

E-SJI NEWS

Human Trafficking and the State Courts: Update on Activities

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SJI established human trafficking as a Priority Investment Area in FY 2013. This led to the creation of the [Human Trafficking and the State Courts Collaborative](#), consisting of the Center for Public Policy Studies (CPPS); Center for Court Innovation (CCI); National Judicial College (NJC); National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ), Legal Momentum; and the National Council of Family and Juvenile Court Judges (NCJFCJ). The HT Collaborative has been engaged in numerous activities to enhance state court capacity to address the challenge of cases involving human trafficking. State court and/or trial court technical assistance efforts have either been

trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation of children, trauma-informed services, and specialty courts and dockets – have been provided by the HT Collaborative for state court systems, trial courts, and justice partners located in Mississippi, Hawaii, Florida, New York, Nevada, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, North Carolina, Georgia, Texas, Wisconsin, Kentucky, Delaware, California, and Arizona. Moreover, additional sessions have been conducted for court associations, including the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA), the National Association for Court Management (NACM), and NAWJ.



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completed or are ongoing in Arizona, California, Georgia, Guam, Illinois, New York, Ohio, Texas, Delaware, Oregon, and North Dakota. Collectively, these efforts, which are tailored to the needs of each court, have involved a great range of services including assessment, planning, program development and implementation, training, and work process improvement.

Educational sessions on a range of topics – such as the forms and dynamics of human trafficking, labor

The resource development and publication work of the HT Collaborative has focused on publishing, in cooperation with NACM, hard-copy and electronic versions of an eleven chapter [Guide to Addressing Human Trafficking in the State Courts](#). In addition, the HT Collaborative has completed a series of nine [information cards](#) that provide four page summaries of topics examined in greater depth in the HT Guide.

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Recently, in an effort led by HT Collaborative member NAWJ, the group completed a *Trafficking in Persons – Modern Day Slavery* program manual that will be released in April 2015. Finally, the HT Collaborative also publishes a [Human Trafficking in the News](#) summary every two weeks.

Over the next year, the HT Collaborative will continue to provide technical assistance, resource development, training, and networking services to state and local courts. In addition, the HT Collaborative will:

- support the National Summit on Human Trafficking and the State Courts hosted by the New York Unified Court System in October 2015;



- address the challenges of increasing gang involvement in labor and sex trafficking;
- continue assessing the intersection between labor and sex trafficking;
- determine how labor-trafficking involved cases might end up in the state courts;
- implement trauma-informed approaches to addressing human trafficking; and
- develop state court approaches for working with non-U.S. citizen trafficking victims, such as unaccompanied immigrant minors, as well as U.S. citizen victims.

Access to Justice for Litigants in Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Judiciary continues to coordinate resources to broaden access to civil justice for all litigants. Programs and services are focused on self-represented litigants, individuals with limited or no English proficiency, and individuals with mental or physical disabilities.

In FY 2013, the Massachusetts Trial Court created the [Access to Justice Initiative](#) to enhance access for the public and court staff. With support from SJI (SJI-12-T-132), the Boston Municipal, District, and Housing Courts introduced small claims forms translated into the seven most widely-used languages. In addition, a [self-help video project](#) created complementary small claims videos in those languages.

With additional SJI assistance (SJI-13-T-084), the Massachusetts Administrative Office of the Trial Court (AOTC) has been preparing to implement a technical assistance pilot project that will help to establish a model language access courthouse at the Worcester Trial Court. The project, now in its implementation phase, aims to address several key areas of concern for all trial courts throughout the state, including:



To promote the rule of law and foster public trust by leading an independent judiciary that assures every person equal access to the fair, timely and impartial resolution of disputes in courts managed with efficiency and professionalism.
Supreme Judicial Court Mission Statement

- Delivery of justice to limited English proficient (LEP) individuals;

- Standardization of flexible service plans for trial courts to serve LEP and self-represented litigants; and,
- Replicable standards, policies, and protocols for language access in the courts.

Much of the past year has been focused on developing a cohesive LEP Advisory Committee, consisting of key justice stakeholders, to oversee the project.

Implementation of this initiative aligns with the Judiciary's [strategic plan](#) regarding access to justice through improving the coordination of resources set forth in the [FY 2013 Annual Report on the State of the Massachusetts Court System](#).

Completion of the work later this year will help to establish a model language access courthouse at the Worcester Trial Court, and make resources available to other state courts that can be adapted to their own collaborative language access projects.

Rhode Island Continues Language Access Project

Beginning in 2012, all Rhode Island Courts were directed that limited English proficient (LEP) individuals should have meaningful access to the courts in a language that they are able to understand. The goal was to promote the accuracy and integrity of judicial proceedings, and preserve fundamental principles of fairness and access to justice.

Evolving from the Rhode Island Judiciary's commitment to providing language access services to LEP individuals that come in contact with the courts, the Language Access Project was launched. The project established that Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian were frequently spoken by court-involved persons, and at stages (during filing or for small claims, prior to proceedings or mediation) when a court interpreter was not provided.

With a grant from SJI (SJI-12-T-159), the Judiciary was able to advance the project by



combining the resources available from the [Office of Court Interpreters \(OCI\)](#) and the [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\)](#), to translate forms and signage in courthouses, engage in language access planning, as well as convert the Judiciary's website for viewing in

all three languages. Feedback over the past year indicated that not only are these resources aiding courts in their provision of services to LEP individuals, but they have had a significant impact on these communities.

The project has since expanded to include translation and adaptation of forms in Cambodian. The Judiciary continues to work to identify litigants whose primary language is not English, and provide language services to assist them in court proceedings.

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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.

