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North Carolina gets tougher on crime

State saves $12 million annually thanks to better data access and process efficiencies

Increased data volume, archaic information systems, shrinking budgets and constrained resources can hinder law enforcement and criminal justice agencies from effectively coordinating information and proactively maintaining public safety. Public safety agencies need reliable, timely and accurate data to strategically and tactically reduce crime and victimization, enhance public safety and optimize the allocation of finite resources.

Challenged with obtaining a comprehensive view of individuals with prior criminal records, including potentially dangerous offenders, law enforcement and criminal justice officials in North Carolina needed an efficient, integrated application to provide quick access to accurate offender information.

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justice organizations [that] agencies can access securely via the web. "

Danny Bell
Director, CJLEADS

To replace the manual process of integrating historical criminal data from multiple systems, reduce the risk of overlooking critical data and improve the information needs of law enforcement agencies, North Carolina Office of Information Technology Services worked with SAS to develop the Criminal Justice Law Enforcement Automated Data Services (CJLEADS) application.

A composite picture, virtually

Based on SAS® Enterprise BI Server, SAS® Enterprise Data Integration Server and SAS® Enterprise Miner, CJLEADS is an on-demand, web-based application hosted by SAS. It integrates criminal offender data to provide courts, law enforcement, probation and parole agencies with a complete view of a criminal offender.

The system also includes a watch list that allows officials to monitor the change of any offender's status, such as arrests, future court appearances or a release from custody.

"CJLEADS is a tool to support criminal justice professionals with making quicker and more effective decisions," says Danny Bell, Director, CJLEADS. "CJLEADS brings together disparate criminal justice data to help create a more rounded profile of offenders and provides a single source of information from a variety of criminal justice organizations — including court, warrant, probation, parole and local jail information — which agencies can access securely via the web."

Weaker budgets, stronger protection

With the CJLEADS system, authorized criminal justice professionals can log in to the application through a secure, Web-based interface to perform searches. Search results on individuals are displayed as summaries, which can be clicked on to view more detailed data, such as an individual's criminal background. In addition, automated messages can be requested to monitor an individual's legal status changes.

"Because SAS hosts CJLEADS, the state focuses on design and business requirements, rather than procurement and installation and maintenance of a technical infrastructure," explains Bell. "With shrinking state budgets, leveraging existing computing capabilities and technical support resources continues to be the most economical and efficient way to enhance the application environment."

Scalability

"CJLEADS is highly scalable. Initially CJLEADS supported 3,000 users – it now supports 26,700 criminal justice professionals and will continue to grow in the coming years," Bell continues. "Based on improved access to more complete information and continued expansion of the system's functionality, the state estimates time efficiencies and cost avoidance of $12 million annually. SAS brought considerable resources to this project and demonstrated a vested interest in public safety. SAS' expertise in data integration and analytics, as well as strong security controls of the technical environment, application access and authentication, was critical due to the complexity and sensitivity of the data."

Bell says the greatest challenge developing CJLEADS was data quality and the lack of common data identifiers from disparate sources. "Significant time and effort was spent developing consistent business rules to accurately match multiple system records for one individual. Because critical decisions are made based on information in CJLEADS, accurate data integration was pivotal to the project's success."

Preventing crime in less time

Bell points to a number of recent criminal arrests that demonstrate the effect CJLEADS is having:

One law enforcement agency cross-referenced security video images of an unidentified larceny suspect, who subsequently used a credit card fraudulently. While searching associates of the credit card owner in CJLEADS, investigators found an image that was an exact match with the suspect in the video.

The state's Department of Insurance criminal investigations division used CJLEADS to track a fugitive and, discovering the individual was scheduled to appear in a county court, had the person arrested at the appearance, saving a number of investigators several hours of work.

One officer, questioning occupants of a stopped car, determined that one person being questioned had provided a fictitious name. Searching the alias in CJLEADS, the officer discovered outstanding warrants and arrested the person on-site. Searching CJLEADS also led to the arrest of three other occupants in the car, who also had outstanding warrants.

The CJLEADS watch list capability allows users to alert others that they are watching an offender. This feature helped officers alert other officers and track potential gang activity statewide through the use of CJLEADS.

New online vehicle search capabilities automates a previous manual process to locate vehicles based on partial license plate information. This capability returns potential vehicle matches to officers in a matter of minutes rather than days. Officers have indicated that this is especially helpful in hit-and-run situations.

"The strong, collaborative relationship between SAS and the state of North Carolina has been critical to the development of CJLEADS," he adds. "SAS' knowledge of key technology and best practices, combined with a flexible, iterative design approach, enabled us to meet the tight, legislatively mandated deadline."

Challenge

- Needed a comprehensive view of individuals with prior criminal records, including potentially dangerous offenders.
- Required an efficient, integrated criminal justice application to provide quick access to accurate offender information.

Solution

SAS® Business Analytics

Benefits

- Improved data access saves state $12 million a year.
- Reduced manual data integration.
- Reduced risk of overlooking critical offender data.
- Integrated criminal offender data.
- Automated watch list lets officials monitor changes in offender status.

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