



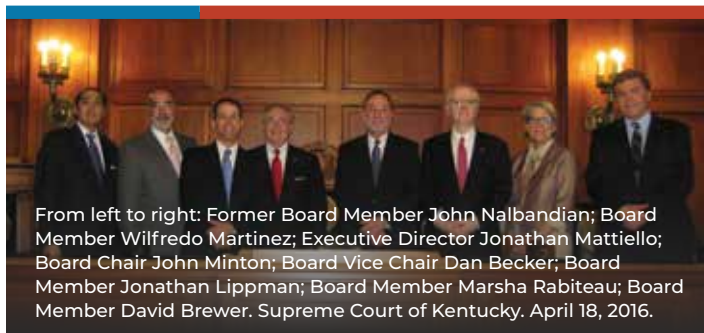
Four Decades of Improving the Quality of Justice in State Courts

1984 ——— 2024

**STATE JUSTICE INSTITUTE
40-YEAR ANNIVERSARY REPORT**

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From left to right: Board Member David Brewer; Board Member Wilfredo Martinez; Senior Program Advisor Michelle White; Board Chair John Minton; Wyoming Chief Justice Kate Fox; Board Member Jonathan Lippman; Executive Director Jonathan Mattiello; Board Member Gayle Nachtigal. Supreme Court of Wyoming, June 5, 2023.

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Foreword

In 1984, Congress created the State Justice Institute (SJI) to award grants to improve the quality of justice in our state courts:

The purpose of the State Justice Institute shall be to further the development and adoption of improved judicial administration in State courts in the United States.



Over the past four decades, through the efforts of its Board of Directors and staff, SJI has continued to meet this purpose. However, SJI has faced challenges, particularly in the past decade, as state courts' needs increase, national judicial trends shift, and resources become more limited. Most notably, the COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally shifted the way state courts operate. SJI has constantly adjusted its strategies and initiatives to meet the current and future demands of providing access to justice in our state courts. In reviewing this report, you will observe the effective strategies that SJI has implemented to address the needs of the state courts.

In the next decade, SJI will continue to foster innovations in judicial administration that help improve the quality of justice in state courts across the nation.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "John D. Minton".

Chief Justice (ret.) John D. Minton

Chair, SJI Board of Directors

Message from the Executive Director

This 40-Year Anniversary Report provides a retrospective overview of the important work that SJI has done over the past four decades. SJI has supported a vast number of projects and initiatives that have improved the administration of justice in the state courts. This report highlights specific projects, by decade, that have supported the areas of greatest need within our state courts.



In developing this report, I have gained an even greater appreciation for the work of the various members of the SJI Board of Directors who have served since 1984. They have provided the vision needed to ensure that SJI is successful in its mission, and SJI is more relevant today than ever before.

I wish to express my deep gratitude to the current and past members of the Board of Directors for their unwavering dedication to both SJI and the state courts.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "J. D. Mattiello". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jonathan D. Mattiello

Executive Director, SJI

Background and History of SJI

For the past four decades, SJI has been dedicated to improving the quality of justice in our nation's state courts. In 1984, Congress established SJI to award grants, charging it with the mission of "assuring each person access to a fair and effective system of justice."

Creation of SJI: The Need and the Visionaries

In the 1970s, the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) was the driving force behind the creation of SJI. CCJ recognized a vital need to secure federal funding for the state courts. To further this effort, CCJ supported the reauthorization of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) in 1976, to include funding for the state courts. However, two years later, frustrated by the lack of LEAA funding reaching the state courts, CCJ authorized a task force for a state court improvement bill.

The task force's mission was to make recommendations on "problems of allocation of jurisdiction between state and federal courts [...] and] methods by which federal funding of efforts to improve the administration of justice in the several states can be accomplished without sacrifice of the independence of state judicial systems." In its final report to CCJ in 1979, the task force concluded that "the federal government and Congress in particular has a very direct interest in the quality of justice in state courts" for the following three reasons:

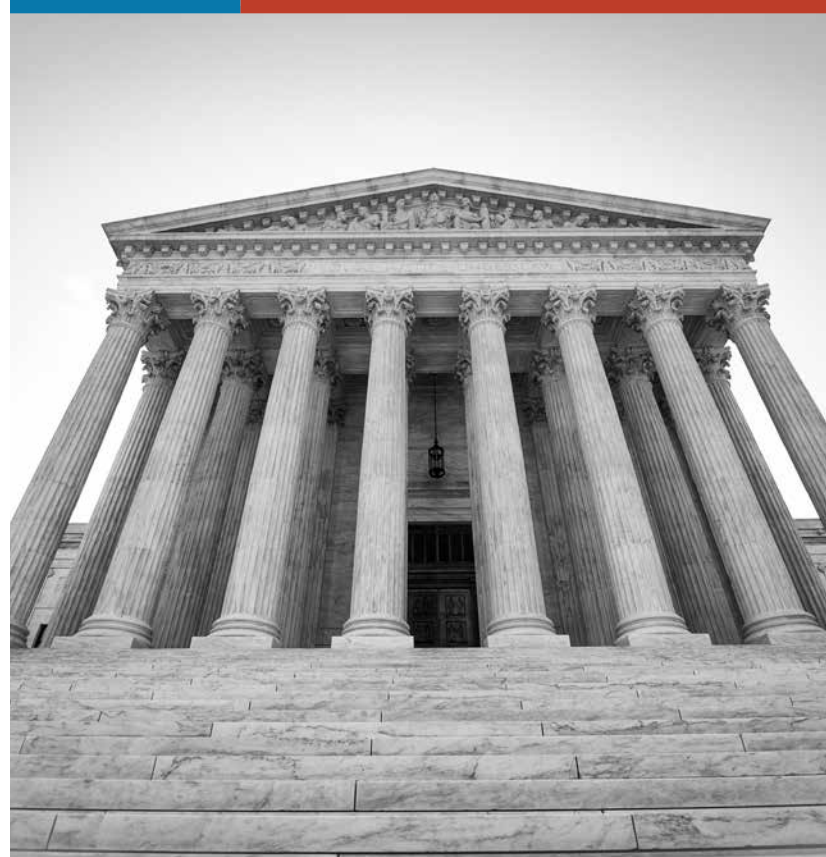
- Congress has imposed additional specific burdens on the state judiciaries, which must be addressed if important congressional policy objectives are to be achieved;
- there is a federal interest in the quality of justice and in the quality of other issues; and
- state courts share with federal courts, under the Constitution, the obligation to enforce the Constitution and federal laws.

The task force proposed that an independent agency, to be called the State Justice Institute (SJI), be created to administer a national discretionary grant program to support state courts.

In 1979, the task force was succeeded by the CCJ State Justice Institute Committee, which worked with Congress to create SJI. Chief Justice (ret.) Robert Utter from Washington State headed the Committee and, during a seven-year period, flew over 100,000 miles as chairman of the Committee to build support for the legislation. He was joined by other members of CCJ and the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA), along with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). Senator Howell Heflin, who was a former Chief Justice of the state of Alabama, held hearings and was an original sponsor of legislation to establish SJI.

After six years of efforts by the Committee, CCJ, COSCA, NCSC, state court judges and administrations, and other key stakeholders, the State Justice Institute Act of 1984 was signed into law (42 U.S.C. 10701 et seq.). The Act created an 11-member Board appointed by the president with the advice and consent of the Senate. CCJ plays an important role in the appointment process by preparing a list for the president nominating individuals for the judicial positions and the state court administrator position. The Act also directed SJI to address national court issues as they occur and develop solutions to those problems.

It was not until 1986 that Congress gave SJI the resources, a Board of Directors, and an appropriation, to begin fulfilling its mission.



Mandate and Mission

For 40 years, SJI has awarded numerous grants to improve the administration of justice in the state courts, to facilitate better coordination and information sharing between state and federal courts, and to foster innovative and efficient solutions to common issues all courts face.

SJI is unique in both its mission and how it seeks to fulfill that mission. Only SJI has the authority to assist all state courts—criminal, civil, juvenile, family, and appellate—and the mandate to share the success of one state’s innovations with every state court system.

SJI carries out its mandate in various ways that maximize the impact of its funding, including by:

- addressing national court issues as they occur, and developing solutions to those problems;
- placing practical products in the hands of the judges and court staff who can most benefit from them;
- sharing effective approaches from one state quickly and economically with other courts nationwide;
- supporting national, regional, and in-state educational programs to speed the transfer of solutions to issues courts across the nation share; and
- supporting national technical assistance targeting specific issues in the courts.

SJI has supported numerous grants to state courts and court-support organizations that have improved the administration of justice in the United States. These include projects that have enabled the state courts to respond to the opioid crisis; address mental health issues; adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic; identify victims of human trafficking; improve services for military families; improve court security; promote fiscally sound and data-driven policies and practices on sentencing; and help enhance access to justice. SJI has also supported many worthwhile projects that have promoted state courts’ performance, accountability, and use of innovative technology to transform the business of courts.

SJI’s federal mission to support the state courts is critical to the successful implementation of federal policies and programs, most recently in the areas of social services and automated justice information systems development. In almost 300 provisions of federal law, and in federal policy through regulations, policy statements, and other pronouncements, state courts have affirmative and negative obligations. For example, state courts are involved in federal subjects such as child welfare, civil protection orders, crime control, national security, consumer protection, and land and water management. SJI grants better enable the state courts to meet these federal obligations.

“There has been no bigger crisis for our state courts than the coronavirus pandemic, and no better partner in addressing the critical issues that it raised. SJI’s support for innovations in our justice system sustained us at a critical moment in time, nurturing critical new ideas when they were most needed. Congratulations on 40 productive years.”

Chief Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby,
District of Columbia Court of Appeals;
President of the Conference of Chief
Justices (COSCA) (2023-2024).

Priority Investment Areas

Each fiscal year, SJI allocates significant financial resources to support its [Priority Investment Areas](#). The Priority Investment Areas apply to all grant types. SJI strongly encourages grant applicants to consider projects addressing one or more of the Priority Investment Areas, and to integrate the following factors into each proposed project:

- evidence-based, data-driven decision making
- cross-sector collaboration
- systemic approaches (as opposed to standalone programs)
- institutionalization of new court processes and procedures
- ease of replication
- sustainability

In fiscal year (FY) 2024, the Priority Investment Areas were the following, listed below in no specific order:

Opioids and Other Dangerous Drugs, and Behavioral Health Responses

- [Behavioral Health Disparities](#)
- [Trauma-Informed Approaches](#)

Promoting Access to Justice and Procedural Fairness

- [Self-Represented Litigation](#)
- [Language Access](#)
- [Procedural Fairness](#)

“SJI has provided invaluable support to the state courts for the last 40 years. That support in the form of grant dollars in particular has meant improved public access to the state courts for the customers we serve. Thank you SJI and we look forward to our continued partnership.”

Greg Sattizahn, State Court Administrator of South Dakota; President of the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA) (2023-2024).

Reducing Disparities and Protecting Victims, Underserved, and Vulnerable Populations

- [Human Trafficking](#)
- [Rural Justice](#)
- [Guardianship, Conservatorship, and Elder Issues](#)
- [Disparities in Justice](#)

Advancing Justice Reform

- [Criminal Justice Reform](#)
- [Juvenile Justice Reform](#)
- [Family and Civil Justice Reform](#)

Transforming Courts

- [Emergency Response and Recovery](#)
- [Cybersecurity](#)
- [Technology](#)
- [Strategic Planning](#)
- [Training, Education, and Workforce Development](#)



Grant Program

To fulfill its mission, SJI awards grants that benefit the nation’s judicial system and the public it serves. These grants are available at the national, state, and local levels to support court innovation.

