

AN OJBC SUCCESS IN THE FIELD

HIJIS subscription function: Offering Hawaii County prosecutors immediate alerts of defendant arrests

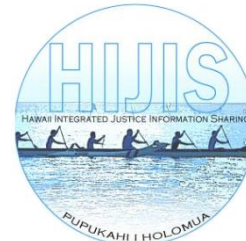
The Open Justice Broker Consortium (OJBC) is a nonprofit membership organization of government agencies and jurisdictions, dedicated to improving justice information sharing through the reuse of low-cost, standards-based integration software. The OJBC unlocks the power of open source software and cross-boundary collaboration to promote a more effective, efficient justice system.

Hawaii County—the largest county in the State of Hawaii—encompasses the “Big Island” of Hawaii and has an estimated population of close to 200,000. Learn how the county’s Office of the Prosecuting Attorney uses the functionality offered by open source software to keep track of felony defendants and safeguard public safety.

The situation: At any one time, a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney (DPA) in Hawaii County has a caseload of about 30 to 40 defendants with active felony cases—but may have oversight of hundreds of cases in which the defendant is either incarcerated, on probation, or on parole. As these cases move through distinct stages of the justice system, a DPA’s responsibilities vary. For example—

- in the early stages of a case, a DPA may screen the case for possible charging or indictment.
- If the defendant is charged or indicted, the defendant is either incarcerated or released on bail or supervised release while awaiting court—and DPAs must carefully monitor their activity during this period.
- After a defendant pleads or is convicted, the defendant is either placed on probation or incarcerated (and eventually paroled). DPAs must monitor defendants’ status and compliance with the terms of their release.

The challenge: If a defendant recidivates or is re-arrested and this results in another open case against the defendant, the assigned felony DPA must prepare a motion to revoke bail, supervised release, or probation—or another type of motion to ensure the defendant is taken back into custody on the prior open case. If the new arrest is charged as a felony, the new case is generally assigned to the same DPA who handled the prior open case. This situation requires DPAs to continuously juggle hundreds of current and past defendants and cases. However, ***until recently, there was no formal notification mechanism to inform the assigned prosecutor of a defendant’s rearrest.*** Notification is particularly important for offenses in which the defendant is arrested and released while under investigation for another offense, or is charged with a misdemeanor, petty misdemeanor, or violation. Without notification, the DPA is unaware of what actions to take.



The resolution: To remedy this notification issue for prosecutors, the Hawaii Integrated Justice Information Sharing (HIJIS) program created a subscription application that immediately notifies DPAs via email whenever a defendant under their responsibility is arrested. HIJIS is a statewide program of the Office of the Attorney General, coordinated by the Hawaii Criminal Justice Data Center, which provides real-time information sharing services via a central architecture. HIJIS helps justice agencies throughout Hawaii achieve greater efficiency, reduce duplicate data entry, and speed the processing and access to justice information.

HIJIS built this subscription-notification service using the Open Justice Broker (OBJ) platform. The OBJ is built entirely using open source software made available at no licensing cost to jurisdictions like Hawaii. This saved HIJIS considerable time and money in building this information sharing capability, which also conforms to national information sharing standards, including the Global Information Sharing Toolkit and the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM).

How it works: To register a subscription, a DPA simply enters identifying information about the defendant into a simple and secure web form. In near real-time, police departments provide arrest information to HIJIS, including details about the arrest subject. Each time HIJIS learns of an arrest, it determines whether an arrest subject is also the subject of a DPA subscription. When there is a match, HIJIS automatically generates an instant email notification to the specific DPA, providing details of the defendant's arrest. This timely notification alerts the DPA to take action on the defendant's case.

Successful outcome: In 2016, a few Hawaii County DPAs started testing the subscription application. They achieved success within the first couple of weeks when a persistent burglary defendant, who was out on bail, was arrested for another offense. As a result of the HIJIS subscription-notification service, a DPA quickly filed a motion to revoke bail on the previous burglary cases and put the defendant back in jail.

The subscription application alerted DPAs that other felony probationers have violated their terms and conditions of probation—and this prompted DPAs to file immediate motions for revocation of probation.

Such real-time notifications help DPAs in Hawaii County efficiently and effectively manage their caseload of active cases and monitor the post-release compliance of defendants.

“Because of the successes realized, all felony defendants in Hawaii County will be entered into the HIJIS subscription application, which will improve efficiency in dealing with recidivating defendants, which will in turn improve the quality of life on the Big Island of Hawaii.”

— Mitchell Roth
Prosecuting Attorney
Hawaii County, HI

If you think this functionality could be beneficial to your organization, visit www.ojbc.org or contact us at info@ojbc.org