



STATE OF OHIO  
OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR

JIM PETRO, AUDITOR OF STATE

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# Preventing Welfare Fraud

*National Crime Information Center Match*

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*An Operational Review by the:*

**Fraud, Waste and Abuse  
Prevention Division**





STATE OF OHIO  
OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR

JIM PETRO, AUDITOR OF STATE

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Ms. Jacqueline Romer-Sensky, Director  
Ohio Department of Human Services  
30 East Broad Street, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43266-0423

Dear Director Romer-Sensky:

The attached report discusses the results of a computer match between fugitive felons listed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and Ohio public assistance recipients. As you know, state and federal legislation prohibit fugitive felons, probation violators, and parole violators from receiving most forms of public assistance.

The objectives of the NCIC match were similar to those of our previous matches with the Ohio Highway Patrol's Law Enforcement Automated Data System (LEADS)<sup>1</sup>: (1) to locate and facilitate the arrest of fugitive felons using addresses obtained from public assistance files, (2) to identify, verify and seek recovery of public assistance benefits paid to fugitive felons, and (3) to prevent fugitive felons from receiving future public assistance benefits. In addition, we also wanted to help determine whether the Ohio Department of Human Services' (ODHS') soon to be implemented Offender's Data Exchange would benefit by including an NCIC match.

Our match identified 300 welfare recipients, including 206 wanted by law enforcement authorities in other states, who were forwarded to the appropriate county sheriffs and human services agencies for follow up investigation. Their investigations resulted in 17 arrests, the identification of \$216,734 in public assistance overpayments, and the prevention of an estimated \$70,464 in future overpayments.

Because of overlapping coverage between LEADS and NCIC, a subsequent LEADS match would have identified some of these fugitives. However, we determined that a LEADS match would not have led to 11 of the arrests, \$179,464 of the overpayments, and \$47,664 of the prevented overpayments. Therefore, we have concluded that the Offenders Data Exchange Program would benefit by incorporating an NCIC match, and we are recommending that the Department arrange with the Department of Public Safety to perform this match.

Copies of this report will also be sent to the Department of Public Safety, the Buckeye Sheriff's Association, the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ohio Human Services Director's Association, County Directors of Human Services, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Inspector General, and other interested parties.

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<sup>1</sup> *Preventing Welfare Fraud: Locating and Preventing Public Assistance Payments to Fugitive Felons*, June 1999, (AOS/FWAP-99-006R); and *Preventing Welfare Fraud: Locating and Preventing Public Assistance Payments to Fugitive Felons--1999*, February 2000, (AOS/FWAP-00-003R)

We appreciate the cooperation shown by state and county staff during the conduct of this project. If you or your staff have any questions concerning the report, please call Johnnie L. Butts, Jr., Chief of our Fraud, Waste and Abuse Prevention Division, at (614) 466-3212.

Yours truly,

JIM PETRO  
Auditor of State

May 11, 2000

Attachment

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### ABBREVIATIONS

AOS	Auditor of State
CDHS	County Department of Human Services
FS	Food Stamps
LEADS	Law Enforcement Automated Data System
NCIC	National Crime Information Center
ODHS	Ohio Department of Human Services
ORC	Ohio Revised Code
OWF	Ohio Works First
SSN	Social Security Number
USC	United States Code

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## **BACKGROUND**

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During Calendar Year 1999, Ohio issued \$905 million in public assistance benefits to Ohio Works First and Food Stamp recipients – down from the \$1.1 billion issued during Calendar Year 1998.

Despite the decrease, the outlay is still significant. For that reason, the Auditor of State (AOS) has a continuing interest in assuring that public assistance benefits are only paid to those who need and are entitled to them.

Sections 5107.36 and 5115.04 of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) and 42 United States Code (USC) Section 608(a)(9) prohibit fugitive felons, probation violators, and parole violators from receiving most forms of public assistance. Over the last several years, the AOS has matched fugitive felon files maintained by the Ohio Department of Public Safety's Highway Patrol with public assistance recipient files maintained by the Ohio Department of Human Services (ODHS). The purpose of the matches was to facilitate the location and arrest of fugitive felons, and to eliminate payment of public assistance benefits to ineligible recipients.

In part due to the results of these matches, ODHS has established a data link between the Highway Patrol's Law Enforcement Automated Data System (LEADS) and ODHS's public assistance recipient files. The link should help prevent erroneous payments to fugitive felons and identify recipients who become fugitive felons.

