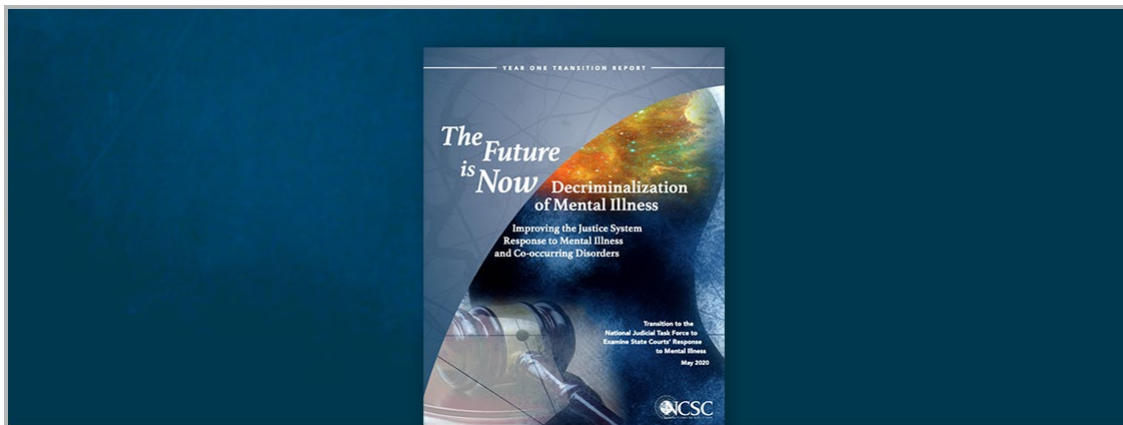


SJI Newsletter

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National Judicial Task Force Names Co-Chairs and Releases Report on Decriminalization of Mental Illness

On March 30, 2020, the Boards of Directors of the [Conference of Chief Justices \(CCJ\)](#) and [Conference of State Court Administrators \(COSCA\)](#) took action to establish a new Task Force to assist state courts in their efforts to more effectively respond to the needs of court-involved individuals with serious mental illness.

The Task Force will build on the previous work of the NCSC National Advisory Committee, supported by SJI.

The Co-chairs of the Task Force are Chief Justice Paul L. Reiber (VT) and Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence K. Marks (NY). In addition to Chief Justice Reiber and Judge Marks, the task force's Executive Committee includes:

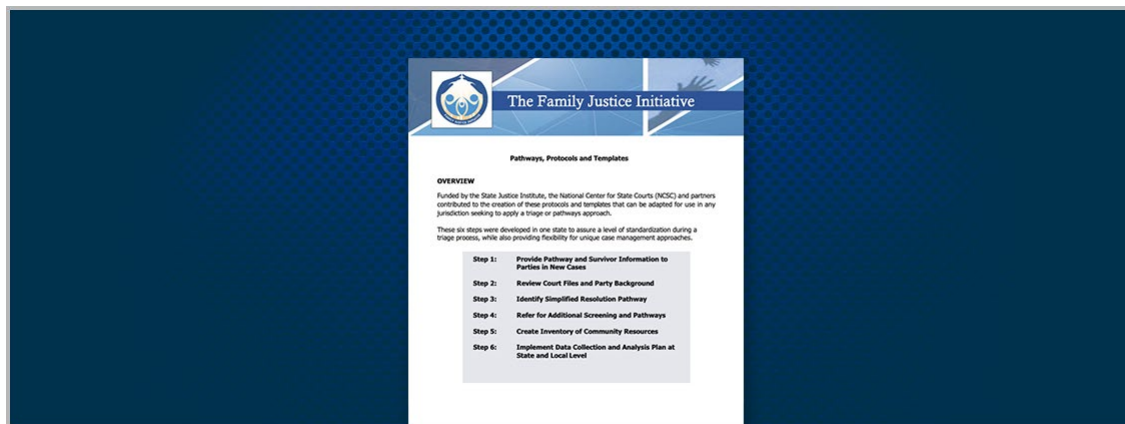
- Arizona Chief Justice Robert M. Brutinel
- Connecticut Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson
- Indiana Chief Justice Loretta H. Rush
- Oregon State Court Administrator Nancy Cozine
- South Carolina State Court Administrator Tonnya K. Kohn
- Illinois State Court Administrator Marcia M. Meis

During the first meeting of the Executive Committee, the structure and governance of the Task Force were adopted and additional financial support from SJI was also announced.

