



# INNOVATIONS

IN THE CALIFORNIA COURTS



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IN THE CALIFORNIA COURTS



JUDICIAL COUNCIL  
OF CALIFORNIA

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ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE  
OF THE COURTS

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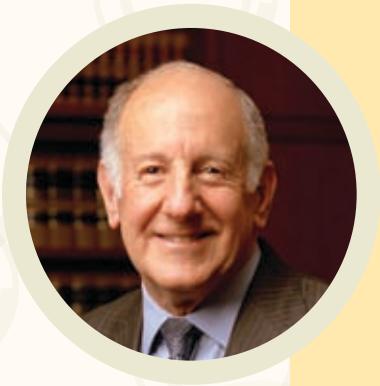
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Ronald M. George



William C. Vickrey

## FOREWORD

*We are pleased to present this second edition of Innovations in the California Courts. The court programs described in this book are drawn from different sources—Kleps Award recipients, courts participating in the Connecting with Constituencies program, and a variety of statewide initiatives sponsored by the Judicial Council and the Administrative Office of the Courts—yet they all represent forward-thinking approaches to improving the administration of justice throughout the state and strengthening our judicial branch. This book is first and foremost an information resource, but it also reflects the diversity and ingenuity with which the branch responds to the needs of the public it serves.*

*The first section of the book profiles award recipients—both past and present—of the Ralph N. Kleps Award for Improvement in the Administration of the Courts. Established in 1991 in honor of the first Administrative Director of the Courts, this award recognizes courts that have implemented innovative programs. These programs address the diverse roles of the courts in the community—from addressing complex social issues that profoundly affect the lives of individual Californians to implementing changes to court infrastructure to provide for efficiencies and better accountability to the public at large.*

*The honored programs make significant contributions to the achievement of our strategic priorities. This book*

indicates how each of the recognized programs embodies one of the six overarching goals of the Judicial Council's strategic plan described in *Justice in Focus: The Strategic Plan for California's Judicial Branch, 2006–2012*:

- ▶ **Goal I:** *Access, Fairness, and Diversity*
- ▶ **Goal II:** *Independence and Accountability*
- ▶ **Goal III:** *Modernization of Management and Administration*
- ▶ **Goal IV:** *Quality of Justice and Service to the Public*
- ▶ **Goal V:** *Education for Branchwide Professional Excellence*
- ▶ **Goal VI:** *Branchwide Infrastructure for Service Excellence*

Because of the branch's commitment to fair and accessible courts, outreach to the public when planning for the future is key. The second section of *Innovations in the California Courts* profiles the Connecting with Constituencies (CwC) Program. Through financial and technical assistance to the courts, this program continues the branch's long-standing priority to advance a dialogue and mutual exchange of ideas with the courts' constituents. Through the efforts of this program, courts encourage inclusiveness and a more open-door approach, with the ultimate aim of fostering trust and confidence in the courts.

The goals and policies set forth in the branch strategic plan promote high standards for excellence in the delivery of justice. The third section of the book explores the progress the judicial branch has made in improving infrastructure and developing the vision to meet ever-changing statewide needs and to ensure public access and accountability. Over the last decade the branch has launched many statewide initiatives to meet these goals, often modeled on programs developed by individual courts.

We hope the programs profiled will be used as models for the entire branch—judicial officers, court staff, and key stakeholders—and inspire further innovation. We extend our gratitude and admiration to those whose continuing commitment to creative solutions strengthens the branch and ultimately serves the people of California.

  
Ronald M. George  
CHIEF JUSTICE OF CALIFORNIA  
AND CHAIR OF THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

  
William C. Vickrey  
ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR OF THE COURTS



## INTRODUCTION

*Californians can justly be proud of their courts, which are the most creative and innovative in the nation. This first section of Innovations in the California Courts: Strengthening the Judicial Branch, demonstrates this standard of excellence as it highlights some of our courts' accomplishments—projects that received the 2006–2007 Ralph N. Kleps Award.*

*Biennially, the Judicial Council honors courts for their innovations in furthering the goals of the council's strategic plan for the courts. With an emphasis on access, fairness, diversity, quality of justice, and service to the public, these awardees eloquently demonstrate how California courts are meeting the challenges of the 21st century.*

*Kleps Award recipients are recommended to the council by the 17-member Kleps Award Committee, composed of justices, judges, and court administrators. Since the inception of the awards in 1991, dozens of projects that were once on the cutting edge have become standard practices in our courts and have improved access to justice for all Californians. One of the fundamental objectives of the awards is to replicate new ideas around the state, and sharing the success of these projects is integral to that objective.*

*It has been an honor for those of us on the committee to highlight these accomplishments and recognize the achievements of the dedicated and creative people of our judicial system.*

Hon. Ronald B. Robie  
KLEPS AWARD COMMITTEE CHAIR

### JUDICIAL BRANCH GOALS

- I** *access, fairness, and diversity*
- II** *independence and accountability*
- III** *modernization of management and administration*
- IV** *quality of justice and service to the public*
- V** *education for branchwide professional excellence*
- VI** *branchwide infrastructure for service excellence*



# **KLEPS AWARD RECIPIENTS**

## ***SUPERIOR COURTS OF CALIFORNIA***

*County of Butte*

*County of Fresno*

*County of Los Angeles*

*County of Monterey*

*County of Napa*

## ***APPELLATE COURTS***

*Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District*

## ***COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS, SUPERIOR COURTS OF CALIFORNIA***

*Counties of Butte and Glenn*

*Counties of Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, and Sierra*

*Counties of Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Benito,  
and Monterey*

## RALPH N. KLEPS AWARD HISTORY

Created in 1991 in honor of Ralph N. Kleps, the first California Administrative Director of the Courts, the Ralph N. Kleps Award for Improvement in the Administration of the Courts recognizes and celebrates the contributions made by individual courts to judicial administration.



This is the 16th time the Judicial Council has bestowed the awards, which are given in four categories, according to the number of authorized judicial positions in each group. A fifth category covers collaborative projects.

Programs nominated for the awards are judged and scored on five criteria.

Programs must

- ▶ Be a project of a California court
- ▶ Reflect the intent of at least one of the six goals of the Judicial Council's strategic plan
- ▶ Be innovative, that is, create value by initiating practices that enhance judicial efficiency and effectiveness
- ▶ Have results, outcomes, or benefits that demonstrate impact on the court and the public it serves
- ▶ Be replicable in other courts

Nomination materials were made available to the courts in spring 2006. A total of 36 eligible nominations were received that fall. After reviewing the nominations, the full committee determined that 27 of them met criteria outlined in the nomination materials.

Through the winter and spring of 2006, committee members made site visits to all 27 applicants to see the programs in action and learn more from the program staff and judicial officers involved. Immediately after the site visit, committee members scored each program and submitted a consensus score and evaluation form to staff.

The full committee met in spring 2007 to evaluate all nominees relative to each other within their categories. Programs that most clearly met the nomination criteria were recommended to the Judicial Council, which approved them at its April 27, 2007, business meeting as the recipients of the 2006–2007 Ralph N. Kleps Award for Improvement in the Administration of the Courts.

The Kleps Award Committee serves as the jury for the award. Its members are a group of court representatives, including members of the bench and court staff. Current membership follows:



## 2006–2007 Ralph N. Kleps Award Committee Members



**HON. RONALD B. ROBIE,**  
**CHAIR**

Associate Justice  
Court of Appeal,  
Third Appellate District



**MR. MICHAEL PLANET,**  
**VICE-CHAIR**

Executive Officer  
Superior Court of California,  
County of Ventura



**MR. JAMES BRIGHTON**

Bureau Chief—Planning,  
Research, Public Information,  
and Court Services  
Superior Court of California,  
County of Alameda



**MS. TINA M. BURKHART**

Executive Officer  
Superior Court of California,  
County of Glenn



**MS. REBECCA FLEMING**

Chief Financial Officer  
Superior Court of California,  
County of Stanislaus



**MS. LISA M. GALDOS**

Executive Officer  
Superior Court of California,  
County of Monterey



**MR. MICHAEL D. GLISSON**

Assistant Executive Officer  
Superior Court of California,  
County of Nevada



**HON. BRAD R. HILL**

Associate Justice  
Court of Appeal,  
Fifth Appellate District



**HON. MARY THORNTON HOUSE**

Judge  
Superior Court of California,  
County of Los Angeles



**MS. MARILYN K. JAMES**

Chief Evaluation and Planning Officer  
Superior Court of California,  
County of San Diego



**MR. STEPHEN M. KELLY**

Clerk/Administrator  
Fourth Appellate District,  
Division One



**HON. CYNTHIA A. LUDVIGSEN**

Judge  
Superior Court of California,  
County of San Bernardino



**MR. LAWRENCE MALIGIE**

Information and Fiscal Services Director  
Superior Court of California,  
County of Butte



**HON. ROBERT H. OLIVER**

Judge  
Superior Court of California,  
County of Fresno



**HON. DONNA M. PETRE**

Judge  
Superior Court of California,  
County of Yolo



**MS. SYLVIA WHITE-IRBY**

Administrator  
Superior Court of California,  
County of Los Angeles



**HON. ERICA YEW**

Judge  
Superior Court of California,  
County of Santa Clara

**2006–2007  
RALPH N. KLEPS AWARD  
FOR IMPROVEMENT  
IN THE ADMINISTRATION  
OF THE COURTS**

**Goal I—Access, Fairness,  
and Diversity**

**ACTION (After Criminal Traffic Infraction  
One-Stop Network) Center**  
Superior Court of Fresno County  
Category 3 (courts with 40-plus authorized  
judicial positions [AJPs])

*This project provides offenders with knowledge and information necessary to comply with their court orders, thereby improving the efficiency and effectiveness of court proceedings.*

**JUSTICECORPS**  
Superior Court of Los Angeles County  
Category 3 (courts with 40-plus AJPs)

*This project provides self-represented litigants with in-depth and specialized assistance from highly motivated and well-trained JusticeCorps members.*

**Goal II—Independence and Accountability**

**COURT CLERK CAREER PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM (3C-P-O)**  
Superior Court of Butte County  
Category 2 (courts with 11 to 39 AJPs)

*This project holds the court accountable for effectively training and deploying its staff resources. Formal, documented staff development plans for each employee provide closer oversight and more immediate response to the needs of the public.*

**Goal III—Modernization of Management and Administration**

**FOUR-COURT REGIONAL APPELLATE DIVISION**  
Superior Courts of Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, and Sierra Counties  
Category 5 (collaborative projects)

*This project consolidates administrative functions from four courts into a central appellate processing center and uses standardized forms and a comprehensive appeals processing and procedures manual developed through the project, videoconferencing, and Web-based solutions to maximize limited court resources.*

## Goal IV—Quality of Justice and Service to the Public

### NAPAH.HELP.INFO COURT AND COMMUNITY REFERRAL SYSTEM

Superior Court of Napa County

Category 1 (courts with 2 to 10 AJPs)

*The project enhances the quality and timeliness of dispute resolution by dedicating resources to the referral process—resolving issues that otherwise often result in litigants having a revolving door in and out of court.*

### REGIONAL COURT AND LIBRARY PARTNERSHIP

Superior Courts of Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Benito, and Monterey Counties

Category 5 (collaborative projects)

*This project moves self-help resources out of the courtroom and into the community through collaboration between the four counties and the public library system.*

## Goal V—Education for Branchwide Professional Excellence

### JUDICIAL EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District

Category 4 (appellate courts)

*The project enhances the legal education and professional development of law students serving as judicial externs and introduces students to the appellate process and practice.*

## Goal VI—Branchwide Infrastructure for Service Excellence

### JUSTICE PARTNER ACCESS WEB SITE (JPAW)

Superior Court of Monterey County

Category 2 (courts with 11 to 39 AJPs)

*This project enhances the ability of the courts to share technological information with justice partners and the public while still remaining responsive to the need for security and confidentiality.*

### COLLABORATIVE INFORMATION SERVICES (IS) PROGRAM

Superior Courts of Butte and Glenn Counties

Category 5 (collaborative projects)

*This project allows small courts to maximize limited IS funding and technical support, resulting in a stable and reliable system—essential to the courts' core work and service to the public.*

Superior Court of California,  
COUNTY OF FRESNO

## ACTION | AFTER CRIMINAL TRAFFIC INFRACTION ONE-STOP NETWORK CENTER

### Helping Offenders Navigate the Legal System

Our legal system too often intimidates and confuses the people

it is supposed to serve—even (and sometimes especially) those who run afoul of it. The [Superior Court of Fresno County](#) found that to be particularly true in light of its mushrooming population and number of criminal cases.

From 2000 through 2005, the county population grew by more than 7 percent, almost twice as quickly as that of the state. Over that same period, the court saw a 55 percent increase in criminal case filings for that fiscal year. The court calendars are packed—especially in high-volume traffic and misdemeanor courts—and courtroom action is swift. The process was leaving too many offenders overwhelmed, especially those whose sentences involved more than one program or remediation.

The results were predictable: lack of understanding led to lack of offender compliance, which undermined public confidence. And an offender's noncompliance generally resulted in additional court appearances. In July 2000, the court collaborated with the [Probation Department](#) and the [Auditor-Controller's Office](#) to develop the first-of-its-kind program to

- ▶ Increase an offender's accountability to the court
- ▶ Make it easier for an offender to comply with court orders and get connected to court-mandated programs
- ▶ Restore and promote the public's trust and confidence in the judicial system

The [After Criminal Traffic Infraction One-Stop Network \(ACTION\) Center](#) was designed to enhance the delivery of court services and increase public access to the courts all in one place. Located in Fresno's downtown courthouse, the center enables offenders to

- ▶ Ask questions about court orders in the disposition of their cases
- ▶ Obtain information necessary to fulfill their sentence
- ▶ Pay fees and fines, or set up a schedule for restitution
- ▶ Get referrals (and often initial appointments) to court-ordered services, such as work furlough, anger management, batterer intervention, traffic school, and probation instructions



Two judicial assistants and one Probation Department employee staff the center. The court and probation cover operating costs from their budgets and also contribute supplies and equipment. Most important, they cross-trained their staffs in each other's procedures and gave each other access to their respective information systems, a collaboration unique in the state.

Many court users in the Fresno community have low incomes, limited literacy, and no Internet access. But at the center, each court user gets one-on-one assistance, until the staff member is certain that the user understands the case disposition and has the tools to help ensure compliance.

