

Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
Department of Criminal Justice Information Services



CORI Information Technology System
Twelve Month Legislative Progress Report

November 7, 2011

Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
Massachusetts Department of Criminal Justice Information Services
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I. Project Background

In August 2010, when Governor Patrick signed into law Chapter 256 of the Acts of 2010, “An Act Reforming the Administrative Procedures Relative to Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) and Pre- and Post-Trial Supervised Release,” commonly known as the “CORI Reform Law,” the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS) immediately moved forward to design and build the new, Internet-based Criminal Offender Record Information (“i-CORI”) System.

The new system is being designed to provide the following categories of access established as a result of the legislation:

- **Standard Access**, for most employers, landlords, and volunteer organizations who, for the first time ever, will have access to CORI for the purposes of screening current and prospective employees, volunteers, and tenants;
- **Required Access**, for employers or organizations that require additional access to CORI, not available under Standard access, because of a statutory, regulatory, or accreditation requirement, including primarily those who provide services to children or other vulnerable populations;
- **Open Access**, for members of the general public; and
- **Personal Access**, for individuals to receive their own CORI.

Implementing the CORI provisions of Chapter 256 of the Acts of 2010 will significantly advance how Massachusetts provides access to CORI and will work towards the realization of key CORI reform goals. For the i-CORI system to successfully reflect the requirements articulated and defined in the CORI Reform Law, various business, policy, and technology challenges must be mitigated. The following sections outline such challenges and include the mitigation efforts the i-CORI project team is engaged in to ensure the success of the project.

II. Progress Update

The following significant project milestones have been achieved as of November 4, 2011:

- **Completed the i-CORI Business Requirements**

The i-CORI Business Requirements Document represents the collection of functionality that the system will provide to end-users to fulfill the needs outlined by the CORI Reform Law. These requirements are ultimately a reflection not only of the CORI Reform Law, but also of specific business needs identified by the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS), DCJIS, and the end-user community.
- **Completed the i-CORI Data Analysis**

Building on existing efforts to identify and engage Commonwealth criminal justice agencies that contribute data to the CORI environment, an extensive analysis of historical, current, and future-potential data was completed. This analysis spanned data sources from the Courts, the Department of Correction (DOC), the Houses of Correction (HOCs), and the Massachusetts Parole Board.
- **Completed the i-CORI Design Specifications**

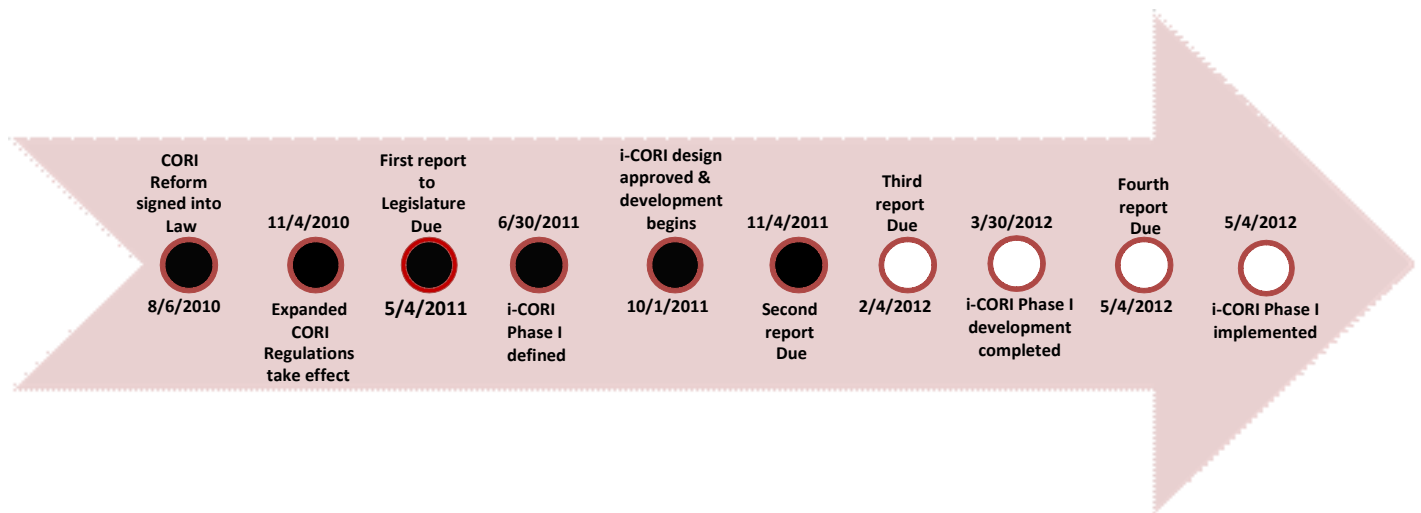
The i-CORI Design Specifications are the initial technical and functional representation of the i-CORI Business Requirements and the detailed implementation steps to be executed during the development of the i-CORI system.
- **Completed the i-CORI Development Plan**

