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FACT SHEET

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Ralph N. Kleps Award

The Ralph N. Kleps Award for Improvement in the Administration of the Courts was established in 1991 in honor of the first Administrative Director of the California Courts. This award program is designed to recognize individual court innovations that improve the administration of justice.

Criteria and Selection

Every two years, all of California's 58 trial courts and the six appellate districts of the Court of Appeal are invited to nominate a maximum of two programs each that demonstrate innovative approaches to the administration of justice (the Superior Court of Los Angeles County, because of its size, may nominate up to four programs). Each selected program must meet the following five criteria:

- Be a project of a California court or group of courts.
- Further at least one of the six goals of the judicial branch's strategic plan.
- Be innovative. "Innovation" is defined by the Kleps Award Committee as creating or significantly enhancing a concept, goal, or objective that improves the performance and practices of the court relative to its size, community, and available resources.
- Have measurable results, outcomes, or benefits that demonstrate the program's impact on the court and the public it serves.
- Be replicable and/or transferable—either directly or on a scalable basis—in other courts.

Nominated programs are divided among three categories, designated by the superior courts' number of authorized judicial positions (AJPs). A fourth category comprises appellate courts, and a fifth consists of projects in which two or more courts collaborate.

After nominations are received, they are evaluated by a committee of peers—appellate court justices, superior court judges, court executives, and other court administrative staff. A nonvoting AOC staff member provides support to the committee, and the group makes award decisions using a rating system designed to assess the program components in relation to the award criteria. During the six-month selection process, committee members visit numerous court sites to see nominated programs in action.

Each court that receives an award will be presented with a commemorative plaque in a ceremony. A video highlighting the courts being recognized will be shown at a Judicial Council meeting and will be available on the California Courts Web site. Awardees also will be profiled in a special Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) publication, *Innovations in the California Courts*, and featured on the California Courts Web site in a section that covers a wide array of innovations.

The Awards

Over the past 21 years, the Kleps Award Program has helped showcase programs that address access for self-represented litigants; enhance communication on behalf of children, families, and seniors; and develop new ways to use technology to support the day-to-day and long-term business of court administration. It is clear that innovative work is happening every day, at every level of the courts. The recipients of the Kleps Award represent a small sampling of the continual good work and progress happening within California's courts.

One important outcome of the Kleps Award Program is the information sharing it fosters. As unification and statewide funding of the courts has evolved, it has been vital for courts to be able not only to implement innovative programs, but also to educate each other on best practices for developing and maintaining successful initiatives.

Contact:

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Additional resources:

To learn more about the history of the Kleps Award, latest recipients, and upcoming nomination information: www.courts.ca.gov/programs-innovations.htm