

Charge-Level Data Elements Requested from Courts

MFJ collects charge-level data for every case filed in court, using a rigorous Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to ensure uniform comparisons. This PDF provides an overview of how MFJ standardizes charge-level court data for consistent analysis.



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Data Element	Definition
Court case number (docket number)	Number used by the courts to identify the case. This number should be assigned to each and every charge within the case.
Arresting agency	Identification (e.g., name, code) of law enforcement agency that conducted the arrest.
County of jurisdiction	County where the case was referred to the prosecutor for review.
Case status	Indication of whether the case is pending/still open, closed, on appeal, or inactive (e.g., when the defendant is at large).
Offense date	Date when the offense occurred.
Arrest date	Date when law enforcement took defendant into custody.
Filing date	Date when the prosecutor (or law enforcement, in jurisdictions where they are allowed to file cases directly in court without prosecutorial review) filed the charge(s) in court.
Initial appearance date (aka arraignment date)	Date when the defendant appeared in court for the first time to hear the charge(s) against them.
Indigence affidavit filing date	Date when the defense filed an indigence affidavit in court.
Indigence determination date	Date when the court entered a finding of indigence pursuant to an affidavit filed by the defense.
Defense attorney request date	Date when the defendant requested that the state provide a defense attorney to represent them in the case.
Defense attorney assignment date	Date when a defense attorney of record was assigned to the case.
Defense attorney withdrawal date	Date when the defense attorney of record withdrew from the case.

Data Element	Definition
Bond/bail hearing date	Date when the defendant appeared in court to get bond/bail set.
Bond/bail setting date	Date when the court originally set a bond for the defendant.
Bond/bail modification date	Date when the court modified the type or amount of bond originally set at the bond/bail hearing.
Monetary bail posting date	Date when the defendant posted monetary bail to obtain pretrial release.
Court hearing dates	Dates for all court hearings scheduled in the case.
Failure to appear in court dates	Dates for all the court hearings to which the defendant failed to appear.
Trial date	Date when trial proceedings were initiated.
Judicial transfer date	Date when the case was transferred to the jurisdiction of another judge.
Bond motion date	Date when a bond motion was filed in court by the defense.
Bond motion granted date	Date when a bond motion filed by the defense was granted by the judge.
Discovery motion date	Date when a discovery motion was filed in court by the defense.
Speedy trial motion date	Date when a speedy trial motion was filed in court by the defense.
Dismissal motion date	Date when a dismissal motion was filed in court.

Data Element	Definition
Final plea date	Date when the defendant entered a final plea.
Charge disposition date	Date when each charge received a judgment or disposition.
Sentence date	Date when sentence(s) was imposed.
Defendant's name	Defendant's first name, middle initial, and last name.
Defendant's aliases	Any aliases used by the defendant in the past.
Defendant's date of birth	Defendant's date of birth (MM/DD/YYYY).
Defendant's race	Defendant's self-identification with one or more social groups (e.g., White, African American, American Indian or Alaskan, Asian or Pacific Islander, Other). If self-identification is unavailable, the officer's perception at first contact may be used as a proxy.
Defendant's ethnicity Bond motion date	Defendant's ethnicity determines whether a person is of Hispanic origin or not. NOTE: Self-identification is much preferred, but in its absence, the perception of race by the criminal justice officer(s) who had the first contact with the defendant can serve as a proxy.
Defendant's sex	Defendant's biological sex at birth.
Defendant's gender	Defendant's gender identification.
Defendant's zip code	Zip code of last known residence for the defendant.
Defendant's indigent status	Whether the defendant was determined to be indigent according to the state's indigence eligibility criteria.

Data Element	Definition
Filing charge unique identifier	Sequence number uniquely identifying each filing charge within a case.
Filing charge description	Text describing the nature of each charge against the defendant that was filed in court by the prosecutor.
Filing charge statute number	The statute number describing each criminal charge filed against the defendant by the prosecutor.
Filing charge type	Whether each charge against the defendant that was filed in court by the prosecutor is a felony or a misdemeanor.
Filing charge class severity	The class severity assigned by law to each charge filed against the defendant (e.g., Felony 1, Misdemeanor A).
Filing charge drug type	The drug and offense (e.g., marijuana possession, cocaine distribution) for each charge filed by the prosecutor.
Filing charge modifiers	Modifiers or enhancers that could increase the defendant's punishment, such as domestic violence or weapon use during a crime.
Filing charge disposition	The judgment or disposition entered by the court for each charge against the defendant that was filed in court by the prosecutor.
Filing charge expected sentence	If the charge was convicted as filed, what sentence type and length would the court impose based on the statutory laws?
Conviction charge unique identifier	Sequence number uniquely identifying each conviction charge within a case.
Conviction charge description	Text describing the nature of each conviction charge.
Conviction charge statute number	The statute number that identifies and describes the behavior as a criminal offense for each conviction charge.
Conviction charge type	Whether each conviction charge is a felony or a misdemeanor.