SJI currently awards four types of grants, detailed below:

- [Strategic Initiatives Grants \(SIGs\)](#)—provide SJI the flexibility to address national court issues as they occur and develop solutions to those problems. SJI awards these grants at the discretion of the SJI Board of Directors. The Education Support Program is administered as annual SIG awards to the National Judicial College (NJC) and the NCSC to enhance the skills, knowledge, and abilities of judges and court managers. These awards support attendance at programs sponsored by national and state providers that judges and court managers could not otherwise attend because of limited state, local, and personal budgets.
- [Project Grants](#)—are intended to support innovative technical assistance, education and training, and demonstration projects that can improve the administration of justice in state courts.
- [Technical Assistance \(TA\) Grants](#)—are designed to provide state and local courts with funding to obtain expert assistance to diagnose a problem, develop a response to that problem, and initiate implementation of any needed changes.
- [Curriculum Adaptation and Training \(CAT\) Grants](#)—enable courts and regional or national court associations to modify and adapt model curricula or course modules to meet state or local jurisdictions’ educational needs; train instructors to present portions or all of the curricula; and pilot test curricula to determine their appropriateness, quality, and effectiveness.

In 2020, SJI launched the updated, paperless [Grant Management System \(GMS\)](#) to better serve applicants and grantees, and further improve the grant-making process. GMS is an online, end-to-end system that spans the entire grant lifecycle. The GMS enables applicants and grantees to apply for and manage grants, including through actions such as fulfilling reporting requirements and requesting reimbursement of grant-funded activities. The launch of GMS represented a considerable investment by SJI and reinforces its commitment to improving the grant application and management process and advancing state courts’ use of technology. A series of brief [videos](#) is also available to GMS users. Additional resources include a [Grant Application Guide](#) and a [Grant Management Guide](#).





THE FOURTH DECADE

2014 — 2024

TAKING INNOVATION TO SCALE

A circular graphic composed of many small white stars arranged in concentric arcs. In the center of the circle, the number '40' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font, with the word 'YEARS' written below it in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. Two horizontal white lines extend from the left and right sides of the circle, crossing the bottom edge of the star pattern.

40
YEARS

The past decade has been one of significant changes for state and local courts. As courts' user demands increased, state courts across the United States responded in various ways. Perhaps the most significant change was the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on state court operations. State courts are still working to determine what institutional changes remain post-pandemic. The opioid crisis, compounded with often cooccurring substance use, in both urban and rural communities challenged courts and their justice-system partners to figure out how best to respond to individuals and their families, and determine alternative methods of providing services. The racial justice movement brought the issue of court fines, fees, and bail practices to the forefront, and challenged courts to determine methods of addressing these issues despite the limitations of being only one branch of the government. Finally, rapid technological changes over the past decade led courts to adopt solutions to better serve the public in an online environment.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response and Recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic deeply impacted the US justice system. State courts, attorneys, and all justice-involved people drastically altered the way they conduct business due to the pandemic. As courthouses closed and court systems moved to virtual interactions, the court community rallied to respond to the ever-growing demands of justice-involved people, as any slowdowns or restrictions on court operations would have significant implications for essential services and urgent matters for individuals such as detainees and inmates, victims of violence, parents or guardians with custody issues, and tenants facing evictions. State courts at all levels across the country implemented strategies to continue providing access to justice.

“When COVID hit, every court in America was desperate to keep the doors open amidst a peril we had never faced. The State Justice Institute was there for us, helping, successfully, to find the keys. SJI’s proven, dependable support made it possible for the nation’s state courts to provide justice to all through the most difficult times we had ever faced.”

Nathan Hecht, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Texas; Co-Chair of the CCJ-COSCA Pandemic Rapid Response Team

In immediate response to the pandemic, SJI supported the CCJ and COSCA [Pandemic Rapid Response Team](#) (RRT) in March 2020. This group of chief justices and state court administrators created a road map for court operations during and after the pandemic and continue to provide critical guidance and resources to the court community. Previously, SJI funded a first-of-its-kind [National Pandemic Summit](#) at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in May 2019. The summit included court leaders, public health officials, legislators, and executive branch officials from 25 states and three territories. The summit focused on the need for states to plan and prepare for a pandemic, which ultimately proved incredibly valuable to the COVID-19 response.

SJI made [Emergency Preparedness and Cybersecurity](#) one of its [Priority Investment Areas](#), and invested considerable resources to support the courts in pandemic planning, response, and

recovery activities. SJI supported [projects](#) that examined the future of judicial service delivery by identifying and replicating innovations and alternate means of conducting court business because of the pandemic. In 2022, SJI convened the grantees for a [collaborative review](#) of key insights emerging from these projects. Over 40 court and justice-system professionals attended the event, which consisted of four small-group topical panels and two large-group discussions.



Behavioral Health

The opioid crisis has impacted every aspect of the nation's public safety and judicial system. Beginning in 2010, the shift from prescription opioid abuse to heroin and fentanyl use caused a dramatic spike in overdose deaths in some regions of the United States, particularly in the Midwest and the South. Drug-related arrests involving opioids skyrocketed. In many communities, court dockets and probation caseloads were filled with individuals with opioid use disorders. Access to treatment was limited, particularly in rural communities.

In 2017, SJI funded a comprehensive strategy for responding to the challenges state courts face in addressing the national opioid crisis. In partnership with CCJ, COSCA, and other key stakeholders, SJI provided funding to create the CCJ/COSCA [National Judicial Opioid Task Force](#) (NJOTF). This initiative identified and documented interbranch activities to address the opioid crisis. Representatives from state and federal government and key national organizations shared strategies and identified unmet needs. The NJOTF created

partnerships to address the impact of opioids on children, with specific emphasis on foster care, assisting state courts in developing opioid task forces, and working with existing state task forces to recommend local response efforts. In addition, the NJOTF developed guiding principles that state courts can use to ensure successful collaboration among treatment providers, criminal justice systems, and child welfare agencies.

The NJOTF pursued short- and long-term objectives that: 1) highlighted the landscape of current responses and effective practices; 2) established a mechanism to engage justice-system partners in collaborative efforts; and 3) provided immediate tools for state courts to use in addressing the opioid crisis. NJOTF activities include:

- Launching the [Opioid Resource Center for Courts](#).

“The misuse of drugs, including opioids, continues to be a devastating public health crisis critically affecting courts. SJI’s support provided a path for the justice system to lead the way in delivering solutions for courts to better handle this crisis. The complexity of the problem requires a multifaceted approach, including working collaboratively.”

Loretta Rush, Chief Justice, Indiana Supreme Court; National Judicial Opioid Task Force Co-Chair

- Finalizing the [Five NJOTF Principles](#).
- Conducting a survey of members of CCJ and COSCA regarding their needs related to the opioid epidemic.
- Collecting, disseminating, and evaluating court-based interventions related to the opioid epidemic.
- Coordinating efforts with other key stakeholders, such as HHS; the National Governors Association; National Association of Attorneys General; National Council of State Legislatures; National Association of Counties; National Sheriffs' Association; American Society of Addiction Medicine; American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry; and National Association of Drug Court Professionals.



In addition to impacting criminal courts, opioid abuse has also deeply impacted the nation's family and juvenile courts and child welfare systems. A report by HHS/ Administration for Children and Families shows that from FY 2000 to FY 2019, the percentage of removals nationally due to parental substance abuse increased from 18.5 percent to 38.9 percent—an increase of 20.4 percentage points.¹ Thirteen (13) states reported that 50 percent or more of the removals are due to parental substance abuse.²

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) significantly impact the likelihood of future substance abuse, violence, and justice-system involvement.³ Prevention and intervention strategies, such as early identification of trauma and trauma-informed treatment, significantly reduce the impacts of ACEs. With SJI's support, the NCSC, the Institute for Intergovernmental Research (IIR), the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ), and the NJC developed a collaboration to assist state courts in addressing the impact of opioids on children and families.



Additionally, SJI partnered with the US Department of Justice (DOJ)/Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to provide funding to rural demonstration sites through the [Rural Responses to the Opioid Epidemic](#) (RROE) initiative. SJI funding enabled the demonstration sites to include the state courts in their work, and ensured courts had the resources they needed to contribute to

- 1 US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, *The AFCARS Report* (Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, 2020), <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/afcarsreport27.pdf>.
- 2 "Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS)," US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, accessed 2019, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/data-research/adoption-fostercare>.
- 3 Jill Levenson and Melissa Grady, "Childhood Adversity, Substance Abuse, and Violence: Implications for Trauma-Informed Social Work Practice," *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions* 16, no. 1-2 (2016).

the overall objectives of each site. IIR—a nonprofit that has a long history of serving as a technical assistance provider for BJA grants—provided the coordination and technical assistance for this initiative.

Building upon the RROE, with funding from SJI, and in partnership with Rulo Strategies, the NCSC launched the Rural Justice Collaborative (RJC) in January 2021 to showcase the strengths of rural communities and highlight the cross-sector collaboration that is a hallmark of rural justice systems. A cross-sector advisory council composed of rural judges, along with additional stakeholders in the justice, child welfare, behavioral health, and public health systems, supported the work under the RJC. The RJC [Online Resource Center](#), launched in late spring 2021, served as a national clearinghouse of promising and innovative rural justice practices. The RJC identified mentor sites that hosted virtual or in-person site visits; answered questions from other rural communities via phone, email, or webinars; and participated in conferences and workshops to share promising and innovative rural justice practices.



In this decade, SJI and its partners continued working to address mental illness and mental health on a national level. This was in response to the increasing complexity of handling individuals who have mental illnesses, and oftentimes a cooccurring substance use issue, in state courts. System wide, mental illness placed a strain on many communities and their resources, and communities were using jails to detain those who needed mental health treatment. Promising approaches were explored to address this problem:

- The [Sequential Intercept Model](#) (SIM) identified where to intercept individuals with mental illness as they move through the criminal justice system, suggested which populations might be targeted at each point of interception, and highlighted the decision makers who can authorize movement away from or through the criminal justice system.
- Mental health codes required modification to permit timely, appropriately targeted, court-ordered treatment for persons with mental illness, before and after contact with the justice system.

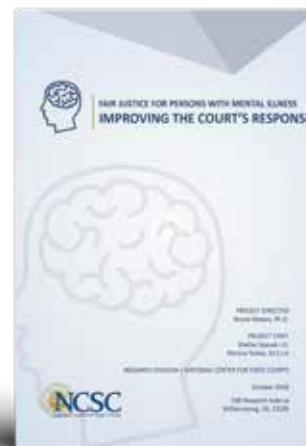
It has also been acknowledged that individuals who are intercepted by the criminal justice system often have cooccurring mental health and substance use issues, including opioid addiction.

With SJI's support, CCJ/COSCA, in coordination with the NCSC:

- Developed resources, best practices, and recommended standards to address mental illness and the state courts' response.
- Expanded the NCSC mental health [website](#) to create a centralized repository for state courts interested in improving court and community responses.



- Provided resources to improve case-flow management for civil commitment cases as well as felony and misdemeanor cases involving persons with mental illness.
- Provided education by developing national, regional, and statewide training and education opportunities for judges and court practitioners.
- Developed guides and resources on the SIM, and adapted the SJI-funded Arizona presiding judge guide titled [*Fair Justice for Persons with Mental Illness: Improving the Court's Response*](#) for use nationally.
- [Built the capacity](#) for state and national court leaders to lead and implement reforms.



Despite these resources, the state courts still needed assistance in dealing with the opioid crisis; most notably, state courts needed assistance with individuals with mental health issues who also had cooccurring substance use disorders. Communities were flooded with fentanyl, and stimulant (methamphetamine and cocaine) use was on the rise. In response, SJI established a Behavioral Health Collaborative Grant Program to document and promote innovative court-based programs that address substance use and mental illness. SJI and its collaborative partners continued to identify court-based programs that integrated substance use and behavioral health approaches such as screening, assessment, and programming, and shared those innovative approaches with the broader court community. Using these innovative behavioral health approaches, the program provided additional technical assistance and training to courts across the United States, conducted process and outcome evaluations of these new sites, and monitored implementation and overall impact. Additional activities included:

- Providing resources to promote court-based programs that treat entire families across case types, so parents and children are linked with critical services.
- Addressing the mental health and trauma of children who are involved in the courts, in both dependency and delinquency cases.
- Pilot testing and expanding to new jurisdictions the SIM for child welfare, with a behavioral health focus.
- Addressing polysubstance abuse, such as the increase in methamphetamine and other stimulant use, and assisting state courts in designing flexible systems to address the full continuum of care.
- Reducing recidivism by supporting court-based programs that link formerly incarcerated individuals to medical, psychiatric, housing, employment, educational, and other critical assistance.

