

Issue 4 : July 2022

Welcome back! In this newsletter we're sharing information and updates on the steps our pilot sites are taking towards developing their prosecutorial dashboards. We describe what the first version of each District Attorney (DA) Office's public-facing dashboard will look like, as well as their plans to share information through data stories. We then review two recent efforts to improve data quality.

The Colorado Prosecutorial Dashboards Project

The **Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab** (Colorado Lab) and the national **Prosecutorial Performance Indicators** are working with **eight judicial districts in Colorado** to develop data dashboards to assist district attorneys' offices with tracking progress toward greater efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness. Following this initial phase, we will develop tools and infrastructure to scale use of the dashboards statewide.



We welcome feedback and input. Our hope is that your questions and ideas will strengthen the work of pilot sites, and that staff in jurisdictions across the state will learn along the way as the work of the pilot sites progresses. Reach out any time to Jo Beletic at the Colorado Lab (joanna@coloradolab.org)

The Dashboard's Structure

As we described in our **May newsletter**, data dashboards are designed to examine the work of the prosecutor's office as a whole. They take data from the case management system (in Colorado, the Action system) and display it visually so it is easier to see and understand.

Each pilot site is developing two versions of their dashboard. The **internal dashboard** will be visible to staff within the prosecutor's office: it will be interactive, allowing staff to filter the dashboard, for example, by top charge, county, and defendant characteristics. Staff can use the internal dashboard to improve their understanding of case outcomes for similarly situated defendants, help identify promising practices and programs, and help identify areas where additional training could be useful. The **public-facing dashboard** will be released online, linked through the DA Office's webpage. Each pilot site will release its first version of their public-facing dashboard in September.

Each public-facing dashboard will provide key contextual information, to support the public in understanding and making meaning of the data. This includes:

- An overview page explaining that the dashboard was developed to improve engagement with and accountability to the public.
- A page explaining the criminal justice process that provides an overview of the system and areas where prosecutors have decision-making power.
- A page with technical notes, which provides definitions, descriptions of categories, and methodological notes.

The dashboard will present data in eight sections, many of which mirror the “flow” of a case (see [flowchart](#)). To support meaning-making and communicate the office's goals and priorities, data points will be presented alongside reflections from the office. The colors in the flowchart correspond to the following five dashboard sections:

- **Felony Referrals:** presents information on felony cases referred by law enforcement to the DA Office for prosecution.
- **Charging and Filing:** presents information on all cases for which a law enforcement agency has filed a case (misdemeanors and petty offenses/infractions) or for which the DA Office has decided to file the charges (felonies).
- **Case Resolution:** Presents information on all cases prosecuted by the DA Office that have reached a final resolution.
- **Diversion and Deferrals:** presents information on all cases for which the DA Office granted alternatives to traditional prosecution: diversion and deferred judgment.
- **Sentencing:** presents information on all cases prosecuted by the DA Office for which a sentence has been imposed following a conviction.

Three dashboard sections are more crosscutting (correspond to multiple areas of the flowchart):

- **Defendant Characteristics:** presents information on defendant characteristics, including race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and criminal history for cases prosecuted by the DA Office.
- **Serving Victims:** presents information on ways the DA Office engages with victims, witnesses, and the general community.
- **Staffing and Caseload:** presents information about the DA Office's staff capacity, caseload distribution, and staff characteristics.

Sharing Information Through Data Stories

Each pilot site will develop data stories to help the public understand and contextualize the DA Office's data. A data story communicates key insights by combining data, narrative, and visuals. In general, a data story will provide an overview of a timely issue to help guide the conversation, better shape the public's understanding, and identify any next steps.

A good data story:

- Has a clear and specific objective
- Is compelling and timely
- Is truthful and accurate
- Is responsive to the needs of its audience

Two examples showcase the possibilities of how to convey information through data stories. The first, from Tampa, Florida, provides an example on [suspended license reform](#). The second, from Portland, Oregon, discusses [treating serious crime the same across neighborhoods](#).

Improving Data Quality

As discussed in our [May newsletter](#), the dashboards will only be as good as their underlying data. Improving data collection efforts is essential for having information that can be trusted and useful.

To augment the Action system and improve data collection, the pilot sites have developed two proposals to better capture “no file” declination reasons and reasons for dismissal or deferred judgment.

- The **no file declination reasons proposal** has been developed to allow offices to gather more comprehensive information for why felonies that are referred to the DA Office are declined.
- The **dismissal and deferred judgment reasons proposal** has been developed to help offices identify why the DA Office dismissed a charge or granted a charge a deferred judgment.

The pilot sites are collaborating with the Colorado District Attorneys' Council for the changes required to the Action case management system. Review the proposals and reach out to Jo (joanna@coloradolab.org) with any feedback on what it may take for your office to implement these practices.

Furthermore, to enhance data quality, we are finalizing a data guide detailing best practices for entering certain data elements into the Action case management system. The data guide will have guidance on logging: felony declinations, offense location, bond requests, victim outreach, victim race and ethnicity, trials, and diversion referrals and outcomes.



“ Our office is committed to being transparent and sharing accurate data with the community that we serve. It is a key component of building community trust in the justice system. For that reason, we strongly value our partnership and the ongoing work with PPI [Prosecutorial Performance Indicators]. We believe that this work and the development of a data dashboard will help us take our office to the next level. ”
– Michael Dougherty, Boulder District Attorney



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