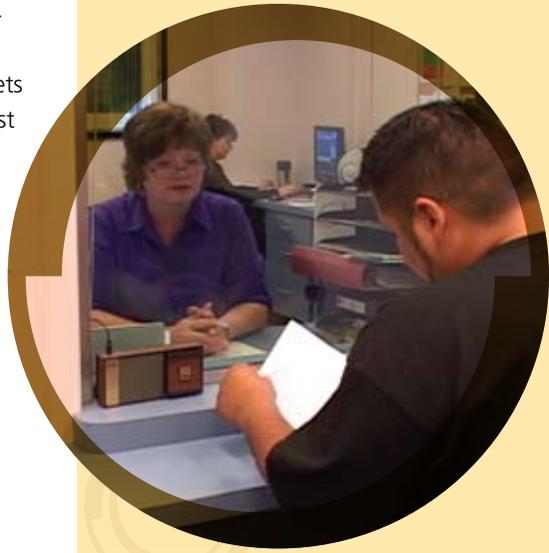
## Impacts

- ▶ Offenders find it easier to follow court orders; 90 percent reported that the ACTION Center information increased their ability to comply with their case disposition.
- ▶ Compared with 2003, the number of services provided by the center in 2005 increased by 72 percent; the amount of revenue collected increased by 87 percent.
- ▶ In 2006, the staff serviced more than 25,000 court users and collected more than \$1.5 million in fees and fines.
- ▶ Freed from having to manage service delivery, the court can now process cases more efficiently: in fiscal year 2005–2006, the court disposed of 40 percent more cases than in the year before the center opened.

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ACTION Center staff assist offenders, such as David Barriga (above, right) and Andrea Roberson-Smith (facing page, bottom), by interpreting court orders, connecting them with court-ordered services, and working with them to set up payment plans for restitution, fees, and fines.

**IN THEIR OWN WORDS** *Fresno County is one of the most diverse in the state, with Hispanics making up 47 percent of the population. The county is also home to the second-largest Hmong community in the United States. In all, nearly half the county population speaks a language other than English at home. To guarantee fair administration of justice to all residents, the ACTION Center staff provides assistance in English, Spanish, and Hmong.*

*In the words of one user,*

**“Aquí, te explican bien y te dan el tiempo para que tú entiendas mejor.”**

*“Here it is explained clearly and you are given the time to understand better.”*

Goal 1

access, fairness, and diversity

Superior Court of California,  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

## JUSTICECORPS

### Recruiting Students as Court Volunteers

Self-represented litigants are inundating the self-help programs of the [Superior Court of Los Angeles County](#). The demand is so great that

people often must wait hours in long lines or receive only minimal help. Many of these litigants have low literacy skills, which hampers their ability to fill out forms, participate in self-help workshops, or use computerized resources.

Ensuring equal access to justice is a critical mission for the courts. But it's difficult to recruit and retain enough long-term volunteers for programs designed to supplement the help provided to the self-represented. To improve access and avoid these pitfalls, the Los Angeles court conceived [JusticeCorps](#) to find sufficient numbers of university students committed to serve long enough to justify a training investment and a service award.

Although the court crafted it, JusticeCorps actually represents a significant collaboration. For the pilot project in 2004, the court initially partnered with four universities—[UCLA](#) and California State Universities at [Northridge](#), [Dominguez Hills](#), and [Pomona](#)—four nonprofit legal-aid agencies, and the [Los Angeles County Small Claims Advisor](#) to operate the program. ([CSU Long Beach](#) has subsequently participated as well.) And with the help of the Administrative Office of the Courts, the court obtained funding from [AmeriCorps](#) for JusticeCorps.

Each year, the program places 100 students in eight court-based self-help centers throughout Los Angeles County. Students agree to serve at least 300 hours in a year, during which they

- ▶ Triage long lines at court-based self-help centers to determine each litigant's need and degree of urgency and help litigants complete the proper forms
- ▶ Make referrals to other court services
- ▶ Teach people to use self-help computer resources
- ▶ Provide services to litigants after hearings

In short, the volunteers enhance the quality and the quantity of self-help service to those who most need it.

**“As JusticeCorps members working in the courts, we help people understand. They take that understanding and pass it on. To me, that’s community strengthening. That’s building trust. Trust in one another and trust in the legal system.”**

—UCLA senior and JusticeCorps member  
who entered law school in fall 2007

The students also benefit. After they fulfill their commitment, they receive a \$1,000 award, to be used for tuition or student loans. They also participate in JusticeCorps Shadow Day, which partners them with mentor judges and attorneys for a view of other aspects of the judicial system and the value of public service.

To evaluate the effectiveness of JusticeCorps, program staff members look for specific increases in the number of self-represented litigants assisted and in the accuracy of documents prepared and referrals made. The program has, to date, far exceeded its target measures.

In its second year, JusticeCorps began funding a campus representative position (filled by program alumni) for each campus, to help recruit and motivate student participants. The partner universities advertise the program on campus and facilitate “Reflection Sessions,” in which students evaluate their work in the courts.

## Impacts

- ▶ Self-help programs supplemented by JusticeCorps members increased by 11 percent the number of self-represented litigants assisted in the program’s first year.
- ▶ Evaluations showed that litigants got appropriate referrals 98 percent of the time when JusticeCorps members referred them to other legal resources.
- ▶ Legal forms prepared by self-represented litigants with JusticeCorps assistance showed a 94 percent accuracy rate.
- ▶ Focus groups of litigants reported a high level of satisfaction with the JusticeCorps program and the services they received.
- ▶ On average, each class of JusticeCorps volunteers has been collectively fluent in more than 20 languages.
- ▶ In its third year, the JusticeCorps program expanded to Northern California, partnering with four San Francisco Bay Area universities.

**WHEN WORDS ARE ENOUGH**  
**“A woman who spoke only Spanish came into the self-help center. She wanted a civil restraining order against her neighbor.... [Afterward] I thought, what if nobody had been there who spoke Spanish. This case was the first in which I felt I made a difference. And I made a difference just by translating.”**

—a JusticeCorps graduate

**Superior Court of Los Angeles County  
JusticeCorps Administrative Office  
Stanley Mosk Courthouse  
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Superior Court of California,  
COUNTY OF BUTTE

## 3C-P-O | COURT CLERK CAREER PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM

### A Better Path to Promotion

More than five years ago, the Superior Court of Butte County faced a crisis in the court clerk's office. Morale was low and clerk turnover was high. Few promotions were given, and seniority

was often the sole deciding factor. There was also a perception that favoritism was tainting the workplace, and labor grievances were on the rise.

Court leaders turned that situation around in 2004 with the Court Clerk Career Progression Opportunity (3C-P-O), a self-directed program that enables clerks to be promoted to the advanced-journey level. The heart of the program, a structured certification process, tests an employee's technical skills and reviews the employee's work habits and interpersonal behaviors.

The program evolved out of a multicourt grant from the Administrative Office of the Courts in 2002 to design a career progression plan for the court clerk classification series. Supervisors and managers from the Superior Courts of Butte, Glenn, Sutter, and Yuba Counties collaborated for six months to develop a uniform court clerk classification and initial criteria for certification. Butte County ultimately refined that design, adding further materials and criteria for the 3C-P-O program.

Court clerk trainees who successfully complete their one-year introduction attain the Court Clerk II level, at which they're performing at least one major assignment in a court division or work unit. The career program encourages clerks—but does not require them—to then become certified in one of the court's six divisions: traffic, criminal, juvenile, family, probate, and civil.

Under the 3C-P-O program, employees don't compete for a limited number of promotions, as was the case in the previous system. In another change from traditional promotions, employees must demonstrate skill mastery *before* advancing to the next level. To become certified, clerks must have an oral interview with supervisors, lead clerks, and certified clerks, and must pass one of two skill assessment evaluations that measure a range of competencies.

**“Gone are the days in which having the most seniority is the criterion for promotion to the next level.”**

Once certified in a division, clerks have to remain current in that area of law, even if they are not working in that division, so that the court can reassign them for operational purposes as needed. Aside from normal duties, clerks at the certified level may get opportunities to give input on the training and promotion process, train other employees, act as lead clerk for special projects, or help develop future test items.

After at least two years at the certified level, clerks may pursue certification in another division by passing the other of the two skill assessment evaluations. In either evaluation, full competence in an ancillary component and a basic working knowledge of the courtroom can substitute for a clerk's ability to fully perform all required duties in the courtroom (see "High Levels of Competence").

The Court Clerk III level—clerks with two certifications—represents a pool of highly skilled generalists. These advanced journey-level clerks can fill in where they are most needed, giving improved service to the public and greater flexibility to the court in making courtroom assignments and responding to shifts in workloads.

With this new program in place, the court now seeks to attract, encourage, and reward employees who want to gain and retain professional skills—and who value those skills. Labor relations have improved, and the county is using less time and fewer resources to resolve personnel matters.

## Impacts

- ▶ Court clerk turnover due to job dissatisfaction—as indicated by exit interviews—has decreased by 75 percent since the program began.
- ▶ All court clerks now have written career progression plans; of 57 clerks, 18 currently hold certification in one court division, and 5 hold dual certification.
- ▶ Two advanced journey-level clerks have been promoted to leadership positions in the past two years.

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**One Court Street**  
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**HIGH LEVELS OF COMPETENCE** *To be promoted, court clerks must demonstrate various competencies. Fundamental to all levels is an ability to do work that is accurate and timely, to demonstrate an attention to detail and knowledge of courtroom etiquette and protocol, and to work with minimal supervision. The other competencies are*

- ▶ **Case processing**—the clerk can perform all duties associated with a court division and demonstrates accurate knowledge of legal and court procedures
- ▶ **Courtroom**—the clerk performs all courtroom clerking duties related to the division and has sufficient knowledge about proceedings, legal forms, document formats, and computer applications
- ▶ **Basic working knowledge**—the clerk understands the "why" of clerk duties and can provide relief clerk services or serve as courtroom clerk in specified hearings in the division
- ▶ **Ancillary component**—the clerk performs all duties associated with an ancillary component (such as appeals or juries)



Goal III

modernization of management and administration

Superior Court of California,  
COUNTY OF LASSEN

## FOUR-COURT REGIONAL APPELLATE DIVISION

### Streamlining the Processing of Appeals and Improving Public Trust

Limited jurisdiction cases appealed at the superior court level pose a special challenge for courts in remote, sparsely populated counties. Because there are so few cases appealed, court clerks often have to relearn the rules, timelines, and notice requirements with each filing. And judges impaneled from neighboring counties to review cases must travel great distances, losing full days for each in-person hearing.

In early 2004, the [Superior Courts of Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, and Sierra Counties](#) petitioned Chief Justice Ronald M. George to designate a single, merged appellate division to serve those counties. With financial support from the Judicial Council's Judicial Administration Efficiency and Modernization Fund, the regional superior court appellate division began operating in April 2004 as a pilot project under a year-to-year memorandum of understanding, with the Superior Court of Lassen County designated as lead court. All four courts contributed judicial and staff resources to the project.

The regional appellate division hears appeals on

- ▶ Limited jurisdiction civil cases
- ▶ Misdemeanor criminal cases
- ▶ Traffic infractions
- ▶ Appellate division decisions

Each county is geographically large and demographically small, with only two sitting judges in its superior court. Feeling the need to make better use of limited judicial resources, court leaders designed the regional division to solve some of the problems brought on by traditional processing of appeals cases: delays due to the need for judicial travel, the need to circulate documents by mail, and backlogs caused by staff having to relearn procedures.

Dedicated staff at the regional center in Lassen process all appeals for the four counties and monitor the timelines for each case. The regional caseload is sufficient to maintain staff knowledge and skill level. Having a centralized staff has also expedited the processing and disposition of cases. From April 2004 through March 2007, the regional appellate division processed 31 appeals, disposing of 29.

These small courts also faced the challenge—or at least the potential public perception—of impropriety. Traditionally, for an appeals case in a two-judge court, a bench colleague would sit in review of a trial judge's decisions. This led to the appearance of potentially biased peer review. The regional appellate division eliminated these standing assignments, ensuring impartiality.

Internet technology has played a large role in the division's success. The processing center permits electronic filing of appeals online (as well as by fax). They are then scanned and, with the record on appeal, notices,

motions, and briefs in each case, posted to a collaborative workspace on a secure Web site for judicial viewing. This provides for the timely review of briefs, proposed decisions, and opinion by the judges on the review panel.

All four courts helped install and test a video-conferencing system, to ensure that they could hold appellate hearings with maximum efficiency. The regional appellate division now conducts hearings via telecommunication, which allows all judges, attorneys, and litigating parties to appear from any court location (pictured right).

During fiscal year 2006–2007, the project's scope expanded to include the processing of juvenile, felony criminal, and unlimited civil appeals sent to the [Third Appellate District of the Court of Appeal](#).

## Impacts

- ▶ The appearance of favoritism will likely decrease, since no member of any appeals panel comes from the trial court's county.
- ▶ Litigants have experienced faster processing and disposition of appeals cases.
- ▶ Through the use of a secure Web site and videoconferencing, the courts have eliminated unnecessary judicial travel and realized substantial savings in time.
- ▶ The regional processing center in Lassen has relieved the other three collaborating courts from having to maintain trained staff to process appeals.
- ▶ In three years, the regional appellate division disposed of more than 90 percent of the appeals pending and filed in the four-county region.

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## BRINGING ORDER TO THE COURTS

*The four participating courts adopted uniform appellate local rules and developed standardized forms and a comprehensive, step-by-step manual for appeals procedures. The courts subsequently distributed the procedures and forms manual on CD to court staff in Trinity and Butte Counties.*



## CONVENING AN IMPARTIAL DIVISION

*The regional appellate division project did away with standing appeals assignments. The senior judge of the four counties—who sits as presiding judge of the appellate division—appoints a three-judge panel to hear each appeal, excluding any judge of the court from which the appeal originates. The senior judge then designates one of the three to be the review panel's presiding judge. Appellants can be confident of being treated in a fair and just manner.*

Superior Court of California,  
COUNTY OF NAPA

## NAPAHELP.INFO COURT AND COMMUNITY REFERRAL SYSTEM

### Coordinating Outreach to Serve Families

Families in the [Unified Family Court \(UFC\)](#) program in Napa County often face challenges far beyond the legal system—homelessness and substance abuse, for example—that create increased risk for their children. But without access to comprehensive information, the courts themselves may be unaware of available community services for families.

Discussions among stakeholders had shown that even referral professionals often did not have complete information about these services. So, in early 2005, the Superior Court of Napa County hired a specialist to help identify resources for children and families.

Under the UFC program, the court collaborated with the [Napa Valley Coalition of Nonprofit Agencies](#) to develop the [NapaHelp.Info Court and Community Referral System](#), which includes a comprehensive, easy-to-use, public database of community services, [www.napahelp.info](http://www.napahelp.info).

