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How to turn collecting of traffic and pedestrian stop data into an opportunity

Veritone Contact eases the time commitment and burden of complying with racial and identity profiling stop data collection requirements in California and offers ways to gather additional insight for agency needs

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By Laura Neitzel, Police1 BrandFocus Staff

Traffic and pedestrian stops are an essential part of policing, important in apprehending criminal offenders and necessary for protecting the public from distracted, impaired or reckless drivers and other dangers. With additional considerations such as autonomous vehicles, [promoting traffic safety as a national priority has become even more complex](#), according to the IACP.



Veritone Contact makes the collection of traffic and pedestrian stop data more efficient and offers agencies the opportunity to gather additional data. (Getty Images)

However, as police undertake this important work, they need to acknowledge an unfortunate history in which police have conducted traffic stops in an unfair and racially biased manner. A June 2020 [survey on race and policing](#) found that Black adults are about five times as likely as whites to say they've been unfairly stopped by police because of their race or ethnicity. In many cases, these traffic stops have led to tragic consequences.

IACP urges all law enforcement to ensure that traffic stops are not made on the basis of the motorist's race, ethnicity or economic status, but rather on articulable suspicion or actual violation of a law, and that all citizens are treated with the utmost courtesy and respect.

It's not just good policing – it's also the law in California and other states.

In 2015, the California Legislature passed AB 953, the [Racial and Identity Profiling Act \(RIPA\)](#), which requires law enforcement agencies in California to collect and report perceived demographic and other detailed data regarding pedestrian and traffic stops. [Similar legislation](#) has passed in states like Texas, North Carolina and Illinois and is pending in other states too, most recently [Alabama](#).

Such legislation requires law enforcement to collect and report data elements such as:

1. Date, time, location and duration of the stop.
2. Perceived race or ethnicity of person stopped.
3. Perceived gender of person stopped.

4. If person stopped is perceived to be LGBT.
5. Perceived age of person stopped.
6. If person stopped has limited or no English fluency.
7. If person stopped has a known or perceived disability.
8. Reason for stop.
9. If the stop was made in response to a call for service.
10. Actions taken by officer during stop.
11. Results of stop.
12. Officer's Identification Number.
13. Officer's years of experience.
14. Type of assignment of officer.

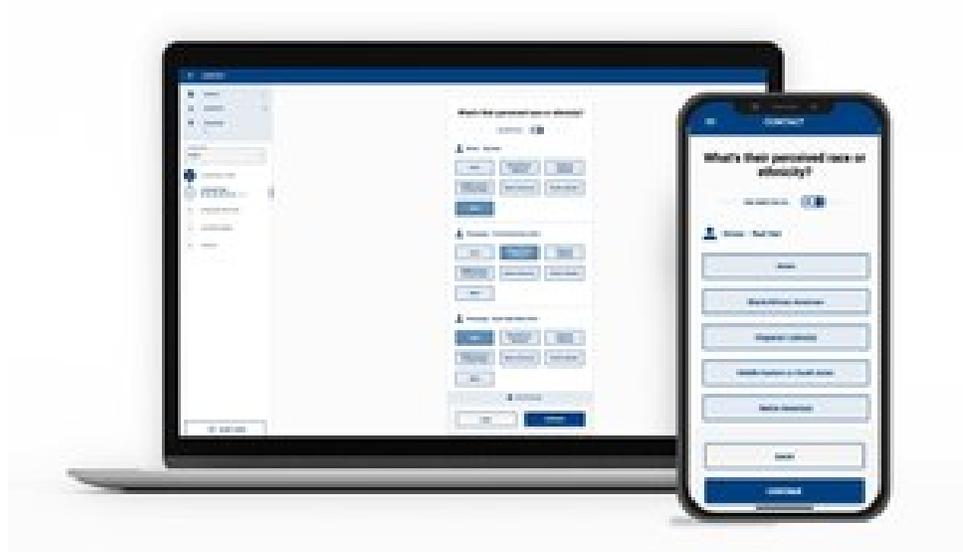
There is value in collecting this data, but the time spent doing so is time not spent patrolling. Even if every stop takes only a few minutes per person, when accumulated across numerous stops during a single shift, time filling out forms to comply with RIPA can be a significant burden for officers.

However, a time-saving mobile app can reduce this burden and present opportunities for agencies to make use of the data for their own needs.

A MORE EFFICIENT WAY TO COLLECT STOP DATA

In response to the need for a more efficient way of capturing and reporting the required data under RIPA, [Veritone](#), a company that develops artificial intelligence-powered software for public safety, created [Veritone Contact](#) in conjunction with the California DOJ and several California law enforcement agencies.

