CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY COUNCIL

AGENCY PLAN FOR INFORMATION RESOURCES

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March 31, 1995

Criminal Justice Policy Council
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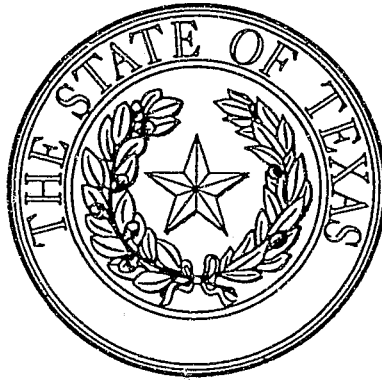Austin, Texas 78711
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Executive Summary

The primary goal of applying information resources in the Criminal Justice Policy Council is to increase the agency's ability to assist policy makers as they structure the state's criminal justice system to meet changing needs in a period of scarce resources. The primary strategy to attain this goal is to maintain and expand the JUSTICE simulation model. This simulation model allows the Criminal Justice Policy Council to project the demands on the state corrections system (probation, prison, and parole) under a *status quo* scenario and to simulate new demands of policy initiatives or proposed legislation. This tool allows policy makers to make informed choices and, in conjunction with the Legislative Budget Board fiscal projections, identifies resources that must be added to or can be saved from new initiatives.

The recent penal code reform, and rapid growth of criminal justice programs and initiatives have led to a corresponding growth in the number of long-term process and outcome evaluations performed by our agency. Data collection, management, and analysis are critical components to these evaluations and are information resources dependent.

Future initiatives include expanding the JUSTICE model, and possibly performing new Adult and Juvenile Sentencing Dynamics Studies. These activities will require the Policy Council staff to use reliable and fast hardware and software to quickly respond to policy makers' inquiries and legislative initiatives.

No significant obstacles or constraints in information resources exist. The Policy Council will seek to continually upgrade software and hardware (especially hard disk capacity on our file server) to increase overall system responsiveness and staff productivity.

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Introduction

The mission of the Criminal Justice Policy Council is to conduct strategic research, planning, and program evaluations to assist the Governor and the Legislature in developing plans, programs, and proposed legislation for improving the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. The agency's primary information resources goal is to insure that the agency has adequate hardware and software to maintain and expand the JUSTICE simulation model, perform program evaluations, and perform statistical analyses on adult sentencing data in order to quickly provide state policy makers with responses to their inquiries and initiatives.

Information Activities of the Agency

The Criminal Justice Policy Council works in four areas to help the state policy makers in the enactment of more effective policies and in the evaluation of the implementation and impact of policies adopted.

1. Criminal Justice Information Authority

The Criminal Justice Information Authority activities of the Criminal Justice Policy Council seek to improve data and information systems for law enforcement, courts and corrections. Designing the Texas Criminal Justice Information System (TCJIS) and planning for its implementation with county representatives, the Texas Department of Public Safety and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and streamlining paper reporting requirements imposed by the state on local governments are the most recent examples of activities in this area.

The Criminal Justice Policy Council plays a key role in the design and implementation of TCJIS. This system will provide state-of-the-art offender tracking information and a wealth of information for operational use, policy analysis and strategic planning. The Criminal Justice Policy Council builds linkages between local, state and national experts to support the design and implementation of a cost-effective information sharing system. A successful model for the electronic transmission of court disposition information to the TCJIS has been tested and integrated in the implementation of the system. As of March 1995, nine of the largest counties in Texas are transmitting court disposition data to TCJIS over telecommunications lines. Electronic reporting is making criminal history information more reliable and is greatly reducing the need for paper reporting between the localities and the state. The Criminal Justice Policy Council also works to develop and implement analytical models to use the information in the TCJIS for the management of the criminal justice system and to enhance analyses for policy development by the Governor and the Legislature.

