



U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of Justice Programs

*Presented by*  
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**July 22, 2016**

# A Case Study: Transforming National Criminal History Records into a Statistical Database

for the  
Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking  
First Meeting

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine  
2101 Constitution Avenue NW, Lecture Room  
Washington, DC



**BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS**

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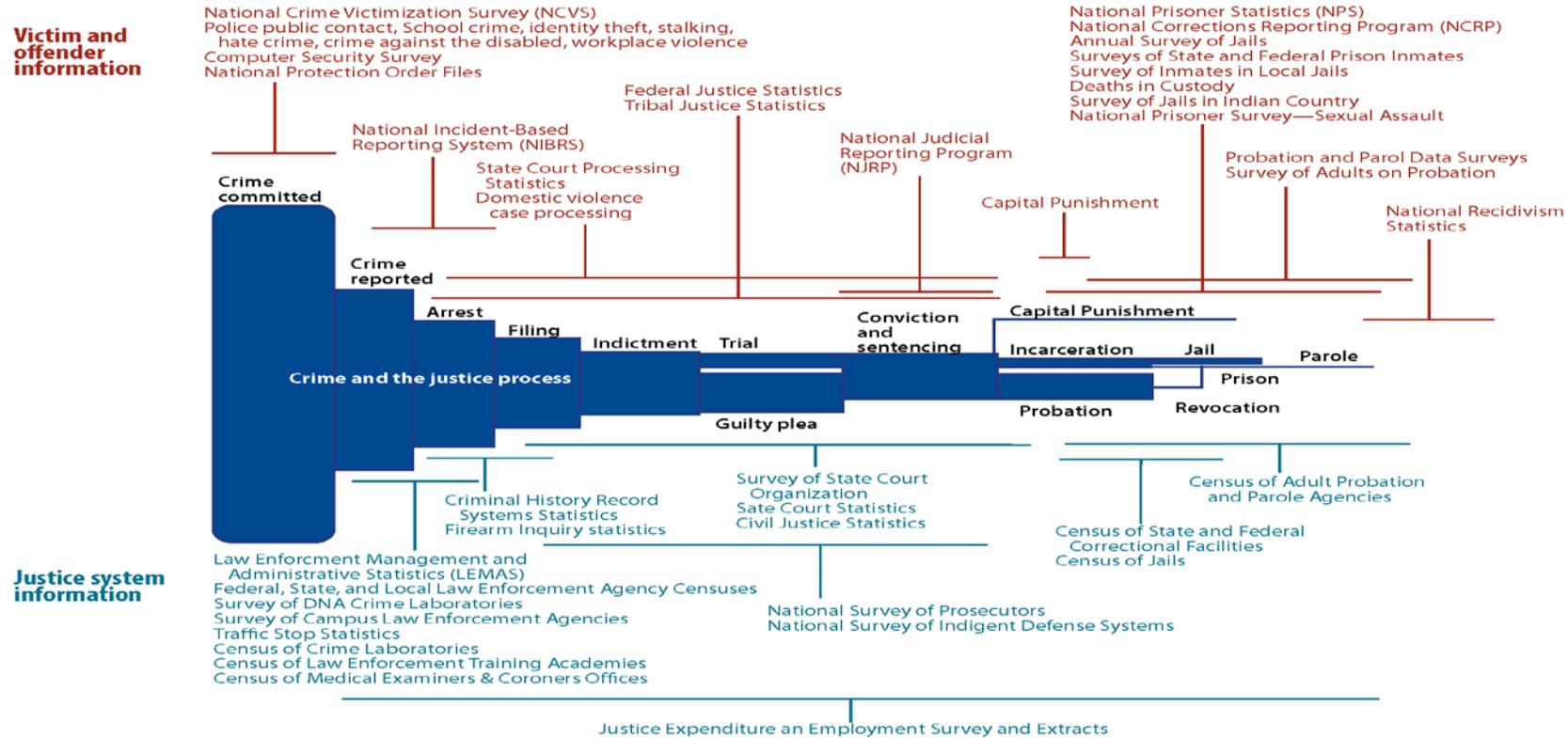
# Bureau of Justice Statistics

- A principal Federal statistical agency
- Sits in the Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs
  - FBI, U.S. Marshals, Bureau of Prisons, Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Attorney, Civil Rights Division,....
- Measures the U.S. justice system: A collection of independent systems at the local, state, and federal level.

