

## Regional Information Sharing Systems<sup>®</sup> (RISS) Program



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## 1. What is RISS?

RISS is a national program composed of six regional centers, operating in unique multistate geographic regions. RISS offers services to local, state, federal, and tribal law enforcement and criminal justice agencies to enhance their ability to identify, target, and remove criminal conspiracies and activities spanning multijurisdictional, multistate and, sometimes, international boundaries. RISS supports investigation and prosecution efforts against terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, identity theft, cybercrime, organized criminal activity, criminal gangs, violent crime, and other regional priorities, while promoting officer safety. RISS provides information sharing services, investigative analysis support, equipment sharing, investigative funds support, training, and technical assistance to law enforcement and criminal justice agencies that are members of RISS. For more information about RISS, visit [www.riss.net](http://www.riss.net).

## 2. Where are the six RISS Centers located and what regions do they serve?



***Middle Atlantic-Great Lakes Organized Crime Law Enforcement Network® (MAGLOCLEN)—Newtown, Pennsylvania***—Provides services to Delaware, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia, as well as Australia, Canada, and England.



***Mid-States Organized Crime Information Center® (MOCIC)—Springfield, Missouri***—Provides services to Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin, as well as Canada.



***New England State Police Information Network® (NESPIN)—Franklin, Massachusetts***—Provides services to Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont, as well as Canada.



***Rocky Mountain Information Network® (RMIN)—Phoenix, Arizona***—Provides services to Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming, as well as Canada.



***Regional Organized Crime Information Center® (ROCIC)—Nashville, Tennessee***—Provides services to Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia, as well as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.



***Western States Information Network® (WSIN)—Sacramento, California***—Provides services to Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington, as well as Canada and Guam.

### **3. How is RISS different from other national information sharing programs?**

RISS, among other criminal justice programs, has different roles and responsibilities; distinctive operational capabilities; multiple sources, formats, and mechanisms to collect and disseminate information; and different customers. Systems such as the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN), the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Law Enforcement Online (LEO), and RISS represent critical components of the Information Sharing Environment ([www.ise.gov](http://www.ise.gov)) and offer valuable services for their individual customers. These systems are not duplicative. Each system provides primary services or programs that make it distinct. RISS maintains criminal intelligence databases, the [RISSLeads](#) Bulletin Board, the [RISS Automated Trusted Information Exchange™ \(ATIX\)](#), the [RISSGang™ Program](#), [RISSafe™](#), and a variety of other investigative tools and systems. RISS also connects disparate systems that otherwise may not be able to communicate and seamlessly share information. In addition to automated capabilities, RISS provides investigative support, such as analytical services, equipment loans, technical assistance, case funds support, and intelligence research.

Creating one single national information sharing system is not the answer for ensuring seamless communications and information sharing. The goal is to build a capability for disparate systems to connect and communicate by leveraging proven technology. RISS provides a mature and proven infrastructure that is ready to meet the national demand for a seamless information sharing system by connecting disparate systems. These connected systems share information and intelligence both bidirectionally and through direct data transfer. RISS members are able to search the RISS Secure Intranet, known as RISSNET™, and connected systems with a single query in a secure Web-based and trusted environment.

### **4. How is RISS funded?**

RISS is federally funded and administered by the [U.S. Department of Justice \(DOJ\)](#), [Bureau of Justice Assistance \(BJA\)](#), through grant awards. BJA provides funding oversight and program management for the RISS Program.

In addition, BJA sets out RISS service and operational guidelines in the RISS Program Funding and Administration Guidelines. The guidelines stipulate the provision of services, including information sharing, telecommunications, analysis, investigative support, specialized equipment, training, and technical assistance. RISS has also developed a long-term plan to help guide future initiatives.

It is important to note that although RISS is federally funded, it is locally managed. See [“Who governs RISS and what is the role of the RISS National Policy Group?”](#) for more information.

### **5. Who governs RISS and what is the role of the RISS National Policy Group?**

The RISS National Policy Group (RNPG) is composed of the six RISS Center Directors and the chair of each RISS Center's policy board. Each RISS Center has an established policy board or executive committee composed of representatives from member criminal justice

agencies in the Center's multistate region. The primary purpose of center policy boards is to provide direction affecting center policy, operation, and administration. The RNPG is responsible for strategic planning, resolution of operational issues, advancement of information sharing, and decision making affecting the RISS Centers, the national organization, service delivery, member agencies, and related partner organizations.

