

What is CLEMIS?

The Michigan law enforcement data program, explained

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Detroit Free Press

Feb. 22, 2026Updated Feb. 26, 2026, 3:10 p.m. ET

- The entity consolidates and provides a slew of critical information to more than 250 law enforcement agencies, fire departments and courts.
- One of its essential functions is a search tool for law enforcement. Similar to Google, an inquiry on a name or address can yield vital details for law enforcement.
- The entity was created as a part of Oakland County government years ago, but recently spun off as an independent, quasi-public agency.

For roughly 60 years, an increasing number of law enforcement and other agencies throughout metro Detroit have relied on a specific data collaboration tool: [the Courts and Law Enforcement Management Information System, more frequently referred to as CLEMIS](#).

The name is a bit of a mouthful, and the organization itself deploys a fair amount of jargon to describe its function. But at its core, it's a search system that currently helps more than 250 agencies in the region work together to serve their various law enforcement or broader public service missions.



Typically, elected officials and the agencies that use the system applaud it. But it is not without a bit of controversy, unearned or otherwise. And it's going through arguably the biggest change in program history, spinning off from the county government where it was founded to become its own, semipublic agency.

What does that matter, and why should you care? Great questions – we try to answer

them here.

What is CLEMIS?

Until very recently, it was a function of Oakland County government. It's an organization overseeing a group of public agencies working together to share information. Drilling down a bit more, it is various technology options typically used by law enforcement or comparable groups to find, record, track and analyze information.

It's modeled on the state Law Enforcement Information Network system, called LEIN. When a Michigan State Police trooper pulls you over and "runs" your information through their system, chances are they are using LEIN.

CLEMIS goes beyond what members can find in LEIN: If police interviewed someone, ran their license plate or otherwise interacted with them and recorded that information, an officer can use CLEMIS to find that information.

It's an investigative building block. According to a 2022 CLEMIS presentation created to describe the program, "CLEMIS provides public safety agencies immediate access to critical information during day-to-day operations and at a time of crisis."

The system is billed to work just like an internet search tool: Think Google or Yahoo. An officer for a member agency can search using a slew of categories, including:

- Names
- Property
- Addresses
- Arrests (mugshots displayed)
- Businesses
- Crime Incidents
- Identifiers
- Aliases

CLEMIS draws from not only information entered by its own members, but also from Michigan Secretary of State driving records and images, the Michigan Department of Corrections inmate database, FBI criminal and stolen property records, local police databases and LEIN.

"CLEMIS hosts, updates, and maintains the central system allowing police agencies to focus on criminal justice," the 2022 presentation states.

Who uses CLEMIS, and why?

In general, many law enforcement, fire departments and court systems in southeast Michigan use CLEMIS.

Roughly 130 police departments and county sheriff's offices throughout metro Detroit are members, according to a list on the Oakland County government CLEMIS website. The Detroit Police Department is not a member, but there are an array of agencies from Wayne, Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw and other counties, including:

- Ann Arbor Police
- Berkley Public Safety
- Clawson Police
- Dearborn City Police
- Grand Blanc Township Police
- Hamtramck Police
- Huntington Woods Public Safety
- Port Huron Police

- Romulus Police
- Ypsilanti Police

Sheriff's offices in Huron, Lapeer, Lenawee, Oakland, Saint Clair and Washtenaw counties are also members, according to the same list.

Agencies policing institutions of higher education are also members, including University of Michigan Public Safety.

More than 50 fire departments are also CLEMIS members. While they do not have access to the same criminal data available to police, they can use CLEMIS for fire and EMS incident reports, personnel records management, training and more.

Member agencies include departments in Auburn Hills, Farmington Hills, Livonia, Royal Oak, South Lion and the Wayne County Airport Authority.

Nearly 50 Michigan court systems use CLEMIS, according to the Oakland County website. There are various applications offered by CLEMIS that might be useful for district court employees, ranging from access to encounters that may be relevant for probation departments to "legible tickets with immediate access in an electronic database," according to the 2022 CLEMIS presentation.

The 6th Circuit Court in Pontiac, the main circuit court for Oakland County, is a member, as are district courts from Warren to Southfield.

Lastly, a handful of other agencies have access to CLEMIS. That includes the Michigan State Police, the FBI, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and federal probation officers working with the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan.

Who controls CLEMIS?

In recent months, after years of work, CLEMIS formally left the county and became a public authority. That essentially means a semipublic, standalone agency that is currently pursuing tax-exempt status.

It posts agendas and minutes, is subject to the Freedom of Information Act and [publicly provides details](#) about its funding and contracts.

"This new authority is now focused on standing up a new organization, transferring assets from the county and building new systems that will help us provide transparent, accountable and affordable services for current and new communities for the next 60 years," reads a statement a PR firm working for CLEMIS provided to the Detroit Free Press.

"The current timeframe is to have this transition completed by September 30, 2026. Currently, CLEMIS services are being provided by existing county employees through user agreements with Oakland County."

Why is CLEMIS controversial?

Not everyone within Oakland County government wanted CLEMIS to become its own authority, arguing doing so would obviously lead to less control of the organization.

In the months leading up to the spin-off, the county announced a whistleblower informed the administration of County Executive Dave Coulter that a company run by a county employee was awarded a six-figure contract to help with IT services for CLEMIS.

While the company never received any of the money, a subsequent county investigation revealed the awarding of the contract violated state law and county policy. Two county employees resigned, two were suspended and a county commissioner filed a report with law enforcement.

In December, a spokesman for the Michigan State Police told the Free Press the agency reviewed the complaint and "found nothing to investigate."

More recently, critics noted ICE, the federal agency leading President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown, has access to CLEMIS, including data from agencies or cities that purport not to assist with federal immigration efforts.

A Coulter spokesman said the county will not renew its contract for ICE to access CLEMIS when it expires at the end of March. Oakland County Commission Chairman Dave Woodward, who also sits on the new CLEMIS executive committee, also said he would not vote to approve any similar deal between ICE and the authority in the future.

How is CLEMIS funded?

Members pay a fee for every officer in their agency. In 2025, Bo Cheng – then a private consultant for CLEMIS while it was still under Oakland County and [now its executive director](#) after it became a separate authority – told [the publication Government Technology](#) it planned to charge each member agency \$500 per officer.

Additionally, Oakland County government approved sending the new CLEMIS Authority \$10 million when it formally spun off to become its own entity. Recently, [the authority also voted](#), in part, to "maintain the current 5% annual increase to membership fees."

What's the big deal about CLEMIS?

It's a massive, publicly funded data-sharing system that allows metro Detroit law enforcement and some other agencies to access private and critical details about scores of people. And it wants to grow.

While the authority serves about 250 agencies now, a key leader last year [told the publication Government Technology he wants CLEMIS](#) to serve 2,000 agencies in 10 states by 2030.

That's not happening yet, though: in a statement to the Free Press, the PR firm hired by the CLEMIS Authority said the organization, "is in the formative stages, and we are not currently able to receive users or add members, including law enforcement agencies at this time. We look forward to providing updates in the months ahead as we launch our new, independent authority consistent with good government practices that promote transparency and accountability for taxpayers."

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