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State Administering Agencies

State Administering Agencies (SAAs) conduct coordinated and transparent strategic planning and implement structural reforms that improve the administration of justice, while saving taxpayer money. There are 56 agencies in all 50 states and territories, and Washington DC. Visit the SAA Directory for agency contact information and websites, and contact information agency heads, JAG contacts and SAC Directors.

Most SAAs are a component of the Governor's (or Mayor's) office; a free-standing criminal justice planning entity or a division of the state department of public safety. In addition to location, the mission, vision and strategic focus of an SAA is often defined by state statutes. Due to differences in location, formula grants administered, research capacity and leadership selection processes, SAAs are a diverse group of government agencies with differing capacities, perspectives, missions and priorities.

The Role of the SAA

With a structure and process that varies by state, these agencies use strategic planning to analyze crime trends, evaluate the priorities of all segments of the criminal justice system, set out a plan for reducing crime and victimization and guide the use of the grant funds.

Furthermore, SAAs, in partnership with the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), design, replicate and implement evidence-based programs and practices that target the needs identified in their strategic plans, incorporate rigorous research, measure performance, and provide an honest assessment of success or failure. In many states, the SAAs have established training centers that help their local partners develop and deploy evidence-based practices. (See our *From Policy to Practice* video series for information about state resources for supporting implementation of EBPs).

Many innovative criminal justice practices started with funding from the Edward Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) Program, the primary provider of federal criminal justice funding to state and local jurisdictions. JAG-funded programs have been replicated nationwide. These include drug courts, methamphetamine lab reduction, anti-gang strategies, reentry programs and information sharing protocols. Browse our *Library of Byrne JAG Promising Practices* for JAG-funded program examples from all 50 states and Washington DC.

Program Management

As the executive branch agency designated to accept, plan and distribute criminal justice funds, state administering agencies seek to leverage state and federal grant dollars to address the needs of statewide and local criminal justice systems. SAAs serve as the primary coordinating body for state and local public safety issue identification, system collaboration, policy development, and system planning and implementation.

The challenges facing the justice system are many; comparatively, the resources available to address them are few. These challenges include: hiring and retaining qualified personnel as well as training current staff; implementing specialized programs (i.e., drug courts, gang units, internet crime enforcement units, sex offender management); building or improving facilities; making greater use of technology through system and software upgrades, integrating stand-alone data silos, and purchasing equipment to allow for high-tech processing of evidence; and supplying other resources where needed.

These responsibilities require SAAs to work closely with a myriad of state and local entities, including: law enforcement, prosecution and defense agencies, court systems, corrections departments, non-profit service providers and professional associations. See, for example, the NCJA webinar on *State and Local Partnerships for Criminal Justice Reform*.

Strategic Planning

In addition to programmatic challenges, governors, legislators and members of the public want to know that tax dollars are well-spent and responsibly used. Priorities must be set so the limited resources that are available are allocated wisely.

The strategic planning process provides a systematic way for an organization to express its vision, describe its values, state or update its mission, develop and accomplish short- and long-term goals, identify strengths and weaknesses, set goals and timelines, and track progress. The process can be used as a roadmap for the organization—one that articulates the way in which an organization will operate and the direction that it will take during the next several years.

Strategic planning brings together all parts of the organization, including board members, managers, staff, collaborative partners, advisory members, and community members. Input from these members, from the beginning, ensures that each member has every piece of information and every opportunity to have input to accomplish the goals and tasks specified in the plan.

There is no single strategic planning model or process that will work for every agency. SAA leadership and staff are as varied in their makeup and talent mix as the size, shape, weather, geography, and demographics of the states and territories where they are located. Each SAA has unique local legislative requirements, local expectations and ways of doing business. A strategic plan must be flexible and practical and yet serve as a guide to implementing programs, evaluating program effectiveness, and making modifications when necessary.

See our *Strategic Planning: An Action Guide* webinar and Strategic Planning Toolkit for more information about criminal justice planning.