# The Criminal Justice System

**Bureau of Justice Statistics—Statistical coverage**  
[www.bjs.gov](http://www.bjs.gov)

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# Why Criminal History Records?

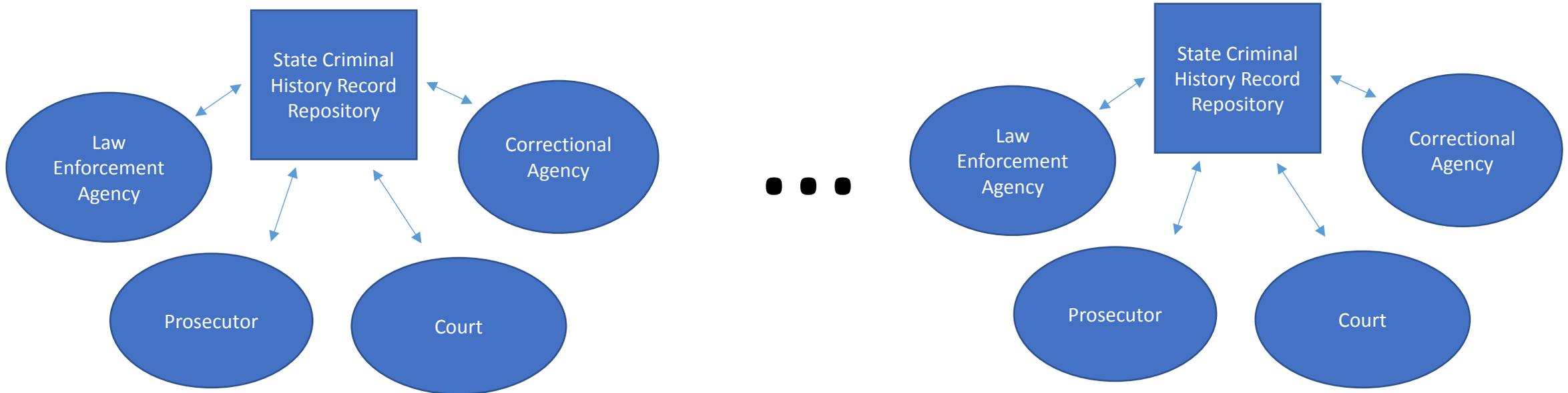
- Important policy or evaluation questions
- Existing data
- Impacts a lot of people.
  - There are roughly 100 million criminal history records.



Potential for evidence-based policy making

# Existing data: Rap Sheets

Each state maintains its own repository.



# Example of Rap Sheet Format in State A

|                          |                      |             |              |
|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------|--------------|
| NAME                     | XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX | STATE ID    | XXXXXXXXXXXX |
| SSN                      | XXX-XX-XXXX          | FBI NO.     | XXXXXXXXXXXX |
| CITIZENSHIP              | UNKNOWN              |             |              |
| BIRTH DATE               | XXXX/XX/XX           | BIRTH PLACE | XXXXXXXXXXXX |
| DECEASED                 | NO                   |             |              |
| RACE                     | WHITE                | SEX         | FEMALE       |
| ETHNICITY                |                      | SKIN TONE   |              |
| HEIGHT                   | 5'05"                | WEIGHT      | 165          |
| HAIR                     | BROWN                | EYES        | BLUE         |
| <b>CRIMINAL HISTORY</b>  |                      |             |              |
| <b>ARREST 1</b>          |                      |             |              |
| DOA                      | 1992/10/25           | DOO         |              |
| AGENCY                   | POLICE DEPARTMENT    |             |              |
| ARREST TYPE              | ADULT                | AGENCY CASE | XXXXXX       |
| CHARGE 1                 |                      | OFF STATUTE | 6-3-404      |
| SEVERITY                 | MIS                  |             |              |
| <b>COURT DISPOSITION</b> |                      |             |              |
| DISP DATE                | 1992/10/27           | DOCKET #    | XXXXXX       |
| OFF SEVERITY             | MIS                  | OFF COUNT   | 1            |
| VERDICT                  | CONVICTED            | FELONY      | NO           |
| BRADY/ IFS               | CLEAR                | VOTING      | YES          |
| SENTENCE                 | PROBATION            |             |              |
| FINE                     | \$100.00             | RESTITUTION | \$85.00      |
| SUSPENDED                |                      | VICTIM COMP |              |
| MIN CONF                 |                      | MAX CONF    |              |
| MIN PROB                 | 180 DAYS             | MAX PROB    | ONE YEAR     |

