Processes and Procedures of NIBRS Certification

General Information

When an agency has implemented an IBR system meeting the criteria established in the UCR Information Exchange Package Documentation (IEPD) or *NIBRS Technical Specification* (flat file), the next step is to begin submitting data to the FBI UCR Program. When an agency initially submits data to the FBI, these data are evaluated based on the standards indicated in the NIBRS Certification Process. The FBI considers all data from these NIBRS submissions as "test data" and the data are not included in the official FBI UCR Program database until all processing problems are resolved.

The agency must ensure it has automated procedures (e.g., error handling, identifying incidents it will submit, etc.) in place prior to testing with the FBI UCR Program. The testing phase will provide an opportunity for the participant to understand and experience the NIBRS submission process.

Agencies Converting from the SRS to the NIBRS

In order to resolve data processing issues, it may take the agency several submissions to complete the testing phase. During this time, the agency should continue to send SRS data until the FBI certifies they are NIBRS data contributors. Once the agency has met each criteria of the NIBRS certification process, the FBI will provide a date when the agency will begin to officially initiate NIBRS submissions. At this time, it will no longer be necessary to submit data via the SRS.

Monitoring the Certification Policy

The NIBRS Coordinator will administer the NIBRS certification policy. The agency under review will receive an e-mail from the FBI indicating certification approval (if warranted) or an indication of what additional steps the prospective NIBRS program must follow to obtain approval.

The FBI tracks the certification status of states/agencies undergoing the NIBRS certification evaluation process. The FBI monitors the progress of certified agencies to ensure they maintain data quality standards. The NIBRS Coordinator maintains records pertaining to agency NIBRS certification status.

NIBRS Certification Process

The FBI UCR Program deems a UCR Program or LEA "NIBRS Certified" when the incident-based data they submitted for NIBRS certification consideration has passed the NIBRS Certification Criteria. NIBRS Certified simply means the data submitted during the NIBRS certification

process was consistent with FBI UCR Program standards and the FBI will accept NIBRS data submissions from the UCR Program or LEA and will be included in the national database.

The FBI UCR Program expects contributing agencies to satisfy the NIBRS Certification Criteria defined below in order to become certified.

NIBRS Certification Criteria

The FBI uses the following criteria to grant a UCR program or LEA NIBRS certification:

1. System Appropriateness

   A UCR Program or LEA must provide evidence their NIBRS-reporting system is compatible with the FBI's UCR system and follows NIBRS technical specifications. A UCR Program or LEA seeking NIBRS certification must submit its incident-based system's description including submission structure, crime categories, segment relationships, number of offenses collected per incident, and data values allowed per data element. The FBI will review this document for program design and concept.

2. Update Capability and Responsiveness

   A UCR Program or LEA must demonstrate its ability to update submissions, meet deadlines, respond to FBI queries and requests, and correct errors received from the FBI UCR Program in a timely manner. A UCR Program or LEA must, at a minimum, maintain a 2-year database of NIBRS submissions (retention period) and have the capability to update incidents from the previous calendar year.

3. Error Rate

   Data submissions must be logical and consistent. The FBI measures logic by the percent of Group A Incident Report submissions containing an error. The FBI defines the error rate as the number of rejected reports over the number of reports submitted. The FBI requires a sustained error rate of 4 percent or less for three separate data submissions. The applicable errors are included in the *NIBRS Technical Specification*.

4. Statistical Reasonableness

   Data submissions must be statistically reasonable as a whole (in comparison to national trends). While the error rate assesses the existence of logical mechanical flaws in the data, it does not address data in the aggregate. The FBI UCR Program evaluates aggregate data submissions in terms of percent distribution, data trend, volume, and monthly fluctuations.