The project team identified and outlined an incremental development plan that will enable the i-CORI system to be completed in the timeframe required by the CORI Reform Law.
- **Ongoing Mitigation of Project Challenges**

Key challenges that were identified during the course of the project were presented to EOPSS so that mitigation strategies could be developed. Near- and long-term mitigation efforts were established to address issues surrounding the quality of historical CORI data as well as policies to support the future implementation of the project. These challenges and mitigation efforts are highlighted in Part V of this report.

III. i-CORI Project Timeline

The initial phase of the i-CORI system, including functionality required by the CORI Reform Law, is currently on schedule to be implemented by the required deadline of May 4, 2012. Additional functionality permitted within the CORI Reform Law is planned as part of a future phase of the i-CORI system. A timeline for future phase(s) of the i-CORI system will be established once the initial phase of the i-CORI system has been developed.



Key i-CORI Initial Phase Functionality

- Public-facing functionality will be implemented for electronic submission of CORI requests and access to distributed CORI Reports across the four categories of access established in the CORI Reform Law, including Open, Standard, Required, and Personal CORI access.
- An internal system will be established for processing all CORI requests including querying CORI data and applying applicable screening rules based upon the category of access of the request.
- Maintenance of an electronic log of all queries within the i-CORI System will be provided to enable DCJIS to respond to self-audit requests. The electronic log will include the name of the requestor, name of the subject, date of the query, and purpose of the query.

Key i-CORI Future Phase Functionality

- Public-facing functionality for electronic submission of Self-Audit requests and electronic access to Self-Audit reports will be included. (Self-Audit requests and reports will be handled manually during the initial phase.)
- Other functionality will be established as determined by DCJIS.

IV. i-CORI Project Expenditures

The budget for the i-CORI project is \$1,731,247; and to date, DCJIS has expended \$506,499. The i-CORI project budget may require an upward revision to include tasks to address business, policy, and data challenges identified by the project team. Such challenges and their mitigation needs are outlined in the remainder of this report. The i-CORI Budget is being funded through Capital Bond IV.

Budget	4Q FY2011	2Q FY2012	3Q FY2012	4Q FY2012	Total Expenditures
Planned	\$506,499	\$395,968	\$395,968	\$432,812	\$1,731,247
Actual	\$506,499				\$506,499

V. Project Challenges, Impacts, and Mitigation Strategy

A critical first step in the i-CORI project was the detailed analysis of the CORI Reform Law requirements and the identification of various sources of data that would be needed to fulfill the new access and dissemination rules outlined in the CORI Reform Law. Over the course of the analysis, challenges have been identified related to the data and technology systems used to generate CORI, as well as business- and policy-oriented items surrounding specific aspects of the law. The following sections outline the challenges that are currently being addressed by the project team through a series of mitigation strategies developed by EOPSS and DCJIS.

A. Data and Technology Challenges

A key goal of the i-CORI project is to leverage technology to help standardize and automate the process of generating accurate, standardized, and easy-to-read CORI reports. Effectively automating CORI requests and reports is central to ensuring that the CORI Reform Law is implemented accurately and in a standardized manner. Automation also reduces the time needed by DCJIS to process a CORI request and return the results to the requestor. To effectively enhance this process DCJIS must depend on obtaining consistently accurate data from the Commonwealth's agencies that generate the original records, including dates of charge disposition and incarceration commitment and release dates.

While DCJIS is tasked with the responsibility of disseminating CORI, the information contained on a CORI report is actually obtained from other criminal justice agencies. DCJIS does not perform the original data entry or correction of CORI information; rather, such information is captured by Massachusetts criminal justice agencies, including the Courts, the Office of the Commissioner of Probation (OCP), the DOC, the HOCs operated by the Sheriffs, and the Massachusetts Parole Board. A key challenge identified by the i-CORI project team is to obtain and use historical variations of the data maintained by these agencies and organizations in disparate information technology systems.

