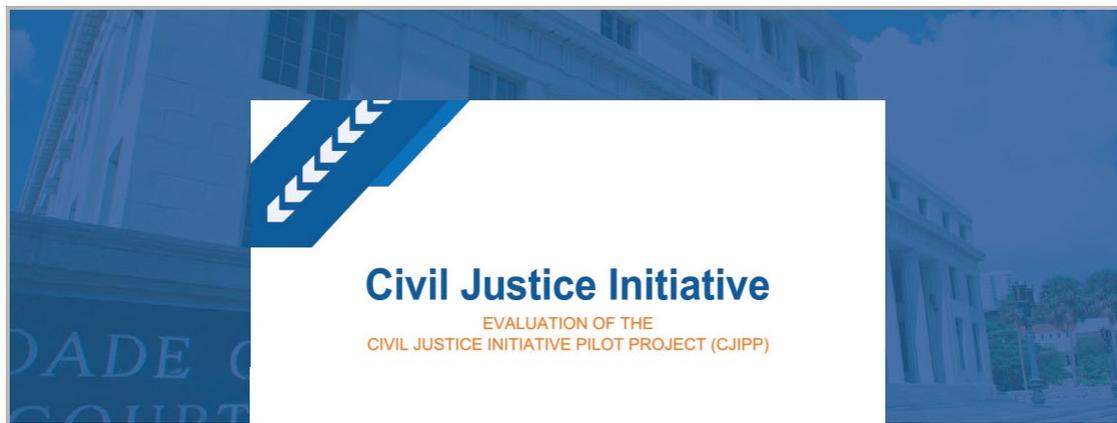


SJI Newsletter

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Civil Justice Initiative Pilot Project Releases Miami-Dade Evaluation

In November 2016, the Circuit Civil Division of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Court of Florida implemented the Civil Justice Initiative Pilot Project (CJIPP) to test the impact of [Civil Case Management Teams \(CCMTs\)](#) on civil case processing. CCMTs were envisioned as an essential component of civil justice reform in the [report and recommendations of the CCJ Civil Justice Improvements Committee](#). With SJI support, the CJIPP created four CCMTs, each consisting of a judge, a case manager, a judicial assistant, and a bailiff. The CCMTs developed a standardized case management process to streamline administrative tasks, triage cases into appropriate case management pathways, and monitor case progress. The remaining 21 judges in the Circuit Civil Division continued to manage civil caseloads under traditional case processing practices and staffing assignments, providing a baseline for comparison.

To assess the impact of CJIPP, the [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\)](#) conducted an outcome evaluation that compared the outcomes of cases assigned to the CJIPP teams with those assigned to the non-CJIPP judges (baseline). The NCSC found that CJIPP cases closed at a significantly higher rate, and approximately five months earlier on average than baseline cases. Shortly after the initial launch of the pilot program, the CJIPP cases experienced a temporary increase in the number of court hearings and case management conferences as lawyers in the CJIPP cases requested modifications to case management orders, including continuances or extensions of time to complete litigation tasks; however, the frequency of these case events returned to normal levels within three months.

In addition to shorter timeframes and increased case activity, the CJIPP cases also showed a smaller ratio between the number of motions filed and the number of orders entered, suggesting that CJIPP judges were more responsive than baseline judges in deciding motions in a timely manner, thus preventing unnecessary costs and delay for litigants.

The NCSC evaluation also conducted focus groups and surveyed attorneys in CJIPP cases to solicit their perceptions about the pilot program. Attorneys were positive overall about the case management practices introduced through CJIPP, with more than half of attorneys surveyed reporting that CJIPP judges set clear expectations and enforced case deadlines. During focus groups, several attorneys also commented that the CJIPP judges' level of oversight and willingness to enforce case management orders tended to reward competence and professionalism and to discourage unnecessary gamesmanship in litigation. CJIPP judges also reported that the CCMT model removed some of the administrative burden associated with civil case management, giving them more time to review case details before hearings or deciding motions. CJIPP judges also noted that attorneys seemed to respond positively to the greater attention from judges, moving their cases sooner than usual.

The NCSC [evaluation report](#) also describes challenges that the Court experienced during the CJIPP implementation as well as suggestions for other courts planning to implement CCMTs.



Public Engagement with the Courts is a Two-way Street

The Massachusetts Trial Court is looking for leaders willing to "commit to a longer-term partnership" between the courts and the community. In Nebraska, the state Supreme Court wants to better recognize the needs of Native Americans. The Franklin (Ohio) Municipal Court is learning how under-served populations perceive specialized dockets and its Self-Help Resource Center.

Those are three of the six court systems participating in [NCSC's Public Engagement Pilot Project](#), which aims to identify proven ways to build trust and confidence in the courts. Each pilot court is working on a different aspect of court services in connection to public engagement. After the project ends, toolkits will be available for courts nationwide.

