

LexisNexis® Case Study

Michigan Department of Corrections

Locating Fugitives With *Accurint® for Law Enforcement*

June 30, 2008



Case Study

Locating Fugitives With *Accurint*[®] for Law Enforcement

Overview

The Michigan Department of Corrections (DOC) is focused on providing the greatest amount of public protection while making the most efficient use of state resources. It meets its goal by ensuring that the state's judges and other criminal justice administrators have the broadest possible array of viable sentencing and sanctioning options, and by ensuring that appropriate supervision is maintained so that Michigan's neighborhoods, families and citizens can be protected. The DOC's Absconder Recovery Unit (ARU) is a group of corrections officers whose mission is the apprehension of escapees and parole absconders. Staff members receive specialized training in the areas of investigation and surveillance techniques.

The Challenge

Charles Levens, a Corrections Officer with the ARU, is responsible, on a day-to-day basis, for managing a caseload of between 75 and 100 absconders—fairly typical numbers for an ARU officer. In keeping with the mission of the DOC and the unit, Officer Levens' cases are only closed when they are solved. Cases that have been outstanding for several years are revisited every six months to a year.

Among Officer Levens' outstanding cases was that of a woman who had been a 32-year fugitive sentenced to 10-to 20-years on drug charges in 1975. In 1976, after serving one year of her sentence, she escaped from the Detroit House of Corrections and has been missing ever since.

For 30 years, the case languished until Officer Levens received the assignment. Told he could not remove the case from his active list unless she was arrested or he secured a relevant death certificate, Mr. Levens committed himself to solving the case.

Working in off hours and from home, Officer Levens interviewed the woman's immediate and extended family including her father in Florida, her brother in Arizona, several cousins and an Aunt. It was clear that her family members knew her location and therefore Officer Levens asked them to pass along a request that she call him in the hope that the situation could somehow be resolved. While he promised not to trace the call, the family was ultimately uncooperative.

Industry

Law Enforcement

Organization Profile

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Situation

Michigan DOC ARU officers are responsible, on a day-to-day basis, for managing a caseload of between 75 and 100 absconders. In keeping with the mission of the DOC and the unit, cases are only closed when they are solved. Cases that have been outstanding for several years are revisited every six months to a year. One particular case had been outstanding for over 30 years.

Solution

Accurint[®] for Law Enforcement was used to help track down the 30-year absconder who was living in another state and using an alias. The *Accurint* person search analysis and linking capabilities provided search results of a relative who had been living with the absconder and gave the officers the reasonable suspicion they needed to arrest.

Results

Marshals took the absconder into custody and she was extradited to Michigan where she is expected to serve out her sentence on drug charges.

On its founding in 1985, the ARU relied on its highly-skilled investigators to track down family members using traditional investigative methods. The ARU was able to access information from sources such as the IRS and other government agencies; however this information is often outdated and unhelpful for case resolution. As a result, ARU investigations were often characterized by a complicated, lengthy process.

Solution

To help overcome this problem and further empower investigators such as Officer Levens, several years ago the ARU invested in licenses to use the *Accurint® for Law Enforcement* investigative solution.

Accurint® for Law Enforcement is a cutting-edge investigative technology designed by a team of former investigative professionals, including a former Director of the U.S. Secret Service, former Special Agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigations as well as officers from various municipal police departments. The solution is a Web-based tool that helps enable law enforcement to quickly locate suspects, find missing children and solve cases quicker by providing instant access to a comprehensive collection of public records data that would ordinarily take days to collect using ordinary investigative methods. As a result, *Accurint for Law Enforcement* helps shorten investigation time, free up valuable staff, minimize costs associated with lengthy investigations and, in some cases, save lives.

In February 2008, as Officer Levens' investigations into the absconder continued, he turned to *Accurint for Law Enforcement* for assistance. Told that she was somewhere in California, Levens conducted an *Accurint®* search using her Social Security Number (SSN). He found no matches, indicating that she was no longer using that number.

He then used *Accurint* to find women in the same age range as the woman, and with ties to Michigan. He found a woman who matched these parameters living in the same county as her brother in Arizona. However, after checking her fingerprints this woman was ruled out.

In March, as Officer Levens' investigation continued, Lieutenant Ken Abbott, with the Michigan DOC, received an anonymous tip that the absconder was living under an alias in San Diego. Lieutenant Abbott passed the information to Officer Levens, who turned to *Accurint* to confirm the information and build a case.



“*Accurint®* for Law Enforcement provided us with the reasonable suspicion we needed to be able to access the absconder’s California records and recapture her.”

**Officer Charles Levens
Michigan Department of Corrections
Absconder Recovery Unit**

Using *Accurint*®, Officer Levens quickly confirmed that a woman using this same alias was living in San Diego. He also determined that the woman had the same birth date as the absconder, separated by one year. While this information was interesting, it was not enough by itself to establish a ‘reasonable suspicion’ that would justify obtaining the fingerprints of the woman’s alias from the state of California’s Department of Motor Vehicles.

To overcome this challenge, Officer Levens again turned to *Accurint*. He quickly obtained a history of the address in San Diego where she resided. That history provided him with the names of all the individuals who were resident at that same address during the years of her residency. The search produced the name of a nephew who, using his real name, had lived at the house of the suspected absconder from 2002-2005.

With this information, Officer Levens had his reasonable suspicion. Marshals in San Diego took the absconder into custody on April 24th. In early May, she was extradited to Michigan where she is expected to serve out her sentence on drug charges.

Benefits

According to the US Marshals, 32 years is the second longest period of time that a fugitive has been on the run from Michigan authorities, only to be recovered. The case was solved by exceptional, dedicated police work with support from *Accurint for Law Enforcement*.

“While traditional police work, and timely tips, ultimately solved the case,” said Officer Levens. “It was *Accurint*® for Law Enforcement that provided us with the reasonable suspicion we needed to be able to access California records and recapture her.”

Accurint for Law Enforcement is the only database the ARU pays for, and has been instrumental in numerous investigations. Partly due to successful cases such as this, Officer Levens also notes that: “the use of *Accurint* among all investigators is increasing. Older cases often have sketchy information in the files. *Accurint* helps us build cases on very slight pieces of information.”

To learn more about LexisNexis® Investigative Solutions, call 1-866-242-1440 or visit lexisnexis.com/government

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