

SJI NEWSLETTER

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Missouri Municipal Courts Assessment & Recommendations

Promoting Our Work

SJI not only uses [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to promote the work of its grantees, but 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 it!



This assessment was conducted by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) at the request of the Supreme Court of Missouri with grant support from SJI (SJI-15-T-119).

The goal was to identify best practices in operating and managing limited jurisdiction courts throughout the United States, and suggest how those practices may be applied to municipal courts in Missouri. The impetus for this analysis was sparked by a recent Department of Justice (DOJ) assessment of the Ferguson, Missouri Police Department which also alluded to problems and improprieties in the operation of the Ferguson Municipal Court.

Court officials in Missouri were concerned that some of the difficulties in Ferguson extended to a broader range of municipal courts in the state. Beginning in May 2015, the NCSC reviewed studies and reports on Missouri's municipal courts (including the March 2015, DOJ Report), examined data on court performance, met with the Supreme Court of Missouri, and visited, observed, and interviewed judges, lawyers, and court staff in a select number of municipal courts throughout the state. A number of attorneys, judges, county, city, and court officials and staff throughout Missouri were interviewed during these site visits.

The report is divided into four subject matter sections, each with specific recommendations for immediate and sustained improvement:

- leadership and governance
- judicial selection retention and evaluation



**MISSOURI MUNICIPAL COURTS:
BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS**
FINAL REPORT
NOVEMBER 2015

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- court management
- fiscal and financial operations

The [final report](#) and recommendations are applicable to all states with limited jurisdiction courts. SJI strongly encourages other state courts to closely examine these recommendations.

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2015 State of State Courts Survey Results

The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) recently released the results of the [2015 State of State Courts Survey](#).

The results show that courts remain the most trusted branch of government, and Americans recognize their unique role in protecting individual rights. However, persistent concerns about customer service, inefficiency, and bias are undermining the public's confidence in the courts. Key findings from this year's survey show that concerns about inefficiency and unfairness are deep-seated and real, and African Americans express significantly less faith in the courts than the population as a whole.

The survey is based on telephone interviews with 1,000 registered voters nationwide. The interviews were completed between October 26-29, 2015 by GBA Strategies.



White House and Department of Justice Convene Working Sessions on Fines, Fees, and Bail



The White House and U.S. Department of Justice convened working sessions on court fines, fees, and bail practices December 2-3, 2015 in Washington, D.C. Attendees included chief justices, judges, court administrators, federal officials, academics, prosecutors, public defenders, and advocates. The following links provide information on the working sessions, in addition to background information:

- Video of the White House convening (full day [here](#); edited version [here](#));
- Transcript of the [Attorney General's remarks](#);
- Report from the [President's Council of Economic Advisors on Fees, Fines, and Bail](#); and

➤ Background materials, including:

- [The Supreme Court of Ohio Collection of Fines and Courts Costs](#);
- [COSCA 2011-12 Policy Paper - Courts are Not Revenue Centers](#);
- [Thompson v. DeKalb County Settlement](#);
- [Investigation of Ferguson Police Department](#); and,
- [US District Court Case, Northern Division: Varden v. City of Clanton](#)

Investigation of the
Ferguson Police Department



United States Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division

March 4, 2015

SJI Releases

FY 2016 Grant Guideline

The SJI [Grant Guideline](#) for FY 2016 is now available. The Grant Guideline appears as part of the National Archives and Records Administration's Federal Register, and sets forth the administrative, programmatic, and financial requirements for applying for and administering SJI grants.



Federal Register

FY 2016 Deadlines for Project, Technical Assistance (TA), and Curriculum Adaptation (CAT) Grants are as follows:

- 2nd Quarter – February 1, 2016;
- 3rd Quarter – May 1, 2016; and,
- 4th Quarter – August 1, 2016.

SJI Newsletter Submissions

SJI is always accepting submissions from its grantees for the SJI Newsletter. Articles of 500 words or less from projects that are either: a) ongoing, with information to share; or, b) have recently completed and could be beneficial to a larger state court audience, are of greatest interest. SJI reserves the right to edit all submissions for any reason.

Submissions, including all article content in Microsoft Word, images or logos, and any links, should be sent to us electronically at kathryn.tuck@sjj.gov by the 15th of each month.

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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.

