

OSLDPS Information Bulletin
No. 00-014 September 6, 2000

TO: All State Administrative Agency Heads
All State Administrative Agency Points of Contact

FROM: C.H. "Butch" Straub, II
Director

SUBJECT: Frequently Asked Questions Related to the On-Line Data Collection Tool

As you know, the On-Line Data Collection Tool is being made available for States who choose to use this method to submit needs assessment data and strategic plans. Currently, three modules of the Tool have been activated by OJP/OSLDPS, including: 1) the Practice Module; 2) the User Registration Module; and, 3) the Local User Data Entry Module. The fourth module, the State-Level Data Entry Module, remains under development. The projected activation date for this module is September 15, 2000.

Continuing discussions with OSLDPS grantees about the On-Line Data Collection Tool have raised a number of questions about the specific capabilities of the Tool. A frequently asked questions (FAQ) list has been developed in response, and a copy of the FAQ list is attached. In addition, OSLDPS will be placing the list on its web site located at the following URL:
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/osldps.

Finally, for technical assistance with the on-line data collection tool, you may contact the OJP toll-free help line at: 1-888-549-9901. Assistance with the public health assessment may be obtained by calling the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention help line at: 1-800-747-7649. You may also contact your OSLDPS program manager for additional information and assistance related to conduct of the needs assessment and development of your three-year state strategy.

Attachment

**OSLDPS Fiscal Year 1999 State Domestic Preparedness Equipment Program
On-Line Data Collection Tool**

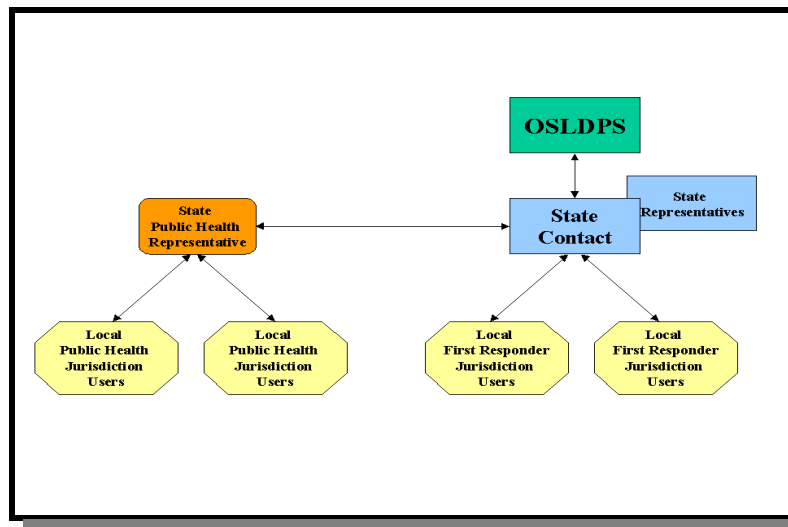
Frequently Asked Questions

Question: Where do I go to access the On-Line Data Collection Tool?

Answer: The Tool is accessed from the OSLDPS web site located at: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/osldps. Icons for the tool are located under “What’s New” on the home page, as well as on the Assessments and Grant pages.

Question: Who authorizes access to the On-Line Data Collection Tool?

Answer: The Tool gives control of the registration process to the SAAs. Once the SAA point of contact (called the State Contact) registers and is approved by OSLDPS, that person will then be able to approve the registration of: 1) other SAA users (called State Representatives); 2) the State Public Health Representative; and, Local First Responder Jurisdiction users. (Note: Once approved by the State Contact, the State Public Health Representative will be responsible for approving the registration of all local Public Health Jurisdiction users.) This process is detailed in the diagram below.



Question: Who defines jurisdictions within a state for the purposes of the data collection effort?

