

Statewide Progress

SUMMARY

Over the past decade, the state has made significant progress in its ability to track offenders' movements and criminal activities around the state. Through a series of projects designed to integrate previously fragmented data and systems, the state has improved criminal justice professionals' access to timely, statewide information. State agencies are currently in the midst of implementing two key information systems that will improve the state's ability to build accurate criminal histories. Criminal justice professionals across jurisdictions can access these systems. However, local law enforcement and prosecution professionals, who do not have their own statewide information systems, still face challenges in obtaining and sharing important investigative data. Absent additional statewide systems, further integration of these data will depend on the ability and willingness of local jurisdictions to link their information with the state. But, at this time, the state does not have a well-formed plan to integrate more local information systems into CriMNet.

As we described in Chapter 1, Minnesota made some early, but limited, progress toward statewide access to criminal justice information in the mid-1990s. Driven by the need to better track offenders' movements and criminal activities around Minnesota, the state's interest in integrating criminal justice information has grown and is supported by a significant financial investment.

In light of the state's commitment, this chapter addresses the following question:

- **To what extent has Minnesota progressed toward its goal of statewide, integrated criminal justice information?**

To answer this question, we relied to a great extent on our evaluation of the specific CriMNet projects discussed in Chapter 3 and CriMNet program management, as discussed in Chapter 4. We interviewed staff from legislative research offices, the State Court Administrator's Office, the departments of Administration, Corrections, and Public Safety, including the CriMNet Office, and representatives of local criminal justice agencies. We reviewed CriMNet planning documents and updates, reports to the Legislature, and documents describing the purpose and scope of CriMNet projects.

We synthesized this information to assess progress in two general areas: (1) improved access to information about individuals in the criminal justice system; and (2) development of complete, accurate information about individuals'

criminal histories. We discuss progress in these areas in the first part of this chapter. In the second part, we discuss remaining gaps in information access and systems development.

PROGRESS TOWARD INTEGRATING CRIMINAL JUSTICE INFORMATION

Integrating criminal justice information systems requires a long-term, incremental approach.

As discussed in Chapter 1, integrating criminal justice information will not happen in a single step or with a single technology solution. Instead, integration requires a long-term, incremental approach. Many of the state's early investments in criminal justice information systems included system upgrades and enhancements that served as a foundation for future integration. Recent CriMNet projects resulted in new or enhanced systems within certain functions, such as corrections, that are of value to other professionals and other jurisdictions as well. Still other CriMNet projects have resulted in direct, system-to-system, connections. Considering all of these steps together, we found that:

- **Since the mid-1990s, the state has made significant progress on several fronts toward CriMNet's goal of statewide, integrated criminal justice information.**

These accomplishments provide direct benefits to users statewide and include: (1) improving criminal justice professionals' access to timely, statewide information by compiling data from various jurisdictions into centralized systems and data repositories; (2) enhancing system capabilities for transmitting data and querying these repositories; and (3) improving the accuracy of offenders' criminal histories. Collectively, these investments helped create efficiencies throughout the criminal justice system.

Access to Information

Over the past decade, improvements in access to data for criminal justice professionals were achieved through investments in statewide information systems, creation of data repositories, and improvements in underlying technology. In general, we found that:

- **CriMNet investments have furthered statewide integration of courts and corrections data and have improved access to other repositories of criminal justice information.**

These technology investments have provided criminal justice professionals with efficient alternatives to time-consuming, but necessary, aspects of their work—activities done previously by manually processing paperwork or making telephone calls. Compiling information from individual local and state systems into centralized repositories has reduced the time and resources needed to research information about offenders. Integrating multiple systems into one common system also creates more uniform recordkeeping practices, thereby improving the overall consistency and quality of data. Access to more complete

information also helps criminal justice professionals make better decisions, such as whether to arrest or release offenders or upgrade or reduce prosecution charges.

As shown in Table 2.1, recently completed CriMNet projects provide technology and systems that are easily accessible to authorized users. These repositories include data compiled from participating agencies across the state, which include most, if not all, 87 counties. These systems are available to authorized criminal justice personnel in all functions, and the number of approved users is growing.

