



**INSLAW  
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**Comprehensive  
Training**

**PROMIS**

PROSECUTOR'S MANAGEMENT  
INFORMATION SYSTEM  
An Exemplary Project of LEAA

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PROMIS (Prosecutor's Management Information System) is a management information system (computerized or manual) for public prosecution agencies and the courts. Developed under a grant from the United States Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), PROMIS has been in operation in Washington, D.C., since January 1971 and is in various implementation stages in more than 30 other jurisdictions.

LEAA has designated PROMIS an Exemplary Project. Such designation is reserved for criminal justice programs judged outstanding, worthy of national attention, and suitable for adoption by other communities.

The Institute for Law and Social Research (INSLAW) has prepared a series of 21 briefing papers to explain to nontechnical audiences of prosecutors, court administrators, criminal justice planners, and members of the bar the underlying concepts of management and organization inherent in PROMIS. It is expected that these briefings will assist other jurisdictions to evaluate and when appropriate, implement PROMIS in part or in its entirety. The implementation can range from adoption of the concepts of management and organization, to the use of PROMIS forms and paperwork procedures, to the application of the manual or semiautomated version of PROMIS, and, finally, to the installation of the computer software.

Other PROMIS documentation produced by INSLAW under grants from LEAA includes a handbook on *PROMIS For The Nonautomated or Semiautomated Office*, research designs for using PROMIS data bases in statistical studies of criminal justice policies, a six-volume set of computer software documentation, and a 20-minute color documentary of PROMIS (16mm film or video cassette) for nontechnical audiences. The 21 briefings are as follows:

1. Management Overview of PROMIS
2. Case Screening
3. Uniform Case Evaluation and Rating
4. Special Litigation (Major Violators) Unit
5. Witness Notification Unit
6. Paralegals
7. Comprehensive Training
8. Reasons for Discretionary and Other Actions
9. Counting by Crime, Case and Defendant
10. Research Uses of PROMIS Data
11. Uniform Crime Charging Manual
12. Police Prosecution Report
13. Crime Analysis Worksheet
14. Processing and Trial Preparation Worksheet
15. Police Intake Worksheet
16. Standardized Case Jacket
17. Interface with Other CJIS
18. Privacy and Security
19. Analysis of Costs and Benefits
20. Transferability
21. Optional On-Line Inquiry and Data Input Capability

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In 1967, the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice candidly stated, "The training of a prosecutor is generally limited to his legal education and whatever courtroom experience he has had. While this may meet the need for the courtroom and trial aspects of the job, it [is not necessarily sufficient preparation for] administrative and law enforcement functions. Many young assistant district attorneys are appointed without specialized knowledge of the criminal law or experience in court or in the investigative and discretionary parts of their work."<sup>1/</sup> The President's Commission specifically recommended that district attorneys' offices "should develop curricula and programs for the preservice and inservice training of prosecutors."<sup>2/</sup>

In 1971, the American Bar Association reiterated the Commission's observation and made essentially the same recommendation,<sup>3/</sup> which early in 1973 was reemphasized by the National Advisory Commission.<sup>4/</sup>

By late 1973, a comprehensive training program was under way in the prosecutor's office in Washington, D.C.,<sup>5/</sup> due in large part to the implementation of PROMIS.

#### HOW PROMIS RELATES TO PROSECUTOR TRAINING

As a Washington prosecutor commented, "PROMIS helped point out that within our staff...there was a significant need for training."

One way PROMIS gives visibility to performance problems is through the operational and informational analysis that must precede the utilization of this--or any other--computerized system. Involving a disciplined look at strengths and weaknesses of current office procedures, such an analysis is necessary because PROMIS is only as effective as the personnel and procedures supporting it. An automatic by-product of this study is the exposure of deficiencies that training could remedy.

\*One of a series of 21 Briefing Papers for PROMIS (Prosecutor's Management Information System), this publication was prepared by the Institute for Law and Social Research (INSLAW), Washington, D.C., under a grant from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), which has designated PROMIS as an Exemplary Project. Such a designation is reserved for criminal justice programs judged outstanding, worthy of national attention, and suitable for adoption by other communities. Presenting a bird's-eye view of PROMIS capabilities, the Briefing Papers are one facet of INSLAW's LEAA-funded program designed to assist local prosecutors evaluate and, when appropriate, implement PROMIS. In January 1971, the computerized information system was initiated in Washington, D.C., where prosecutors continue to rely upon PROMIS to help them manage more effectively an annual work load involving allegations of 8,500 serious misdemeanors and 7,500 felonies. (A manual version of PROMIS is also available and parallels the capabilities of the computerized system.)

As implemented in Washington, D.C., PROMIS exposed some important administrative weaknesses, such as incomplete and nonuniform case documentation (especially with regard to the recording of reasons for various discretionary decisions).6/

PROMIS can also spotlight needs for additional legal training. For example, if PROMIS-generated reports reveal abnormally high nolle prosequi or dismissal rates, this may indicate that charging decisions are faulty. And training needs of trial attorneys might be indicated by PROMIS' capability of linking final dispositions with specific prosecutors.