The system collects and shares information from more than 60 government and private nonprofit agencies and lists more than 300 human services programs. NapaHelp includes information about

- ▶ Basic subsistence—including emergency shelter, food, and money
- ▶ Physical and mental health—including programs on health insurance, alcohol and substance abuse, and child protective services
- ▶ Family support services
- ▶ Employment and vocational training
- ▶ Legal assistance—including landlord-tenant mediation



Each agency can regularly access the database, via the Internet, and update its service and program information. And many of the Web sites of member agencies have a link to the NapaHelp system. Says Family Court Services Manager Tammy Glathe, “The sustainability of the database was the most critical element for this project to be successful.”

To judge how much the database is being used, the court has an independent Web statistics company track the number of separate visitors to the site as well as the number of searches, pages accessed, and files requested.

The court now tracks referral activity for family court clients and keeps those details in confidential folders in clients’ case files in the case management system.

The court-community collaboration also formed a community task force to advise on developing and operating NapaHelp. It was important that the referral component

- ▶ Ensure timely and cost-effective service delivery
- ▶ Monitor the delivery of services to families referred by the family court
- ▶ Identify and meet regularly with court liaisons for each major community agency
- ▶ Share appropriate information with providers while preserving confidentiality and due process rights

Plans call for expanding access to Spanish-language speakers, when funding permits. On a vote by its executive board, the Napa Valley Coalition of Nonprofit Agencies has become NapaHelp's fiscal sponsor and is seeking additional funds for software costs and staffing.

On another front, [United Way of the Bay Area](#) hopes to expand its 211 call center to six additional Bay Area counties (including Napa) and may enter into a data-sharing agreement with NapaHelp.

## Impacts

- ▶ In its first year, NapaHelp was the source of more than half the referral actions taken by Family Court Services.
- ▶ The NapaHelp system projected a 46 percent increase in searches of its community services database in only its second year of operation.
- ▶ The system helps court staff to direct families to appropriate resources and providers, and track the results in confidential client files, thereby offering the public better service.

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## STEP-BY-STEP HELP—AND PRIVACY

The *NapaHelp* database guides users through six easy steps to finding community resources. From the home page, users can

- ▶ Identify, by either zip code or city name (within Napa County), nearby services
- ▶ Search for services by topic, keyword, or name of service provider
- ▶ Narrow the focus of the search by choosing among options
- ▶ Check any features that are desirable, including details about accessibility or services available in languages other than English
- ▶ See thumbnail descriptions of all services that match the search
- ▶ View details of any service in the search results, including hours of operation, eligibility requirements, cost (if any), directions, and instructions for referrals

Users can also protect their privacy on *NapaHelp*. If they have trouble using the system or finding particular resources, anyone who signs in can also send questions anonymously to the system administrator and receive replies in a private mailbox. When they sign in, users also get a private home page, which has tools to help them save resource information and program Web sites from their searches.

Superior Courts of California,  
**COUNTIES OF SANTA CLARA (LEAD  
 COURT), SANTA CRUZ, SAN BENITO,  
 AND MONTEREY**

## REGIONAL COURT AND LIBRARY PARTNERSHIP

### Bringing Self-Help Services to the Community

The courts in the four participating counties recognized several years ago that the steps they had taken to improve access to self-help services

were still not enough. The need of self-represented litigants far outstripped the counties' capacity to serve. In *Santa Clara County* alone, in one year, some 10,000 people were turned away because the court-sponsored Self-Service Center and Family Law Facilitator's Office lacked the resources to help them. Because they operate out of court locations and may have limited hours of operation, the court-sponsored centers also present barriers for segments of the population who need legal help but who live in far corners of the county and have fewer transportation options.

Studies and planning discussions by the courts led to the conclusion that the solution lay in reaching out to the community and involving public libraries. Court administrators and self-help service representatives helped conceive the project. Library representatives then were invited to refine the details, with the *Peninsula Library System* acting as lead representative and coordinator during the training phase.

The partnership groups collaborated to design a program that would

- ▶ Help public librarians to better understand the court system
- ▶ Teach librarians about available legal self-help services on the Internet
- ▶ Develop a court-library partnership that will continue beyond the self-help project
- ▶ Extend community outreach and disseminate self-help services to a wider population
- ▶ Strengthen public trust and confidence in and understanding of the courts

Having sought and been awarded a development and implementation grant from the Administrative Office of the Courts, the court-library partnership succeeded in training librarians throughout the four counties. Training team members included managing attorneys from court self-help programs and representatives from the AOC, the Superior Court of San Mateo County, and *Public Interest Clearinghouse*.

The training, held whenever possible in library computer labs, included interactive demonstrations to familiarize librarians with existing legal and related Web sites, such as the AOC's Online Self-Help Center ([www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp)) and San Mateo's [www.ezlegalfile.org](http://www.ezlegalfile.org).

The project also created a Web page for librarians, [www.systemref.org/law.htm](http://www.systemref.org/law.htm), which pulled together essential legal sites from many sources. That Web page now features links to the court-sponsored

self-help centers. Two months after the training, the participating librarians completed a follow-up evaluation to report on their experience with the resources.

Librarians report that they are better able to help patrons find legal information and resources, and librarians from other parts of the state have inquired about replicating the program. Expansion plans for the project include a new self-help center in Watsonville, to be located downtown with the Watsonville public library and the county law library.

### Impacts

- ▶ Established a first-of-its-kind partnership between public libraries and the courts.
- ▶ Trained 88 librarians over the course of six training sessions.
- ▶ Decentralized self-help resources by moving services into the community, greatly increasing public access.
- ▶ Produced more than 15,000 bookmarks listing important legal Web sites and distributed these to the courts and more than 80 library facilities around the region.

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### A LIBRARIAN RESPONDS

**“I’ve already had many very practical opportunities to use the information presented [in the training session].... I appreciate that the recommended Web sites are all user-friendly ... with just a brief demo, [people] were pretty much able to search and investigate on their own.”**

—*Librarian, Santa Cruz Public Library*

Librarians, such as Watsonville’s Dody Anderson (shown left), report that they are better able to help patrons find information about legal issues and that they refer to the court’s resource materials daily.



California Court of Appeal,  
SECOND APPELLATE DISTRICT

## JUDICIAL EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM

### Promoting Appellate Practice

For several years, the *Second Appellate District of the California Court of Appeal* had a good externship program. Each year it drew students from five local law schools to work on opinions under the supervision of a few justices.

But in 2004 the district greatly expanded the breadth and depth of its Judicial Externship Program to

- ▶ Increase judicial participation to enable more externs to learn skills under the direct guidance of the justices
- ▶ Increase student participation to expose more aspiring lawyers to appellate practices and procedures
- ▶ Introduce formal instruction via seminars to teach the externs skills to improve their performance and productivity

Externs now work directly with both justices and research attorneys to review appellate briefs, examine court records, conduct legal research, and draft opinions and memoranda. In weekly seminars, justices, research attorneys, and appellate practitioners teach the principal aspects of the appeals process and the role of the appellate courts in the development of law.

Through writing workshops, externs get direct feedback on their work.

Externs also observe argument sessions in the appellate court, participate in weekly writ conferences, and attend judicial conferences before and after oral argument sessions.

Participating justices and appellate staff are dedicated to constantly improving the new program. In the past, while externs learned how to review appellate records and identify critical issues on appeal, they received no instruction on how to resolve issues. Now, one program seminar focuses on the approaches used to decide difficult issues, including legal precedent, public policy, and judicial philosophy.



More recently, the program has expedited the screening of applicants by transmitting applications to justices electronically for review and by interviewing applicants via videoconferencing.

## Impacts

- ▶ Student interest in the program has exploded. In 2003, 25 law students applied for externships; by 2006 the applications had increased more than a dozenfold.
- ▶ Nearly 80 percent of judicial chambers—25 out of 32—now supervise the externs directly, compared with only a handful of judicial chambers as recently as 2003.
- ▶ The program's externs make up a more diverse group, with representatives coming from more than 20 law schools nationwide in the past three years, including [Harvard](#), [Georgetown](#), [Baylor](#), and [Northwestern](#).
- ▶ The program has generated increased interest in appellate litigation, with many externs taking summer associate positions with appellate practice groups.



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## BEYOND THE APPEALS COURT

*As part of their externship, students*

- ▶ *Observe trial court proceedings in civil, criminal, juvenile delinquency, and child dependency courts for context on the issues raised in appeals*
- ▶ *Discuss the trial court fact-finding process with the judges conducting those proceedings*
- ▶ *Observe oral arguments before the [California Supreme Court](#)*
- ▶ *Participate in postobservation discussions with [Supreme Court](#) justices to explore procedural differences and similarities between the Supreme Court and the intermediate appellate courts*

Presiding Justice Roger W. Boren (right), Associate Justice Kathryn Doi Todd (center), and Associate Justice Victoria M. Chavez (left), Division Two Justices of the Second Appellate District, listen as appellant's attorney Barry Zelner presents the issues for argument held in the courtroom at the [University of Southern California's Gould School of Law](#) on March 22, 2006.

Goal VI

branchwide infrastructure for service excellence

Superior Court of California,  
COUNTY OF MONTEREY

## JPAW | JUSTICE PARTNER ACCESS WEB SITE

### Improving Access to Court Case Information

When the Superior Court of Monterey County shifted from the Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) to Sustain, Justice Edition in 2004,

state and local law enforcement, county agencies, district attorneys, and public defenders lost their access to case management information.

To restore that access, so critical to the administration of justice, the court considered acquiring additional licenses to Sustain or adding court staff to continue to manually provide information. Both ideas were rejected as too costly. Instead, the court pursued an innovative solution—one that would

- ▶ Disseminate court case information with little cost
- ▶ Continue the exchange of data needed by law enforcement and other justice partner agencies
- ▶ Expand electronic access to court case information—within the limits of statutes—to private attorneys and the public via a secure Web-based application

That solution, the Justice Partner Access Web site (JPAW), began providing justice partners with access to court data in December 2004.

In 2005, the court organized a steering committee to explore how accessibility could be expanded beyond justice partners. Because statutes and [California Rules of Court](#) restrict the distribution of criminal history information and the remote accessing of court records, the JPAW system had to define four additional viewing groups: public defenders, attorneys, users of courthouse viewing rooms, and the public. Each group could access only that information to which it was entitled.

The court rolled out JPAW access in stages to the additional groups, beginning with public defenders in April 2006 and finishing with access for the public in July 2006.

To reduce the workload of court staff, the justice partner agencies were set up as system administrators, who could designate their staff to add and delete users, activate and deactivate accounts, and reset passwords.

#### ENTHUSIASTIC USERS

**“It is vastly superior  
to anything heretofore  
available to the  
practicing attorneys  
of Monterey County.”**

—Attorney, Salinas

The JPAW site has several features to ensure the integrity of the system itself and compliance with laws on access to information. These include

- ▶ Security features built directly into the Web application to protect data
- ▶ Password logons and authentication on justice partner views, so that only authorized users see restricted information
- ▶ Built-in auditing and reporting of users and usage
- ▶ Webtrends software to monitor and keep statistics on site traffic

JPAW also has an online user form for suggestions. A Justice Partner User Group, organized by the court, meets annually to discuss improvements to the Web site. The site's design is flexible, so that other courts can replicate the model with their own set of viewing groups.

## Impacts

- ▶ The JPAW site had more than 26,000 visitors in a six-month period, with logons by justice partners now exceeding 800 a day.
- ▶ When compared with alternatives to providing access to court case information, JPAW has saved the court nearly a half million dollars.
- ▶ The court has realized an additional savings of \$7,000 a year by creating a courthouse viewing room in place of 10 licenses for the Sustain system.
- ▶ Access to court case data has greatly increased, especially for the public, which now has 24-7 access via the Internet.

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**“The Justice Partners  
Web site is wonderful....  
I am able to access most  
of the information I need  
to complete a criminal  
background check....  
It has eliminated a lot of  
unnecessary work for  
myself and the court staff.”**

—Researcher, courthouse viewing room



Goal VI

branchwide infrastructure for service excellence

Superior Courts of California,  
COUNTIES OF BUTTE AND GLENN

## COLLABORATIVE INFORMATION SERVICES (IS) PROGRAM

### Sharing Resources Improves Service and Reduces Costs

Butte and Glenn are neighboring counties in the Sacramento Valley. The superior courts of both counties already utilized the same court case

management systems, office applications, and jury software. But they had separate information services (IS), and each county faced different challenges.

In Butte County, the court was growing, and its IS department faced increasing demand for technology and resources. This led the court to adopt a help-desk model for IS support. The court in Glenn County, by contrast, was small. It had no on-site IS staff or support from the county. Court staff often had long waits for service from an outside vendor, which had no incentive to offer cost-saving advice.

Given their collaboration in other areas, it made sense for the two courts to develop a solution that would extend IS support to Glenn and benefit Butte as well.

Butte identified the technological and human resources it could make available, the skills of its IS staff, the feasibility of a collaboration, and the potential objectives it could meet. Glenn detailed its IS needs, its existing equipment and applications, and its desired goals for the collaboration.

In late 2001, the two courts drafted and entered into a memorandum of understanding, which included a service-level agreement on response time, levels of service, related deliverables, and financial terms.

Both courts benefited from the process. Planning for the collaboration forced Butte to examine its own IS procedures and ensure that it was using industry best practices. Implementing the collaboration made resources and comprehensive support available to Glenn that it previously couldn't afford.