Table 2.1: CriMNet Projects Providing Improved Access to Criminal Justice Information

Project	Contribution	Access
Statewide Supervision System (S ³)	S ³ is a statewide information system holding current and historical information on juveniles and adults who are or have been on probation, in detention, imprisoned, or in jail. These data were previously held in separate county and detention facility information systems. Integration of data from all counties was substantially completed in June 2003.	S ³ currently has about 7,000 authorized users, including prosecutors; public defenders; and court, probation, and corrections personnel.
Court Web Access (CWA)	CWA is a system, completed in 2002, that allows authorized users to search select court information. Through CWA, users may search limited, non-confidential, adult criminal case information from felony, gross misdemeanor, and select misdemeanor cases. Previously these data were available to court employees who had direct access to court information systems and, for court data submitted to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, to other professionals who requested records from the Computerized Criminal History system.	About 1,000 criminal justice personnel statewide can access CWA. In addition to court staff, authorized users include prosecutors, public defenders, and probation and corrections personnel.
Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS)	MNCIS will replace the court's outdated, case-based information system. MNCIS data and records will be organized by individual, rather than by case, contributing to better individual criminal history data. MNCIS is also expected to support automated exchange of information with other criminal justice agencies. As of January 2004, MNCIS is being implemented in three counties, with statewide implementation expected in 2006.	As currently envisioned, state court personnel will have direct access to MNCIS. Other criminal justice professionals will obtain MNCIS data through Court Web Access or the Integration Backbone.
Predatory Offender Registration System (POR)	POR is a central repository, completed in 2002, for information on about 14,500 registered predatory sex offenders in Minnesota. Criminal justice personnel use it to track and supervise these offenders. Offender records in the repository include additional identification information from other databases, including the Department of Vehicle Services system, Bureau of Criminal Apprehension's Computerized Criminal History system, and national databases containing offender and criminal history data.	Currently, POR has about 3,100 authorized users representing 322 agencies, including 85 of 87 county sheriff offices and all state correctional facilities.
Minnesota Repository of Arrest Photos (MRAP)	MRAP is a central database, completed in 2002, that accepts digital photographs and corresponding descriptive and demographic data taken at the time of booking and arrest. MRAP allows criminal justice agencies to create lineups and witness viewing sessions from photographs and enroll unidentified persons into the facial recognition component.	Currently, 71 agencies submit arrest photographs to the database. Capability for more agencies to submit photos will be added as local funding becomes available. Approximately 2,600 authorized users representing 71 law enforcement agencies can access MRAP.

SOURCE: Office of the Legislative Auditor analysis of Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, Department of Corrections, State Court Administrator's Office, and CriMNet Office project descriptions.

Probation, detention, and court data are now available statewide to criminal justice professionals.

Probation and detention data are now available statewide to corrections professionals and other authorized users. In June 2003, the Department of Corrections substantially finished integrating county probation and detention information systems with its Statewide Supervision System, which gives system users a single point of access to adult booking and detention data and adult and juvenile probation information from all Minnesota counties. Although this integrated information is limited to certain data, the value of the system is increased because, in addition to corrections personnel, professionals from other functions, such as prosecutors, judges, and front-line law enforcement personnel, are able to access the system to obtain important and current information about offenders on probation, parole, or supervised release around the state. Before the Statewide Supervision System was available, information on Minnesota probationers, for example, was maintained on a variety of local information systems, and it was often difficult for criminal justice officials to determine offenders' probation terms and conditional release status.

Progress toward better access to courts data has occurred through two key projects—Court Web Access and the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS). Court Web Access provides a way for authorized users to view limited information from the courts' Total Court Information System, a case-based records management system. Court Web Access is updated regularly and contains statewide sentencing and conviction records on offenders. Court Web Access will also be able to access statewide data from MNCIS, the courts' new records management system currently being developed. MNCIS further enhances the quality of court data in that it is a person-based records system, rather than case-based. This means that criminal records are automatically added to the offender's file when new charges are added, saving personnel time searching and compiling offenders' criminal files. Once MNCIS is fully implemented, users will be able to obtain statewide data on all misdemeanors, which are not available under the current system.¹ MNCIS is currently being implemented in three counties as the first step toward statewide implementation. All counties are expected to be using MNCIS by 2006, and statewide data will then be available to all users.

Through CriMNet investments, Minnesota has created or improved other information systems and repositories holding specific types of criminal justice information. As discussed in Chapter 1, a decade ago, sources for statewide information were limited to a few systems, including the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) Computerized Criminal History system and Hot Files. The state made several later improvements to the quality and content of offenders' criminal histories, including standardizing certain prosecution data, adding certain misdemeanor offenses, and expanding the database to include juvenile offenders.² More recent CriMNet projects at the BCA have further expanded access to criminal justice information, as shown in Table 2.1. These new systems rely considerably on information collected and submitted by participating local

¹ Records on individuals obtained directly from MNCIS are not linked by fingerprint.

