

## SJI Newsletter

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### SJI Awards FY 2020 Third Quarter Grants to Support State Courts in COVID-19 Response and Recovery

The SJI Board of Directors met virtually on June 29, 2020, to make decisions on quarterly [grant applications](#), and approved two new grants to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

A [Strategic Initiatives Grant](#) was awarded to the [National Center for State Courts](#) (NCSC) to support Phase I of the Conference of Chief Justices/Conference of State Court Administrators (CCJ/COSCA) Post Pandemic Planning Initiative. For this new initiative, the [Pandemic Rapid Response Team](#) (RRT) – a group of chief justices and state court administrators established in March 2020 by CCJ and COSCA, is creating a roadmap to help state courts move forward during the COVID-19 pandemic – and after it ends. SJI provided initial emergency funding to launch the RRT.

The RRT is cataloging state court actions to address the pandemic. [Webinars](#) that have already been conducted included discussions, presentations and focus on remote hearings, appellate court challenges, Family First Response to COVID-19, jury considerations, courthouse facility considerations, budget and finance issues, personnel issues, and others. All webinars were taped, disseminated and remain available on the NCSC website for continuing education and reference. These archived pandemic webinars have been viewed over 9,500 times to date.

The RRT established a series of working groups that will determine what courts have learned, how to resume court operations, and what they can do beyond to build a stronger judiciary. The working groups are focusing six areas: 1) court management – criminal; 2) court management – civil; 3) court management – children, families, and elders; 4) appellate; 5) technology; and 6) communications. Through this process, the RRT quickly recognized that courts would very soon need mid- and post-pandemic tools and deliverables to assist in all areas. The RRT has developed a framework with a mission, the working groups, and an approach or deliverables called the Post-Pandemic Planning Initiative (PPPI). Each working group includes CCJ and COSCA members, trial court judges and administrators, other court partners, an NCSC lead staff person for organization and coordination, and other NCSC topic experts to assist with the work plan development and final deliverables. The working groups are tasked with identifying what the “new normal” is going to look like, and how to get there.

A [Technical Assistance Grant](#) was awarded: to the [National Association of Women Judges \(NAWJ\)](#) to provide judges and other legal professionals with expert assistance via webinar, podcasts, and other media that will address the issues of maintaining access to justice during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Like previous educational programs, NAWJ will use the expertise of its members and non-members to create these resources.

The next [deadline](#) for grant applications is August 1, 2020 (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter FY 2020).



## SJI Releases Request for Applications: Court Pandemic Response and Recovery

SJI has identified *Emergency Preparedness and Cybersecurity* as one of its [Priority Investment Areas](#) and has invested considerable resources into supporting the courts in pandemic planning, response, and recovery activities.

On July 8, 2020, SJI released a request for applications seeking to support projects that look to the future of judicial service delivery by identifying and replicating innovations and alternate means of conducting court business because of the pandemic.



### Funding Categories

Eligible applicants may apply for funding based on the categories below.

Category 1-Local Court: Eligible local court applicants may apply for up to \$50,000 for a period of up to 12 months.

Category 2-State or Territory Supreme Court and/or the Administrative Office of the Courts: Eligible state (or territory) supreme courts and/or administrative court office applicants may apply for up to \$100,000 for a period of up to 12 months. They may also submit applications on behalf of one or more local courts for up to \$50,000 per locality for up to 12 months and must agree that all funds will go directly to the local court(s).

Category 3-Non-profit, For-profit Organizations and Institutions of Higher Education: Eligible non-profit, for-profit organizations, or institutions of higher education applicants may apply for up to \$150,000 for a period of up to 18 months.

### How to Apply

**Applications, along with all required forms and attachments, are due to SJJ via email to [contact@sjj.gov](mailto:contact@sjj.gov) by August 14, 2020 to be eligible for consideration for the first round of review. Applications received after August 14, 2020 will be reviewed, and if approved, awarded on a rolling basis in FY 2021.**

See the SJJ website for the full [Request for Applications](#).

### Additional Information

Visit the [Virtual Learning](#) section of the *Funding Toolkit for State Courts and Justice System Partners* to learn more about SJJ funding, including an upcoming podcast about this funding opportunity. If you have specific questions regarding this solicitation, please email [contact@sjj.gov](mailto:contact@sjj.gov).



## SJJ Funding Toolkit Launches Podcast Series

SJJ's [Funding Toolkit for State Courts and Justice System Partners](#) is designed to support local courts, state courts, and their justice system partners as they pursue federal and philanthropic funding opportunities.

The toolkit has a new virtual learning section that features webinars and podcasts designed to aid applicants in the grant process. The inaugural podcast in the [Court cents](#) series features Jonathan Mattiello, Executive Director of SJJ, discussing SJJ's funding opportunities.

Or follow SJJ on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn and look for the Court cents icon highlighting the latest posting. Send your funding and grant questions, as well as your ideas for topics to address with webinars and podcasts to [fundingtoolkit@sjj.gov](mailto:fundingtoolkit@sjj.gov).



