

# How to Know What's Working (and What's Not) in Community Corrections and Why It's Important

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## Things to Consider

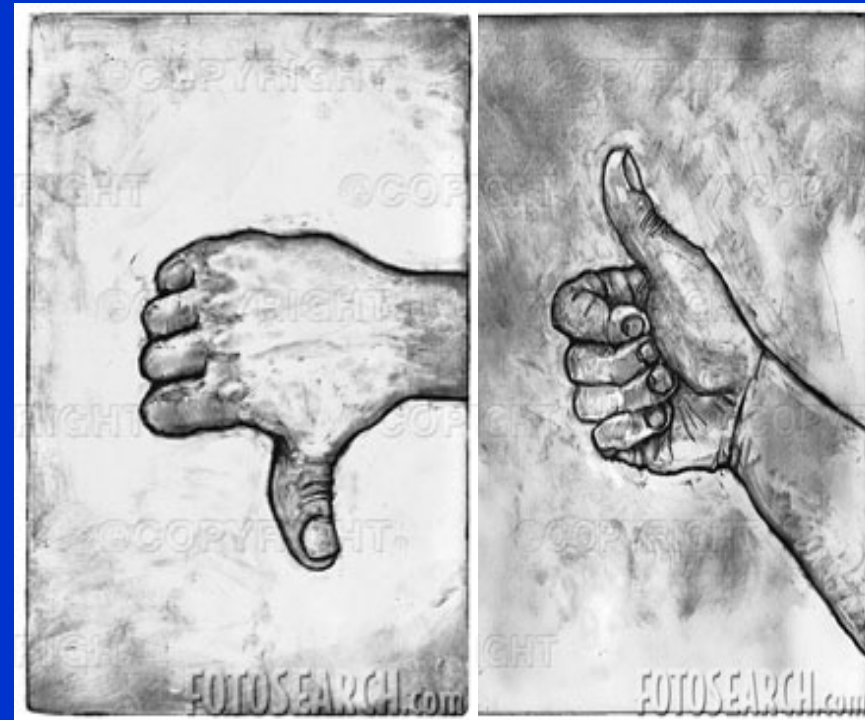
- **Researchers are interested in the average, managers are worried about the outlier.**
- **How does your department/program measure “success?”**
- **How do others--the public, legislators, the media--measures your success (or point out your lack of success)?**
- **How many of you have the capacity to conduct research within your organizations?**

# Researcher's View

$$- y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{1i} + \beta_2 x_{2i} + \dots + \beta_k x_{ki} + \varepsilon_i$$

- where  $y$  is the dependent variable,  $\beta_0$  is the Intercept (Constant),  $i$  represents each observation,  $x$  represents the independent variables, and there are “ $k$ ” of these,  $\beta$  are the “Parameters” to be “estimated”,  $\varepsilon$  are the “residuals” (“error”)