The Criminal Justice Policy Council develops models for the effective use and application of information for policy making and strategic planning. The computerized

simulation JUSTICE model, for example, provides a comprehensive framework to analyze criminal justice offender based and processing information. The model serves the state leadership in projecting the impact of sentencing policies on the correctional system and in developing alternate policies. Projections generated by JUSTICE are also used by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice - Institutional Division to develop their statutorily mandated four year construction plans. JUSTICE projections are instrumental in responding to the court mandates of the Alberti ruling and other litigation concerning jail overcrowding impacted by state policies.

2. Research and Evaluation

The Research and Evaluation activities use the data available in the state criminal justice information systems or gather new information, if necessary, to provide criminal justice managers and state policy makers with program evaluations and policy analysis.

Long-term process and outcome evaluations of criminal justice programs are conducted to measure the effectiveness of new initiatives. This is particularly important because budget constraints demand the most efficient utilization of limited state resources. Examples of on-going program evaluations are the following:

(a) Treatment Alternative to Incarceration Program
(b) In-prison Therapeutic Community Substance Abuse Treatment Program
(c) Substance Abuse Punishment Facility program
(d) Juvenile Probation Intake and Intervention Process, Dallas
(e) State Jail Performance Monitoring program
(f) Parole Guidelines Development and Monitoring program
(g) Community Corrections Evaluation Infrastructure
(h) Inmate Release Statistics Monitoring
(i) Standardized Operational Correctional Cost-Per-Day Monitoring

3. Special Projects

The Criminal Justice Policy Council has nationally recognized staff that routinely provides assistance to the state leadership for policy development. This help is provided through "special projects" assigned by the legislature or through assignments by the Governor or other members of the Criminal Justice Policy Council.

The Criminal Justice Policy Council serves as a resource to the Office of the Governor by providing analyses of policies under consideration or analyses for developing policy initiatives. Special reports or memoranda are prepared as needed for the Governor's staff on selected issues.

The Criminal Justice Policy Council serves as a resource to the Legislature by conducting interim "special projects." These special projects are assigned through

legislation or assigned by the executive director following directions from policy council members.

4. Interagency Projects

The Criminal Justice Policy Council serves as coordinator/facilitator for selected criminal justice initiatives with federal, state and local impact. Among recent initiatives are: managing the Texas participation in the U.S. Department of Justice Criminal History Records Improvement (CHRI) Project through which Texas received over $820,000 in federal discretionary funds; joint management with the Office of the Governor, Criminal Justice Division of the U.S. Department of Justice Criminal Justice Records Improvement (CJRI) Project that provides approximately $1.2 million annually in federal funds to localities for improving the reporting of criminal history tracking information to the state; managing the Texas participation in the U.S. Department of Justice Law Enforcement Support Center (LESC) Project; and conceptualizing, writing, and submitting the National Criminal History Improvement Project (NCHIP) grant application for Texas. In addition, numerous state-local forums have been created to insure that decisions on projects, that affect local governments, are not made in a state agency vacuum.

Current Information Resources Environment

Since our last *Agency Plan for Information Resources,* the IR environment has improved in the following ways.

- Our staff, who were divided into two geographically separate offices, now are located together in the Tom C. Clark Building.

- All the staffs are now connected on a Local Area Network. This has improved working group efficiency over what was possible with stand-alone computers.

- All the staff except two in office services now have 486 microcomputers. The normal upgrade process was accelerated to replace all the Club 386 microcomputers that developed mother-board problems.

- Data security has improved. Through the network we perform more systematic and extensive backups onto DAT tapes then were performed on the stand-alone systems.

- The ability to process and store large datasets has improved. The Criminal Justice Policy Council has a growing requirement to process and store large datasets for policy analysis. Our main file server (90 Mz Pentium) currently has two gigabytes on-line, a one gigabyte parity disk (R.A.I.D Level 5), and a one gigabyte hot spare. The file server capacity will soon be expanded to 6 gigabytes and can be expanded to store up to 25 gigabytes.

Planning Factors and Assumptions

Underlying assumptions that may affect the viability or validity of the Criminal Justice Policy Council Information Resources Strategic Plan are listed below.