² These misdemeanors, referred to as "targeted misdemeanors," include: assault in the fifth degree, domestic assault, harassment (violation of restraining order), interference of privacy (stalking), indecent exposure, orders for protection violations, and driving while impaired (DWI) violations. Compiling conviction information for these cases is still a challenge because the courts currently cannot electronically transmit all targeted misdemeanor case dispositions to the BCA. MNCIS is expected to rectify this problem.

Authorized users can electronically access key criminal justice information through a secure network.

agencies. For example, state and local law enforcement officers electronically submit to these central repositories identification information about offenders, such as photographs, names, dates of birth, and fingerprints. They also submit information about the status and location of certain offenders convicted of sex offenses (predatory offenders). Authorized users can access these repositories individually through the BCA's secure network.

State investments in underlying technology have supported access to information systems and repositories, as shown in Table 2.2. The CriMNet Integration Backbone will provide a way for users to electronically search the data systems and repositories they are authorized to access.³ Scheduled for full statewide implementation in late 2004, the Integration Backbone will allow users to search

Table 2.2: CriMNet Technology Projects That Facilitate Information Sharing

Project	Purpose and Benefit
Integration Backbone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As envisioned, this system will provide a technical infrastructure to connect criminal justice information systems and organize and distribute data among jurisdictions. Under its initial statewide implementation, expected in late 2004, the Integration Backbone will allow criminal justice professionals across jurisdictions to search five statewide systems through a single query, and it will provide links to additional data in source systems.^a Previously, these systems had to be searched separately.
Criminal Justice Data Network (CJDN) Upgrade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This project, completed in 2001, upgraded the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension's network and the computer workstations used to access it. The upgrade was necessary to support statewide integration of law enforcement data systems and repositories, such as arrest photos and fingerprint data. Over 15,000 authorized users representing about 660 agencies statewide use this network to transfer data to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and to access a variety of state and federal criminal justice information systems.
Sentencing Guidelines Worksheet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed in 2001, this system provides an electronic means to document and transfer sentencing information to appropriate agencies. Used by court, prosecution, defense, and corrections personnel, it reduces time for producing and sharing sentencing information.

^aThese systems are: Predatory Offender Registration System, Minnesota Repository of Arrest Photos, Court Web Access, Statewide Supervision System, and the Correctional Operations Management System (a Department of Corrections prison information system).

SOURCE: Office of the Legislative Auditor analysis of Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, Sentencing Guidelines Commission, and CriMNet Office project descriptions.

³ This system has been tested, but not implemented statewide. Our discussion of the Integration Backbone search capability presumes successful statewide implementation and that CriMNet officials' assertion that other systems can be connected to the Backbone is correct. We did not independently verify the technical capabilities of the Integration Backbone.

five statewide systems: Statewide Supervision System, Court Web Access, Predatory Offender Registration System, Minnesota Repository of Arrest Photos, and Correctional Operations Management System (a Department of Corrections information system containing prison data).⁴

Collectively, as illustrated in Figure 2.1, state systems and repositories provide a centralized network for obtaining certain data to help identify offenders, their arrests and convictions, and their incarceration or probation status. Cities and counties still maintain their own law enforcement information systems for investigating crimes and managing jails. Similarly, prosecutors maintain their own case management systems for investigating and charging offenders. Some local governments, such as St. Louis County and surrounding counties, have initiated inter-county efforts to coordinate these information systems. Others, such as Hennepin, Dakota, and Anoka counties, are actively pursuing systems integration in their respective counties.

Improving Criminal History Records

Criminal justice decisionmaking requires information on individuals that is not only complete, but accurate. State action to improve the accuracy of criminal history records involves (1) identifying individuals using fingerprints and (2) using fingerprints to link records from different information systems. As shown in Table 2.3, CriMNet projects have resulted in improved capabilities in both of these areas.

Identifying Individuals

The key to creating accurate criminal histories is to ensure positive identification of individuals using information that is unique to an individual. Information about an offender's name, race, and date of birth provides only a partial, and sometimes inaccurate, means of identification. Photographs can also help identify individuals. Currently, the state uses individuals' fingerprints as the basis for creating accurate criminal histories. We found that:

