

Warrants and Disposition Management Project

Allegheny Standardized Arrest Program (ASAP)

May 10, 2013



Allegheny County's Justice System: Profile and Structure

Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, lies at the heart of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Statistical Area and, according to U.S. Census bureau estimates for 2011, includes a resident population of over 1,227,000. Once known as the steel production capital of the world, the area is now renowned for its leadership in the Medical, Education and Financial Services fields. The County is the heart of an area known as Greater Pittsburgh, an area consisting of seven counties in Western Pennsylvania with a combined population approaching 2.4 million residents. It is also the cultural and entertainment center for what is known as the tri-state area, drawing shoppers and cultural and sports enthusiasts from not only the Metro area but also Eastern Ohio and Northern West Virginia to its many theaters, museums, and professional and collegiate sports venues. The City of Pittsburgh ranks fifth in the nation in daytime growth as commuters from throughout the region swell the population by 41%.

Allegheny County is the 5th Judicial District of Pennsylvania. It consists of the Court of Common Pleas, a trial court of general jurisdiction with original jurisdiction over all cases not exclusively assigned to another court. The Court of Common Pleas includes the Criminal Division, which has post-arraignment jurisdiction over all felonies and misdemeanors. The Judicial District also includes the Minor Judiciary, a limited jurisdiction, first level court. In Allegheny County, the minor judiciary comprises 46 magisterial districts and the Pittsburgh Municipal Court. The president judge of the Court of Common Pleas exercises general supervisory and administrative authority over the magisterial district court system within the County. An elected district judge presides over the magisterial district.

Magisterial district judges handle summary traffic and non-traffic cases, conduct preliminary arraignments and preliminary hearings on misdemeanor and felony cases, and issue arrest and search warrants, as well as emergency protection from abuse orders.

In Allegheny County there are 119 municipal police departments, as well as approximately twenty other law enforcement agencies with police powers in the county. There are 130 municipalities, each with its own municipal codes. The Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts maintains a statute table for all state criminal statutes and authorizes the entry of municipal ordinances into its

Magisterial District Judge System. The Fifth Judicial District composes and maintains standardized language and charging variables for every state criminal statute.

Business Drivers and System Users

The Allegheny County justice system has faced daunting challenges in recent years as economic resources dwindled while criminal case loads continued to increase, and those challenges included

- Declining state budgets and depleted reserves.
- Increasing legislation for specific crimes and unfunded mandates.
- Overcrowding in the jail.

In the face of these challenges it was incumbent on the Court to develop methodologies to maximize existing resources by appropriate consolidations and the elimination of duplication of effort. After analysis, Court staff, in cooperation with justice partners in the County, focused on economies that could be gained through the effective application of technology. The result was the Allegheny Standardized Arrest Program, appropriately known by its acronym “ASAP.”

The goal of ASAP is to expedite required court paperwork preparation, electronically share information among law enforcement and other criminal justice agencies, and identify and reduce delays between the time of arrest of criminal defendants and their subsequent arraignment. The chief performance metric instituted was that no more than eight hours should elapse between time of arrest and first appearance or arraignment. So far that goal is being regularly accomplished. It was no easy task. The initial stakeholders were the Chiefs of the various police agencies, the District Attorney, and the Magisterial District Courts. Starting slowly with an initial implementation in 2006, ASAP now has 6,000 users with individually assigned account numbers registered within ASAP. Access is available to authorized staff members in the Courts, Office of the District Attorney, Allegheny County Probation and Pre-Trial Services, the County Jail, and, of course, all law enforcement agencies in the County. At the end of 2012, there were a total of 140 agencies submitting data into the system.

