



## SJI Newsletter

January 2020 | Volume 30, No. 4

### Behavioral Health Alerts

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE SJI FUNDED NATIONAL INITIATIVE TO IMPROVE THE COURT AND COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO MENTAL ILLNESS AND CO-OCCURRING DISORDERS

#### National Initiative Advisory Committee Shares Resources and Updates

The National Initiative on Mental Illness and the Courts Advisory Committee is committed to improving both court and community responses to those with mental illness and co-occurring substance use disorders.

Supported by [State Justice Institute](#) (SJI) and the [National Center for State Courts](#) (NCSC), the Committee publishes a bi-monthly Behavioral Health Alert and has compiled a [series of selected readings and resources](#).

With the continued interest and the leadership of the state courts, this effort is well-positioned to address the revolving door of jails, involuntary commitments, court cases, emergency rooms, state hospitals, and homelessness of those with serious mental illness.

[Sign up to receive these Behavioral Health Alerts.](#) The Alerts will include updates from the National Initiative, Research and Resources, and News from around the nation.

Also, remember the Advisory Committee wants to hear from you. Please send news and developments, and/or concerns and challenges by emailing Patti Tobias, NCSC Project Coordinator, at [ptobias@ncsc.org](mailto:ptobias@ncsc.org).



## Georgia Good Judge-ment Podcast

With grant support from SJI, technical assistance from the NCSC, and use of the [podcast studio at the University of Georgia School of Law](#) in Athens, the [Georgia Superior Courts](#) have established a thriving podcast.

Centered on Georgia law and issues relevant statewide, judges J. Wade Padgett (Augusta Circuit) and Tain Kell (Cobb Circuit), enlist guests, experts, and knowledge from their combined judicial careers to provide continuing education and dialogue on matters of interest to Georgia judges and the legal community.

At more than 20 episodes, [the Good Judge-ment Podcast](#) has found an audience interested in exploring substantive law and procedure for superior courts. The show also has had a three-episode foray into the realm of probate courts with special guest Judge Keith Wood of the Cherokee County Probate Court. First Lady of Georgia, Marty Kemp, even paid a visit to the studio (pictured above) to discuss her initiative to curb human trafficking in Georgia.

The hosts welcome feedback and ideas for future podcasts at [goodjudgepod@gmail.com](mailto:goodjudgepod@gmail.com).



*IMPACT OF THE FASTAR PILOT  
PROGRAM ON CIVIL CASES IN THE  
SUPERIOR COURT IN PIMA COUNTY*

## **New Report Available on Pima County, Arizona, Pilot Program to Address Civil Cases**

The [Superior Court in Pima County](#), Arizona implemented the [FASTAR Pilot Program](#) in November 2017. The program was designed to address case management complaints concerning cases valued at \$50,000 or less, which were automatically assigned to compulsory arbitration. Under the pilot program rules, cases eligible for compulsory arbitration could be assigned to expedited case management tracks in which the parties could choose to resolve the case by bench or jury trial (Fast Trial) or by arbitration (Alternative Resolution). Plaintiffs that failed to choose defaulted to the Alternative Resolution track. With generous financial support from the [State Justice Institute](#), the [National Center for State Courts](#) evaluated the FASTAR Pilot Program as a technical assistance project through its Civil Justice Initiative Implementation Plan.

The NCSC found that, in more than one-quarter of FASTAR cases disposed between November 1, 2017 and September 30, 2019, plaintiffs choose the Fast Trial track. These cases were less likely to settle than cases in which the plaintiffs choose Alternative Resolution. A total of 14 cases were ultimately disposed by bench trial (6 cases) or jury trial (8 cases), thus fulfilling the program expectations that attorneys would gain valuable trial experience. The NCSC also surveyed attorneys who were listed as counsel of record in FASTAR cases. The survey response rate was 11.9 percent, and differences between case and respondent characteristics suggest that self-selection bias may have prompted lawyers with more negative opinions about the FASTAR Pilot Program to respond. For example, there was a consistent and strong consensus that the FASTAR Rules were unfair to plaintiffs. Moreover, attorneys that affirmatively selected the Fast Trial track indicated that they did so to avoid prohibitions on appeals from arbitration rather than to take advantage of the opportunity to resolve the case by trial. The evaluation report concludes with recommendations, including aligning case management rules for FASTAR cases with those for cases assigned to Tier 1 under the Arizona Rules of Civil Procedure.

The full report is available [here](#).



## Attaining Judicial Excellence: A Guide for the NJCA

### Attaining Judicial Excellence in Australia

In December 2017, The National Center for State Courts (NCSC), with support from SJI, released the [Elements of Judicial Excellence Framework](#).

The framework was created to support a well-coordinated, evidence-based system of judicial professional development, and provides information court leaders can use when deciding how to structure judicial education, performance feedback programs, and mentoring programs for judges. It also provides judicial professional development program stakeholders with a common language that can be used in discussions about developmental objectives and to improve coordination of resources across developmental programs.

Recently, the [National Judicial College of Australia](#) (NJCA) adapted the framework as a basis for the development of their own judicial excellence framework.

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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.*

## Products and Resources

Since 2011, SJI has designated the library at the National Center for State Courts as the official repository of published work related to SJI-supported grant projects. You can search the ecollection online by using the term, State Justice Institute.

## Share the News

SJI uses [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to promote the work of its grantees and also shares information of interest to the entire state court community. If your organization's work complements ours, let us know and we will share.