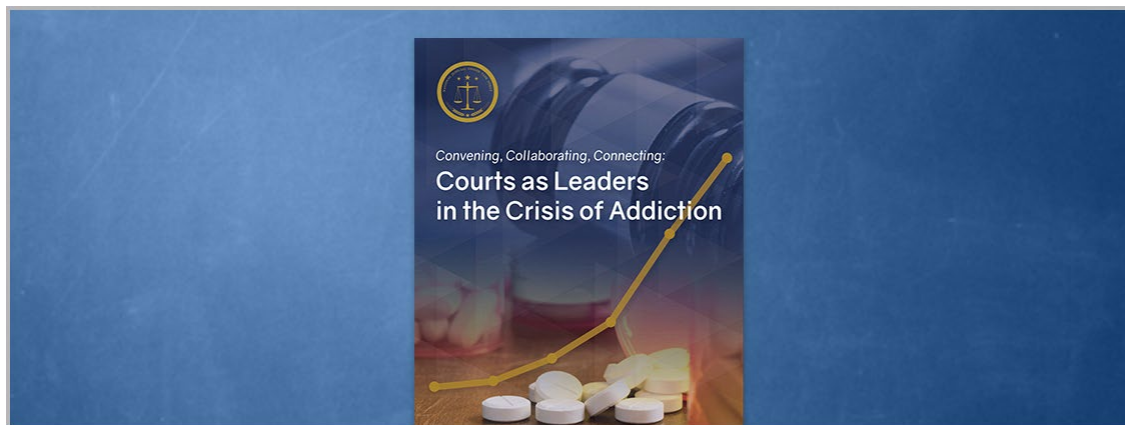


SJI Newsletter

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NJOTF Releases Report at National Press Event in D.C.

After more than two years of work, the SJI-supported [National Judicial Opioid Task Force \(NJOTF\)](#) this week released a [report](#) that lays the groundwork for state courts nationwide to treat opioid-addicted defendants more like patients than criminals by using a combination of counseling services and medicated-assisted treatment.

The release of the report was attended by more than 100 court leaders and health and government leaders, including U.S. Surgeon General VADM Jerome M. Adams, and Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, James W. Carroll Jr., at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. [Watch the press conference here.](#)

“Judges must exert leadership and advocate for the availability of quality, evidence-based treatment services as the best and most effective response to the opioid epidemic,” said Indiana Chief Justice Loretta H. Rush, who co-chaired the task force along with Tennessee Director of Courts Deborah Taylor Tate. In all, 34 state court leaders, representing 24 states, served on the task force, which was staffed by the National Center for State Courts.

Surgeon General Adams praised the task force and agreed with the report's findings. "The opioid crisis has ravaged communities all across the country," he said. "Everyone has a stake in our response, including our court systems. Just as addiction is complicated, so, too, is recovery – but we know that it is possible. Connecting people to care is important with any chronic condition, but it's crucial when the individual is battling an opioid use or other substance use disorder. The earlier that connection is made, the better."

The criminal justice system is the single largest source of referral to substance use disorder treatment. However, the report notes that "the opioid epidemic is not just a *criminal* justice issue," but impacts every court, including family and bankruptcy courts.

"The misuse of opioids such as heroin, morphine, and prescription pain medications is not only a devastating public health crisis, it is critically affecting the administration of justice in courthouses throughout the United States," Chief Justice Rush said. "It's crucial that judges are involved in reversing this epidemic."

According to the report, state courts must:

- Embrace medicated-assisted treatment, which involves using federally approved medications as well as counseling and behavioral therapies to treat those with substance use disorders;
- Partner with state lawmakers, federal agencies and executive branches;
- Realize that the most significant impact of the epidemic involves cases with children and families; and
- Design programs that can also be used for the next substance abuse addiction crisis.

"For years, the justice system knew how to be tough on drugs," Tate said. "Now is the time for us to become smart' on drugs."

The task force was established in 2017 by the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators as the opioid epidemic increasingly impacted state courts.



2019 ODR International Forum: 'Online Dispute Resolution is Here to Stay'

The woman's last name was called a few times in Collin County Court in north Texas before she finally appeared, 15 minutes late, with a baby in her arms and tears in her eyes. As Ben White (pictured in center), the court's senior IT manager, watched her rush into the courtroom, he assumed the woman couldn't find a babysitter and her job didn't offer paid time off. He wondered if the money she was losing by being in court that day might cause her to go into debt.

"I realized right then that ODR (online dispute resolution) was meant for her," said White, a panelist at the recent [2019 ODR International Forum](#), attended by about 210 people from 17 countries.

eBay, Alibaba and hundreds of other companies have been using online dispute resolution for several years to resolve disputes related to the sales of goods and services. Only within the last few years have courts seen ODR as a realistic way to resolve lawsuits by allowing litigants to use their phones and computers to settle disputes without stepping foot in a courtroom.