# Example of Rap Sheet Format in State B

```
NAME:          XXXXXXXXXXXX          DOB:          XX/XX/XXXX
SID NUMBER:    XXXXXXXXXXXX          FBI NUMBER:   XXXXXXXXXXXX
DOC NUMBER:    XXXXXXXXXXXX          SOC SEC      XXXXXXXXXXXX
*****
                        PERSON INFORMATION
*****
SEX  RACE  HEIGHT  WEIGHT  EYES  HAIR  PLACE OF BIRTH  CITIZENSHIP
M    B      600    160    BRO  BLK           XX              US
                        CRIMINAL HISTORY INFORMATION
*****
ARREST 1                                     DATE OF ARREST: 06/12/1991
-----
NAME USED:          XXXXXXXXXXXX
CONTRIBUTING AGENCY: POLICE DEPARTMENT
LOCAL ID:          XXXXXXXXXXXX          PCN: XXXXXXXXXXXX          TCN: N/A
-----
ARREST OFFENSES                                DISPOSITION
09930 FAIL TO COMPLY                                CONTRIBUTOR OR RESPONSIBLE AGENCY:
CLASS UNKNOWN                                       MUNICIPAL COURT
ORIGINATING AGENCY:                                STATUS: DISPOSITION NOT RECEIVED
POLICE DEPARTMENT
OIN:          XXXXXXXX
DISPO RESPONSIBILITY: COURT
COURT CASE NO: XXXXXXXX
COMMENT: BURGLARY

CLASS UNKNOWN                                       CONTRIBUTOR OR RESPONSIBLE AGENCY:
ORIGINATING AGENCY:                                SUPERIOR COURT
POLICE DEPARTMENT
OIN
DISPO RESPONSIBILITY: COURT
COURT CASE NO:          XXXXXXXX

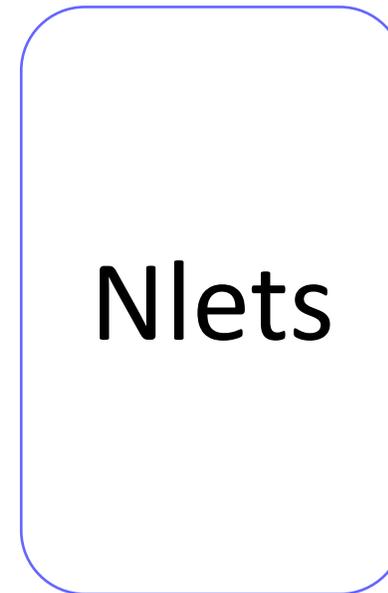
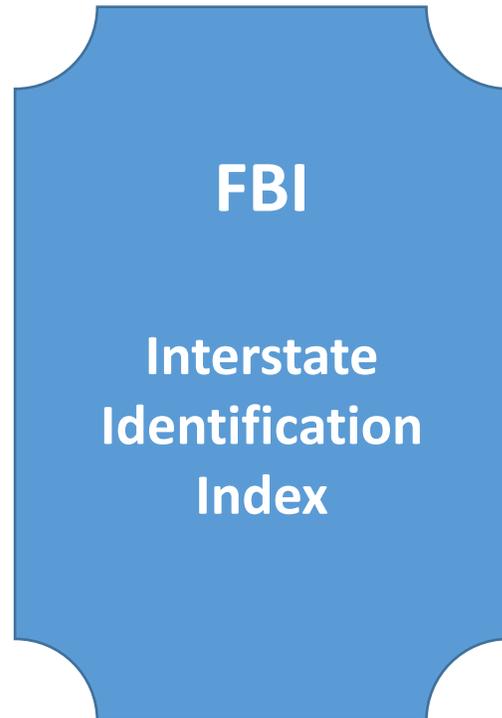
STATUS:          GUILTY
THEFT-3
RCW:          9-46-20
MISDEMEANOR
STATUS DATE:    08/27/1991
SENTENCE:       SENT. DESC.:
CHG 01: JAIL-15 DS/SUSPENDED
1 YR, SUPV-12 MOS
-----
```

