

E-SJI News

March 2009



Vol. 19, No. 6

FY 2009 APPROPRIATION AND NEW GRANTS



On March 11, 2009, the President signed into law the FY 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act (P.L. 111-8), which provided \$4,100,000 for SJI. This is an increase of \$340,000 over FY 2008, and marks the second fiscal year in a row that SJI has received an increased budget from Congress. The Omnibus Bill also increased the available funding for SJI's Strategic Initiatives Grants program to \$500,000. This will allow SJI to expand the program to address other critical issues facing the state courts. SJI greatly appreciates the continued support from Congress.

Once SJI's final appropriation was signed into law, SJI immediately awarded \$375,566 in grants from the 1st quarter that had been on hold pending the final budget. Awarded grants included a Project Grant to support a California Judicial Administration Graduate Program. This program will help the California judiciary attract and retain employee-students who have the potential to become highly educated judicial administrators. Four (4) TA applications were awarded, including a child maltreatment caseload project for the Superior Court of Maricopa County, Arizona; a re-engineering project to support the Vermont Judiciary in light of severe budget cuts across the courts in that state; and a strategic planning initiative for the Superior Court of San Luis Obispo County, California. SJI also entered into a Partner Grant with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to examine inter-branch relations and the effectiveness and efficiency of criminal justice policy.

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IMMIGRATION ISSUES IN THE STATE COURTS: KEY IMPROVEMENTS ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED

As part of its on-going work in the Miami-Dade County Superior Court, the Maricopa County, Arizona, Superior Court, and the Courts of the Minnesota Eighth Judicial Circuit, The Center for Public Policy Studies (CPPS) has identified ten key improvements for better addressing the impacts of federal, state, and local immigration law, policy, and practice. The ten key improvements now being implemented in at least one or more of the pilot learning sites include:

- revamping state trial court records preparation and management practices, to include criminal and family law case information in formats that could be readily used in concurrent or subsequent federal immigration proceedings;
- working with justice partners to increase access to interpreters early on to assure that non-English speaking litigants have an opportunity to assess whether their immigration status might be a factor in their case before the state court;
- working with defense council and prosecutors to assure that the implications of immigration status are well known throughout the legal community;
- addressing the complicated interplay among immigration status and eligibility for the types of local, state, and federally-funded services often associated with state court cases, such as substance abuse and mental health treatment, parenting assistance, and medical assistance for children;
- establishing information links between court and justice agency litigant assistance services and resources for immigrants such as national consulates and legal and family support organizations;
- establishing mechanisms for locating the family members of individuals involved in state court cases;
- redesigning self-help services to assist litigants in self-identifying whether their or a family member's immigration status might be a factor in their state trial court case;
- working with state and federal justice partners to improve communications practice so that state court and local detention officials can quickly determine if state court litigants are in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody, or have been removed from the country and thus are no longer able to meet state court requirements, such as appearances for hearings, and other probation conditions;
- revamping plea acceptance practices to assure that defendants have been advised of the immigration consequences of their plea; and,
- preparing training materials and establishing education programs throughout the court to assure that judges and court personnel are aware of the connections between immigration status and criminal, family, and juvenile case processing.

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The State Justice Institute is a private, non-profit corporation established by Federal law in 1984 to improve the quality of justice in state courts, and foster innovative, efficient solutions to common issues faced by all courts. SJI is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.



COURTS AND THE MEDIA: INITIATING AND MAINTAINING A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE



During 2005 and 2006, the National Judicial College's (NJC) Donald W. Reynolds National Center for Courts and the Media (RNCCM) – a collaborative partnership between NJC and the Reynolds School of Journalism at the University of Nevada, Reno – conducted a series of state workshops bringing together judges, journalists, and court personnel to discuss issues of mutual concern. These workshops were successful in fostering dialogue between the courts and the media, and SJI awarded a grant (SJI-07-N-055) to NJC to support a series of regional workshops. These workshops focused on ways in which the states and communities could create mechanisms by which discussions over issues between the courts and media not only could be initiated, but instituted on an ongoing basis. These workshops produced a grant product that is available on the SJI website:

http://www.sji.gov/PDF/Courts_and_the_Media_NJC_Document.pdf

SJI has been committed to supporting grants that improve relations between the courts and the media; since much of the conflict between the two is based on unfamiliarity with one another's duties, responsibilities, and limitations. In particular, SJI has been interested in projects that focus on cultivating trust and open communication between the courts and media on a day-to-day basis. The topic is truly critical to the courts, as evidenced by a panel on court/media communications held by the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ)/Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA) annual conference in 2008, which highlighted some of the tensions between courts and the media, especially in high profile cases.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Next grant and scholarship application deadline: May 1, 2009 (3rd Quarter, FY 2009).
- The FY 2009 SJI [Grant Guideline](#) is available on the SJI website.
- All SJI forms are available on the website under the following tab:
<http://www.sji.gov/forms.php>.