## **6. What is the role of the RISS Office of Information Technology?**

The RISS Office of Information Technology (OIT) consists of the information technology staff, which provides services, coordination, and support for RISS. The RISS OIT staff maintains RISSNET and develops and implements the common RISS resources provided on the network. RISS OIT consists of three groups—the Applications Development Group (ADG), the Intranet Operations Group (IOG), and the Projects Support Group (PSG). RISS OIT ADG provides software development, implementation, and maintenance to support selected RISS database needs. The RISS OIT IOG maintains and operates RISSNET, including ensuring that necessary communications links are maintained and monitoring and maintaining RISSNET security. The RISS OIT PSG provides project management and other specialized support to both RISS OIT ADG and IOG.

## **7. What is the role of the Institute for Intergovernmental Research®?**

The Institute for Intergovernmental Research (IIR) is a Florida-based nonprofit research and training organization specializing in law enforcement, juvenile justice, and criminal justice issues. IIR serves as the grantee for ongoing technical training, research, and analysis services to the RISS Program through the support of grant awards received from BJA. IIR supports RISS by providing project coordination activities, policy development assistance, research and program planning, performance measurement and evaluation, meeting coordination, training, and information systems support. IIR provides for management support and spending related to the operation of RISSNET and RISS database applications, including liaison to RISS information technology operational and applications development components, coordination of information technology support, and processing of technology purchases and acquisitions. For more information about IIR, visit [www.iir.com](http://www.iir.com).

## **8. Who are the primary customers of RISS?**

The primary customers of RISS and RISSNET are local, state, federal, and tribal law enforcement member agency personnel. Currently, RISS supports the investigative and prosecution efforts of member agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories, Australia, Canada, and England. RISS also provides services and tools to thousands of public safety and private sector partners through the [RISS ATIX™](#) program.

RISS membership has grown to more than 8,500 law enforcement and criminal justice agencies, including more than 95,000 access officers.

Agency membership is required for access to RISS resources, except for RISSafe, RISSGang, and RISS ATIX (see below). Membership is a critical component to ensuring a

trusted network of users as well as the integrity of the overall information sharing process and of RISSNET and its related programs and applications. Agency membership fees are nominal. Approximately 3 percent of the total RISS budget is obtained through membership fees.

Each RISS Center has implemented a membership application and policy board approval process. Agency membership is typically open to all local, state, federal, and tribal law enforcement agencies; prosecution agencies; corrections agencies; and others, such as multijurisdictional task forces and regulatory agencies with law enforcement or criminal investigative authority. **However, it is important to note that membership in a RISS Center is governed by the specific RISS Center's rules, procedures, policies, constitution, and/or bylaws.**

Law enforcement agencies may access [RISSafe](#) and [RISSGang](#) resources—after completing a thorough vetting process—without the requirement to establish RISS membership. In addition, those individuals participating in RISS ATIX also complete a vetting and approval process prior to accessing ATIX resources.

## **9. What services does RISS provide to its member agencies?**

RISS provides services to support law enforcement member agency investigations and prosecutions. RISS services include:

- Information sharing through RISSNET and telecommunications
- Investigative support and research
- Analysis of criminal activity data and development of diverse and varied analytical products
- Loan of specialized investigative equipment
- Loan of confidential funds
- Specialized training, conferences, and meetings
- Publications, bulletins, and educational materials
- Technical assistance, including field operations

## **10. What is the RISS Secure Intranet (RISSNET™)?**

In 1997, RISS built a secure national information sharing intranet, known as RISSNET. At that time, RISSNET featured online access to intelligence databases; secure e-mail, chat, and bulletin board capabilities; search engine capabilities; and other resources. During 1999, RISS began expanding RISSNET to electronically connect state and federal law enforcement agency systems to more quickly and securely share information and access critical resources. RISSNET facilitates a significant component of the RISS Program by offering state-of-the-art technology to address and support law enforcement demands for rapid communication and sharing of information. RISSNET provides the communications backbone and infrastructure for sharing investigative intelligence, offers secure sensitive but unclassified electronic communications, and provides controlled access to a variety of sensitive information resources. In addition to the RISSNET users from member agencies, almost 100 local, state, and/or federal information

technology systems are connected or pending connection to RISSNET. RISSNET has been expanded to include those organizations and agencies having public safety responsibilities.

