

**Office of Justice Programs  
Science Advisory Board Meeting  
January 28, 2011**

**Meeting Minutes**

**March 4, 2011**

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## **Office of Justice Programs Science Advisory Board Meeting January 28, 2011**

### **Meeting Minutes**

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) Science Advisory Board (SAB) convened for the first time on January 28, 2011, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., in the OJP main conference room in Washington DC. The 18-member SAB will provide valuable advice in the area of social science and statistics for the purpose of enhancing the impact and performance of OJP programs and activities in criminal and juvenile justice. The goal of this initial meeting was to provide board members a broad orientation to OJP and a review of the SAB charter and bylaws as well as a review of the general guidelines on ethics and conduct for members of federal advisory committees. Both the U.S. Attorney General and Assistant Attorney General were present and gave opening remarks. Representatives of the National Institute of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Bureau of Justice Assistance, and the Office for Victims of Crime described their current initiatives and needs as they relate to scientific research and evidence-based practices. In addition to accepting the charter and bylaws as stated, the Board provided comments and recommendations on defining what is “evidence-based,” setting priorities for the Board’s work, and forming subcommittees to address the issues identified.

Al Blumstein, SAB Chair, opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. A total of 58 individuals were in attendance, including 16 of the 18 Board members and 34 federal participants. Six members of the public attended as observers and did not provide any written or oral comments.

### **OJP Overview**

The value that the Department of Justice places on science and the need to incorporate it into the daily functioning of every agency was evident not only in the caliber of the Science Advisory Board membership but also in the fact that both the Assistant Attorney General and the Attorney General were present to share OJP’s vision for integrating science into the field of criminal and juvenile justice and victim assistance.

Assistant Attorney General Laurie Robinson thanked the Board members for their willingness to serve as scientific advisors to the Office of Justice Programs. In OJP’s efforts to integrate data-driven approaches to reduce crime, she identified four specific priorities: 1) strengthen BJS and NIJ and increase their independence, 2) ensure that strong scientists head both NIJ and BJS, 3) increase funding for BJS and NIJ, and 4) increase the programmatic attention paid to science within OJP and in funding awards.

This Board was convened for all of OJP instead of just for BJS and NIJ because so much of OJP’s budget goes to programmatic funding. AAG Robinson urged the Board to

consider six roles: examining the role of science within OJP and determining how to integrate scientific lessons into program design; strengthening the research and statistical functions within OJP; suggesting broad research priorities; considering and making recommendations about institutional ways to protect the science; providing advice and counsel on practical concerns like peer review; and connecting researchers with practitioners.

Attorney General Eric Holder thanked Laurie Robinson and others for their part in the creation of OJP's Science Advisory Board. He asked for the Board's frank judgment of what is working well and what is not and help to "incorporate science into the DNA" of the Department. Bringing more science back to the Department is a top priority for the leadership of the Department of Justice.

In response to the Board's concerns that a new Attorney General in 2013 might reverse any gains toward incorporating science into the Department, Mr. Holder urged the Board to partner with DOJ staff to identify bureaucratic options that position the changes in such a way that they cannot be easily undone. People need to view science as natural and expected parts of the Department.

## **Formation of the OJP Science Advisory Board**

Because this was the initial kick-off meeting of the OJP Science Advisory Board, the participants reviewed the formalities of establishing the Board, including the ethical standards of conduct as well as the charter and bylaws.

### **Review of Federal Advisory Committee Ethics**

Charles Moses, Office of the General Counsel (OGC), provided a general overview of Board members' ethical requirements as Attorney General appointees to the Science Advisory Board. He focused on the rules governing conflicts of interest, and appearances of conflicts of interest.

Board members should avoid any decisions that might look like they, or their family or close business associates, are likely to personally or financially benefit from their Board activities. Board members should also avoid any positions that look like any particular agency or organization stands to benefit from a Board member's stance. The Board's purpose is not to lobby for any of the Board's recommendations outside of the appropriate Department processes.

