

## SJI Newsletter

March 2019 | Volume 29, No. 6



### SJI Funds National Initiative to Address Mental Illness and the State Courts

The state courts are experiencing increasing complexity in handling individuals who have mental illness, and oftentimes a co-occurring substance use issue. System-wide, mental illness has placed a strain on many communities and their resources, and jails are being used to detain those who need mental health treatment. The problem is exacerbated by the lack of a coordinated national, state, and community effort involving all three branches of government. In addition, lack of resources, empirically-based data, and a clearinghouse for state court leaders to learn the practical steps they can take to address the problem in their court systems also contribute to the problem.

**To address this issue on a national level, SJI has awarded a major grant to the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), which will work in partnership with the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) and the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA) on a mental illness in the courts initiative that will:**

- Develop resources, best practices and recommend standards to address mental illness and the state courts response.
- Expand the NCSC website to create a centralized repository for state courts interested in improving court and community responses.
- Provide resources to improve caseflow management of civil commitment cases as well as felony and misdemeanor cases involving persons with mental illness.
- Provide education by developing national, regional, and statewide training and education opportunities for judges and court practitioners.

- Develop guides and resources on the Sequential Intercept Model, and adapt the SJI-funded Arizona Presiding Judge Guide titled, [Fair Justice for Persons with Mental Illness: Improving the Courts Response](#) for use nationally.
- Build capacity of state and national court leader to lead and implement reforms.

This national initiative will be based on the 2016-2017 COSCA policy paper, [Decriminalization of Mental Illness: Fixing a Broken System](#). Additionally, CCJ/COSCA Court Management Committee working group has identified four areas for further action in addressing mental health:

1. Developing resources, best practices, and recommended standards in state court responses to mental health issues;
2. Improving caseload management by examining civil commitment and criminal cases involving persons with mental illness to identify barriers to, and opportunities for, timely and effective case processing;
3. Promoting education; and
4. Building capacity to implement reforms

This new Initiative will support a [resolution](#) passed at the CCJ/COSCA 2018 annual meeting in support of improving the justice system response to mental illness. Promising approaches are currently being explored to address this problem, including the [Sequential Intercept Model](#), which identifies where to intercept individuals with mental illness as they move through the criminal justice system, suggests which populations might be targeted at each point of interception, and highlights the decision-makers who can authorize movement away from or through the criminal justice system. Mental health codes require modification to permit timely, appropriately-targeted, court-ordered treatment for persons with mental illness, before and after contact with the justice system. It has also been acknowledged that individuals who are intercepted by the criminal justice system often have co-occurring mental health and substance abuse issues.

As the initiative moves forward, more updates will be provided.

The screenshot shows a web interface for a "2019 Course Calendar". At the top, it says "2019 Course Calendar". Below that, a paragraph explains that courses can be sorted by clicking on categories below, including those relevant to the *Elements of Judicial Excellence* framework. It also mentions that more information about the framework can be found on the National Center for State Courts website. Below the text is a search bar labeled "Search By Title". Underneath the search bar are several filter buttons: "All", "Tribal", "General Jurisdiction", "Administrative Law", "Military", "Special Courts", "Appellate", "Webcast", "Web Course", "Free", "International", "Across the Country", "Traffic", "EJE - Citizen of the Court Community", "EJE - Informed and Impartial Decision-Maker", and "EJE - Leader of the Court Process".

## NJC Catalog Sortable by Elements of Judicial Excellence

The [Elements of Judicial Excellence](#) (EJE) are a set of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics of being a great judge that emerged from lengthy consultations with Illinois judges.

The [EJE framework](#) was developed with support from SJI and the [National Center for State Courts](#) (NCSC). In the NJC's 2019 printed catalog, courses are aligned with the Elements of Judicial Excellence. A graphic representation of the framework is on page 22.

To view which NJC courses align with which Elements of Judicial Excellence:

1. Go to the 2019 [online catalog](#) page.
2. Click on any of the three major development categories from the Elements of Judicial Excellence: *Citizen of the Court Community*, *Informed and Impartial Decision-Maker*, or *Leader of the Court Process*.
3. View the resulting list of 2019 courses designed to support that element.
4. Click "Read more" for a detailed description and the link to enroll.



## New Web Page Provide Resources on Workplace Conduct In the Courts

To address the issue of gender bias and sexual harassment in the workplace, the [National Center for State Courts](#) (NCSC) created a [web page](#) for court employees and others with information specific to the courts work environment. This project is supported with grant funding from SJI.

The web page includes information such as the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) and American Bar Association (ABA) resolutions on sexual harassment and gender bias, judicial codes of conduct, and the ABA's conduct code. It also lists additional resources from the ABA, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the National Women's Law Center, and the National Association of Women Judges.



## NACM Wraps Successful Midyear Meeting - Looks Ahead to Annual Event

The [National Association for Court Management](#) (NACM) Midyear meeting was recently held for over 500 court professionals and stakeholders in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The theme, *Advancing Today's Courts to Meet the Challenges of Tomorrow* showcased a number of exceptional educational programs, while offering networking opportunities for national and international guests. With support from SJI, portions of the conference content were streamed and archived online. NACM is happy to share it all on their [Midyear Highlights](#). All past NACM conference videos can be accessed in their [Video Gallery](#).

NACM is dedicated to educating court professionals, providing community, sharing information, and advocating on important court and justice system topics. Early registration is now open through April 12<sup>th</sup> for the 2019 annual meeting, July 21-25, 2019. The theme is *Courts and Society: Creating Public Trust Through Engagement and Innovation*. Courts have a responsibility to serve the citizenry and in fact, society depends and expects the courts to provide an impartial judicial process as the third branch of government. This Annual Meeting will focus on improving the public's trust in courts through active engagement and innovation in the areas of:

- access and fairness;
- community engagement;
- indigent legal representation;
- problem-solving courts;
- mental health and substance use;
- civil justice improvement initiatives;
- workforce management; and
- technology

Members are also encouraged to apply for one of a limited number of [scholarships](#) - due by April 12th.

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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.*

## Products and Resources

Since 2011, SJI has designated the library at the National Center for State Courts as the official repository of published work related to SJI-supported grant projects. You can search the ecollection online by using the term, State Justice Institute.

## Share the News

SJI uses [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to promote the work of its grantees and also shares information of interest to the entire state court community. If your organization's work complements ours, let us know and we will share.