## **11. What resources are available via RISSNET?**

Resources available on RISSNET include:

- [RISSIntel](#)—criminal intelligence databases with national search capabilities
- Various state, regional, federal, and specialized criminal intelligence databases and resources
- [RISSafe](#)—officer safety event deconfliction system—available to all law enforcement agencies
- [RISSGang Program](#)—includes a specialized intelligence database used to collect and disseminate information on criminal gangs and gang members, as well as a Web site, bulletin board, and library—available to all law enforcement agencies
- [RISS ATIX](#)—a secure platform for law enforcement, public safety, and the private sector to share information—includes a Web site, bulletin board, and library
- [RISSLinks™](#)—instant data visualization and link analysis of database information
- RISS Investigative Leads Bulletin Board ([RISSLeads](#))—secure electronic bulletin board that allows law enforcement agencies to post information regarding a particular case or other law enforcement issues
- RISS training Web site ([RISSTraining](#))—online access to specialized training, including anti-terrorism
- [RISSearch](#)—a search engine that canvasses multiple information sources and databases
- **RISS Center Web sites**
- RISS technical assistance Web site ([TECHPage](#))
- **Secure e-mail**

## **12. Who is connected to RISSNET?**

RISSNET has almost 100 existing or pending node partner agency connections. RISSNET serves state law enforcement systems, High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) network systems, and federal and other systems electronically connected to RISSNET. Examples of connected systems include:

- El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC)
- Law Enforcement Intelligence Unit (LEIU)
- Nlets—The International Justice and Public Safety Network
- National Virtual Pointer System (NVPS)
- U.S. Department of Justice, Criminal Division
- National Gang Intelligence Center (NGIC)
- Operation Respond Institute (ORI)
- U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC)
- California Department of Justice, Bureau of Investigation

- Oregon State Intelligence Network
- Utah Law Enforcement Information Network
- Wyoming Criminal Justice Information Network
- Colorado Law Enforcement Intelligence Network
- Director of National Intelligence-Unclassified (DNI-U)/Intelink
- Delaware State Police Intelligence System

In September 2002, RISS and LEO established an electronic interconnection that enables secure distribution of FBI homeland security information and alerts to individuals with RISS and LEO electronic access account permissions. The interconnection provides for the exchange of encrypted, secure e-mail between partnering agencies and access to available resources.

More than 3 million records are available for search through the RISS intelligence databases. Millions more are available bidirectionally from connected systems.

### 13. How does an authorized user access RISSNET?

Access to RISSNET can be achieved through a single computer connection using an Internet Service Provider (ISP) or via a RISSNET node connection of an agency information technology system. Member agency staff members should contact their in-region RISS Center for an enrollment package. The enrollment package provides step-by-step instructions for connecting to RISSNET. In addition, RISS is moving to an industry standards-based Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) authentication technology. SSL technology is a mature technology for the transmission of encrypted information and is supported by all major Internet browsers. To find out how to connect to RISSNET, contact your in-region RISS Center. For RISS Center contact information, click [here](#).

### 14. What is the RISSNET Portal?

The RISSNET Portal provides authorized users with one entry point for RISSNET, allowing them to instantly view and access appropriate RISSNET resources from one location. For additional information, visit [www.riss.net](http://www.riss.net).



### 15. What security measures are in place to ensure that information transmissions are secure when using RISSNET?

The technical capabilities and systems architecture implemented by RISS allow authorized users to interact electronically with one another in a secure environment. RISSNET protects these transmissions through the use of encryption, user authentication, Internet protocol security standards, and firewalls to prevent unauthorized access.

**16. Are RISS criminal intelligence databases subject to 28 Code of Federal Regulations Part 23 (28 CFR Part 23)?**

All RISS criminal intelligence databases comply with 28 CFR Part 23, issued by BJA. All criminal intelligence databases electronically connected to RISSNET, which are available for member agency access, must also comply with 28 CFR Part 23. RISS provides member agencies with training and on-site technical assistance to ensure compliance with the regulation. For additional information on 28 CFR Part 23, visit [www.iir.com/28CFR](http://www.iir.com/28CFR).

