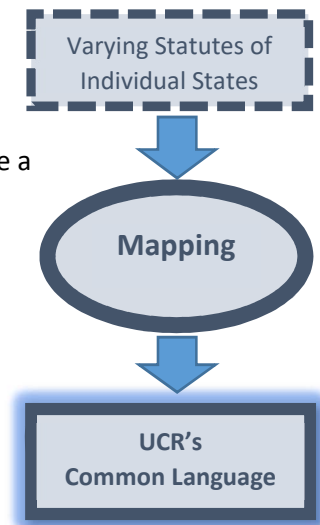




The Importance of Mapping: Finding the Common Language of UCR

One of the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program's main purposes is to produce a nationwide view of crime based on statistics. Though state statutes define crimes according to specific situations, the definitions of the offenses captured in the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) are generic so they don't exclude varying state statutes relating to the same type of crime. Mapping is an extended translation tool that correlates criminal offenses with varying state codes and titles to NIBRS offense definitions. It helps achieve the common language of UCR that is necessary for a national picture of crime.



Key considerations

- Every criminal state statute must be mapped to a NIBRS offense definition to help ensure uniformity and consistency of data across the country. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) asks each state UCR Program and any agencies that contribute directly to the UCR Program to make a fair effort in mapping criminal state statutes; the FBI will then assist with the questionable ones.
- Mapping should be done by people who understand both state statutes/penal codes and NIBRS offense definitions. When mapping is done properly, police officers can submit incident reports using the statute/penal codes of offenses, and their records management systems will automatically apply the corresponding NIBRS offense codes.
- If an agency chooses to map offenses before the state does, the agency should work closely with the state UCR Program to conform to the state standards and avoid inconsistencies.
- Because most states base their criminal statutes on the common-law definitions, many offense codes will directly correlate with a corresponding NIBRS offense classification (or at least easily fit into one even though they may vary as to specifics).
- Based on their definitions, some criminal state statutes may not map to the same offense classifications in NIBRS as they do at the state. For example, certain statutes/penal codes might define thefts from motor vehicles as burglaries. For NIBRS purposes, these thefts must be mapped to larcenies.
- When considering offense names only, some NIBRS offenses may not have a corresponding state statute. For example, some states do not define embezzlement within their state statutes. However, agencies must map applicable state statutes and codes to those NIBRS offense classifications and codes based on NIBRS offense definitions.
- It is important to train police officers/recordkeepers responsible for submitting NIBRS data to read the entire list of codes to find the correct selection.
- As state legislatures create new laws, statutes/penal codes must be updated and mapped to NIBRS offenses to maintain the standard of consistency in the common language of UCR data.

Mapping is a translation tool used to reach the common language of NIBRS between contributing agencies and the UCR Program regardless of differing titles and statutes.