Answer: As with the registration process, the Tool gives control of the jurisdiction definition process to the SAAs. Once an SAA State Contact is registered to use the Tool, that person has the capability to define all jurisdictions within the state that will be submitting data for the assessments. It is suggested that the State Contact complete the process of defining the state’s jurisdictions prior to approving the user registration request of any local users.

Question: What is the definition of a local jurisdiction?

Answer: The Tool gives the SAAs the flexibility to define local jurisdictions however they choose. This could include towns, cities, metropolitan areas, counties, regions, or even a combination of these.

Question: Does the system have the capability to provide both a local perspective and a regional perspective?

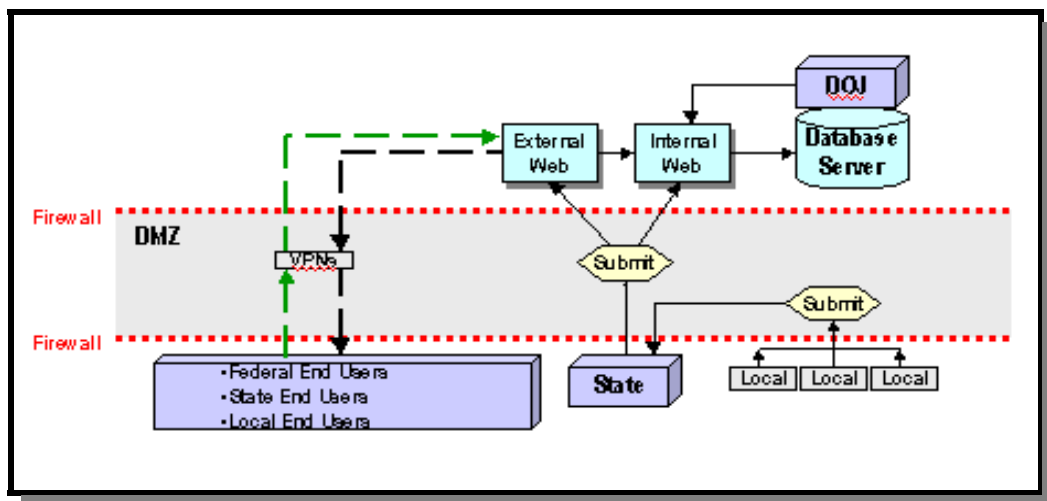
Answer: No. The Tool does not have the capability to roll up data from local jurisdictions for a regional, or mid-level, overview prior to the data being submitted to the SAA. If a regional perspective is desired, it is suggested that the regions be defined as the state's local jurisdictions for the purpose of reporting data to the SAA.

Question: Can local jurisdiction data be entered into the Tool at the state level if that is how the state wishes to accomplish the task?

Answer: Yes. The Tool will accommodate the entry of local jurisdiction data by the State Contact or State Representatives. However, for state-level users to enter the local jurisdiction's information into the Tool, the state level user will need to register in the system as a local user and receive local user id's and passwords for each local jurisdiction they are entering data for.

Question: Who owns the data once it is submitted, where is its stored, and who has access to it?

Answer: The state owns the data. When data is submitted, it is sent to an OJP server where it is stored for the state. The data may be accessed through a virtual private network (VPN) by the state and the local user that submitted it. The VPN also provides access to certain federal users (DOJ, FBI, CDC) to allow those agencies to gain a better perspective of current capabilities and needs nationwide and refine their domestic preparedness assistance programs accordingly. The chart below provides an overview of the system's architecture.



Question: Is the data submitted as part of the assessment process subject to disclosure at the federal level under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)?

Answer: The OJP Office of the General Counsel (OGC) has considered this issue and has determined that sensitive information submitted by State and local jurisdictions to secure funding from OSLDPS, including information about a jurisdiction's threat, risk and needs assessments (including discussions of demographics, transportation, public works, and industrial and public health infrastructures) with regard to terrorist threats and activities may not need to be disclosed because it qualifies under the terms of exemption 7(E) of the FOIA. Exemption 7(E) exempts from disclosure "records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes, but only to the extent that the production of such records or information... would disclose techniques and procedures for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions, or would disclose guidelines for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions if such disclosure could reasonably be expected to risk circumvention of the law." 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(7)(E).

