

The use of the FBI's National Data Exchange System in the corrections community

BY KASEY WERTHEIM



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For their continued efforts to track down fugitives, the Georgia Department of Community Supervision (DCS) received the 2017 FBI N-DEx Excellence in Information Sharing Award. The Georgia DCS uses the batch search capability of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) National Data Exchange (N-DEx) System to search for numerous fugitives with outstanding felony warrants. In just one month, the Georgia DCS found three subjects with active Georgia parole warrants to be in custody in other jurisdictions:

1. One subject was awaiting trial in Alabama for violation of probation.
2. A second subject was detained at the Richland County Sheriff's Office in South Carolina for methamphetamine trafficking.
3. A third subject was detained in Kent County, Michigan, for aggravated assault.

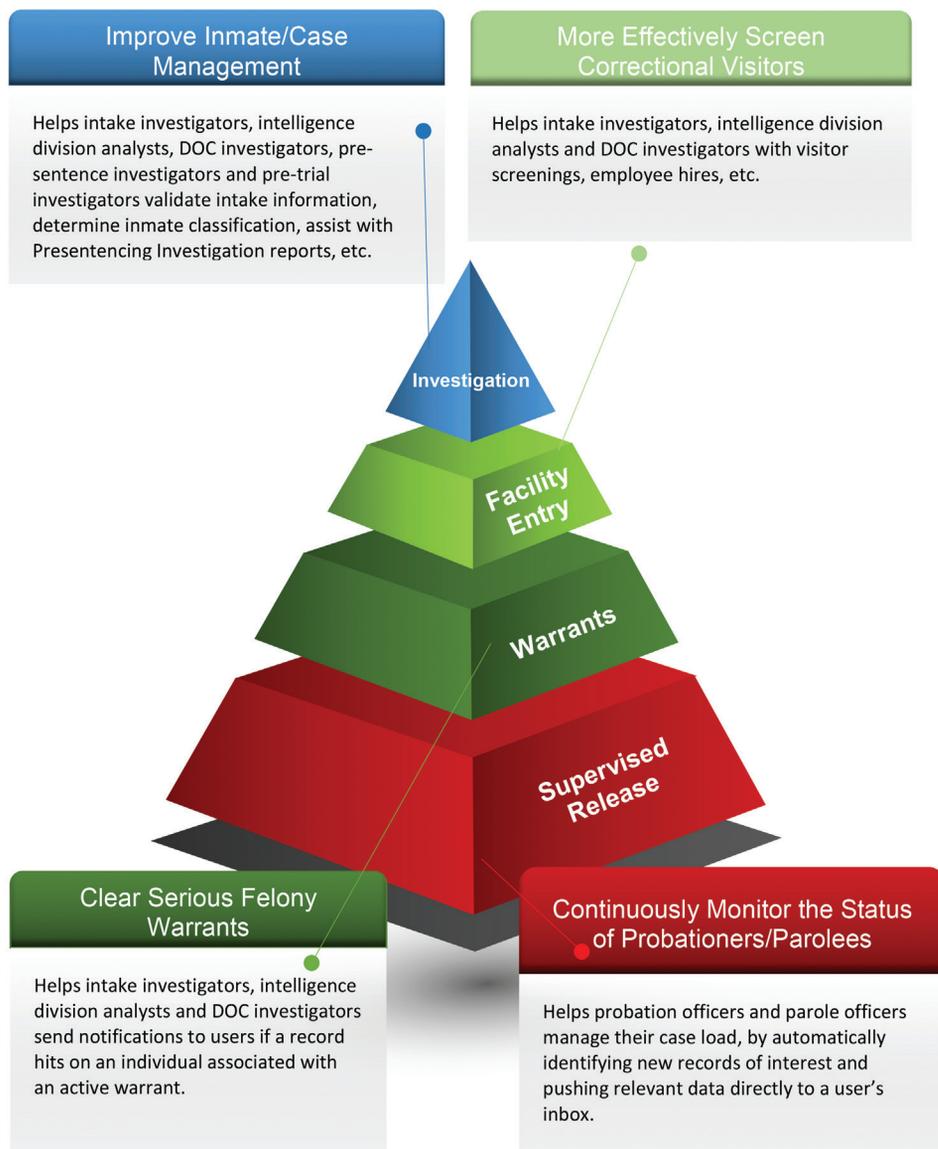
The Georgia DCS asked the Georgia Parole Board to request the subjects be extradited back to Georgia once the subjects' current sentences were served in the other states. Without the use of the N-DEx System, the subjects may have evaded detection by Georgia authorities.