# Example of Rap Sheet Format in State C

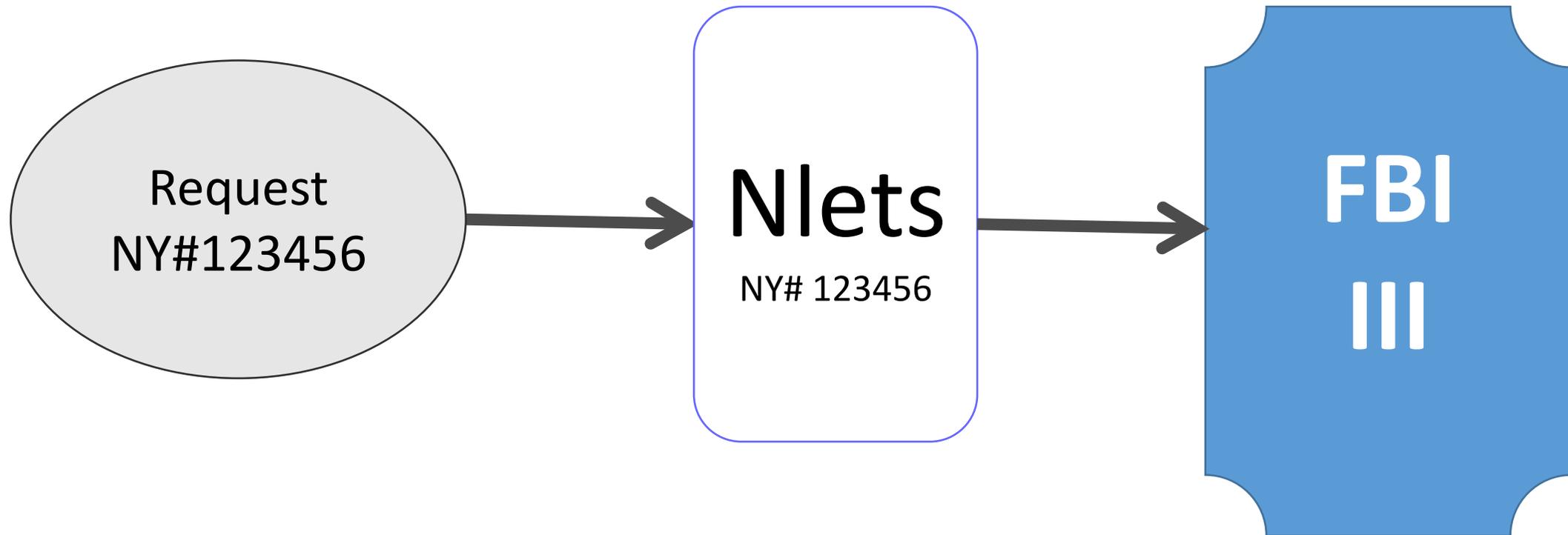
```
NAME(S) :                XXXXXXXXXXXX
FBI NUMBER                DPS NUMBER
XXXXXXXXXX                XXXXXXXXXXXX
SOCIAL SECURITY            DRIVERS LICENSE      ID NUMBER
XXXXXXXXXX                XXXXXXXXXXXX
SEX                       RACE                SKIN TONE
M                          B                  MED
HEIGHT                   WEIGHT            DATE OF BIRTH
510                       180             XX-XX-XXXX
HAIR COLOR               EYE COLOR        FINGERPRINT PATTERN
BLK                       BRO
PLACE OF BIRTH           CITIZEN          III CODE
TX                         US                MULTI-STATE
=====
EVENT CYCLE 1
  TRACKING NUMBER        XXXXXXXXXXXX
  ARREST DATE            05-06-1995
  TYPE                   ADULT
  AGENCY                 0180000 - STATE POLICE
-----
OFFENSE DATA
  OFFENSE DATE           05-06-1995
  OFFENSE                BURG
  CITATION               PC 40.02(a)
  LEVEL & DEGREE         FELONY - 1ST DEGREE
  DISPOSITION            HELD
  REFERRED               DISTRICT ATTORNEY OFFICE
-----
COURT DATA
  COURT AGENCY           5TH DISTRICT COURT
  COURT OFFENSE          BURGLARY OF HABITATION
  CITATION               PC 30.02(a)
  LEVEL & DEGREE         FELONY - 1ST DEGREE
  DISPOSITION            CONVICTED
  DISPOSITION DATE       03-30-1996
  SENTENCE DATE          03-30-1996
  FINAL PLEADING         GUILTY
  CONFINEMENT            10Y
```



