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UNIFORM PAROLE REPORTS
FINAL REPORT

Grant Year: February 8, 1977 - February 7, 1978

Grant Number: 77-SS-99-6004

February 7, 1978

Uniform Parole Reports
National Council on Crime and Delinquency
Research Center
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UPDATING UPR

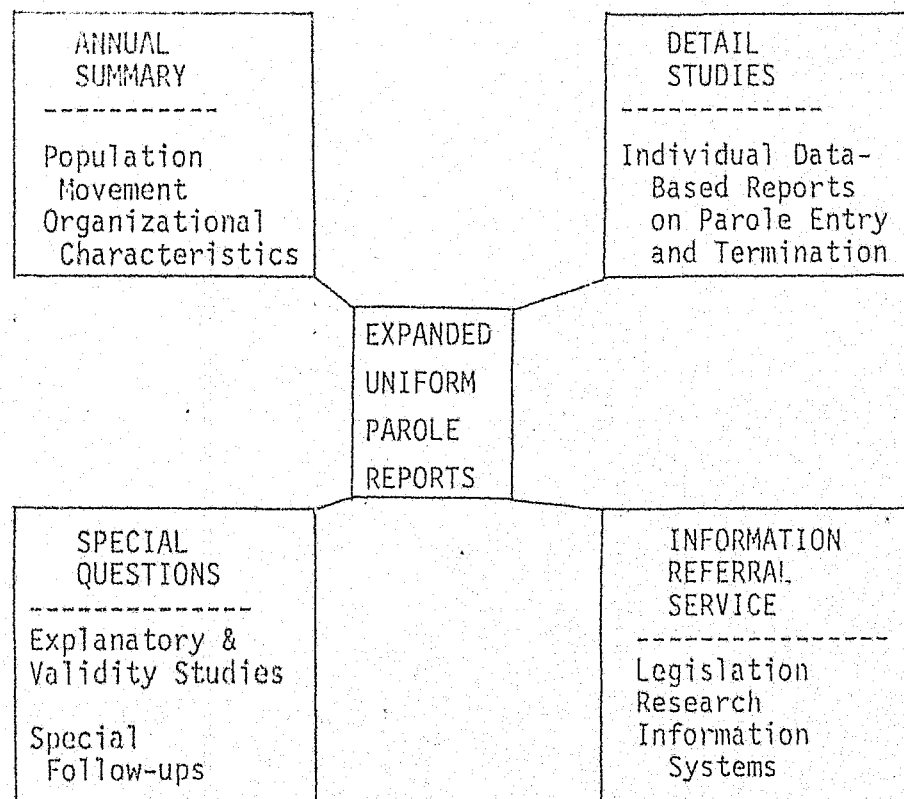
I. OVERVIEW - A CHANGING UPR

Uniform Parole Reports is a national reporting organization collecting data on paroled offenders. Each offender entering the system is covered, and these tabulations are reported to state agencies along with analyses of the data. UPR is one of several national systems reporting on offenders in the justice system. UPR is working with other organizations to bring a broad range of information to agencies and decisionmakers.

UPR focuses on parole, a dynamic process. Types of offenses committed, sentencing and parole procedures have changed during UPR's ten years of study. Over the past ten years, the UPR staff has received recommendations from a variety of sources including parole board members, parole supervision staff, corrections researchers, and others in the field, for modifying the system. Based on these recommendations the staff is exploring expanded

coverage to include more demographic data. In addition, the possibility of studying parole agencies, their different organizational types, and their impact on parole is being examined. Changes outside the parole system are also having an impact on parole, and there is also the possibility of studying these changes.

In the proposed revised system, the basic functions of UPR will remain the same. But the scope of inquiry into the parole process will expand into four areas: 1) annual summary of parole agencies; 2) detailed studies; 3) special questions; and, 4) an information referral service.



A. Annual Summary

The annual summary report will include aggregate data from state agencies and national reporting systems. These data, arranged by individual and organizational type, will be analyzed by UPR and published in the form of national tables reflecting: population movement, cost per case, revocation actions, system characteristics, and other system activity.

B. Detailed Studies

Data will continue to be collected on individual parolees for the detailed studies. These studies will cover all those entering parole in a given year and all those terminating parole in a given year. The termination data will yield recidivism and success rates for parole. Instituting a less cumbersome coding system and working with OBSCIS in the development of information management systems will aid in the data collection process.

