11-01 - Detective Case and Suspect Closure Codes

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

NEWSLETTER

Field Operations Support Services

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DETECTIVE CASE AND SUSPECT CLOSURE CODES

BACKGROUND

A two-year study conducted by an Advisory Committee on Detective Standards, discovered that the Case Management Module within the Department's records management application, Los Angeles Regional Crimes Information System (LARCIS), needed enhancements and modifications to reflect existing business practices. These enhancements will assist detectives and supervisors in more accurately measuring productivity while closing and clearing cases as required by the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) — Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Program.

The case management module in LARCIS is programmed to automatically report certain detective case closure information to appropriate agencies. These agencies are mandated to record statistics from all law enforcement agencies statewide and nationwide. This newsletter is intended to clarify the terminology involved in case closures, while also providing detectives and supervisors with guidance on selecting the most appropriate code(s) used at the conclusion of an investigation.

FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program: Cases Cleared vs. Uncleared

Case clearance data is collected and reported to the FBI UCR Program. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) documents this information through data entry in the case closure code field within the LARCIS system.

In the UCR Program, law enforcement agencies can "clear" offenses in one of two ways: by "arrest" or by "exceptional" means. Although agencies may administratively close or "solve" a case for internal reporting purposes, that does not necessarily mean that the agency can clear the offense for UCR purposes. To clear an offense within the UCR Program's guidelines, the reporting agency must adhere to very specific criteria, which are outlined in the following text.

Cleared by Arrest (Codes 200-205)

In the UCR Program, a law enforcement agency reports that an offense is cleared by arrest, or solved for

crime reporting purposes, when three specific conditions have been met.

At least one person must have been:

1. Arrested,

2. Charged with the commission of the offense, and

3. Turned over to the court for prosecution (whether following arrest, court summons, or police notice).

In its clearance calculations, the UCR Program counts the number of offenses that are cleared, not the number of persons arrested. The arrest of one person may clear several crimes, and the arrest of many persons may clear only one offense. In addition, some clearances that an agency records in a particular calendar year, such as 2009, may pertain to offenses that occurred in previous years.

Cleared by “Exceptional” Means (Codes 210-215, 218, 221, 223, 225, 227, 231)

In certain situations, elements beyond law enforcement’s control prevent the agency from arresting and formally charging the offender. When this occurs, the agency can clear the offense “exceptionally.” Law enforcement agencies must meet all of the following four conditions in order to clear an offense by exceptional means. The agency must have:

1. Identified the offender,

2. Gathered enough evidence to support an arrest, make a charge, and turn over the offender to the court for prosecution,

3. Identified the offender’s exact location so that the suspect could be taken into custody immediately, and

4. Encountered a circumstance outside the control of law enforcement that prohibits the agency from arresting, charging, and prosecuting the offender.

Some examples of exceptional clearances include, but are not limited to: the death of the offender (218), the victim’s refusal to cooperate with the prosecution after the offender has been identified (214), or the denial of extradition because the offender committed a crime in another jurisdiction and is being prosecuted for that offense (231). In the UCR Program, the recovery of property alone does not clear an offense.

Clearances Involving Only Persons Under 18 years of Age (Codes 216, 217, 219)

When an offender under the age of 18 is cited to appear in juvenile court or before other juvenile authorities, the UCR Program considers the incident cleared by arrest, even though a physical arrest may not have occurred. When clearances involve both juvenile and adult offenders, those incidents are classified as clearances for crimes committed by adults.

Cases Unfounded

If a suspect is found to be factually innocent and exonerated of the crime, or the investigation reveals that no

crime actually occurred, case clearance code “205” would apply. This code effectively reverses the statistic for the recorded crime on any subsequent reporting within the UCR Program. Due to the time lapse caused by an investigation, it is not uncommon for a crime to be reported in one period, and then deducted in a later period. This may result in a negative number for a particular crime category, due to statistical correction purposes, as code 205 effectively reverses the original reported statistic from the prior period.

To clarify, the case clearance code represents the outcome of the case overall. So the arrest of even just one suspect out of three would result in an overall recorded statistic with UCR Program as a “cleared” crime. Conversely, the arrest of all three suspects would only result in one “clearance” for that individual case.

Cases “Solved” vs. “Closed”

For detective case management purposes, LARCIS is programmed to record concluded cases as “Active” (0), “Pending” (1), “Closed” (110-138) or “Solved” (200- 255). These results are best reviewed using the “Investigator Workload Analysis” report in LARCIS. It’s important to note, codes 220, 222, 224, 226, 230 and 255 are counted as “solved” cases for tracking purposes; however, these closures do not meet the criteria for “cleared” cases as a part of the UCR Program.

Suspect Codes

Suspect codes in LARCIS are used to record and report the final disposition of involved suspects or subjects for cases handled by investigators. Suspect clearance data is collected and reported to DOJ. LASD records this information upon data entry in the participant (suspect/subject) code field within the case closure module in the LARCIS system. The participant disposition code(s) selected should be harmonious with the case clearance code entered.

Unlike clearance codes for the overall case, suspect codes account for the outcome of each individual suspect for statistical reporting purposes. For example: in one case with three defendants, where there is one felony filing, one misdemeanor filing, and one District Attorney rejection, three individual outcomes, one listed in each category, would be reported to DOJ.

To guide investigators and detective supervisors in the selection of proper case clearance and suspect codes, which comply with the requirements of the UCR Program, a 2-page reference table has been produced, and is attached to this newsletter. The reference guide is also available within the Department’s Microsoft SharePoint eForms Library under “LARCIS Case Clearance Code Reference Table.”

For additional information regarding the content of this newsletter email the “Detective Standards Committee” group or contact Field Operations Support Services, at (323) 890-5411.

REFERENCES

United States Department of Justice — Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Report (UCR): Crime in the United States, 2009 (Released September 2010),
http://www2.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2009/documents/clearancetopic.pdf

ATTACHMENTS

LARCIS Case Clearance Code Reference Table

LARCIS Case Status Dispo & Participant Codes

FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Handbook