

Iowa Uniform Crime  
Reporting (UCR) Program

# Policy Manual

JANUARY 2021

# Agency Certification

Iowa Code § 692.15 requires law enforcement agencies to report public offenses and delinquent acts to the Iowa Department of Public Safety (DPS). County sheriffs' offices are required to report crime data as direct contributors, using a unique Originating Agency Identifier (ORI). Police departments and other law enforcement agencies are also encouraged to report as direct contributors. In certain situations, such as when an agency has a cooperative agreement with the county sheriffs' office, police departments may report indirectly in "covered by" status. Agencies that report in "covered by" status do so using the ORI of their respective county sheriff's office. The Iowa UCR program will conduct regular audits to ensure that agencies in covered by status actively report crime data.

The Iowa UCR program is National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) certified; certification was achieved in August 1992. To ensure the quality and integrity of data collected and submitted to the Iowa UCR program and, consequently, the FBI, the Iowa UCR program requires contributing agencies, to satisfy certification requirements.

To initiate the certification process, the agency must submit a letter of interest. The completed Letter of Interest for UCR Program Participation provides information required to add an agency to ICRIME, the state crime repository. It also identifies a primary agency contact. The primary contact is responsible for coordination and submission of agency crime data, and receives all updates related to the Iowa UCR program (i.e. information on data deadlines, training opportunities, etc.). Changes to agency contact information may be submitted using the Iowa UCR Program Contact Change Form.

To obtain certification, the agency must submit three consecutive months of crime data in the ICRIME production environment. Agencies become certified when they achieve an error rate of less than four percent (4%) over three consecutive months. Agencies must maintain this level of accuracy to remain certified. Crime data from agencies that have not satisfied certification requirements may be excluded from state and national publications.

# Agency Submissions

Agency submissions must comply with the current [Iowa UCR technical specification](#). While compliant with the FBI 2019.1 NIBRS Technical Specification, the Iowa UCR technical specification also contains Iowa-specific data elements and codes.

Agencies may submit crime data via an RMS generated flat file, the single-incident entry form built into ICRIME, or the CIRF-NIBRS forms incorporated into TraCS. Agencies must identify a submission method, and notify the Iowa UCR program of any changes.

Regardless of the submission method, agencies must submit monthly crime data to the Iowa UCR program. Data from the previous month must be processed in ICRIME by the fifteenth (15th) day of the current month.

Agencies must maintain an error rate of less than four percent (4%). The error rate is defined as the number of rejected incidents over the number of incidents submitted. Agencies must correct errors in a timely manner and are encouraged, when necessary, to work with the Iowa UCR program and RMS vendor.

Importantly, while the error rate assesses compliance with the Iowa UCR technical specification, it does not guarantee that crime data is statistically reasonable (i.e. correct). Both the Iowa UCR program and FBI evaluate aggregated crime data to help ensure overall accuracy and completeness. Agencies are encouraged to periodically review, at a minimum, their offense counts to ensure they are consistent with crime that was known to have occurred.

# Crime Data Publications

The Iowa UCR program will publish agency crime data at regular intervals using the web-based reporting feature in ICRIME. At a minimum, the Iowa UCR program will publish crime data annually. Once a majority of agencies achieve certification, the Iowa UCR program will publish preliminary data quarterly. ICRIME and other Iowa UCR program publications, including trend reports, may exclude crime data from agencies that have not satisfied certification requirements.

The Iowa UCR program will send data to the FBI for inclusion in national UCR publications. Due to differences in publication rules and schedules, data published in ICRIME may differ from that published by the FBI.

While the Iowa UCR program will assess data for accuracy and completeness, agencies maintain responsibility for submitted crime data. The Iowa UCR program will make no changes to agency data unless directed by the agency and then only when there is an identified business need (e.g., an issue with agency software prevents the submission of a complete and accurate incident or arrest). If a data change is required, agencies must submit a [Data Change Request Form](#). Additionally, the Iowa UCR program will not estimate crime when data is incomplete or otherwise missing.

Agency crime rates, when published in ICRIME, will be calculated using population estimates provided by the FBI. As the FBI estimates do not include data for state universities, these population estimates will be obtained directly from the state universities. The state crime rate will be calculated using the total state population; it will not be adjusted. All crime rates will be standardized to represent the number of reported offenses per 100,000 residents.