The N-DEx System is an unclassified, national, strategic investigative information-sharing system that includes millions of criminal justice records to help users reduce crime and promote public safety. The N-DEx System brings together records from thousands of local, county, tribal, state and federal criminal justice agencies, helping users share, search and link information from the initial dispatch call or patrol stop to the supervision of an individual

reintegrated into the community (see Figure 1). Records in the N-DEx System span the criminal justice life cycle: information related to service calls, incident and case reports; warrants, citations and tickets; field contact and interview reports; arrest reports; missing person reports; booking and incarceration reports; and pre-trial, probation and parole reports.

Federal data available via the N-DEx System includes records from the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), International Criminal Police Organization

Figure 1: Advantages of N-DEx System



(INTERPOL), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), United States Marshals Service (USMS), Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS), Joint Automated Booking System (JABS) and the Department of Defense (DoD).

N-DEx System users can search for a variety of data types, including names, aliases, social security numbers, state and federal identification numbers, telephone numbers, addresses, vehicles, crime characteristics and more. The N-DEx system supports simple keyword searches, or a user can conduct targeted searches for specific data elements within the system. A user can conduct a search of all N-DEx System data, or the user can filter results in a variety of ways to ensure the user finds the data he or she needs. A sophisticated record correlation engine provides a snapshot of a subject's name, along with all known aliases, biographic information, identifiers, locations and booking photographs in the system. From the entity view, users can drill down into individual records to review information the agency provided, such as residence and place of birth; incident and arrest details; telephone numbers; ethnicity; identifying information, including scars, marks and tattoos; occupation; enforcement official information; offenses; known associates; and other justice system data.

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in 44 states. Thirteen departments of corrections (DOCs) supply data directly to the N-DEx System, with several other states actively working with the N-DEx Program Office (PO) to develop connectivity. With an average search response time of under two seconds, the N-DEx System facilitates more than a million searches per month from thousands of users across the criminal justice community. Web-based access is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The FBI bears the full cost of the development and maintenance of the N-DEx System, and the N-DEx PO employs a team of data integration specialists to provide assistance to agencies wishing to contribute their data. Assistance can include everything from simply answering technical questions to creating the custom software that runs on an agency's record management system (RMS) and submits its data to the N-DEx System.

Institutional corrections

Conducting searches on the N-DEx System can assist the institutional corrections community as it strives for inmate safety in jails, detention centers and prisons. Corrections personnel can obtain valuable information as they supervise and manage inmates in local and county correctional facilities. The N-DEx System can play an important role, as corrections staff are responsible for reading and reviewing a variety of relevant information and properly applying the information to the circumstances within their facility. Specifically, the N-DEx System data may improve inmate and case management, help validate intake information, determine inmate classification and housing assignments, assist in visitor screening and contribute to pre-release reports. Some corrections officials have even suggested the N-DEx System be used nationally by all state DOCs to share information with each other. If the N-DEx is fully implemented nationally, any state DOC could view comprehensive data on an inmate who served time in another state DOC.

For example, in October 2017, a parole and probation specialist with the Nevada Department of Public Safety (DPS) was conducting research on a subject whose parole eligibility hearing was approaching. As the subject was known to be a violent individual, the specialist wanted to obtain as much information on his prior arrests and convictions as possible. The specialist logged on to the

N-DEx System and found the relevant information. The specialist was also able to contact the point of contact (POC) provided in the N-DEx System record to obtain permission to use the information in a post-conviction report. The parole board considered the additional information, resulting in a denial of the subject's parole. While the board does not disclose what specific information was relied upon, the specialist provided the relevant information for the board to make an informed decision about the subject.