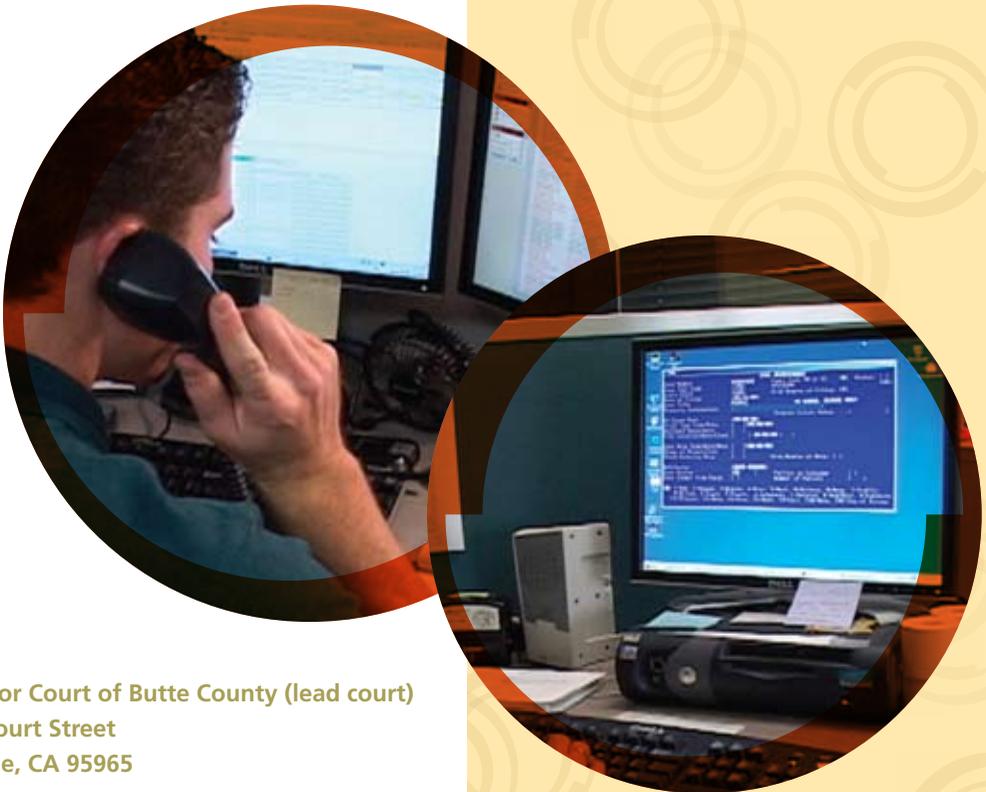
The program began in September 2003. The two courts are now connected by a dedicated T1 line and make use of trusted domains (which allow mutual access). The Butte court also provides the Glenn court's Internet service and hosts Glenn's accounting system and Web site. Butte IS staff can generally resolve 80 percent of Glenn's IS problems remotely, through dedicated communications, but an IS analyst makes weekly visits to Glenn for on-site needs and to maintain face-to-face relationships.

The program has allowed Glenn to stabilize its infrastructure, standardize its systems, and get consistent, timely response to its IS problems.

## Impacts

- ▶ There has been a decrease in court user complaints in Glenn County about the stability and reliability of IS systems, and a documented drop in system crashes and failures.
- ▶ Staff productivity and public satisfaction have both increased in Glenn County because of improved system performance—entry and retrieval of case information for customers are more efficient.
- ▶ Butte has hired an additional senior IS analyst, which provides increased service to both courts.
- ▶ For court staff in Glenn County, less time is lost waiting for IS problems to be resolved.
- ▶ The two courts have been able to expand the possibilities for long-term strategic IS planning.

**SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE** *Because the two courts share infrastructure, improvements can be easily implemented by both courts at no additional cost. When the Superior Court of Butte County developed a Web-based product that allowed the public to access case and calendar information via the Internet, Glenn was able to add that same capability to its Web site.*



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*Ralph N. Kleps Past Recipients*  
**15, 10, AND 5 YEARS AGO**

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

In November 1961, when Ralph N. Kleps was appointed the first Administrative Director of the newly established Administrative Office of the Courts, he could not have envisioned the judicial branch of today—comprising more than 2,000 members of the judiciary and more than 20,000 trial court personnel serving approximately 37 million Californians online and in 451 court facilities statewide.

In 1991, the Ralph N. Kleps Award for Improvement in the Administration of the Courts was created in his honor to recognize the contributions made by individual courts to the administration of justice. Since that time, the Judicial Council has bestowed the award to over 160 programs ranging widely in size, scope, and subject area.

Kleps Award recipients have illustrated the best of the best throughout the state, with programs that began at the local level; have shown imaginative, innovative solutions to pressing needs, often with few resources; and have employed creative ways to leverage existing funds or access new funding. These programs have also been implemented by other courts and have inspired a turn toward long-lasting, structural change in the California judicial branch.

To honor the many, we provide the following glimpses of several recipients of the Kleps Award who have made valiant efforts during the past 15 years.

### **Fifteen Years Ago ... 1992**

The 1990s were a time of great structural, legislative, and cultural change in the courts. These changes culminated in the unification of the superior and municipal courts, reducing the number of courts from 202 to 58 by the end of the 20th century.

The concept of unification can be traced back to the early 1940s, with several unsuccessful legislative attempts put forward through the subsequent decades. By the end of the 1980s, California—experiencing an increase in court caseloads coupled with a rapid fiscal decline—was ripe for reform.

In 1991, the chair of the state's Assembly Judiciary Committee, Phillip L. Isenberg, saw consolidation as a way to maximize cost savings and increase efficiency. He sponsored the [Trial Court Realignment and Efficiency Act](#), which required courts to look at innovative ways of coordinating and sharing resources.

A precursor to unification, this legislation retained the dual superior and municipal court structure but required courts to focus on [coordination](#), a combining of administration functions to “achieve maximum utilization of judicial and other court resources and statewide cost reductions in court operations.”



The 1992 recipients of the Kleps Award reflected this focus, including several court coordination and consolidation plans. Consolidation, though similar to coordination, took the additional step of merging the superior and municipal court systems into one system.

Bestowing the Kleps Award on these programs recognized the courts for their efforts and exemplified the council's endorsement of the coordination and subsequent consolidation process.

**1992 Ralph N. Kleps Recipient—Superior and Municipal Courts of Sacramento County**

Although not the first court in the state to consolidate—both Napa and Ventura courts consolidated earlier—Sacramento was the state's first large court to consolidate at the presiding judge level rather than the administrative level.

Under the 1991 act, Sacramento was required to submit a coordination plan to the Administrative Office of the Courts. Sacramento took this requirement one step further and submitted a comprehensive consolidation plan.

The Superior and Municipal Courts of Sacramento County had formed a joint committee of staff from both courts to examine opportunities for coordination and consolidation.

continues >

Dennis B. Jones, newly appointed executive officer for the consolidated Superior and Municipal Courts of Sacramento County (left), and Sacramento Municipal Court Judge Gail D. Ohanesian welcome participants to share in a celebration of the court's yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

**OTHER KLEPS RECIPIENTS** that focused on trial court coordination and consolidation:

**1991**

*Ventura County Superior and Municipal Courts for consolidating court support services*

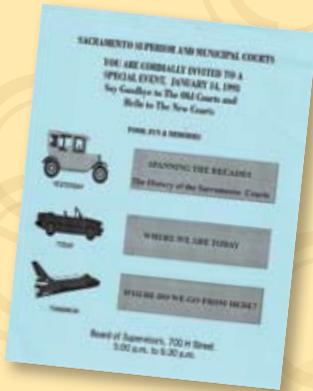
*Napa County Superior and Municipal Courts for its comprehensive court reorganization-consolidation plan*

**1992**

*El Cajon Municipal Court and San Diego County for its coordination plan*

*San Bernardino Superior and Municipal Courts for its consolidation plan*

*Sacramento Superior and Municipal Courts for its consolidation and transition plan*



On January 14, 1993, the Sacramento court celebrated its consolidation. Roger K. Warren, Presiding Judge of the Superior and Municipal Courts (below), joins Dennis B. Jones in describing his vision for the newly consolidated court.

Staff consistently suggested that the best opportunities for achieving the greatest long-term savings, increased access to the courts, and many other benefits would come from consolidation, not coordination.

The superior and municipal courts entered into a consolidation agreement, which called for

- ▶ Unification of judicial supervision under one presiding judge
- ▶ Unification of court administration services under a single executive officer
- ▶ Coordination of judicial resources, including coordinated use of assigned judges
- ▶ Blanket cross-assignments of judges and subordinate judicial officers
- ▶ Full consolidation of case processing and administrative activities
- ▶ Coordinated development of automated accounting services

Assembly Member Isenberg continued to watch the progress in coordination made by Sacramento and other counties. In the May–June 1998 issue of *Court News*, he singled out the courts in [Ventura](#), [Yolo](#), [Shasta](#), [Sacramento](#), [Riverside](#), and [Napa Counties](#) for making coordination work: “These heroic counties ought to get most of the credit.”

In light of California’s historic budget impasse, which ultimately led to a 63-day delay in the signing of the 1993 budget, Isenberg sponsored Assembly Bill 1344. This legislation established the foundation for consolidating superior and municipal courts. It authorized courts participating in coordination plans to select a single presiding judge, an executive officer, and an executive committee.

Sacramento was already ahead of the game. In January 1993, Roger K. Warren was elected the first presiding judge of the consolidated superior and municipal courts of Sacramento. Dennis Jones, the former court executive of the municipal court, was selected to be the newly consolidated executive officer.



Governor Pete Wilson signed the Lockyer-Isenberg Trial Court Funding Act of 1997 on October 10. In attendance are (left to right) Steve Szalay, Executive Director, California State Association of Counties (CSAC); Assembly Member Martha Escutia; Jerry Eaves, San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors; Senator Bill Lockyer; Dwight Stenbakken, League of California Cities; Ray LeBov, Director, Office of Governmental Affairs, Administrative Office of the Courts; and Rubin Lopez, Legislative Representative, CSAC.

## What Happened Next?

1993—The newly constituted Trial Court Presiding Judges Advisory Committee and Court Administrators Advisory Committee, under the leadership of Roger Warren and Sheila Gonzalez, respectively, formed a joint subcommittee to study and present recommendations to the Judicial Council on trial court unification as contained in Senator Bill Lockyer’s Senate Constitutional Amendment 3. The amendment was not approved, but the groundwork was laid for future legislation.

1997—The Lockyer-Isenberg Trial Court Funding Act provided that the state would be responsible for funding the trial courts. This landmark act ended the bifurcated system under which courts were funded by both the counties and the state, and created the Judicial Administration Efficiency and Modernization Fund to promote court unification. Courts were required to be coordinated in order to receive additional funding and to ensure pay parity for municipal court judges.

1998—Senate Constitutional Amendment 4 provided for voluntary unification of all California trial courts by permitting the judges in each county to create a “unified” or single superior court if both a majority of the superior court judges and a majority of the municipal court judges within the county so voted.

Sacramento County unified its courts on July 17, 1998—one of the first 17 counties to unify.

## Ten Years Ago ... 1997

As the 1990s came to a close, and the trial courts continued to move toward unification, municipal and superior courts searched for innovative ways to combine functions to better serve the public’s needs. One such example from the 1997 Kleps recipients was South [Orange County](#) Municipal Court and its domestic violence temporary restraining orders.

### 1997 Ralph N. Kleps Recipient—South Orange County Municipal Court

At that time, only superior courts issued civil restraining orders. In geographically large and rural counties, obtaining an order might mean miles and hours of travel by court users often without ready access to

public transportation. This discouraged many victims from filing the orders. In Orange County, victims of domestic violence had to travel up to 35 miles to the Family Law Court in the City of Orange to obtain a temporary restraining order (TRO).

South Orange County Municipal Court was one of the first municipal courts in the state to issue TROs. Under a blanket order, issued by then Chief Justice Rose Bird, all municipal courts would handle certain general jurisdictional matters as determined by each county and superior court.

In December 1995, ex parte TROs became available to victims of domestic violence in the South Orange area in their local court. These orders were issued on a regularly scheduled basis to victims through a local women's shelter. This innovative program provided a new level of public service to the community, thanks to the judges of South Orange County Municipal Court, who took the opportunity to focus on the community's needs in assisting the victims of domestic violence through quick and effective intervention.

The court's action aligned with the recommendations of the Judicial Council's Advisory Committee on Gender Bias in the Courts in July 1996 in its final report, *Achieving Equal Justice for Women and Men in the California Courts*. One recommendation suggested that the authority to issue protective orders be expanded to more-convenient courts and that victims be able to obtain protection from municipal or justice court judges.

## What Happened Next?

Viewed through a historical lens, this program was an incremental step to respond to an immediate problem that eventually was addressed through further innovations.

When the superior and municipal courts of Orange County unified in August 1998, the court began building the countywide infrastructure to meet community needs, including domestic violence, and the need for this particular program lessened.

In July 1997, the court began to implement a protective order registry to process criminal protective orders, TROs, emergency protective orders, and various types of civil harassment and family law orders. This local database was designed to accommodate all types of protective and restraining orders to be uploaded into the [Department of Justice's Domestic Violence Restraining Order System](#), and victims were able to obtain restraining orders at any time of the day or night—either through court business hours or emergency protective orders issued by law enforcement at the court's directive at any other hour.

As the South Orange County Municipal Court—encompassing the Laguna Hills and Laguna Niguel locations—was folded into the overall Orange County court structure, judicial assignments were shifted, and administrative functions centralized. The program did continue through 2006, but the volume of TROs processed in the South Orange court locations progressively decreased. The court is exploring other methods of providing this service to shelter victims perhaps through video conferencing.

At the state level, in September 2005, Chief Justice Ronald M. George appointed the [Domestic Violence Practice and Procedure Task Force](#) (see pg. 57). Charged with studying ways to improve practices and procedures in domestic violence cases, the committee has draft recommendations out for general comment and expects to bring its recommendation to the Judicial Council for approval in December 2007. The task force's current proposal suggests that every court ensure timely access at convenient court locations.

## Five Years Ago ... 2002

The violent, criminal offenses that the California courts adjudicate are often the result of underlying factors—such as homelessness, mental illness, alcohol and substance abuse—that affect the lives of millions of Californians.

While the court's immediate concern is the legal matter, the public often expects these underlying factors to be addressed. By assisting with preventative measures, the court reaps the benefits of a community of healthy, law-abiding citizens.

This is especially true for juvenile delinquency, where giving attention and treatment to children in their formative years may help them avoid a life of crime and violence.

### **2002 Ralph N. Kleps Recipient— Superior Court of Yolo County**

The *Superior Court of Yolo County*, among the first in the state to develop a program that focused primarily on juvenile violence (see “Other Kleps Recipients”), received the Kleps Award in 2002 for its Juvenile Violence Court.

Established in 1999 in collaboration with the Yolo County Probation Department, the Juvenile Violence Court is an intervention program for reducing delinquent activity through preplacement, preventative services that help keep at-risk minors in the community, thus cutting out-of-home placement costs and providing compliance enforcement for those participating in the program.

Juvenile Violence Court targets approximately 30 youth annually (15 youth per each six-month session), ages 12–17, who have active cases and whose offenses involve violence or whose case plans underline the need for anger management.