- Supporting Technologies -- No insurmountable problems are currently perceived. To insure responsiveness to policy makers and optimization of staff productivity, periodic hardware and software upgrades are sought. This new technology phase-in is targeted to the most crucial components of the agency activities, and as long as modest upgrade funds are available, the staff will have high-level resources.

- The Policy Council staff maintains a close working relationship with policy makers. This places the agency in a pro-active mode for responding to their inquiries and initiatives. This demands a high state of readiness on the part of our staff, particularly during the legislative session.

- One scenario that can temporarily affect agency operations is the sudden addition of new legislative mandates that necessitate hiring new staff, acquiring office space, and most importantly, providing sufficient hardware and software resources to attain the new mandates. This happened in the 72nd legislative session during which the Policy Council was mandated to perform the Sentencing Dynamics Study and was forced to amend the submitted Information Resources Plan.

Major factors that significantly impact information resources and the agency's mission, management, and operations are listed below.

- Agency Expansion -- The primary factor that may significantly impact information resources is unanticipated mandate expansion. As mandates expand and new positions are added to cope with new mandates, additional hardware and software will be needed.

- JUSTICE Simulation Model Expansion -- By adding new modules to the existing JUSTICE simulation model, simulation run times will increase depending on the degree of complexity of each new module. At some point it may become cost effective to consider new hardware platforms to insure that available technology is matched to the policy makers' needs for legislative/policy impact simulations. The Department of Information Resources staff has suggested that we explore the benefits of porting the JUSTICE simulation model over to a RISC based computer system. This is option still being evaluated.

IR Strategic Goals and Strategies

Agency Goal:	ENHANCE JUSTICE SYSTEM. Develop means to promote a more effective and cohesive state criminal justice system.

IR Goal #1:	Insure that the agency has adequate hardware and software to maintain and expand the JUSTICE simulation model, perform program evaluations, and perform statistical analyses on adult and juvenile sentencing data
IR Strategy # 1:	Purchase additional hard disks for the main file server to increase data processing and storing capacity
IR Strategy #2:	Review the options for purchasing optical scanning equipment to improve the speed and efficiency in processing agency survey and evaluation instruments
IR Strategy #3:	Develop and implement software to maintain an audit trail of all changes to databases used to support the JUSTICE simulation model.
IR Strategy #4:	Perform a cost-benefit analysis of upgrading the hardware used to run the JUSTICE simulation model to a RISC system
IR Strategy #5:	Modify the JUSTICE simulation model software to incorporate the new changes to the Penal Code
IR Strategy #6:	Complete the restructuring of our data storage strategy on the Local Area Network

IR Goal # 2:	Insure the security and integrity of information resources used by our agency
IR Strategy #7:	Insure that adequate backups occur for data stored on the primary and secondary file servers
IR Strategy #8:	Improve the backup procedures for agency data that still reside on local workstation disk drives

IR Strategy #9   Improve error checking procedures used on data supplied by other agencies and used in the JUSTICE simulation model

IR Strategy #10   Complete and test our agency's Contingency Plan for Information Resources Services Resumption

Attachment: Supplemental Information

A. Organization and Personnel

The Criminal Justice Policy Council's Legislative Appropriations Request, Agency Strategic Plan, and Operating Plan do not categorize any employees as "IR Staff." Currently all employees of the agency are involved in multi-faceted projects involving research, data manipulation, report preparation, and programming. As the agency continues to evolve, some staff may assume purely IR functions. However, the dynamic work environment here will preclude this for the foreseeable future. The current organizational chart of our agency can be found on Chart 1 on the following page.

Among our research and evaluation staff and special projects staff we have individuals with advanced degrees (Ph.D., M.A., and BA.) in criminology, policy analysis, and sociology. They all have received advanced training in research, evaluation, and statistical analysis. Our senior staff all have had extensive experience with the Texas Criminal Justice System. The Database Administrator IV has 25 years experience in programming, systems analysis, database administration, and simulation modeling. All other "information services" staff have at least a B.A. in computer science or an equivalent degree. Our "network administrator" has completed all the coursework for a CNA and will soon be taking the certification examination. This will complement the on-going data manipulation and analysis functions which the position includes to assist in research and evaluation projects. Overall, the skills and experience of our staff are well suited to meet the goals of our agency.