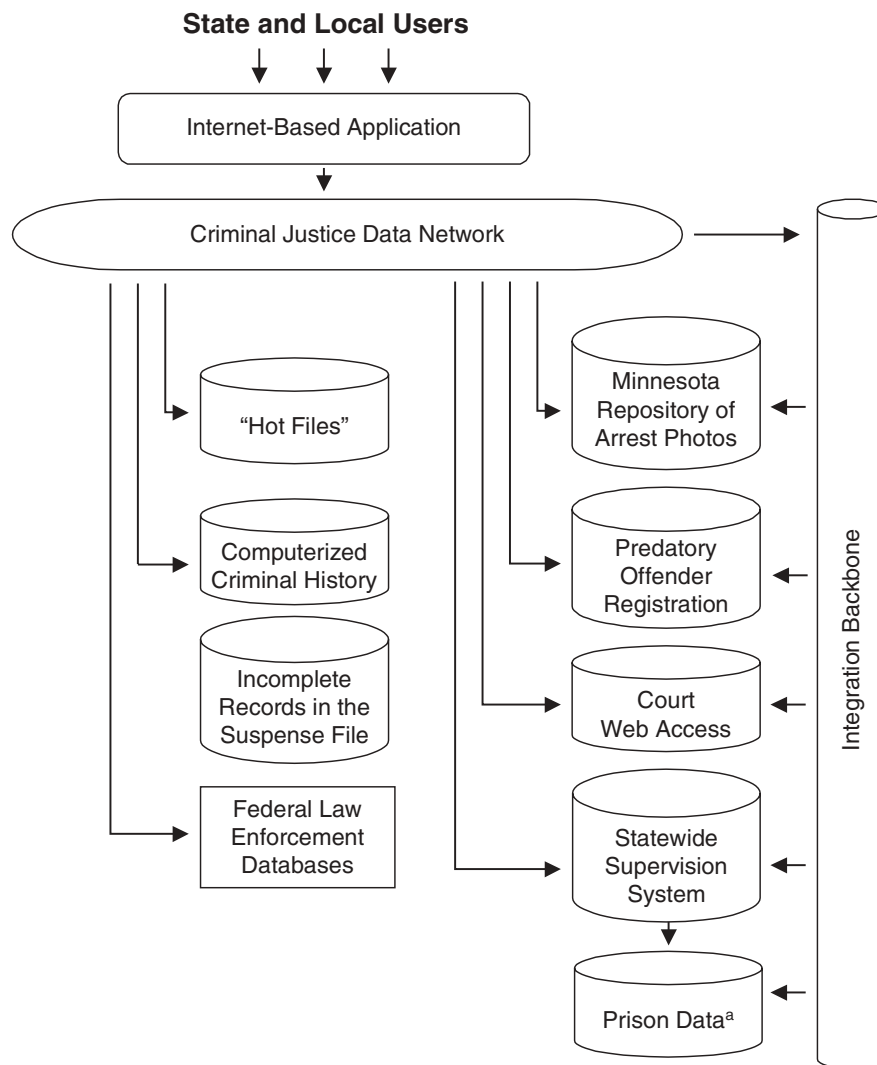
- **The state has improved its capabilities for compiling and storing accurate fingerprint and other identifying information.**

In the past, law enforcement officials around the state used a manual process for fingerprinting and transmitting fingerprint cards to the BCA. Fingerprint cards were occasionally lost or contained insufficient information for processing. Under this process, using offenders' fingerprints to build criminal histories was extremely time-consuming and required extensive staff resources. In many instances, the state was unable to link arrest and court disposition records to individuals, and these records were excluded from criminal histories.

Using fingerprints is a more reliable means of linking criminal history records than name or date of birth.

⁴ One local prosecution case management system, Carver County's Minnesota County Attorney Practice System, is connected to the Integration Backbone. Data from other counties with similar prosecution systems may be available in the future, although there are limitations to proceeding with this integration, as we discuss later in this chapter.

Figure 2.1: Statewide Access to Criminal Justice Information Systems, as of January 2004



Authorized users can sign on to each of these systems separately through the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension's secure criminal justice network. For example, users can obtain court case information by signing directly on to Court Web Access. If users choose to use the Integration Backbone, they can search the connected systems at the same time.

NOTE: The Integration Backbone is scheduled to be fully available statewide in late 2004.

^aThe Department of Corrections' information system for prison data is called Correctional Operations Management System.

SOURCE: Office of the Legislative Auditor analysis of CriMNet program documents.

Table 2.3: CriMNet Projects Contributing to Improved Accuracy of Criminal History Records

CriMNet investments have improved the content and accuracy of criminal history records.

