

# SJI NEWSLETTER

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## New Roadmap For Implementing Civil Justice Reform

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[Transforming Our Civil Justice System for the 21st Century: A Roadmap for Implementation](#) provides guidance to state courts who are answering the Call to Action from the [Conference of Chief Justices](#) (CCJ) and [Conference of State Court Administrators](#) (COSCA) following their endorsement of the [Report and Recommendations](#) of the CCJ Civil Justice Improvements Committee. With continued SJI support, the [National Center for State Courts](#) (NCSC) and the [Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System](#) (IAALS), have partnered to develop this new guide to ensure the Recommendations are implemented in a way that is thoughtful, responsive to the needs of court users, well-designed, and well-executed so that the reforms have the greatest possible likelihood of success.

The Roadmap sets forth seven steps, building off the successful experiences of innovative states that have already implemented reforms:

- Lead
- Assess
- Define Issues
- Create a Working Group and Engage Stakeholders
- Develop Vision and Goals
- Develop Tailored Recommendations
- Take Action



The Roadmap is just one tool developed as part of the CJ Implementation Phase, a multi-pronged effort that includes strategic planning assistance for state judicial leadership; education and technical assistance for state and local courts; evaluation of demonstration pilot projects to document the impact of best practices; and the development of practical tools and instructions on effective implementation efforts. For more information about the CJ Implementation Phase, visit the [CJI website](#), or contact the Project Director, Paula Hannaford-Agor, at [phannaford@ncsc.org](mailto:phannaford@ncsc.org).

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## Courting Justice Listening Tour

The *Courting Justice Listening Tour*, which was hosted by Tavis Smiley on PBS, and supported by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) and the State Justice Institute (SJI), concluded its multi-city town hall-style sessions late last year.

An archive of programs and content exists on both the [Tavis Smiley Show page](#) and the [NCSC website](#). According to the host's podcast, the audience size was greater than 50,000 unique in-home viewers for each of the three listening tours. This does not include the views of content online or via other formats.

Key takeaways from *Courting Justice* show a strong desire across audiences for greater transparency, accessibility for self-represented litigants, and improvements regarding fairness, especially in the area of



finances, fees, and bail. Each *Courting Justice* episode addressed diverse audiences, and connected state court leadership with constituents on the major issues impacting the public and the courts.

## Cochise County Redesigns Law Library

The [Cochise County Superior Court](#), located in Bisbee, Arizona, received a Technical Assistance grant from SJI to engage the [National Center for State Courts](#) (NCSC) in a redesign of its law library (SJI-16-T-058).

The law library is considered a valuable resource for the court, self-represented litigants, and its partners, as thousands are served and utilize the physical space and its contents annually. Throughout the project, the Court was deeply committed to ensuring a continued focus on change and enhanced access to services for self-represented litigants.

A total of 39 recommendations were noted by the NCSC in its review of existing facilities, tools, and administration using industry best practices, and unique service elements identified by the Court and its team. The report also included five priority recommendation areas:

1. Creation of a full-time Law Library/Self-Help or Self Service Center (SSC) Coordinator;
2. Development of a specific website where information and resources are available;
3. Renaming and rebranding the current Law Library into a Self Service Center;



4. Reengineering the space and facility where current Court Interpreter and Law Library functions occur to better accommodate self-represented litigants; and
5. Movement of Court Interpreter functions to an area of the SSC with greater privacy.

Based on the NCSC report, the Court has made significant progress, including:

- A full revamp of library holdings maintained on site in the Law Library/SSC;
- Utilization and reallocation of subscription savings for a Coordinator position, recently hired for full time support of the SSC;
- Reengineering of Law Library space including collaboration with County IT, facilities staff, and a County architect;
- Focus on the creation of forms and documents for dissemination from the SSC and website; and,
- Documentation and tabulation of accomplishments to date, with notation of targets and actions for additional work.

As the Cochise County Superior Court continues efforts to implement recommendations and enhancements, it is well-positioned to draw from local resources. More local coverage about the project can be found in the [Sierra Vista Herald](#).

## Merced County Offers Court Security Training

Superior Court of Merced County, CA, Provides Interactive Online Court Security Training for Court Employees and Partners

The [Merced Superior Court](#) was awarded an SJI grant to develop an online training that would benefit all court security staff and court employees by providing in-depth coverage of court and personnel security issues.

Courthouses are always at risk for violence, in large part due to the nature of the business conducted in our nation's courts. The [California Superior Courts](#) contract with the county sheriff's departments to provide security. The Merced Superior Court's concern was for the safety of all individuals visiting the courthouse, and worked to develop a training program that enhanced existing, yet limited, training. The Court experienced a violent incident in 2008, when an intruder was shot and killed in the courtroom.

The Court learned that the [National Center for State Courts](#)(NCSC) had developed the first on-line interactive [court security training program](#) for the [Arkansas Administrative Office of the Courts](#) in 2015. The Court received SJI support to adapt this curriculum to its needs, and partnered with the NCSC and the security coordinator for [Judicial Council of California](#) to develop a highly interactive and immersive online training pro-

gram. This video is the first of its kind in the state of California and is aimed at training law enforcement and court personnel in four critical areas:

1. How to respond to an active shooter, which includes a segment for court staff and judicial officers on Run/Hide/Fight;
2. Best practices in court security;
3. Judicial threat management; and,
4. Body language as a communication tool

The online curriculum was distributed statewide in early 2017 for every court to use and implement as part of safety training for court security staff and court employees. Approximately 200 individuals have completed all four modules. The link has also been posted on the California State Sheriff's website under their [POST Training](#).

The interactive training program is available for anyone interested. To register, please visit the following link: [www.MercedTraining.org](http://www.MercedTraining.org)



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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.

