

## SJI Newsletter

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### NACM Hosting Virtual Education Event in Place of Annual Meeting

The [National Association for Court Management's \(NACM\)](#) first-ever [Virtual Education Program and Expo](#) is underway and runs through October. Earlier this summer, NACM's leadership made the difficult decision to cancel their in-person annual meeting.

With nearly 40 sessions planned, NACM did not want the court professional community to miss out on the opportunity to receive this educational content. With the generous support of the [State Justice Institute \(SJI\)](#), they moved nearly all of the sessions online, to a 10-week free educational series offered each Thursday afternoon regardless of NACM membership. The series will consist of both live and recorded sessions, along with unique networking events and a virtual expo.

Now, more than ever, courts are CONNECTED. As an institution, courts are part of the local, state, and national community. As such, courts must be connected to their communities. This necessitates that courts are part of the conversation on numerous important issues from substance abuse to mental health. Courts must be involved on issues of reform, all the while working with other branches of government and their communities to ensure access to justice.



## Funding Toolkit Offers Intensive Federal Grant Application Development Series

As part of the State Justice Institute's (SJI's) ongoing commitment to support court access to federal grant funds, SJI will select eight courts to participate in a free, three-month intensive federal grant application development series. This virtual training series integrates traditional grant training and technical assistance (TTA) with intensive one-on-one support to assist selected sites in the development of a federal application to be submitted during the FY 2021 grant season. This TTA opportunity will begin in mid-October 2020 and run through the spring of 2021.

This TTA opportunity is open to court staff. Court support agencies and justice system partners (e.g., probation, prosecutor's office, Sheriff's office) are encouraged to participate with court staff. Up to three staff members from the same locality/region may participate if selected. SJI is prioritizing this opportunity for courts/staff with no prior federal grant writing experience or courts/agencies that have previously applied for federal funding but were unsuccessful.

If you are interested in being considered for this TTA opportunity, click on this [link](#) to answer a brief set of questions. These questions should take you no more than 15 minutes to complete.

Applications are due **October 2, 2020 at 5:00pm EST** and the selected sites will be notified by October 15, 2020.

Additional information about this opportunity is [available here](#).



## New Business Court Docket Curriculum Developed for Courts Nationwide

The [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\)](#) and the [Tennessee Administrative Office of the Courts \(AOC\)](#) developed an innovative [training curriculum](#) and [faculty guide](#) – along with practical tools – to help state courts establish and manage business court dockets more efficiently and effectively. The curriculum was developed as part of the [Tennessee Supreme Court’s Business Court Docket Pilot Project](#).

That project was established in 2015 to address complex corporate and commercial cases in a specialized manner. In 2018, SJI awarded a grant to the Tennessee AOC and NCSC to develop and implement a training curriculum to help expand commercial dockets across the nation.

A wide variety of litigants have requested to transfer to the specialized docket ranging from large, multi-national companies, to small businesses, said Tennessee Administrative Director of the Courts Deborah Taylor Tate. The specialized court docket has handled business topics ranging from contract interpretation, to corporate e-discovery, to “business divorces,” to trade secrets and intellectual property.

“In addition to assisting the business and corporate sector by providing a specialized docket to address complex business disputes, it also helps cases involving citizens of our state by inserting efficiencies into the system and allowing more time for cases on other dockets,” said Tennessee Supreme Court Chief Justice Jeffrey Bivins.

One of the main goals of business court dockets is to provide businesses with more predictable answers and expedite the resolution of disputes, saving time and money for litigants as well as the court system. Feedback from litigant surveys has been overwhelmingly positive, with participants reporting a success rate of more than 90 percent.

Tate said the SJI grant allowed Tennessee – in cooperation with other business court judges – “to build on these successful strategies to create a blueprint for other states embarking on the creation of their own business court dockets...we hope this will become a regular way to share innovative ideas across state lines and across branches of government.”



## The Illinois Judicial Branch Forges Ahead on Strategic Initiatives Amid the Pandemic

In October 2019, the reconstituted [Illinois Judicial Conference \(IJC\)](#), comprised of 15 judicial officers and 14 non-judges and chaired by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, unveiled an inaugural 3-year Strategic Agenda for the [Illinois Judicial Branch](#).

