

Q&A on RIPA between CAC Ad Hoc + RIPA Administrator

October 2023

To learn more about the Racial and Identity Profiling Act (RIPA) reporting and the challenges facing the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office (SCSO), this Ad Hoc engaged SCSO personnel to understand how the department collects and submits data and some of the challenges and concerns. In October 2023, the Ad Hoc sent the SCSO questions; here is the Q&A exchange. *NB. This copy has been edited for grammar and clarity only.*

Q1) RIPA requires that the Office confirms that all data submitted is accurate. Since data is submitted directly by the deputy after a stop, how do you prove that it is correct? Who is accountable for this validation?

A1) The RIPA system occasionally shows that data has been entered incorrectly. For example, [a] deputy codes the stop as a traffic stop but enters an incorrect code for the crime that warranted the stop. The RIPA system identifies this and sends an "Error" to the Offices' RIPA administrator. The RIPA Administrator must research, determine the proper code and correct errors. The RIPA administrator can ask the deputy, watch videos, and read associated content such as written reports or the CAD [Computer Aided Dispatch] log. The RIPA administrator can do this because when an error is flagged, all associated data is provided by Cal DOJ [California Department of Justice] so that the stop can be identified and the data can be corrected. These errors are corrected one to two times a month, and the corrected information is submitted immediately.

Q2) Recent reports state San Francisco found instances of obviously false data input. For example, a black male entered the system as a white female. How do you ensure that doesn't happen in Sonoma County?

A2) The RIPA data entered regarding any person detained is based on the deputies' perception when they initially went to make the detention. For example, if a deputy believed they were contacting a white male pedestrian, but after detaining the subject, they believed the subject was a Hispanic male, the deputy would enter a white male into the RIPA data. Because the collected data is based on the individual deputy's perception before making actual contact, there is no way to get into the deputy's mind and audit what they were thinking. Additionally, the Sheriff's Office does not retain the data; it is turned over to the Cal DOJ daily, and the Sheriff's Office maintains no records.

Q3) Does SCSO compare the RIPA data to police reports on a per-officer basis to determine if the data is consistently being entered?

A3) No, the Sheriff's Office does not retain the data and audit it in any way, aside from correcting errors when notified by Cal DOJ. No other agency within the county does this either.

Q4) What policy does SCSO have to ensure BWC footage is consistent with RIPA-reported data?

A4) The office does not compare RIPA data to BWC footage. It does not retain or review the data before it goes to Cal DOJ or any other agency within the county.

Q5) Is the BWC information for 2022 being retained so it can be compared to the 2022 RIPA data when it is released?

A5) All BWC footage is retained; however, the Office and no other agency within the county will compare the RIPA data with BWC footage.

Q5a) Reword: Given that Biased-Based Policing is strictly prohibited, why does RIPA data show that 6% of all SO stops are for people classified as black? Does that group represent only 2% of the county population?

A5a) While 2% of the county population is classified as black, the data does not only reflect detentions on county residents. It captures all detentions. Sonoma County has many attractions, attracting millions of non-county residents a year into Sonoma County. Some of these people end up detained by Law Enforcement. For example, Graton Casino and River Rock Casino attract many non-county residents daily. It is common for deputies to make detentions and arrests at these casinos, as well as people coming and going from these casinos.