Veritone Contact is a field interview application that helps significantly reduce the amount of time patrol officers spend collecting all the stop data required to comply with RIPA. Capable of being used on an agency-issued smartphone, laptop or on the officer's mobile device terminal (MDT), Veritone Contact helps officers to complete this task significantly faster than the California DOJ's own web portal as well as other third-party-developed offerings by speeding up data collection in several ways:



Veritone Contact works on smartphones, MDTs, laptops and desktop computers. (Veritone)

1. **Multi-answer picklists.** The app allows officers to quickly choose the appropriate answer from a prepopulated list of values for each question, eliminating the need for manual input.
2. **Spell-check like capability and PII prescreening.** Coming soon in the application, for the few questions requiring an open-ended response, the app also has a capability, much like spell check, that highlights possible errors and automatically and intelligently prescreens answer for proper names, vehicle makes and models and other possible personally identifying information (PII) that should be excluded from data sets.

Once completed, the stop data record is uploaded to CJIS-compliant cloud storage and available for the command staff to batch review the patrol officers' observational remarks to ensure that no PII is exposed when subsequently delivered to the California DOJ.

3. **Intelligent forms.** The app surfaces the next logical question based on previous responses. So, instead of walking officers through every possible answer to every possible question, the intelligent form eliminates unnecessary steps by skipping questions that are not relevant based on the answers already provided. For example, for any stop not happening in a school zone, no school zone-related questions would appear.

"Instead of showing every potential question for every data point, our app is smart enough to identify based on information selected," said Mike Morper, Veritone's vice president of product marketing for government. "It's going to show or suppress the next reasonable set of questions to be asked so that

that officer can complete that task as quickly as possible so they can get back to patrol as quickly as possible.”

4. Flexible data entry. Officers can stop and start data entry at any time without losing questions already completed.

GATHERING ADDITIONAL DATA FOR AGENCY INSIGHT

In addition to more efficiently and quickly capturing stop data required under RIPA, [Veritone Contact](#) can be customized with additional questions at the discretion of the agency and for their own initiatives.

Additional questions might include whether windows were tinted (which may skew an officer’s perception of race), was there ample lighting (if the stop took place at night) as well as the perceived, predominant race of the surrounding area.

“In our collaboration with command staff from different agencies across the state, we have identified a common need for the collection of additional insight at each stop. These additional questions allow leadership to have a more contextually-complete picture of each stop,” said Morper. “Chiefs we have worked with anticipate situations where the DOJ-mandated data may be called into question or trends challenged by civic and other groups. With these additional questions, they feel they can provide a more accurate representation of their agency’s actions and behavior.”

This flexibility gives agencies the ability to do more with the data collected during stops than just fulfill reporting requirements under RIPA. The data collected over time can identify trends within the agency or community and inform officer training needs, support agency transparency initiatives with the community and other purposes.

“The Veritone Contact application absolutely has an opportunity for local law enforcement agencies to be able to take advantage of the data they’re collecting and be able to communicate it back to their constituents and elected officials in a very timely manner to demonstrate how they are inspecting the way they patrol, inspecting the way they interact with the community,” said Morper “and, if necessary demonstrate how corrective measures have resulted in improved outcomes.”

WHY INVEST IN AN APP VERSUS DIY TOOLS

Although the California Department of Justice (CDOJ) has made data collection and reporting tools available through an online portal, many departments have found the tools lack efficiency, says Morper. Other agencies have developed their own software to comply with RIPA -- even making it available as “open source” code -- only to find that keeping the app secure and up-to-date with ongoing software code changes including security patches, deployment updates, adding new capabilities to the application and more is a bigger job than they anticipated, requiring dedicated software development resources and/or contractors.

Veritone Contact offers several time-saving advantages over the CDOJ portal or software developed by individual agencies:

- Veritone products uniformly work with various device types -- smartphones, MDTs, laptops and desktop computers.
- The collection of data for stops that include multiple individuals has been deemed the fastest of all alternatives.
- Veritone Contact includes basic reporting dashboards and can also integrate with an agency's existing data analytics tools for more in depth analysis.
- Veritone Contact is maintained by an enterprise software company with hundreds of law enforcement agency customers across the country as well as Federal customers such as the U.S. Department of Justice and Department of Defense.

[Veritone Contact](#) is made specifically to comply with the requirements of RIPA in California but other state-specific versions will be available in the future. Veritone wanted to first focus on meeting the objectives of helping California law enforcement agencies make the stop data collection process more efficient and providing flexibility for agencies to collect supplemental data for their own purposes.

“The reason we have developed this application is frankly rooted in our commitment to local law enforcement agencies, helping them with other challenges that they have,” said Morper. “Veritone Contact is a great addition to our other AI-powered public safety applications that are used across the country to help law enforcement [complete investigations faster](#), fulfill open records requests with [properly redacted video and audio evidence](#) in a timely manner, and [spend more time on patrol](#) versus completing paperwork.”

[Veritone Contact](https://www.veritone.com/applications/contact/) is now available for California law enforcement agencies. For more information, visit <https://www.veritone.com/applications/contact/>.

Read next: [How intelligent computing can help win the war on crime](#)

About the author

Laura Neitzel is Director of Branded Content for Lexipol, where she produces written and multimedia branded content of relevance to a public safety audience, including law enforcement, fire, EMS and corrections. She holds degrees in English from the University of Texas and the University of North Texas, and has over 20 years' experience writing and producing branded and educational content for nationally-recognized companies, government agencies, non-profits and advocacy organizations.

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