

E-SJI News

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NEW SJI BOARD MEMBERS SWORN IN



From left to right: Chief Justice (and SJI Chairman) Jim Hannah; new members Chief Justice Chase Rogers; Judge Wilfredo Martinez; and Ms. Isabel Framer

On March 25, 2011, SJI Board Chairman Jim Hannah (Chief Justice, Arkansas) administered the oath of office to three new Board members: **(continued on page 2)**

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Hon. Chase T. Rogers – Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Connecticut.

Hon. Wilfredo Martinez – County Judge, 9th Judicial Circuit of Florida (Orlando)

Isabel Frammer – President of Language Access Consultants, LLC, based in Copley, Ohio.

More information about these new members is available on the SJI website. By law, SJI is supervised by a Board of Directors consisting of 11 members appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate. Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 10703, the President appoints 6 judges and 1 state court administrator from a list of candidates submitted by the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ). In addition, the President also appoints 4 public member positions, no more than 2 of whom can be from the same political party.

KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON COMPLETES REVIEW OF CASEFLOW MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENTS

The King County Superior Court, seated in Seattle, Washington, recently issued their final report on the multi-year implementation of a new criminal caseflow management system. Through a SJI Technical Assistance grant (SJI-09-T-068), the Court was able to acquire expertise from the Justice Management Institute (JMI) to develop an action plan for implementing recommendations designed to improve felony caseflow.

In 2008, JMI performed the original evaluation of the Court's caseflow data and existing system for criminal case disposition. JMI issued a report highlighting both assets within the existing process and areas for improvement or further review. This report included a series of recommendations for the Court to implement; however, with diminishing resources and staff, the Court required additional assistance to translate the technical recommendations into an action-based implementation plan.

The final report, in addition to providing benchmarks for implementation, also included six new recommendations which ranged from modest system re-engineering to collaborative development of pre-adjudication operations under an interdisciplinary workgroup. The Court has made in achieving its goals to improve the felony case processing system, engaging criminal justice partners and resources in caseflow management, and organizing data by segment of criminal caseloads to assist with developing performance measurement of caseflow interventions.

NEW MEXICO FINALIZES FAMILY LAW MANUAL



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SCHOOL of LAW

The 3rd Judicial District Court in Las Cruces, New Mexico recently completed a Family Law Manual subtitled, *Topics in Family Law for the New Mexico Judiciary*. This manual was adapted from the *Washington State Family Law Benchbook*, with support from SJI through a Curriculum Adaptation and Training (CAT) grant (SJI-09-E-074), and technical assistance provided by the University of New Mexico's Institute of Public Law (IPL).

The Court developed its manual as a collection of materials designed to inform the bench of state-specific statutes, case law, processes, and references in the handling of family law matters. Also featured are standard legal definitions of and protocols for marriage, divorce, community property, guardianship, adoption, and child support proceedings.

Other topic areas were in direct response to the economic downturn and/or advancements in alternative dispute resolution. These included: 1) divorce taxation; 2) intersection between bankruptcy and business valuation; 3) dividing military retired pay; 4) family relocation (with/without children); and 5) collaborative divorce. With appendices, the manual totals more than 330 pages, but is conveniently organized by section including prescriptive and editorial content provided by experts within each topic area. The appendices also contain draft parenting plans for pro se litigants, a property analysis form, a series of worksheets parties can use when estimating assets and liabilities, and forms for judges to use relevant to visitation and parenting time. IPL provided expertise and consultation throughout development, as well as assembly of, the document.

Future plans include posting/enhancing additional materials on procedure, domestic partnership, the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act (UIFSA), and parentage by the end of FY 2011 to incorporate anticipated changes to these laws in the current legislative session. A PDF of the final document is available on the New Mexico Judicial Education Center [website](#).

SECURING COURT FACILITIES THROUGH ASSESSMENT AND BEST PRACTICES

During FY 2010, SJI supported two separate court security assessments through Technical Assistant grants, both of which were conducted by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). The first of these extensive assessments was performed in the district and county courthouses for the 4th Judicial District Court in Omaha, Nebraska (SJI-10-T-012). **(continued on page 4)**

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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 state courts, and foster innovative, efficient solutions to common issues faced by all courts. SJI is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.



The second assessment was for three courthouses (including the Supreme, District, and County court facilities) in Honolulu, Hawaii for the State of Hawaii Judiciary (SJI-10-T-156).

Operating a courthouse today is by its very nature a risky business. Courthouses are visited by a large volume of disgruntled and even law-breaking citizens. Moreover, courthouses can be seen as an important symbolic target for those who wish to cause harm. Courts must contend with a growing number of security incidents and threats. Shrinking budgets make it that much more challenging for the state courts to provide a reasonable level of safety and protection to those who work in, and use courthouses. An effective approach courts can take to minimize risks is to conduct a thorough security assessment of its facilities.

Assessments include thorough, comprehensive on-site review of courthouses – inside and out. The NCSC assessment team reviews security from a perspective of governance (how security decisions are made and implemented), facilities (brick and mortar), technology (closed circuit television, duress and intrusion alarms, magnetometers, x-ray machines, etc.) and staffing (deputy sheriffs, court security offices, bailiffs, etc.). NCSC is also able to conduct personal safety training for judges and court staff.

For the two SJI-funded projects, NCSC produced a detailed report for the grantees containing information specific to each courthouse assessed. The assessment report contains observations describing the current state of security, detailing physical and procedural information about inherent risks and vulnerabilities.

In addition to specific observations and tailored recommendations for the Omaha and Honolulu courthouses, the assessments also included recommendations for implementing best practices in light of funding constraints. Recognizing that improving security can be costly, NCSC developed steps, to be completed in phases, so that courts can adopt incremental improvements at their discretion. Implementation of these recommendations provides a path to improvement that courts achieve over time with respect to budget limitations.

NCSC has performed security assessments in approximately 225 courthouses across the United States, and is a leading expert on courthouse security best practices. More information about courthouse security and emergency preparedness can be found on NCSC's Emergency Planning & Preparedness [website](#).