

# E-SJI NEWS

## Request for Concept Papers: Self-Represented Litigation in the State Courts

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SJI is accepting concept papers to address **self-represented litigation in the state courts** – one of SJI's new [Priority Investment Areas](#). SJI is seeking to fund project(s) that are innovative and national or statewide in scope, and will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the state courts in addressing this critical issue. Some examples include (but are not limited to) unique approaches to maximizing court self-help centers and court-based volunteer attorney programs, and application of technology solutions to improve access for self-represented litigants and the state courts. Applicants must follow the concept paper [guidelines](#).

Concept papers will be reviewed and the SJI Board will decide which potential project(s) merit further exploration and possible funding. Concept papers must adhere to the guidelines below and address issues of content specified in the request. In addition, SJI may have additional requirements should the project(s) be funded. SJI's [Grant Guideline](#) will govern any award(s). The project(s) will be funded as a [Strategic Initiatives Grant](#) (SIG).

**Concept papers are due to SJI via mail by February 15, 2012.** Applicants must submit one original and two hard copies. The Board will make final decisions on award(s) by the end of April 2012.

### GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING A CONCEPT PAPER

Concept papers must not exceed 2 pages in length. All papers should be on official letterhead, structured according to the four sections below:

#### Section I: Organization Information

Provide the following information about your organization in narrative form: 1) Name of organization and mission; 2) Services provided and target population; Current organizational budget; 3) Tax Status (nonprofit, government agency, etc.); and 4) Any work performed in the past 5 years in partnership, or on a contract basis with the state courts.

#### Section II: Project Description

Provide the following information about your proposed project in narrative form: 1) Summarize in not more than one page your project; include its goals, target population, your capacity to provide the services, etc.; 2) Specify whether this project has national, state, and/or local significance, and to what extent this project could be replicated; 3) Identify any state court support specific to this project that has already been secured; and 4) List your measurable outcomes and briefly describe how you will evaluate impact.

#### Section III: Budget Information

In narrative form, provide information specific to only this proposed project: 1) Dollar amount requested from SJI and number of months required for this project; 2) Total cost of the project (if different from requested amount); and 3) Specify when your most recent audit was performed and if there were any findings.

#### Section IV: Contact Information and Authorization

Provide the following information as part of the overall concept paper: 1) Contact Information for Project Lead; 2) Full Name and Title; 3) Phone and Fax Numbers; 4) Mailing Address; 5) E-mail Address; and 6) Organizational Website.

## Maryland Judiciary Completes Evaluation of Three Unique Truancy Court Models

The Maryland Judiciary recently completed a multi-year project grant (SJI-08-N-086) designed to evaluate three different types of truancy courts that are currently active in the state.

Under provisions of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, the State's courts are charged with participating in the enforcement of Maryland's compulsory school attendance laws. In lieu of punitive sanctions, Maryland's judges are also given authority to intervene to "establish terms and conditions which would promote the child's attendance." To help meet these requirements, the Maryland Judiciary completed an evaluation of three different programs that handle truancy cases. The goal of the evaluation was to provide feedback to Maryland's courts and judges regarding truancy intervention.

In total, a five-report series was produced through this grant, authored by the research and evaluation team from the Maryland Administrative Office of the Courts, in collaboration with faculty and staff at the University of Maryland School of Social Work Ruth H. Young Center for Families and Children

(RYC), and the University of Maryland Institute for Governmental Service and Research (IGSR). Each of the reports are summarized as follows:

- *Evaluation of the Truancy Reduction Pilot Program in the First Judicial Circuit* – this is the first report in the series presenting the evaluation of the Truancy Reduction Pilot Program (TRPP), which is a court-based truancy reduction intervention in the juvenile courts of the First Judicial Circuit of Maryland.
- *Evaluation of the Truancy Court Program in Baltimore City* – this second report in the series documents an evaluation of the school-based Baltimore City Truancy Court Program (TCP).
- *Evaluation of the BSMART Program* – the third report in the series evaluated "Baltimore Students: Mediation About Truancy Reduction" (B-SMART), a mediation program that works with students, parents, and schools to improve communication and address factors that may be contributing to student truancy.
- *A Contextual Analysis: Truancy in Baltimore City and First Judicial Circuit* – this fourth report in the series analyzed the social,

economic, and other correlates and indicators of truancy in Maryland.

- *Assessing School Attendance Problems and Truancy Intervention in Maryland: A Synthesis of Evidence from Baltimore City and the Lower Eastern Shore* – this fifth report discusses and provides an overall background on truancy and truancy intervention ongoing in Maryland, as well as synthesis of findings and other relevant information from the other four reports.

Where relevant, each individual intervention report contains information about the program's impact on students' academic performance, attendance, and court-involvement.

The cadre of researchers, agencies, and the courts highlight where truancy is not the exclusive jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system and emphasize through the reports where significant community, school, and family collaborations have enhanced the relevance or effectiveness of the initiative.

The reports can be downloaded from the NCSC Library Digital Archive.

## SJI Grant Products are Available at the NCSC Library

The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) Library is the official repository for all SJI grant products, including reports, curricula, media, and any documents in their final version created by SJI grant funding. Beginning in FY 2011, The NCSC Library became a centralized holding of these items, which replaced the previous requirement for SJI grantees to disseminate their final products to all 50 state court libraries.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to research previously-funded SJI grants by reviewing grant products and presenting this information in their application. A benefit of

the collaboration with the NCSC Library is their convenient online searchable [catalog](#) and [digital archive](#). The catalog contains a list of all holdings at the physical location in Williamsburg, Virginia, and the digital archive allows users to access the electronic versions.

All grantees are required to forward one hard copy and one digital copy (preferably in Adobe PDF or Microsoft Word) of their final grant product(s) to SJI. Project Grant recipients are requested to send three hard copies and one digital copy upon completion of their grant product(s). SJI makes all final grant products available to the NCSC Library for posting.

### Follow SJI on Facebook and Twitter

For the latest information on projects, grant application deadlines, and updates. Connect with us on both forums by visiting our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages.



## Shared Solutions Summit Charts a Course for Texas Trial Courts

The Texas Judicial Council Shared Solutions Summit, (SJI-11-N-178) was held January 8 – 10, 2012, at the AT&T Conference Center on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin.

The Texas Judicial Council and the Conference of Urban Counties convened local justice leaders to share promising practices, plan collaborative local strategies, analyze data and identify opportunities, and chart a course for Texas courts that are both economical and effective. The goal of the summit was for the 14 attending teams to be motivated and equipped to launch and sustain local justice system improvements in the context of criminal, child protection, mental health, juvenile Class C, and self-represented civil cases.

Attendees generally regarded the Summit as an innovative first step towards collaboratively

addressing problems and issues currently impacting the courts in Texas.

Although the Summit was only held recently, some “quick wins” have already been identified by the organizers. An attendee county approached the Texas Office of Court Administration (OCA) with a technology problem dealing with the sharing of case files. OCA provided a free solution that will enable a five-

county district to pass files electronically and securely. Another attendee county received valuable information from the Travis County Office of Parental Rights to assist them in setting up an attorney representation model that includes assistance from social workers.

Teams will continue to work on the process improvements plans drafted at the Summit and receive technical assistance from the OCA.



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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.