Data Element	Definition
Conviction charge class severity	The specific class severity provided by statutory laws for each conviction charge (e.g., Felony 1, Felony 2, Misdemeanor A, Misdemeanor B, etc.)
Conviction charge modifiers	The specific type of modifiers or enhancers, when applicable, that could lead to more serious punishment for each conviction charge. Common charge modifiers include domestic violence and using a weapon in the commission of a crime.
Conviction charge drug type	The type of drug and offense (e.g., marijuana possession, cocaine distribution) for each conviction.
Conviction charge means of disposition	Whether each charge was convicted via plea bargain, bench trial, or jury trial.
Defendant's zip code	Zip code of last known residence for the defendant.
Monetary bond amount	Dollar amount of the monetary bond imposed at the bond/bail hearing.
Monetary bond payment	Whether the defendant posted the monetary bond amount imposed at the bond/bail hearing/
Nonmonetary conditions of pretrial release	List of nonmonetary conditions defendant is mandated to comply with while on pretrial release.
Pretrial release decision	Type of pretrial release set by the court at the bond hearing, including: recognizance, supervised release, monetary bond, electronic monitoring, or held without bail.
Failures to appear in court	Number of instances in which the defendant failed to appear at a scheduled court hearing.
Pretrial release revocation due to failure to appear in court	Whether pretrial release was revoked due to the defendant failing to appear at a scheduled court hearing.
Pretrial risk assessment score	Risk score assigned to the defendant during the pretrial assessment phase on which the pretrial release decision is based. This can be simplified into categories such as high, medium, low.
Pretrial release revocation due to a new offense	Whether pretrial release was revoked due to the defendant being arrested for the commission of a new offense.

Data Element	Definition
Defense attorney type	Whether last attorney of record was: pro se, public defender, court-appointed private attorney, retained private attorney, other.
Defendant representation complaint	Whether the defendant complained about the quality of their representation.
Dismissal by prosecutor flag	Flag indicating whether the case was dismissed or nolle prosequi after filing at the prosecutor request.
Dismissal by judge flag	Flag indicating whether the case was dismissed by the judge.
Failures to appear in court	Number of instances in which the defendant failed to appear at a scheduled court hearing.
Time served credit	Whether the court credited the defendant's pretrial detention toward their mandated sentence.
Sentence type(s)	Type(s) of sentence(s) the defendant was mandated to serve. Common sentence types include: death penalty, life in prison, state prison, jail, lifetime supervision, extended supervision/split sentence, probation, fine, restitution, community service, time served, other.
Sentence length(s)	Length (in days and months) of confinement and probation imposed by the court. The sentence length should be recorded separately for each type of sentence.
Sentence conditions	Additional conditions imposed at sentencing, including suspension or revocation of driver's license.

Data Element	Definition
Time served credit length	Length (in days) of time spent in pretrial detention that was credited toward the sentence the defendant was mandated to serve.
Fine amount	Dollar amount of the fine the defendant was sentenced to pay.
Court fees/costs amount	Dollar amount of the court fees/costs the defendant was mandated to pay.
Fine amount balance to date	Dollar amount of fines owed by the defendant at the time of data extraction.
Court fees/costs balance to date	Dollar amount court fees/costs owed by the defendant at the time of data extraction.
Restitution amount	Dollar amount of the restitution the defendant was sentenced to pay.
Restitution balance to date	Dollar amount of restitution owed by the defendant at the time of data extraction.
Restitution amount paid to victims/survivors	Dollar amount of restitution that was paid to the victims/survivors of the crime.
Appeal filed	Whether the defendant filed an appeal after receiving a judgment of conviction.
Type of appeal filed	Basis for appeal: ineffective counsel, DNA evidence, new or withheld exculpatory evidence.
Appeal disposition	Whether the defendant's appeal resulted in an exoneration or reversal of judgment.
Ineffective assistance of counsel appeal disposition	Whether the defendant's ineffective assistance of counsel appeal resulted in an exoneration or reversal of judgment.

Data Elements Requested from the Courts at the County Level

In addition, the following information is needed to provide context about each Court's resources:

Data Element	Definition
Number of judges	Number of judges, magistrates, court commissioners or their equivalents who see non-appellate, adult criminal cases.
Annual court budget	Annual budget appropriated for the operation of trial courts.
Pretrial services	Does the jurisdiction have a pretrial services office?
Specialized courts	Number and type of specialized courts (aka problem-solving courts).
Pretrial risk assessment tool use	Does the jurisdiction use a validated pretrial risk assessment tool to inform pretrial release decisions?
Pretrial risk assessment tool type	What pretrial risk assessment tool does the jurisdiction use? (Name)
Judge misdemeanor caseloads	Average annual misdemeanor caseload for judges, magistrates, court commissioners or their equivalents who see non-appellate, adult criminal cases.