Mr. Moses clarified the following questions from Board members:

- *What is the definition of "other documents"?* These are documents used when the entire Board meets. Communication done outside of the Board does not need to be public.

- *Is it prohibited for Board members to be in contact with any legislators?* Board members can contact legislators so long as they are acting individually, not as a representative of the Board, and so long as they are not using federal funds.
- *Can Board members apply for grants from agencies for which the Board serves in an advisory role?* In some cases. So long as the board does not discuss the specifics of a solicitation, it is permissible for Board members and their employers to apply under categories that have been discussed by the Board as a whole. The Board should avoid becoming entangled in the details of research or any other OJP solicitations. Board members can discuss in generalities the necessary requirements to produce a quality research project and should contact the OGC if they have questions.

### **Review of Charter and Bylaws**

SAB Chair Al Blumstein explained that the charter is based on the generic charters for a Federal Advisory Committee under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). The bylaws detail the operations of this Board and explain that Board members are appointed to a four-year term. Board members are limited to two four-year terms.

Board discussion helped to clarify the following points:

- The work of the subcommittees is not required to be public in the same way as the entire Board's work. Subcommittee work will be recorded as it is presented to the Board.
- According to FACA, the Board can create subcommittees and appoint subcommittee members, but those subcommittees have no right to surface their positions publicly.
- Individual Board members can still give advice to the Department so long as it is not under the auspices of the entire Board. When the entire Board is brought together and is giving advice, the more rigid components of FACA apply.
- If the media want to talk to individual Board members, Board members can speak to the media as individuals but cannot represent the entire group.

As there were no objections, the Board members accepted the charter and bylaws.

### **How the Science Advisory Board Can Support Agency Efforts**

Board members listened to presentations on five agencies within the Office of Justice Programs to gain an understanding of each agency's distinctive purpose, initiatives, and science issues and concerns.

#### **Bureau of Justice Statistics**

James Lynch, Director of BJS, stated that the goal of BJS is to build, maintain, and utilize statistical systems that describe the extent and characteristics of crime in our nation, and the response of the justice system. The agency's strategy to achieve this goal is to emphasize the creation and maintenance of the statistical infrastructure at the federal, state, and local levels. At the same time, BJS is aggressively supplementing these basic

data collections in order to stay relevant on current issues. In pursuing this general strategy, BJS is giving priority to a number of specific initiatives:

- **The National Crime Victimization Survey is being rebuilt and redesigned.** Flat funding for almost two decades resulted in the degradation of the survey to the point that by 2007 it could not serve its basic function. In 2010, money was allocated to restore the quality of the survey. Additional funds were allocated to increase the utility of the NCVS and specifically to produce sub-national estimates for states and large cities, to improve the data on rape and sexual assault, and to improve ability of the survey to provide data on juvenile victims, especially those under the age of 12.
- **BJS is trying to increase its ability to use operational data for statistical purposes.** BJS invested heavily to build criminal history records for the Brady Bill. State and local law enforcement agencies have sophisticated data systems which are currently not being tapped for statistical purposes. Several initiatives are underway to test the feasibility of using these data to produce statistics. The first of the initiatives in this arena is a recidivism study using criminal history data. BJS is currently working out the legal and technical questions of how the data can be made uniform while still providing high quality results. The same data sets will be used in pilot projects on arrested persons and offenses known to police. The legal and technical questions that arose from using operational data for statistical purposes are still being worked out.
- **BJS would also like to improve sentencing and pre-trial data.** Currently, data are housed in two different systems. Exploring ways to combine these systems so that they provide meaningful information is another focus of BJS.
- **BJS would like to focus on the flow of individuals between corrections and society.** This year inmate surveys will include jails as well as prisons, and the jail data collection will emphasize very short-term inmates. BJS will be using a diagnostic tool from SAMHSA to help focus on the mental health of inmates during the survey. BJS would also like to engage in an information exchange with the National Corrections Reporting Program to get a better idea of the flow in to and out of correctional facilities.
- **BJS is also examining the Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics** system, which describes the police industry, in order to figure out a way to give law enforcement up-to-date information more quickly.

