

E-SJI NEWS

SJI Awards FY 2014 Second Quarter Grants

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The SJI Board of Directors met on March 31, 2014, to make decisions on quarterly grant applications and awarded a total of ten (10) grants.

Two (2) Strategic Initiatives Grants were approved, including: a joint project of the Self-Represented Litigation Network (SRLN) and the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to develop and conduct an assessment of programs and technologies to provide services to self-represented litigants through remote or virtual means, and identification and documentation of business and technical requirements for a full-service “triage portal” that will serve as a single point of entry to legal information and services for self-represented litigants; and Phase II of the Civil Justice Initiative which will add an evaluation of the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure on expedited actions to further inform the Civil Justice Committee’s decisions and recommendations on effective civil case processing.

Two (2) Project Grants were approved, including: a self-help forms expansion project for the Hawaii Judiciary; and a weighted caseload assessment for the Vermont Supreme Court. Five (5) Technical



Assistance (TA) Grants were approved, including: assessment of service processing for the Delaware Justice of the Peace Court; assessment of staffing, organization, and processes for the Oregon Supreme Court; sex offender strategic planning for the Guam Judiciary; a D.C. jury service improvement project by the Council for Court Excellence; and strategic planning and performance measurement for the Superior Court of Maricopa County, Arizona. One (1) Curriculum Adaptation & Training (CAT) Grant was approved for courthouse security training in Massachusetts.

In this Issue

Second Quarter Grant Awards	1
Human Trafficking and the State Courts	1
Human Trafficking Courts in New York	2
Evidence-Based Sentencing Resources	3

Human Trafficking and the State Courts Collaborative

In FY 2013, the SJI Board of Directors established *Human Trafficking and the State Courts* as one of its [Priority Investment Areas](#) for grant funding. The SJI-funded Human Trafficking and the State Courts Collaborative was then established. The Collaborative features a diverse partnership of the following national court support organizations: [Center for Public Policy Studies](#) (CPPS); [Center for Court Innova-](#)

[tion](#) (CCI); [National Judicial College](#) (NJC); [Legal Momentum](#); and, [National Association for Women Judges](#) (NAWJ).

The Collaborative’s [website](#) provides reports, statistics, and tools that will help state courts more effectively address human trafficking issues. As the Collaborative develops resources, their website, [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#) page, will provide the latest information on this critical issue.

Human Trafficking Intervention Courts Provide Critical Services in New York



On September 25, 2013, Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman of the New York State Unified Court System announced the launch of the *Human Trafficking Intervention Initiative*, the nation's first statewide system of dedicated courts designed to intervene in the lives of trafficking victims. In New York, human trafficking manifests itself most prominently in the form of sex trafficking. This trailblazing initiative focuses on individuals charged with prostitution-related offenses in an effort to identify and assist sex trafficking victims, opening the door for thousands across the state to escape a life of abuse and torture.

Many domestic and foreign-born individuals who end up in New York's criminal courts on prostitution charges are recruited into the commercial sex industry by force, fraud and/or coercion. Embracing a newly emerging criminal justice approach, 11 Human Trafficking Intervention Courts in the state will seek to promote a just and compassionate resolution to these cases - treating defendants as victims who are often in need of critical services. With the collaborative efforts of the court system's criminal justice partners and service providers across the state, this unprecedented system of dedicated courts will work to connect these individuals with meaningful intervention and link them to resources aimed at breaking the cycle of exploitation and arrest.

District attorneys across the state have also affirmed their commitment to investigating and bringing charges against traffickers and those who patronize prostitutes.

This approach is supported by both prosecutors and defense counsel. In the pilot jurisdictions, all cases with misdemeanor prostitution or related charges that continue past arraignment are transferred to a Human Trafficking Intervention Court; once transferred to that specialized court, defendants are evaluated by on-site staff. The court connects defendants to tailored counseling and case management services, which range from shelter and healthcare to immigration assistance, drug treatment, and counseling. These counselors/social workers also screen for indicators of trafficking.