ASAP'S Business Process and System Interfaces

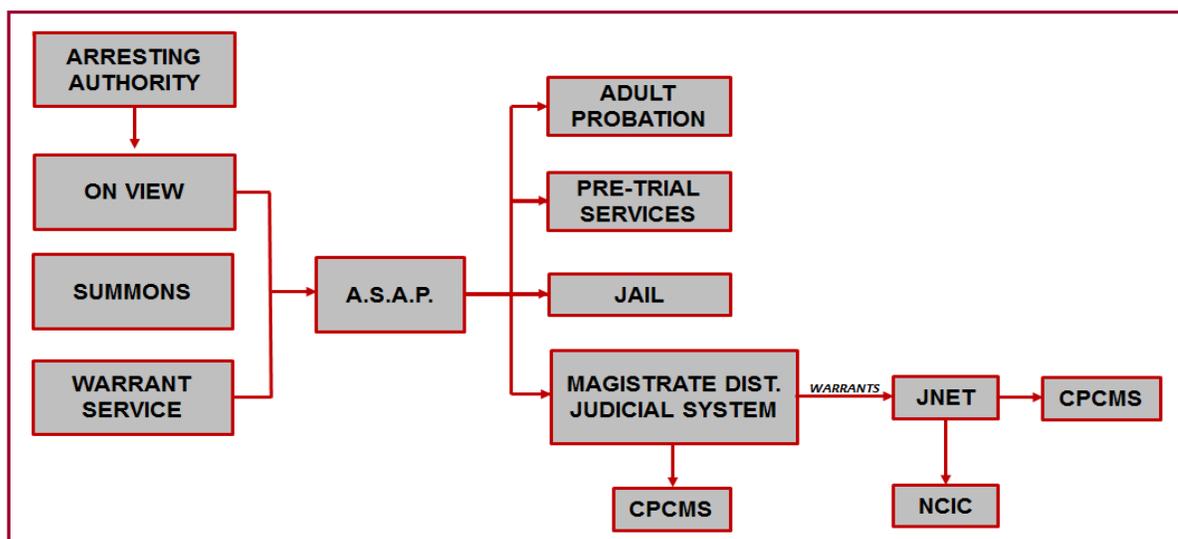
As implemented, ASAP generates a complete Pennsylvania Criminal Complaint that complies with the uniform statewide template. ASAP was designed to handle all murder, misdemeanor and felony complaints from three possible paths: on-view arrest, summons, or warrant service. Additionally, in 2008 a direct data interface between ASAP and the Magisterial District Judge System (statewide MDJS) was established.

ASAP's process flow begins with an affiant officer, who creates the criminal complaint on-line from a work station or mobile data terminal. Once completed, that criminal complaint is immediately available to the County Jail and the District Attorney's Office via the ASAP system. The data are also picked up by the MDJS.

If the defendant is already in custody, the MDJS schedules an initial court appearance. The Jail is then notified of the first appearance schedule and can make arrangements for movement within Jail Intake as required. Successful requests for arrest warrants are transmitted through the Commonwealth's Justice Network, exposing it to all law enforcement in Pennsylvania and, depending upon the available data, to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Crime Information Center.

The following schematic details the process.

ALLEGHENY STARDARDIZED ARREST PROGRAM (ASAP) PROCESS FLOW



ASAP's User Interfaces

System screens are designed to be intuitive and user friendly. All are clearly labeled and easy to follow so officers generally are competent to use the system with minimum training. After signing on, the user begins with a basic information screen that allows a point and click technique to choose from three options: 1) Request for Warrant from a Magisterial District Judge, 2) Arrest, or 3) Summons.



Note that ASAP's home screen also provides the user with menu choices for obtaining assistance as well as a descriptive manual and system forms.

Let's follow the creation of a warrant request. In the illustration below, Officer John Doe from the Pittsburgh Police Department has requested a warrant for an incident that occurred on November 27, 2012, at 12:01 A.M. at a location on Grant Street. The officer can make use of drop down boxes to populate various data fields, such as extradition type. Note also the capability to save the document for later completion should the officer be interrupted while working on the complaint. That capability is repeated on succeeding screens.

The screenshot shows a web-based form for entering arrest information. At the top, there is a button labeled "Save Until Later" with a red arrow pointing to it from the right. Below this, the form is organized into several sections:

- Arrest Type:** A dropdown menu with "WARRANT REQUEST" selected.
- Department:** A text field containing "City of Pittsburgh".
- Officer Name:** A dropdown menu with "JOHN DOE" selected.
- Id Center:** A dropdown menu with "PITTSBURGH SIC" selected.
- CCR Number:** A text field with "12345" and a label "ex. YY123456".
- LiveScan Number:** An empty text field.
- Incident Date From:** A date field with "11/27/2012" and a calendar icon.
- Incident Date To:** A date field with a placeholder "___/___/___" and a calendar icon.
- Incident Time:** A time field with "12:01".
- Extradition Type:** A dropdown menu with "Felony - Limited Extradition" selected.
- Distance:** An empty text field.
- Criminal Incident Location:** A large text area containing "347 grant street".
- Arrest Location:** A text field with a button "Same as Incident Location" above it.
- Bottom:** A checkbox labeled "Criminal Laboratory Services Requested".

