

# E-SJI NEWS

## SJI Awards FY 2015 Second Quarter Grants

### SJI Grantees

When Tweeting or posting to Facebook about your SJI Grant, be sure to use the hashtag #SJIGrant so the state court community can learn more about your project!

You can access our latest posts via the [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) icons below.



The SJI Board of Directors met on April 13, 2015, at SJI Headquarters to make decisions on quarterly grant applications and awarded a total of 11 grants.

Two (2) Strategic Initiatives Grants were awarded as part of a national effort to improve public trust and confidence in the state courts. The first SIG initiative will enable the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), in partnership with the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) and the National Consortium for Racial and Ethnic Fairness and the Courts to establish an engagement strategy to bridge the gap between minority and low-income communities and the state courts through collaborative efforts that will improve public trust and confidence. The second SIG will support a National Procedural Fairness Education and Training Initiative for judges, court managers, and court staff led by the Center for Court Innovation (CCI), in collaboration with The National Judicial College (NJC), the National Association of State Judicial Educators (NASJE), and the NCSC.

Three (3) Project Grants were approved: support to CCI to adapt a New York Domestic Violence Risk Factor Guide for Civil Court for national use; the NCSC for a model framework to support professional development for state court judges; and the South Dakota Unified Judicial System for a statewide judicial workload assessment.

Four (4) Technical Assistance (TA) Grants were



approved, including: support to develop a Language of Justice Institute for the 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District of Pennsylvania that will provide an academic course of study for court interpreters; assistance for a website redesign and planning project for the Kansas Judiciary; a space needs assessment for the 10<sup>th</sup> District Court of Minnesota; and funding to the NCSC to support a collection of best practices in appellate courts for expediting case resolution.



Two (2) Curriculum Adaptation & Training (CAT) Grants were approved: support to the American Judges Association, the NASJE, and the Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts for joint edu-

cational sessions; and the NJC for an updated probate judges course that incorporates the SJI-funded [National Probate Court Standards](#).

**The next deadline for grant applications is May 1, 2015.**

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## National Initiatives Will Address Public Trust and Confidence in the State Courts

During its recent meeting, the SJI Board awarded two [Strategic Initiatives Grants](#) to address public trust and confidence. The Board decided to support these projects after hearing from justices, judges, court administrators, and other key stakeholders over the past several months that SJI should take a leadership role on this critical issue. These SIG projects are a first step in a new approach to improving public trust and confidence in our state courts.

### Minority and Economically Disadvantaged Communities Engagement Strategy

This initiative will establish an engagement strategy to bridge the gap between minority and low-income communities and the state courts through collaborative efforts that will improve public trust and confidence. In partnership with the [Conference of Chief Justices \(CCJ\)](#) and the [National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Court](#) (National Consortium), the NCSC will coordinate this engagement strategy which includes:

Establishing an Advisory Committee consisting of minority community leaders, chief justices, the National Consortium, and others to provide policy direction. The Advisory Committee will develop best practices to engage the target communities and improve understanding and recognition of the state courts. The Advisory Committee will identify key focus areas and best practices.

Conducting a parallel minority community measurement process that will further explore minority perceptions of the state courts, building off the [State of the State Courts 2014 survey](#).

Holding a Community Leader Convocation in partnership with the National Consortium that will bring together state community leaders and representatives from minority justice com-



missions to review the issues identified by the Advisory Committee, consider best practices, and further refine engagement strategies.

Selecting six pilot sites from the National Consortium's membership to test the engagement strategies designed to improve public trust and confidence, with at least four sites focused on minority community engagement.

Convening a National Public Trust and Confidence Summit to share the lessons learned from the pilot sites with state teams using the successful convening models from the SJI-funded National Summit on Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and the State Courts. The objective of this summit will be for state teams to learn innovative approaches to engage minority and economically disadvantaged communities, and develop or strengthen state court action plans to improve public trust and confidence.

### National Procedural Fairness Education and Training Initiative

The [Center for Court Innovation](#) (CCI) has worked to improve procedural fairness in the state courts through demonstration projects, research, education, and training both locally and nationally. CCI has piloted procedural fairness training in four jurisdictions over the past few years as part of larger efforts in those locations. There is a national demand for more education and training on procedural fairness. CCI received dozens of highly qualified applications from jurisdictions for a na-

tional training solicitation issued in 2013, for which there was only enough funding for three slots. In addition, CCI receives numerous unsolicited requests for education and training each year.

To address this demand, CCI will develop education and training resources for judges, court managers, and court staff. These include:

A speakers bureau of judges, researchers, and court system professionals who have expertise in procedural fairness and help present at local, state, and national training events. The speakers bureau will work with CCI to develop a standard curriculum for these presentations. CCI will partner with the [National Judicial College](#) (NJC) and the [National Association of State Judicial Educators](#) (NASJE), and the [NCSC's Institute for Court Management](#) (NCSC/ICM) to identify speakers, develop the curriculum, and respond to requests for education and training.

Direct trainings for up to five in-person events and webinars, in collaboration with project partners. Each training event will be specific to the needs of the jurisdiction.

Online learning modules based on the curriculum and available free of charge to all state courts. These modules could include videotaped demonstrations of court proceedings, virtual site visits, and interactive skill-building workshops. CCI will partner with NCSC/ICM to develop these modules.

Interviews with practitioners who are leading voices on procedural fairness to examine the impact at the local level, and how these local initiatives can be replicated across the U.S.

SJI will continue to provide updates on both of these high priority initiatives, including resources available to all state courts.

## Unaccompanied Immigrant Children Update

The [Center for Public Policy Studies](#) (CPPS) and the [National Center for State Courts](#) (NCSC) are increasing state court capacity to address the increasing number of immigrant children likely to appear in state courts by:

- 1) Preparing and distributing an information card and an Action Guide for state courts on cases involving unaccompanied immigrant children, also known as Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) in federal immigration law;
- 2) Developing a basic curriculum for state court judges, administrators, and practitioners about: why and how the upsurge in the numbers of unaccompanied immigrant children entering the U.S. will affect the state courts both now and in the future; the appropriate role state courts play in providing findings and other legal materials as part of their traditional role in protecting the best interest of children, that can also be used in concurrent and subse-



quent immigration matters; and the mechanics involved and tools available to state courts when working with unaccompanied immigrant children; and

- 3) Conducting a series of webinars, and individual state court and court support organization educational sessions using the curriculum.

To date, CPPS/NCSC has hosted a national webinar on the UAC issue, which is available [online](#), and created a [webpage](#) for additional resources. In addition, CPPS/NCSC recently released an [information card](#) for judges and

court practitioners on federal [Special Immigrant Juvenile Status](#) (SIJS). SIJS provides unaccompanied immigrant children with a temporary right to remain in the U.S. and apply for permanent resident status. In cases where the UAC wants to apply to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) for SIJS, the juvenile must supply USCIS with a state juvenile court order with certain findings. The information card also provides details on the types of findings required, and the types of cases where these juveniles will most likely end up in state courts.

The Action Guide is currently in the final stages of drafting, and will be released soon. The action guide contains more detailed information about UACs and the state court findings required as part of the SIJS application process. A curriculum on this issue will follow shortly after publication of the Action Guide.

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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.