In many instances the legacy data from these systems may not meet the same standards of completeness and quality as data collected in the present day. The lack of a common set of statewide standards for collecting data make it challenging at best to associate an individual's court record with the custodial records maintained in these legacy systems, with the degree of certainty that is required to create the CORI report. Additionally, the ability to fully automate the processing of CORI requests based on the proposed dissemination rules will remain challenging until the contributing systems are enhanced. A process will need to be established that allows for DCJIS personnel to manually review the CORI request and record and confirm the accurate dates that trigger the dissemination.

As contributing criminal justice agencies continue to modernize their offender management systems used to collect and provide DCJIS with the CORI data needed for dissemination, the data used to populate the i-CORI system will improve; however, as long as legacy data is used for i-CORI, the need for mitigation strategies will persist. Projects are currently under way to replace or enhance information systems operated by the Department of Correction, the Sheriffs', and the Parole Board

with i-CORI compliance requirements built in. These projects are being funded through the IT Capital Bond Program and managed by EOPSS in conjunction with DCJIS. The i-CORI project team has identified the following mitigation steps to address immediate challenges:

Automatically Obtaining a “Disposition Date Trigger” in Legacy Data

Challenge: Under the CORI Reform Law, for CORI requests submitted under the “Open” and “Standard” categories of access, the duration that a subject’s conviction record(s) remain available is calculated from the later of the “disposition” date or the subject’s last release from incarceration. When a subject has been convicted and **not** incarcerated for a charge, the disposition date must be used for calculating whether a conviction should appear on a subject’s CORI Report. This date is referred to as the “disposition date trigger” in i-CORI project documentation.

Because most of the historical criminal arraignment and event data, including dispositions, were compiled in a non-standard manner, and because the format and abbreviations used for data entry vary from court to court and probation office to probation office, it is often difficult to determine the disposition date, and extremely challenging to provide for complete automation of the “disposition date trigger” requirement.

The following examples help to illustrate such challenges. Please note that any/all “date fields” are **underlined and in bold** to help identify them.

Data Challenge: Date formatting within a disposition description

DFD/RC**91508**CWOFSP**91410**REST VN**5410**VOP G PROB**11/1/11** VN**101510**WARD/R **C5/2/11**WARD/R VN**71911**VOP C**71613**

Date formats differ or can't be distinguished from other numbers and don't follow a specific order from case to case

In the above example of a legacy disposition description that the iCORI system or DCJIS staff must interpret, it can be seen that dates are not entered in typical date formats (MM/DD/YY, M/D/YY, etc.), presenting a challenge to accurately identify and obtain them from the “free text” disposition data. In this example, only the dates “11/1/11” and “5/2/11” can be automatically recognized with high accuracy given the various types of formatting in the disposition description.

Data Challenge: Multiple dates within a disposition description

DFD/RC**91508**CWOFSP**91410**REST VN**5410**VOP G PROB**11/1/11** VN**101510**WARD/R **C5/2/11**WARD/R VN**71911**VOP C**71613**

Dates are not distinguished from each other and don't follow a specific order from case to case

Automatically Obtaining a “Disposition Date Trigger” in Legacy Data

Additionally, in the same example of a disposition description it can be seen that the specific types of dates (such as arraignment date, disposition date, etc.) cannot easily be distinguished from one another. The order of the dates and codes included in the text do not follow a predefined format or standard, presenting a challenge regarding the ability to accurately and consistently identify a disposition date in legacy CORI data.

Impact: “Standard” and “Open” access CORI requests for subjects having convictions that did **not** result in a sentence of incarceration, and for which the disposition date cannot reliably be obtained automatically, will require manual screening by DCJIS staff to determine the disposition date, resulting in the need for dedicated DCJIS CORI staff and resulting in longer processing and response times. The manual processing of the information will entail researching and interpreting incomplete or non-standardized CORI data to complete the CORI request.

Mitigation Strategy: The project team is working to develop a method of identifying disposition dates customized to each data source required to fulfill the CORI Reform Law. This effort of creating “disposition date parsing rules” is being completed as an iterative process and includes rule testing, rule modification, and retesting. Once complete, a set of disposition date parsing rules for automatically obtaining dates from the data source may be used for automation by the i-CORI system. Recognizing that no set of rules can guarantee perfect calculation of disposition dates from faulty data, best efforts will be made to balance public safety with the subject’s rights to privacy. This mitigation strategy is currently in process.