Addressing individuals with behavioral health needs in state courts is a critical component of the national response. Despite significant new investments of federal funding in response to the opioid crisis, more resources were needed to assist state courts in delivering successful outcomes. State and local governments, including the courts, bear the greatest burden in shouldering the primary and secondary costs of untreated mental health and substance use issues. Furthermore, the state courts are the most likely point

of intersection between a community and an individual with behavioral health needs, and are the most frequent referral point for treatment. These issues are not confined to state criminal courts—family, juvenile, and civil dockets have been exponentially affected by the scope and magnitude of mental illness and cooccurring substance use.

Advancing Justice Reform



With support from SJI and DOJ/BJA, CCJ and COSCA formed a [National Task Force on Fines, Fees and Bail Practices](#) to address the ongoing impact that court fines, court fees, and bail practices have on communities. One of the aims of the nationally led initiative was to understand and address how fines, fees, and bail disproportionately impact the economically disadvantaged across the United States.

The Task Force comprised national judicial and legal leaders and policy makers from state, county, and municipal governments. The Task Force coauthors formed three working groups: 1) Access to Justice and Fairness; 2) Transparency, Governance & Structural Reform; and 3) Accountability, Judicial Performance and Qualifications, and Oversight.

Among other significant accomplishments, the Task Force:

- drafted model statutes, court rules, written policies, processes, and procedures for setting, collecting, and waiving court-imposed payments;
- compiled and created suggested best practices for setting, processing, and codifying the collection of fines, fees, and bail;
- reviewed and revised suggested guidelines for qualifications and oversight of judges in courts created by local governments or traffic courts, including state codes of judicial conduct and the jurisdiction of judicial conduct commissions to ensure their applicability to all judges;
- facilitated a court “hackathon” designed to develop innovative technological solutions that ensure courts are providing 21st-century customer service through mobile applications and software platforms; and
- developed an online clearinghouse of information containing resources and best practices.

Despite major efforts to address the equitable enforcement of fines, fees, and bail, serious issues remained. The unjust imposition of fines and fees also raised significant public policy concerns. Imposing and enforcing fines and fees on individuals who cannot afford to pay them has been shown to cause profound harm. The detrimental effects of unjust fines and fees fall disproportionately on low-income communities and people of color, who are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Fines and fees can be particularly burdensome for youths, who may be unable to pay court-issued fines and fees themselves, burdening parents and guardians who may face untenable choices between paying court debts or paying for basic necessities. In addition, many jurisdictions continued to base pretrial release decisions on monetary payment as the primary condition, thus elevating



the economic status of the defendant over risk assessments. This can lead to other disparities. For example, as people of color face disproportionately high rates of poverty, they were disproportionately more likely to be incarcerated.

In response, SJI funded the CCJ/COSCA [Fines, Fees, and Pretrial Taskforce 2.0](#) in FY 2023, which: 1) updated the landscape of initiatives undertaken by state courts; 2) broadened the Taskforce's

scope to include fees and fines in juvenile cases; and 3) developed and disseminated practical tools and educational materials to assist state courts across the country.

Juvenile and Family Justice Reform

SJI funded many innovative projects that have led to broader juvenile justice reform at the national, state, and local levels. In FY 2017, SJI funded the Juvenile Justice and State Courts Reform Initiative, which convened a steering committee of judges, court administrators, and other national experts to consider subgrants for unique projects at the state and local levels. A subgrant enabled the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts to implement the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice's four-phase framework to provide juvenile justice, child welfare, judicial branch, and other relevant youth-serving agencies with training, technical assistance, and consultation on youth who are at risk of being, or have been, sexually exploited. However, more was needed to address the unique challenges of child abuse and neglect cases in state courts.

In FY 2023, SJI [awarded grants](#) through a special Request for Applications process. The purpose of these grants was to further improve state court efforts to address child abuse and neglect. The projects enhanced state and local courts' ability to handle challenging cases, and better serve youths and their families. The projects also addressed one or more of the following key principles:

- keeping families together;
- ensuring access to justice;
- cultivating cultural responsiveness;
- engaging families through alternative dispute resolution techniques;
- ensuring child safety, permanency, and well-being;
- ensuring adequate and appropriate family time;

“As our court system considered the issue of access to justice, we identified a significant need to bolster legal representation of parents in the child welfare system where conflict of interest issues require separate counsel. Given the nature and scope of that need, we knew that it would be a tremendous effort and we would benefit from consulting services involved in supporting and improving the administration of justice in state courts. Through a grant from SJI we were able to contract for those consulting services, and our court system is now in the initial phase of establishing a much-needed office of parent conflict attorneys in child welfare cases. The SJI grant has been instrumental in helping us achieve our goal.”

Honorable Kathryn Hens-Greco, Administrative Judge
of the Fifth Judicial District Court of Pennsylvania

- providing judicial oversight;
- ensuring competent and adequately compensated representation; and
- advancing the development of adequate resources.

SJI gave priority consideration for funding to projects that focused on institutionalizing, replicating, and/or building on national best practices and procedures surrounding child abuse and neglect case processing, in addition to meeting all other application requirements.

Over the past decade, SJI supported the NCJFCJ's [Enhanced Juvenile Justice Guidelines](#), which ensured that courts have a way to determine if their practices align with recommended practices. In 2017, the NCJFCJ updated the Guidelines so the resource was relevant to the field. In the years between the original publication and the update, there were significant changes in juvenile justice practices, such as advances in brain science and a better understanding of adolescent behavior.

With SJI's additional support in FY 2019, the NCJFCJ selected four juvenile court jurisdiction sites to participate in an Enhanced Juvenile Justice Guidelines demonstration project. These sites provided the NCJFCJ with information about the accessibility and usability of the Guidelines, which assisted the NCJFCJ in further developing tools and technical assistance. Finally, in FY 2023, SJI's support enabled the NCJFCJ to: 1) further develop the Court Self-Assessment Tool; 2) identify and address the needs of the juvenile justice field by using additional demonstration sites to expand the focus areas to include dual-status youths and youths with mental health disorders; and 3) promulgate the Guidelines as widely as possible to ensure their broad adoption nationwide.



Juvenile court judges are the most important public figures in the juvenile justice system—each year, their decisions impact whether hundreds of thousands of youths become court involved and for how long, whether they are involuntarily removed from their homes and communities, and what services they receive. Despite the importance of these judges, states and locales have generally not assessed whether and how the structures, roles, and operations of their juvenile courts support or hinder public safety and positive youth outcomes.



With SJI's support, the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center and the NCJFCJ conducted an analysis in 2021 of how courts that handle juvenile delinquency cases are structured and operate in all 50 states. The final report, [Courting Judicial Excellence in Juvenile Justice: A 50-State Study](#), highlighted key recommendations to improve juvenile court policy and practice and includes examples of best practices across the country. Key recommendations included:

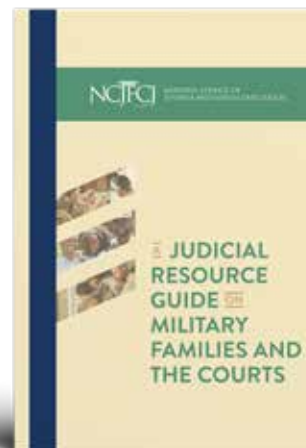
1. Establish specialized and dedicated juvenile and family court judges.
2. Ensure that judges hearing delinquency cases have the tools and resources necessary to adjudicate delinquency cases in a developmentally appropriate way.
3. Require all judges who hear delinquency cases to receive ongoing training on juvenile justice.
4. Establish dedicated forums focused on strengthening and supporting juvenile courts.
5. Identify statewide performance measures for juvenile courts.

Building off the report, CSG and the NCJFCJ conducted an initiative that provided technical assistance with implementing the report's recommendations in three states: Oregon, Montana, and Mississippi. CSG and the NCJFCJ also created and launched a first-of-its-kind juvenile justice court training institute on juvenile court research and best practices as a resource for judges that handle delinquency cases.

In FY 2022, CSG and the NCJFCJ conducted a follow-up implementation initiative to advance the recommendations outlined in the report at both the state and national levels by: 1) providing three states with intensive technical assistance in strengthening juvenile court policy and practice, in alignment with research on what works in improving public and youth outcomes; and 2) creating an unprecedented juvenile justice court training institute to serve as a resource for judges who handle delinquency cases.

With SJI funding, the NCJFCJ hosted the first-ever [National Summit on Courts and the Military](#) in 2015. The goal of the summit was to create a forum for collaborative relationships between the state courts and military bases to better assist military families. Post-summit, the NCJFCJ worked to identify the following major needs: 1) education and training for courts and the military on their roles and responsibilities; 2) resources for military families; 3) judicial and command collaboration; 4) judicial and command leadership; and 5) assessment of military families' needs and risks. These needs were further highlighted via surveys of family and juvenile court judges, who confirmed they wanted to know more about issues such as kinship care for children of deployed parent(s), the effects of military service on neurological and psychological status, and domestic violence issues. A second national summit was held in 2019 to further national discussion among those engaged with justice-involved service members, including discussion about how best to assist justice-involved service members. The Summit was a targeted "deep dive" into the realities of the information and practices needed to promote effective court-military systems' communication and collaboration.

SJI further enabled the NCJFCJ to launch a Military Families in Juvenile and Family Courts Initiative. The initiative formulated uniform standards for information and resource sharing, with a major emphasis on developing templates for memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between state courts and military posts; identified juvenile and family courts in jurisdictions with a significant military presence and recruited them to serve as pilot sites; created an online [National Resource Center](#) on Military-Connected Families and the Courts, which included documents for state courts and military installations, such as template MOUs, bench cards, resource



guidelines, and links to services; and developed a training curriculum on the unique issues of military families for judges, military commands, and key stakeholders.

The [Landscape of Domestic Relations Cases in State Courts](#), published in 2018 by the SJI-funded [Cady Initiative for Family Justice Reform](#), documented the severe deficiencies in family court data. Since then, the NCSC has worked with courts to improve family case management. These efforts have not been fully successful because courts lack the data or capacity to analyze processes beyond the basics. For example, many cases, whether contested or uncontested, consume the same amount of time, demonstrating that cases are not managed commensurate with need. In part, this is because many courts are unable to distinguish if a case is contested or not until months after filing. Furthermore, the data revealed that one in four family cases, especially cases involving children, are reopened. Many courts still face challenges in reporting whether an activity is pre- or post-decree.



In response, and with SJI grant support, the Cady Initiative created a cohort of courts that used data to manage family cases effectively, which served as a national model.

The NCSC: 1) selected three to four court sites according to strict readiness criteria, analyzed their data, and recommended improvements; 2) created a dashboard that the courts populate and use to manage cases via individual and group coaching; and 3) analyzed collective results, publicized the findings, and solicited the next cohort of court sites.

Civil Justice Initiative

In July 2016, CCJ and COSCA adopted a [Call to Action: Achieving Civil Justice for All](#), which included recommendations designed to secure the fair, speedy, and inexpensive resolution of civil cases in state courts. The SJI-funded Civil Justice Initiative (CJI) recommendations present a comprehensive framework that features: 1) a pathway approach based on the concept of proportionality in which civil rules and court resources are matched to the unique needs of each case; 2) a radically different staffing model for civil case processing that delegates substantial responsibility for routine case-flow management to specially trained professional staff, supported by effective case automation, permitting judges to focus on tasks that require their unique training and expertise; and 3) a renewed focus on high-volume calendars that comprise the vast majority of contemporary civil caseloads, especially improved access for self-represented litigants, greater attention to uncontested cases, and greater security on claims to ensure procedural fairness for litigants.

With additional support from SJI in 2020, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System and the NCSC partnered on a three-year project to implement CJI's recommendations. The report, [Transforming Our Civil Justice System for the 21st Century: A Roadmap for Implementation](#), highlights the experiences of four states—Idaho, Maine, Missouri, and Texas—as they worked to implement guidelines.

Transforming Courts

Over the past decade, state courts have integrated technological advances into daily judicial processes and proceedings. SJI supported projects that institutionalized the innovative technology that has advanced the use of electronic filing and payment systems, online dispute resolutions, remote work, and virtual court proceedings. SJI promoted projects that streamlined case filing and management processes, thereby reducing time commitments and costs for litigants and the courts; provided litigants with online access to courts to make dispute resolution more efficient; and made structural changes to court services that enabled them to evolve into an online environment.

