

SJI NEWSLETTER

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SJI Support for Language Access In the State Courts

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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 it!



Since the mid-1990s, state courts have implemented various strategies in an effort to ensure access to justice for limited English proficiency (LEP) individuals. Most state courts provide foreign language interpreters in criminal cases, and more are providing interpreters in civil, domestic relations, and other court proceedings. Several factors have pushed state courts to establish policies and standards for serving LEP individuals, including recognition that there should at least be a common agreement that every court aspire to provide these services as a matter of fairness.

Since FY 2006, SJI has invested [approximately \\$2.7 million](#) in grants on this issue. These include projects on interpreter training, remote interpreting, and forms translation. In addition, the SJI Board established Language Access as a Priority Investment Area for grant funding in November 2011.

In FY 2012, SJI awarded a grant to the NCSC, in collaboration with CCJ and COSCA, to host a [National Summit on Language Access in the Courts](#). This Summit, which was held October 2012, enabled state courts to share successful strategies and evidence-based practices, and propose implementation strategies that are consistent among the states. Each state team that attended the Summit is working to develop or improve statewide plans to address the problem of serving LEP individuals. A [National Call to Action](#) report documenting the Summit's outcomes and strategies for implementation of language access plans was widely disseminated.

In FY 2013, SJI awarded a grant to the NCSC's Language Access Services Section to provide direct technical assistance on this critical issue. In FY 2014, SJI provided support for the National Virtual Remote Interpreting (VRI) Capability. State courts are now able to use the VRI to provide interpreters remotely, thereby increasing access and reducing costs.

Hosted by the [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\)](#), the Council of Language Access Coordinators held its fourth annual conference this month.

[Conference information](#) including registration, program agenda, schedule, presenter information, and resources are available online.

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NCJFCJ Publishes Final Report From National Summit on Courts and the Military



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES

WWW.NCJFCJ.ORG

With SJI support, the [National Council for Juvenile and Family Court Judges \(NCJFCJ\)](#) recently published a report from its first-ever *National Summit on Courts and Military*. Convened in March 2015 at Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia, the goal of the Summit was to create the groundwork for a collaborative relationship between the courts and the many military institutions, civilian agencies, and government departments that assist military families when they access the state courts.

The Summit represented years of planning efforts culminating in the engaged presence of nearly 100 individuals representing all branches of government and the military, specifically including:

- state court judicial leaders from across the country;
- armed forces personnel including former commanding officers;
- federal executive departments of Office of the Secretary of Defense and Veterans Affairs;
- federal and state legislators;
- various service organizations for military families, together with

academic, research, and policy groups interested in the welfare of the military family.

The summit report covers the following considerations:

1. Education and training in a more comprehensive, consistent, and widespread manner than currently exists.
2. Resources and services for military-connected families.
3. Judicial and Command collaboration.
4. Judicial and Command [co-] leadership.
5. Assessing the needs and risks of the military-connected family members.

The NCJFCJ also outlined eight specific ways in which it could leverage national support of military families and courts, based on shared insights from participants, some of which included: increasing membership on its Military Issues Committee; keeping participants connected and engaged in the discussion virtually; fostering support for local and state-level court and command collaborative; and development of training curricula for key stakeholders within the collaborative. With ongoing information sharing and a demand for more resources to move the discussion forward, the NCJFCJ maintains an active [Military Families portal](#) on their website.

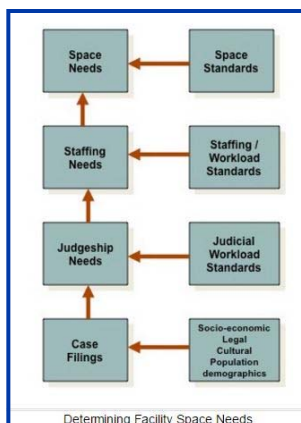
The full 10-page [final report](#) is available from the NCJFCJ.

Virtual Courthouse Planning Guide

A new addition to the [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\)](#) website includes the compilation of a near exhaustive list of resources for state courts and their stakeholders when designing new, renovating existing, or significantly updating facilities.

With grant support from SJI, the NCSC was able to create an online portal, titled [The Virtual Courthouse: A Guide to Planning and Design](#). The NCSC still maintains experts in the field, who assist with these projects; however this site provides the early planning efforts that should be considered regardless of whether the court has engaged outside resources.

Among the processes emphasized as essential to launching the first-stage of courthouse planning efforts are:



- Needs Assessment – Evaluation of the deficiencies of current facility and quantifying existing conditions.
- Master Planning – Engage architectural and site selection teams, inclusive of building occupants.
- Project Budgeting – List and evaluate funding options; obtain realistic expectations for total costs.
- Facility Planning – Ensure that planning and design standards are set.

Each process is linked to resources that further define the core components required of successful new, or redesigned, courthouse structures. Also included is special attention to the uniqueness of the courthouse structure, and its particular needs, including, security, accessibility, compliance, and technology.

King County, WA, Implements Strategic Agenda

Just added to the [National Center for State Court \(NCSC\) Library's eCollection](#), is the final report, titled, [King County Superior Court's Strategic Agenda \(2014-2018\)](#), which was developed under an SJI Technical Assistance grant last year.

The grant from SJI made it possible for the Court to receive assistance from [PRAXIS Consulting, Inc.](#) Consultants serving the project were familiar with the strategic focus areas that were most salient to the entire Court, including the Clerk's Office, judicial officers, and staff. These large, encompassing issues that are fundamentally important in both the short and long-term included:

1. Access, Services, and Programs that Promote Justice
2. Case Management and Caseflow
3. Public Understanding and Intergovernmental Relations
4. Operational Infrastructure
5. Work Environment and Workforce Development

The report is approximately 15 pages, including the cover and a comprehensive list of the key stakeholders responsible for leading the project.

Courts and their partners [accessing the report online](#) will want to note that the strategic agenda relates to the long-range goals of the Court extending beyond 2018, and that the next agenda will be formulated while this effort is still active.



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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.

