SMART PROSECUTION

San Francisco District Attorney's Office
Smart Prosecution Initiative
Crime Strategies Unit (CSU)

Statement of the Problem

San Francisco County is populated by diverse cultural communities.[1] Public safety challenges include crime and quality of life issues for residents. In 2013, the San Francisco District Attorney's Office filed close to 7,200 felony and misdemeanor charges, resolved over 5,700 cases and convicted close to 4,400 individuals. Given public safety demands, prosecutors sought a comprehensive and efficient approach to prevent, investigate and prosecute neighborhood crime.

Strategies and Tactics

In 2014, The San Francisco District Attorney's Office launched the Crime Strategies Unit (CSU) to evaluate crimes and to explore connections between individuals convicted of crime, victims, and witnesses for targeted investigation and strategic prosecution. This data-driven approach identifies (1) individuals responsible for the majority of crime in San Francisco's communities, (2) vulnerable victims, and (3) chronic crime areas.

CSU is a multi-disciplinary team of investigators, analysts and prosecutors dedicated to strategically targeting chronic criminal activity. Under the direction of a Managing Attorney, seven neighborhood prosecutors craft strategies to prevent criminal activity, reduce crime and improve the quality of life for residents. Neighborhood Prosecutors are assigned to the city's ten police districts where they engage with both law enforcement and community stakeholders to

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[11] According to the U.S. Census Bureau population estimates for San Francisco County, July 1, 2014; White 53.8%, Black or African American 5.8%, American Indian and Alaska Native 0.8%, Asian 34.9%, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander 0.5%, and Hispanic or Latino 15.3%

build relationships, promote access to the criminal justice system, and strengthen community trust.

Crime Analysts housed in the District Attorney's Office support this evidence-based prosecution model. The analyst team is split into two divisions: the tactical and intelligence division and the strategic and administrative division. The tactical and intelligence division supports prosecutors and provides information to the research partner, Justice and Security Strategies, Inc. (JSS).

Data is acquired from a variety of sources including the district attorney's case management system, and police department report data. Analytic tools are utilized to create crime maps for hot spot identification and determination of root causes of crime. Crime mapping provides directed intervention to a designated geographic area. Using statistical tools, the research partner assists the unit to identify chronic hot spot locations of crime, individuals convicted of multiple offenses, and chronic victims of crime.

Partnerships

Dr. Craig Uchida, President of JSS, and his staff are an integral part of the development, implementation and evaluation of the District Attorney's Crime Strategies Unit.

Research Methodology

The research partner, JSS, assists CSU with data collection from external sources, and examining and validating appropriate databases. Utilizing statistical tools, JSS works with CSU to identify and to map hot spot locations of crime, individuals convicted of multiple offenses, and victims of crime. Further, JSS will develop and validate a predictive tool for use by the Crime Strategies Unit. JSS will conduct a process evaluation describing the establishment of CSU, the office's use of data for decision-making, the use of predictive analytics and resulting organizational change for a final report.