In addition to these efforts to build the statistical infrastructure, there is the need for building infrastructure within OJP, specifically the need for ensuring the independence of BJS and NIJ and the need for the capability within these agencies to service the in-house research needs of DOJ.

**Board Member Question:** BJS defines jail as one year or less, but in Massachusetts jail is defined as the time before trial and can be much longer than a year. Currently, this population is not being counted by BJS.

**Jim Lynch (BJS):** It would be very upsetting if such a large population is being left out. If houses of corrections are not being included in the Census of Jails, BJS needs to make adjustments so that they are included.

**Board Member Question:** How close is the National Crime Victimization Survey to being restored? How can this committee help in this endeavor?

**Jim Lynch (BJS):** BJS has reintroduced one incremental sample and plans to introduce at least one more by the end of the year. The training of interviewers will begin in April. Other quality controls, such as re-interviewing and CATI, need to be reincorporated into the survey along with training for interviewers. Reintroducing these changes could lead to another break in the series. BJS is working to make changes incrementally so that rates can be adjusted accordingly.

**Board Member Question:** What other details should the Board consider when discussing the internal statistical analysis center mentioned in the presentation? Specifically, how can staff qualifications be met?

**Jim Lynch (BJS):** BJS funds many statistical analysis centers on the state level which serve as interesting laboratories for solutions to common problems. The quality of information produced can be uneven due to varying commitment levels within the states, but there is a lot of potential to work with the states to use of the statistical analysis centers more.

**Board Member Question:** If the new budget is approved, it may be helpful for BJS to set aside some staff to handle data requests from state agencies.

**Jim Lynch (BJS):** BJS does handle data requests from state agencies currently and we would like to be even more responsive, but committing existing staff solely to this project will hamper many of the other initiatives mentioned earlier. If additional staff were made available, we would be happy to serve this function.

**Board Member Question:** How large is the staff at BJS? How does BJS select initiatives?

**Jim Lynch (BJS):** The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report contains a lot of the staff and budgetary information for BJS and describes the various groups within the agency.

### **National Institute of Justice**

John Laub, Director of NIJ, stated that NIJ has a unique mission. It must produce rigorous science and at the same time produce research that is useful to state and local practitioners in the field. He cited the recommendations of the NAS evaluation report of NIJ as a blueprint for the future. Dr. Laub's goals for NIJ include expanding resources for social sciences.

NIJ looks to the Board for assistance with—

- Facilitating the integration of research and practice into the three major sciences at NIJ (social science, forensic science, and physical science).
- Identifying partnerships within OJP and DOJ, other components of the federal government as well as private foundations to identify cutting-edge research opportunities.
- Identifying priorities in an era of limited resources.
- Improving the solicitation planning process for funding NIJ research and developing a long-term strategic research plan.
- Disseminating research and effectively sharing information with practitioners in the field.

Dr. Laub responded to the Board members' requests for more information on the following points:

- Awareness of NIJ research. One Board member's suggestion for increasing awareness of NIJ research was to use new technology like Wikipedia to speed up the accessibility of information that policymakers need to make decisions.
- Scientific peer reviews. Currently NIJ is examining how other scientific agencies conduct peer reviews and is considering a standing peer review board for solicitations in the future. The Board can help with this.
- Interagency research center. Dr. Laub said that an interagency research center is a great idea and should be expanded to include other agencies like BJA and be designed to respond to data requests from the Federal Government as well as the field.
- Changing the culture of NIJ. In response to the recommendations of the NAS report, working groups were set up for staff at all levels and lively meetings were held over a 10-week period. The director has open office hours for 90 minutes once a week.

### **Evidence Integration Initiative**

Phelan Wyrick, Senior Advisor, Office of the Assistant Attorney General, provided an overview of the Evidence Integration Initiative (E2I). E2I started two years ago almost as soon as Assistant Attorney General Laurie Robinson was confirmed. It was readily apparent to those working on this initiative that there were already evidence-based movements occurring in many fields and across disciplines. Most of E2I's efforts have been focused internally. E2I's success relies on OJP-wide engagement to create long-term culture changes within the Department and the field that will lead to the integration of evidence-based practices into decision-making processes.

