

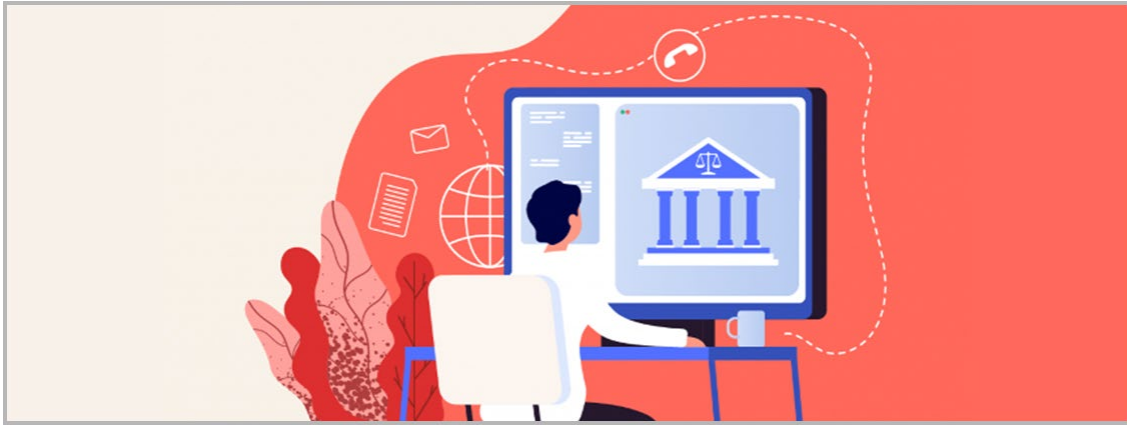
## SJI Newsletter

November 2020 | Volume 31, No. 2



### SJI Board Member Hernan Vera Appointed to the Bench

On November 13, 2020, SJI Board Member Hernan D. Vera was appointed by Governor Gavin Newsom to serve as a Judge in the Los Angeles County Superior Court. Vera has been a Principal at Bird Marella since 2015, where he focuses his practice on complex civil litigation and class action defense. He also counsels and advises clients on risk management in public matters where a problem-solving, community approach is essential to the success of the litigation. He previously served as President & Chief Executive Officer of Public Counsel, the nation's largest pro bono, public interest law firm. He was the first Latino leader of the 40-year-old civil rights organization, which is based in Los Angeles. Mr. Vera was a commercial litigator with the international firm of O'Melveny & Myers LLP, where he specialized in class actions. Mr. Vera has also worked as an Education Staff Attorney for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund and clerked for the Honorable Consuelo B. Marshall, U.S. District Court Judge for the Central District of California. He was appointed to the SJI Board of Directors in 2010. He received an A.B., with Distinction, from Stanford University, and his J.D. from the UCLA School of Law.



## Virtual/Remote Services in Judicially-Led Programs/Initiatives Perspectives from the Field

### Purpose

The [National Center for State Courts](#), [Rulo Strategies](#), and the [Center of Behavioral Health and Justice at Wayne State University](#) want to hear from the field on virtual/remote services in practice. This survey is intended to collect information from judges and court professionals working directly in a local or regional **problem-solving court, specialty court or other judicially-led diversion programs**. The information will contribute to discussions on policy and practice changes (local, state, and national) in the future as developed in response to the pandemic.

### Who

The survey is written for judges, community supervision agencies, treatment providers, and other stakeholders of judicially-led programs. Questions asked in the survey are driven by your role (e.g. judge, probation, coordinator, treatment provider, peer support, etc.) in the program.

### Return on Investment

Information gathered from this survey will be made available to all individuals who contributed in a report format. Your responses to the survey will only be reported in aggregate.

### Survey Links

[Judge/Coordinator/Attorneys](#)

[Community Supervision](#)

[Treatment Providers/Peer Support](#)

### Questions or Comments

Contact Kristina Bryant ([kbryant@ncsc.org](mailto:kbryant@ncsc.org)) or Tara Kunkel ([tara@rulostrategies.com](mailto:tara@rulostrategies.com)).



