

## What You Should Know

Access to the IOWA message switch for CJIS/NCIC information is critical to your agency's operation. This access provides you a gateway to information that can aid your public safety agency in protecting the community while providing your personnel with the critical data and communication resources they need to do their jobs. Choosing the right client software solution for access to the IOWA message switch is a very important, but perhaps complicated decision. As with any major purchase, it's important you understand your needs and requirements as well as the options available to you. Therefore, CommSys produced this document with the purpose of providing you useful information to aid in your decision making.

**Question:** *Is Iowa Department of Public Safety, Technology Services Bureau (TSB) Division going to provide me the client software for full-terminal access like they do on the old IOWA message switch or do I now have to purchase a my own client software application in order to gain access to the upgraded IOWA message switch?*

**Answer:** TSB will no longer provide a client solution therefore; all Iowa public safety agencies are now responsible for purchasing a software solution to facilitate access to the IOWA message switch. As part of the IOWA message switch upgrade, the Iowa DPS TSB division announced in 2004 that they will no longer provide the Datamaxx Omnixx or any client solution for agencies but will certify vendor solutions and allow agencies to purchase the certified solution of choice.

**Question:** *Am I required to purchase a Datamaxx solution to access the IOWA Message Switch?*

**Answer:** No, in fact, Datamaxx, as of March 15, 2006, has yet to certify their application on the upgraded IOWA message switch. Before Datamaxx can sell a solution to Iowa Public Safety Agencies, they are required to pass certification with the Iowa Department of Public Safety's TSB; the same certification CommSys completed in May, 2005. CommSys has had Iowa agencies successfully using our ConnectCIC™ CLIPS™ software solution since May, 2005 too. Besides CommSys, there are other public safety software solution vendors who have certified a mobile (inquiry-only) solution that is integrated within their product offerings (CAD, RMS, mobile).

**Question:** *What is the difference between full-terminal and inquiry-only access?*

**Answer:** Depending on your public safety agency and your responsibilities, you may be required to have at least one device/workstation that has full access to the IOWA message switch. This device is usually referred to as your control terminal. You may want or need additional full-terminal access workstation devices too. If you are a 24X7 operation who have PSAP or PDAP responsibilities, have inmate or warrant processing responsibilities, enter/update CJIS/NCIC information, or need access to criminal history information, hit confirmation requests, or administrative messages, you will need to have at least one device in your agency with full-terminal access. A software application certified for full-terminal access supports every transaction available on the IOWA Message Switch; whereas an application certified for inquiry-only access supports an IOWA-define set of basic inquiry message transactions. The inquiry-only certification does not allow access to any entry, modify, locate, clear, cancel transactions, criminal history transactions, or even administrative or hit confirmation messages and is targeted at the mobile environment. Even though your agency is only required to have one full-terminal device, you may want to have more workstations with full-terminal access to facilitate

responsibilities in your department. You may also need to have one or more in-house workstations with robust inquiry-only access as well. There are options from vendors that allow you to select the combination of device licenses you need to maximize your operations without having to purchase functionality you do not need.

**Question:** *If I don't purchase a Datamaxx solution to access the IOWA message switch will I lose the ability to access other state-level applications and resources?*

**Answer:** No, all of your other state-level applications and resources that your organization uses, such as TraCS, Sleuth, or access to state-level systems like Kaleidoscope or DMV, will be available no matter what IOWA message switch access solution you purchase.

**Question:** *My agency would love to get rid of the noisy, dedicated line printers we use with the old IOWA message switch solution. Are these printers still required on the upgraded IOWA Message Switch?*

**Answer:** No, Iowa TSB does not require agency's to print out all message responses from the IOWA message switch. This requirement is obsolete. However, be careful when selecting your new solution as the vendor may still require the printer even though Iowa TSB does not. On some solutions this may be your only option in finding "unsolicited messages" such as administrative messages, BOLOs, or hit confirmation requests. The CommSys ConnectCIC CLIPS solution, however, does not require a dedicated line printer, in fact our application provides you a very easy-to-use response search engine as well as a separate folder where we route for easy access all unsolicited messages then notify you that messages are waiting for your review. We also use color coding so you can easily determine the type of message waiting your review. Our current Iowa agency users print only what they need for their internal operations, and most agencies have cut their printing by 90% while making use of network printers.

Some of our agencies have stated that because they do not have the dedicated line printers and associated support contracts on the hardware required for the old solution as well as the reduction in paper use, the CommSys ConnectCIC CLIPS solution is rapidly paying for itself. The savings is also assisting agencies in purchasing additional device licenses to expand access points throughout their agencies making IOWA message switch information access more convenient as well. Our current customer agencies are expecting less than a 3-year ROI.

**Question:** *How can I obtain more information on the CommSys ConnectCIC CLIPS CJIS/NCIC client software solution?*

**Answer:** There are several ways to obtain information on our certified ConnectCIC CLIPS solution:

- Visit our Website, [www.commsys.com](http://www.commsys.com) and in the Solutions tab access the CJIS/NCIC Solutions section and open the ConnectCIC CLIPS/IA product overview.
- Contact CommSys at [info@commsys.com](mailto:info@commsys.com) or by phone at **800-842-8225**.
- CommSys is planning seminars in April and May throughout Iowa. The purpose of these seminars is to provide agency decision makers a forum to acquire additional information, a product demonstration, and get your questions answered regarding ConnectCIC CLIPS. If you would like to ensure an invite, please request so at [info@commsys.com](mailto:info@commsys.com).
- CommSys can, upon request, provide on-site or remote product demonstrations of ConnectCIC CLIPS and provide you with references for agencies currently using our solution.

**CommSys prides ourselves on providing you quality product and support services to help you efficiently do your job! Let us know how we can help you!**