# Practitioner/Policy Maker's View

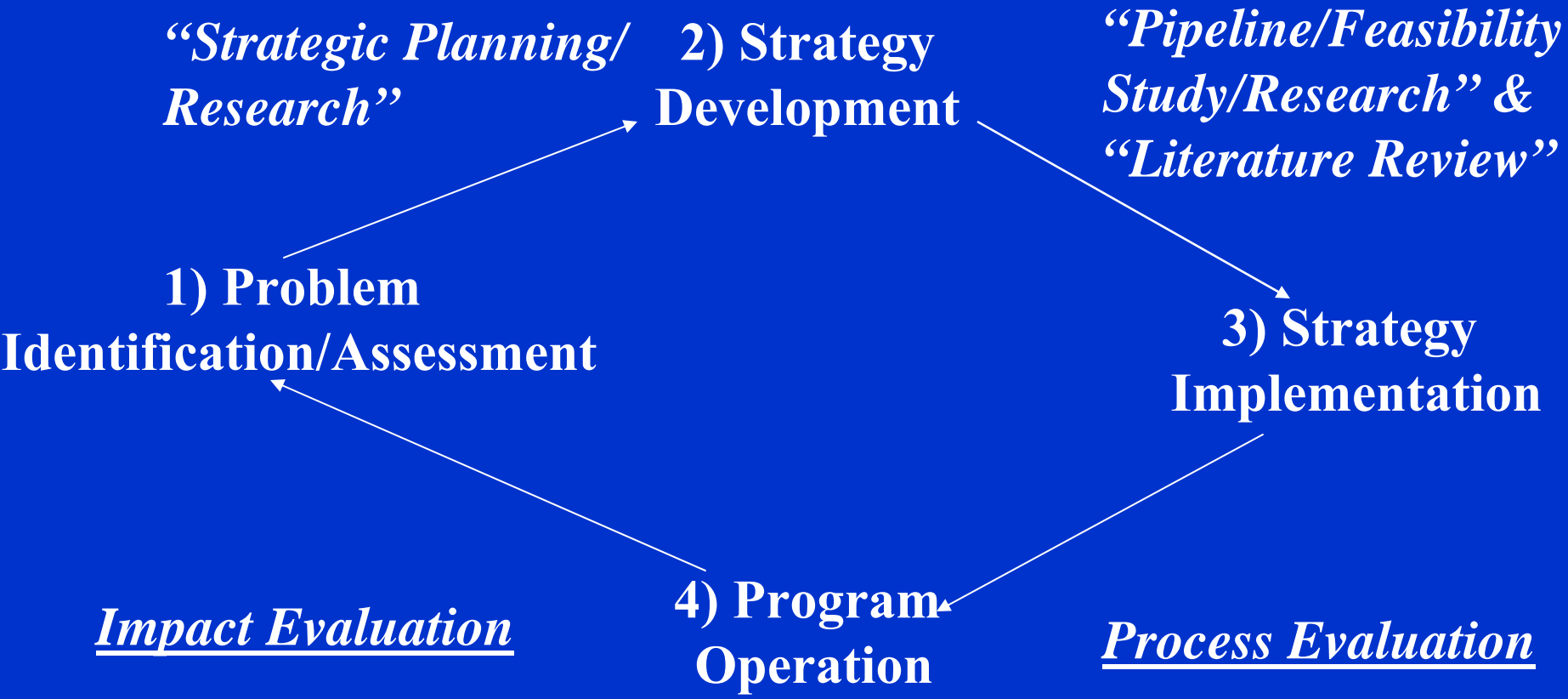


# **“Good” Policy, Management and Practice Includes Research and Evaluation**

- Research is used on an ongoing basis by agencies, government and businesses to identify “performance gaps” as part of an effective management process;**
- The formulation of solutions/responses to identified performance gaps relies on research and policy analysis as a guide;**
- Implemented solutions/responses are monitored/evaluated to gauge implementation & impact as part of an effective management process—individual, unit, agency, system.**
- However, this is rarely done .....why?**



## Where Research/Evaluation Fits into the “Circle of Life” (or at least program development & evolution)





# Measuring the Performance of Community Corrections / Probation

(Petersilia's 1993 Recommendations-BJS/Princeton)

- **Enforce Court-Ordered Sanctions (e.g., compliance)**
  - Rearrests & technical violations, payments collected, community service performed, drug/alcohol-free days.
- **Protect the Community**
  - Supervision contacts, technical violations, rearrests, absconders.
- **Assist Offenders to Change**
  - Attendance at treatment, vocational, educational programming; rearrests & technical violations, and attitude change.
- **Restore Crime Victims**
  - Restitution & Victim Satisfaction

## So . . . .

- If we wanted to improve our performance in these areas, we would need to know:
  - 1) What is our *current* level of performance;
  - 2) What can be done to improve our performance (evidence-based, not “garbage-can theory” driven) and what is the expected *magnitude* of the effect;
  - 3) If we *decided* to implement evidence-based practices, did we actually *do it*?
  - 4) Did the implemented strategy improve our performance (what was the impact)?