C. Special Questions

UPR will conduct studies on special questions that deal in depth with issues central to parole. Possibilities include expanding the scope of data collected, studying the effects of determinate sentencing legislation, and using exploratory data techniques.

D. Information Referral

The proposed parole information referral service will assist agencies and decisionmakers in tracking down information concerning legislation, research, special reports, or data systems focusing on parole.

II. PARTICIPATING IN UPR EVALUATIONS

This section lays out the preliminary steps that were taken by the UPR staff in addressing some of the problems that were raised about the Uniform Parole Reports project. These steps were generated out of the concerns of NCJISS as expressed in the special condition placed on the most recent refunding grant: "Special Condition 5: Early in 1977, two evaluations will be conducted on the UPR Program. One will focus on the methodological, conceptual, technical adequacy of the program; the other will focus on the current and potential usefulness of the program."

In responding to these expressed concerns, NCCD took certain preliminary steps on its own to address the issues raised. The UPR staff conducted an internal assessment of the project along the lines outlined in the special conditions. In addition, UPR created an overall revision process plan that provided for meeting those concerns as well as others that may develop in the revision process of the UPR project. The intent

of this process was to put UPR on as sound a basis as possible from a methodological point of view while at the same time making it as responsive as possible to user concerns.

The steps in the process included:

Conducting internal assessment

Cooperating with external, methodological assessment

Conducting an external, user-oriented assessment

Conducting planning process for revising UPR

Submitting revised proposal

Completing staff reorganization

Securing LEAA/NCJISS approval

Using the UPR seminar to introduce proposed revised system to the states

A. Internal Assessment

The internal assessment proceeded along four lines.

1. System Assessment. In order to both understand and thus gain control of the detailed workings of the system as well as to evaluate its adequacy, UPR, of necessity, devoted much energy to a detailed review of the operations of the pre-revised UPR system. This included all data handling procedures within the UPR project itself: receipt of input data; coding of data; communication with the states

concerning the data; procedures for keypunching; editing; computerization of the data; data storage and retrieval; manipulation of the data for various substantive concerns; reporting of the data in the newsletters; and so on.

2. Methodology. In this area UPR addressed a number of concerns that were raised concerning the UPR data base and data handling approaches, including:

- a. Coding reliability: in the pre-revised UPR, coding reliability studies were conducted on an annual basis and routinely reported a high level of coding error - unacceptable for most research purposes. A systematic analysis of the nature of the errors, the location of the errors and so on, was conducted so that changes in forms, personnel training, other approaches for reducing such error could be implemented. The formal analysis of such errors was begun in October and will continue through the next grant period.
- b. Sampling procedure: Under the pre-revised UPR system, seven states reported on a sampling basis ranging from a 15% sample to a 50% sample. While there were some

technical questions about the sampling procedure (e.g., the specific questions of substitute names for certain parolees on the initial list who in fact did not make parole and the general issue of replacement), the impact of these concerns on the data was probably not very great. Of much greater concern was the issue of appropriate weighting of the sample data when they are integrated into national reports.

In the past, no weighting was done for many of the reports although a blow-up estimate was done for the extrapolated reports that were published on an annual basis. This was clearly an issue that should have been addressed in the external assessment.

c. General accuracy of data: There was concern that because of the nature of some of the items reported, there was a serious problem in terms of the accuracy of the data. This was a complex problem and had to be dealt with as a part of the revised research plan.

d. Completeness of the data: Attachment A indicates general completeness of the system over its ten years and identifies

the states for which there were gaps. While the states omitted or partially reported were clearly identified in each of the newsletters, this general picture had implications for longitudinal studies and other similar types of analysis. UPR staff has devoted much time to working with states to generate the appropriate data from each state.