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Community corrections

N-DEx information also aids community supervision. An estimated 4.8 million adults are currently under some type of community supervision (pretrial, probation, parole or other post-prison supervision) in the U.S.¹ In the vast majority of cases, conditions are placed on the release of a convicted defendant on probation, as well as on the early release of prisoners to parole. Most probation and parole officers are faced with high workloads, at times managing twice an ideal population of supervisees. Most states have implemented a statutory requirement for probation and parole officers to regularly monitor compliance with conditions of supervision. With such a high volume, it can result in nominal supervision. This comes at a time when many states are pressuring their agencies to provide rapid notification in the event a supervisee, active or absconder comes into contact with the criminal justice system. Probation officers can quickly and efficiently use the N-DEx System to find information on offender behavior, as they conduct pre-trial investigations, prepare risk assessments, assist with pre-sentencing investigations and write reports

of non-compliance to the court. It can help parole officers as they supervise offenders in the community; conduct home, work or other visits with offenders; and report non-compliance to the paroling authority. N-DEx System data can enhance supervision efforts, identify criminal justice contact, discover previously unknown relationships and associates, reveal associated addresses and facilitate the apprehension of absconders.

The N-DEx System can enhance supervision efforts by quickly identifying offender contact with law enforcement in other jurisdictions. Each year, roughly 20-25 percent of supervised offenders will either abscond or be re-incarcerated with a new sentence, revocation or another unsatisfactory exit.² For example, a probation officer can discover if an offender was in a vehicle with a convicted felon in another state based on an N-DEx System incident report, listing the passenger as an associate of the driver. Parole officers have reported success in finding offenders listed as victims or witnesses of a crime in an N-DEx System record.

The N-DEx System can assist in the expedited apprehension of absconders and fugitives. The generally high rates of recidivism in the community supervision population can have a significant impact on public safety and typically results in large lists of absconders. By regularly searching batches of data in the N-DEx System, officers can increase their insight into their high-risk offenders anywhere in the country. The N-DEx PO took this need into consideration as the N-DEx System was developed. The batch search capability allows users to create Excel spreadsheets of data, identify the data elements and upload them to the N-DEx System. This feature can be used for probationers and parolees, warrants, absconders, telephone numbers, Vehicle Identification Numbers or other types of information. The results can then be sorted by offense date to identify the most recent records in the N-DEx System.

As an example, between January 2018 and March 2018, an executive assistant (EA) with the New Mexico Corrections Department (NMCD) Security Threat Intelligence Unit was searching for recent records on probation absconders through the FBI N-DEx System, accessible through the Regional Information Sharing System's Rocky Mountain Information Network portal. From multiple batch searches, the EA found more than 50 leads, which led to NMCD locating 12 subjects in custody in

other jurisdictions. In January alone, the EA found seven of the subjects in custody at the El Paso County Sheriff's Office in Texas. Warrants against the subjects included burglary, trafficking controlled substances, resisting an officer and receiving stolen property.

Additional subjects were in custody in other jurisdictions including Oklahoma, New Mexico and South Carolina. In each case, the EA contacted the agency to determine if the subjects were still in custody. The EA forwarded the updated information to the relevant NMCD officers to place holds on the subjects for their return to the NMCD, upon serving their time in the other jurisdictions. Without running the batch searches in the N-DEx System multiple times each month, many of the subjects would have most likely continued to evade detection by NMCD authorities or would have been released from those jurisdictions before NMCD staff could place holds on the subjects. The NMCD staff also took advantage of the collaboration feature within the N-DEx System, uploading their latest warrant hits to share with other NMCD and FBI staff.