**17. Does RISS consider privacy rights?**

RISS firmly recognizes the need to ensure that an individual's constitutional rights, civil liberties, civil rights, and privacy interests are protected throughout the intelligence process. RISS endorses the *National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan* recommendation to ensure that "the collection, submission, access, storage, and dissemination of criminal intelligence information conforms to the privacy and constitutional rights of individuals, groups, and organizations" and that "law enforcement agencies shall adopt, at a minimum, the standards required by the Criminal Intelligence Systems Operating Policies federal regulation (28 CFR Part 23)." RISS Centers have adopted a privacy policy that fully complies with 28 CFR Part 23 and is based on the Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative (Global) Privacy Guidelines. All RISS member agencies have also agreed to comply with the requirements of 28 CFR Part 23 with respect to any criminal information they submit into applicable RISS criminal intelligence databases. RISS strongly encourages its member agencies and, indeed, all law enforcement agencies to voluntarily adopt appropriate and clearly defined privacy and security safeguards for all agency intelligence missions to manage and control collection, retention, and dissemination activities. To access the RISS Privacy Policy, visit [www.riss.net/privacy.aspx](http://www.riss.net/privacy.aspx).

**18. What is the U.S. Department of Justice Global Justice Extensible Markup Language (XML)?**

XML is a technology used by RISS that allows for communication between Web-based applications. The RISS Data Exchange Specification (RISSDES) has been modified to reflect the latest XML standards published by the Global Intelligence Working Group. RISSDES is promoted to law enforcement agencies connecting to RISSNET to facilitate the sharing of their criminal intelligence information with RISS member agencies. For more information on Global and XML, visit [www.it.ojp.gov](http://www.it.ojp.gov).

**19. What is RISSIntel?**

All six RISS regional criminal intelligence databases (RISSIntel) and several state agency intelligence databases are electronically connected via RISSNET. Member agency users inquire about suspected criminal information, such as subjects, weapons, and addresses. When information is located in the database, called a "hit," the users are referred to agencies that have additional information. The databases are designed to encourage exchange of information and coordination among member agencies investigating the same individuals or organizations.

Users may be selective as to which databases to query or may query all databases and other available systems simultaneously. Member agencies may access the databases via RISSNET or may contact center intelligence technician research staff directly, via telephone or e-mail, for assistance.

Member agencies are able to submit large volumes of data for inclusion in the databases through software applications implemented by RISS.

RISS has also launched RISS7—the 7th Instance of RISSApps. The technology that supports the RISSIntel databases—the RISS Suite of Applications (RISSApps)—can be duplicated in a manner to serve as an information repository for law enforcement entities other than RISS. This capability allows for the creation of an alternate criminal intelligence database for deployment and use in law enforcement agencies to store criminal intelligence data that they have collected. The data is housed at the RISS Technology Support Center and, as part of the global RISSIntel application, may be made available to all RISSIntel users via RISSNET. RISS7 can exist multiple times and can be designated by the state, agency, or entity utilizing the system.

## **20. What is RISSLeads?**

RISSLeads is a secure electronic bulletin board available via RISSNET that allows member law enforcement agencies to post information regarding a particular case or other law enforcement issues. Case information is posted with the intent of generating investigative leads. Member agencies share intelligence by viewing and responding to posted information. RISSLeads allows geographically disparate law enforcement professionals to convene electronically to discuss crime trends or specific cases and share investigative techniques.

## **21. What is RISS ATIX™?**

RISS ATIX leverages the RISSNET infrastructure to provide a secure platform for law enforcement and other public safety and first responder agencies involved in securing our nation from terrorism and other disasters to share information.

Community groups include local, county, state, and tribal levels of emergency management, law enforcement, and government, as well as public and private utilities, transportation, agriculture, chemical manufacturing, private security, environmental protection, banking and finance, and hospitality industries.



The RISS ATIX resources include the secure ATIX Web pages and library, the secure ATIX bulletin board, and secure e-mail. For more information on RISS ATIX, visit [www.riss.net/atix.aspx](http://www.riss.net/atix.aspx).

## **22. What is the RISSGang™ Program?**

The RISSGang Program consists of the RISS National Gang Intelligence Database, the RISSGang Web site, and the RISSGang bulletin board. The database, which is 28 CFR Part 23-compliant, provides law enforcement agencies with access to approximately 130,000 gang

records, including suspects, organizations, weapons, locations, and vehicles, as well as visual imagery of gang members, gang symbols, and gang graffiti. The Web site provides a vast amount of resources, information, and publications, whereas the bulletin board provides investigators with secure communications for sharing gang-related information. In an effort to increase the sharing of gang information, RISS is providing access to the RISSGang Program resources to all criminal justice agencies without the requirement to establish RISS membership. For more information on the RISSGang Program, visit [www.riss.net/rissgang.aspx](http://www.riss.net/rissgang.aspx).



