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MEDIA CONTACT

Kacey Bonner

kbonner@fairandjustprosecution.org

310-402-3013

Alyssa Kress

akress@fairandjustprosecution.org

215-264-9665

Researchers Launch New Tool to Measure Success in Prosecutors' Offices

The Prosecutorial Performance Indicators are comprehensive performance metrics that increase accountability and transparency while improving operations to promote just results.

Today, criminologists from Florida International University and Loyola University at Chicago, with support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's *Safety & Justice Challenge*, launched Prosecutorial Performance Indicators (PPIs), including implementation guides, training videos and data from prosecutor's offices, all included on a new website: ProsecutorialPerformanceIndicators.org.

The PPIs are 55 new measures of performance that challenge and expand traditional measures of success in the field of prosecution. Historically, prosecutorial performance has been measured by metrics such as number of cases filed, conviction rates and sentence length, thereby encouraging tough-on-crime policies and feeding mass incarceration. Amid widespread protests and calls for reimagining public safety, the PPIs provide a timely shift toward priorities of safety, community well-being, justice and fairness. The implementation guides offer a comprehensive process for data collection that makes the tool accessible for prosecutor's offices of all sizes.

"Data is a powerful instrument that can help prosecutors see the impact of their decisions on their communities through multiple measures over time," said **Besiki Kutateladze, a criminology professor at Florida International University** and lead researcher on the project. "As more and more prosecutors are seeking guidance about how to use data to bring about a new vision for justice, it is time for researchers and prosecutors to work together in close partnerships."

Don Stemen, a criminology professor and chair at Loyola University Chicago, added: "To make a difference, we need to equip prosecutorial offices with better data. But more importantly, we need to help them to become intelligent consumers of the information. That's why our focus has also been on training mid-level managers in using the PPIs."

The indicators look at nine objectives within a prosecutor's office, from increasing timely disposition of cases, to reducing racial and ethnic disparities, to expanding community outreach and engagement. These metrics create a multilayered and holistic assessment that moves beyond individual cases to determine offices' broader impact. They also allow prosecutors to discern trends to learn about progress and to anticipate problems.

“Prosecutors have long been asked to look at each case that comes across their desk in a silo,” said **State Attorney Melissa Nelson from Florida’s 4th Judicial Circuit**. “While evaluating each case on its specific facts is critical to justice for the individual, we also need to examine the extent to which our case decisions contribute to the best overall outcomes for our communities. My team is working tirelessly with FIU and Loyola to improve our data capacity, learn how to effectively incorporate data into our management decisions and build a public-facing dashboard that increases transparency with the community.”

State Attorney Nelson is one of four elected prosecutors who have partnered with researchers in this effort from its inception. Over the past three years, **John Chisholm** (Milwaukee County, WI), **Kim Foxx** (Cook County, IL) and **Andrew Warren** (13th Judicial Circuit, FL) have been three other initial partners. All four elected prosecutors opened up their offices to explore data and help develop and pilot the PPIs. Key outcomes from their collaboration include:

- Robust racial disparity analyses with findings shared in community meetings.
- Public dashboards that enhance prosecutorial transparency and accountability.
- Development of data and analytic capacity within prosecutors’ offices, including recruiting and training research and data staff.
- Increased capacity of mid-level managers to use data over time to identify areas for changes in policy and practice.

“The time for justice is always right now. Prosecutors are one of the most powerful players in the criminal justice system, which means we cannot reform the system without investing in prosecutorial fairness and efficiency,” said **Aisha Edwards, program officer of Criminal Justice Programs at the MacArthur Foundation**. “Data and research must be the drivers of this reform, and the Foundation is committed to bringing researchers and prosecutors together to do that work.”

“With communities across the country calling for a reimagining of the criminal legal system, these indicators are a key step toward tracking how prosecutors are fulfilling a new vision of justice,” said **Miriam Krinsky, executive director of Fair and Just Prosecution**. “Every prosecutor in the nation should embrace this tool to develop more holistic and reparative solutions, grounded in data, to build healthier and safer communities.”

For more on the Prosecutorial Performance Indicators visit this website:
prosecutorialperformanceindicators.org.

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Florida International University is Miami’s only public research university. Designated a top-tier research institution, FIU emphasizes research as a major component in its university mission. FIU is among the top 10 largest universities in the nation. Of its 54,000 students, 67% are Hispanic and 12% are Black.

Loyola University Chicago, a private university founded in 1870 as St. Ignatius College, is one of the nation’s largest Jesuit, Catholic universities and the only one located in Chicago. Loyola is among a select group of universities recognized for community service and engagement by prestigious national organizations like the Carnegie Foundation.

Fair and Just Prosecution is a national network of elected prosecutors working towards common-sense, compassionate criminal justice reforms. To learn more about FJP’s work, visit

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