COD LIST SERVE

DATABASE Cop Watch

Police Brutality Database

I.   Statement of Purpose

The Bridgeport G.A.#2 public defenders office regularly represents people
who have been injured by police during an arrest. These defendants are
often held in lieu of bond and are represented by the public defenders
office at their arraignment. As such, public defenders are the first to
see/hear of these injured defendants and have the unique opportunity to
start documenting these incidents.

Cop Watch is a database that will afford public defenders the ability to
document cases of suspected excess force by police and to compile data
regarding the circumstances of a defendant's arrest and injury. Access to
this aggregated data will afford the public defender the ability to track
excess force incidents, analyze the data and illustrate trends that may be
associated with particular police officers and/or departments.

In addition, the Cop Watch database will provide the public defender a
tool to document questionable arrests due to search and seizure issues.
The database will allow the public defender to collect and document a
police officer's suspicious conduct, actions, incriminating behavior,
boilerplate language and/or scenarios in police reports, etc. Having
the means to summarize such information on officers will provide a
valuable tool to assist the public defender in preparing for a suppression
hearings, justifying an in-camera review of a particular police officer's
personnel records and/or providing impeachment material during a trial.

This user-friendly database will afford the public defender access to
programmed queries that summarize data, as well as allowing for customized
queries, each of which can generate printable reports with graphs and
pictures.

II.   Status of Project

The Cop Watch program is the final stages of design. The program is
currently in the hands of our systems department. The program is being
reviewed and modified to ensure a product that meets the design criteria
and that is free of glitches that may cause a crash.

III.   Vision for this Project

Cop Watch is expected to be a powerful tool, which will help public

defenders in two very significant ways. First, Cop Watch will provide defenders the ability to collect, analyze and graphically demonstrate any trends in excess force and questionable search and seizure incidents. The program will graphically illustrate any trends associated with specific police officers and/or specific police departments. This program will provide public defenders the tool to determine whether there is a systemic problem of police misconduct and, if so, will provide powerful ammunition to aggressively pursue redress of such illegalities.

Secondly, the data collected may assist public defenders in litigating their cases. Cop Watch can be used for trial purposes by providing the requisite showing to prevail on motions in camera to review police officer personnel records. Also, the collected data may be a rich source of impeachment material regarding specific police officers, which can be used at trials and suppression hearings.

As soon as Cop Watch is completed, it will be implemented in the Bridgeport office as a pilot program. After 6 months, this project will be evaluated for ease of use and utility. Any modifications necessary will then be made. Once we have a final product, Cop Watch will be offered to other public defender offices in Connecticut. Hopefully New Haven, Hartford, Waterbury and Meriden will adopt and incorporate this tool.

IV.   General Design Criteria

This Access database stores information into five different tables: 1) Defendant; 2) Officer's Information; 3) Nature of Injuries; 4) Search and Seizure Issues and 5) Questionable Police Conduct. Each table is organized into rows and columns. For example, in the table titled Defendant, each row (or field) will store the name of a specific defendant, each column then will have the information related to that specific defendant, such as docket number, arrest date, age, race, etc.

The five tables are interrelated to each other through certain fields they share in common. This relational connection between the tables allows the operator to type in a query, which is then cross-referenced against all four tables. For example, the operator can input the name of a police officer and query a list of all defendants claiming to have been injured while being arrested by this officer. Or, the operator can input the name of a defendant and query the name of the officer(s) which arrested/injured him/her. Or, the operator can start tracking specific types of injuries to see if there is a pattern of type of injury with a certain police officer. Or to query any correlation between police officers charging defendants with resisting arrest and injuries sustained by said defendant.

This program will have a form, which will prompt an operator and guide him/her in the input of data. The program will also allow the operator to access canned queries or type in specific queries and generate reports based on such queries. This database will allow the public defenders to document and analyze incidents of excess force and questionable search and seizures. This tool will afford the attorney to track these cases and illustrate through reports, graphs, charts and/or photographs any trends regarding specific officers and/or police departments and/or shifts.

This user-friendly database will afford the public defender to input data,

access canned queries to analyze data and impeachment material, will allow for customized queries and can generate printable reports with graphs and pictures.