3. Conceptual Issues. UPR, until the current proposed expansion, was organized as a statistical reporting system. While this was an important function, clearly additional needs could have been served by the system. As a part of the proposed revision, UPR planned to broaden and expand UPR in a number of ways. It was felt that this would permit both a more user-related system as well as, in general, permit the shift to a research rather than the strict "reporting" orientation. This expansion required the formulation of a comprehensive set of research questions related to parole and development of an expanded list of the statistical data needs of the participating agencies and other users. Generating such lists were incorporated into the planning process. The pre-revised

UPR system did not address the following kinds of issues which the UPR staff felt were important to consider:

a. Data on the parole agencies and systems involved: the variation in agencies participating in the system are quite complex and potentially much more closely related to parole performance than some of the offender-based characteristics now reported on a national basis.

b. Information on offenders other than those who were paroled: as more states move to either abolish or dramatically alter the parole process, UPR should at least consider moving towards a total correctional outcome system. While this would have obvious methodological implications, it seems a logical way to move, considering the trends in parole.

c. Articulation with national prisoner statistics: the pre-revised UPR system did not facilitate the comparison of data across the criminal justice system (in NPS as well as UCR).

d. The reporting of programmatic information related to offenders:

the pre-revised UPR system did not allow the analysis of the impact of type of prison, type of treatment within prison, program participation, parolee needs at the time of release, the presence or absence of employment for the parolee at the time of release, service delivery activities to the parolee at the time of release, service delivery activities to the parolee while under supervision and other such dynamic or programmatic type information. The lack of such data and the nature of the current data items reported dictated that the system was essentially failure oriented, that is, it allowed for the analysis of certain person-centered characteristics against types of failure. There was no analysis of success, and in fact, the lack of a breakdown of the continued on parole item lumped together, in effect, a variety of disparate categories (e.g., successful terminations as well as continued on parole).

- e. A detailed analysis of certain
key individual background variables.

B. External Assessment

1. Methodological Evaluation. As one component of special condition 5, in the most recent refunding grant, NCJISS contracted with Howard Wainer, Ph.D., Bureau of Social Science Research, Inc. to conduct a methodological evaluation of the pre-revised Uniform Parole Reports Project.

The UPR staff met with Mr. Wainer on July 6, 7, 8, in Davis, California to aid in his evaluation. An interim report from Mr. Wainer was submitted NCJISS on August 1, 1977 and forwarded to UPR. The staff read the Wainer report and submitted comments. James Galvin, Ph.D., Project Director, and Cheryl Ruby, Ph.D., Project CoDirector, met in Washington, D.C. to discuss the Interim Report with both the program monitor, Ms. Carole Kalish, NCJISS and with Mr. Wainer. After the meetings, the UPR submitted to NCJISS a written response to the Methodological Evaluation of the Uniform Parole Reports, Interim Report by Howard Wainer. In addition, Mr. Wainer was invited to observe the UPR Evaluation/Planning Colloquium held in San Francisco on October 19, 20, 21 to aid in his evaluation of the UPR system.

2. Policy User/Oriented Evaluation. The second component of the external evaluation was an evaluation of the potential usefulness of UPR.

As part of NCJISS' and NCCD's Policy/User-oriented assessment of the Uniform Parole Reporting Project, an Evaluation/Planning Colloquium was held on October 19, 20, and 21, 1977.

Since the UPR System was in the process of evolution and development, to have an evaluation based exclusively on the pre-revised UPR system seemed inappropriate. What seemed needed was assistance from external resources in critiquing not only the current system, but the planning process for development of a more comprehensive and useful UPR system. The Evaluation/Planning Colloquium made efficient and effective use of liaison agencies and "User Evaluators," not only presenting their views as to what was wrong, but as to what was needed to maximize the usefulness of the UPR system.

a. Goals. There were two major goals of the Evaluation/Planning Colloquium.

One, it was designed to carry out a limited, in-meeting evaluation of the current UPR system, examining its strengths and weaknesses, assessing its major limitations,

and identifying gaps in the present system. Two, the sessions were designed around the preparation of a report which would provide maximum use of a parole reporting system for users (the Colloquium Report is Attachment B). This report was a culmination of: (1) the inmeeting evaluation; (2) participant knowledge of important parole research questions, current parole issues, and parole reporting needs, and; (3) participant premeeting background research. This report constituted a major component for the revised UPR system design plan submitted to LEAA.

b. Participants. The total number of individuals participating in the Colloquium was 24. The participants included representatives from the following relevant arenas: parole/correctional system; state parole boards; LEAA and other concerned federal agencies; experts/researchers in the criminology/parole field; exoffenders; and, NCCD staff.