Additionally, SJI supported the first examination of the potential for integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into court processes, including identifying the positive outcomes and potential limitations of AI. In 2023, SJI awarded the NCSC a grant to develop two products: 1) guidelines for the ethical and evidence-based use of AI technologies in the state courts; and 2) an AI Impact Assessment Tool for the state courts. The guidelines provided a framework for defining norms, values, and ethical principles related to the use of AI in state courts. The impact assessment tool assisted courts considering adopting specific AI tools in the decision-making process. The AI guidelines and the AI Impact Assessment Tool helped ensure that state courts are aligned with each other and with the latest scientific developments in their



policy making around AI. The project built a structure for keeping both the guidelines and the impact assessment tool up to date as the science of AI advanced.

State courts rely on secure and functional technological systems to serve the public; therefore, it was critical that court leadership have the knowledge and tools to mitigate, and quickly respond to, events that impact those systems. This was especially important as [cybersecurity](#) attacks increased in complexity and sophistication over the past decade, paired with natural disasters impacting technological systems. Over the past few years, three state court systems, and many local courts, have experienced cyberattacks. In 2024, SJI funded a grant for the NCSC to conduct five regional hybrid

“AI has the power to transform courts by opening new doors to access justice, creating efficiencies with legal research and drafting, and even completing some clerical tasks. Court leaders across the country are grappling with how AI will impact courts and how to plan for change in a rapidly changing landscape. SJI funding has been the catalyst to identify the benefits and risks of AI in the courts through convening the work of the CCJ COSCA Rapid Response Team and other related AI efforts. I really appreciate SJI’s vision to help the court community plan for a monumental shift in the way we do business.”

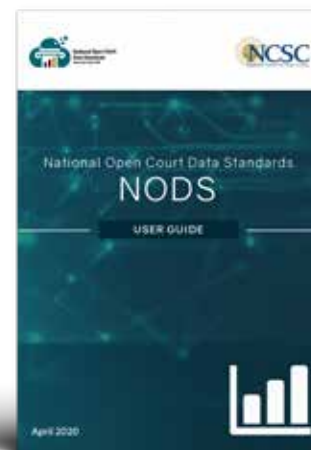
Stacey Marz, Administrative Director,
Alaska Court System, Co-Chair of the Joint
Technology Committee and member
of the AI Rapid Response Team

summits (online, then in person), where court leaders gained a deeper understanding of cybersecurity and technical disaster recovery resources and tools, enabling them to prevent, respond to, and recover from cybersecurity events.

Experts from the NCSC, Center for Internet Security/Multistate Information Sharing and Analysis Center reviewed, compiled, and created both online and in-person materials to facilitate the regional summits. The curriculum development process included members of the COSCA/National Association for Court Management (NACM) Joint Technology Committee reviewing the materials. The regional summits enabled participants to better prepare for and respond to cybersecurity events. Teams were encouraged to establish recovery plans, policies, and annual tabletop exercises to ensure ongoing preparedness for cybersecurity and disaster recovery events.

With SJI grant funding, the Utah and New York judiciaries could develop Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) platforms to better assist litigants. Both states launched ODR platforms that were mandatory for small claims cases. SJI also supported ODR platform development for: 1) the Tennessee Judiciary to address medical debt cases; and 2) the Ohio Judiciary to address evictions/foreclosures and family cases. These systems enabled parties to access their cases online, communicate and negotiate resolutions, receive individualized assistance from a facilitator, and if necessary, involve a judge. The systems guided users to the dates of their trials, which were often held online. Court processes were adapted to work efficiently in an online environment without sacrificing parties' rights or interests. ODR proved to be easier, faster, and cheaper than traditional practices, while providing all parties the opportunity to be heard and treated fairly.

The [National Open Court Data Standards](#) (NODS) were developed by the NCSC, and were endorsed by COSCA and the NACM. The purpose of the SJI-funded NODS implementation project was to facilitate the consistency and sharing of state court data by standardizing logical and technical data standards. The NCSC worked with states to help them assess their needs and develop strategic plans for NODS adoption, helping courts map their data to the standards and creating programs that enabled consistent extracts. NCSC also assisted courts in developing data governance policies related to data standards, data quality, and data sharing. NCSC applied the knowledge gained from this process to create implementation case studies, improve leadership and user guides for NODS, and create a NODS guide for users of court data.



State courts must rely on a deliberate process to determine organizational values, missions, visions, goals, and objectives. During the past decade, SJI continued to promote [structured planning processes and organizational assessments](#) to assist courts in setting priorities, allocating resources, and identifying areas for ongoing improvements in efficiency and effectiveness. Strategic planning included elements of court governance; data collection, management, analysis, and sharing; and sustainable court governance models that drive decision making. Strategic plans and outcomes were communicated to judges, court staff, justice partners, and the public.

Technical Assistance Projects to State and Local Courts

TA Grants provide state and local courts with funding to obtain expert assistance to diagnose a problem, develop a response to that problem, and initiate implementation of any needed changes. While much smaller in size, scope, and awarded amount than Project or Partner Grants, TA Grants are still valuable to state and local courts because the funding enables them to address significant issues such as caseload management, strategic planning, and behavioral health.

SJI awards numerous TA Grants each year that have a positive impact on the state courts. These include grants to:

- the Kentucky Judiciary to assess the court system’s access to, and use of, mental health and substance use treatment and recovery supports, and to host a [Mental Health Summit](#) that convened community teams to collaborate and more effectively respond to the needs of court-involved individuals with mental health and substance use disorders;
- the New Hampshire Judicial Branch for strategic planning and technology projects;
- the Kansas Judicial Branch for an organizational assessment and to implement e-filing services for self-represented litigants;
- the 18th Judicial District of Kansas to transition from a centralized court calendaring system to an individual one;
- the Connecticut Judicial Branch for electronic records management and triage projects;
- the Pennsylvania courts to conduct a statewide Behavioral Health and Recovery Summit;
- the Texas courts for various projects, including family law cases and municipal court improvements; and
- the Illinois Supreme Court for a mental health task force implementation project.

In addition to supporting TA Grants in the 50 states and the District of Columbia, SJI has also supported the judiciaries in Puerto Rico, Guam, the US Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

“Improving the lives of Kentuckians with mental health and substance use needs involves collaborative and innovative approaches. The Kentucky Judicial Commission on Mental Health Summit was designed to foster these connections and develop effective solutions. It was a pivotal event in advancing a comprehensive response to individuals experiencing mental illness and substance use disorder. We are profoundly thankful to the State Justice Institute for their support in making this event a reality.”

Katie C. Comstock, Director, Administrative Office of the Kentucky Courts

Sharing Solutions

SJI remains committed to sharing innovative solutions and helping state courts in other ways beyond its grant making.

Online Solutions

In 2020, SJI launched the online [Funding Toolkit for State Courts and Justice System Partners](#). The Funding Toolkit is designed to support local courts, state courts, and their justice-system partners as they pursue federal and philanthropic funding opportunities. This toolkit includes resources that encompass the entire grant seeking, writing, and management process, such as planning checklists, sample documents, frequently asked questions, and fact sheets. Technical assistance is also available to courts, including support and feedback during the grant writing and development process. The contents of the Funding Toolkit were updated regularly and largely included:



1. specific federal funding and nonprofit funding resources most relevant to courts
2. an overview of each funding opportunity, along with detailed guides and sample templates for required application documents
3. virtual learning opportunities such as webinars and podcasts
4. a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section with a highlighted question of the week to be shared on social media to direct people to the toolkit
5. a link to access virtual technical assistance related to current grant opportunities or general funding inquiries



Courts and Counties

In 2022, with SJI's support, the National Association of Counties, Rulo Strategies, and Praxis Consulting launched an initiative to support justice-oriented strategic planning co-led by judges and elected county leaders. This timely project leveraged the renewed interest many courts have, post-pandemic, in partnering with local stakeholders to expand the resources available to the courts. Ten diverse local and regional locations served as pilot sites. Some sites aligned their work

under an existing planning group, while others formed new bodies to support their planning. Each site engaged diverse stakeholders representing the court, elected county leadership, law enforcement, corrections, behavioral health, and other stakeholders.

Informed by the work with the 10 pilot sites, the project team launched a national toolkit highlighting the key components of the planning initiative. The [County, Court, and Justice Leaders Framework](#) is a resource for court leaders and their partners to explore a variety of effective models spanning prearrest diversion strategies to reentry models that reduce

recidivism. The toolkit is also a one-stop shop for the most up-to-date information and research published by leading national experts. The toolkit addresses various topics, including strategies to reduce community violence, build a behavioral health continuum, reduce overdose deaths, establish diversion and alternative-to-incarceration opportunities, strengthen family justice systems, and reintegrate individuals back into the community upon reentry. Court, county, and justice leaders can also access federal funding resources that align with different strategies and information about no-cost technical assistance opportunities.

Support for Professional Court Associations

Since FY 2010, SJI has supported 15 grants to NACM totaling approximately \$2.24 million. These grants have supported the educational sessions at NACM's midyear and annual conferences, the development of the [NACM Core](#)[®], and special white papers. NACM has been a testing ground for new trends, such as SJI's focus on opioids, human trafficking, public trust and confidence, behavioral health, and pandemic response in the state courts. NACM's willingness to make resources available online—specifically, videos from meeting events which NACM

“This project reminds me of the stone soup parable. You have the one person who brings the magical stone to the town, and people say they have nothing to contribute. But this person helps people understand that they have something to contribute. They get one person to bring the carrots and one to bring the potatoes, and all of a sudden, and they have this amazing soup. This is what this project is about – the consultant team bringing ideas to our communities but empowering us to take action as a collective.”

Judge Tamara R. Bernstein, Cambria County

posts on its YouTube channel—has been well received by SJI's social media audience and key stakeholders. The wide reach of NACM's conference programming provided SJI with a unique opportunity to support core state court curriculum development and integration. Recently, SJI awarded a grant that will enable NACM to support the 2024 conferences and regional educational opportunities. As in previous years, NACM developed and implemented educational sessions that targeted several of SJI's Priority Investment Areas.



From left to right: former Board Member John Nalbandian; Executive Director Jonathan Mattiello. Following Senate Judiciary hearing for Judge Nalbandian's appointment to the Federal Judiciary. March 7, 2018.

SJI has also provided extensive grant support to other court associations for educational sessions and special projects, including the [American Judges Association](#), the [National Association of Women Judges](#), the [National Association of State Judicial Educators](#), the [Council of Chief Judges of the State Courts of Appeal](#), and the [National Association for Presiding Judges and Court Executive Officers](#).

“NACM truly cherishes its partnership with the State Justice Institute. We are indebted to SJI for its financial contributions to our education programs which are a significant factor in the success of our national conferences and regional seminars. SJI has recently provided funds for NACM to take the CORE to those in regions of the country who lack the financial resources, but retain a strong interest and commitment to professional growth. Many of the SJI priority areas over the years have been identified by NACM leadership as a priorities of its membership as well. This partnership is not a matter of convenience, rather two organizations that place values on the same ideals of fairness and accessibility for justice for all.”

Rick Pierce, Judicial Programs Administrator, Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts; National Association for Court Management President (2023-2024).

Looking Ahead to the Next Decade

SJI remains the only source of federal or private funding dedicated exclusively to improving the quality of justice in the state courts. There is a strong national interest in continuing to support the state courts, as there is in federal funding for state and local law enforcement, corrections, prosecution, and public defense. The state courts handle over 99 percent of all the cases in the United States.⁴ In 2022, state courts handled 64.6 million new cases, an increase of 2 percent over 2021. New civil cases were up 5 percent from 2021 to 2022; domestic relations and criminal cases were up 2 percent; traffic cases increased by 1 percent; and juvenile cases increased by 7 percent. Nearly the entire increase in juvenile cases resulted from increased delinquency cases, reversing a downward trend over the last five years.⁵

It is anticipated that over the next decade, cyberattacks on state courts will continue to increase in number and complexity. State courts will need assistance to employ technology initiatives that protect infrastructure, data, and applications from cyberattacks. State courts were impacted by the “Great Resignation,” or the high numbers of individuals leaving the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the next decade, state courts will continue

4 National Center for State Courts, Court Statistics Project, *State Court Caseload Digest* (Williamsburg, VA: National Center for State Courts, 2018).