B. Policies and Practices

Method of Setting Priorities. Priorities are set based on current and planned policy initiatives of the Governor and Legislature.

Staff Training and Continuing Education. All members of the staff are encouraged to identify any needs for training or continuing education. Recommendations for specific training and continuing education are made by department heads and the deputy director and approved by the executive director. In the past several years, training and continuing education courses have been provided in Foxpro, SPSS, and management skills.

Operating System Standards. The following are the operating system standards used by our agency: MS DOS 5.0 and "Windows 3.1" on the workstations, Novell 3.11 and Novell 3.12 on the file servers.

Organizational Chart

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                    │                         │
                    │ Criminal Justice Policy │
                    │        Council          │
                    │  Governor, Chairperson  │
                    │                         │
                    └────────────┬────────────┘
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                    ┌────────────┴────────────┐
                    │                         │
                    │    Executive Director   │
                    │ Appointed by the Governor│
                    │                         │
                    └────────────┬────────────┘
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    ┌─────────────────┐ ┌────────┴────────────┐
    │                 │ │                     │
    │  Support Staff  ├─┤   Deputy Director   │
    │                 │ │                     │
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│                │   │                      │   │                    │
│ Special        │   │ Information Services │   │ Research &         │
│ Projects Staff │   │       Staff          │   │ Evaluation Staff   │
│                │   │                      │   │                    │
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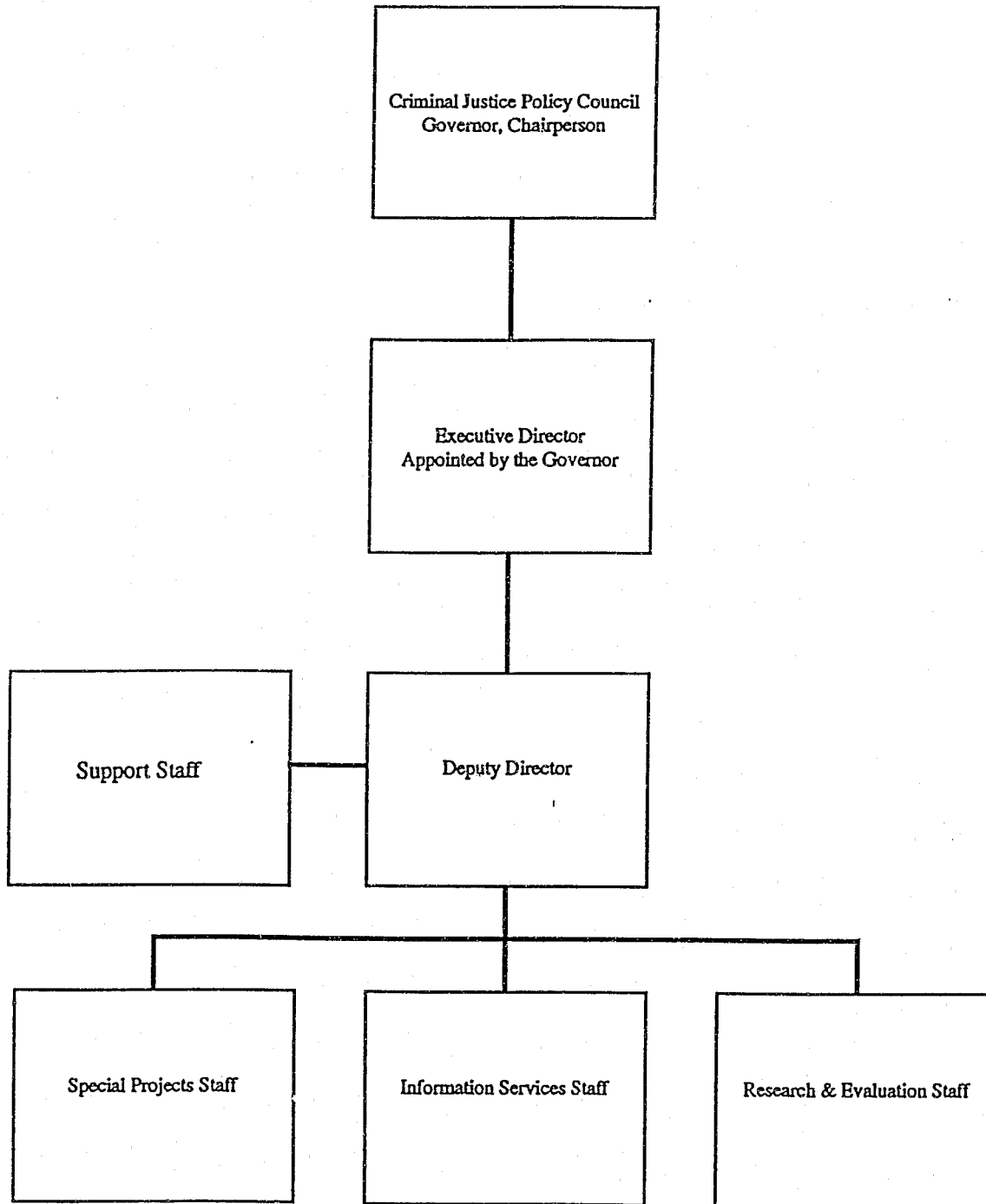
Interagency data communications. The executive director, deputy director or director of information services must approve of all interagency data communications. Staff must follow the rules and procedures required by other agencies to use their data resources. All programs and data downloaded to our agency must be scanned for viruses.