### 23. What is RISSafe™?

RISSafe is an officer safety event deconfliction system. The purpose of the RISSafe application is to store and maintain all planned law enforcement activities. Used in conjunction with a mapping system, upcoming events are posted and monitored for potentially dangerous conflicting law enforcement operations. If a conflict is identified, immediate notification to the submitting officer occurs, as well as notification to the conflicted officers by a RISSafe Watch Center. RISSafe makes a significant contribution towards enhancing officer safety and supporting criminal investigations. For more information on RISSafe, visit [www.riss.net/rissafe.aspx](http://www.riss.net/rissafe.aspx).

### 24. How has RISS partnered with fusion centers?

RISS has endorsed the [\*Fusion Center Guidelines: Law Enforcement Intelligence, Public Safety, and the Private Sector\*](#) developed by the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and has developed a Fusion Center Partnership Strategy.

### 25. How does RISS make use of Federated Identity Management?

In 2004, RISS recognized the need for the secure sharing of critical justice-related information among trusted partner agencies without requiring each partner to maintain and use each other's security credentials with the initiation of the Trusted Credential Project (TCP). After thoroughly investigating various technologies, RISS OIT identified Federated Identity as the most suitable model for meeting the requirements of the TCP. (NOTE: According to the Burton Group, a respected Information Technology research and advisory firm, Federated Identity Management is defined as "...the agreements, standards, and technologies that make identity and entitlements portable across autonomous domains...")

RISS's early involvement in Federated Identity Management allowed it to participate in two groundbreaking nationwide justice-related information sharing initiatives: (1) the Global Federated Identity and Privilege Management (GFIPM) project and (2) the Law Enforcement Information Sharing Program (LEISP) Federated Identity project.

RISS's participation in these projects has so far allowed it to connect 86 RISS users to access the federal Joint Automated Booking System (JABS) via the LEISP Trusted Broker. As of the end of August 2009, there were more than 1,200 users from trusted partner systems using Federated Identity Management to access RISSNET resources. RISS has also showcased this technology by supporting the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative. RISSNET and LEO users can now access SAR data, available from the National Criminal Intelligence Resource Center, via RISSNET. For more information regarding GFIPM or LEISP, visit [www.it.ojp.gov](http://www.it.ojp.gov) and [www.usdoj.gov](http://www.usdoj.gov).

**26. What is the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM)?**

NIEM's mission is to develop a unified strategy, partnerships, and technical implementations for national information sharing by joining together communities of interest. NIEM leverages the data exchange standards efforts successfully implemented by Global and extends the Global Justice XML Data Model (GJXDM) to facilitate timely, secure information sharing across the whole of the justice, public safety, emergency and disaster management, intelligence, and homeland security enterprise. For more information about NIEM, visit [www.niem.gov](http://www.niem.gov).

**27. How does RISS measure the effectiveness of the program?**

RISS maintains a comprehensive performance plan and reports and analyzes performance on a regular basis. Program effectiveness is measured by the delivery and acceptance of RISS reports, data analysis, educational products, policy documents, strategic plans, performance measures, and feedback from RISS Center management and staff and the BJA Program Office.

**28. How do I contact a RISS Center?**

Contact your in-region RISS Center, or visit [www.riss.net](http://www.riss.net) for additional information.

<b>MAGLOCLEN</b> (800) 345-1322 <a href="mailto:info@magloclen.riss.net">info@magloclen.riss.net</a>	<b>NESPIN</b> (800) 343-5682 <a href="mailto:info@nespin.riss.net">info@nespin.riss.net</a>	<b>ROCIC</b> (800) 238-7985 <a href="mailto:info@rocic.riss.net">info@rocic.riss.net</a>
<b>MOCIC</b> (800) 846-6242 <a href="mailto:info@mocic.riss.net">info@mocic.riss.net</a>	<b>RMIN</b> (800) 821-0640 <a href="mailto:info@rmin.riss.net">info@rmin.riss.net</a>	<b>WSIN</b> (800) 952-5258 <a href="mailto:info@wsin.riss.net">info@wsin.riss.net</a>