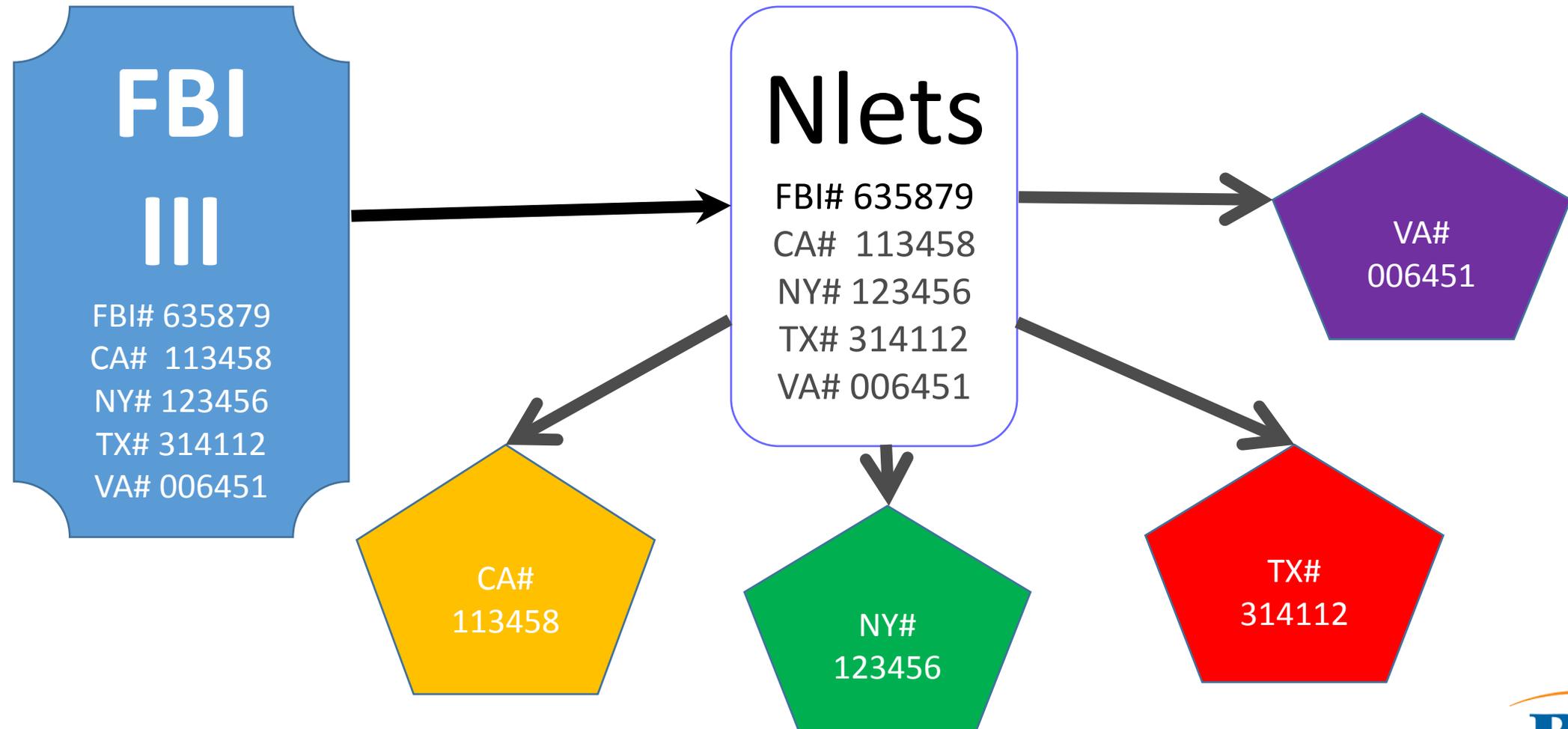
# Connecting together State Rap Sheets



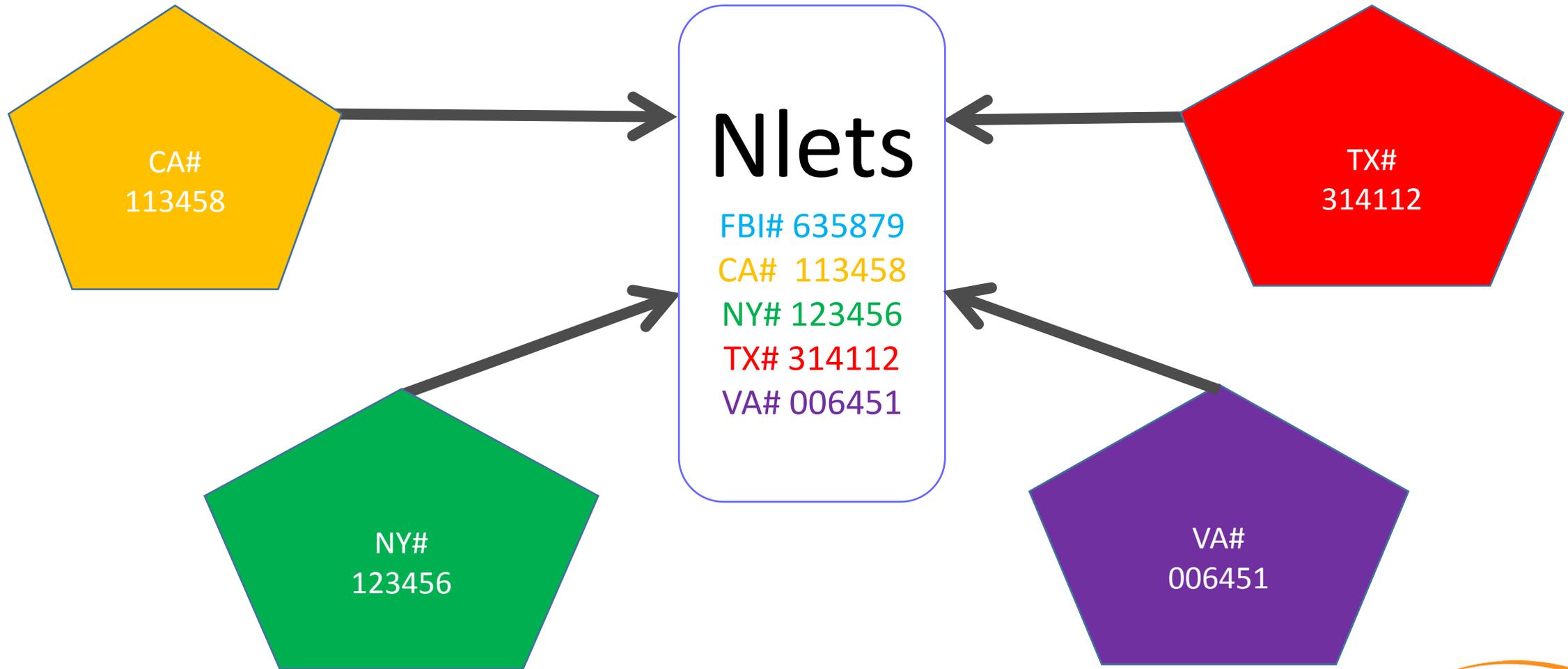
# Simplified Description of III System: A Request for a Multi-State Criminal History Record (or Rap Sheet)



