

# E-SJI NEWS

## Human Trafficking and the State Courts Collaborative Included in Strategic Action Plan on Human Trafficking

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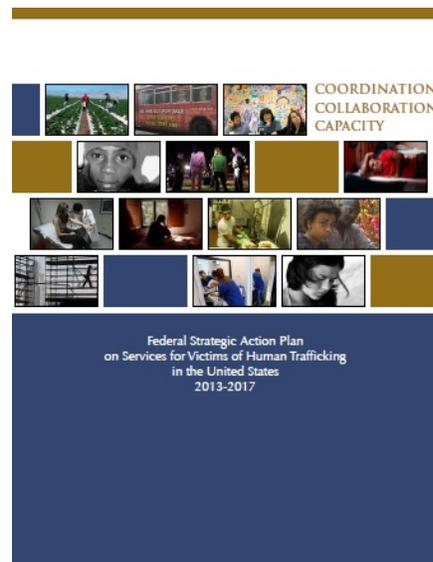
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On January 14, 2014, the first-ever [Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States](#) was released. After several months of coordination with the White House, Executive Branch agencies, and other entities, the SJI-sponsored [Human Trafficking and the State Courts Collaborative](#) was included as a part of this national effort (see pages 33-34, and 60). While SJI's contribution to the plan appears small, it is in fact one of the only components of the plan that includes the state courts as a justice system stakeholder in addressing human trafficking.

The plan lays out a five-year path for increased coordination, collaboration, and capacity across the federal government and in partnership with other governmental and nongovernmental entities at all levels. It describes the steps that federal agencies will take to ensure that all victims of human trafficking in the United States are identified, and have access to the services they need to recover and to rebuild their lives. This includes a victim services network that is comprehensive, trauma-informed, and responsive to the needs of *all* victims, regardless of the type of trafficking they endured. More than 15 federal agencies (led by the Departments of Justice, Health and Human Services, and Homeland Security) worked with stakeholders and participated in listening sessions across the country to develop this plan, as well as solicited feedback through a 45-day public comment period.

In FY 2013, SJI awarded a Strategic Initiatives Grant (SIG) to the [Center for Public Policy Studies/The](#)



[National Judicial College/Center for Court Innovation](#) (CPPS/NJC/CCI) to form a **Human Trafficking and the State Courts Collaborative** focused on 4 strategic priorities: 1) increasing understanding and awareness about the challenges faced by state courts in dealing with cases involving trafficking victims and their families, and traffickers; 2) developing and testing state and local approaches for assessing and addressing the impact of human trafficking victims and defendants in the state courts; 3) enhancing state and local court capacity to improve court services affected by human trafficking-related case processing demands; and 4) building effective national, state, and local partnerships for addressing the impacts of human trafficking case processing in the state courts.

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## Cochise County, Arizona Strategic Planning Project

With support from SJI, the Cochise County, Arizona, Superior and Justice Courts recently completed a comprehensive planning process that included court-community collaboration, strategic planning, and reengineering (SJI-12-T-170). “The process and end products were incredibly beneficial to our Court. They helped us connect with and strengthen relationships with our external partners. And, the plan has helped us communicate the Court’s priorities and demonstrate our need for additional resources,” says Presiding Judge James Conlogue. According to Court Administrator Eric Silverberg, “The strategic planning process was the right tool to use to prompt strategic thinking, establish clear priorities, involve partners, judges, and employees, and take action in our Court. It will help ensure we use our limited resources prudently and on our highest priorities to best serve our communities.”

The Court’s leadership had multiple objectives for embarking on its first strategic planning process, which proved to be an effective leadership and change management tool. The objectives included:

- Thinking critically and strategically about the future of the courts and developing a clear direction and sound strategies for improving court performance and services;



- Reconnecting with and involving justice system partners and stakeholders in identifying and prioritizing needed court improvements, ultimately strengthening relationships;
- Involving judges and court staff from both the Superior and Justice Courts in identifying future priorities, ensuring their voices were heard;
- Aligning funding and staffing resources with strategic priorities; and
- Developing an implementation and follow-through approach for long-term sustainability.

The above objectives were achieved with the assistance of Dr. Brenda Wagenknecht-Ivey, CEO of [PRAXIS Consulting, Inc.](#) “Dr. Wagenknecht-Ivey worked with us to customize a planning process taking into considera-

tion our court and legal culture, and our desired objectives,” says Silverberg. Specifically, the process included:

- Extensive outreach to and involvement of internal and external partners and stakeholders through a survey and court-community planning conference;
- An analysis of relevant internal and external trends;
- Facilitated, interactive planning sessions with a diverse but small Court Planning Team; and
- A planned and structured implementation approach with defined strategic initiatives and project implementation teams.

As a small, rural County in southern Arizona (bordering Mexico), the needs are high despite limited resources. The courts know there are challenges ahead, but their hard work, clear focus, and resiliency will enable them to continue providing the highest quality of justice and court services.

The final [strategic planning report](#) and [strategic projects plan](#) for Cochise County Superior and Justice Courts are available through the NCSC Library eCollection (Digital Archive).

## Status of FY 2014 Appropriations

On January 15, 2014, the House approved the [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014](#) (H.R. 3547), which included \$4,900,000 for SJI. The Senate approved the bill on January 16<sup>th</sup>, and it was signed by the President on January 17<sup>th</sup>.



SJI now has its full-year appropriation for FY 2014, and will continue awarding grants on a quarterly basis.

As a reminder, there are three grant deadlines remaining in FY 2014: February 1<sup>st</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> quarter); May 1<sup>st</sup> (3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter), and August 1<sup>st</sup> (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter).

## New Report by the Court Statistics Project Provides Additional Resources

*Self-Represented Litigant:* A person (party) who advocates on his or her own behalf before a court, rather than being represented by an attorney. These litigants are also known as *pro se* or *pro per* litigants.

Courts across the country have experienced a significant increase in the number of cases involving self-represented litigants.

To assist in meeting the demand for additional resources, the Court Statistics Project (CSP), with support from SJI, recently released a report titled, [\*Developing Standardized Definitions and Counting Rules for Cases with Self-Represented Litigants\*](#), (SJI-12-P-084).

CSP, a joint project of the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) and the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA), has developed a number of products through extensive research and collection of case data that advance the courts' ability to address self-

-represented litigant demands with efficiency, and in the fairest manner possible. The project to standardize self-represented litigant definitions and counting rules was initiated with the goal of establishing a consistent approach to

reporting cases with self-represented litigants, and fostering a means by which comparative data could be produced within and among jurisdictions.

CSP intends to use this data to facilitate greater understanding of the nature and extent of self-representation in the state courts.

Recommendations are provided in three key areas necessary to case processing: 1) definitions; 2) counting rules; and, 3) reporting guidelines. Each area is well-defined with the intent of avoiding ambiguity when it comes to



collecting, interpreting, and reporting caseload data. The final report also addresses court technology standards that reflect the level of capabilities required to manage data-driven operational changes.

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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.