The highly structured program includes intensive probation monitoring and supervision and regular court appearances, as well as various mental health programs such as anger management counseling; alcohol, drug, and mental health assessment and

### **OTHER KLEPS RECIPIENTS** *that focused on juvenile intervention*

#### **2000**

*Butte County Superior Court for its Reality Check program, an innovative alternative sentencing program for young adult first-time alcohol offenders*

*Fresno County Superior Court for its Keep Kids in School program, an aggressive early intervention program targeting truant youth*

#### **2001**

*Santa Clara Superior Court for its Juvenile Delinquency Domestic Violence/Family Violence court program that addressed the behavior of abusive minors and provided support for the victim*

#### **2002**

*San Benito Superior Court for its Court to Community: Addressing Parentage and Support Issues with Teens program, an outreach effort that informed teenagers about the legal and financial consequences of becoming a teen parent*

**“Violence doesn’t  
begin at 18; we  
need to get to  
them earlier.”**

—Hon. Donna M. Petre (ret.),  
Superior Court of Yolo County

treatment; gang intervention workshops; and individual, group, and family counseling, if applicable. In addition, parenting classes and family outreach services are provided to parents and guardians of the participating minors.

Initially established in April 1999 with one-time funding from the State Office of Criminal Justice Planning, the program was temporarily disbanded in March 2000, when this support was no longer available. In July 2001, additional revenue was identified through the [Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act of 2000 \(AB 1913\)](#), which through the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation allocated funding for every county.

The court and the Probation Department realized that the amount allocated to Yolo County was too small to make much of an impact if divided up among the county and the cities within, so they approached the cities of Davis, West Sacramento, and Woodland with a request to pool the funds. All three cities issued a resolution to collectively fund Yolo County's juvenile delinquency intervention and prevention programs, the Juvenile Violence Court, in addition to two other programs—the Juvenile Drug Court and the Yolo County Conservation Program.

Probation has administered the funds for the Juvenile Violence Court since its inception, and the Superior Court of Yolo County contributes in-kind support with a specialized court calendar. Juveniles appear monthly in court, where the specially assigned probation officer reports on each minor's progress or missteps.

## What Happened Next?

Since the Superior Court of Yolo County received the Kleps Award in 2002, more than 90 children have participated in the Juvenile Violence Court program. During the next four years, 88.6 percent of total participants did not incur a new violent offense while in the program, and 53.8 percent of all those enrolled successfully graduated from the program.

Funding and enrollment levels have remained stable, yet the need in the community has increased, so program administrators must triage potential enrollees and focus on juveniles with the greatest number of offenses.

The program constantly tracks its successes and failures—not only those of the participants but also of the program as a whole. Applying updated mental health data and research, program administrators have been evaluating the therapeutic model for their treatment plans. The entire program is being retooled in the upcoming year to better address the specific triggers of aggression and violence within each individual and to provide more specialized care.

**“Remember, we don’t like living in violence, so we shouldn’t create violence. Violence is something we can all live without.”**

*—Written by Juvenile Violence Court graduates and presented by a graduate at graduation on June 25, 2002*

**“Choosing violence is choosing to miss out on all the good things life has to offer.”**

—Written by Juvenile Violence Court graduates and presented by a graduate at graduation on June 25, 2002

Written by JVC session #2 graduates — presented by one graduate during ceremony (1/25/02)

“The choice today is no longer between violence and nonviolence, It's either nonviolence or nonexistence.”

Written By's  
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

If your violent you dont exist in society. In order survive untill tomorrow, you got to stop the violence today. Choosing all the good things life has to offer. The media is one who also promotes violence. People get sent away to prison for long periods of time, for violence. Remember, we dont like living in violence, so we shouldn't create violence. Violence is something we can all live without. People need to start making a stand. So stand up and let your voices be heard. You have a choice, so make it. Take a stand, just you can make a difference.

Written By's  
The Juvenile Violence Court Participants;

## INTRODUCTION

*Relationships take time to develop—between people, between groups of people, and between institutions. And maintaining good relationships can take as much time as building new ones.*

*Courts in California have always reached out to engage the public. While the state's previous fiscal crises made outreach more difficult for the courts, their commitment to hearing the voices of their communities remained unchanged. In the late 1990s, committees of the Judicial Council of California provided significant assistance for community-focused court planning in the form of a statewide conference designed to equip the courts with tools to engage their public. A related handbook (with accompanying tools disk and video) was also prepared for the courts. Recent studies of the public's perception of the courts commissioned by the Judicial Council confirmed that the public wants to both better understand the courts and have its voice heard by the judicial branch. In 2006, the Connecting with Constituencies (CwC) Program was developed to act on this finding.*

*What is CwC? CwC is a process of engaging constituency groups in meaningful dialogue to assist in efforts to improve the courts. These efforts include community-focused court planning, assessing performance, solving problems, improving existing services and programs, and creating new ones. Unlike the more traditional concept of community outreach, which is a one-way communication aimed at informing people about the courts, CwC encourages a dialogue and mutual exchange of ideas with constituents.*

*As part of this program, trial courts were asked to apply the concepts of CwC in the area of community-focused court planning. The primary purpose of such planning is to listen to people's perceptions and expectations of the court system and involve the community in establishing a strategic plan or future direction for their local court. The Judicial Council did just that when it collaborated with key stakeholders to develop *Justice in Focus: The Strategic Plan for California's Judicial Branch, 2006–2012*.*

*The following profiles illustrate the many approaches courts took to connect with their constituencies—from going on a Hmong-language radio show to taking direct action in response to public feedback.*

*To aid the courts in their endeavors, the CwC Program provided the following assistance:*

- ▶ *Grants to all courts that applied to help them renew their community-focused court planning activities and begin their strategic planning.*
- ▶ *Three in-depth training workshops to convey practical advice and strategies to court leaders on how to best engage their communities.*
- ▶ *A practical "how to" guide designed to help courts identify key constituents and develop constructive dialogue with them.*

*Innovation in court administration benefits greatly from hearing the voices of court users, judicial branch partners, and other stakeholders, and carefully considering how to meld these voices into comprehensive and enduring plans for the future.*

*The CwC program will continue to support the changing needs of the courts and provide them with assistance in connecting with their constituencies.*

# CONNECTING WITH CONSTITUENCIES PROGRAM



**CWC** |

***A Bridge to Connect Cultures***  
*Superior Court of Fresno County*

***Cultivating Community Ambassadors***  
*Superior Court of San Joaquin County*

***Bridging the Gap***  
*Superior Court of Orange County*

***Many Paths Toward a Collective Strategic Plan***  
*Superior Court of San Mateo County*

***Big Results from Small Screens***  
*Superior Court of Shasta County*

***Connecting with Jurors***  
*Superior Court of San Diego County*

## A BRIDGE TO CONNECT CULTURES

and ethnic minorities constitute more than 60 percent of the residents, and nearly half of them speak a language other than English in the home.

The [Superior Court of Fresno County](#) has worked hard to reach out to its Hmong community, an ethnic and linguistic group native to Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and China. After a large influx of Hmong in the past few years, Fresno County today has the second-largest Hmong community in the United States, with over 35,000 residents.

The Hmong population is not a monolithic group, however. Not only are there different factions, there are varying degrees of assimilation to American ways (many elders still adhere to a clan structure and work out problems through clan leaders) and differing levels of literacy (the written language of the Hmong was not formalized until the 1960s).

In its efforts to connect with the Hmong, the court took two simple yet significant steps: it met with the community on its own territory, in its own language. Judges Adolfo M. Corona and Gary D. Hoff were interviewed (through interpreters) on a Hmong-language radio show about the court and its services. Community response was enthusiastic. A journalist who is also a respected leader in the Hmong community hosted the radio show and hopes to have more interviews, each one focusing on a specific topic.

For Judge Corona, “It was a pleasure to have participated in the Hmong radio show event. It was an honor to be involved in such an activity where I was able to see and appreciate the strong desire of this group of relatively new American immigrants to integrate and to learn more about our justice system and how it can better serve their community. This experience further confirmed my strong belief that, in general, all members of our community wish to be well served by our courts and, if so, would in turn serve their courts—either through jury service or in other ways.”

Fresno County possesses one of the fastest-growing and most diverse populations in the state. In recent years, the county’s population has grown at a rate nearly twice that of the state. Racial

**“From administration to judges to staff, Fresno County courts always strive to provide public service at the highest level of competence, equity, and empathy. We take public access to justice and outreach very seriously and are always looking for ways to make our courts more user-friendly and accommodating.”**

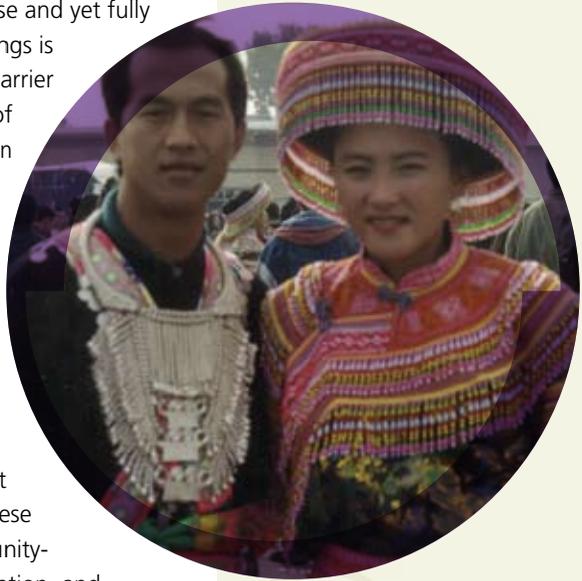
—Judge Adolfo M. Corona

Judge Hoff found that “the ability to be concise and yet fully explain services, programs, and legal proceedings is difficult, especially when there is a language barrier and when there often is no literal translation of the legal concepts. When one superimposes on top of that cultural issues related to lack of trust and confidence in the courts, or at least a lack of awareness of the court’s process, it makes clear that our task of public outreach and education needs to be one which is very broad based, at grassroots levels, and ongoing.”

The court also reached out into the larger community by joining with other agencies that have worked successfully with the Hmong. These agencies include Stone Soup Fresno, a community-based organization that provides health, education, and other services to the Southeast Asian population; the Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministry; and the Fresno Center for New Americans. The court also surveyed the Hmong members of its own staff on how the court could better serve their community.

One change the court has made already is to have a Hmong-language speaker at its one-stop service center. And the court now works more directly with clan leaders to resolve disputes out of court.

Small-group sessions and a large community forum are planned to help the court with its strategic plan and to further improve services.



A Fresno County Superior Court employee with his wife in traditional Hmong dress at a local Fresno event.



Examples of the Hmong culture are shown above, including a musical instrument called a Qeej (top left), a violin (bottom right), and two examples of the beautiful Hmong tapestries with scenes from a marriage ceremony, a hunt, and the traditional agricultural lifestyle.

## CULTIVATING COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS

The heart of one of the most significant outreach programs implemented by the [Superior Court of San Joaquin County](#) just may have come about because one person lost her way.

In 1999, that same person came to a court-sponsored focus group meeting of the county's Cambodian community. Through an interpreter she told of how she had spent an entire day trying to find the court that was hearing a case involving her son. Since her son was a juvenile, it turned out that the woman was not even in the correct courthouse. "Someone else got up at that meeting," says Judge William J. Murray, Jr., "and said, 'You should have someone who can help people like this woman.'" From that came the beginning of the [Court-Community Leadership and Liaison Academy](#).

The court began the academy the following year as a 12-week program. In recognition of its innovative efforts, the court received the 2001 Ralph N. Kleps Award for Improvement in the Administration of the Courts. The Superior Court of San Joaquin County works with community-based organizations that serve the ethnic, immigrant, and disabled communities across the county and invites them to nominate an employee or volunteer from their organization to attend.

Each year the court asks those in attendance for suggestions on how to improve the program. Based on that input, new topics are added, and the academy has evolved into a 21-week program, split between fall and winter semesters. Once a week, judges and other justice system professionals present a three-hour interactive session. Participants also visit the court clerk's counters, the county law library, the county jail, the county juvenile hall, and even the [Court of Appeal, Third Appellate District](#), to see the courts in action and experience the impact of court operations.

Academy graduates serve for two years as liaisons to the community and agree to reconvene for discussions if and when the need arises. One unexpected outgrowth of the program: graduates began networking outside the court, which strengthened the interaction of the service organizations in the community. "You can't reach everybody," says Judge Murray. "But the people you do reach go back into the community and have a multiplier effect."

The court also has a Youth Leadership Academy for high school students, which evolved from its mentorship program. Currently, it is a five-week summer program, but the court is planning to make it available year-round.

When it was once again time to begin strategic planning, the court made valuable use of the relationships it built over the years. Using its CwC grant, San Joaquin conducted 28 focus groups with community groups, justice system partners, and court users (including former jurors and ex-offenders). Nearly 400 people participated. The court also distributed four different surveys and collected more than 2,000 responses. This valuable input from the community was used to develop the court's new mission statement, issue statements, strategic goals, operational objectives, and new programming. A summary of the focus group comments and an analysis of the survey results, including a comparison with the court's 1999 survey results, will be published and made available to the focus group participants, local governmental leaders, and the public.

**“You can’t reach everybody ... but the people you do reach go back into the community and have a multiplier effect.”**

*—Judge William J. Murray, Jr.*



Judge William J. Murray, Jr. (left, first row), shown with the 2005 graduating class of the Superior Court of San Joaquin County's Court-Community Leadership and Liaison Academy.

## BRIDGING THE GAP

its first Leadership Academy. At this early date, the academy has already proved a great success. Its 22 participants, who graduated from the six-week program in April 2007, have a better understanding of the court's work and have provided feedback on how to improve programs and services.

The Superior Court of Orange County previously had a Court Community-Focused Planning Committee but wanted a more concentrated and inclusive program to establish a bridge between the court and various ethnic, immigrant, and disabled communities. The Leadership Academy, modeled after the Superior Court of San Joaquin County program, was the perfect medium. Academy participants share what they've learned about the court with their organization, thus spreading the information to the community and increasing understanding and access to the court.

Judge Frederick P. Aguirre organized the program and recruited participants. The new program, tailored to meet the needs of Orange County's diverse community, successfully achieved broad representation from many service agencies: Catholic Charities of Orange County, the Korean American Coalition, the Black Chamber of Commerce, Latino Advocates for Education, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Names and addresses of organizations were obtained from lists used for prior stakeholder meetings. Judicial officers with the court's CwC committee also helped attract participants with follow-up calls to organizations that would benefit from the academy.

"It was a rewarding experience to lead an effort where the community took a genuine interest, was able to learn more, and made a contribution to the improvement of our court," says Judge Aguirre. He adds, "We recruited judges, attorneys, and court staff to make informative presentations and provided reference materials based on participant interest, which covered

When developing its strategic plan, the Superior Court of Orange County took the opportunity to form a new and lasting connection with the culturally diverse community it serves by creating

**"The court has already benefited from this collaborative effort, with graduates having made a presentation to our court's Executive Committee. It is our hope that graduates will be involved in many facets of our court's strategic planning."**

—Presiding Judge  
Nancy Wieben Stock

a wide range of topics: self-help, collaborative courts, traffic, landlord-tenant issues, and domestic violence.”