Chief Judge of the D.C. Court of Appeals Anna Blackburne-Rigsby chairs the Community Engagement in the State Courts Initiative, which oversees the pilot project. At the first meeting of the pilot site teams earlier this year, Chief Judge Blackburne-Rigsby said courts have been working for decades to improve public trust and confidence in the courts, but little progress has been made.

She said the primary method courts have used is outreach to communities. Representatives from state teams and project researchers are pictured at top of the page.

"Outreach is one-way communication," she said. "Engagement is different. It involves listening. It's a two-way. We are going to come up with strategies, outcomes, toolkits, and data. This project is going to make a difference."

The other three pilot sites include:

- Kansas City (Mo.) Municipal Court, which is integrating court user surveys into its public engagement process;
- Puerto Rico Judicial Branch, which is focusing on helping communities address neighborhood conflict; and
- Texas Office of Court Administration, which is building on results from its prior "Beyond the Bench" effort.

The Public Engagement Pilot Project is building on information gathered and analyzed from a three-city listening tour in which judges met with community members to hear about their experiences with - and their impressions of - the courts. The sessions, broadcast on PBS titled "Courting Justice," were held in Los Angeles, Cleveland and Little Rock, Ark. After the listening tours, surveys were sent to court and civic leaders to hone in on specific areas of concern that courts need to address. Each of the pilot sites is engaging the public to address such needs collaboratively. [Tune into this month's podcast with Chief Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby.](#)



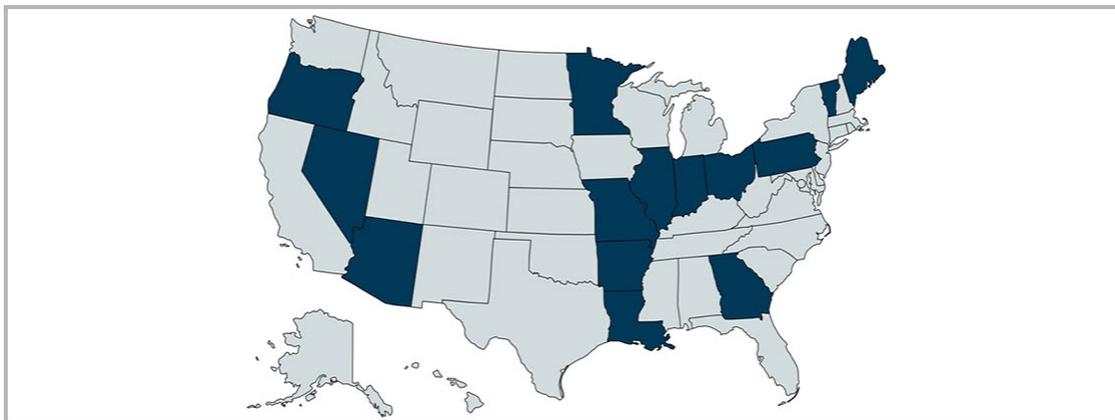
Advancing Judicial Excellence in New Mexico

Supreme Court Chief Justice Judith Nakamura addressed a joint session of the New Mexico Legislature earlier this year to outline plans for improving and streamlining [New Mexico Courts](#) operations to better serve New Mexicans. A core component moving forward will be an SJI grant-funded evaluation by the [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\)](#) of appellate court processes.

The first-ever evaluation is already underway and seeks to help the judiciary and court administration identify issues that need to be addressed. It will work in tandem with a workload study, also to be performed by the NCSC of the district, metropolitan, and magistrate courts.

Plans for improving court operations are part of a campaign called "[Advancing Judicial Excellence](#)" that originated last spring at a meeting of chief judges, court executive officers and representatives of magistrate and municipal courts.

"This initiative, which will provide the framework for the judiciary's strategic planning and budgets for the next three years is rooted in two simple questions," the Chief Justice told lawmakers. "Are we doing our best work? And how can we do better?"



NCSC Completes National Grant Project on Improving Language Access Services in the State Courts

To further support state courts in developing and improving language access services, the [National Center for State Courts](#) provided direct technical assistance, guidance, and new tools for state and local courts with the support of an SJI Grant awarded in FY 2013.

In addition to providing individual local and state court technical assistance, the NCSC also used developed a national tool to assist state courts in locating and accessing qualified court interpreters that may not be easily sourced at the local level. The result was the release of a court interpreter database with 1,324 interpreters in 49 languages, which was made available to court language access program managers across the country in 2016.

These efforts assisted local and state jurisdictions of varying size and governance structures not only in addressing their specific language access needs, but also in providing models and work products for use by others, thus contributing to significant improvements in language services nationwide.

The full [report](#) on the work completed by NCSC under this grant is available online at the [NCSC Language Access Services Section](#) website.

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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.

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