Security:
- All staff sign confidentiality and non-disclosure agreements.
- Our offices have restricted access during weekends and non-office hours.
- Sensitive agency documents are stored in locked files or in locked offices.
- Id's and passwords are required to access our local area network.
- Special work areas are created on the network for agency projects. Access to these special work areas is limited to assigned staff.
- The Criminal Justice Policy Council is in compliance with security standards of the Department of Public Safety and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. This enables our agency to access full criminal history records for research purposes.

Disaster recovery: Major databases and applications are stored on our network file server. Data from the servers are backed up on DAT tape. Data from the primary file server are backed up daily at 11:00 PM. The secondary file server is backed up every two weeks. All tapes from a Friday backup are stored off-site, with the oldest being returned each week. Eight tapes are rotated in this manner. Completed projects and databases associated with them are archived as a unit to DAT tape. Our agency disaster recovery plan incorporated in our Contingency Plan for Information Resources Services Resumption has not yet been completed, however, primary risks have been identified. Tests restoring lost and damaged data have been completed. Tests for failure of a single disk on the server should be completed within two months. Tests of a simulated virus attack and catastrophic file server failure are scheduled after the legislature adjourns.

Use of computing resources. The executive director has a Macintosh and laser printer. Two support staff have 386 computers; all other staff have 486 computers. All staff with the exception of the executive director are connected to our local area network. All staff have a basic understanding of their computers and software tools provided by the agency. They know how to use the network, and e-mail, and how to access network laser and dot matrix printers. Our computing resources are only to be used for agency business.

Use of contract services and consultants. Our agency uses the General Services Commission Machine Repair for all computer repair and parts replacement that are not covered by warranty and that we can not handle in-house.

Use of Computer-Aided Software Engineering (CASE) tools and methodology. N/A

Geographical Information systems (GIS) implementation. N/A

Quality assurance and risk management. The accuracy and validity of data that we receive from other criminal justice agencies are crucial to the work we do. Extensive arithmetic checks, logic checks, and rules of thumb are applied to all data used by our agency. We are beginning to automate these procedures to speed up the error checking process. In addition we hope to improve the quality of the data used by incorporating a new software tool (IDIS by Intelligence Ware) into our error checking procedures. This tool will be used to identify anomalies in data that may have been missed by other error detecting techniques. Agency policies and procedures for risk assessment and management are currently being developed for inclusion in our Contingency Plan for Information Resources Services Resumption.