Orange County used funds from a CwC grant to produce a 14-minute video and resource guide about the court to share with the Leadership Academy members during their orientation. The video, narrated by a well-known radio announcer, is also shown to jurors and the general public to demonstrate how the court is changing to meet community needs.

The court surveyed its Leadership Academy members at different stages of the program to assess if their expectations had been met. The feedback received was overwhelmingly favorable: in 2008, the Leadership Academy will become an eight-week program. Leadership Academy graduates will also be participating in focus groups to help court planning efforts.



Graduating members of the Superior Court of Orange County's inaugural Leadership Academy. The 22 participants attended the six-week session, which concluded in April 2007, and now have a better understanding of the court's work to share with members of their communities.

## CREATING A LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

- 1 Develop a list of 20 to 30 community organizations, with an emphasis on leaders who might represent traditionally marginalized communities in the court system.*
- 2 Draft course content and select appropriate speakers.*
- 3 Send invitation letters, applications, and a course schedule.*
- 4 Review applications, obtain background checks, and confirm attendees.*
- 5 Prepare class materials.*
- 6 Create certificates of completion for the graduation ceremony.*

## MANY PATHS TOWARD A COLLECTIVE STRATEGIC PLAN

When it was time to renew its planning efforts, the [Superior Court of San Mateo County](#) went far beyond the confines of the court. Its Strategic Planning Committee began a multifaceted effort

to connect with the community. The committee is made up of three judges, the court executive officer, the deputy court executive officers, managers, and other members of the court's staff. Then Presiding Judge George A. Miram and then Assistant Presiding Judge Robert D. Foiles asked the committee to review the court's current strategic plan and to develop new goals and initiatives to guide the court in planning and decisionmaking. Through various communication channels, the court asked its constituents two questions: What is the court doing well? And what can it do better?

With the guidance of its Strategic Planning Committee, the court took the following steps to get the maximum feedback from the public and its justice system partners:

- ▶ Held four forums open to the public with Mandarin, Cantonese, Spanish, and Tagalog interpreters.
- ▶ Placed ads in seven local newspapers, including the largest daily Chinese newspaper, to announce public forums.
- ▶ Launched online surveys, which allowed the public to provide feedback on general court services and in the areas of jury and traffic.
- ▶ Sent letters to 60,000 jurors, asking them to participate in the online survey for jury service.
- ▶ Invited the [San Mateo Bar Association](#), minority bar associations, the [Office of the District Attorney](#), the Office of the Public Defender, business leaders, law enforcement, and the leadership of various county departments to five focus group meetings.
- ▶ Held another six focus groups solely for court employees.
- ▶ Arranged for the assistant presiding judge and another judge to appear on a community-access cable TV news show.
- ▶ Coordinated the appearance of two judges on a local radio show that focuses on individuals' legal rights.

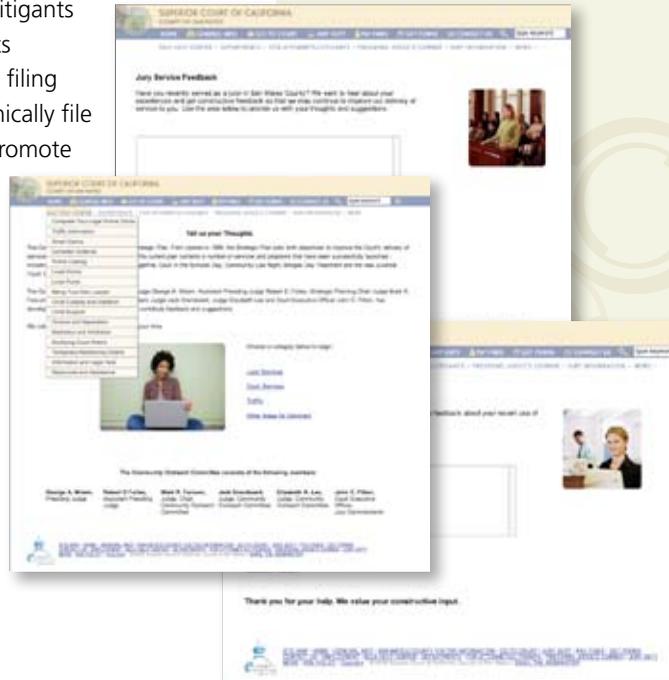
- Utilized the **CourTools** system, provided by the **National Center for State Courts**, to evaluate public perceptions of court access and fairness.

Between face-to-face contact, surveys, and online feedback, nearly 1,500 people contributed to the court's planning process.

The most immediate action the court took was to report back to the community participants after the completion of the strategic plan. Everyone who attended a public forum or focus group either received a copy of the plan or was directed to the online version at the court's Web site. Participants were able to see that their feedback had been included and had factored into some of the court's priority actions.

Working from constituent suggestions to improve services, the court has already created a way for litigants and attorneys to request court transcripts online. It also hopes to expand its online filing capability, so that the public can electronically file criminal matters; increase its efforts to promote alternative dispute resolution; and improve its Web site and other court communications to make them more accessible to constituents who speak languages other than English.

To maintain the relationships it has built, the court plans to survey court users at least once a year, post quarterly updates of the strategic plan on the Web site, and provide city councils with regular updates about court developments.



The Superior Court of San Mateo County launched a series of online surveys to get feedback from the public about the public's general experiences with the court and more specific information about jury service and traffic court.

## BIG RESULTS FROM SMALL SCREENS

information to computerized scrolling screens and solved a logjam in its courthouse.

Like many other courts in the state, Shasta has experienced a sharp rise in the number of criminal cases in recent years. But the court still communicated its calendar to the public in the same way: with a computer printout posted on bulletin boards throughout the courthouse.

The printout was so small and crammed—a function of the database system—that it was common for a crush of people to surround it, all of them trying desperately to find the right courtroom. Those who could not get near the board went to the clerk's office seeking the same information, creating another bottleneck.

The problem affected more than just the public. Litigants and attorneys also complained of being late for court, because they were unable to get prompt, accurate information. Court delays and added expenses magnified the problem.

As a response, the court used its CwC grant to directly address its public's needs and act on one element of its strategic plan—to improve how it conveys critical information.

With an assist from information technology staff at the [Superior Court of Yolo County](#), which had implemented a similar system, Shasta installed flat-panel video screens and linked them to the court calendar database. Each screen scrolls through a portion of the alphabet, displaying the day's calendar by case name and showing the court department where the case is being heard. The scrolling display repeats within a minute or so, much like the arrival and departure screens in an airport. The following were the key steps Shasta took:

- ▶ Identifying the need to provide a comprehensive listing of all matters to be heard, sorted alphabetically by party with the associated time and department location.
- ▶ Determining that Yolo's kiosk system, designed to solve a similar problem, would also work in Shasta.
- ▶ Using, with some modification, a copy of Yolo's programming code to get started.

- ▶ Having a cabinet built for the four display screens and computer that runs the calendar program.
- ▶ Placing the new system in its foyer, a highly visible location.

Court users and court staff alike have praised the new system. It has relieved the congestion in the court clerk's office. And it has been so successful that the court has already expanded its use to display the calendar for many case types, not just criminal matters.

The Shasta court staff hopes to further refine the system by installing a video screen outside each courtroom, which would display the day's case calendar for that courtroom alone.

One of the last steps of the CwC approach is to act on the public's feedback. The Shasta court shows that addressing the needs of constituents does not necessarily mean that a major overhaul in court operations is necessary—sometimes the solution lies in one concrete action with lasting impact.

In the [Superior Court of Shasta County](#), the public now has access to the most current version of the court's daily case calendar by using video screens linked to the court's database in highly visible locations throughout the courthouse.



## CONNECTING WITH JURORS

recognized this as a potential avenue to share information about the court and seized on the opportunity to create a dialogue with jurors. The court used its CwC grant to contract with the Criminal Justice Research Division of the [San Diego Association of Governments \(SANDAG\)](#). Together, they held four focus groups with jurors to find out whether they were interested in using this time to learn about the courts, and if so, what information would be most useful to them and how the court should deliver it. A total of 75 jurors participated in these discussions. Each focus group lasted about one hour and included brief introductions by a judge or court staff person.

San Diego found that jurors welcomed the opportunity to use their time at the courthouse to learn more about how the court works and what services it offers. Some preferred in-person interactions, such as live question-and-answer sessions, presentations, and courthouse tours. Others urged the court to increase its use of technology, such as making improvements to the court's Web site, showing court-related videos, and providing computer kiosks that allow jurors to select from a menu to view presentations or print information.

San Diego also held a forum with local bar associations, organizations assisting self-represented litigants, citizens' groups, and the media to explore how it could improve knowledge of and access to the court.

SANDAG prepared a report, which explains how the forums were conducted, sets forth conclusions, and suggests actions for follow-up. San Diego is using this report to inform its strategic and operational plans.

The same scenario plays out in courthouses throughout the state—people report for jury duty and inevitably spend time waiting to be called. The [Superior Court of San Diego County](#)

**“The focus groups facilitated by SANDAG have provided very valuable information and perspectives to the court about our services and areas where we can improve our current operations or consider new initiatives to better serve our community.”**

—Presiding Judge  
Janis Sammartino

## **CONNECTING WITH CONSTITUENCIES RESOURCE LINKS**

**Justice in Focus: The Strategic Plan for California's Judicial Branch, 2006–2012** may be found at [http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/2\\_annual.htm](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/2_annual.htm).

To access information about the Judicial Council of California's Trust and Confidence in the California Courts: A Survey of the Public and Attorneys (2005) and Trust and Confidence in the California Courts, Phase II: Public Court Users and Judicial Branch Members Talk About the California Courts (2006), please visit [http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/4\\_37pubtrust.htm](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/4_37pubtrust.htm).

To download a copy of **California's Courts: Connecting with Constituencies—Instructional Guide** (February 2007), please visit the Serranus Web site.

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## INTRODUCTION

*California's courts display an incredible amount of initiative, innovation, and foresight in their approaches to serving the public and handling the day-to-day work of administering justice. Whether small, medium, or large, each individual court has the opportunity to develop programs and processes that reflect the culture of its community and daily operations while striving to achieve the greater goals of the judicial branch writ large. The Administrative Office of the Courts is on hand to foster this work and support the courts as they identify long-term needs.*

*Guided by input from the courts and its stakeholder partners, the AOC has created and stewarded a number of initiatives toward this end. The following section profiles several programs that will enhance the development of a strong statewide infrastructure, help courts reach their stated strategic goals and vision, and provide direct service to a diverse public throughout California. These programs touch on all aspects of the business of the courts, including finance and technology, staff and personnel resources, emergency preparedness and response, and case management.*

*More often than not, these initiatives represent a collaborative effort in which the courts act as program designers, pilot partners, and evaluators. Some are brand-new ventures; others are more established innovations that have made great strides since they began. All have been developed to ensure that the courts have a stable and efficient infrastructure to allow them to do their best work in administering justice for the people of California.*



# STATEWIDE JUDICIAL INITIATIVES

## **DEVELOPING THE STATEWIDE INFRASTRUCTURE**

*The California Case Management System (CCMS)*

*Domestic Violence Safety Partnership (DVSP)*

*The Phoenix Project*

*Supreme Court Appointed Counsel System (SCACS)*

*Computer-Aided Facilities Management (CAFM)*

*Enhanced Collections Project*

*Minimum Education Requirements and Expectations*

## **EFFECTING THE LONG-TERM VISION OF THE COURT**

*Senate Bill 56 and the Need for New Judgeships*

*Court Funding Stability: The State Appropriations Limit (SAL)*

*Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP)*

*Partnerships with Colleges and Universities*

## **SERVING THE PUBLIC'S DIRECT NEEDS**

*Augmented Self-Help Services*

*Psychotropic Medications Pilot Program*

*Peer Court DUI Prevention Strategies Program*

*Probate Conservatorship Task Force*

## part I

### *Developing the Statewide Infrastructure*

# CCMS | THE CALIFORNIA CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

## The Courts Move Toward Venue Transparency

The [California Case Management System \(CCMS\)](#), one of the largest and most visible projects in an overall drive to standardize court practices and

procedures, is the statewide technology initiative to implement a uniform application to manage all case categories.

A 2001 assessment by the AOC revealed that the superior courts of California used more than 70 different case management systems. It also revealed several disadvantages of using multiple systems to manage court cases:

- ▶ Each system requires its own support and maintenance.
- ▶ Many of those systems had limited exchange capabilities with the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Department of Justice, or other agencies.
- ▶ Some systems are unable to meet legislative requirements.
- ▶ Statistical reporting to the Judicial Branch Statistical Information System is inconsistent.
- ▶ Courts have individual agreements that require independent negotiations for maintenance and upgrades.

In 2002 the Judicial Council approved the development of a statewide application to meet the needs of the courts and the public. Since that time, the Superior Courts of [Sacramento](#), [Orange](#), [Ventura](#), [San Diego](#), and [Los Angeles](#) Counties have led the design of CCMS with project management support from the AOC's Southern Regional Office. Since its inception, the CCMS project has achieved the following milestones:

- ▶ The California Courts Technology Center installed the criminal and traffic component (see "CCMS Products") in July 2004.
- ▶ The [Superior Court of Fresno County](#) deployed the application for criminal and traffic case categories in July 2006.
- ▶ The [Superior Court of San Diego County](#) implemented the small claims component at its Kearney Mesa courthouse in November 2006, adding it to the North County courthouse in December. In 2007, it implemented the civil case component at three courts and added small claims to two others.
- ▶ The [Superior Court of Sacramento County](#), in February 2007, became the first court to deploy the probate case component.

- ▶ The **Superior Court of Orange County** implemented the small claims component at its Central Justice Center in November 2006 and at three other justice centers in February 2007.
- ▶ The **Superior Court of Ventura County** implemented the small claims, civil, and probate components in two courts between March and May 2007.