Project	Purpose and Benefit
<p>Bureau of Criminal Apprehension Livescan and Cardhandler Fingerprint Technology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livescan equipment electronically captures fingerprint images and arrest identification data. Livescan machines are located at all county sheriff departments where most bookings occur, but coverage is less complete at courts and local police departments. • Cardhandler is a computer interface that allows Livescan users to transmit electronic fingerprint data to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. The Cardhandler project was essentially completed in 2000, although a joint project with Hennepin County to enhance the system was underway in January 2004. • Electronic fingerprinting replaces the process of inking and rolling prints, typing arrest and identification data on fingerprint cards, and sending documents to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. The electronic process takes up to two hours compared with several weeks for manual cards.
<p>Criminal History Suspense File Program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This ongoing program is comprised of subprojects aimed at improving the accuracy of Computerized Criminal History records. It includes technology and work practice improvements to ensure the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension receives fingerprint and identification data and that related court dispositions are linked to the appropriate individual's criminal history. • The suspense program had (1) resolved nearly 420,000 records, reducing the suspense file to about 100,000 records in 2003; and (2) reduced the average monthly percentage of court dispositions entering the suspense file from 50 percent in fiscal year 2001 to 20 percent for July-December 2003.
<p>State Court Administrator's Office Statute Table</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This ongoing project is to create a single point of reference for statute citations. The statute table is expected to be integrated with other criminal justice systems, resulting in improved accuracy of charge and conviction data included in criminal history records. • As of January 2004, court staff were developing the statute table for integration into the Minnesota Court Information System.

SOURCE: Office of the Legislative Auditor analysis of project documents from the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and State Court Administrator's Office.

As of January 2004, about 78 percent of fingerprint records were transmitted to the BCA electronically.

To facilitate processing offenders' fingerprints, the state now uses electronic, automated fingerprint machines, called Livescan, to create digital images. These images are electronically transmitted to the BCA where BCA staff either create a new criminal record or add the information to an existing criminal history for the individual. As of January 2004, about 78 percent of fingerprint records were transmitted to the BCA electronically. Currently, Livescan machines are located at every sheriff's office in the state and at many larger police departments, mainly in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Some judicial districts keep Livescans in certain courtrooms for law enforcement officers to fingerprint offenders that have bypassed the booking process before making their first appearance in court. Only a few jurisdictions have not yet integrated these machines into their daily practices and still rely on manual cards for recording and transmitting fingerprint information to the BCA. Compared with the previous approaches, Livescan allows faster and more accurate transfer of an individual's fingerprint information to the BCA.

Linking Records

The BCA's Computerized Criminal History system currently provides the most biometrically accurate information available about offenders' criminal convictions in Minnesota. Using fingerprints and demographic data obtained at the time of arrest, BCA staff match arrest incidents, charging information, and court case disposition records to create this criminal history for offenders. But, as we discuss later, significant work remains in linking criminal records using fingerprints to improve confidence that criminal histories are complete from an individual's first contact with the state criminal justice system. Additional improvements to the BCA Computerized Criminal History system are underway. These initiatives focus on, among other objectives, developing standards and functions that will improve the electronic linking of criminal information across previous and recently implemented systems.

Actions to address shortcomings in technology and fingerprinting practices have reduced the percentage of new criminal history records that cannot be matched.

Previous shortcomings in technology and local jurisdictions' fingerprinting practices resulted in the creation of the BCA suspense file, which contains arrest and conviction records that cannot be linked to offenders' criminal histories. By the late-1990s, the suspense file had grown to nearly 450,000 records, and nearly 50 percent of new court case dispositions were going into suspense status. In response, criminal justice officials began devising a strategy to reduce both the size of the existing suspense file and the flow of records going into suspense. While Livescan machines greatly improved collecting and transmitting fingerprints to the BCA, additional resources were necessary to reduce the flow of records into the suspense file and resolve the inventory of unmatched records. In 2001, the Legislature appropriated funds for the BCA to implement a program to do this, and set specific targets to measure the progress.⁵ We found that:

- **The state has made progress in correctly linking offenders with missing conviction records and reducing the flow of records into the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension's suspense file.**

⁵ *Laws of Minnesota* (1Sp2001), ch. 8, art. 4, sec. 10, subd. 3. The goals included reducing the number of dispositions entering the suspense file on June 1, 2001 from 50 percent to 30 percent in the first year (June 30, 2002), to 20 percent the second year (June 30, 2003), and 10 percent in future years. For more information on this program, see Department of Public Safety, *Livescan, AFIS, Suspense, MRAP, and ICHS Project Overviews* (St. Paul, September 2003).

Beginning in mid-2001, project teams implemented a series of strategies that included (1) inspecting and resolving records manually; (2) identifying and flagging records that could not be readily resolved; (3) programming system enhancements to the criminal history and court repositories to link records more effectively; (4) improving agencies' practices for obtaining and transmitting identification data by holding workshops and distributing suspense file reports; and (5) implementing a criminal history audit program to identify errors. The BCA is also developing a system modification that will allow agencies to correct errors in data they submitted.

