

Data Reporting Improvement Plan

Williamson County, Texas

The Williamson County Commissioners' Court established the Williamson County Data Advisory Board in 2009 in compliance with Chapter 60.10 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure as enacted by the 81st Legislature. Although Williamson County's completion percentages exempted the county from creation of the Board, Williamson County is committed to improving the availability of criminal justice data to law enforcement and prosecutors offices across the State of Texas. The report of the Data Advisory Board was created in the format requested by the Texas Department of Public Safety and is set out below.

Section I

Mission Statement for Williamson County's Data Advisory Board

Williamson County would like to set the standard for the State of Texas for complete and accurate reporting of criminal justice information.

Section II

The Williamson County Data Advisory Board will consist of the following members or their designee:

Sheriff	Gerry Moore*
District Clerk	Lisa David
County Clerk	Nancy Rister & George Shuman*
IT	Otis Coufal
District Attorney	Jana K. McCown* & Grace Frias*
County Attorney	Stephanie Lloyd*
Round Rock Police Department	Captain Alain Babin

*designee of the elected official

Upon notice that a member of the board is unable to serve, a replacement shall be designated by the head of the department to serve in the capacity as designee.

Section III

The Current Process

In December of 2009, Williamson County began using a computer software package designed by Tyler Technologies known as Odyssey. The Odyssey system is an integrated criminal justice package that consists of different modules used by the Williamson County jail, the District and County Attorney's offices, and the District and County Clerk's offices. A criminal case that is initiated in the jail is linked throughout the different packages, i.e. jail manager, prosecutor package, and case manager, by using the TRN (tracking incident number) and TRS (tracking incident suffix).

A. Arrest reporting to repository

When any person is charged with a crime and booked into the Williamson county jail, booking employees at the jail are responsible for submitting the fingerprints and CJIS/CR43 forms in order to get a TRN/TRS number assigned. The TRN/TRS is system assigned using one of the batch of numbers provided to the county by DPS. The Sheriff's department booking staff handles the CJIS reporting for all adult arrests in the county on all reportable offenses for all police departments as well as the Sheriff's office. This includes the arrests for the following agencies: Bartlett Police Department, Cedar Park Police Department, Georgetown Police Department, Florence Police Department, Granger Police Department, Hutto Police Department, Jarrell Police Department, Leander Police Department, Liberty Hill Police Department, Round Rock Police Department, Taylor Police Department, Thrall Police Department, Williamson County Sheriff's Office, and the Georgetown office of the Department of Public Safety. All agencies handle their own reporting of juvenile offenses.

Offenders arrested in our county on warrants from other counties are fingerprinted and the prints are forwarded to the county where the warrant originated. The county where the warrant originated is responsible for reporting their CJIS information and fingerprints to DPS. Offenders arrested out of county on Williamson County warrants have their CJIS'able offenses reported when the arresting county forwards their fingerprints to Williamson County.

B. Arrest reporting to prosecutor

Felony offenses: Every weekday, a prosecutor from the District Attorney's office goes to the jail to review all cases where a defendant has been charged with a felony and booked into the Williamson County jail. If the charges are accepted, copies of the appropriate paperwork are made for the DA's office and a case is initiated within the DA's office. When the data is entered into the prosecutor package software, it is linked to the jailing so that the same TRN/TRS number(s) follow a particular charge through the system. If the charge is referred to the County Attorney's office for prosecution as a misdemeanor, CJIS reporting is done upon completion of the misdemeanor prosecution. If a charge is declined, the same employees responsible for data entry into the software are responsible for the CJIS reporting of the declined charges.

Misdemeanor offenses: Every weekday, the legal assistants pick up paperwork from the magistrate and enter the case into the computer by choosing the correct jailing with the corresponding charge and TRN linked to it. They then prepare an intake packet for the County Attorney prosecutors and Investigators to review. Once the prosecutor and investigator have reviewed the intake information, it is forwarded to the appropriate court secretary to prepare the Complaint and Information. Once the Complaint and Information are prepared, CJIS is submitted to DPS as Accepted. If the prosecutor decides to decline a case, the rejected status is submitted to DPS on the given TRN/TRS. If we refer a case to the District Attorney, we will wait for their office to file and dispose of the case and then submit CJIS for the misdemeanor charge.

C. Prosecution reporting to repository

CJIS reporting from the District Attorney's office occurs at the time a formal charge, namely an indictment or information, is filed. When additional charges are added (without an additional complaint), the employees responsible for CJIS will add the additional charges to the computer, assign the same TRN number, and create TRS numbers using the D001, D002 format. CJIS will then be reported for all charges.