E2I has three goals: 1) improve the quality and quantity of evidence generated by OJP, 2) improve the integration of evidence into program practice and policy decisions within OJP and in the field, and 3) improve the translation of evidence into practice.

To meet these goals several initiatives are under way. Some are managed by the Office of the Assistant Attorney General, but others were created and are run by different agencies within OJP. To effectively change the culture of OJP, E2I embraces individual agency efforts to create new activities aligned with the initiative's goals. Some of E2I's programs are outlined below:

- CrimeSolutions.gov is an online clearinghouse of evidence-based programs and practices. CrimeSolutions.gov encompasses criminal justice, victim services, and juvenile justice. The goal is to provide a practitioner-oriented resource that will inform decision-making based on rigorous research. CrimeSolutions.gov will launch this June.
- E2I has also piloted two evidence integration teams drawing on DOJ personnel from OJP, OVW, and COPS. The goal of these teams is to collect and synthesize the existing research, statistics, and evaluation findings to inform decisions on particular subjects. The first two teams met last fall and focused on gangs and children exposed to violence. Findings from these teams are already being used to inform DOJ priorities and practices related to these topics.
- E2I has encouraged the development of randomized trials and randomized field experiments. Although NIJ has supported randomized trials over the years, E2I has helped to facilitate greater coordination between NIJ and other programmatic components to enhance the federal development of field experiments.
- E2I conducted internal trainings on being a good consumer of research. Staff from across all levels within OJP attended.

Based on a review of OJP's FY2010 solicitations, the term *evidence-based* was used too loosely and without context. Starting in FY2011, if a solicitation includes the term *evidence-based*, a standard definition is provided in the solicitation. OJP respects the role of innovation and has not required all solicitations to use evidence-based practices.

**Board Member Question:** Moving science into practice requires practitioners, and pressure from the public on practitioners, to change their behavior. Involving public communications experts should be a crucial aspect of this initiative. Scientists often forget about communications specialists.

**Assistant Attorney General Laurie Robinson:** E2I is working closely with OJP's communications department, and next week a new communications director will be starting.

**Board Member Question:** How is E2I making sure that it is not duplicating any work being done by other agencies?

**Phelan Wyrick (OAAG):** OJP is currently examining options for better integrating activities related to E2I into the normal functioning of existing OJP components. In the long term, E2I should not stay within the Office of the Assistant Attorney General. In

order to sustain cultural changes regarding science and evidence, each OJP component will have to view this work as central to its own mission.

**Board Member Question:** Does E2I have any research agenda geared towards studying evidence integration?

**Phelan Wyrick (OAAG):** The current focus of E2I is coordinating the different components of OJP and the field to encourage the use of evidence-based practices.

**Board Member Question:** Could local programs using strong scientific approaches be awarded for their efforts as a way to publicize the government's commitment to science and evidence?

**Phelan Wyrick (OAAG):** Currently, OJJDP is planning a conference that will feature "star programs." We have found that practitioners often want to visit programs that have established a reputation as being successful. In many cases the organization operating such a program does not have the resources to handle the influx of visitors, which may cause a significant drain on core resources. One way we might be able to help such programs is to recognize them by supporting their activities related to hosting interested visitors.

**Board Member Question:** How is E2I accounting for the robustness of results to ensure that findings are translatable in other locations and settings?

**Phelan Wyrick (OAAG):** Program reviews for CrimeSolutions.gov will include information about the setting and the populations that were served in the testing condition.

### **Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention**

Jeff Slowikowski (Acting Administrator, OJJDP): OJJDP is the federal office charged to lead the juvenile justice field and has always had a research function. The original legislation creating OJJDP, included a National Institute that funded research on many topics and performed data collection. Many longitudinal studies that are groundbreaking in the juvenile justice field are funded by OJJDP.