Through these efforts and ongoing communication with local law enforcement agencies, BCA staff have resolved nearly 420,000 unmatched records, reducing the suspense file to approximately 100,000 records. The flow of records going into suspense has also been reduced. In the first half of fiscal year 2004 (July to December 2003), on average, about 20 percent of case dispositions from the courts went into suspense—the goal for the full fiscal year is 10 percent. However, for the last three months of 2003, the average percentage of case dispositions going into the suspense file was about 13 percent. The volume of fingerprint and court disposition records coming into the BCA has also grown in recent years, which has increased the volume of work necessary to meet the goals.

Since mid-2001, BCA staff have resolved nearly 420,000 unmatched criminal history records.

Other efforts are underway to improve the accuracy of conviction records. The State Court Administrator's Office is overseeing the development of a statewide, on-line reference system of Minnesota Statutes that will be used with MNCIS. The goal of the electronic system, called the "statute table," is to ensure that prosecution and court staff consistently and accurately enter the correct statute citations when filing charges and updating court files. Given the number and complexity of criminal statutes, the statute table should reduce time spent to manually research information on offenses.

REMAINING INTEGRATION GAPS

So far, CriMNet has improved statewide access to information about individuals involved in the criminal justice system. However, we found that:

- **Statewide integration of criminal justice information is not yet seamless. Gaps in information remain at both the local and state level, and the state has a long way to go in building accurate, cross-jurisdictional criminal histories.**

In particular, the current information structure (1) is not yet easily accessible by some criminal justice personnel, such as front-line law enforcement officers, and (2) does not yet provide complete information about individuals' interactions with the criminal justice system, including their initial contact with law enforcement officers, pending criminal investigations, and misdemeanor convictions. While recent CriMNet improvements will facilitate researching and compiling offenders' records, significant work remains in linking these criminal records through fingerprints to ensure that criminal histories are accurate and complete.

Access to Information

As we describe in Chapter 1, information about offenders comes from many sources and is channeled through a variety of systems and central repositories to be shared by criminal justice professionals. In reviewing the scope of information available and ease of accessing these systems, we found that:

- **Local law enforcement and prosecution information systems have not yet been sufficiently integrated into CrimNet.**

Local prosecution and law enforcement investigation data are not accessible statewide.

These gaps occur because cities and counties usually maintain their own law enforcement, jail management, and prosecution systems, which are generally not integrated with systems outside of their respective jurisdictions. While law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and public defenders can access the information that is available through the BCA's secure network (and through the Integration Backbone, once implemented), comprehensive information originating from their own work is generally not available to others.

Various efforts have been made in the past to bridge these gaps. The Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association provided more comprehensive police contact and investigative information from local law enforcement systems through its Multiple Jurisdiction Network Organization (MJNO) system. Developed in the mid-1990s and funded through user fees paid by participating agencies, the system provided a way for law enforcement officers to share information used for investigations, background checks, warrant research, and person location. Seen as an opportunity to expand CrimNet's data resources, the CrimNet Office in March 2003 contracted with the Chiefs of Police to integrate MJNO with the Integration Backbone. However, numerous concerns about the system's compliance with the Minnesota Data Practices Act led policymakers to question MJNO as a viable solution to law enforcement agencies' needs. Ultimately, in December 2003, the Policy Group voted to terminate the MJNO contract if the Chiefs of Police Association did not do so first. Later that month, the association chose to shut down MJNO altogether—leaving the state to seek other avenues for integrating these data.

To resolve these deficiencies, the state has several possible paths, including: (1) developing statewide systems or data repositories, similar to MNCIS and the Statewide Supervision System; or (2) using the Integration Backbone to directly access local data. Currently, CrimNet policymakers have not decided which path to pursue, but CrimNet Office officials acknowledge that many issues need to be addressed before the Integration Backbone can be used as the solution.

According to stakeholders, significant obstacles exist to proceeding under a "local-to-backbone" approach on a statewide level at this time. First, CrimNet officials have not decided (1) what local data to access, (2) which data to maintain in local hubs or the Integration Backbone, or (3) how the data will be managed. The Integration Backbone is currently programmed to directly access, or "hit," connected systems. There are no hubs yet to absorb, control, and manage users' inquiries of the systems, as was planned in the Integration Backbone's original design. Because some local systems would be overwhelmed by statewide user searches, the CrimNet Office must control users' access to the locally-held data

The state and local governments have many issues to resolve before they can proceed with local systems integration.

by limiting access to certain hours or select groups of professionals.⁶ The effort necessary to manage users' sharing of information without using local hubs or enhanced Integration Backbone capabilities may not be cost-effective on a statewide basis and is not the CriMNet Office's preferred approach. According to CriMNet Office staff, resolving these data management decisions and proceeding with building local hubs are top priorities for the office. Before proceeding with additional local systems integration, however, local units of government must also make decisions regarding their system requirements and data practice policies.