## Goals

One of the overarching goals of CCMS is to make the California courts “venue transparent”: that is, to enable judicial constituents and the public to conduct court business from any location in the state. In addition to venue transparency, when it is fully implemented CCMS will

- ▶ Create a common technical infrastructure and promote standard business practices
- ▶ Increase public safety by collaborating with local and state justice partners
- ▶ Adopt standards for data sharing
- ▶ Ensure equal access to justice for the public and other justice partners
- ▶ Reduce the costs of maintaining disparate case management systems
- ▶ Maximize economies of scale and leverage shared resources
- ▶ Allow each court to configure CCMS for its unique needs
- ▶ Utilize a common approach for all case categories based on best practices and continued technology evolution
- ▶ Manage system enhancements, especially those that arise from legislative changes
- ▶ Maximize the benefits of automation by standardizing court business processes

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## CCMS PRODUCTS

*The California Case Management System project consists of three components.*

- ▶ **CCMS-V2** manages criminal and traffic cases and can exchange information with the Department of Justice, the Department of Motor Vehicles, and local justice agencies. It has been implemented in the Superior Court of Fresno County.
- ▶ **CCMS-V3** manages civil, small claims, probate, and mental health cases. It permits electronic filing of cases and is accessible at public computer kiosks in courthouses. Deployment began in late 2006, and four courts—**San Diego, Orange, Ventura, and Sacramento**—have implemented portions of it.
- ▶ **CCMS-V4** will focus on family law, juvenile dependency, and juvenile delinquency case categories. It will also support Unified Family Court business processes. It will use the V3 application as its base and will integrate the functionality from V2.

*CCMS will be fully implemented in all 58 superior courts by the end of 2012.*

## part I

### *Developing the Statewide Infrastructure*

# DVSP | DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

## A Tool to Increase Safety

Domestic violence is a critical issue in our society—one that confronts our social and legal institutions daily. In the judicial system, numerous policies and actions are mandated or recommended to help

ensure that domestic violence cases are handled properly. Courts often face difficulties in complying with all of them—especially if it requires additional personnel or resources to do so.

In 2004, the AOC developed the [Domestic Violence Safety Partnership \(DVSP\)](#). Courts that participate in the partnership use the DVSP Self-Assessment, a two-part tool designed to help courts examine—with the aim to improve—how they follow best practices and mandated procedures in domestic violence cases.

Using the self-assessment tool and other resources provided by DVSP, courts can

- ▶ Identify and review selected statutes and mandates addressing domestic violence
- ▶ Identify and review safety considerations related to domestic violence cases
- ▶ Get AOC-sponsored and -funded technical assistance to ensure compliance with requirements or enhance safety
- ▶ Get AOC-sponsored and -funded local training for court officers and staff on domestic violence–related topics

The assessment's first part deals primarily with mandated procedures for emergency protective orders, restraining orders, family court services protocols, issues involving juveniles, and criminal protective orders. The second part focuses on actions the court may take to implement recommendations to improve practice and procedure in these critical cases. The self-assessment is voluntary and confidential, although courts are free to share the results with the AOC or other justice system entities, as the court deems appropriate. After courts examine their practices and complete the assessment, they may obtain training or technical assistance at no cost under the DVSP project through a grant from the [Governor's Office of Emergency Services](#) with funding from the federal [Office on Violence Against Women](#). Courts can get assistance without the self-assessment, but courts that complete it get priority.

The training or assistance must relate directly to improving a court's response to cases involving victims of domestic violence. The AOC funds short-term projects—whose costs generally range from \$3,000 to \$5,000—to assist a court to

- ▶ Bring a team from another court to provide help on a specific project or a promising practice related to domestic violence
- ▶ Pay for consulting services to assist the court

- ▶ Fund logistics for a local education program, including travel and honorarium for the faculty, facility rental, or production of materials
- ▶ Reimburse travel expenses for court staff to visit another court
- ▶ Purchase computer equipment to enable access to the [Domestic Violence Restraining Order System \(DVROS\)](#) and the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS)

In the three years of the partnership, the AOC has expended approximately \$80,000 on DVSP training and technical assistance. More than 30 courts have taken advantage of AOC assistance. The project has also funded related local, regional, and statewide educational events relating to domestic violence.

## Impacts

The DVSP project funded dedicated computer equipment for the Superior Courts of [Yolo](#), [Tulare](#), [Plumas](#), and [Madera](#) Counties to access DVROS and CLETS through the AOC's Data Tech Center.

Two rural courts held countywide interdisciplinary programs featuring nationally recognized guest speakers. The Superior Courts of [Siskiyou](#) and [Inyo](#) Counties held daylong programs in October 2005 and November 2006, respectively. The events helped galvanize these rural counties into giving this issue much-needed attention.

Family Court Services mediators and evaluators from the [Superior Court of Contra Costa County](#) are better prepared to conduct risk assessment after receiving training from a nationally recognized expert on risk assessment and lethality.

The [Superior Court of Sonoma County](#) gained valuable information on working with countywide domestic violence councils from a site visit to the [Superior Court of Santa Clara County](#). The project also funded a facilitator to assist the court and its justice system partners in assessing the functioning of its council.

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## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE TASK FORCE

*On September 13, 2005, Chief Justice Ronald M. George appointed a task force to study ways to improve practices and procedures and to develop best practices for domestic violence cases in California courts.*

*"Our goals are to ensure fair, expeditious, and accessible justice for litigants in these critical cases and to promote both victim safety and perpetrator accountability," said the Chief Justice. The Chief Justice named retired Justice Laurence D. Kay, of the Court of Appeal, First Appellate District, as chair of the 15-member state-wide panel, comprising appellate justices, trial court judges, and court executive officers.*

*The task force first reviewed the Attorney General's Task Force on Local Criminal Justice Response to Domestic Violence Report, issued in June 2005, to consider implementing court-related recommendations, then developed guidelines and proposed practices designed to improve handling of court cases involving allegations of domestic violence.*

*The task force held two public hearings in March 2007 to seek comments on the draft guidelines and proposed practices. Final recommendations will be made to the Judicial Council in December 2007.*

## part I

### *Developing the Statewide Infrastructure*

## THE PHOENIX PROJECT

### **Enterprise Resource Planning for the Courts' Business**

Court unification and the consolidation of administration and facilities ownership have brought great possibilities, but also great challenges. The

severing of court ties with counties meant the loss of county infrastructure and support systems for financial and human resources management. Technology has played a large part in addressing those challenges as the courts move toward a statewide, standardized environment.

The [Phoenix Project](#) is relatively new, but components of it have been in development and in operation for several years.

The Phoenix financials, human resources, and payroll system is based on internationally recognized software, SAP, and is hosted in a centralized shared services environment in the [California Courts Technology Center](#). This is consistent with the judicial branch's enterprise approach to technology, which uses a single, centralized standard application for accounting and human resources statewide.

The Court Accounting and Reporting System (CARS) was launched in 2002 to automate court accounting needs. Development began in 2005 on the Court Human Resources Information System (CHRIS) to address personnel management. In May 2006, the AOC—recognizing the need for more consistency in deploying statewide systems—appointed a program director who combined CARS and CHRIS into the Phoenix Project, a single cross-enterprise structure using the software for enterprise resource planning. The two components were renamed Phoenix Financials and Phoenix HR/Payroll.

The creation in December 2006 of a Phoenix steering committee, comprising chief executives from two small, two medium-sized, and two large courts, gave the judicial branch more direct input into Phoenix and helped provide an avenue for accurate communication to constituents and stakeholders. The committee also works to ensure the success of the Phoenix modules.

Phoenix Financials standardizes all accounting functions for the judicial branch, including accounts payable and receivable, cost accounting, and grants management, and provides timely, comprehensive financial information for required reporting. To date, 49 California courts have adopted Phoenix Financials, and the system should be fully deployed in fiscal year 2008–2009.

Phoenix HR/Payroll processes payroll and administers personnel matters, including benefits, training, performance, and organizational management. The [Superior Court of Sacramento County](#) implemented this module in 2006, and five other courts followed in January 2007 ([Lassen](#), [Riverside](#), [Santa Cruz](#), [Siskiyou](#), and [Stanislaus](#)). Implementation in other courts is on a one-year hold as the project team develops additional structure and methods for deployment. Completion is anticipated in fiscal year 2010–2011.

The project team is working with the [United States Administrative Office of the Courts \(USAOC\)](#) to use its deployment methods for the Phoenix Project. The USAOC has successfully deployed a uniform financial and human resources system to more than 90 judicial districts nationwide.

## Projected Results

Full deployment of both Phoenix systems will allow courts to

- ▶ Increase efficiency due to consistent standards of practice and business procedures
- ▶ Realize cost savings and flexibility to adapt to employee changes from consistent, uniform statewide training for new and continuing users
- ▶ Manage their own payroll and be released from contracts with outside vendors such as ADP
- ▶ Get quicker access to data and improve day-to-day operations
- ▶ Include automated interfaces between the courts and court benefits service providers

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**USING TECHNOLOGY TO STREAMLINE A COMPLEX PROCESS** *The Supreme Court Appointed Counsel System (SCACS) is designed to automate the case management and payment process functions for the court-appointed counsel program for the Supreme Court's capital cases. These cases are lengthy—counsel appointed to them can expect the appeals process to span ten years or more. Delays in the appeals process caused by circumstances beyond counsel's control often result in increased costs to the state and cash-flow problems for court-appointed counsel. Staff from the Supreme Court and both the Appellate and Trial Court Judicial Services and Information Systems Divisions of the AOC collaborated on SCACS. The automation of capital case record management—which includes appointing attorneys for both direct appeal and habeas corpus proceedings, tracking budget, and generating correspondence—should move cases through the appeals process with greater speed and efficiency, and streamlining the payment process will encourage more attorneys to seek appointment to capital cases. The system enables staff to*

- ▶ Track payment requests from receipt through payment
- ▶ Execute payment orders and other documents required to support the process
- ▶ Search, review, and report capital case and appellant information, counsel information, and historical payment information
- ▶ Prepare reports that will assist in budgeting and monitoring workloads

*Future phases will provide additional records management capability and allow attorneys to submit payment requests via the Internet.*

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## MANAGING THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST COURT SYSTEM

**The Computer-Aided Facilities Management (CAFM) program will ultimately standardize the management of all California trial court facilities. As "owner" of the vast real estate holding that is the largest court system in the United States, the Judicial Council faces some real challenges to maintain and create court buildings that reflect the highest standards of excellence.**

*Four years after the completion of 20-year facilities master plans for each of California's superior courts,*

- ▶ 23 court facilities are in trailers, because of lack of building space
- ▶ 25 percent of courtrooms have no space for a jury
- ▶ 41 percent of court facilities have no private, secure entrance passage for in-custody defendants
- ▶ 78 percent of court facilities lack adequate access for people with disabilities

*The Office of Court Construction and Management began implementing CAFM in 2004 to help provide uniform high-level services to all courts in the branch. A Web-based program, CAFM enables court personnel, AOC staff, and third-party contractors to get real-time data on court design, construction, operations, and maintenance.*

*As individual courts transfer to the state, their administration and management functions become accessible through CAFM. By using the program, court management staff can quickly report maintenance problems and track progress on major repairs, renovations, and other facilities projects. Those reports ultimately lead to actions. The *Trial Court Five-Year Capital Outlay Plan* contained within the *Judicial Branch Five-Year Infrastructure Plan for Fiscal Year 2008–2009*, for example, comprises 175 projects:*

- ▶ 92 new constructions to replace obsolete court facilities
- ▶ 40 renovations to existing court facilities
- ▶ 43 expansions of existing or future court facilities

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The downtown Merced courthouse is the first new court facility to be constructed in Merced since 1950. It was completed on March 30, 2007, and opened to the public in April. Home to six courtrooms, with space for a seventh, it meets the Judicial Council's standards for design of trial court facilities by providing secure hallways for the public, judicial officers, and staff, and separate hallways and holding areas for in-custody defendants.

## HELPING COURTS TO COLLECT DEBT

The *Enhanced Collections Project* originally grew out of a call by Chief Justice Ronald M. George, in his 2003 State of the Judiciary address, to make collection of money owed to the courts a top priority.

The passage of *Senate Bill 940* in 2004 led to the creation of the *Collaborative Court-County Working Group on Enhanced Collections*, which included trial court judges and officers, and representatives from the AOC, the Franchise Tax Board, the Department of Corrections, and the State Controller's Office.

The Judicial Council adopted the working group's recommendations in August 2004 aimed at establishing standards for debt collection; helping courts to prioritize, evaluate, and implement the collection of delinquent fees and fines; and, in some cases, reimbursing courts for the costs of collecting delinquent debts. In August 2006, the Judicial Council adopted standards for cost recovery and a revised collections reporting template.

The enhanced collections working group in fiscal year 2004–2005 achieved a 27 percent increase in collections over the previous fiscal year. In addition, courts, counties, and the California Compensation and Government Claims Board increased revenue by 64 percent through the Franchise Tax Board Court-Ordered Debt Collection Program during the same time period.

The working group was instrumental in developing and adopting the *Sentencing Fines and Fees Assistant (SFFA)*, a database program that gives judicial officers quick access to mandatory and discretionary fine, fee, and penalty data for selected infractions, misdemeanors, and felonies across multiple code sections. The SFFA streamlines the process for assessing fair and consistent fines and fees.

The AOC's Enhanced Collections Unit continues the working group's efforts. The unit has developed a link on the council's Serranus Web site as well as an external Web site to disseminate collections-related information and tools, and has to date assisted 25 courts in creating or improving their collection programs.

The Judicial Council also

- ▶ Disbursed \$3.59 million in Comprehensive Collection Program Awards, to help courts start or improve their collection programs
- ▶ Plans to expand collection efforts to other litigation areas including civil, family law, and juvenile courts
- ▶ Will collaborate with other state agencies to collect court-ordered payments

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## part I

### *Developing the Statewide Infrastructure*

# MINIMUM EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

## New Rules for Judicial Branch Education

With the adoption of new rules for minimum education, California's trial court judges and trial court personnel are being officially encouraged—

and required, in some cases—to participate in ongoing professional education.

In October 2006, the Judicial Council adopted **new continuing education rules** based on a proposal by the Governing Committee of the Center for Judicial Education and Research (CJER). This is the first time the judicial branch has taken a consistent, comprehensive approach to establishing education rules for judges and court personnel. The rules took effect on January 1, 2007.

The newly adopted rules outline specific content-based courses and some hours-based education that judges and court personnel are expected or required to complete. New judges and subordinate judicial officers must complete new judge orientation within six months; an overview of their primary court assignment (civil, criminal, family, juvenile dependency, juvenile delinquency, probate, or traffic) within the first year; and within two years, the B.E. Witkin Judicial College of California.

New court executive officers must (and new presiding judges are expected to) complete the presiding judges orientation and court management program within one year. In their first year, new supervising judges are expected to complete the orientation to the administrative role and (if the local court deems it appropriate) the orientation to court calendar management.

Within their first six months, new court managers, supervisors, and personnel must complete the orientation to the judicial branch and the orientation to the local court. (Managers and supervisors are excepted in some cases.) Personnel must also complete an orientation to basic employee issues, such as sexual harassment and safety; some managers and supervisors must complete an orientation to management/supervision. After completing these content-based requirements or expectations, continuing education is based on hours of participation.

