

Chicago's Gang Database

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What is the Database?

The "Criminal Enterprise Information System" (CEIS)

- Enacted into Illinois law in 2000: Originally known as SWORD.
- CEIS definitions: Contains personal information such as names, addresses, birth dates, physical descriptions (scars, marks, tattoos), officer safety information, and gang affiliations.

Use by Chicago Police Department (CPD)

- Inaccuracy and Abuse: CPD has been criticized for inaccuracies and potential abuse of the database information.

VI. CRIMINAL ENTERPRISE AND GANG AFFILIATION IDENTIFICATION CRITERIA

- A. Criminal enterprises and street gangs will be identified on the basis of specific, documented, and reliable information, including but not limited to:
1. analysis of crime pattern information;
 2. observations by Department members;
 3. witness interviews;
 4. interviews of admitted criminal enterprise or street gang members; and
 5. information received from informants who have proven to be reliable and whose information can be independently corroborated.

Membership in or affiliation with a criminal enterprise or street gang must be substantiated by specific, documented, and reliable information received by the Department within the past five years,

Information is inputted by individual officers and verified by the Deployment Operations Section of CPD.

Demographics: 95% of the 135,000 people on the database are Black and Latino.

Stakeholders

- **CPD:** Holds a \$1.7 billion budget for 2021, with a duty to protect the law and maintain database integrity.
- **Mayor Lori Lightfoot:** Fighting gang violence is politically advantageous. In the first six months of 2021, there were at least 336 homicides.
- **Citizens of Chicago:** Being on the database can lead to arrest upon being stopped. The database is shared with 500 external agencies, including U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE), without formal agreements.

Flaws in the System

Audits in 2019 and 2021 highlighted persistent problems. CPD claims the database is "still unfinished."

The Deputy Chief of Data Analytics for CPD left in December 2020, with no successor or action plan.

- 90 Gang Arrest Cards with dates of birth entered as prior to 1901, making these individuals over 117 years old, and 80 Gang Arrest Cards that listed an individual's age as zero.
- 21,380 individuals designated with multiple dates of birth (approximately 15.9% of all designated individuals).
- 15,174 individuals with no specific gang designation, despite being listed as gang members (approximately 11.3% of all designated individuals).
- 15,648 individuals designated as gang members without a reason provided for this designation on any Gang Arrest Card (approximately 11.7% of all designated individuals) and 24,151 Gang Arrest Cards with no reason provided for the designation.
- Individuals designated as gang members at ages as young as 9 years old and as old as 75, and the indefinite retention of designations.
- 4,029 individuals aged 50 or older who were, at the time of the analysis, still designated as gang members in CPD's systems.⁸

OIG also found that CPD:

- did not provide notification to individuals that they had been designated as a gang member;
- did not provide relevant training to sworn members;
- did not have processes for individuals to contest or appeal gang designations;
- did not have processes to regularly review or purge outdated or faulty designations; and
- had no internal mechanism to amend inaccurate gang information.

Case Study: Wilmer Catalan–Ramirez

- Background: Undocumented immigrant in the U.S.; Chicago is a “Sanctuary City.”
- Incident: Never committed a crime or had gang affiliations but was added to the database.
 - Sanctuary City rights were negated.
 - On March 27, 2017, six ICE officers entered his home without a warrant, using force.
 - Detained for 10 months in isolation, with a lack of medical care, leading to potential partial paralysis.
 - Eventually removed from the database and allowed to live in Chicago, pending an immigration hearing.

Solutions?

- CPD Internal Change: Lack of effort to reform internally.
- Organizational Plaintiffs' Efforts: In 2018, groups including Chicagoans for an End to the Gang Database, Black Youth Project 100, and others, brought an ordinance to the city council to regulate the database.
 - Outcome: The case was voluntarily dismissed, partly due to a shift in focus to the Black Lives Matter movement.
 - Quote: "‘This lawsuit was about harm reduction,’ said Vanessa Del Valle, a lawyer for MacArthur Justice Center at Northwestern University’s School of Law.”

Thank you for visiting the Chicago Police Department's public awareness page for the Criminal Enterprise Information System policy. CPD has now incorporated substantial stakeholder feedback and public comments into its policy directive, and will begin implementation of its Criminal Enterprise Information System on February 27, 2020. The full policy is available for review below, along with an informational and FAQ document.

It is important to note, the Criminal Enterprise Information System and its associated policies are not yet operational. CPD is still working to create the Criminal Enterprise Information System, and implement the procedural safeguards associated with it, such as the access and appeal process. The policies and protocols will be developed in the near future, and the Department will notify the public once the system and its associated procedural safeguards are fully operational.

Thank you for your continued partnership in building a safer Chicago.

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Summary and Next Steps

Key Points:

1. Purpose of the CEIS: Originally known as SWORD, the database contains personal and gang affiliation information.
2. CPD's Use and Issues: Significant inaccuracy and potential abuse by CPD, with 95% of entries being Black and Latino individuals.
3. Stakeholders Involved: CPD, Mayor Lori Lightfoot, and citizens affected by the database.
4. System Flaws: Highlighted by Inspector General audits, with unresolved issues and leadership gaps.
5. Case Study - Wilmer Catalan-Ramirez: Illustrates the severe personal impact of inaccuracies in the database.
6. Efforts for Change: Organizational plaintiffs' efforts and the need for comprehensive reform.

Next Steps:

- Advocacy for Reform: Continued pressure on CPD and city officials to implement recommended changes.
- Public Awareness: Educating citizens about their rights and the impact of the database.
- Policy Proposals: Supporting legislation that ensures accountability and transparency.