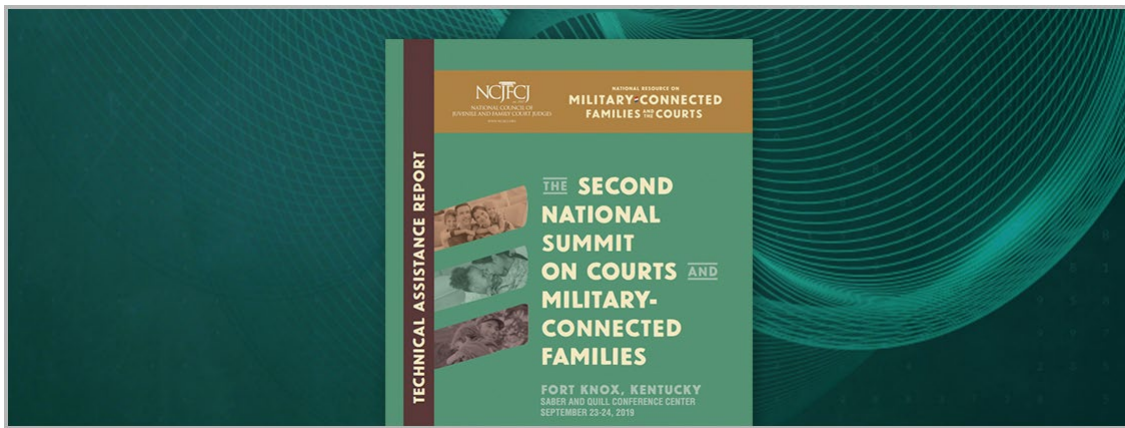
## State of the State Courts Survey in a (Post) Pandemic World

In June 2020, the [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\)](#) released the latest version of the [State of the State Courts Survey](#). This survey revealed some interesting findings about appearing in courtrooms remotely during COVID-19:

- Two out of three people are receptive to appearing in courtrooms remotely—a significant increase from 2014, when only two out of five said they were receptive.
- Over half of all respondents cited at least one pandemic-related obstacle to reporting for in-person jury duty, such as serving as a primary caregiver to an elderly family member; an inability to secure childcare for an extended period; or living with someone who has an underlying health condition.
- At least 70 percent of respondents said they would be more comfortable in a courthouse if courts enforced social distancing, checked temperatures at the door, and required court employees and visitors to wear masks.
- Answering a question about whether respondents would be more comfortable serving on juries in person or remotely, 44 percent said remotely, 32 percent expressed no preference, and 23 percent said in person.

The survey includes additional resources:

- The pollster, GBAO Strategies, breaks down the survey into granular detail. [Access the analysis here.](#)
- [Review the presentation slides](#), which dive into additional details including public trust in the courts and data collected on respondents' access to technology tools.
- [Watch the June 18, 2020 webinar](#) featuring NCSC's Jesse Rutledge, GBAO's Karl Agne, David Slayton from the Texas Office of Court Administration and Nicole Zoe Garcia from the Superior Court of Arizona in Maricopa County.



## NCJFJC Releases Report on the 2nd National Summit on Courts and Military-Connected Families

The [National Council of Family and Juvenile Court Judges](#) (NCJFCJ) held the **Second National Summit on Courts and Military-Connected Families** September 23-24, 2019, at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

The one-and-a-half-day Summit brought together members and staff of the military-related committees of the NCJFCJ, subject matter experts, representatives of national-level organizations that serve military-connected families, stakeholders with local and state government and nonprofit organizations, and members of the civilian and military communities of two demonstration sites selected for this SJI-funded project. The Summit's purpose was to advance the national discussion by those who engage with justice-involved service members, National Guard, Reserve, and veteran populations on how best to assist when they interface with juvenile and family courts. The Summit was a focused and targeted “deep dive” into the realities of the information and practices needed to promote effective court/military systems communication and collaboration. SJI Board Chair Chief Justice John Minton from Kentucky gave opening remarks.

The Summit [report](#) is available on the NCJFJC website.





## NCSC Releases 2020 *Trends in State Courts*

As 2020 began, the production of [\*Trends in State Courts\*](#) – the annual journal of the [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\)](#), was humming along. As the year progressed, the COVID-19 pandemic and protests against systemic racism proved to be effective disrupters and led to a “stop-the-presses moment.”

This year’s edition opens with a series of statements on racial justice from six state supreme court chief justices, and follows with an introduction from NCSC President Mary McQueen that recognizes how the turmoil in the world is affecting the courts. *Trends* then highlights the work NCSC has done to inform the courts, including maps that show how state courts nationwide have reacted to pandemic-related challenges.

The maps lead to the first article, *Leading During the Chaos of a Pandemic*, by Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Nathan Hecht and David Slayton, Administrative Director of Texas’ Office of Court Administration. In addition to the pandemic, the state courts in Texas also had to deal with a cyberattack.

“Our training has taught us to gather information, analyze it, propose and refine a solution, and implement— sometimes over months or years,” Chief Justice Hecht and Slayton wrote. “The chaos of the pandemic and the cyberattack have not fit well within that mold. In fact, during the challenges of recent days, the information sometimes changes hourly or by the minute. We were faced with making decisions without all the information, but the alternative was to delay a decision—a delay that could cost lives or cause further damage. Rather than being paralyzed with inaction due to fear of making a mistake, court leaders must act without fear.”

This year’s 96-page edition of *Trends* includes a diverse slate of stories:

- On Demand: Transforming Virtual Remote Interpreting
- Access Empowers: How ODR Increased Participation and Positive Outcomes in Ohio
- The Family Justice Initiative: A Work in Progress
- So, this is 50: The Gray Divorcees
- State Courts’ Responsibility to Convene, Collaborate and Identify Individuals Across Systems
- What Will Shape the Future of Courthouse Design?
- When the Law and a Judge’s Personal Opinions Collide

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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.*



# FUNDING TOOLKIT

**for State Courts and  
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Supporting local courts, state courts, and their justice system partners,  
as they pursue federal and philanthropic funding opportunities.

Visit us for updates: [www.fundingtoolkit.sji.gov](http://www.fundingtoolkit.sji.gov)

## Share the News

SJI uses [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) 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.