The officer then completes additional screens as necessary based on the details of the case: note the menu items in blue font, such as vehicle, scars, and victims. To complete arrestee information, the officer can search for the suspect and import and edit personal data already known to ASAP. For cases involving multiple offenders, offense detail can easily be replicated from screen to screen. These features save considerable data-entry time for law enforcement users.

The screenshot displays the ASAP web application interface. At the top, a dark blue header bar contains the text "OTN:", "Arrestee:", and "SID:". Below this, a white bar shows "Officer: JOHN DOE" and "Department: CITY OF PITTSBURGH".

The main content area is titled "Options:" and contains a group of buttons: "Main Menu", "My Incomplete Cases", "New Warrant Request", "Change to On-View Arrest", "Change to Release on Summons", and "Create with this Info".

Below the buttons is a navigation menu with tabs: "Offense Rpt", "Arrestee" (highlighted in red), "Alias", "Vehicle", "Charges", "Complaint", "Affidavit", "Narrative", "Scars", "Co-Defs", "Victims", and "Complete".

A "Save Until Later" button is located below the navigation menu. A "Search Offender" button is positioned further down.

The form fields are as follows:

- Arrest Classification:** A dropdown menu with "ADULT CASE" selected.
- DOB:** A date input field with slashes for separators.
- Age:** A numeric input field.
- Arrestee Last Name:** A text input field with "Jane" entered.
- License State:** A dropdown menu.
- Arrestee First Name:** A text input field with "Doe" entered.
- Driver's License:** A text input field with "No Spaces" as a label.
- Arrestee Middle Name:** A text input field.
- License Expire Date:** A date input field with slashes for separators.
- Arrestee Suffix:** A text input field.
- SSN:** A text input field with dashes for separators.
- Arrestee Phone:** A text input field with a placeholder for the area code.
- Race:** A dropdown menu.
- Street Address1:** A text input field.
- Sex:** A dropdown menu.
- Street Address2:** A text input field.

ASAP's use of drop-down menus serves three important purposes:

- First, it is a time-saver for the affiant.
- Second, it ensures uniformity of information for all system users.
- Finally, it eliminates data errors that commonly occur when such documents are prepared from scratch.

The illustration below shows a charge code list:



Officers also have point and click access to tables which outline criminal statutes and elements of an offense. To ensure accuracy, ASAP also previews what a completed criminal complaint will look like when filed with the MDJS.

ASAP's Business Benefits

The benefits of the ASAP system have helped Allegheny County officials face the challenges of fiscal constraints while at the same time vastly improving efficiency and accuracy not only for the Courts but also for other County offices and law enforcement agencies in the County. Though difficult to assign a dollar value, the cost savings in personnel time are significant: these include the elimination of paper handling and duplicate data entry. ASAP provides an instant offender locator and workflow engine – guesswork regarding an arrestee's next step in the booking, hearing, and bonding processes is eliminated. Real-time tracking of every event in the offender's pre-trial history – including creation and filing of criminal complaint, district attorney's review and approval of complaint (if required,) jail intake, and arraignment – is visible in ASAP and can be measured and reported, enabling continuous process improvement.

Unanticipated benefits have accrued as well. For example, the system has proven to be a valuable investigative tool, providing person, location, and vehicle data that have been used to solve several crimes. In Allegheny County's smallest police departments, ASAP serves as their Records Management System. District Attorneys are better prepared at preliminary hearings, because ASAP provides them instant access to the most current version of the case file from any device with browser access.

ASAP continues to grow in capability and value to its users and has proven to be a giant leap forward in the effective management of pre-trial criminal cases. The success of ASAP has inspired the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency to create a generic version of ASAP known as ACES2. That system is now in use in several Pennsylvania Counties.

Contact Information:

For more information, please contact the Office of the District Court Administrator, 437 Grant St., Pittsburgh, PA, 15219, (412) 350-5410.



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