5 National Center for State Courts, Court Statistics Project, *2022 Caseload Highlights* (Williamsburg, VA: National Center for State Courts, 2024).

to face a lack of resources for recruiting and retaining judges and court staff. How technology can fill this gap in staffing will be a major question. One solution that will continue to be deployed is the use of technology to address these shortages and meet the ever-increasing demand among court users for online case management. AI will no doubt play a major role in all facets of court processes. How AI can be used efficiently, effectively, and ethically will be a major focus. Finally, state courts will face challenges in ensuring access to justice for citizens and businesses, both large and small, that require adjudication of disputes.

Over the next decade, SJI will leverage funding whenever possible to help the state courts address the most critical issues. SJI will continue to focus on using its [Priority Investment Areas](#) to address court issues on a national level and will maintain flexibility to adapt the SIG program to address emerging topics. The effectiveness of the state courts is critical to ensuring that the public experiences the justice guaranteed by the Constitution. SJI will continue identifying issues that impact all courts, fostering innovative solutions, and sharing information about successful approaches nationwide.



Board Vice Chair Dan Becker and Chief Justice of Puerto Rico Maite Oronoz-Rodriguez. Supreme Court of Puerto Rico, December 5, 2022.

Improving the Quality of Justice in State Courts:

Innovative Problem Solving Throughout the Years (1984 – 2014)

The First Decade

1984 – 1994

- Family Violence
- Juvenile Justice Issues
- Access to Justice
- Drug Courts
- State-Federal Jurisdiction
- Alternative Dispute Resolution
- Future of the State Courts

The Second Decade

1994 – 2004

- Domestic Violence
- Sentencing
- Public Trust & Confidence in the Courts
- Jury Systems Standards & Improvement
- Sexual Assault Cases
- Courthouse Security & Disaster Preparedness

The Third Decade

2004 – 2014

- Reengineering
- Self-Represented Litigation
- Language Access in the Courts
- Immigration Issues & the Courts
- Human Trafficking & the Courts
- Elder Issues
- Executive Session for State Court Leaders in the 21st Century



THE FIRST DECADE

1984 — 1994

A VISION MATERIALIZED

A circular graphic composed of many small white stars arranged in concentric arcs. In the center of the circle, the number "40" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font, with the word "YEARS" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font directly below it. Two horizontal white lines extend from the left and right sides of the circle, crossing the bottom edge of the page.

40
YEARS

The first decade of SJI involved building a foundation for how SJI would meet its mission to improve administration in state courts. Key themes that emerged included access to justice; juvenile justice; drug courts (now known more commonly as treatment courts); state-federal court cooperation and jurisdiction over case filings; alternative dispute resolution, including the use of mediation to reduce time commitments and costs for litigants; and the future of state courts in the next decade.

Access to Justice

Since its inception, SJI has supported a broad variety of projects designed to provide all Americans with “ready access to a fair and effective system of justice,” which is one of SJI’s statutory mandates. Among the numerous Access to Justice projects SJI has supported throughout the years, one of the most notable projects was a Self-Service Center pilot program in Maricopa County, Arizona.

SJI funded the development and initial operation of the program to assist self-represented litigants in the Superior and Justice Courts of Maricopa County. The Self-Service Center provided an extensive array of court services to litigants in Maricopa and other Arizona counties both within the courthouse and online. In addition, the system was created in both English and Spanish. Not only did the program successfully provide essential services to self-represented litigants, but it was also nationally recognized by a Ford Foundation Innovations in American Government award.

Since SJI’s initial funding of the pilot, the program has expanded across Arizona and has served as a model for similar initiatives in other states across the country, which have replicated many aspects of the Self-Service Center.



Family Violence

In the early 1990s, SJI recognized that profound changes were occurring in the way the justice system responded to family violence. States were rapidly enacting legislation that clearly defined family violence as a crime and set out judicial procedures for protecting victims. As a result, all components of the state court system, including family, criminal, civil, juvenile, and appellate courts, were inundated with family violence cases.

In response to these increasing challenges, SJI sponsored numerous projects that improved the way courts viewed and treated domestic violence cases. Most significantly, in 1993, the NCJFCJ, with a grant from SJI, hosted the first national conference on family violence and the courts, titled *Courts and Communities: Confronting Violence in the Family*. The conference convened over 400

participants, including judges, prosecutors, advocates, service providers, legislators, and attorneys. The participants formed teams representing each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Not only did the conference spur the state teams to establish court-community partnerships to combat family violence in their home jurisdictions, but it also provided the impetus for judicial and legislative reforms to improve how the courts handle domestic violence cases.

The impact of the conference was felt well beyond the event. Following the conference, SJI continued to support this area by awarding grants to 15 states to establish state or local coordinating councils, hold state conferences modeled on the national conference, or implement their action plans in other ways. Furthermore, SJI awarded three follow-up grants to the NCJFCJ's Family Violence Project to provide training and technical assistance. The Family Violence Project handled over 1,500 technical assistance requests; trained more than 2,700 judges and court personnel; published a series of newsletters; and conducted workshops related to family violence. SJI grants helped make positive and lasting changes in the state courts' response to family violence issues.

Juvenile Justice Issues

Between 1980 and 1993, Congress enacted numerous federal laws that imposed special responsibilities on state courts in cases involving children. Most notably, the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980⁶ required state court judges to determine whether state child welfare agencies have made “reasonable efforts” to keep families together before placing children in foster homes.

From 1988 to 1991, SJI awarded grants to the NCJFCJ that supported nationwide training and technical assistance to help judges comply with the “reasonable efforts” provisions of the 1980 legislation. These grants enabled over 1,200 judges, court personnel, and other professionals to attend educational programs within their states or jurisdictions.

In 1992, SJI funded a National Symposium on Courts, Children, and the Family. This Symposium addressed many of these federally mandated responsibilities. Following this Symposium, SJI continued supporting juvenile justice issues by working with the Department of Justice/Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the American Bar Association to convene separate national events.



6 Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980, Pub. L. No. 96-272.

Drug Courts

Throughout the nation, drug misuse has had a tremendous impact on state courts. In the early part of the 1990s, drug and drug-related cases were increasing and choking dockets in the criminal, juvenile, and family courts, partly due to the complex treatment needs of defendants whose substance use disorders would frequently return them to the courtroom. Recognizing this burgeoning crisis, CCJ/COSCA adopted resolutions recognizing that “improved coordination among agencies involved in the administration of justice is essential to the nation’s drug strategy” and that “improved linkage between the justice community and the education, treatment, and health communities is vital to the war on drugs.”



In response to these resolutions, SJI, in collaboration with the DOJ/BJA, funded the first National Conference on Substance Abuse and the Courts in 1991. The NCSC and CCJ/COSCA sponsored the conference and convened teams of judges, court administrators, and treatment providers to exchange information and ideas about how to address drug abuse’s impact on the state courts. The conference was designed to identify effective programs that courts and treatment providers used to respond to the drug crisis, and to develop state action plans that coordinate cross-disciplinary approaches to addressing substance abuse problems. Following the conference, SJI awarded follow-up grants to a series of states to enable them to carry out and implement the plans they developed at the conference.

During that same year, SJI and the US Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice (NIJ) cofunded an evaluation of the effectiveness of one of the earliest “drug courts” in Dade County (Miami), Florida. This important assessment led to subsequent grants that enabled other jurisdictions to benefit from the findings and begin establishing their own drug courts. Specifically, the Florida Administrative Office of the Courts created a manual and a training curriculum to assist rural courts in adapting the Dade County model on a smaller scale for both adults and juveniles.

Numerous drug courts (more commonly known now as treatment courts) were created across the country following the introduction of the Dade County model. With the increase in these specialty courts, the operation of these courts predictably led to unanticipated developments. In response to these issues, SJI supported a National Symposium on the Implementation and Operation of Drug Courts in 1995, which was sponsored by American University and the National Consortium of Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities Programs. The Symposium brought together multidisciplinary teams to address the challenges of the new drug courts. Highlighting the almost universal need to address these issues, nearly 500 judges, court administrators, treatment providers, and other key stakeholders from 59 jurisdictions attended the Symposium. Following the Symposium, SJI supported technical assistance for many of the teams to assist them in effectively addressing the issues associated with newly established drug courts.

State–Federal Jurisdiction

As one of its statutory mandates, SJI works closely with the federal judiciary on matters impacting state and federal courts. In 1992, SJI supported a grant to convene the National Conference on Federal-State Judicial Relationships. The conference was the first of its kind; a unique gathering of both state and federal judges who examined the health of judicial federalism. In his welcoming remarks at the opening of the conference, Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist emphasized that the state and federal courts are part of a single system dedicated to providing justice to all Americans and should work in harmony to improve judicial federalism. The conference was sponsored by the Federal Judicial Center (FJC), the US Judicial Conference, CCJ, and the NCSC.

“We need to view our systems [federal and state judiciaries] as one resource and use that resource as wisely and efficiently as we can, whether it be cooperating on the mega case, exchanging information, sharing facilities or joint planning for the future, we are at a stage where circumstances require a closer relationship among our systems.”

Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, in his welcoming remarks, National Conference on Federal-State Judicial Relationships, 1992.

The 1992 conference sparked a series of regional conferences supported in part by SJI. These smaller events better enabled state and federal judges to coordinate related cases, and regularly exchange information.

In 1994, in collaboration with the FJC, SJI supported the first National Conference on Mass Tort Litigation, where over 300 state and federal judges gathered to learn about effective ways to manage discovery, improve jurors’ understanding of complex scientific issues, and expedite fair dispositions of state and federal cases.

Throughout its existence, SJI has supported numerous projects promoting state and federal cooperation to improve the judiciary. One significant project included developing the [Manual for Cooperation Between State and Federal Courts](#), which was released in 1997, and was a collaboration between the FJC, NCSC, and SJI. The manual illustrated many different areas of court practices and court administration in which cooperation, communication, and collaboration between state and federal courts have not only improved court operations, but have resulted in efficiencies and savings of scarce funds.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

During SJI’s first decade of grant making, SJI provided funding to help courts examine the effectiveness of various nontraditional approaches to resolving conflicts. In 1988, SJI cosponsored the National Conference on Dispute Resolution and the Courts to discuss, on a national level, whether alternative dispute resolution (ADR) approaches could improve the justice system by accelerating the legal process, reducing costs to the parties and the courts, and increasing public satisfaction with the justice system.



Building on the conference, SJI supported 32 separate follow-on projects. These projects examined a variety of approaches including mediation, arbitration, early neutral evaluation, and other forms of dispute resolution, seeking to determine whether these methods provided litigants with faster, better, and cheaper means to settle their legal differences.

In 1994, SJI sponsored a second ADR conference, the National Symposium on Court-Connected Dispute Resolution Research. The purpose of this Symposium was to compile the results of the previous projects and to identify the highest-priority issues needing further exploration. Following the conference, SJI awarded grants to help courts respond to the issues identified.

Future of the State Courts

In 1990, SJI supported the National Conference on the Future of the Courts in collaboration with the American Judicature Society (AJS). The mission of the conference was to assist state courts in providing effective, fair, and responsive justice to all Americans in a future filled with expected, but undefinable change.

The 300 participants, including judges, lawyers, court administrators, legal scholars, social scientists, doctors, technologists, ethicists, and futurists, met for four days to formulate their visions of the American judicial system 30 years in the future. Attendees developed strategies that focused on the steps they had to begin taking in 1990 to bring their vision of the courts to fruition in 2020. Most participants articulated a future characterized by service-oriented courts that offer a range of conflict resolution alternatives, make imaginative use of technology, and seek to achieve humane, “win-win” outcomes.

SJI has supported a range of “futures” planning efforts. In particular, grants have helped to convene futures commissions, educational programs regarding the future of the courts, and other state-based futures activities.