OJJDP has 76 full-time staff, but no longer has any dedicated research staff. The new OJJDP Act does contain a research provision outlining OJJDP research functions. In Fiscal Year 2008, OJJDP allocated \$10.5 million for data collection and research. Last year \$23 million was allocated, more than doubling the research budget in only two years. Congress does not provide any funding to OJJDP specifically for research. All research comes from internal set-asides from the agency's budget.

Later this year, OJJDP will launch a journal of juvenile justice designed for researchers and the research community so that they can share information with their peers. OJJDP will be responsible for translating the information in the journal and sharing it with the

juvenile justice field. OJJDP wants to show research practitioners that they are also an important part of its constituency.

OJJDP needs assistance from the Board in determining how to use completed research to influence and change behaviors in the field. OJJDP is accumulating data and resources but has no way to communicate findings to the field. As John Laub stated, research needs to be done on how to change decision-making behavior. The current practices of OJJDP are not effectively influencing the juvenile justice field in a way that is congruent with research findings.

**Board Member Question:** What is one way that the Board can be helpful to OJJDP?

**Jeff Slowikowski (OJJDP):** In a time of limited resources, OJJDP needs guidance on how to prioritize funding. We don't want to be a mile wide and an inch deep. We want to be able to get into certain areas in more depth.

**Board Member Question:** So you want us to contribute to where the depth is?

**Jeff Slowikowski (OJJDP)** Yes, in three areas. Evaluations of programs such as Scared Straight is one area. OJJDP has made a tremendous impact in the field through research such as our longitudinal studies where we have funded ground breaking research. We also have a half dozen annual or biannual data collections. Things such as the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement, or Probation surveys or should we do a new NISMART survey. Helping us determine the needs of the field for data.

Keep in mind that for OJJDP it is more than the juvenile justice field as we are also responsible for the victimization of children.

How we communicate all of the findings and how the data is transmitted to the field is critical. How can this information be translated to the field in a way to impact practices?

### **Bureau of Justice Assistance**

Jim Burch, Acting Director of BJA, stated that BJA's mission is to provide leadership and services for criminal justice policy development to state, local, and tribal justice systems. BJA has 124 authorized staff and in the last few years has been appropriated around one and a half billion dollars. At any given time BJA manages 11,000 active grants, and each year puts out 50 competitive funding solicitations. BJA releases about 500 grantee publications each year and disseminates eight million copies of these publications. BJA also supports 2,000 training programs nationwide at any given time. More details on BJA's broad scope can be found in BJA's Annual Report.

Specific challenges faced by BJA are articulated in the handout provided to Board members. BJA staff is extremely committed to bringing science into BJA programs, but as the Board has seen today, it is a slow moving process.

BJA is committed to incorporating science, but recognizes the need to be very careful and strategic in its messaging and use of the term *evidence-based* to ensure that it is not

contributing to the confusion in the field over what the term actually means. There are many ways that BJA has incorporated evidence into programs and there are many areas where more integration is needed.

**Board Member Question:** What is one way that the Board can be helpful to BJA?

**Jim Burch (BJA):** BJA has identified several areas where more research is needed. BJA is not able to address these gaps because governmental funding is allocated annually, making long term investment planning a challenge. This Board would be very useful as a sounding Board to help BJA identify gaps in knowledge and recommending possible ways of addressing those gaps. The Board should also not hesitate to call to BJA's attention any effort that it feels is not consistent with our mission or not sufficiently tied to or influenced by the science.

### **Office for Victims of Crime**

Joye Frost, Acting Director of OVC, described the history and mission of the Office for Victims of Crime. OVC was formally established in 1988 through an amendment in the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). OVC's mission is to provide federal leadership to improve the response to victims of crime throughout the Nation and more specifically to administer the Crime Victims Fund (CVF) that was established through VOCA.