# Necessary Elements for Using Research to Manage Community Corrections Programs

- **A commitment to do so**
  - Not window dressing, but critical component of the agency's management and operations
- **Skills, experience & data to do so**
  - In-house vs. "out-house" vs. partnerships
- **Patience to do so**
  - Good research takes time, and may not always coincide with budgeting & electoral cycles



# What Kinds of Information to Collect / Analyze

- **Don't just ask a researcher!!!!**
- **Don't ask everyone!!!!!!!!**
- **Utilize existing information first**
- **Answers to research questions produce more research questions**
- **Start out "small" and get staff used to seeing & discussing research findings**
- **Develop a research & evaluation strategy**



## Illinois' Experience & Context

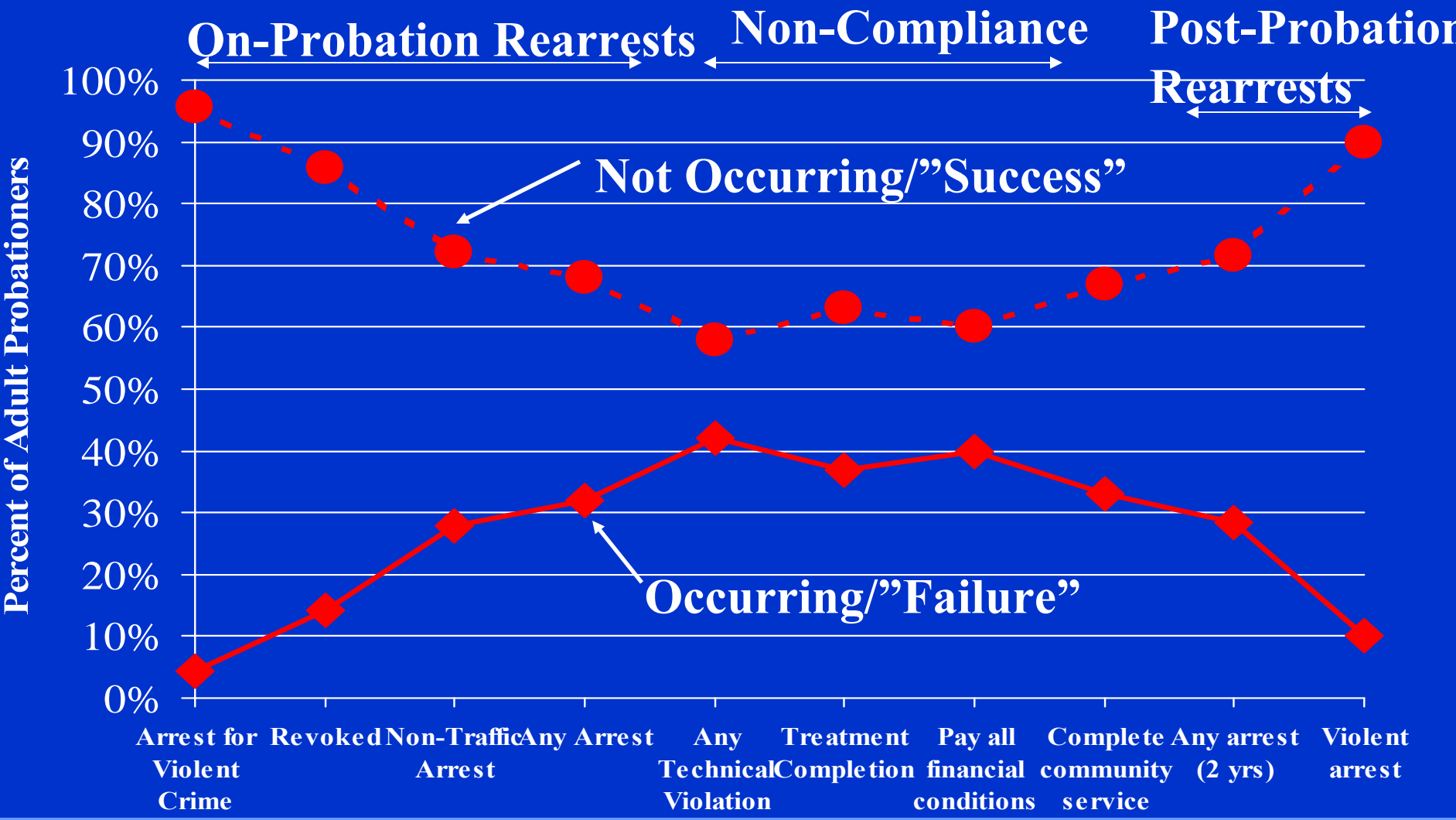
- **Probation organized at the county level, with state involvement (Administrative Office of Illinois Courts-AOIC), judicial branch;**
- **More than 80 individual probation departments;**
- **Some state-level research and evaluation, limited (but growing) local research and evaluation;**
- **Close relationship between AOIC, ICJIA (Illinois' Statistical Analysis Center or SAC), & Local Probation Departments.**