THE SECOND DECADE

1994 ——— 2024

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

A circular graphic composed of many small white stars arranged in concentric arcs. In the center of the circle, the number '40' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font, with the word 'YEARS' written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font directly below it. Two horizontal white lines extend from the left and right sides of the circle, crossing the bottom edge of the star pattern.

40
YEARS

In its second decade, SJI began addressing other major challenges facing the state courts. During the mid- to late 1990s, the public paid much attention to domestic violence and sexual assault in various contexts, spurred by the passage of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994.⁷ In addition, SJI focused on sentencing reform, improving public trust and confidence in the courts, jury systems improvement efforts, and court security.

Domestic Violence

In its second decade of existence, SJI continued its work on family violence, focusing specifically on domestic violence. In 1997, SJI partnered with the DOJ/Office on Violence Against Women to support a national conference on domestic violence issues in criminal courts.

Also in 1997, SJI worked with NIJ and HHS to support a project that enabled the National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ) to produce a congressionally mandated Report to Congress on the use of expert testimony in criminal cases involving battered women.

Following these grants, SJI continued to support projects to improve the state courts' response to domestic violence, including projects on effective sentencing approaches for domestic violence offenders; the court-related implications of the full faith and credit provisions of the Violence Against Women Act; and the effective use of electronic protection order databases in combating domestic violence.

Sentencing Reform

In the 1990s, a wave of sentencing reforms focused on imposing harsher legislation, such as sentencing guidelines, mandatory minimum sentences, and “three strikes, you’re out” statutes. After these reforms were in place for some time, there was a demand to examine the effectiveness of the heightened punishments and their impact on the justice system and the public.

Recognizing this demand, SJI solicited proposals for a National Sentencing Symposium, to provide a forum to address these issues and convene a national dialogue. In 1997, SJI awarded a grant to the AJS, which collaborated with NIJ and BJA to host the Symposium. The event convened approximately 300 participants representing all facets of the criminal justice system, including state and federal judges, members of sentencing



7 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, Pub. L. No. 103-322.

commissions, prosecutors, defense attorneys, corrections and law enforcement officials, media representatives, state legislators, members of Congress, and public representatives.

SJI maintained its support of advancing research and projects to promote effective sentencing policies and practices. SJI partnered with the Pew Public Safety Performance Project on the Public Safety Performance Project, which provided funding for research, training, and technical assistance with evidence-based sentencing and corrections practices. SJI funding enabled the state courts to be a part of the nationwide project. The effort was initiated in support of a CCJ/COSCA resolution which called for: 1) adopting sentencing and corrections policies and practices that research and evaluation has shown to be effective in reducing recidivism; 2) working with the executive and legislative branches to promote such policies and practices; and 3) urging members of the judiciary to educate themselves about evidence-based programs that work.

The initial effort resulted in a ground-breaking model curriculum on evidence-based sentencing for judges; two research briefs on sentencing commissions; and several national and state-level presentations. Subsequent partnership work involved convening interbranch meetings to discuss sentencing and corrections policies; creating an online version of the model curriculum for judges; establishing a National Working Group and developing a set of guiding principles for using offender risk and needs assessment information at sentencings (subsequently endorsed by CCJ and COSCA); and providing training and technical assistance to numerous states.



In addition, SJI funded separate projects addressing evidence-based sentencing and corrections practices in California and Wisconsin. The California Risk Assessment Pilot Project (CalRAPP), jointly funded by SJI and NIC, began as a joint project of the California Administrative Office of the Courts and the Chief Probation Officers of California. The project explored ways in which evidence-based practices and offender risk and needs assessment information could be used in adult felony sentencing and violation-of-probation proceedings to reduce offender recidivism and improve offender accountability. California subsequently enacted laws that significantly changed the state's criminal justice landscape and CalRAPP. Probation chiefs in all four CalRAPP counties, together with their justice-system partners, have reported that participating in the project made them better prepared for the dramatic changes initiated by realignment.

In Wisconsin, SJI supported the Director of State Courts Office to conduct the “Enhancing Public Safety: Effective Justice Strategies” research project. The project included a comprehensive survey of all counties in the state to update an inventory on alternative practices and programming that addressed addiction, public safety, criminal behaviors, and recidivism.

Public Trust and Confidence in the Courts

During its second decade, SJI grants promoted improving the public's trust and confidence in the state courts. SJI supported a wide range of projects to improve both the public's understanding of the courts and the courts' responsiveness to citizens.

One of the seminal events that SJI supported was a national satellite “town hall” teleconference that brought together over 1,000 participants from across the country. The National Town Hall Meeting on Improving Public Confidence in the Courts was held in 1995 and was cosponsored by the AJS and the NCSC. The Town Hall successfully explored ways courts and the communities they serve could collaborate to improve public trust and confidence. Following the event, the cosponsors continued promoting the meeting's goals by making available a 30-minute video summary of the conference and a technical assistance manual for jurisdictions interested in convening their own court-community conferences.

As part of its efforts to improve the public's trust and confidence in the courts, SJI also supported projects focusing on racial and ethnic bias in the courts. In 1994, SJI funded the First National Conference on Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Bias in the Courts. Over 400 participants representing courts from all 50 states and territories gathered to develop and further their action plans to eliminate bias. Subsequently, SJI awarded follow-up grants to numerous states to assist in implementing their action plans.

Jury Systems Standards and Improvement

Beginning in the early 1990s, state courts began implementing sweeping changes to their jury systems. The American Bar Association's *Standards Relating to Juror Use and Management* provided clear guidelines for summoning and qualifying prospective jurors and treating their time and expertise as a valuable court resource. New York State was a leader in this movement, adopting one day/one trial terms of service and eliminating all occupational exemptions for jury service in 1994. Other states and districts followed in quick succession, including Arizona (1995), California (1996), Colorado (1997), the District of Columbia (1998), Virginia (1999), and Indiana (2001).

At the same time, judges and lawyers were introduced to a growing body of scholarly literature about juror comprehension and performance, which challenged traditional notions of how jurors make decisions and the factors that aid or undermine effective decision making. This new understanding led to in-court reforms—such as permitting jurors to take notes and submit written questions to witnesses, providing jurors with written copies of jury instructions, and permitting jurors to discuss the case with one another before final deliberations—designed to improve juror comprehension, performance, and satisfaction.



Sexual Assault Cases

SJI has funded projects focusing on sexual assault cases under Legal Momentum's [National Judicial Education Program](#) (NJEP). In 2004, SJI's initial funding supported the development of a curriculum and a web-based course aimed at improving state courts' responses to victims of sexual abuse in a domestic violence context. The web course consists of 13 modules and case studies, with highly interactive features.

The course was geared toward training a wide variety of justice-system professionals, including judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, court staff, victim advocates, probation department professionals, batterer intervention professionals, and others. The course helped justice-system professionals understand the many aspects of intimate partner sexual abuse cases, including the unique impacts, both psychological and physical, of intimate partner sexual abuse; the red flags indicating a domestic violence case may involve sexual abuse; the reasons these victims are uniquely reluctant to disclose; and the importance of creating a courtroom in which victims and their advisors perceive that victims can disclose with safety and respect.



Courthouse Security and Disaster Preparedness

Courthouse security and disaster preparedness have always been issues for state courts. After the attacks on September 11, 2001, threats against public spaces (in particular, courthouses), became an even greater concern. Not only was there a heightened need for security, but the range and variety of threats greatly increased. In 2005, state courts in Louisiana faced a new set of challenges in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, which demonstrated the threat these storms pose to court files, evidence storage, and computer systems.

Since 2001, SJI has assisted numerous states with their ongoing efforts to enhance court security and disaster preparedness. SJI partnered with the DOJ/US Marshals Service to provide training to state court judges on court security. SJI supported projects that included assessments of courthouses and security protocols, and the development of standards and best practices.



THE THIRD DECADE

2004 ——— 2014

A DECADE OF INNOVATION

A circular graphic composed of many small white stars arranged in concentric arcs. In the center of the circle, the number '40' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font, with the word 'YEARS' written below it in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. Two horizontal white lines extend from the left and right sides of the circle.

40
YEARS

SJI's third decade involved addressing trending issues, some of which were new and required tailored responses. The economic downturn of 2008 led to severe budget reductions for state courts. SJI responded by helping courts reengineer their processes and procedures to adapt to the new budget reality. At the same time, changing demographics in the United States led to even greater demands for language access in the courts, elder issues, a need for education on how immigration issues impact the state courts, and identification of victims of human trafficking. Overlaying SJI's work during this decade was a focus on improving court governance and performance.

Reengineering

In the early 2000s, state courts faced severe budget reductions as a direct result of the economic downturn in the United States. By 2010, almost every state was facing shortfalls, some up to 16 percent, which had a direct and lasting impact on state court budgets and threatened the administration of justice. In response to these budget reductions, SJI supported state court reengineering initiatives through its SIG program.

SJI also funded individual reengineering grants for state and local courts.

SJI funded a workload assessment of judges and court staff for the Vermont Judiciary, which resulted in various recommendations for reducing costs while ensuring access to justice. Subsequently, as a direct result of the final report's recommendations, major legislation was passed, unifying the courts in Vermont. With support from SJI, the Vermont Judiciary was able to conduct a ground-breaking outreach effort in which the Vermont Commission on Judicial Operation solicited suggestions and comments via surveys of court users and justice partners, followed up by roundtable discussions in 44 focus groups throughout the state. Over 800 individuals responded to the survey and/or participated in focus groups, and over 360 different ideas, suggestions, and proposals were made to the Commission. This extensive statewide outreach helped the Commission form proposals that were consistently cited by legislators as among the key reasons legislation was passed that unified the courts.

Additional phases of the reengineering program included technical assistance sites in Alabama, Arkansas, New Hampshire, and Nebraska. In addition, the program developed national recommendations for state courts on making policy decisions and implementing changes in areas such as centralized traffic tickets and payables; centralized jury operations; video conferencing; and utilizing technology.



Self-Represented Litigants

With the number of self-represented litigants (SRLs) increasing—in particular, within domestic relations cases—the state courts sought to respond by improving access to justice and making courts more user-friendly. State courts took various approaches, including simplifying court forms; providing one-on-one assistance; developing guides, handbooks, and instructions on how to proceed pro se; offering court-sponsored legal advice; developing court-based self-help centers; and using Internet technologies. These efforts not only empowered people to solve their own problems and improve the public’s trust and confidence in the courts, but also benefited the courts through more efficient case flow.



To address the trend in SRLs, in 2012, SJI released a special SIG program solicitation on self-represented litigation and the state courts. Demonstrating the overwhelming interest in supporting and the need to support self-represented litigants, courts and court-support organizations submitted 47 concept papers. SJI awarded multiple SIG grants that accomplished numerous goals at local, state, and national levels. The program enabled the California, Indiana, and South Carolina courts to maximize the use of college and law student volunteers to provide self-help services for self-represented litigants in urban and rural locations. At the national level, the program developed standardized definitions and counting rules for SRL cases, established case triaging techniques,

and promoted additional funding sources for providing these services. Specifically, the NCSC developed a standard set of definitions and counting rules for cases involving one or more SRLs. Also, the Self-Represented Litigation Network (SRLN) and the NCSC developed formal case triage protocols for assisting SRLs. Additionally, the SRLN facilitated state court reimbursement under Title IV-D and promoted awareness of this resource.

Language Access and the Courts

In 2013, SJI awarded a SIG to the NCSC to address limited English proficiency (LEP) issues in state courts. The NCSC worked with courts across New England, assessing their language access services and helping them find ways to share interpreters regionally. The NCSC also assisted the Tennessee Judiciary in conducting a stakeholder summit to plan for providing language access services at no cost in civil cases throughout the state.

SJI assisted state courts nationally by funding projects that supported consistent national standards for the increased ability to share resources, including the ability to share interpreters, tests, and training opportunities; the creation of regional and national databases of interpreter resources; and the development of an NCSC clearinghouse to collect data on LEP complaints to assist courts in addressing these issues. The NCSC also worked directly with courts in conducting needs assessments and assisting courts in developing their LEP plans.

SJI supported the National Summit on Language Access and the State Courts in 2012. Nearly 300 judicial leaders from 49 states, three territories, and the District of Columbia gathered to identify the challenges they faced in providing high-quality access to services and to determine the best ways to create solutions. The Summit was designed not only to educate and provide vital information to the participants, but also to engage each attendee fully in problem solving and creating action plans.