Implementation commenced in December 2019. Eight newly formed Task Forces along with several existing Committees/Commissions began working on 15 strategic initiatives identified as highest priorities for the first year of implementation. The 15 initiatives span the Branch's five strategic goals, which are:

1. Accessible Justice and Equal Protection under the Law.
2. Procedural Fairness, Timeliness, and Operational Efficiency.
3. Professionalism and Accountability throughout the Judicial Branch.
4. Understanding of and Confidence in the Judicial Branch.
5. Sufficient Funding and Effective Use of Judicial Branch Resources.

Despite the disruption and hardships caused by the pandemic, the work of the Task Forces and Committees continues. In June 2020, during a virtual IJC meeting, two Task Forces presented their completed reports and recommendations to the IJC. The reports and recommendations were unanimously referred to the Supreme Court for review and appropriate action.

While these are indeed challenging times, it also is an exciting time for the Illinois Judicial Branch. The many dedicated Task Force members and staff of the Administrative Office of the Courts continue to meet virtually, and are well on their way to accomplishing their respective initiatives amid the pandemic.

The [Strategic Agenda and At-a-Glance Operational Plan](#) (showing the list of strategic initiatives and Task Force/existing body assignments) is available online.

For more information, contact Alison Spanner, Director of Strategic Planning at [aspanner@IllinoisCourts.gov](mailto:aspanner@IllinoisCourts.gov) or Chris Bonjean, Communications Director to the Illinois Supreme Court at 312.793.2323 or [cbonjean@illinoiscourts.gov](mailto:cbonjean@illinoiscourts.gov).





## NJC Core Skills Web Series Supports Ongoing Judicial Education

The [National Judicial College \(NJC\)](#) is offering a 10-course series aimed at new state court judges. It may also be useful for administrative law judges, tribal court judges, and military judges, and a good refresher to judges not so new to the bench as well. Each course is 75 minutes in length, and the full series will run through September 22, 2020. Remaining courses are listed below, and judges are encouraged to participate in as many as they would like.

### [Sentencing](#)

**Friday, August 28** | Time: 8:00 a.m. Hawaii / 10:00 a.m. Alaska / 11:00 a.m. Pacific / 12:00 p.m. Mountain / 1:00 p.m. Central / 2:00 p.m. Eastern

### [Judicial Discretion and Contempt Webinar](#)

**Tuesday, September 1** | Time: 8:00 a.m. Hawaii / 10:00 a.m. Alaska / 11:00 a.m. Pacific / 12:00 p.m. Mountain / 1:00 p.m. Central / 2:00 p.m. Eastern

### [Judicial Security](#)

**Thursday, September 3** | Time: 8:00 a.m. Hawaii / 10:00 a.m. Alaska / 11:00 a.m. Pacific / 12:00 p.m. Mountain / 1:00 p.m. Central / 2:00 p.m. Eastern

### [Being Fair, Appearing Fair, and Staying Well While Presiding Over Domestic Violence Cases](#)

**Thursday, September 3** | Time: 8:00 a.m. Hawaii / 10:00 a.m. Alaska / 11:00 a.m. Pacific / 12:00 p.m. Mountain / 1:00 p.m. Central / 2:00 p.m. Eastern

### [Fundamental Writing Skills](#)

**Tuesday, September 15** | Time: 7:00 a.m. Hawaii / 9:00 a.m. Alaska / 10:00 a.m. Pacific / 11:00 a.m. Mountain / 12:00 p.m. Central / 1:00 p.m. Eastern

### [Mindfulness](#)

**Tuesday, September 15** | Time: 9:00 a.m. Hawaii / 11:00 a.m. Alaska / 12:00 p.m. Pacific / 1:00 p.m. Mountain / 2:00 p.m. Central / 3:00 p.m. Eastern

### [Effective Communication](#)

**Tuesday, September 22** | Time: 7:00 a.m. Hawaii / 9:00 a.m. Alaska / 10:00 a.m. Pacific / 11:00 a.m. Mountain / 12:00 p.m. Central / 1:00 p.m. Eastern

NJC is using [SJI Education Support Program \(ESP\)](#) funding to provide scholarship assistance for eligible judges, along with other scholarship sources, to promote maximum participation.

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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.*



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## Share the News

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