The forum, co-sponsored by the [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\)](#), was an opportunity for court technologists and administrators, academic researchers and private-sector entrepreneurs -- from nations such as Singapore and New Zealand to England and Israel -- to share ideas and experiences about what has worked well, and what hasn't. In the United States, ODR is being used in scattered courts in 17 states for small-claims cases, but some are also using it to settle traffic and family law cases.

Throughout the conference, in Williamsburg, Virginia, panelists echoed the sentiment of Utah Supreme Court Justice Deno Himonas, the keynote speaker, that ODR is just one technological advancement that courts must embrace to better provide access to justice for many millions of people who can't afford lawyers and are not well served by the courts.

"Would it be ideal if everyone had access to an attorney and it was affordable?" Himonas said. "Yes, but that system has failed." He dismissed those who don't want ODR, saying, "Get over it. ODR is here to stay."

Himonas announced new data that shows Utah's ODR pilot project has yielded promising results. Cases are resolved faster than if litigants went to court, and only a very small percentage of them opted out. Hear Himonas talk more about the project on [NCSC's podcast, Court Talk](#).

Other speakers also shared data and stories that make it clear that ODR has enormous potential to resolve disputes faster, cheaper and more conveniently than what courts now offer.

[Go here for a longer story](#) about the 2019 conference.

The 2020 International ODR Forum is May 6-7 in Dublin, Ireland.



NJC Encourages Early Planning for 2020 Courses

If you or your court are looking for a judicial education program soon, it's never too early to start planning for 2020.

The [National Judicial College \(NJC\)](https://www.judges.org) encourages potential attendees online or in-person to plan as early as possible since many courses fill quickly. For a complete listing of NJC courses, visit [judges.org/courses](https://www.judges.org/courses).

Did you know:

- SJI sometimes provides grant support directly to the NJC to develop content, offer specific courses online, or prorate/provide some course for free or reduced cost.
- The SJI [Education Support Program \(ESP\)](https://www.judges.org/education-support-program) covers the cost of tuition up to a maximum of \$1,000 per award. Awards will be made for the exact amount requested for tuition. To seek an ESP to attend an NJC course, simply find the course you wish to attend on the NJC website: www.judges.org/courses, and click "register."
- During the registration process, the website will ask whether you need a scholarship to attend. Simply follow the online instructions to request tuition assistance.
- If you have any questions about this process, you may contact NJC Scholarship Coordinator Brenda Pardini, at pardini@judges.org or 800-255-8343. The NJC reserves the right to apply additional selection criteria.



**Leadership Development/
Career Mobility Program**

King County Superior Court

Onboarding and Career Mobility: Two New Programs for Court Employees and Long-Term Benefits for Courts in King County, WA

Court leaders frequently express concern about the ability to: (1) recruit and retain qualified employees and (2) meet the development desires of a workforce that is increasingly hungry for “growth and learning opportunities.” Are you one of them? If yes, you are not alone. Leaders of both private and public organizations frequently express concerns about being able to recruit and maintain a high-performing, engaged workforce.

King County Superior Court (Seattle, Washington) recently developed two new employee programs thanks to a technical assistance grant from SJI, the hard work of a dedicated internal project team led by Deputy Court Administrator Linda Ridge, and the assistance of Dr. Brenda Wagenknecht-Ivey (who served as a consultant to the Court for this project).

The two programs are:

1. A multi-phased Onboarding Program for new employees; and,
2. A Leadership Development and Career Mobility program for “veteran” employees of 3 years or more.

Both programs are aimed at meeting the expressed desires and needs of today’s workforce and yield significant, noticeable benefits to Courts. Please contact article authors, Linda K. Ridge at linda.ridge@kingcounty.gov or Dr. Brenda Wagenknecht-Ivey at bwagen@praxisconsulting.org for more information. You can read the full post-project summary [here](#).



Hawaii Holds Mental Health Summit Searching for Ways to Keep Mentally Ill Out of Jail

Judges, law enforcement officials, and health agency representatives recently met at the Hawaii State Supreme Court for the inaugural *Hawaii Summit on Improving the Governmental Response to Community Mental Illness*. The summit was supported by SJI, the [Conference of Chief Justices \(CCJ\)](#) and the [Conference of State Court Administrators COSCA](#), with technical assistance from the [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\)](#).

The summit helped Hawaii government agencies learn more about how they can guide people with mental illness to proper health care services before they repeatedly cycle through jails, hospitals, and courts.

During 2017 and 2018, the Hawaii Department of Public Safety (DPS) held 275 pretrial detainees in that category. The detainees with mental illness spent a cumulative 12,000 days occupying bed space at DPS before they were transferred to the Hawaii State Hospital, according to Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald. Chief Justice Recktenwald said he hoped to see a reduction in the number of “704” acquittal filings to ease the strain on the judicial system. In the first 10 months of 2019 alone, there were 440 of those filings from people who cited health issues that made them incapable of standing trial.

Chief Justice Recktenwald said solutions such as opening a crisis center could be a possibility for Hawaii. “To make that happen we need to work with the Department of Health and providers in the community to make sure those resources are in place,” Recktenwald said. “You can’t have a meaningful diversion system unless you actually have appropriate resources and a place you can take people to get treatment or care.”

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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.