The NCJA also offers Statewide Planning Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) to SAAs to help states meet the Byrne JAG requirement of comprehensive statewide strategic plans.

Research and Evaluation

Sound policy and programs are grounded in and informed by both research and evaluation. While the concepts often apply the same tools and methods, they serve different purposes, fulfill different information needs, and their results are used in different ways.

Research usually produces generalizable knowledge based on inference from studying a small group -- or sample -- of a larger population. This research may address general and fundamental questions (called "basic research") that are sometimes complex -- such as "what motivates an offender to change?" or "what is the interplay between mental illness and offending?" Or, it may have a more practical purpose (also known as "applied research") and help accomplish tasks. For example: "How can our community corrections program effectively reduce the recidivism rate?"

Evaluation, on the other hand, is a systematic, objective process for determining the effectiveness of a policy or program. It addresses questions about whether and to what extent the program is achieving its goals and objectives. Evaluations may, for example, ask whether something is performing as you want it to, how well works, and how much does it cost per benefit gained?

Research and evaluation can ensure that funds are expended as planned and agreed to in federal grant plans and proposals but assuring those funds are used to achieve maximum results. In your capacity as an SAA, you will be asked to allocate and approve funds for research and/or evaluation components, proposals and projects. As a study or evaluation proceeds, you will be given briefings on progress made and be expected to ensure the study stays on course. You may also be expected to describe and apply findings.

Evidence-Based Programs and Practices

SAAAs allocate federal funds for state and local criminal justice programs. As such, they play a critical role in facilitating the use of evidence-based programs.

While there is no standard definition of what constitutes evidence-based, the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) "considers programs and practices to be evidence-based when their effectiveness has been positively demonstrated by causal evidence, generally obtained through one or more outcome evaluations," where "causal evidence depends on the use of scientific methods to rule out, to the extent possible, alternative explanations for the documented change." This approach reduces wasteful spending, expands innovative programs, and strengthens accountability.

The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control's Continuum of Evidence Effectiveness illustrates the distinctions between evidence-based and promising programs and practices.

See the NCJA webinar archive for resources on implementing and sustaining EBPs. In addition, our *From Policy to Practice* video series provides examples of state resources for supporting implementation of EBPs.

Statistical Analysis Centers

Statistical Analysis Centers (SACs) are also essential to sound strategic planning, policy formulation, and the implementation and replication of EBPs. The SACs perform a variety of activities including collecting, analyzing, and distributing criminal justice data, conducting policy-relevant research, and designing and implementing automated information systems. SACs play an important role in development of criminal and juvenile justice policy at the state and local levels. Their research provides the evidence that policymakers use to guide their decision-making. By furthering the use of evidence-based practices in their states', SACs promote the effective and efficient administration of criminal and juvenile justice. SAC

Directors at the 2013 Executive Session on Evidence-Based Policy discussed how they provide support to their SAAs, and the challenges and opportunities they encounter in providing data and information to support the implementation of EBPs in their respective states.

See also the NCJA and JRSA webinar archives for more information about SAA-SAC partnerships.

Grants Management and Administration

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) administers numerous grant programs to support state and local criminal justice systems. No single issue is more critical to the proper administration of an SAA's job performance than the management of the award and the monitoring of federal funds to eligible grantees. If properly executed, the agency will thrive, programs will flourish and best practices will advance. If not, the agency will suffer, not only in reputation, but also in the ultimate denial of sufficient funds to promote positive programs and criminal justice advances in the state.

More significant than the selection of any one particular model of administration is the necessity to have an effective and wholly legal process in place. For example, whether a state chooses to use the advisory board model in all instances – whether federally required or not – is of lesser importance than is the need to ensure that a comprehensive method has been established to assure that all legal and accounting requirements are met. You as the SAA owe this not only to sub-grantees, but also to your state's criminal justice effort as a whole.