Identification of the participants was generated from NCJISS/LEAA recommendations

and the three surveys conducted as part of the internal assessment of UPR (state parole authorities, parole systems, and experts/researchers). In the course of those probes, a pool of key and knowledgeable people was developed. Among others, these included five persons who were selected as an Action Task Force on the basis of their interest in parole related issues, time commitments, expertise and relative proximity to UPR offices. It is anticipated that UPR will draw upon the expertise of an Action Task Force periodically. The composition of the Task Force may change as the issues confronting UPR change.

The participants were supplied, in advance of the seminar, with briefing materials on UPR. This included: UPR reports and publications; NCCD (UPR) Proposed Process for Revisions Report; Uniform Parole Reports: A National Corrections Data System by M. Neithercutt, W. Moseley, and E. Wenk (a report on the pre-revised UPR system); Proposed UPR Level 3 - Special Studies by Sheldon Messinger (a paper addressing some possibilities for the proposed special research studies level of activity;

Preliminary Description: May 1977; Uniform Parole Reporting Program by Roland Chilton (a paper discussing the history, current operation and the relation of UPR to other programs).

c. Results. The Colloquium proved very successful. As an immediate follow-up, members of the Action Task Force assisted NCCD staff in developing a report which included both a brief evaluation of the current UPR system and some specific recommendations to maximize the usefulness of UPR. (See Attachment B.)

III. LIAISON, FEEDBACK AND WORKING TOWARDS STATE-BY-STATE DATA

A. Surveys

In the 1977 interim period, three surveys were conducted for three major purposes. One was to continue to develop a productive working relationship with parole/corrections agencies. Two was to maximize the comprehensiveness of state data and to work towards publishing state-by-state data. And, three was to aid in UPR's internal assessment of the current reporting system.

1. UPR State Contacts Survey. This survey involved a state-by-state contact of all the parole agencies, directly, to obtain their authorization for publication of identified

state data. In addition, information was gathered on how the UPR system might be more responsive to user needs. Only three agencies refused to authorize for state-by-state data publication. Additional work with the states will be conducted in order to develop further support for publishing and releasing data. A letter informing the states that all data received after January 1, 1978 will be published is now being sent to each reporting agency.

2. Parole System Survey. A sample of state paroling authorities was taken to gather information on parole system characteristics and relate those data to the current UPR design. This, in turn, helped illuminate deficiencies in the current system and provided a quick check of possible coding problems.

3. Experts/Researchers Survey. This survey was a form of a grapevine survey where a core group of experts in the criminology/parole field was identified and a contact network was developed from that. This survey was designed to help in expanding the UPR system to include a research orientation in addition to a statistical reporting orientation. The experts were asked questions

relating to the development of a set of research questions needed for a national parole reporting system.

B. Offender Based State Corrections Information System (OBSCIS)

The key to the development of any intrastate data management system is the development of agreements between states for common definition of terms. UPR's service on OBSCIS Data Dictionary subcommittee made available its longterm experience in developing these common definitions.

UPR maintained OBSCIS liaison by being an active member of the OBSCIS project committee. Through this UPR facilitated the growth of the OBSCIS system as well as maintained active contact with data management personnel within state corrections systems. This contact culminated in a presentation given to the OBSCIS National Seminar in September.

C. Professional Contacts

UPR maintained active contact with the national paroling organizations by participating in the American Correctional Association Congress in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. UPR staff made presentations to familiarize officials with both the current status and future plans of the UPR Project at the Probation and Parole Compact Administrators' and Association of Paroling Authorities' annual meetings.

In addition UPR sent representatives to the National Parole Institute and American Society of Criminology meetings.

IV. CONDUCTED UPR ANNUAL SEMINAR

UPR held its Annual Seminar in Denver, Colorado on December 12, 13, 14, 1977. This site was selected after an extensive cost analysis of several possible sites.

A. Goals

There were three main purposes of the 1977 UPR Annual Seminar. The first goal was to maintain contact to and to generate feedback with each state agency. The second goal was to provide an orientation and review of the proposed UPR system, and, the third goal was to provide a forum for the presentation and discussion of the current issues and perspectives surrounding parole.

B. Participants

To encourage participation, UPR (as in the past) reimbursed each state agency for the travel costs of its selected representative. A total of sixty-six persons attended the Seminar. In addition to the parole agency representatives, this included LEAA and other interested federal agency representatives; individuals from the criminology/parole research community; and UPR staff.