The Committee received a transition report, [The Future is Now: Decriminalization of Mental Illness](#) from the former National Advisory Committee. The report established the process leading to the adoption of an aggressive agenda of the work and activities to be undertaken over the next thirty months, based on the following principles:

1. A community by community approach, supported by statewide leadership from all three branches of government, is required to improve the justice system response to those with mental illness and co-occurring disorders.
2. Supporting judicial leadership to implement the Sequential Intercept Model to promote early access to treatment for mental illness and co-occurring disorders, and to keep individuals from continuing to penetrate the justice system.
3. Developing best practices, research, and data to improve justice system responses including competency delays, civil commitment, assisted outpatient treatment practices, deflection and diversion, caseflow management practices involving those with mental illness and co-occurring disorders, and other strategies to improve our responses.
4. Promoting education and training for judges and court personnel to improve our capacity to lead change in our states and communities, and to understand mental illness and co-occurring disorders and their impact on court proceedings.
5. Carrying forward the important work started by the [CCJ-COSCA National Judicial Opioid Task Force](#) (NJOTF).

Additional information about the work of the Task Force, and resources for courts on behavioral health issues can be found at <https://www.ncsc.org/mentalhealth>.



Family Justice Initiative Releases Pathways, Protocols, and Templates

The [Family Justice Initiative \(FJI\)](#) sets forth a model that draws upon data-informed strategies to assist the resolution of family matters. Through screening and assessment tools, and triage case management, judges and court staff can better identify cases that require substantial court-based or community services, and cases requiring minimal court resources and little or no exercise of judicial discretion.

During its February 2019 midyear meeting, the [Conference of Chief Justices \(CCJ\)](#) endorsed the [FJI Principles](#), and encouraged courts across the nation to consider them as a worthy guide to improve the delivery of justice in domestic relations cases.

With SJI support, the [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\)](#) and partners contributed to the creation of protocols and templates that can be adapted for use in any jurisdiction seeking to apply a triage and/or pathways approach. The [FJI: Protocol Development and Appendices](#) is a resource to aid courts using a practical, six-step process, which assures standardization during triage and flexibility in case management.

Contact NCSC Principal Court Management Consultant Alicia Davis at adavis@ncsc.org if you have questions about the FJI protocols, need additional information, or more extensive on-site technical assistance.



SJI Funding Toolkit Provides Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

SJI'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.



Each week you can find a new [FAQ](#) about the grant making process, along with an answer from a grant expert.

Or follow SJI on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) and look for the Q&A icon highlighting the latest posting. Send your funding and grant questions to fundingtoolkit@sj.gov. Experts will provide answers, as well as references to additional resources.



Justice System Marches on in Texas During COVID-19

The public health emergency caused by COVID-19 has impacted daily life across the country and around the world. In Williamson County, Texas, the justice system responded to the coronavirus through innovation, ingenuity, and a commitment to service.

As detailed in her [article](#) for the [National Association of Counties \(NACo\)](#), County Commissioner Terry Cook wrote that courts in Williamson County have long embraced technology, but the disaster declaration accelerated the pace of innovation. On March 13, the Texas Supreme Court and Court of Criminal Appeals ordered all hearings be held remotely.

Under the leadership of local Administrative Judges Betsy Lambeth of the 425th District Court and John McMaster, County Court-at-Law Four, emergency plans ensuring that the justice system continued to function during the pandemic were activated. Their multi-step plan, involving use of remote technology, flexibility across justice system partners, and an integrated approach to serving justice.

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