

E-SJI NEWS

SJI Awards Second Quarter Grants for FY 2013

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The Board met on April 8, 2013, to make decisions on FY 2013, 2nd quarter grant applications.

A total of 14 grants were awarded during this meeting. One Project Grant was awarded to the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to develop and pilot specialized jury in-



structions on implicit bias. Led by the NCSC and Project Implicit, this grant will support the drafting of model jury instructions on implicit bias, pilot their effectiveness using a mock jury, and disseminate the research findings to state court judges.

A total of eight (8) Technical Assistance (TA) Grants were approved, including grants to: Volusia County, Florida, Clerk of the Circuit Court to conduct an e-courtroom assessment and redesign in preparation for statewide e-filing; Massachusetts Trial Court Administrative Office of the Court (AOC) to further statewide language access improvement efforts by developing a model courthouse; New Mexico AOC to continue ensuring language access in the courts by continued delivery of training to judicial employees; 20th Circuit Court of Ottawa County, Michigan, to develop statewide juvenile justice system data sharing capabilities; Superior Court of the Virgin Islands to conduct strategic planning using the High Performance Court (HPC) Framework; 9th Judicial Circuit Court of Orange County, Florida, to ensure court compliance with Florida law regarding guardians and their LEP wards; and two grants to the NCSC for development of a model virtual courthouse setting with integrated

technology, as well as the creation of resource for state courts on responding to courthouse security incidents.

Five (5) Curriculum Adaptation & Training (CAT) Grants were also approved, including grants to: Legal Momentum to enhance their online Intimate Partner Sexual Abuse course; County of York in Pennsylvania to develop a model guardianship training and community education program; Nebraska Judicial Branch Education Division of the AOC for the design and delivery of continuing education to Guardian Ad Litem; Superior Court of the Virgin Islands for judicial training, inclusive of the NCSC's *CourtTools* curriculum; and, the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts (NCREFC), which will develop training on objective (race-neutral) decision-making processes for judicial officers and administrators.

SJI also welcomed National Association for Court Management (NACM) President Pam Harris and President-Elect David Slayton to the meeting. Ms. Harris and Mr. Slayton delivered a briefing on the status of SJI-funded NACM projects, and discussed the upcoming NACM Annual Conference, July 14-18, 2013 in San Antonio, Texas.

In this Issue

FY 2013 2nd Quarter Grant Awards	1
New Board Member Sworn In	2
Immigration and State Court Records	2
Human Trafficking and the State Courts Collaborative	3

New SJI Board Member Sworn In

Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman of the State of New York and the New York Court of Appeals was officially sworn in by SJI Board Chairman Chief Justice Jim Hannah as a member of the Board of Directors on Sunday, April 7, 2013.

Chief Judge Lippman joins ten other Board members appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. By law, the President must appoint six state court judges, one state court administrator, and four members of the



public (no more than two of whom may be of the same political party).

Chief Judge Lippman has held his current position since 2009. He has spent his entire legal career in the New York state court system, serving for 40 years in a variety of roles, including Chief Administrative Judge of all New York State Courts from 1996 to 2007.

Immigration and State Court Records

SJI began using the Strategic Initiatives Grants (SIG) program in FY 2008 to address immigration issues in the state courts at a national impact level. The Center for Public Policy Studies (CPPS) was awarded a SIG (SJI-08-P-138) to identify the major challenges and opportunities for state courts in addressing immigration issues in several pilot states.

Subsequent grant awards expanded the impact of this project to additional states, in addition to generating bench guides and other key materials on this important issue. CPPS (in coordination with SJI) also developed working relationships with key federal agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security/U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), DHS/Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and DOJ/Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR). Over the years, these working relationships have led to a significant increase in understanding of the critical state court role in federal and state immigration law and policy, including a focus on human trafficking and the importance of state court records in immigration proceedings.

The rights of a non-citizen under federal immigration law can be impacted by their involvement in a state court criminal, family, juvenile,

or civil case. This can make the application process to the USCIS for naturalization and other immigration benefits heavily dependent on the contents and quality of state court records. Access to court records is also needed by unaccompanied juveniles and immigrant crime victims, and state court records documenting family relationships can be critical to processing immigration matters. However, there are significant misalignments between the USCIS and state court systems that make the system especially difficult for immigrants, state court personnel, and federal immigration hearing officers. Applicants for immigrant benefits must produce certified copies of state court documents regarding cases in which they were involved. In general, USCIS does not allow these documents to be submitted electronically, even if the transmission comes from the state court. Filling these requests can be time consuming for court personnel. Furthermore, contents and quality of court records can vary greatly by state, and even within a state, so that some court actions may not appear in records at all.

With SJI support, in a new project CPPS will address four strategic priorities: 1) enhance state court capacity to efficiently, securely, and effectively exchange records with USCIS; 2) increase the ease of access to state court

records by self-represented immigrant court users; 3) build effective partnerships between the state courts and USCIS in two pilot states (Georgia and Iowa); and 4) create a model approach and tools for effective state court/USCIS records exchange that can be used across the United States. CPPS will form and facilitate state court/USCIS records exchange development and implementation teams to assess the uses of state court records, and document best practices. The Georgia and Iowa AOCs, in addition to state court clerks of courts associations and USCIS field offices are committed to this project. The two states illustrate both ends of the court record spectrum – court record-keeping in Georgia is mostly locally controlled and paper-based; whereas Iowa is implementing a centralized electronic and document filing system that will make court records paperless statewide.

The project will result in a model state court/USCIS records exchange planning and technical assistance approach that can be used across the United States; best practices for records exchange and serving immigrants; and records exchange training curricula that has been tested in two states and will be adaptable.

NAWJ and Legal Momentum Join the Human Trafficking and the State Courts Collaborative

SJI support has enabled the [Center for Public Policy Studies/The National Judicial College/Center for Court Innovation](#) (CPPS/NJC/CCI) to recently 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 cases processing demands; and,



4. Building effective national, state, and local partnerships for addressing the impacts of human trafficking case processing in the state courts.

The SJI Board established Human Trafficking and the State Courts as a [Priority Investment Area](#) on October 1, 2012.

This month, the [National Association of Women Judges \(NAWJ\)](#) and [Legal Momentum](#)/National Judicial Education Program (NJEP) officially joined the Collaborative.

NAWJ has made human trafficking a priority over the past 2 years, and with SJI support, has been able to offer educational programming to their membership on this critical issue.

With a recent SJI grant (SJI-13-E-090), NJEP will add a module on human trafficking to its popular course, *Intimate Partner Sexual Abuse: Adjudicating This Hidden Dimension of Domestic Violence Cases*. This web course has proved to be highly successful, as over 13,000 learners have taken the course. It is available free of charge at www.njep-ipsacourse.org.

SJI appreciates the commitment of NAWJ and Legal Momentum to supporting the state courts on this issue, and commends both organizations for joining the Human Trafficking and the State Courts Collaborative.

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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.