Many states divide their criminal justice planning staff programmatically, while others utilize a model with grant specialists handling all types of grants. For example, in states using the first model, all juvenile grants are handled by individuals assigned to a juvenile section or unit; with the second structure, juvenile grants, victims' grants, drug grants and state funded grants are administered by a grant team or section, leaving programmatic and policy issues to others. Still others utilize a third structure, organizing staff geographically so a single staff member oversees all grants awarded in a specific jurisdiction. Whichever model is used, strong emphasis must always be placed upon proper accounting and accountability procedures. This applies to the agency itself as well as to all sub-grantees.

The SAA in even the smallest state is unlikely to know the large number of requirements attached to each award. Therefore, it is incumbent upon her to employ professional grant managers and accounting staff who do possess this detailed knowledge and upon whom she can rely with confidence.

See the Grants Management and Administration section for more information about this topic and training and technical assistance offered by the NCJA.

Federal Budget and Appropriations

Because prospective grantees apply to DOJ and other departments of the federal government for program funding, we would like to start by reminding SAAs that the Constitution grants federal funding powers exclusively to Congress. Before DOJ can make a single dollar available in grants, Congress must pass an appropriations bill and the President must sign it into law. This section provides details of the annual federal budgeting process so that executive directors have a better idea of what is involved in legislating and funding grant programs. We would also like to point out that the extensive experience and expertise that SAAs acquire in the course of their work makes their input into annual budgeting vital. Executive directors have a significant voice and must therefore do their best to ensure that federal criminal justice dollars are as well spent as possible.

Learn more about the federal appropriations and grantmaking process.

Technology, Data and Justice Information Sharing

Today's technology solutions require strategies that improve how the justice enterprise collects, shares, and uses information to support justice and public safety decision making. Strong state level leadership and planning, and collaboration with local practitioners, is critical to implementing and improving justice information sharing strategies across the country.

SAAs spend nearly one-fifth of Byrne JAG funds on information sharing initiatives including criminal records, cyber-crime, identity theft, fusion centers, and other information sharing projects, they are becoming more knowledgeable about national standards and their leadership role in these efforts.

For some, the need to share information is a foregone conclusion. Information sharing can increase effective decision making, aid prosecution in the administration of justice, and empower law enforcement officers and first responders to take appropriate action on the scene.

However, information sharing is a powerful tool that must be used wisely. Information in the wrong hands can become a danger to privacy, civil liberties, and civil rights. Even when information is used correctly, the sheer volume of information can be overwhelming and difficult to piece together. Therefore, information must be shared only with appropriate partners, with adequate privacy and security controls, and in such a way that it is practical, actionable, and useful to its end recipients. Many of the planning and policy issues relating to privacy, the use of data, system governance, collaborative stakeholder involvement, and investment decisions to promote the adoption of national standards require the executive leadership. Working together, SAAs and practitioners can provide a collaborative environment to increase the adoption and implementation of national standards and tools for justice information sharing country.

Federal Partners

The Office of Justice Programs has been directed to implement or oversee programs and services that are of specific interest to SAAs. Established by the Justice Assistance Act of 1984 and reauthorized in 1988, the OJP provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime,

administer justice, and assist crime victims. The OJP provides innovative leadership to federal, state, local, and tribal justice systems, by disseminating current knowledge and practices and providing grants for the implementation of these crime fighting strategies.

Because most of the responsibility for crime control and prevention falls to states, cities, and local units of government, the federal government can be effective in these areas only to the extent that it can enter into partnerships with these entities. Therefore, the OJP does not directly carry out law enforcement and justice activities and related services. Instead, the OJP works in partnership with the justice community to identify the most pressing challenges confronting the justice system and to provide information, training, coordination, and innovative strategies and approaches to address these challenges.

Learn more about the Office of Justice Programs.

Training and Technical Assistance

The National Criminal Justice Association offers training and technical assistance to SAAs in strategic planning and strategy implementation, stakeholder engagement, grants management and administration, data access and information sharing. [Click here](#) to learn more about the Statewide Planning TTA Program and submit an online TTA request form.