V.   Table Contents of Cop Watch Program

·   Defendant

i.   docket number
ii.   arrest date
iii. time of incident / injuries
iv.   Defendant's last name
v.   Defendant's first name
vi.   Defendant's address
vii. Defendant's phone number
viii. Defendant's attorney (pull down list attorneys in G.A. #2, and add an option for entering name of private attorney)
ix.   Defendant's charges   (pull down interfering, resisting arrest, assault on police officer; click if any apply)
x.   age of defendant
xi.   race of defendant
xii. Defendants gender
xiii. comment box

·   Officer's Information

i.   police department (pull down Amtrak, Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, State Police, Stratford, Trumbull, and an option to fill in name of other department if applicable)
ii.   Officer's last name
iii. Officer's first name
iv.   Officer's badge number
v.   Officer's gender
vi.   Officer's race
vii. comment box (large area so that multiple comments can be entered regarding any particular officer)

·   Nature of Injuries

i.   last name of arrestee / injured
ii.   first name of arrestee / injured
iii. date of arrest / injuries
viii. arresting police department (pull down Amtrak, Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, State Police, Stratford, Trumbull, and an option to fill in name of other department if applicable)
iv.   number of police officers involved (here there should be way the operator types in a number [1-9])
v.   last name of officer (corresponding to the number of officers involved;
if data input is 3 officers involved then program asks for last and first name of 3 officers; if data input is 9 officers, then program asks for

last and first name of 9 officers)

vi.   first name of officer (see comments above)

vii. need for medical care (pull down taken to hospital by police, defendant sought medical attention later, no medical attention)

viii. how was defendant injured (check all that apply) (pull down struck with objects [i.e. flashlight], sprayed with chemicals, struck with fists, struck with feet, struck with police vehicle, bit by dog, injured while being taken down to the ground, injured while resisting arrest, dragged on pavement, other)

ix.   was client struck on head (click yes or no)

x.   box for 3 photographs (probably saved elsewhere and only displayed when called for by program operator, to save space and loading time)

·   Search and Seizure Issue

i.   last name of defendant

ii.   first name of defendant

iii.   date of arrest

iv.   time of arrest

v.   name of police department (pull down Amtrak, Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, State Police, Stratford, Trumbull, and an option to fill in name of other department if applicable)

vi.   number of police officers involved (here there should be a way the operator types in a number [1-9])

vii. last name of officer (corresponding to the number of officers involved; if data input is 3 officers involved then program asks for last and first name of 3 officers; if data input is 9 officers, then program asks for last and first name of 9 officers)

viii. first name of officer (see comments above)

ix.   Officer's badge number (see comments above)

x.   justification for search & seizure (pull down click if apply)

- threw bag down when saw police
- ran from police, walked away
- loitering
- clenched fist (drugs in hand)
- drugs fell from defendant's clothing
- motor vehicle stop furtive movement
- motor vehicle stop - drugs in plain view
- motor vehicle stop smell of marijuana/drugs
- defendant looked nervous, sweating
- police while driving, look into Defendant's car and see drug activity
- high crime area
- other

ix.   comment box

·   Questionable Police Conduct

i.   name of police department (pull down Amtrak, Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, State Police, Stratford, Trumbull, and an option to fill in name of other department if applicable)

ii.   number of police officers involved (here there should be a way the operator types in a number [1-9])

iii.   last name of officer (corresponding to the number of officers involved; if data input is 3 officers involved then program asks for last and first name of 3 officers; if data input is 9 officers, then program asks for last and first name of 9 officers)
iv.   first name of officer (see comments above)
v.   Officer's badge number (see comments above)
vi.   date of incident
vii.   place of conduct/incident (pull down testifying in court, community meeting, during an arrest, off duty, other)
viii.   comment box

VI.   Conclusion

Cop Watch should be available for the Bridgeport public defenders in August, 2003. Data previously collected by that office will be entered into the database and a system will be established for the systematic entry of new data. The project will be up and running and will evaluated 6 months after implementation.

The issue is national in scope and reaches people all across this country. For too many people, especially in minority communities, the trust that is so essential to effective policing does not exist because residents believe that police have used excessive force, that law enforcement is too aggressive, that law enforcement is biased, disrespectful, and unfair.

Janet Reno, Attorney General of the United States, speaking on police brutality at a National Press Club luncheon, Washington, DC, 15 April 1999.

Cop Watch represents one of many ways the Connecticut Public Defenders Office is addressing the epidemic of police misconduct.