Federal Statistical Agency Priorities – Roundtable Discussion

Jeri M. Mulrow
VP & Director, Westat
Former Principal Deputy Director, Bureau of Justice Statistics

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JeriMulrow@westat.com
Bureau of Justice Statistics

**Mission:** Collect, analyze, publish information on crime, criminal offenders, victims of crime, and operations of justice systems at all levels of government

Established 1979 under the Justice Systems Improvement Act of 1979

Current **statistics** cover: corrections, courts, federal processing of crime, indicators of crime, Indian country justice, justice employment & expenditures, law enforcement, victims

Supports criminal justice **data improvement** projects: National Criminal History, National Instant Criminal Background Check System, State Justice Systems, NIBRS
Create a strong leadership structure

• Restore Senate confirmation of the BJS Director & change to a fixed term, staggered across election years to ensure
  – A highly qualified leader
  – A strong voice within the Department of Justice for timely, objective, relevant data releases
  – A credible voice among the disparate data providers (~60 national statistical programs and 50,000+ criminal justice agencies)

• Reinstate SES career level status to the Principal Deputy Director position
Re-invigorate existing & develop new strategic partnerships

• Reengage with the Federal Statistical System
  – actively participate on the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy and with Evidence Act activities

• Revitalize partnerships with key DOJ agencies, such as
  – Federal Bureau of Investigation, Office of Victims of Crime, Bureau of Prisons, Office of Violence Against Women, National Institute of Justice, and others to improve and support data collection activities

• Develop strategic partnerships
  – With state & local justice agencies, academic institutions (criminal justice, statistics, data science) to support modernization efforts
BJS – Data to Keep our Communities Safe

Modernize & strengthen processes for:

› Data collections, acquisitions and linkages
  • Develop a 5-year R&D plan to assess: current coverage and gaps in data, methodologies to improve measures of crime, feasibility & fitness of use of new/alternative data sources, including administrative and open source, other data sources for linkage/integration with BJS data, and practical ways to implement

› Data communication, publication and dissemination
  • Develop & adhere to a data release and publication schedule
  • Reduce existing backlog
  • Move to a digital first strategy for data and report access, including, data visualizations, maps, dashboards, APIs, etc.
Sustained focus to grow:

› Budget
  - Address decade long chronic shortfalls. FY10: $59.0M  FY21: $36.6M
  - Bolster ability to meet separately with OMB and Congress

› Staff
  - Cultivate and build upon current staff skills in criminal justice & statistics
  - Grow staff size and expand skills (data science, digital communication, project management, leadership...)
Recommit to principles & practices:

• Relevance to policy issues
• Credibility among data users
• Trust among data providers
• Independence from political influence

Reinstitute culture of transparency & engagement

• Establish an advisory board with FACA status
Thank You

Comments, questions, discussion?

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The Bureau of Justice Statistics

• faces some big challenges
• has huge potential
• needs attention & support

BJS must play a bigger role in providing the data needed to make sound policy decisions about how to keep our communities safe.