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Issues & Policy / State Administering Agencies

The NCJA represents state, tribal and local governments on crime control and crime prevention issues.

State Administering Agencies

State Administering Agencies (SAAs) are entities within state and territorial governments and the District of Columbia that are responsible for comprehensive criminal justice planning and policy development. In addition, these agencies allocate resources statewide and distribute, monitor and report on spending under the federal Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) program and, in most cases, other grant programs. As required by federal statute, the SAA is designated by the Governor, or in the case of territories and the District of Columbia, the head of the executive branch.

As the executive branch agency designated to accept, plan and distribute criminal justice funds, SAAs seek to leverage state and federal grant dollars to address the needs of statewide and local criminal justice systems. Because of this responsibility, SAAs serve as the primary coordinating body for state and local public safety issue identification, system collaboration, policy development, and system

planning and implementation. These responsibilities require SAAs to work closely with a myriad of state and local entities including: law enforcement, prosecution and defense agencies, court systems, corrections departments, non-profit service providers and professional associations.

Resources for SAAs

Training and Technical Assistance

NCJA, with funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, provides training and technical assistance to SAAs that manage federal Byrne JAG justice funds along with a wide-ranging portfolio of other criminal and juvenile justice and victim services funds. As the primary technical assistance provider to SAAs funded by the Department of Justice, NCJA is knowledgeable about the administration of federal and state justice funds and is uniquely positioned to assist states in the administration of federal justice funding and serve in an advisory capacity to the SAA. The TTA we provide can be adapted to the circumstances in each state and their agencies. For more information, please contact Chris Asplen, NCJA Executive Director, at casplen@ncja.org.

NCJA Center for Justice Planning

The NCJA Center for Justice Planning is a unique resource for planners at all levels of government and in all agencies and organizations responsible for developing strategies for delivering justice. Building on the knowledge and expertise of practitioners who are working to build communities through effective justice, the NCJP serves as the catalyst for transforming the practice of justice planning.

Characteristics of SAAs

Agency Location

There are 56 Byrne JAG SAAs in all 50 states, five territories and the District of Columbia. Contact information and agency profiles for each SAA can be found on the NCJA Center for Justice Planning website.

Most SAAs are a component of the Governor's (or Mayor's) office; a free-standing criminal justice planning entity or a division of the state department of public safety. In addition to location, the mission, vision and strategic focus of an SAA is often defined by state statutes. Due to differences in location, formula grants administered, research capacity and the leadership selection processes, SAAs are a diverse group of government agencies with differing capacities, perspectives, missions and priorities.

Formula Grants Oversight

In addition to administering the Byrne JAG program, the majority of SAAs oversee other federal criminal justice formula grant programs. In FY 2013, 93 percent of SAAs administered at least four of the Department of Justice state formula grants including: Residential Substance Abuse Treatment for State Prisoners (RSAT) Formula Grant; Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program, the Violence against Women Act (VAWA) STOP/SASP grants, Victims of Crime Act (VOCA); the National Criminal History Improvement Program (NCHIP) and Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) formula grants. priorities.

Strategic Planning

As the principal entity responsible for strategic resource allocation, SAAs are often called upon to lead statewide or grant specific planning efforts. Due to their grant making and monitoring functions, SAAs are often uniquely positioned to identify and convene stakeholders from across the justice system.

Through the use of strategic planning SAAs ensure that both federal grant funds and state resources are effectively leveraged to address the needs of state and local criminal justice systems.

Governing Boards and Councils

In an effort to better serve the criminal justice community SAA offices often staff and work closely with high level governing boards and state level advisory councils. These boards and councils, comprised of state and local level decisionmakers, help the SAA establish policy and priorities, analyze statewide trends, identify recourses, and share successful program models. These councils and boards often help guide strategic criminal justice investment, create policy and practice recommendations and guide future criminal justice initiatives.

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