## 2020 NACM Annual Virtual Conference and Expo

With SJI support, the [National Association for Court Management](#) (NACM) has made content from its [2020 NACM Annual Virtual Conference and Expo](#) available online. This year's event went virtual for the first time due to the complexities of the COVID-19 pandemic. Plenaries, workshops, the annual business meeting and much more have all been uploaded as videos that you can watch sequentially or by subject/session area.

NACM is also accepting proposals for its 2021 Conference, [Justice for All: Courts at the Crossroads](#). NACM is committed to providing innovative, engaging and emerging trends at the Midyear and Annual conferences. Conferences are made up of plenary and concurrent breakout sessions.

**Private Sector** – please contact [Stacey Smith](#) about sponsorships with speaking opportunities.



## Groundbreaking Project Could Lead to 'Faster Courts' Nationwide

Before the coronavirus pandemic reduced court operations, state courts nationwide resolved 40 criminal felony cases and 100 criminal misdemeanor cases every minute of every day, but most courts failed to meet national time standards because of too many continuances and scheduled hearings.

These findings come from one of the most ambitious undertakings of its kind, [the Effective Criminal Case Management](#) project, a five-year examination of 1.2 million felony and misdemeanor cases from 136 courts in 21 states. The [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\)](#) released a report that details the project's findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The researchers who worked on the project say the recommendations provide a roadmap for how courts can operate faster and more efficiently. They recommend that courts:

- Limit continuances;
- Compile good data that help them figure out why some cases are resolved more quickly than others; and
- Schedule hearings on dates that maximize the likelihood that prosecutors and defense attorneys will be prepared.

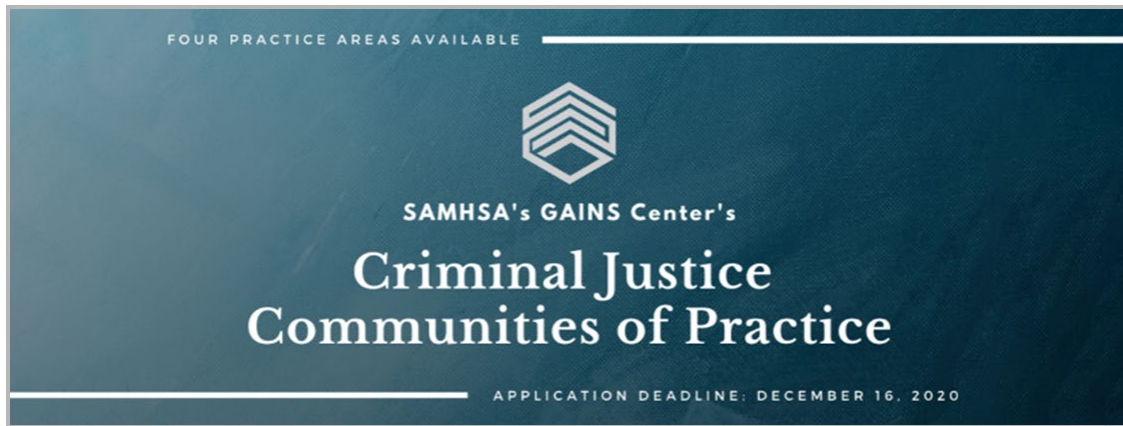
Here are some of the project's major findings:

- The project allowed researchers for the first time to estimate the number of criminal cases resolved each year in the nation's state courts – more than 18 million, five million felony and 13 million misdemeanor.
- The average time to disposition is 256 days for felony cases and 193 days for misdemeanors, but no court in the study meets the current national time standards. Current time standards say that 98 percent of felony cases should be resolved within 365 days, and 98 percent of misdemeanor cases should be resolved within 180 days. On average, courts in the study resolved 83 percent of felony cases within 365 days and 77 percent of misdemeanors within 180 days.
- The courts that resolve cases faster are led by presiding judges who make it clear that they dislike continuances, which lead to additional hearings and delays.
- Timely courts dismiss fewer cases, and they are faster across all case types and all manners of disposition.
- Differences in court structure play a small but surprising role in overall average timeliness, with single-tiered courts being least timely and two-tiered courts being most timely.