Question: Does all the required information have to be entered at once?

Answer: No. The Tool stores information and thus allows partial work. It also allows the user to navigate the steps in no particular order, so information can be entered as it becomes available.

Question: Can local jurisdictions edit their data after they submit their report to the SAA?

Answer: No. After submittal, jurisdictions will not be able to change information. The SAA needs to officially release that information back to the jurisdiction for them to make any changes.

Question: Can someone at the state level change data submitted by the local jurisdiction?

Answer: No. If the state believes there is an error in the local jurisdiction's data, the state must contact the local jurisdiction and release the record back to the local jurisdiction so that it can be changed. Only the local jurisdiction will have the ability to change the data they submitted. However, for purposes of the state submission to OSLDPS, a copy of the local user's submission will be created automatically. This copy may be edited by the SAA for inclusion in the overall state submission.

Question: Is there a mechanism that gathers the jurisdictional information for the statewide strategy?

Answer: Yes. The Tool will compile this data for the state. Reports and roll up summaries may also be generated by the state using this data.

Question: Can the SAA edit or update their submission to OSLDPS once the report has been submitted?

Answer: No. After submittal, the state will no longer be able to change information.

OSLDPS needs to officially release the record back to the state for them to update it.

Question: Is it possible for local and state users to save a copy of their submission to a local disk or hard drive?

Answer: No. The system doesn't allow for this. However, registered users will always be able to view the data they submitted by logging into the system. A permanent copy of the submission will always be maintained there.

Question: Is there a way for sharing the information in the system among states?

Answer: No. Currently there is no mechanism for sharing state information or assessments between or among states. The Tool is designed to make data visible only to the state that submitted it.

Question: Some jurisdictions do not have the web access required to fill out the On-Line Data Collection Tool. How will they be able to complete the assessment?

Answer: While the assessment is a web-based tool, OSLDPS is aware that not every jurisdiction has Internet access. Local users without Internet access may also submit data to the state by filling out a hard copy form, or by using another electronic form that can be completed off-line and submitted through other means.

Question: Will states need any specific information technology support in order to access and use the On-Line Data Collection Tool?

Answer: No. States will not need any specific information technology support in order to access or use the tool. Only a basic understanding of the Internet is required.

Question: What level of security has been implemented for the On-Line Data Collection Tool?

Answer: The browser for the Tool uses 128-bit encryption to safeguard the data being submitted.

Question: How will this level of security affect users?

Answer: Your browser will have to support 128-bit encryption. It is recommended that you at least use Netscape 4.73 or the equivalent. This software may be downloaded from the World Wide Web at no cost.

Question: Will a hard copy of the on-line submittal pages be available?

Answer: OSLDPS has made several resources available to familiarize users with the Tool and the assessment process. First, OSLDPS has published a Tool Kit to guide users in conducting their threat, vulnerability, public health and capabilities and needs assessments. The Tool Kit is available for viewing or downloading on the OSLDPS web site. In addition, a Practice Module for the Tool is also available on the OSLDPS web site. The Practice Module allows users to familiarize themselves with the on-line submittal pages

without the need for a user ID or password. Finally, users may also print the screens they are viewing using the print function in their Internet browser.

Question: Certain counties and states have experienced access problems in the past. Are access problems anticipated, and has OJP researched the volume of jurisdictions reporting?

Answer: There is no one hundred percent guarantee that problems will not occur. However, OJP is prepared for a great number of jurisdictions accessing the system. To help address any problems that may be encountered, OJP has established a toll-free help desk phone number. The help desk number is 1-888-549-9901.

Question: Is there a source of information on the public health assessment process?

Answer: Yes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has established a toll-free number for public health participants. The CDC number is 1-800-747-7649.