Because LEADS is limited to fugitive felons wanted by law enforcement authorities in Ohio, members of the Auditor's Welfare Fraud Prevention Initiative<sup>2</sup> questioned whether the ODHS data link should also include fugitive felons listed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Crime Information Center (NCIC). NCIC contains the names of fugitives wanted by law enforcement authorities in other states, in addition to those listed on LEADS. To answer this question, the Auditor, with the cooperation of the Ohio Highway Patrol, the Ohio Department of Human Services, County Sheriffs, and County Departments of Human Services (CDHSs) matched NCIC fugitive felon files with public assistance files.

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## **OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

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The objectives of the NCIC match were similar to those of our previous matches with the Ohio Highway Patrol's LEADS: (1) to locate and facilitate the arrest of fugitive felons using addresses obtained from public assistance files, (2) to identify, verify and seek recovery of public assistance benefits paid to fugitive felons, and (3) to prevent fugitive felons from receiving future public assistance benefits. In addition, we also wanted to determine whether the ODHS' soon to be implemented Offender's Data Exchange would benefit by including an NCIC match.

To accomplish our objectives, we and the Ohio Highway Patrol matched public assistance recipients

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<sup>2</sup> The Welfare Fraud Prevention Initiative is a multi-agency group established in January 1997 to plan and coordinate welfare fraud detection and prevention activities.

(335,950 recipients<sup>3</sup>) as of July 31, 1999 with NCIC rolls as of the end of August 1999. The match identified 882 fugitive felons, from which 582 felons were removed because they appeared in our August 1999 match with LEADS. After removing other obvious mismatches, we identified 300 individuals (fugitive felons), of which 206 were named on out-of-state warrants (i.e. they were wanted by law enforcement authorities outside of Ohio), and 94 of the fugitives were named on Ohio warrants (i.e., they represented warrants issued since our August 1999 LEADS match). Adjacent states (Indiana, Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Michigan -- which might be most willing to extradite fugitive felons arrested in Ohio) accounted for 53 of the 206 out-of-state warrants. According to ODHS records, the 300 fugitives were receiving public assistance benefits in 49 of 88 Ohio counties.

In October 1999, lists of fugitives receiving assistance in each county were sent to the respective county sheriffs and CDHSs for further investigation. The sheriffs' offices and CDHSs were asked to complete and return a questionnaire to the AOS on the results of their investigations. The questionnaires were used to tally information on such items as whether or not: (1) an arrest was made, (2) benefits were overpaid to a public assistance recipient (and how much), (3) future benefits had been terminated or adjusted, and (4) a recipient was being referred for fraud prosecution.

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### **NCIC Match Resulted in Fewer Arrests than Leads Match**

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As of March 10, 2000, sheriffs' offices had reported results on their investigations of 164 of the 300 fugitives. Proportionately, the NCIC match resulted in fewer fugitive felon arrests than previous LEADS matches.

Table 1 shows that County Sheriffs arrested only 17 fugitives (6 percent) from the 300 names sent them, as compared to the 30 percent arrest rate from our most recent LEADS match. Six of the 17 arrests were fugitives with Ohio arrest warrants, and the remaining 11 fugitives were arrested on out-of-state warrants. Appendix I breaks out the investigative results by county.

Before arresting fugitives wanted by out-of-state law enforcement authorities, sheriffs' offices typically contacted these authorities to determine whether they were willing to pick up or extradite the fugitive. If the out-of-state authority was unwilling to pick up the fugitive (because, for example, the nature of the crime was not considered serious enough to warrant the expense of transporting the fugitive), the sheriffs' office did not make an arrest. Anecdotal information from sheriff's representatives indicated that this reduced the number of arrests.

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<sup>3</sup> We excluded recipients under age 18 and recipients receiving only Medical Assistance.



**Table 1: Comparison of County Sheriff Offices' Investigations of LEADS and NCIC Match Results**

	<b>1999 State-wide LEADS match</b>	<b>Percent of Total Referred</b>	<b>1999 Nation-wide NCIC match</b>	<b>Percent of Total Referred</b>
<b>Number Referred for Investigation</b>	1,082	100 %	300	100 %
<b>Responses Received</b>	817	76 %	164	55%
<b>Arrests Made</b>	320	30 %	17	6%

Source: AOS questionnaire results.