Human Trafficking Intervention Courts also link participants to education and job training programs to help prevent their return to the commercial sex industry. For example, in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan, defendants are referred to the Women's Independence, Safety, and Empowerment (WISE) program, operated by the Center for Court Innovation (CCI). WISE provides trauma-informed individual and group programming that aims to reduce the shame and isolation associated with prostitution and trafficking by creating a safe space for clients to address their underlying needs. A defendant's charges may be dismissed or reduced contingent upon compliance with these court-mandated services and programs.

Other features of Human Trafficking Courts include increased coordination and communication between the court, its criminal justice part-

ners, local service providers, and other stakeholders; a single presiding judge to handle all the cases, tracking them through to disposition; regularly assigned prosecutors and defense attorneys; on-site or conveniently located service providers to offer vital support to partici-

pants, as well as valuable updates to the court and prosecutor; and specially trained court staff who recognize the dynamics of sex trafficking and the challenges defendants must overcome to reintegrate into mainstream society.

Over 2,500 defendants have already appeared in New York's Human Trafficking Intervention Courts. These courts offer the potential for identification of victimization and trafficking, and the opportunity to connect defendants to services. As one example, during the fall of 2013 (September – December), the Human Trafficking Intervention Court within the Midtown Manhattan Community Court reported that 83 percent of defendants with prostitution charges reported some type of present or past victimization, such as sexual assault or domestic violence, while 33 percent reported indicators of sex trafficking (force, fraud and/or coercion). As the pilot trafficking courts continue to develop and expand, identifying the incidence of victimization among these defendants will be critical to breaking the cycle of re-arrest and continued trauma.

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Evidenced-Based Sentencing Resources

In 2007, the [Conference of Chief Justices \(CCJ\)](#) and the [Conference of State Court Administrators \(COSCA\)](#) passed a joint resolution that called for the: a) adoption of sentencing and corrections policies and practices that are effective, as determined through research and evaluation, in reducing recidivism; b) working with the executive and legislative branches to promote such policies and practices; and, c) urging members of the judiciary to educate themselves about evidence-based programs that work.

In support of the resolution, the State Justice Institute (SJI) partnered with the [Pew Public Safety Performance Project](#) to provide funding for research, training, and technical assistance on evidence-based sentencing and corrections practices. The initial effort resulted in the [Center for Sentencing Initiatives \(CSI\)](#), a dedicated web-



site for information, education, and assistance related to evidence-based sentencing policies and practices for the state court com-

munity, inclusive of:

- A [ground-breaking model curriculum](#) on evidence-based sentencing for judges;
- Two research briefs on sentencing commissions; and,
- Several national- and state-level presentations.

Subsequent partnership work involved convening inter-branch meetings to discuss sentencing and corrections policies; creating an online version of the model curriculum for judges; establishing a National Working Group and developing a set of guiding principles for using offender risk and needs assessment information at sentencing; and providing training and technical assistance to numerous states. In addition, SJI

has funded separate projects addressing evidence-based sentencing and corrections practices in California and Wisconsin.

These efforts provided the groundwork and ongoing infrastructure for court efforts to implement evidence-based sentencing reforms. Since passage of the 2007 resolution, numerous states and local jurisdictions have adopted policies and practices that focus on recidivism reduction strategies, such as using risk and needs assessment information to inform sentencing decisions, targeting conditions of probation at relevant offender characteristics to achieve effective sentencing outcomes, and basing responses to violations of probation on research-based practices. This area of court reform has benefitted greatly from the contributions of the work supported by SJI and continues to expand. For more information about evidence-based practices and risk assessment, CSI encourages judges and judicial officers to join its [listserv](#).

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The State Justice Institute is a federally-funded, non-profit corporation established by federal law in 1984 to improve the quality of justice in the state courts.