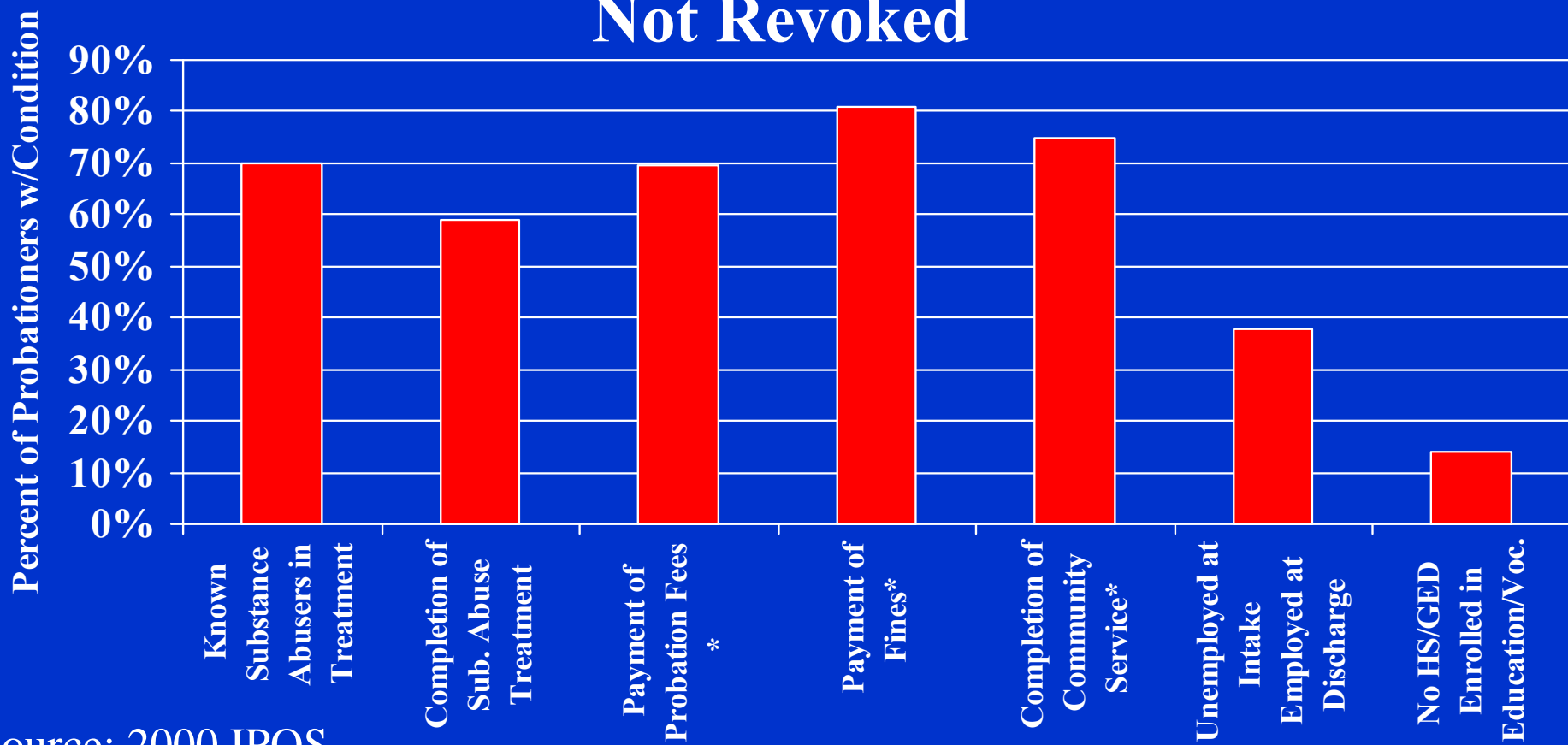
## **Research & Evaluation Experiences in Illinois Probation**