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### **NCIC Match Resulted in Public Assistance Savings**

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As of March 10, 2000, CDHSs reported on the results of their investigations of 289 individuals, or 96 percent of the 300 cases referred to them. As a result of their investigations, the CDHSs identified \$216,734 in overpayments, terminated the benefits of 63 recipients, adjusted the benefits of 61 other recipients, and referred 32 recipients to county prosecutors for fraud prosecution. We estimate that the savings to the state associated with terminated benefits amounted to \$70,464. Relatively speaking, the NCIC match results compared favorably with the results from our last LEADS match. Table 2 compares the results of the two matches, and Appendix 1 breaks out the NCIC results by county.

**Table 2: Comparison of CDHS' Investigations of LEADS and NCIC Match Results**

	<b>1999 LEADS Match</b>	<b>Percent of Total Referred</b>	<b>1999 NCIC Match</b>	<b>Percent of Total Referred</b>
<b>Number of Individuals Referred to CDHSs for Investigation</b>	1,082	100 %	300	100 %
<b>Number of Questionnaires Returned</b>	1,050	97 %	289	96%
<b>Number of Individuals with Overpayments</b>	709	66 %	147	49%
<b>Overpayment Amount</b>	\$1,056,028	NA	\$216,734	N/A
<b>Number of Assistance Cases Terminated</b>	297	27 %	63	21%
<b>Prevented Overpayments <sup>1</sup></b>	\$325,122	NA	\$70,464	N/A
<b>Number of Cases with Future Benefit Reductions</b>	237	22 %	61	20%
<b>Number of individuals Referred for Fraud Prosecution</b>	68	6 %	32	11%
<b>Number Reported as "No Action Taken" <sup>2</sup></b>	391	36 %	145	48%

<sup>1</sup> A 6-month projection based on the actual monthly benefit paid to recipients whose benefits were terminated.

<sup>2</sup> A CDHS may not have taken any action because, for example: (1) warrant information was not accurate, (2) the CDHS was unable to obtain a warrant date from the Sheriff offices, so they could not calculate the amount of the overpayment; or (3) a recipient had been removed from public assistance before the date of the warrant

Source: AOS Questionnaire results.

Because NCIC and LEADS have overlapping coverage (Felony warrants on LEADS are also posted on NCIC), we attempted to determine what portion of the public assistance savings were unique to the NCIC match. The savings attributable to the NCIC match primarily stemmed from fugitive felons wanted by law enforcement authorities in states outside of Ohio. We determined that \$179,464 of the overpayments and \$47,664 of the prevented overpayments would not have been identified by a LEADS match.

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***CONCLUSIONS &  
RECOMMENDATION***

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One of the objectives the NCIC match was to help determine whether such a match should be included as part of ODHS' Offenders Data Exchange program. Not many arrests occurred from the NCIC match, at least partly because out-of-state law enforcement authorities were not willing to extradite arrested felons. However, county human service departments identified over \$200,000 in recoverable overpayments and prevented at least \$70,000 in future overpayments. We also believe that the prospect of benefit terminations and adjustments caused some fugitive felons to resolve their outstanding warrants with law enforcement authorities. Therefore, we are recommending that ODHS make arrangements with the Department of Public Safety to include an NCIC match in the Offenders Data Exchange program.

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***AGENCY COMMENTS***

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The Director of ODHS, after reviewing a draft of this report, responded on April 26, 2000 that the Department plans to include NCIC data as part of the Offenders Data Exchange initiative. The Director also included a schedule for delivery of match information to the counties. See page 9 for a copy of ODHS' letter.

APPENDIX I

COUNTY BREAKOUTS OF NATIONAL CRIME INFORMATION CENTER (NCIC) MATCH RESULTS										
County	Unique Likely Matches	County Sheriffs Offices		County Human Service Departments						
		Responses Received	Arrests Made	Responses Received	Cases Terminated	OWF Over-payment Amount	FS Over-payment Amount	Total Over-Payment Amount	Future Benefits Adjusted	Referrals to Prosecutor
Adams	2	1		2	1		\$502	\$502		1
Allen	7	7		7	2		\$3,488	\$3,488	3	
Ashtabula	5	3		5	1		\$2,010	\$2,010	1	
Athens	3	3		3			\$4,174	\$4,174	1	
Belmont	4	4		4	1		\$1,539	\$1,539	2	
Brown	1	1		1			\$647	\$647	1	1
Butler	5	0		5	2	\$496	\$5,411	\$5,907	2	1
Clark	10	10		10				\$0		
Clermont	2	0						\$0		
Columbiana	3	0		3		\$462	\$606	\$1,068		
Coshocton	1	1		1				\$0		
Cuyahoga	85	0		83	24	\$14,392	\$45,912	\$60,304	21	6
Defiance	1	1		1				\$0		
Delaware	1	1		1			\$104	\$104		
Fairfield	1	1	1	1	1		\$146	\$146		
Franklin	25	25		25				\$0		
Gallia	3	0		3	2			\$0	2	2
Greene	2	2	1	2				\$0		
Guernsey	2	2		2				\$0		
Hamilton	26	26	3	26	8	\$5,355	\$19,990	\$25,345	4	
Hocking	2	2		2		\$260	\$1,009	\$1,269		1
Jefferson	1	1	1	1			\$869	\$869		1
Knox	3	3		3				\$0		
Lake	1	1		1			\$2,074	\$2,074		1
Lawrence	3	0		3	1		\$737	\$737		
Licking	2	1		2				\$0		
Lorain	2	2		2	1			\$0		
Lucas	24	23	4	24	3	\$9,750	\$26,933	\$36,683	9	
Mahoning	18	0		18	2	\$6,072	\$16,119	\$22,191	7	13

