

Justice Technology Transparency Project

Justice System Technology in Mississippi: A Preliminary Overview

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Executive Summary

Technology plays an increasingly influential role in the American justice systems. Courts, law enforcement agencies, and correctional institutions rely on software, algorithms, and data-driven tools to support decisions related to bail, sentencing, surveillance, and case management. While these technologies are often adopted in the name of efficiency or public safety, their use frequently occurs without sufficient transparency, oversight, or public understanding.

This preliminary report provides an early overview of justice system technology as it is generally used across the United States, with a focus on identifying key areas of concern relevant to Mississippi's courts and law enforcement agencies. Due to limited public disclosure, the full scope of technology use in Mississippi remains unclear.

This report is intended to establish a foundation for further research, public records requests, and policy analysis.

1. What Is Justice System Technology?

Justice system technology refers to digital tools used by government actors in the criminal legal system to assist or inform decision-making. These tools may include:

- Algorithmic risk assessment systems
- Predictive analytics and data-driven policing tools
- Surveillance technologies
- Digital case management and evidence systems

These technologies can influence decisions that directly affect individuals' liberty, privacy, and constitutional rights.

2. Common Categories of Justice System Technology

2.1 Risk and Pretrial Assessment Tools

Risk assessment tools are algorithms designed to estimate the likelihood that an individual will fail to appear in court or reoffend. These tools may be consulted during bail, sentencing, or supervision decisions.

Concerns associated with these systems include:

- Lack of transparency regarding how risk scores are calculated
- Limited ability for defendants to challenge or understand the results
- Evidence that some tools may reinforce existing racial or socioeconomic disparities

It is currently unclear which, if any, standardized risk assessment tools are formally adopted across Mississippi courts.

2.2 Predictive Policing and Data Analytics

Law enforcement agencies across the United States increasingly use data analytics to inform patrol deployment, investigations, or resource allocation. These systems analyze historical data to predict potential crime patterns.

Key concerns include:

- Feedback loops that may reinforce over-policing
- Limited public disclosure of system methodologies
- Unclear standards for accuracy and oversight

2.3 Surveillance and Data Collection Technologies

Surveillance technologies may include tools such as:

- Automated license plate readers
- Camera systems with analytic capabilities
- Data aggregation platforms

These tools raise significant privacy and civil liberties concerns, particularly when retention policies, data sharing practices, and oversight mechanisms are not clearly disclosed.

2.4 Digital Case Management and Legal Software

Courts and legal offices rely on software systems to manage case files, evidence, and court records. Increasingly, artificial intelligence–assisted tools are also used for legal research and document analysis.

While these tools can improve efficiency, they also raise questions about:

- Data security
- Accuracy and bias
- Reliance on proprietary systems without public accountability

3. Transparency Gaps in Mississippi

At present, there is no centralized public database detailing what justice system technologies are used by Mississippi courts, police departments, or correctional facilities.

This lack of transparency limits:

- Public oversight
- Meaningful policy debate
- Individuals' ability to understand or challenge technology-influenced decisions

4. Policy Questions Raised

This preliminary overview raises several critical policy questions:

- What technologies are currently used by Mississippi justice system agencies?
- Are these tools subject to independent audits?
- Do individuals have the right to know when automated tools affect their cases?
- What safeguards exist to prevent bias, error, or misuse?

5. Next Steps

The Justice Technology Transparency Project will continue this work by:

- Conducting public records requests
- Engaging with legal practitioners and researchers
- Publishing state-specific transparency reports
- Developing policy recommendations to promote accountability and due process

Conclusion

Technology in the justice system can offer benefits, but only when implemented responsibly, transparently, and with appropriate oversight. Without these safeguards, such tools risk undermining public trust and constitutional protections.

This report represents a first step toward understanding and addressing these issues in Mississippi.

Disclaimer

This report is for informational and educational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.