- **Some state-level research, including probation intake & outcome studies during the 1990s and 2000s.**
- **Some local-level research, including individual probation departments & ICJIA-funded evaluations of “innovative” programs.**
- **Generally a limited capacity for on-going, local research and evaluation.**

## The Range of Adult Probation Performance



## Satisfaction of Various Probation Conditions & Positive Changes During Supervision Among Those Not Revoked



Source: 2000 IPOS

\* Payment/Completion of 90%



## All, nothing or somewhere in between?

### (Goals of Enforce Sanctions & Protect Community)





## Implications for Evidence-Based Practice

- **Majority of probationers “successful”**
- **Probationers who access and complete treatment have better long-term outcomes;**
- **Probationers who comply with probation conditions have better long-term outcomes;**
- **Probationers who become employed have better long-term outcomes;**
- **Variation from jurisdiction to jurisdiction in these, requiring an examination of why & potential need for systemic change.**

# Overview of EBP Research and Evaluation Project in Illinois

- Provide local probation departments participating in EBP project with research support to examine performance measures;
- Eventually develop a mechanism and process whereby all local probation departments could be provided with research support to examine performance measures;
- Develop a capacity & interest in local probation departments to include research & evaluation in its management structure.

# **Groups Involved in the EBP Research & Evaluation Project**

- **Participating Probation Departments**
  - Adams, Cook, DuPage, Lake, Sangamon Counties and 2nd Judicial Circuit (includes 12 individual, rural counties)
- **EBP Research Subcommittee**
  - Participating Departments, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, NIJ, NIC, CJI, ICJIA
- **Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority**
  - Research and Analysis Unit Staff
- **Local University Partners**



# Data Collection and Analytic Strategy

- **Types of Data to be Collected**
  - Probationer characteristics, compliance with probation conditions, treatment participation, technical violations and rearrests;
- **Baseline and EBP-Periods**
  - **Baseline: Discharges from probation in 2002**
  - **EBP Period: Sentences to probation during 2005&2006**
- **Analysis Plan**
  - **Simple to more complex**
  - **Initial phase - collection of baseline and 2005 data**
  - **Intermediate phase - collection of 2006 data and comparisons to baseline and 2005 to measure changes**

# EBP Research and Evaluation Framework

- **Data collected from local departments (information systems or manually) in each EBP project site;**
- **Data analyzed and feedback provided to departments regarding probationer characteristics, services provided/ordered, and compliance with probation conditions;**
- **Criminal History data obtained and examined to determine on- and post-probation rearrests.**
- **Feedback to department managers and staff**
- **Updated over time to gauge changes in services provided/ordered, compliance, and recidivism**

## **What this Work Will Accomplish**

- **Ability to assess impact of implementing Evidence-Based Practices in the pilot sites across various performance measures: Document the success of their work;**
- **Ability to compare and combine Illinois' EBP efforts and impact with that experienced in Maine;**
- **Build the capacity of local probation departments and the State of Illinois to use research and evaluation to enhance probation practice and management.**
  - **Build relationships between local researchers and probation departments.**
  - **Establish a process and mechanism for sharing information and collaboration between local departments and state agencies relative to data access and analysis relevant to understanding probationer outcomes.**

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**Justice Research and Statistics Association  
Links to State Statistical Analysis Centers (SACs)  
<http://www.jrsa.org/sac/index.html>**