Finally, depending on the evaluation technique used, PROMIS-produced data can gauge the effectiveness of a given training program.7/

After conducting an extensive training-needs analysis, which involved not only PROMIS data but also extensive interviews locally and nationally, the staff that was selected to conduct the Washington prosecutor's comprehensive training8/ developed a four-part program:

1. Training for novice prosecutors.
2. Training for managerial and supervisory attorneys.
3. Training for nonlawyer administrative/paralegal personnel.
4. Training for experienced prosecutors.

#### A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR NOVICE PROSECUTORS

That facet of the comprehensive training program designed for novice prosecutors is conducted approximately every four months. With about 12 newly hired prosecutors per class, the program provides formal orientation to the office, training in the skills of prosecution, and an opportunity to meet with and be trained by experienced senior attorneys of the office.

Spanning a three-week period (five half-day sessions weekly), the initial curriculum included the following topics: case screening procedures and case jacket entries; plea discussion; arrest, search, seizure and the suppression hearing; bail and pretrial detention; preliminary hearings; law and hearings related to identification and confessions; discovery; sentencing; citizens' complaints; PROMIS; basic trial skills; case preparation and examination of witnesses at trial; demonstrative evidence and exhibits; impeachment of witnesses; jury selection; proper use of objections; opening statement; closing argument in a jury trial; proper use of rebuttal.



A variety of training techniques are employed--lectures/discussions, workshops, simulations, video-tape presentations, etc. The goal is to match each topic with the most appropriate training technique for presentation, retention, and application.

(Developed independently, a comprehensive intake and screening manual serves as a training and reference guide for the less experienced attorneys.)9/

### MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISORY TRAINING

About 25 attended the first training seminar designed for managerial and supervisory attorneys. Extending over a three-day period, the curriculum exposed participants to the concepts, problems, and techniques of managing people and institutions.

The seminar agenda included the following: evolution of the mission and goals of the prosecutor's office, organizing the office to meet its goals, personnel management and supervision, decision-making and delegation of authority, communications, and information systems.

A major objective of the seminar was to relate management concepts to the practical, everyday problems of the office so that the prosecuting attorneys could immediately perceive the applicability of managerial principles.

### ADMINISTRATIVE/PARALEGAL TRAINING

The training goal for administrative and paralegal personnel is to acquaint those in nonlawyer positions with the prosecutive system, the mission and operations of the office, and the importance of specific administrative support and paralegal assistance to overall prosecutory effectiveness.10/

Conducted in three half-day sessions, the general-training curriculum covers the role of the prosecutor's office and its organizational structure, personnel systems, overview of the prosecutive system, interaction with other agencies, and general office skills. In addition, a second curriculum, a half-day in length, is designed for supervisory-level administrative and paralegal personnel. That curriculum includes prosecution systems description, supervision, managing time, objectives and techniques of planning, supervisory-skills quizzes.



## ADVANCED TRAINING

To round out the four-part training program, a curriculum encompassing advanced topics was prepared for the experienced trial attorneys.

Reflecting current office policies and procedures, a series of training seminars was developed: the prosecutor's ethical responsibilities and Brady obligations; use of grand jury; tactics in exclusionary hearings regarding confessions, search and seizure, and identification; law of conspiracy; electronic surveillance; interviewing and preparing witnesses for trial; opening statement and closing argument; direct and redirect examination of witnesses; cross-examination of witnesses; hearsay rule; services and functions of law enforcement agencies in criminal cases; preparation and examination of expert witnesses; the insanity defense.

## APPLICABILITY OF THE PROGRAM TO OTHER JURISDICTIONS

Training manuals and materials, along with the other details of the comprehensive program, were developed in such a way that the effort became an on-going, self-evaluating one under the sole responsibility of the Washington prosecutor's office, without the need for outside contractor assistance.

Although the training materials focused on the need of a specific prosecution agency, they are adaptable to the requirements of other jurisdictions, and have in fact been used in prosecutory training in several other local, state, and federal jurisdictions.



## FOOTNOTES

1/President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1967), p. 148.

2/Ibid.

3/American Bar Association Project on Standards for Criminal Justice, The Prosecution Function and the Defense Function (Chicago: American Bar Association, 1971), p. 66.

4/National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, Courts (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 239.

5/In the District of Columbia, the U.S. Attorney serves as the local prosecutor. About 75 lawyers are assigned to the D.C. Superior Court (equivalent to a state court of general jurisdiction), where prosecution of local "street crime" cases is conducted. About 16,000 allegations of such crimes are considered for prosecution annually.

6/See Briefing No. 8, Reasons for Discretionary and Other Actions, for details on the use of PROMIS reason data.

7/For example, novice prosecutors assigned to case screening could be randomly placed in two groups. One group would receive formal training; the other, traditional informal on-the-job instruction. Cases screened by the two groups could be tracked by PROMIS for several months. The rate of subsequent nolle and dismissals for the two sets of cases could be compared.

8/The Institute for Law and Social Research was selected to develop and conduct the training.

9/See Briefing No. 11, Uniform Crime Charging Manual.

10/Briefing No. 6, Paralegals.







**END**