User acceptance. Information services respond to information resource requests by our staff. Specifications for fulfilling the request are produced jointly by the user and information services staff where appropriate. Information services continues to work on user requests until the specifications are met or until other agency priorities, as articulated by the deputy director or executive director, take precedence.

C. Methodology for Information Resource Planning

The Criminal Justice Policy Council's IR Strategic Plan is developed by following the guidelines set forth by the Department of Information Resources. The State Strategic Plan and the CJPC's Operating Plan and Legislative Appropriations Request are tools for developing an IR plan in accordance with the goals and strategies set forth previously by the agency. Data systems staff are consulted on the current and future needs of the agency. The Deputy Director and Executive Director, who are continuously involved in information resources planning, have primary input into the agency IR goals and recommendations contained in the plan, and they provide final agency approval.

D. Configuration

The agency uses a LAN with star topology. The software is Novell NetWare 3.11, running on a Pentium server with two gigabytes disk storage space, one gigabyte parity disk, and one gigabyte hot spare. Connected to this server is a secondary file server for Information Services use only. It is a 486 running NetWare 3.12 with two gigabytes disk storage spaces. Two print servers (286 computers) are also connected to the network.

The workstations on the network consist of eighteen 486 models and four 386 models. Of the 386 models, two are used by office services staff, one is dedicated to running network backups as well as reading in data from other agencies on a 9-track tape drive and a 3480 tape drive, and one serves as a spare on-line computer to be used while another workstation is being repaired

Our executive director uses a Macintosh and laser printer that is not connect to our LAN. One 386 computer not connected to our LAN is used to access legislative bills and other government information through internet. One terminal, not connected to our LAN is used to access TDCJ databases. See Chart 2, on the following page, showing the configuration of our network and computer resources.
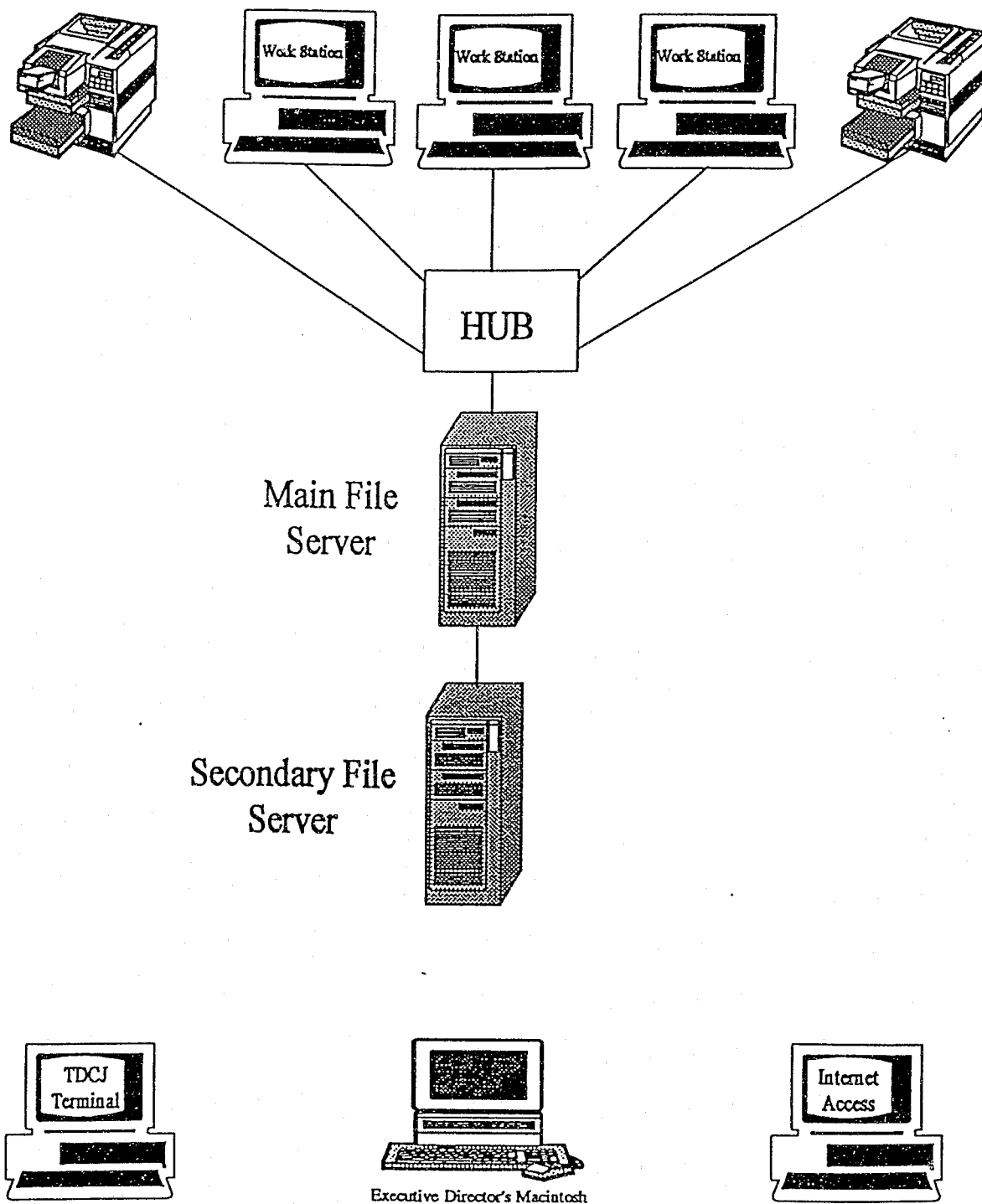
E. Telecommunications Infrastructure. N/A