“The report's most important conclusions revolve around what faster courts do to be fast and what slower courts do that make them slow,” said lead researcher Brian Ostrom. “We know courts are always striving to be more efficient, so our hope is that court leaders read the report and implement its recommendations. What's at stake is whether every person's constitutional right to due process is honored in the process of seeking justice in individual cases.”

NCSC consultants Ostrom and Patti Tobias will provide as much as 60 minutes of free advice to courts that want to know how to operate faster and more efficiently, as part of the NCSC's *Dr. Is In program*. [Go here to sign up.](#)

For more information about this project, including an appendix that lists the courts involved, [go here.](#)



## SAMHSA GAINS Center Announces Criminal Justice Communities of Practice

***Application deadline: December 16, 2020***

SAMHSA's GAINS Center for Behavioral Health and Justice Transformation, operated by Policy Research Associates, Inc., and known nationally for its work regarding people with behavioral health needs involved in the criminal justice system, is convening four topical Communities of Practice (CoPs) to work intensively with select communities on the following topics:

- [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion in Reentry](#)
- [Engaging Clients for Successful Reentry](#)
- [Effectively Identifying & Treating Justice-Involved Individuals with Polysubstance Use Disorder](#)
- Building a Competent Crisis Care System at Intercepts 0-1 (*coming soon*)

### **About the Criminal Justice CoPs**

Each CoP brings together local jurisdiction teams to create coordinated local strategic plans and implementation strategies for the topic of focus. Selected teams for each CoP will work intensively to determine optimal ways to implement best practices and define success indicators for their respective CoP. Each topic-specific CoP will engage subject-matter experts to work with jurisdiction teams during the implementation process and facilitate peer-to-peer sharing. Through a virtual platform, selected teams will work together to learn and complete their implementation work while, at the same time, share with other jurisdictions and receive an array of technical assistance from subject-matter experts across the country. The CoPs are designed to achieve four key objectives:

- Enhance collective knowledge of key issues and familiarity with the topic;
- Understand promising, best, and evidence-based practices to address the topic and related issues;
- Develop strategic plans that focus on the issue, including defining assignments, deadlines, and measurable outcomes to be reported; and

- Increase knowledge about the challenges and lessons learned in implementing strategies through peer-to-peer sharing via virtual convenings, monthly collaborative calls, and other virtual mechanisms.

### Application and Selection Process

- Applications are due December 16, 2020.
- General requirements:
  - Narrative (up to five pages).
  - Expectations/guidelines will differ by CoP topic.
  - List of key stakeholders who will participate in the team.
  - Letters of support or commitment from key partners.
- Selected jurisdictions will be notified on or about January 4, 2021.

### Informational Webinars

For more information about these opportunities and how to prepare a CoP application, please register for one of the upcoming informational webinar sessions:

[November 30, 2020, 3:00–4:00 p.m. ET](#)

[December 2, 2020, 3:00–4:00 p.m. ET](#)



## NCSC Report on How to Keep Court User Safe During Self-Help Services

Earlier this year, the [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\)](#) released a [report-style guide](#). The purpose of this report is to provide facilities and access to justice recommendations for how courts can continue to offer in-person self-help services while respecting the public health and social distancing provisions required under COVID-19.

As confirmed cases continue to rise in states across the country, this resource may help courts maintain their efficiency, especially those which have slowly reopened or reintegrated self-directed services.

In addition to the report, there is also [Tiny Chat #13](#) from Danielle Hirsch and Zach Zarnow, who are joined by NCSC Senior Architect and Facilities Planner Allie McKenzie to discuss six tips from the report further exploring this topic.

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