In the County Attorney's office, all misdemeanor cases are reported at the time that an information is filed. If additional charges are filed after arrest without additional warrants, the county attorney employees will assign the same TRN number and create TRS numbers using the C001, C002 format.

For declined offenses, both the District and County Attorney's offices report the decline at the time the decision is made along with the rejection date.

D. Prosecution reporting to court clerk

The Odyssey software allows the two prosecutors offices to help generate information that the District and County clerk will use to initiate the data entry into the case manager (clerk's) software package. The cases in the prosecutor package and case manager package can be linked by TRN and TRS numbers, which helps ensure the correct tracking of a charge through the system. When a charge is filed with the clerk, specific entries into the prosecutor software will allow the clerk to go into the computer and use that case to create the case in the clerk's package. When the charges are linked properly, any TRN and TRS numbers will flow through from the jail to the prosecution to the clerk's packages.

E. Court clerk reporting to repository

The District and County clerk's do all CJIS reporting at the time a case is disposed. The reporting is done electronically using the Odyssey software.

Key functions

- The DPS Incident Tracking Number (TRN) and Tracking Number Suffix (TRS) are system assigned at the time of arrest from the batch of numbers provided to Williamson County
- When charges are added without additional complaints or warrants issued, the prosecuting agency adds those charges into the computer, assigns the same TRN that the offense arose from, and designates the TRS using the D001 (for felony offenses) or C001 (for misdemeanor offenses).

- The DPS “return file” is used to monitor completion percentages. A division of information into felony and misdemeanor categories would be helpful in identifying any issues that might arise.

Section IV

The principal issues associated with accurate and prompt reporting are as follows:

- The Department of Public Safety CJIS reporting guidelines are confusing and vague. The subjective nature of some of the reporting requirements allows for conflicting interpretations. Depending upon which CJIS representative is asked, an inquiry may have more than one person telling the county more than one way to do things.
- Offense codes are changed too frequently and sometimes for no apparent reason.
- New offense codes that are required for changes in the law are not always handed down in a timely fashion.
- New offense codes may be released at any time of the year, which means that some counties may not be aware that new codes have been released.
- The titles associated with offense codes are sometimes confusing because of similarities between titles. This is further complicated by the changing of codes for offenses that have not changed.
- Counties across Texas handle arrests for Williamson County warrants differently. Some counties do not create a TRN and forward it with the prints and some counties do create the TRN. When an offender who is arrested out of county returns to Williamson County, unless Williamson County fingerprints the offender and initiates the assignment of a TRN, there is the possibility that the arrest would go unreported.
- Not all Disposition and Driver Improvement data can be reported electronically and must be reported through a manual submission (for example, an order for the installation (or removal) of an Ignition Interlock device). Also, when manual corrections are required, the Clerk’s office must determine to which DPS office to send the correction – Crime Records vs. Driver Improvement – and often has to send the information to both offices.

- The two different divisions of DPS that require reporting on the same form do not always communicate the same answers when questions are asked.
- CJIS representatives seem to change frequently, which adds to the lack of a consistent interpretation of various reporting requirements.
- Williamson County is aware of at least one other county that has experienced a problem with arrest data that is being reported to DPS but not being received by DPS. We are currently attempting to resolve this particular situation and determine the source of the issue.

Section V

Williamson County's reporting percentage was 90% or greater for the years for which the latest reporting data is available. We are currently working to adapt new computer software that reports CJIS electronically and to be sure that the software works in the manner in which it was intended and which the State of Texas requires. While there is always room for improvement, Williamson County has always conscientiously reported criminal justice data to CJIS at every level and will continue to do so.

The County Data Reporting Improvement Committee would like to see changes made at the state level to the system by which offense codes are created, maintained, and distributed, however we have little ability to control those issues. We recommend that the Legislature continue to take steps to encourage, if not mandate, counties with low reporting rates to actively pursue increases in reporting. We recognize that the data contained in the CJIS system is critical to the safety of law enforcement and the citizens of Texas. Williamson County continues the commitment made long ago to accurately and completely report all criminal justice information, thereby doing our part to contribute to the safety of law enforcement and the general public.

Signed June 1, 2010

Gerry Moore
Williamson County Sheriff's Office

Nancy E. Roster
Williamson County Clerk

Lana K. McCowan
Williamson County District Attorney

Adair R. Bell
Round Rock Police Department

Otis Coufal
Williamson County IT department

Lisa David
Williamson County District Clerk

John Hummer
Williamson County Clerk

Grace Inias
Williamson County District Attorney

Stephanie Lloyd
Williamson County Attorney