# III Provides Federal Portion of Rap Sheet to Nlets along with the Person's State ID Numbers; then Nlets Requests State Records



# State Repositories Return State-Specific Rap Sheets and Nlets Sends Set to Requesting Agency



# Challenges to using Criminal History Records

1. Gaining access
2. Standardizing for statistical purposes
3. Understanding quality
4. Archiving

# Challenge 1: Gain Access (Obtain permission)

**2006:** Began exploring how to gain the permission to access

**2008:** Signed MOU with FBI

- Duties of each agency
- Terms of use
- Extensive security provisions
- Point of entry

# Challenge 2: Standardize the Criminal History Records

## **Step 1:** Parse individual state rap sheet data

- Identify key data fields
- Identify location of key data fields in EACH state format
- Create programs to parse text strings
- Copy into a standardized relational database

# Rap sheet fields in the uniform record layout

## **Subject segment**

- BJS case number
- Name
- State identification number (SID)
- FBI identification number
- Date of birth
- Gender
- Race
- Social security number

## **Court/Sentencing segment**

- Court disposition date
- Court name and ORI
- Statute number
- NCIC code
- Offense description
- Type of court disposition
- Sentences (prison, fine , etc.)

## **Arrest segment**

- Date of offense
- Date of arrest
- Arresting agency name and ORI
- Statute number
- NCIC code
- Charge description
- Charge severity
- Arrest disposition
- Arrest disposition date

## **Supervision segment**

- Supervision date (admission, release, etc.)
- Agency name and ORI
- Supervision description

# Challenge 2: Standardize the Criminal History Records

## **Step 2:** Recode state specific data into a common taxonomy

- Map state specific statutes into the common codes
  - Initially done by hand to interpret the statutes
  - Developed automated coding programs/crosswalks
  - Validated the crosswalks
- Maintain and update the library of state to state crosswalks
  - Revise crosswalks as state statutes change or create new crimes

# Challenge 3: Evaluate quality

## Data Quality

- Are there parsing and coding errors?
  - Feed back identified errors to Nlets
  - Check for large amounts of uncoded or unknown codes
- Are there patterns of missing data?
  - Feed back identified gaps to States
  - Support states to report more complete data

# Challenge 4: Archiving

This is a remaining challenge –

Need to balance regulatory restrictions

With ability to be transparent and reproducible

# Costs\*

**Developmental costs** – about \$3.0 million.

\$1.1 million for initial record acquisition, collation, parsing.

\$1.9 million for initially standing up the data standardization software, coding crosswalks, creation of recode libraries.

**Maintenance costs** – about \$360,000 annually

Acquisition, collation, etc. – about \$60,000

Maintenance of standardization software, recode library and crosswalks – about \$300,000 per cohort study.

\*excludes OJP & BJS staff salaries and overhead.

# A Case Study...

- Enhances Nation's criminal justice data infrastructure
- Potential is still to be fully realized for evidence-based policy decisions
- Continued data quality improvement with use
  - Improves operational uses
  - Improves statistical and research uses
  - Improves evaluation uses

# Thank you!

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