budget Office Rep

Strategy 3: Establish clear lines of authority and refine the organizational structure of DSS-J

6. While retaining the essence of DSS-J's prior organization, formalize the following four-tiered organizational structure in order to (a) bring more focus and direction to the Council's efforts to improve and maintain the system and (b) ensure that the appropriate people and organization participate in the decisions necessary to accomplish these objectives.

Lead: Peter Ozanne

Strategy 4: Reduce the technology costs associated with DSS-J

7. Critically assess the DSS-J technology platform with an eye to the expanding and changing business needs, technology options and cost control requirements. Based on that assessment, recommend an appropriate “toolset” to ensure that DSS-J keeps pace with the LPSCC strategic goals.

Lead: County IT

Strategy 5: Improve the accessibility of DSS-J's data tools

8. Survey current and prospective users of DSS-J to determine (a) the extent to which agency managers, practitioners and researchers rely on DSS-J, (b) how to increase the accessibility and “user friendliness” of DSS-J and (c) how DSS-J can be changed to meet more of the operational needs of justice agencies and the research needs of the county.

Lead: Elizabeth Davies

9. Expand the number of DSS-J “General Users” by examining the list of current users who have logged in over the past six months and identifying additional agencies or users.

Lead: Elizabeth Davies / Gail McKeel

10. Expand the number of DSS-J advanced users, either by replacing Cognos with another software that is easy to use and does not restrict the number of users (such as SQL Query Analyzer) or by obtaining additional Cognos licenses and ensuring that distribution is fair to all agencies (i.e., preference given to analysts from agencies in which no other analyst has access to Cognos).

Lead: County IT

11. Develop a data dictionary and training manual for General Users of DSS-J Online and Power Users of Cognos (or its replacement).

Lead: Elizabeth Davies / County IT

Strategy 6: Improve the breadth, depth, and accuracy of data in DSS-J

12. Determine the feasibility of including data from GPD, SPIN, LEDS, and MPD within DSS-J. If feasible, begin process of obtaining permissions and validating data.

Lead: County IT / DSS-J Security Committee

13. Continue to validate DOC data and ensure that most appropriate data is sourced from the DOC system in order to make corrections and community corrections data accessible to analysts and other DSS-J users through the Web tool and Cognos (or its replacement).

Lead: Gail McKeel and Diana Manthe

14. Expand data linking between systems by training DSS-J advanced users how to link data between systems in Cognos and by encouraging DSS-J general users to make requests of DSS-J staff when they would like to collect cross-agency, linked data.

Lead: County IT / Elizabeth Davies

15. Develop a shared drive or website for DSS-J users to report and help troubleshoot data problems and anomalies. County IT will be responsible for ensuring that all problems reported are resolved or forwarded onto to the appropriate source agency.

Lead: County IT / Elizabeth Davies

16. Expand the Sentencing Support Tool by allowing users to access common combinations of dispositions (versus independent sentencing elements) and by including more offender-based variables (such as program outcomes and risk and need assessments) and more sophisticated measures of recidivism (such as frequency and severity).

Lead: Sentencing Support Focus Group / Elizabeth Davies / DSS-J County IT

Strategy 7: Capitalize on the knowledge and expertise of DSS-J staff and users

17. Subject to further analysis and a determination of feasibility, begin to address the needs identified in the CJIS feasibility study for increases in interagency data and connectivity.

Lead: Elizabeth Davies / County IT / Public Safety Plan Workgroup

18. Use DSS-J database knowledge to provide technical assistance and suggestions as individual agencies change their existing systems.

Lead: County IT

19. Encourage data analysts and program managers to attend policy-level meetings (such as LPSCC, CJAC, etc.) in order to stimulate the development of relevant research questions.

Lead: Elizabeth Davies

20. Encourage additional analysts to use DSS-J and consult County IT for help in creating their own reports (rather than making special requests on already limited DSS-J IT staff time).

See Strategy 5.

21. Formalize the DSS-J project request process and prioritize DSS-J staff time for certain projects.

Lead: County IT

Appendix C: DSS-J Committee Members

Security Committee:

Judge Michael Marcus	Circuit Court
Lisa Dunn	Portland Police Records Supervisor
John Hoover	District Attorney's office
Dave Braaksma	MCSO
Wende Hickman	DCJ

Policy Committee:

Judy Shiprack	County Commissioner, District 3
Doug Bray	Trial Court Administrator
Mike Schrunk	District Attorney
Peter Ozanne	Public Safety Advisor to the Chair / LPSCC Director
Scott Taylor	Director, Department of Community Justice
Larry Aab	Director, Sherriff's Office Business Services
Judy Hadley	Citizen Representative
John Connors	Metropolitan Public Defender's Office
Capt. Jim Maciag	Portland Police

Other regular attendees:

Judge Michael Marcus	Circuit Court Judge
Gail McKeel	DSS-J Customer Advocate
Elise Nicholson	Manger of County IT Public Safety Applications
Jann Brown	DCJ IT Manager
Elizabeth Davies	LPSCC Analyst