

NIBRS

Transition Summary



**Fort Worth
Police Department**
Fort Worth, Texas



January
2018



NIBRS Transition Summary: Fort Worth Police Department

Located in north central Texas, the **Fort Worth Police Department (FWPD)** has over 1,500 sworn officers and serves a population of more than 800,000 residents. In 2016, FWPD received nearly 1.2 million police emergency calls for service, which resulted in more than 385,000 dispatched events. Of the more than 70,600 offenses that occurred in 2016, 56% were property-related offenses and 19% were crimes against persons.

FWPD transitioned to NIBRS to streamline its inefficient manual crime reporting processes: FWPD officers would call headquarters to speak with administrative staff, who would transcribe incident reports into a word processing program. Records staff would then manually code the reports based on the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Summary Reporting System (SRS) coding rules. The manual data entry and coding process required that multiple people modify the incident reports, which increased the potential for errors in the records. Staff would file monthly UCR SRS reports with the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), which administers the Texas UCR Program.

FWPD was one of Texas' first and largest NIBRS contributing agencies. FWPD transitioned to NIBRS in 2005, after a 2-year transition to a new records management system (RMS) that enabled the department to automate its report writing *and* report NIBRS data. For FWPD, the NIBRS transition was a natural extension of its decision to implement an updated RMS and replace its inefficient and cumbersome manual report writing process with a modernized, automated process.

Key Elements of FWPD's Successful NIBRS Transition

➤ **Cultivating Top-Down Support for NIBRS**

Gaining the full support of the department required a sustained effort. At times, patrol officers and more senior staff expressed resistance to the NIBRS transition. ***Continued reminders of the value of NIBRS and consistent support from executive staff were essential to its success.*** The NIBRS project team made regular presentations to police commanders at monthly all-staff meetings, attended roll calls, and e-mailed information to officers. The project team also recruited peer trainers throughout the department to increase involvement and improve group buy-in. Throughout the transition, the project team conveyed a simple yet effective message: the new system would give officers complete control over their reports and would be a considerable improvement over the old system in ease of use, functionality, and ability to query records.

FAST FACTS: FORT WORTH, TEXAS

- 350 square miles
- >800,000 population served
- 1,588 sworn officers
- Nearly 1.2 million emergency calls annually
- >385,000 dispatched events (2016)



➤ **Integrating Change Across Technology and Process**

FWPD purchased a commercial off-the-shelf RMS to automate its manual reporting process and to report crime data in the NIBRS format. Personnel found the use of the RMS to be straightforward. In addition, the design of the RMS product facilitated an easy transition from SRS to NIBRS crime data reporting. FWPD found it was easier to make changes to its technology and crime data reporting method concurrently than to have personnel learn how to report both summary and incident-based data in the new system. ***Combining the NIBRS transition with the deployment of the new RMS proved to be efficient, as FWPD personnel learned the new system and the new reporting method simultaneously.***

➤ **Tailored Training Solutions From Multiple Sources**

The RMS solution provider offered RMS product training, and FWPD coordinated additional in-house training on NIBRS, its validation rules, and the entire offense-recording and report-writing process. ***The vendor’s curriculum educated FWPD trainers on how to use the new NIBRS-compliant RMS and integrate it with the agency’s work processes.*** The software provider made its NIBRS experts available to the agency to assist with the transition.

FWPD trainers developed a role-specific training curriculum that included a step-by-step NIBRS reporting guide for officers and civilian staff, and a manual on report verification for supervisors. The entire department, which comprised 1,200 officers and 350 civilian staff, received 2–4 hours of training over a 3-month period. Groups with particular training needs, including crime analysts, detectives, records division staff, and UCR NIBRS staff, attended specialized training sessions to review specific modules and processes that would directly affect their work. FWPD continued to train officers after the initial training on the new RMS software and NIBRS elements.

➤ **Ownership of Incident Reports**

Officers and supervisors were trained to use FWPD’s RMS to enter the offense codes, describe events, and record identifying information (e.g., names of victims or perpetrators, victim/suspect relationship, vehicle, location) for each incident under investigation. Once a report was entered, the officer ran the report verification tool to check for errors. After the report was validated, the status of the incident report changed to “officer approved.” The report was then electronically routed to the officer’s supervisor for review and verification. During the approval process, the supervisor could either accept the report as complete, return it to the officer for correction, or identify and correct errors directly in the system. As officers began to directly enter case information into the RMS, FWPD discovered that weak grammar, poor spelling, and improperly structured reports were lowering supervisors’ ability to validate incident reports. Supervisors worked closely with officers to improve report writing skills. ***The automated report verification process allowed supervisors to ensure that reports were well written and that required data elements were properly recorded.***

➤ **Proper Communication With Stakeholders About the NIBRS Transition**

Anticipating that elected and appointed officials would have questions about the transition, FWPD communicated early and often with the city council about the NIBRS transition. FWPD did this using multiple methods, including memoranda, personal interactions, and information sessions. FWPD emphasized that reporting incident-based data in a NIBRS-compliant format would provide a more comprehensive and transparent count of crime in the city of Fort Worth. ***FWPD’s message was***

straightforward: the rich data provided by incident-based reporting is necessary and valuable both within the police department and in interactions with the public.¹

Benefits of NIBRS Reporting

FWPD transitioned to NIBRS as a means of streamlining inefficient manual reporting processes. In reporting NIBRS data, FWPD emphasized technology and automation, decreasing reliance on transcription by administrative staff and error associated with manual entry of transcribed records. Automated reporting benefited FWPD through improved data quality, timeliness, and analytical capability.

FWPD's RMS included NIBRS edit rules that guided officers through report entry, requiring fixes to data errors in real time. The RMS alerted officers when report entries did not meet NIBRS reporting requirements. Officers were responsible for following the correct verification and validation prompts and quickly learned from data entry mistakes. This resulted in more complete incident reports with fewer errors overall. Records staff also implemented a new review to check for duplicate information and ensure that data in the reports are correct. The automated data entry process, combined with digital audit trails for records approval, greatly improved the quality of FWPD's investigative reports.

Improvements in automation and use of the built-in NIBRS validation checks also improved the timeliness of report submissions. Because officers were now entering report information from the field, Records Division staff were relieved of tedious data entry from called-in reports and were freed up to focus on other tasks. The streamlined reporting process allowed supervisors to review reports within 72 hours. Supervisors were held accountable for conducting timely reviews of reports so incomplete reports would not linger in the system awaiting corrections.

Transitioning to an automated NIBRS-compliant RMS gave FWPD a rich information resource used to facilitate internal strategic decision making. Analyzing the incident-based data from the NIBRS-compliant RMS has helped FWPD to devise response tactics tailored by crime type and incident characteristics and to deploy resources more efficiently. The agency is also able to provide more comprehensive crime data to the public. By adding location codes to its NIBRS data, FWPD can map incident data to show crime patterns across the city and highlight issues of public safety and community wellness through the city of Fort Worth. The NIBRS data enable FWPD to generate crime and safety information that meets the needs of citizens and community leaders, who expect comprehensive and detailed crime data from their police department. FWPD regularly posts statistical reports and crime maps generated from its NIBRS data to its Web site (www.fortworthpd.com).

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¹ The FWPD Web site provides an example of the types of information shared with the public. To view, visit <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/1027364> or <http://www.fortworthpd.com> (click Crime Statistics link).