C. Results

It was felt that all the goals of the Seminar were achieved. The participant evaluations of the Seminar were favorable, and the input from the Seminar helped UPR in making needed adjustments in the proposed revised UPR system. An interim Seminar report was sent to all participants, and a Final Report, 1977 Annual Seminar is in the final stages and will be sent to each participant upon completion. (See Attachment C.)

V. REWORKING THE CORE DATA SYSTEM

A. Coding and Data Collection

The existing (pre-revised) UPR coding and data collection formats have been changed only slightly, creating an interim system to ease the transition into the new system. The interim system itself has been designed to introduce state agencies gradually to the UPR systems changes anticipated by the staff. The basic procedures of data collection and coding have remained the same: i.e., monthly parole release lists are still sent in by the states; and, the current codesheets, with minor revisions, are still being used. These changes have been overprinted on the current codesheet to maintain the basic design. This information should be relatively simple for coders to obtain. (See Attachment D.)

With the interim system going into effect in January, 1978, the revised UPR data collection and coding system has been designed so that users will perceive little difference between the two. Under the new data collection procedures, participating agency differences, will be grouped as follows: 1) those agencies where manual systems will still be in effect; and 2) those agencies with the computer capability necessary to provide automated data input. For those agencies who will continue to hand-score UPR data, the codesheets and coding manual will be redesigned and simplified to eliminate repetitive coding and to present the coder with clear alternatives and improved format. This will save the paroling agencies time and reduce the current level of coding problems. Monthly lists will still be sent from the agencies to the UPR office for parole releases and, in addition, lists of those terminating parole each month. Codesheets will continue to be initiated by UPR although, to save preparation time, they will be generated by computer for both parole entries and terminations.

For those states that have developed information management systems within their corrections departments, the development of UPR's own information management system will facilitate direct communication between systems, eliminating the need for coders within those states. Several states are presently prepared to send data to UPR in the form of magnetic tapes, diskettes,

and keypunched cards. Negotiations are currently underway between UPR staff and data processing personnel in a number of states to resolve any problems that might arise in the formatting and transmission of data.

B. Data Management and Analysis Capabilities

Following UPR's removal of in-house computing hardware, procedures were implemented to insure an uninterrupted flow of data from reporting agencies while development of new systems proceeded in a speedy manner. The two principle components of the new system, data management capabilities and data analysis capabilities, are being implemented.

For data processing and management applications, the IBM 370-145 located at the University of California Medical Center has been selected. The IBM 370 currently supports a wide range of language compilers and application programs. Furthermore, programs are currently being written by UPR staff to facilitate the management and reporting of data. Telecommunications links have been established between the UPR office and the host computer. To complete our telecommunications network, plans are currently underway to obtain a "smart" terminal/floppy disk system including highspeed printer, CRT terminal and telephone couplers.

C. Confidentiality and Security Procedures

The charge in LEAA policy concerning the confidentiality of state data as well as the envisioned changeover to nondedicated computer facilities requires the revision of UPR's confidentiality and security procedures as provided for by Confidentiality of Identifiable Research and Statistical Information. The revised set of procedures are hereby submitted as Attachment E.

VI. ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES

A. Staff Reorganization

The proposed revisions in the UPR system generated a reorganization in staff. The staff was reorganized into four areas:

1. Systems Maintenance Unit: This included the coding, keypunching and routine state relations functions currently provided for in the system.
2. Statistical Reporting Unit: This staff was charged with producing the routine statistical reports in the revised system.
3. Research Component: This unit was charged with assisting in the generation of research questions and carrying out the research plan of the revised project.
4. Administrative Component: This unit was charged with providing the necessary clerical and administrative support for the project.

At the time the Final Report was submitted, the core project staff was: James L. Galvin, Ph.D., Project Director; Cheryl H. Ruby, Ph.D., Project CoDirector; John Galvin, Senior Research Associate; Paul Litsky, System Design Analyst; Ellen McNeil, Research Coordinator; Beverly McKelvin, Data Collection Coordinator; Ella M. DuPree, Coder; B. Jeffrey Sarasson, Administrative Assistant; and Wanda Parker, Project Secretary.

B. New Location, NCCD Research Center

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency Research Center moved its offices from Davis, California to San Francisco, California. The new address for UPR/NCCD is:

Uniform Parole Reports
National Council on Crime and Delinquency
Research Center
760 Market Street, Suite 433
San Francisco, CA 94102

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