



Rural Responses to the Opioid Epidemic

The [Rural Responses to the Opioid Epidemic](#) grant solicitation was designed to leverage the combined resources and expertise of the U.S. Department of Justice, [Bureau of Justice Assistance \(BJA\)](#), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), and the [State Justice Institute \(SJI\)](#), along with other federal partners, to reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with opioid overdoses among individuals who come in contact with law enforcement or are involved in the criminal justice system in high-risk rural communities and regions.

Twenty-one rural American communities substantially impacted by the opioid epidemic will receive \$14.8 million in grants, up to \$750,000 per community, to develop tailored and innovative responses to gaps in prevention, treatment and/or recovery services for individuals involved in the criminal justice system. Communities awarded 18-month implementation phase grants at the end of 2019 represented sixteen states, including the following sites:

- Arkansas Rural Health Partnership (AR)
- County of Rio Arriba (NM)
- Ellenville Regional Hospital (NY)
- Franklin County Sheriff's Department (MA)
- Grays Harbor Public Health & Social Services (WA)
- Marcum and Wallace Hospital (KY)
- Marshall University Research Corporation (WV)
- Memorial Regional Health (CO)
- Mohave Substance Treatment Education & Prevention Partnership (AZ)
- Northern Kentucky University (KY)
- Northumberland County (PA)
- Porter-Starke Services Inc. (IN)
- Portsmouth City Health Department (OH)
- Prisma Health–Upstate (SC)
- Project Lazarus (NC)
- Reno County Health Department (KS)
- SMA Healthcare, Inc. (FL)

- Mary's Regional Health Center (MN)
- Upper Cumberland Human Resources Agency (TN)
- WestCare Tennessee, Inc. (TN)
- Whitley County Health Department (KY)

SJI funding ensures that state courts are a key component in these collaborative efforts to address the opioid epidemic in rural areas. More information is available on the project [website](#). Site profiles are being added to the website, along with new resources as the project moves forward.



Preparing for Public Health Emergencies

The coronavirus may not have been labeled a pandemic yet, but the rapid spread of the virus is a good enough reason for court officials to plan for how they would deal with one. Fortunately, there's no need to reinvent the wheel.

The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) has updated its [public health emergency page](#), which offers many resources for court administrators and judges. The page features [Preparing for a Pandemic](#), a blueprint for developing a plan to combat a pandemic, as well as resources from last year's SJI-funded [National Pandemic Summit](#) at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, home to the nation's largest biocontainment unit.

The information on the page also applies to public health emergencies other than pandemics, which are relatively rare. It applies, for example, to influenza, which has killed between 12,000 and 61,000 Americans per year since 2010. The flu pandemic of 1918, which killed about 675,000 Americans and tens of millions worldwide, caused courts to close in the [District of Columbia](#), [Tennessee](#) and [Kentucky](#), among other places, but fortunately public health emergencies rarely lead to court closings.

Despite that, public health emergencies sometimes impact the courts, and court officials need to know how to react to them. Court administrators need to know how to keep their courts operating efficiently when some of their employees are sick and can't work. And judges must know what to do when they are called upon to order quarantines for individuals infected with contagious diseases. A quarantine order related to a nurse in Maine who was exposed to the Ebola virus in Africa in 2014 made [national headlines](#).

“Preparing for a Pandemic addresses the legal bases for actions the government may take and provides a ready-reference for a judge confronting issues that thankfully are extremely rare as they relate to things like a quarantine,” said William Raftery, senior NCSC Knowledge and Information Services analyst.

If you have questions about this or resources to share, [email the NCSC](#).



CCJ Urges Regulatory Innovations in the Delivery of Legal Services

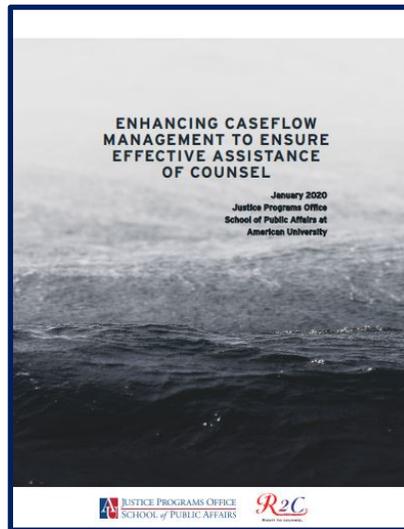
Members of the [Conference of Chief Justices \(CCJ\)](#) recently gathered for their midyear meeting where there was discussion on the variety of proposed innovations in the regulation of the delivery of legal services. State supreme courts, after all, don't just act as arbiters of legal disputes, but also hold ultimate authority for the regulation of the practice of law in their states.

The assembled members heard from the President of the American Bar Association (ABA), Judy Perry Martinez, who did not mince words about how critical innovation is in the effort to close the nation's access to justice gap. She also emphasized the vital role of both the ABA and state judicial leaders in fostering open discussion about potential reforms.

"We need and are beginning to see bold new ideas to address our nation's unmet legal needs," said Martinez. "Given the dire circumstances that the public faces when trying to protect their basic rights, doing nothing—having no dialogues and conversations among stakeholders; fearing to ask "what if" or "why not"—may pose an even greater risk."

At its business meeting, CCJ adopted a policy resolution [Urging Consideration of Regulatory Innovations Regarding the Delivery of Legal Services](#), which was proposed by its committee on Professionalism and Competence of the Bar. The resolution "urges its members to consider regulatory innovations that have the potential to improve the accessibility, affordability and quality of civil legal services, while ensuring necessary and appropriate protections for the public."

As ABA President Martinez noted: "The ultimate purpose of regulation is not to protect the livelihood of lawyers but to advance the administration of justice."



American University and NACM Release Caseflow Management Report

The Justice Programs Office (JPO), a center in the [School of Public Affairs at American University](#), in partnership with [Right to Counsel \(R2C\) National Campaign](#) consortium member the [National Association for Court Management \(NACM\)](#) partnered on a project which recently released its final report titled, [Enhancing Caseflow Management to Ensure Effective Assistance of Counsel](#).

With SJI support, the report and [archived webinar](#) available through NACM, explore the tension between ensuring the right to counsel and caseflow management, what causes it and what alleviates it, and what judges and court administrators can do both separately and as a team to ease it.

Caseflow management is defined as the coordination of court processes to ensure court proceedings progress in a timely and efficient manner. This can sometimes result in courts' feeling pressure to process cases quickly in order to clear a docket and avoid case delay. This pressure may also result in the scheduling of case events without consideration for whether a defense attorney has been assigned to the case, and if so, whether one has had time to sufficiently prepare for these events. In some instances, competing interests may emerge—those supporting prompt resolution of cases against those supporting effective assistance of counsel, which at times may slow down case proceedings. When these interests are not adequately addressed, a tension emerges for judges and court administrators: the right to counsel tension.

The report is the culmination of several activities that involved face-to-face meetings with court professionals, industry expert analysis, and a focus on two courts in Spokane, Washington, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana.



New Justice for All Website Provides States with Resources to Meet Public Legal Needs

The [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\)](#), in partnership with the [Self-Represented Litigation Network \(SRLN\)](#), has published a new [Justice for All website](#) aimed at addressing the needs not only of those already in the court process, but also of people with unmet civil legal problems who could benefit from legal help—even if they don't yet realize their problems have a legal solution.

The Justice for All website offers a framework for engaging with a wide range of stakeholders to systematically expand access to justice. Through broad collaboration, it ensures there is no wrong door through which to enter the civil justice system.