APPENDIX I

COUNTY BREAKOUTS OF NATIONAL CRIME INFORMATION CENTER (NCIC) MATCH RESULTS

County	Unique Likely Matches	County Sheriffs Offices		County Human Service Departments						
		Responses Received	Arrests Made	Responses Received	Cases Terminated	OWF Over-payment Amount	FS Over-payment Amount	Total Over-Payment Amount	Future Benefits Adjusted	Referrals to Prosecutor
Medina	1	1	1	1				\$0		
Miami	1	1						\$0		
Muskingum	3	3	2	3			\$2,103	\$2,103	1	
Noble	1	1		1				\$0		
Perry	1	1		1			\$1,854	\$1,854		1
Pickaway	1	0						\$0		
Pike	2	0						\$0		
Portage	1	0						\$0		
Richland	3	0		3				\$0		
Ross	1	1		1			\$967	\$967	1	
Scioto	2	0		2		\$860	\$2,078	\$2,938	1	
Shelby	1	1		1				\$0		
Stark	10	10	1	10	10	\$7,600	\$9,200	\$16,800		2
Summit	15	15		15	2	\$8,960	\$10,338	\$19,298	3	1
Trumbull	3	3	1	3				\$0		
Tuscarawas	1	1		1				\$0	1	
Vinton	2	0						\$0		
Warren	1	0		1				\$0		
Washington	3	3	1	3	2		\$834	\$834		1
Wayne	2	2	1	2		\$1,040	\$1,843	\$2,883	1	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>\$55,247</b>	<b>\$161,487</b>	<b>\$216,734</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>32</b>

300 unique matches occurred in 49 of Ohio's 88 counties

Number of counties responding: Sheriff Offices : 35 CDHS: 43

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Bob Taft  
Governor



Jacqueline Romer-Sensky  
Director

## Ohio Department of Human Services

30 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43266-0423

April 26, 2000

John L. Butts, Jr.  
Fraud, Waste and Abuse Prevention Division  
State of Ohio, Office of the Auditor  
P.O. Box 1140  
Columbus, OH 43216-1140

Dear Mr. Butts:

Thank you for your letter of April 6, concerning the results of your office's match of ODHS data with that of the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). I am writing in response to your recommendation that ODHS make arrangements with the Department of Public Safety to include an NCIC match in our Offenders Data Exchange program.

We do plan to include NCIC data as part of the Offenders Data Exchange initiative. We have already implemented the first two matches of this system: the Social Security Administration's prisoner match and our exchange with the Ohio Department of Youth Services. In addition, we are currently testing match data from the Ohio Department of Public Safety's Law Enforcement Automated Data System (LEADS), which we expect to deliver to the counties by May 1, 2000.

Our tentative schedule for delivery of additional match information to the counties is as follows:

Sheriff's Jail Linkage	June, 2000
Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections	June, 2000
NCIC	July, 2000

Thank you for your interest in these matters. If you have questions, please contact Jane Wasman at 614-728-7743.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jacqueline Romer-Sensky".

Jacqueline Romer-Sensky  
Director

jw

c: Cheri Walter  
Neva Terry  
Sam Van Schoyck  
Curt Anderson

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STATE OF OHIO  
OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR  

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**NATIONAL CRIME INFORMATION CENTER MATCH**

**STATE-WIDE**

**CLERK'S CERTIFICATION**

**This is a true and correct copy of the report which is required to be filed in the Office of the Auditor of State pursuant to Section 117.26, Revised Code, and which is filed in Columbus, Ohio.**

*Susan Babbitt*

**CLERK OF THE BUREAU**

**CERTIFIED  
MAY 22, 2000**