The Crime Victims Fund is made up of money from fines, penalties, and assessments from convicted federal offenders. Every year Congress caps the percentage of the Fund accessible to OVC. Currently, the balance of the Fund is approaching six billion dollars. Approximately 87 percent of OVC's annual funding goes directly to states through two formula Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant programs, one for victim assistance and the other for victim compensation. There has never been a systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of these two programs, or any of the other set-asides funded through VOCA. The victim's field would also benefit from a meta-analysis of existing and disparate victimization statistical data to develop (1) a more holistic understanding of the scope and impact of criminal victimization in the U.S. and (2) an analysis of where gaps exist in services, rights, and support for particular populations of victims or for victims of specific types of crimes. Finally, there is still a dearth of information on evidence-based practices that are effective and victim-centered, especially in relation to emerging crimes such as human trafficking, child victims of pornography, and financial fraud.

Currently, the formulaic structure of VOCA allows OVC only limited discretionary funding (around \$32 million in Fiscal Year 2010) and directs that funding to the support of national scope training and technical assistance and services to federal crime victims. Before OVC can advocate through the Department of Justice to Congress for additional funding outside of the existing statutory formulation, it needs to develop a compelling and strategic research agenda that demonstrates what research is needed and how such research would enhance the efforts of OVC and the crime victims' field in providing quality services and support to all crime victims. Such an agenda would complement OVC's current strategic planning initiative with the collective crime victims' field, *Vision 21*, which is addressing the changing role of the crime victims' field, enduring and emerging crime victims' issues, and more effective ways to institutionalize victim

assistance in this country. OVC believes that the Board can play a major role in assisting OVC with developing this strategic research agenda.

In response to questions posed by SAB members about the potential use of the CVF to support research in other criminal justice related matters not related to victimization, Ms. Frost responded that such use is outside of the statutory intent of VOCA. She added that there is broad bipartisan support in Congress for crime victim issues and that it is important to ensure that balances in the CVF are not diverted to other agencies for purposes unrelated to the needs of crime victims. She added, however, that it could be both practically and politically viable for OVC to provide funding to its sister agencies, NIJ and BJS, to further a research agenda on crime victimization.

Bottom Line: OVC needs expert assistance in developing a research agenda for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including:

- Finding new ways to reach unserved, underserved, and inadequately served victims.
- Understanding the full impact of crime on victims and society, including the financial impact.
- Ensuring that services to victims are evidence-based.
- Determining strategies to assess the impact of programs funded by VOCA, especially programs at the local, tribal and state level, where most of the funding is directed.

## **Future Direction of the Board**

Chairman Al Blumstein asked each Board member to share observations from the day's discussion and comments on the future direction of the Board.

Based on the previous discussion, Board members reflected that OJP agencies seem to be working in silos and need help synthesizing the work in a way that encourages collaboration within OJP and that fosters effective communication with practitioners in the field. The Board also needs to consider the varying definitions of "evidence-based" outside of the research community to advise OJP on how best to describe its evidence-based research and practices.

## **Formation of Subcommittees**

The Charter calls for the establishment of three subcommittees, one for NIJ, one for OJJDP, and one for BJA. Other subcommittees may be added.

The Board expressed some reservations about forming only agency-specific subcommittees. Mapping member interests with agency needs may be more beneficial and ensure that members can positively impact the agencies they work with. Overall, the Board must determine if it is focusing on large strategic themes or strategic operational questions. If the Board's focus is on strategic operations, then the current agency-specific subcommittee structure will work, but, if the Board is focusing on larger strategic themes,

then a different subcommittee structure might be more effective. Suggested topics for subcommittees included research priorities, evidence integration and translating research for practitioners in the field, quality of science, and lessons learned from other fields regarding behavior change and how to apply those lessons to OJP.

### **Ideas for Future Consideration**

The final discussion among Board members sparked many ideas for integrating science into the DNA of the Office of Justice Programs. Listed below are some of the ways in which the Science Advisory Board may support OJP agencies individually and collectively to strengthen evidence-based approaches to criminal justice and victim assistance.