F. Interagency Network Participation

Our agency accesses the following data systems:

- Texas Department of Criminal Justice prison, parole, and drug databases through a terminal provided by TDCJ,
- Texas Legislative Council's listing of legislation and hearing through the DIR's and Texas State Library's internet connections,
- Texas Legislative Council's Automated Budget and Evaluation System of Texas using THEnet, and
- Direct dial-up to ERS's Texflex Reporting System.

Criminal Justice Policy Council
Information Resources Configuration

Work Station   Work Station   Work Station

HUB

Main File
Server

Secondary File
Server

TDCJ
Terminal

Executive Director's Macintosh

Internet
Access

G. Databases

Application Name:	Criminal Aliens
Software:	Paradox for DOS 4.0
Hardware:	LAN: Pentium file server
Estimated physical storage requirements:	1 gigabyte (90 megabytes / month for 12 months)
Application Description:	Criminal history of offenders with felony dispositions. Used to estimate the numbers of and describe the offenses committed by criminal aliens.
GIS Data Classification:	N/A
Sharing:	None

Application Name:	Legislative Mandates
Software:	Foxpro for DOS Version 2.5
Hardware:	LAN: Pentium file server
Estimated physical storage requirements:	480 megabytes (40 megabytes per month for 12 months)
Application Description:	parole release records and parole board decisions - information is used to address legislative mandates
GIS Data Classification:	N/A
Sharing:	None

Application Name:	Justice Data
Software:	Foxpro for DOS Version 2.5
Hardware:	LAN: Pentium file server
Estimated physical storage requirements:	250 megabytes
Application Description:	Contains information used to describe the current state of the criminal justice system and serves as the data source for the Justice Model
GIS Data Classification:	N/A
Sharing:	None

H. Major Applications

Application Name:	JUSTICE Version 4.0
Software:	Foxpro for DOS Version 2.0
Hardware:	486 50 Mz workstation 9-track tape drive and 3480 tape drive used for data transfer with other state agencies.
Location:	Information Services Department
Status:	Batch/on-line Update/Inquiry
Application:	State corrections system simulation model