In the meantime, we found that:

- **The state does not have a well-formed plan for bringing local law enforcement, prosecution, and public defender data into CriMNet.**

Moreover, establishing and implementing a plan to do so may prove to be difficult, particularly since the state has not mandated local participation in CriMNet. The state's current approach is to make statewide data and systems available and let cities and counties decide whether to integrate their data and systems into CriMNet.

But, according to anecdotal information from CriMNet Office officials, local governments' efforts towards upgrading and integrating their criminal justice information systems vary greatly around the state, with minimal progress in most jurisdictions. To move forward, the CriMNet Office will need more than anecdotal information. Yet, we found that:

- **The CriMNet Office does not have adequate information on local jurisdictions' criminal justice information systems; therefore, it does not know how great an investment is needed to integrate more local jurisdictions.**

For the most part, the four counties receiving grants are the only counties for which the state has good planning and systems information. Although the CriMNet Office has general knowledge about the types of local law enforcement and prosecution systems used in Minnesota, the office has not assessed the capacity of local governments to integrate their criminal justice information systems as envisioned in the CriMNet model. According to CriMNet Office staff, city and county interest in integrating varies around the state, and their systems and technology are evolving. Under these circumstances, neither the state nor local jurisdictions have a clear sense of future milestones and costs. Cities and counties maintain their own law enforcement, jail management, and prosecution systems, and their systems reflect their users' needs, daily practices, and preferences. As a result, local approaches and efforts towards integration will follow different paths. Rather than planning and designing uniform solutions at this point, CriMNet officials told us they will likely follow an individualized approach to bring local systems into CriMNet. However, until the Office obtains more comprehensive information about city and county systems, further development of the Integration Backbone and integration of local systems will not proceed, primarily because state and local officials do not have clear

⁶ For example, access via the Backbone to the one local prosecution case management system integrated with it—Carver County's Minnesota County Attorney Practice System—is limited to Carver County prosecutors only.

Technical development of the Integration Backbone is on hold until CriMNet stakeholders resolve work requirements and data management issues.

understanding of the technical specifications necessary for integration.⁷ More importantly, until CriMNet officials resolve concerns about how the state will manage and classify data moving from local systems into a statewide, integrated network, some local jurisdictions may be unwilling to share information about individuals' criminal activities.⁸

Other Integration Backbone functions have not been developed as quickly as anticipated, primarily due to lack of progress resolving data management issues and concerns about data practices and security. These other functions are primarily to facilitate workflow and create work efficiencies. However, criminal justice personnel must first identify and agree on work requirements (what the system should be able to do) before programming technical functions, and reaching these agreements has taken longer than anticipated.

Criminal Histories

Electronic fingerprinting is necessary, but not sufficient, to meet CriMNet goals to accurately identify individuals and obtain their full criminal histories. We found that:

- **Significant work needs to be done before criminal histories accurately reflect offenders' involvement in the criminal justice system from the start.**

The state has several technological means for pulling together information about an individual's involvement with the criminal justice system, each of which has some deficiencies. As described previously, the BCA creates criminal histories for offenders using arrest and conviction data, but these histories only include biometrically-linked records for felony, gross misdemeanor, and certain misdemeanor offenses. Other systems—MNCIS and the Integration Backbone—will eventually provide the means for a more extensive compilation of convictions. But, these systems do not guarantee that records will be accurately linked to individuals' criminal histories.

Although the Backbone can pull together extensive data and records from a number of repositories, the Backbone does not yet provide biometric, or fingerprint-linked, offender-based information. That is, requests for "John Doe" will provide records for all individuals using the name John Doe. Users must define parameters, such as date of birth, to narrow their search. Still, because of incomplete data and offenders' use of aliases, search results do not guarantee a certain match for all records. Users must consider the Integration Backbone information as a resource to facilitate their research efforts—and use due diligence to confirm that the records received from a search are, in fact, for the same individual. Although the Integration Backbone search function does provide limited information about whether biometric information exists about an

⁷ As we discuss in Chapter 3, better information about local jurisdictions' systems will help CriMNet estimate the time needed for integration. The Department of Corrections discovered on the Statewide Supervision System project that integrating local jurisdictions with a statewide system was far more time-consuming and complex than anticipated.