- **Set priorities for research.** The Board can help agencies prioritize the areas where funding should be directed and help OJP develop a cross-cutting agenda to eliminate any perceived or actual duplication of efforts.
- **Institutionalize scientific practices within OJP.** Institutionalizing science would be a very long lasting positive effect and should therefore be a high priority. The Board can examine ways to involve young scholars and practitioners within agencies to help instill science in future generations of leaders at OJP.
- **Foster interagency collaboration and effective communication.** Collaboration and sharing is very important so that all agencies within OJP have access to quality data that can be used to implement evidence-based policies. The Board should examine ways of integrating the work of the various agencies to help foster collaboration and encourage the growth of science within each agency.
- **Consider how to institutionalize protection of science.** Board members should also keep in mind that as political pressure on agencies increases, independence is another issue that should be examined.
- **Examine ways to improve information dissemination.** The Board can assist in gathering solutions from other fields that also struggled with these issues. For example, involving practitioners in the early stages of research design may be more effective.
- **Assist with translation challenges.** The Board can help researchers understand how to make their findings compelling and useful to the public. OJP should enlist political scientists to help deal with the translational issues currently faced by researchers. To help OJP shepherd research through the process of dissemination to policy, the Board should examine the role of research entrepreneurs and committed implementers.
- **Support the specific needs of each agency.** The Board can help NIJ, for example, by supporting its response to the National Academy of Sciences report. The Board also expressed interest in agency staff qualifications for carrying out scientific programs.
- **Act as liaison between OJP and Congress.** The Board can play the role of an honest broker by helping Congress and OJP determine the actual scope of what research can be done given current funding levels. Laying out what can be done for how much

may help OJP communicate its limitations to Congress and teach Congress the actual costs of its requests.

- **Help OJP bridge the gap between researchers and practitioners.** The Board can identify which practitioner communities need to be engaged and help ensure that agencies are not working in a vacuum so that researchers are connected to the needs of communities.
- **Search for ways to effectively communicate data to practitioners.** The Board needs to realize that for most law enforcement officers statistics are off-putting because law enforcement is not familiar with the language used by researchers. One recommendation the Board might make in the future is to embed researchers with practitioners, like law enforcement officers, to demonstrate how data are used effectively. Creating local ambassadors will help spread science to other practitioners and other agencies. Practitioners need to feel that research is accessible and can help them convince their communities that other options exist that will save money but still hold offenders accountable.
- **Establish a rapid response to data requests.** The Board can help establish an interagency capacity in OJP to respond to data requests from the field. BJS and NIJ should make use of the research community through small quick turnaround grants for data not already accessible.
- **Conduct a comprehensive study of crime trends.** This type of study is vital for the field and provides an opportunity for BJS and NIJ to work together. Any such program should attempt to build in a forecasting capacity for multiple levels and should be model based. Currently, the criminal justice field does not have this capacity so it should be viewed as a long-term infrastructure investment.
- **Address the challenge of how to reduce prison populations.** This is one of the most salient issues across states. The Board could support OJP in assembling a task force of researchers and practitioners to compile all of the knowledge on this subject. This collaboration can then serve as a model for future initiatives within OJP.
- **Strengthen the research infrastructure.** Cumulative research practices need to be compiled so that the criminal justice field has a base to build on for future research. This knowledge base must include robust testing and replication. Pulling in experts from other subject areas also will help the field expand its knowledge base and grow in new directions.
- **Define what “evidence-based” means.** There is not an agency-approved definition. Standard language is used in solicitations for evidence-based programs and there is a working definition for evidence. The Board should review this issue to ensure consistency in OJP-wide communications about its evidence-based research.

## **Next Steps**

The next steps include the following:

1. The DFO, Marlene Beckman, will prepare and disseminate to the Board members a summary report of this meeting.
2. Board members will receive specific information about the structure of the Board going forward.
3. Preparation will continue on determining the subcommittee structure, major goals, and timelines for implementation.
4. Meetings of subcommittees and the full Board will be scheduled.

AAG Laurie Robinson concluded the meeting by thanking the participants for their valuable contributions to this first meeting of the Science Advisory Board.

Board Chair Al Blumstein adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.