Automatically Obtaining the “Incarceration Release Date Trigger”

Challenge: When a subject has been convicted and incarcerated for a charge, the incarceration release date must be used to determine whether a conviction record should appear on a subject’s CORI report for “Open” and “Standard” access requests. This is referred to as the “incarceration release date trigger” in i-CORI project documentation.

Determining the “incarceration release date trigger” requires matching the CORI records maintained by DCJIS with the incarceration records maintained by the DOC and each of the fourteen Sheriffs. The Sheriffs’ data in particular is problematic, because in many cases commitment and release dates are not recorded or not kept in an accessible electronic data base. The DOC, for its part, does not have readily available release dates for inmates prior to their 1992 conversion to a new inmate data management system. Accordingly, a tremendous challenge exists in providing complete automation of the “incarceration release date trigger” requirement using the complete set of custodial and court data available to i-CORI.

Impact: All “Standard” and “Open” access CORI requests for subjects having convictions for a

charge that resulted in incarceration will require manual screening by DCJIS staff to determine an incarceration release date. Manual screening will require processing by dedicated DCJIS CORI staff and will result in longer processing and response times. Obtaining the incarceration release date may potentially require contact with a custodial agency and will introduce further delays in completing the CORI request. The manual processing of the information will entail interpreting incomplete or non-standardized CORI data to complete the CORI request.

Mitigation Strategy: The project team is working to develop a platform that can be used by DCJIS staff to increase the ability for the system to automatically process CORI requests in a standardized manner. This entails DCJIS staff proactively determining the incarceration release date for records where it cannot be identified automatically. To perform this proactive mitigation, an analysis that defines the records that must be mitigated, and their relative priority, is being completed, along with the development of a specific i-CORI module needed to perform the mitigation prior to the formal i-CORI rollout. Based upon the large number of records requiring manual attention (approximately 537,251 distinct offenders), it is not likely all records will be mitigated prior to the i-CORI rollout. Therefore, the process of identifying incarceration release dates will remain an ongoing task.

Offense Classification

Challenge: To determine whether or not an arraignment/disposition should appear on a subject's CORI report for "Open" and "Standard" access requests, the CORI Reform Law necessitates an offense be classified as:

- A felony, misdemeanor, or civil charge;
- A murder, manslaughter, or sex offense;
- Punishable by incarceration; and
- Punishable by 5 or more years of incarceration.

The primary source of data contains offense abbreviations and descriptions, but does not include the classifications listed above. To automate the CORI process, the system needs to look up the offense to determine the classification. In many cases, however, the descriptive information contained in the primary data source for an offense abbreviation is minimal and insufficient to classify the abbreviation with certainty. In these cases the offense is defaulted to classifications based upon a joint review by DCJIS and EOPSS legal counsel.

Impact: The default Offense Classification Mapping Table developed by the i-CORI project team may be incorrect in some instances, given the minimal data available.

Mitigation Strategy: The project team is engaged in an iterative development and review process to establish an accurate classification of offenses to be used in the system. This is known as the iCORI “Offense Classification Mapping Table,” and is needed in the absence of any other standardized classification data that can be used and maintained by the iCORI system. The review processes is designed to maximize accuracy and minimize the risk of misclassification. The final Offense Classification Mapping Table was completed on October 31, 2011.

B. Policy and Business Challenges

At a high level, the key business and policy challenges revolve around effectively addressing complexities in the CORI Reform Law to ensure that the i-CORI implementation accurately reflects the spirit of the reform effort. To that extent, such challenges and mitigations are outlined as follows:

Discrepancy in the CORI Reform Law between Open and Standard Access

Challenge: The CORI Reform Law provisions that define the parameters of “Open” access CORI include a clause that makes all “convictions for any felony punishable by a term of imprisonment of 5 years or more” available to the general public, regardless of when the case is closed.

Impact: This clause provides the general public with access to a larger scope of criminal history than an employer or landlord with Standard access, which is limited to felony convictions that have closed within the last 10 years with no subsequent convictions.

Mitigation Strategy: Amend the CORI Reform Law to make the felony convictions available under Open access parallel to those available under Standard access, by adding the following to the relevant clause: “for 10 years following the disposition thereof, including termination of any period of incarceration or custody.” The Administration presented this amendment to the legislature in section 3 of House Bill No. 3761, filed October 17, 2011.