⁸ As of January 2004, the CriMNet Office was in the process of hiring additional staff to help expedite work on integration standards, user needs, and data practices.

individual in the BCA's Computerized Criminal History system, future plans for the backbone system include redesigning and improving its and other systems' capabilities for electronically linking records.

In the future, CriMNet officials intend to use the Integration Backbone to move basic data from one system to another to improve efficiency, but also to reduce errors associated with redundant data entry. Ideally, the system would automatically tag and link records for an individual upon initial arrest and fingerprinting. By incorporating these "workflow" features that use a fingerprint as the record identifier across systems, the accuracy of criminal histories would improve. An immense amount of work is involved to achieve this level of technology, and doing so requires criminal justice professionals across functions and jurisdictions to modify work practices and ensure accurate decisionmaking.

A significant amount of work will be required to electronically link records from an offender's first interaction with the criminal justice system to all subsequent records.

Still other challenges remain in compiling accurate criminal histories. As we reported earlier, on average, about 20 percent of court case dispositions went into the suspense file during the first half of fiscal year 2004. Currently, nearly 90,000 records cannot be matched to fingerprints and could remain unresolved, primarily because the state cannot retroactively capture fingerprints after sentences have expired since agencies no longer have authority to do so. Because it is a time-consuming process, some agencies have been reluctant to track down individuals on probation to capture their fingerprints. Agencies' failure to obtain fingerprints continues to be the biggest obstacle to further reducing the flow of records into the suspense file. This occurs because (1) the individual was summoned to court and bypassed the booking process, (2) the agency fingerprinted the individual but did not send in the fingerprint card, or (3) the agency did not fingerprint the individual. Other reasons are unique to specific local systems, which may not be able to link with the state's system. According to BCA officials, standardizing fingerprint work practices across the state remains a challenge.

To close information gaps, some jurisdictions must upgrade their jail management systems to better interface with the BCA's Livescan and Cardhandler system. The BCA is currently partnering with Hennepin County to improve the capture of fingerprint and offender information from all law enforcement agencies within that county. A significant share of statewide bookings occurs through the Hennepin County jail—a detention facility used by most law enforcement agencies in that county. As such, this targeted effort, once completed, should have a measurable impact on reducing the flow of records into suspense. The BCA recently initiated another project, called "electronic criminal linking," to develop work practice and technology changes that will support electronic linking of fingerprints, arrest photographs, and other data at the point that the information is first collected. In addition, the BCA and state court representatives are discussing ways to ensure that individuals making a first appearance before the court have fingerprints on file with the BCA and, if not, that the individual is fingerprinted upon appearance at the court.

CONCLUSIONS

The state does not have a well-formed plan to integrate more local jurisdictions into CriMNet.

The state has made significant progress over the last decade toward eliminating fragmented data systems and sharing critical information about offenders' criminal activities around the state. But, gaps and significant challenges remain in integrating data for certain criminal justice functions and linking offender records into complete criminal histories. Public defenders, prosecutors, and local law enforcement officers, for example, do not have statewide information systems. Certain types of data from these professions may be available statewide through other systems (for example, law enforcement agencies must submit certain data to the BCA). However, absent additional statewide systems, fuller integration of these data will depend on the ability and willingness of cities and counties to link their information systems with the state. At this time, the state does not have a well-formed plan to integrate more local jurisdictions into CriMNet.

Without a state mandate on local governments and much more state funding, attaining and maintaining 100 percent integration of all jurisdictions and systems is an unrealistic, if not impossible, goal to achieve in the foreseeable future. Similarly, it may be difficult for the CriMNet Office to estimate a "final completion date" for CriMNet. On the other hand, policymakers should have information about the status of criminal justice system integration and how it benefits the criminal justice community in order to progress toward achievable, realistic goals. We discuss the need for better short-term and long-range planning for these incremental steps in Chapter 4.

RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION

The CriMNet Office, in coordination with local governments, should inventory local governments' criminal justice information systems and integration plans and estimate the resources that will be required to bring needed information into CriMNet.

At one time, the CriMNet Office had prepared a draft survey to collect information about local criminal justice information systems and integration capabilities, but the office never sent the survey to local governments. It may be a logical starting point to continue this effort to better understand local needs. In addition, other decisions regarding how data will be indexed in the Integration Backbone and in local hubs need to be made before CriMNet Officials can fully assess local jurisdictions' readiness to integrate.