Another helpful feature of the N-DEx System for probation and parole officers is the subscription and notification capability. Officers can enter their supervisees into the system and "subscribe" to the results. If any record meeting the criteria of the subscription is subsequently entered into the system, the officer will receive an e-mail alert to check the N-DEx System. The officer

can then go to the notification section of the N-DEx System, view the entry and access the record to view the details. This feature, combined with the concept of initial batch searching of large lists of supervisees or absconders, supports continuous monitoring of large populations.

The National Institute of Corrections and other major criminal justice associations have endorsed the N-DEx System, they include: The Association of State Correctional Administrators, the American Probation and Parole Association, the Corrections Technology Association, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Sheriffs' Association, the Major Cities Chiefs Association and the Major County Sheriffs of America (formerly known as the Major County Sheriff's Association).

Sharing correction and supervision information via the N-DEx System is tremendously valuable. Prison offender and jail management systems can inform N-DEx System users about offenders by providing information such as:

- What the offender did while incarcerated (disciplinary actions).
- With whom they associated.
- Who visited them.
- Who phoned them while in prison.
- Who they received money from or who they transferred money to.
- Inmate involvement with gang activity.
- Associated security threat groups.
- Whether there were terrorism or radicalization efforts.
- Their release dates.

Other case management systems can provide information about:

- Friends, relatives and associates of probationers and parolees.
- Where and with whom the released inmates will live.
- Their probation or parole conditions (supervision level, restrictions, etc.).
- Where they will be employed.
- Where they socialize, visit, etc.

The N-DEx PO has many successes of users making connections between investigations based on information



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from corrections data. Consequently, the N-DEx PO is actively seeking additional data from corrections and court record management systems.

Relevant data of interest in the criminal justice community include:

- Booking and Intake Reports
- Offender Identifiers: FBI number, state ID number, Social Security Number, driver’s license number, probation and parole number, etc.
- Photos
- Aliases
- Known Associates
- Visitation Information
- Housing Assignments
- Disciplinary Management
- Commissary (money deposits/payments)
- Gang and Security Threat Risks
- Alerts: active warrants, protective orders, registered sex offender status, cautions, incarceration status, etc.
- Supervised Release Reports
- Revocation Reports
- Presentence Investigation Reports (PSI)
- Pre-Trial Investigation Reports
- Risk Assessments

Why participate:

- No fee.
- Nationwide data sharing.
- Connect the dots between seemingly unrelated records.
- Immediate availability to over 700 million local, state, regional, tribal and federal records.
- Coordinate investigations across jurisdictions.
- Enhance supervision efforts.
- Increase public safety.

How to participate

Flexible access to the N-DEx System is available via the Law Enforcement Enterprise Portal (LEEP), Regional Information Sharing System (RISS), Naval Criminal Investigative Service Law Enforcement Information Exchange, COPLINK and other secure

connection options. Agencies can become an identity provider to the N-DEx System to allow users from that agency to obtain provisioned access. As with all FBI CJIS Systems, access is managed by the CJIS system officer who is responsible for ensuring that the data is only accessed for criminal justice purposes. Usage of the system is subject to audit to ensure that appropriate compliance and data sharing is occurring. Data contributors retain full ownership of the data and can establish data sharing rules that govern who can access their data. Use of the N-DEx System information requires obtaining advanced permission and verification from the data owning agency.

The N-DEx System is a force multiplier, allowing users to obtain more information in less time.

Maintaining a posture of information sharing that supports public safety is critical, especially if the technology is readily available to do it. The N-DEx System is a force multiplier, allowing users to obtain more information in less time. To take advantage of the system, visit www.CJIS.gov to create a LEEP account. If you already have a LEEP account, request access to the N-DEx System. Contact the N-DEx PO for additional details on user access or if you are interested in sharing corrections data with the N-DEx System. The help desk staff are available by telephone, Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. E.T. at 304-625-0555, or by email at ndex@leo.gov.

ENDNOTES

¹ Kaeble, D. & Bonczar, T. (2015) *Probation and Parole in the United States, 2015*. Retrieved from <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ppus15.pdf>

² Ibid.

Kasey Wertheim is a project manager for the Tygart Technology Inc. Contractor/FBI CJIS Division, N-DEx Program Office.