In 2013, the NCSC released [A National Call to Action, Access to Justice for Limited English Proficient Litigants: Creating Solutions to Language Barriers in State Courts](#). The report summarized the Summit and highlighted state action plans and activities. The report also presented a series of action steps state courts used to implement or improve language access programs.

Immigration Issues and the State Courts

Since 2008, SJI has addressed immigration issues in the state courts at a national level under its SIG program. As an initial step, SJI engaged state courts in a dialogue to determine how immigration issues were encountered in the courtroom. Two overarching themes emerged from this outreach effort. First, the magnitude and intensity of current and anticipated immigration challenge state courts' capacity to provide effective services, which threatens equal access to justice. Second, the intersection of federal immigration law and practice, and state law, can result in unintended consequences for litigants and state court systems, which impairs equal justice for all.



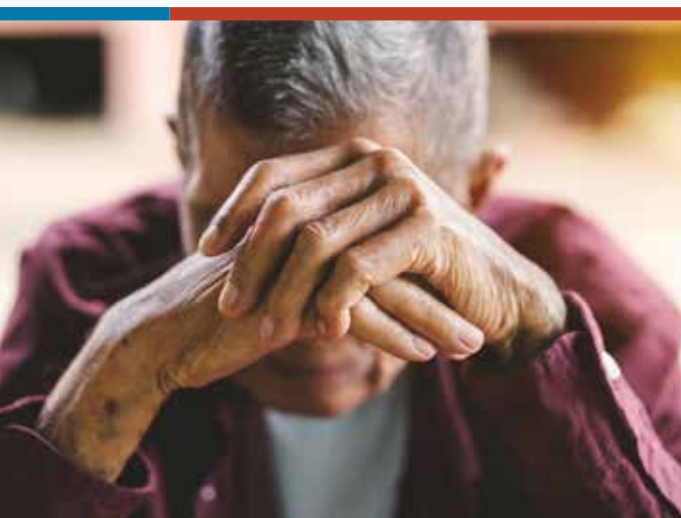
The Center for Public Policy Studies (CPPS) was SJI's technical assistance provider for the SIG program on immigration issues. CPPS conducted substantial work at numerous pilot learning sites to learn what challenges the sites face in meeting the needs of immigrant populations that use the state courts, and to learn how best to address those challenges. In addition, CPPS prepared a bench guide and bench cards for assisting judges across the United States in addressing the practical implications of immigration in the state courts for various topics, including pretrial release decisions, eligibility for and conditions of probation, the effects of guilty pleas on immigration status, and the intersection of federal and state laws.

The program met the following four strategic priorities:

1. enhanced state courts' capacity to exchange records efficiently, securely, and effectively with the Department of Homeland Security/US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS);
2. increased the ease of access to state court records for self-represented immigrant court users;
3. built effective partnerships between the state courts and USCIS in two pilot states (Georgia and Iowa); and
4. created a model approach and tools for effective state court/USCIS records exchange that can be used across the United States.

Human Trafficking and the State Courts

Since 1994, Congress has enacted a series of laws related to human trafficking; most notably, the Violence Against Women Act and the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. Additionally, states passed criminalization statutes for human trafficking. As a result of this increased focus on human trafficking, state court judges learned that human trafficking can manifest itself in a variety of court settings, including in prostitution and drug cases where the individual may be a trafficking victim, in cases involving child thieves who are part of trafficker-controlled organizations, and in cases involving abused and neglected children. Human trafficking not only involves immigrants who are in the United States legally or illegally, but also US citizens who are victims. However, the state courts lacked the knowledge, expertise, processes, and basic infrastructure needed to address this issue.



In 2013, SJI supported a grant to the CPPS, the NJC, the Center for Court Innovation, the NAWJ, and Legal Momentum to form a Human Trafficking and the State Courts Collaborative. The Collaborative: 1) increased understanding and awareness of the challenges state courts face in processing cases involving trafficking victims and their families; 2) developed and tested state and local approaches to assessing and addressing the impact of human trafficking victims and defendants on the state courts; 3) enhanced state and local courts' capacity to improve court services for victims of human trafficking; and 4) built effective national, state, and local partnerships for addressing the impacts of processing human trafficking cases in the state courts.

In 2014, the Collaborative was included in the Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States. This was a result of several months of coordination between SJI, the White House, and other executive branch agencies. SJI's contribution represented the only component of the plan that included the state courts as a justice-system stakeholder in addressing human trafficking.

Elder Issues

The growth in the number and proportion of older adults remains unprecedented in the history of the United States. By 2030, persons aged 65 and older are predicted to comprise 20 percent of the US population. Issues involving the elder population, such as elder abuse, which includes neglect and financial exploitation, continue to have significant implications for state courts.

To help address these issues, SJI, along with the Retirement Research Foundation, began a multiyear grant initiative, starting in 2011, to help the NCSC provide greater resources, education, and services. Specifically, SJI's funding assisted the NCSC with much-needed upgrades to the [Center for Elders and the Courts](#) (CEC) website to expand online resources. The funding made it possible for CEC to host complex integrated materials and to deploy web-based training.

SJI also provided funding to convene the Third National Guardianship Summit in October 2011. In addition to SJI, other sponsors included the Borchard Foundation Center on Law and Aging, and contributions from the National Guardianship Network sponsoring organizations. The Summit focused on post-appointment guardian performance and decision making for adults. The attendees adopted a far-reaching set of recommendations for guardian standards, as well as recommendations for courts, legislatures, and other entities. These recommendations provided the groundwork for nationally recognized standards for guardians of adults.⁸

Executive Session for State Court Leaders in the 21st Century

Beginning in 2008, the Harvard [Executive Session for State Court Leaders in the 21st Century](#) provided state court leaders an opportunity to discuss and develop ways to address the numerous challenges the courts face. SJI partnered with the DOJ/BJA to fund a collaborative effort between the NCSC and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government to plan and implement an executive forum of state court leaders to discuss state courts as instruments of democratic governance.

Through its six meetings over three years, the Executive Session set out to both develop and answer questions that the state courts will face in the foreseeable future, attempting to clarify what leaders of state courts can and should do to distinguish their role in our system of democratic governance.

Members of the Executive Session explored a broad array of themes, many of which are published in a series, including:

- the use of budget crises as adaptive challenges to court leaders;
- the identification of essential principles for effective court governance;
- the tension between problem solving and decision making;
- the challenges social media poses to court legitimacy;
- how courts defend themselves from political attack; and
- the notion of chief justices as civic leaders.



Court Management

During SJI's third decade, the state courts were confronted with a series of monumental challenges, including budget shortfalls, demographic changes, and advancing technology. Historically, the management and administration of state courts has evolved over time because of these societal trends. To help courts more efficiently and effectively address these challenges, SJI provided funding to NACM to deliver educational content to court managers. In 2011, SJI awarded a grant to

8 "Third National Guardianship Summit Standards and Recommendations," *Utah Law Review*, no. 3 (2012), https://www.eldersandcourts.org/_data/assets/pdf_file/0021/8832/third-national-guardianship-summit-standards-and-recommendations.pdf.

NACM, along with DOJ/BJA, for a multiyear project to review and revise the NACM [Core](#). The Core focused on areas in which court administration professionals should have acceptable levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities to be successful.

Another significant project that enabled state courts to explore the most productive and efficient ways to overcome challenges in administration was the 4th National Symposium on Court Management, which was jointly funded by SJI and DOJ/BJA. Over 100 court leaders and scholars from around the country participated in the Symposium, which provided an important forum for the state court community to engage in a high-level dialogue about the impact of trends on judicial administration.

While many solutions were discussed, the Symposium focused strongly on reengineering and modernizing the courts.

Performance Measurement

Performance measurement is vital to managing an efficient and cost-effective court while at the same time providing effective services to the public.

SJI funded several projects that supported the development of court performance measurement tools. SJI also provided support to NACM, the Institute for Court Management, and the NJC for educational and training programs. Two significant projects included the development of a unifying framework for measuring court performance and a revision of model time standards for state trial courts.



With SJI's support, in 2008, the NCSC developed a unifying framework that provided measures and standards for courts. The report, *A Unifying Framework for Court Performance Measurement*, synthesized leading performance measurement initiatives into a unifying conceptual framework, which provides courts with guidance on selecting a clear and concise set of performance indicators. The unifying framework helps courts develop performance measures that assess both processes and results, manage judge and staff resources, achieve timely case processing, and meet the public's needs.

Another seminal project in court performance measurement was the update to the *Model Time Standards for Trial Courts*. With SJI support, CCJ, COSCA, and the NCSC completed a two-year evaluation and revision of model time standards for trial courts. This initiative set forth time-to-disposition standards that established a reasonable set of expectations for the courts, for lawyers, and for the public.

SJI Board of Directors

Current Members of the Board of Directors



**Chief Justice
John D. Minton Jr.**

John D. Minton Jr. (ret.) served as Chief Justice of Kentucky from 2008 to 2023. He is credited with steering the Commonwealth's unified

court system through the challenges presented by the Great Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic. During his tenure, he prioritized investment in the elected and nonelected people who operate the courts by updating personnel policies and overhauling the judicial branch's lagging salary structure. He oversaw investment in court technology to improve efficiencies in court operations and enhance statewide access to the justice system. His sweeping technology initiative brought e-filing at the trial-court and appellate-court level to every Kentucky county. During his tenure, the Kentucky Supreme Court adopted the Commonwealth's first uniform Family Court Rules and Juvenile Court Rules. He collaborated with the executive and legislative branches to carry out penal code and juvenile-justice reform. He formed Kentucky's Access to Justice Commission and, most recently, the Kentucky Judicial Commission on Mental Health. In 2016–17, he was president of the Conference of Chief Justices and chair of the National Center for State Courts Board of Directors. He was appointed to the SJI Board of Directors in 2016 and currently serves as Chair. Before joining the Kentucky Supreme Court as a justice in 2006, he engaged in the private practice of law and served 13 years as a general-jurisdiction trial-court judge and three years as a judge on the intermediate appellate court. He holds degrees from Western Kentucky University and the University of Kentucky College of Law.



**Chief Justice
Chase T. Rogers**

Chief Justice Chase Rogers (ret.) was the Chief Justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court from 2007 to 2018.

She served as a judge on the Connecticut Appellate Court from 2006 to 2007, and as a judge on the Connecticut Superior Court from 1998 to 2006. Prior to becoming a judge, she was a partner at Cummings & Lockwood in Stamford, Connecticut, where she focused on employment law and commercial litigation. She served on the Board of Directors of the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) from 2008 to 2011. She has been a member of the Committee on Federal-State Jurisdiction of the Judicial Conference of the United States since 2012; member of the National Center for State Courts Expanding Court Access to Justice Project Advisory Committee since 2012; member of the Conference of Chief Justices Civil Justice Initiative Committee since 2014; member of the Connecticut Bar Foundation Nominating Committee since 2007; Ex Officio Member, American Law Institute; and Ex Officio Director, Connecticut Bar Foundation. Chief Justice Rogers was appointed to the SJI Board of Directors in 2010, and served as Chair from 2016 to 2018. She has been an Adjunct Professor at the University of Connecticut School of Law since 2012. She received an Honorary degree from Quinnipiac University School of Law in 2010, and an Honorary degree from the University of Hartford in 2011. She received her J.D. from Boston University School of Law, and a B.A. from Stanford University.



**Chief Judge
Jonathan Lippman**

Chief Judge Lippman (ret.) is currently Of Counsel for Latham & Watkins, LLP in New York City, New York. He previously served as Chief

Judge of the State of New York and Chief Judge of the New York Court of Appeals, a position he held beginning in 2009. Chief Judge Lippman spent his entire legal career in the New York State court system, serving for 40 years in a variety of roles. He was Presiding Justice of the Appellate Division of the New York Supreme Court, First Department from 2007 to 2009; an Associate Justice of the Appellate Term for the Ninth and Tenth Judicial Districts from 2006 to 2007; a Justice of the Supreme Court, Ninth Judicial District from 2006 to 2009; and Chief Administrative Judge of all New York State Courts from 1996 to 2007. Chief Judge Lippman is a former member of the Board of Directors of the Conference of Chief Justices, former President of the Conference of State Court Administrators, and former Vice Chair of the Board of the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). He is the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including the William H. Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence, which the NCSC awarded to him in 2008. He was appointed to the SJI Board of Directors in 2013. He holds a BA from New York University in government and international relations and a JD from the New York University School of Law.