Statutory Mandates

Challenge: The CORI Reform Law rewrote M.G.L. c. 6, § 172A, regarding fees for CORI requests under the new i-CORI system. The second paragraph states that “[DCJIS] shall be authorized, subject to appropriation, to retain a portion of the revenues received by the commonwealth under this section for the following purposes: to assist ex-offenders in obtaining and maintaining employment, including, but not limited to, workforce development training and other applicable training programs, training and auditing requestors described in subsection (a) of section 172, providing education and assistance regarding the correction of criminal records, including but not limited to, training judges, providing the necessary information to employers and other applicable

persons in possession of an applicant's criminal offender record information, and to operate and maintain the public safety information system and the criminal records review board.”

Impact: DCJIS will not be able to implement provisions of the legislation without a sustained funding source.

Mitigation Strategy: A sustained funding mechanism must be established and maintained to support this operation. In House Bill No. 3761, the Administration proposed initial funding for these purposes in the amount of \$3 million.

VI. Project-based Efforts to Mitigate Ongoing Challenges

In the long-term, efforts by each agency that contributes to CORI data will help to address the automation challenges outlined in the previous section through the implementation of new systems that provide robust data entry and maintenance capabilities. However, given the implementation deadline for the i-CORI system, DCJIS recognized the need for immediate steps to be able to effectively use current CORI data required under reform from the Courts/OCP, DOC, the HOCs, and Parole. It should be noted that while these near-term efforts will facilitate the implementation of i-CORI, they will not completely resolve the challenges of the current availability of required CORI data. It is envisioned that the long-term efforts are ultimately needed to fully realize the mitigation of all challenges.

Short-Term Efforts to Mitigate Data Challenges

- **DCJIS:**
 - A project is under way to provide DCJIS with a mechanism to proactively address data quality issues for legacy records that cannot be automatically processed in connection with a CORI request. This will enable DCJIS to increase the number of records that can be automatically processed before the i-CORI system goes live.
 - A set of data quality “best practices” and/or requests to address data quality issues at the source of data capture are also being created for discussion with other participating agencies. It is envisioned that these efforts will be in place prior to the i-CORI roll-out, and can continue to be leveraged in parallel with the operation of the i-CORI system.
- **Courts/OCP:** The new MassCourts system continues to be rolled out. As more courts are added, the reliance on “legacy court data” decreases. The i-CORI team and DCJIS continue to work with the Administrative Office of the Trial Court (AOTC); however, the schedule to rollout MassCourts to the Superior Criminal Court has not been determined as of this date. AOTC representatives are hopeful that the rollout will be completed within 2 years, but this date is speculative.

- **HOCs:** Implementation of a data sharing project to aggregate and expose custodial data from each county to the i-CORI system is currently being completed. It is envisioned that this effort will be completed in early 2012.
- **Parole:** Internal data mitigation efforts within the State Parole Integrated Records and Informational Tracking (SPIRIT) system are being completed to facilitate integration with the i-CORI system.
- **DOC:** DOC data is available and integrated into the i-CORI process. Efforts are under way to populate release date fields for pre 1992 data.

Long-Term Efforts to Eliminate Data Challenges

- **DCJIS:** Ongoing i-CORI integration efforts with participating agencies will be completed to take advantage of the new systems being developed by each agency.
- **Courts/OCP:** MassCourts is expected to be rolled out within the next two (2) years enabling conviction and disposition data to be electronically obtained directly from district and superior court records.
- Continue efforts to integrate court and correctional information systems eliminating the need for agencies to separately populate databases. This effort is part of a larger effort know as the Integrated Criminal Justice Information System Modernization effort, or "ICJIS."
- **HOCs:** Future development and rollout of a new inmate management system that will address all i-CORI data needs. Progress will be made every year as each county facility comes on-line.
- **Parole:** Future development of a new information management system that will address all i-CORI data needs.

VII. Conclusion

As this second report illustrates, significant progress has been made in delivering the information technology system necessary to fulfill the requirements established in the CORI Reform Law. The team has completed key project milestones, as well as worked to define and implement strategies to mitigate the challenges posed by existing legacy data, and to ensure that the new i-CORI system meets the accuracy and accountability standards clearly articulated in the CORI reform strategy advanced by the Governor and the Legislature. The DCJIS project team will continue to work on all fronts to implement the new i-CORI system by the required date of May 4, 2012, and is optimistic that this date remains attainable.

There is still much work to be done, but with the ongoing support of the Governor, the Legislature, the Judiciary, EOPSS, and other key CORI users and stakeholders, DCJIS looks forward to demonstrating continued progress in the next project update to the Legislature.