**Justice
David V. Brewer**

David Brewer was a Justice on the Oregon Supreme Court, where he was elected in 2013. He previously served on the Oregon Court of Appeals from

1999 to 2013 and was chief judge from 2004 to 2012. Prior to joining the Court of Appeals, he served as a state court trial judge and presided over criminal and civil matters. Previously, Justice Brewer was a partner at the law firm Lombard, Gardner, Honsowetz & Brewer. He is a past President of the Council of Chief Judges of the State Courts of Appeals. In 2008, Justice Brewer received the National Center for State Court's Distinguished Service Award for his contributions to the development of performance measures

for the nation's state appellate courts. He was appointed to the SJI Board of Directors in 2011. He holds a BA in economics from California State University at Sonoma and a JD from the University of Oregon School of Law.



**Judge
Gayle A. Nachtigal**

Gayle Nachtigal was a Circuit Court Judge in Washington County, Oregon. She was initially appointed in 1991, serving as the Presiding

Judge from 1996 to 2002. She served as Lead Judge for 10 years on the Criminal Court Team. Judge Nachtigal is also involved in the American Judges Association where she served as Secretary, First and Second Vice President, and President. From 1999 to 2005, Judge Nachtigal served on the board of the National Center for State Courts, and the NCSC Court Consulting Advisory Board, from 2000 to 2005. She also previously served on the Oregon Judicial Conference Judicial Conduct Committee and the Court Technology Committee, as well as on the Oregon Uniform Trial Court Rules Committee. She was appointed to the SJI Board of Directors in 2010. She received a BLS from Bowling Green State University and a JD from Lewis and Clark Law School.



**Judge
Wilfredo Martinez**

Judge Wilfredo Martinez is a Senior Judge for the State of Florida. He was initially appointed to the Court in 1998. Previously,

Judge Martinez was a sole practitioner in Orlando, focusing on real estate and business law. Prior to that, he was in-house counsel for a manufacturer, distributor, and retailer; worked for an insurance defense firm; and served as a staff attorney at the Legal Aid Society of the Orange County Bar Association of Florida. Judge Martinez served as Board Member and Chair of the Governance Committee of United Abolitionists—an organization dedicated to the eradication of all forms of human trafficking. He is a former president of the National Conference of Metropolitan Courts and a member of the Florida Conference of County Court Judges. He has served as a Commissioner on the East

Central Florida Regional Planning Council; Commissioner on the Florida State Commission on Hispanic Affairs; Board Member of the Florida Supreme Court Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee; Vice Chairman of the Orange County Citizen Review Board; Chairman of the Orange County Children, Youth and Family Advisory Board; Founding Member of the Hispanic Bar Association of Central Florida; Board Member of the Orange County Bar Association Foundation; Founder and Director of the 9th Judicial Circuit Courthouse Law Academy; Chairman of the 9th Judicial Circuit Citizen Advisory Board; Judicial Representative of the City of Orlando Redistricting Advisory Board; and Board Member for the 9th Judicial Circuit Racial and Ethnic Bias Committee. He is a recipient of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Central Florida Excellence Award and has been recognized by CISCO and FedEx as one of the top 10,000 World Leaders and Influencers. He was appointed to the SJI Board of Directors in 2010. He received a BA from Yale University, with honors, and a JD from the New York University School of Law.



Mr. Daniel J. Becker

Daniel Becker served as State Court Administrator at the Administrative Office of the Courts for the State of Utah from 1995 to 2017. In that capacity, he was responsible

to the Utah Supreme Court and Utah Judicial Council for the administration of the state court system. From 1984 to 1995, Mr. Becker worked for the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts, serving in the positions of: Deputy Director (1993–1995); Court Services Administrator (1986–1993); and Assistant to the Director (1984–1986). He also held the position of Trial Court Administrator for the Fourteenth Judicial District of North Carolina, and Assistant Director of Operations for the Georgia Administrative Office of the Courts. From 2004 to 2005, he served as President of the Conference of State Court Administrators and Vice Chair of the Board of Directors of the National Center for State Courts. Mr. Becker was the recipient of the 2006 Warren E. Burger Award for Excellence in Judicial Administration. He was initially appointed to the SJI Board of Directors in 2010 and currently serves as Vice Chair. He holds a BA and an MPA from Florida Atlantic University, and attended

the Executive Session for State Court Leaders in the 21st Century at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.



Ms. Marsha J. Rabiteau

Marsha J. Rabiteau is Executive Director of the Center for Human Trafficking Court Solutions, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with a core mission

to assist the Chief Justices in fulfilling their Human Trafficking Resolution. She has also served as Associate General Counsel for Koch Industries, Inc., as Vice President & Assistant General Counsel, Director of Civil Justice Policy for The Hartford Financial Services Group, and Litigation Counsel and Crisis Manager for The Dow Chemical Company. She has participated as the chair or cochair of various organizations, including the Civil Justice Reform Group; Product Liability Advisory Council Foundation; IADC Class Action and Aggregated Torts Committee; and Federalist Society Litigation Practice Group. She is on the National Judicial College's Board of Visitors and Executive Finance Committee, has served on George Mason University's Law and Economic Center's Advisory Board, and is a member of the Michigan and Wisconsin Bars. She was appointed to the SJI Board of Directors in 2010. She received her JD, cum laude, from Marquette University Law School.



Ms. Isabel Frammer

Isabel Frammer is the founder and principal partner of Language Access Consultants, LLC. Since 1998, Ms. Frammer has worked as a consultant to defense

attorneys; prosecutors; law enforcement; state and federal government agencies, including the US Department of Justice; and advocacy firms on language access for limited English proficient communities in the court system. She is a state court-certified judiciary interpreter and has been qualified as an expert witness in court proceedings regarding language access and interpreter standards. Ms. Frammer was also a board member of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators from 2003 to 2009, serving as chair from 2007 to 2009. She was appointed to the SJI Board of Directors in 2010.

Past Members of the Board of Directors

Hernán D. Vera

Judge Hernan D. Vera is currently a District Judge of the US District Court for the Central District of California. He served as a Judge of the Los Angeles County, California, Superior Court from 2020 to 2023. He was appointed to the SJI Board of Directors in 2010 and served until 2023.

John B. Nalbandian

Judge John Nalbandian sits on the US Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. He was previously a partner in the Litigation Department of Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP. He was appointed to the SJI Board of Directors in 2010 and served until 2018.

Robert A. Miller

Chief Justice Robert A. Miller (ret.) served over 30 years as a member of the South Dakota judiciary. He took office as Chief Justice of the South Dakota Supreme Court in 1990. He was appointed to the SJI Board of Directors in 1998, which he chaired until 2010.

Arthur A. McGiverin

Chief Justice Arthur A. McGiverin (ret.) served as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Iowa from 1987 to 2000. He was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1998 and served until 2010.

Tommy E. Jewell

Tommy E. Jewell (ret.) was a judge on the Second Judicial District Court of New Mexico in Albuquerque from 1991 to 2005, where he served as the Presiding Children's Court Judge. He was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1995 and served until 2010.

Carlos R. Garza

Carlos R. Garza (ret.), Administrative Judge, US Department of Energy Board of Contract Appeals, was a member of the Board of Directors from 1992 until 2009.

Terry Adamson

Terry Adamson is Co-Chair of the Board of Directors of the Henry Luce Foundation in New York, New York. He was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1990 and served until 2010.

Joseph F. Baca

Joseph F. Baca was a member of the New Mexico Supreme Court from 1989 until 2003, serving as Chief Justice from 1994 to 1996. He was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1994 and served until 2010.

Robert Baldwin

Robert Baldwin was Executive Vice President and General Counsel for the National Center for State Courts. He previously served as State Court Administrator of Virginia from 1976 to 2005. He was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1994 and served until 2010.

Carl F. Bianchi

Carl F. Bianchi, former Administrative Director of the Courts for the State of Idaho, was a member of the Board of Directors from 1990 to 1994.



From left to right: Board Member Wilfredo Martinez; Board Member Marsha Rabiteau; Board Vice Chair Dan Becker; Senior Program Advisor Michelle White. Supreme Court of Puerto Rico, December 5, 2022.

David A. Brock

David A. Brock (ret.), Chief Justice of the New Hampshire Supreme Court, was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1992, and served until 1998. He served as Co-Chairman of the Board from 1995 to 1998.

Joseph W. Brown

Joseph W. Brown, an attorney with Jones, Jones, Close & Brown of Las Vegas, Nevada, was a member of the Board of Directors from 1988 to 1990.

James Duke Cameron

James Duke Cameron (ret.), Chief Justice of the Arizona Supreme Court, was a member of the Board of Directors from 1986 to 1994.

Lawrence H. Cooke

Lawrence H. Cooke (ret.), Chief Judge of the New York Court of Appeals, was a member of the Board of Directors from 1986 to 1988.

John F. Daffron

John F. Daffron (ret.), a Chief Judge for the 12th Judicial Circuit, Chesterfield, Virginia, was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1986, and served until 1998. He served as Chairman of the Board in 1994, and Co-Chairman of the Board from 1995 to 1998.

Vivi L. Dilweg

Vivi L. Dilweg (ret.), a Circuit Court Judge in Green Bay, Wisconsin, was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1990 and served until 1995.

Ralph J. Erickstad

Ralph J. Erickstad (ret.), Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of North Dakota, was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1987 and served until 1990.

Janice L. Gradwohl

Janice L. Gradwohl (ret.), Presiding Judge of the County Court, Third Judicial District of Nebraska, was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1986 and served until 1995.

Sophia Hall

Sophia Hall is the Administrative Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Justice and Child Protection Department of the Cook County (Chicago), Circuit Court of Illinois. She was appointed to the SJI Board of Directors in 1998 and served until 2010.

Jim R. Hannah

Jim Hannah served as the Chief Justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court from 2005 to 2015. He was appointed to the SJI Board of Directors in 2010 and served as Chairman until his death in 2016.

Malcolm M. Lucas

Malcolm M. Lucas (ret.), Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court, was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1990, and served until 1994. Chief Justice Lucas served as Chairman of the Board from 1991 to 1994.

Keith McNamara

Keith McNamara was a lawyer with the firm McNamara & McNamara in Columbus, Ohio. From 1961 to 1972, he served as a member of the House of Representatives, Ohio General Assembly. He was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1990 and served until 2010.

Daniel J. Meador

Daniel J. Meador, James Monroe Professor of Law Emeritus, University of Virginia, was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1986 and served until 1992.

Florence K. Murray

Florence K. Murray was an Associate Justice on the Rhode Island Supreme Court. She was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1994 and served until her death in 2004.



From left to right: Board Member Marsha Rabiteau; Board Member Wilfredo Martinez; Board Vice Chair Dan Becker; Board Chair John Minton; Minnesota State Court Administrator Jeff Shorba; Board Member Gayle Nachtigal; former Board Member John Nalbandian; Executive Director Jonathan Mattiello. Supreme Court of Minnesota, June 11, 2018.

Sandra Ann O'Connor

Sandra Ann O'Connor was the State's Attorney for Baltimore County, Maryland from 1975 to 2006. She was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1986 and served until 2010.

Rodney A. Peebles

Rodney A. Peebles (ret.), Circuit Judge of the Second Judicial Circuit of South Carolina, was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1986 and served until 1990.

Larry P. Polansky

Larry P. Polansky, former Executive Officer of the District of Columbia Courts, was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1986 and served until 1990.

Janie L. Shores

Janie L. Shores (ret.), an Associate Justice on the Alabama Supreme Court, was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1995 and served until 1998.

C. C. (Bo) Torbert Jr.

C. C. (Bo) Torbert, Jr. (ret.), Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Alabama, was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1986 and served until 1992. Chief Justice Torbert served as Chairman of the Board from 1986 to 1991.



Chief Judge (ret.) of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals Eric Washington meets with the Board of Directors. December 4, 2017.