- ▶ Trial court judges are expected to complete 30 hours of continuing education in each three-year period.

**“California has always been seen as a leader in judicial education, and we wanted to make a statement about branch values. Any member of the public should be able to walk in and, regardless of the court, judge, employee, or type of case, have access to the highest levels of expertise and receive the same high levels of service.”**

—Karen M. Thorson,  
Education Division/CJER Director

- ▶ Subordinate judicial officers and court executive officers must complete at least 30 hours of continuing education in each three-year period.
- ▶ Court managers and supervisors must complete at least 12 hours of continuing education in each two-year period.
- ▶ Court personnel must complete at least 8 hours of continuing education in each two-year period.

CJER has created continuing education templates, so that individuals can map out a learning plan. CJER spent five years developing curricula, which local courts can use to develop their own coursework. These are all accessible on Serranus, the password-protected site for the California judiciary. Local courts can also jointly offer education opportunities, seek grants, and share training facilities and expenses to make education available to more individuals and provide access to state and national education providers.

Under the new rules, each judge will record participation in education, reporting to his or her presiding judge annually. At the end of the three-year period, each presiding judge will report to the Judicial Council about overall levels of participation. Recording participation in education for court personnel is a local court responsibility with no requirement to report to the Judicial Council.

The CJER Governing Committee is currently proposing similar rules for minimum education for Supreme Court and Court of Appeal justices, clerk/administrators, managers, supervisors, and other personnel; and AOC executives, managers, supervisors, and other employees. The Supreme Court and appellate administrative presiding justices have gone on the record as strongly favoring mandatory continuing education for their numbers. The Judicial Council expects to act on the proposal before the end of 2007.

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### **A MULTITUDE OF CHOICES**

*Judges and court personnel can use any combination of continuing education hours to fulfill the prescribed expectations or requirements, including statewide conferences; training sessions conducted by local courts; in-person, online, and TV broadcast courses offered by CJER; and programs from other providers. An experienced trial judge can exceed the expected 30 hours of education over three years by, for example,*

- ▶ *Attending a Rural Court Institute (14 hours)*
- ▶ *Completing a CJER course in qualifying ethics (5 hours)*
- ▶ *Completing a course in sexual harassment prevention (2 hours)*
- ▶ *Attending a one-hour CJER broadcast every quarter (12 hours)*

## part II

### *Effecting the Long-Term Vision of the Court*

## THE MISSION TO ENSURE FAIR ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

courts' interactions with the public but also in the state's interaction with the courts. Two recent actions—the passage of [Senate Bill 56](#) and the application of the state appropriations limit on court funding—are aimed at ensuring the equitable allocation of resources, both human and fiscal.

### **Senate Bill 56 and the Need for New Judgeships**

The California trial court system suffers from a severe shortage of judgeships, from both lack of funds and growing caseloads. That shortage not only decreases the public's access to the courts but also creates a backlog that impedes the fair and timely execution of justice.

The superior courts of California have roughly 1,500 trial court judges and approximately 423 commissioners and referees. In fiscal year 2004–2005, nearly 9 million cases were filed in the trial courts, and the courts disposed more than 7.5 million cases. Population growth has far outpaced the growth of the courts. Since 1980 the state population has increased by more than 50 percent; the number of new trial judges, by about 20 percent. In 2004, the Judicial Council acted on findings from the [Assessment of Judicial Workload](#) by the Office of Court Research (OCR) in the AOC. The study reported the state



Judge Kimberly J. Nystrom-Geist, Superior Court of Fresno County, began her career on the bench as a commissioner in 2005. Pictured here at her enrobing ceremony, she was appointed to a judgeship on April 13, 2007.

**CONVERTING SJOS TO JUDGES** *The 2007 OCR report also addressed appropriate workloads for commissioners, referees, and hearing officers—also known as subordinate judicial officers (SJOs). About 40 percent of SJOs statewide are handling cases or proceedings that are considered more appropriate for judges. The OCR recommended 25 courts that would benefit from converting those SJO positions to judgeships. It was, in fact, the shortage of judges over the years that led courts to create SJO positions to help manage the workload. Converting some SJOs to judges would help address the courts' assessed judicial need and balance the number of SJOs relative to judges.*

needed more than 350 new judges. In response, the council began seeking legislative authority and funding to add 150 new judgeships over three years, a figure that would begin to address the historic shortage.

SB 56 became law in 2006 and funded 50 new judicial positions. The state's trial courts will still have a real need for new judges beyond those that this bill provides. In early 2007, the OCR reassessed judicial need, using up-to-date available filings data to validate the continuing support of the Legislature for 100 additional judicial positions within the next two years. The 2007 assessment revealed several shifts in allocation priority stemming from actual changes in the number of case filings for a court or a change in that court's judicial need relative to another court.

In February 2007, the Judicial Council sponsored new legislation, [AB 159](#), seeking an additional 100 judgeships and conversion of eligible subordinate judicial officers (see "Converting SJOs to Judges"). As directed by SB 56, the council will reevaluate each court's judicial needs and report to the Legislature every two years, beginning in November 2008.



Administrative Office of the Courts leadership worked closely with the Legislature and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to facilitate the passage of SB 56. Shown here with the Governor are (left to right) the AOC's Office of Governmental Affairs Director Kathleen T. Howard; Administrative Director of the Courts William C. Vickrey; Ronald M. George, Chief Justice of California; and AOC Chief Deputy Director Ronald G. Overholt.

**A QUICK GUIDE TO CALCULATING JUDICIAL NEEDS** *Researchers calculate the state's total judicial needs by multiplying the amount of time it takes to resolve each case type by the number of filings per case type. They then divide that total by the standard amount of time each judicial officer can be available to complete case-related work. The result is the number of judges needed per county and in the state as a whole to resolve the cases filed.*

*By comparing that figure to the actual number of authorized judicial positions a court has, the OCR can identify shortages. The 2004 report found that Fresno County, for example, needed 67 judges. Fresno at the time had 36 trial court judges. By tracking increases in case filings, the OCR could see how a court's judicial needs had changed and might change in the future. In the 2007 assessment, Fresno County's need had grown to nearly 75 judges.*

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## Court Funding Stability: The State Appropriations Limit (SAL)

Several initiatives have been launched in recent years to create a more uniform court system: uniformity in budget planning, resource availability, and security practices.

The [state appropriations limit \(SAL\)](#) has been a part of California finances since 1979, when voters approved it to limit the amount of monies that could be spent from tax revenues. The SAL factors changes in population and cost of living to calculate a fair year-to-year adjustment on budget funding. But it had no effect on trial court budgets until fiscal year 2005–2006, and that effect has been to bring stability, predictability, and flexibility to funding the trial courts.

### Uniformity in Budget Planning

Prior to 2005, the courts went through a prolonged budget-development process and had to document increased costs they had already incurred in order to seek increased funding. The courts' final budget allotments were often not approved until after the start of the fiscal year, and the courts were subject to shortfalls if the Governor or Legislature made cuts to close the gap between revenues and spending. It hampered efficient asset allocation and made long-range planning more difficult for the courts.

In fiscal year 2004–2005, the process was revised, so that trial court budgets would be automatically adjusted according to the percentage change in the SAL. First applied for fiscal year 2005–2006, this made for a more predictable funding process. More important, the funding is provided as a lump sum, and the Judicial Council and the courts—not the Governor and the Legislature—now determine how to allocate those funds. This gives the courts more control over their budgets and promotes more efficient long-range resource planning and employee contract negotiation, because the courts can anticipate their funding.

For the three budget years since the new process began (through the proposed fiscal year 2007–2008 budget), the SAL increase has averaged roughly 5.5 percent. This year, that adjustment meant an additional \$125 million for the courts.

### Equitably Allocating Resources

The [Resource Allocation Study \(RAS\)](#) works in conjunction with the SAL to make court funding even more stable. Adopted by the council in July 2005, the RAS established a model to provide funding to underresourced courts.

Similar to the approach used to assess the need for new judges, the RAS studied case workloads and nonjudicial staff levels to identify those courts that—relative to all courts—had been underresourced since state funding of trial courts began in the late 1990s. The council can then make discretionary allocations of a prescribed portion of a year's total funding. In fiscal year 2005–2006, for example, the council distributed \$13.9 million to 28 underfunded courts, with significant allocations going to the trial courts in [Calaveras, Lake, Lassen, Merced, Placer, and San Benito Counties](#).

The RAS is intended not as a long-term component of the funding process but as a tool to bring about more uniform funding relative to workload needs, which the SAL can then continue to support.

## Securing Our Courts

In 2004, the Judicial Council began to address concerns about the rising cost of security in the trial courts. Salaries for correctional officers (which the courts do not negotiate) and the nationwide push for increased protection in a post-9/11 world had contributed greatly to the cost of security—making it the fastest growing budget item for the courts.

The following year, the courts adopted uniform standards for funding court security, including guidelines for

- ▶ Entrance screening stations
- ▶ Courtrooms
- ▶ Holding cells
- ▶ Internal transportation of defendants
- ▶ Supervision of deputies

The standards are also designed to create an objective method—based on the number of case filings and judges in each court, among other factors—to apportion funds among the state's 58 trial courts.

In 2006, the council adopted standards to cover such unaddressed areas as support staff, supplies and equipment, training, vehicle use, and purchase and maintenance of screening equipment. Prior to the courts transferring to state control, there had been no uniform practice from court to court. Adopting these standards establishes uniform statewide practices and enables courts to better predict their security costs.

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Deputy Byron Mays waits with an in-custody defendant for an elevator in the Placerville courthouse's main foyer. Like many throughout the state, the courthouse does not have private elevators for transporting defendants between the sheriff's van and courtrooms.

## REFINING THE BUDGET

**ADJUSTMENTS** *Two significant areas further help the Judicial Council to determine how it will allocate court funding.*

### ▶ **Inflation and Workforce Funding:**

*This major portion of the annual SAL adjustment (\$56.4 million in fiscal year 2005–2006) covers staff compensation, operating expenses, and other costs at the court's discretion, and is allocated on a pro-rata basis, based on the court's budget.*

### ▶ **Workload Growth and Equity Funding:**

*This provides extra resources to those courts identified by the RAS as being historically underfunded by at least 10 percent. The council apportions larger percentages of this discretionary allocation to those courts with greater shortfalls.*

## part II

### Effecting the Long-Term Vision of the Court

# COOP | CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLANNING

## A Cybertool to Prepare for Real Disasters

In 2006, the Emergency Response and Security (ERS) unit of the AOC developed a [Continuity of Operations Plan \(COOP\)](#) program to help courts

prepare for and recover from a disaster. A COOP plan helps reduce the impact of a disaster or emergency on a court and improve that court's ability to recover and resume operations.

COOP planning is a fundamental mission of any public institution. For years, it was the responsibility of individual agencies and was conducted primarily to address the threat of emergencies within an organization. The AOC's efforts are an attempt to provide statewide consistency in COOP planning (see "The Basis for COOP Planning").

ERS provides information and guidance to the courts and assists them in developing a comprehensive plan. Most important, the ERS created a secure Web-based tool at [www.coop.courts.ca.gov](http://www.coop.courts.ca.gov). Using this tool—a template with 20 major sections—each court can create an operational recovery plan that details its mission-essential functions, alert notification procedures, communications plans, delegations of authority, and more.

The tool has built-in flexibility, so it can be scaled to cover the needs of each court—no matter its size. The court can choose to develop a simple, one-level plan or a complex plan to coordinate many separate groups.

In November 2006, the [Superior Court of Fresno County](#) became the first court to use the tool. It developed COOP plans for 39 individual departments, including personnel, finance, research attorneys, and mediation.

**THE FIRST THREE MONTHS** *Whether it's a natural disaster such as an earthquake or fire, a health emergency, or an attack, California's courts need to have contingency plans in place. In the first 90 days of COOP activation, courts should be able to*

- ▶ *Perform all mission-critical functions*
- ▶ *Address all emergency matters after disasters*

*Courts should resume full operations as soon as possible. If they cannot do so within 90 days of COOP activation, courts should implement long-term strategies to*

- ▶ *Handle all criminal matters and address emergency civil matters*
- ▶ *Perform other mission-critical functions when little or no face-to-face contact is possible for an extended period*

Feedback from the Fresno court contributed to changes that ERS made in the cybertool to better adapt it to court operations. The tool received positive endorsement from an informal continuity of operations planning review committee, which comprised judges, executive officers, disaster recovery professionals, court security staff, and information technology partners from small, medium-sized, and large courts around the state.

The ERS unit has developed training sessions for appropriate court personnel to learn about COOP, write their departmental plans, and learn to train others in writing COOP plans. These training sessions began in August 2007 and will continue throughout 2008. ERS plans to further expand the Web tool to include a Building Evacuation and Emergency Response Plan, a Pandemic Plan, a Court Security Plan, and an Emergency Management Plan.



The Superior Court of Alameda County's Allen E. Broussard Justice

Center in Oakland was closed as of Monday, July 16, 2007, due to severe damage from a burst water pipe. The court quickly transferred cases in other court facilities, and relocated case files for safekeeping during the clean-up and repair process.

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## THE BASIS FOR COOP PLANNING

*Continuity of operations plans evolved out of the concept of continuity of government, which is the preservation, maintenance, or reconstitution of the government's ability to carry out its responsibilities. Continuity of operations focuses further on establishing a baseline of preparedness, including such areas as training and communications, for any potential emergency. The overall purpose is to ensure the continuity of essential functions under all circumstances that may disrupt normal operations.*

*The specific objectives of continuity of government operations are to*

- ▶ *Ensure the continuous performance of an agency or department's essential functions/operations during an emergency*
- ▶ *Protect essential facilities, equipment, records, and other assets*
- ▶ *Reduce or mitigate disruptions to operations*
- ▶ *Reduce loss of life and minimize damage and losses*
- ▶ *Achieve a timely and orderly recovery and a resumption of full service*

## part II

### *Effecting the Long-Term Vision of the Court*

## **PARTNERSHIPS WITH COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

The judicial branch is collaborating with several colleges and universities to provide expanded educational opportunities for judges, court personnel, and individuals seeking work in the courts. One partnership, with the [San Mateo Community College District](#), has already demon-

strated astonishing results and is available to both current court employees and those seeking work in the courts. The Judicial Career Training Partnership (JCTP) establishes and implements an integrated judicial studies workforce development program. In light of the courts' roles as independent employers, JCTP seeks to address the increasing need for well-prepared applicants to entry-level positions and the courts' ongoing needs for professional development to prepare staff to replace retiring managers, executives, and subject-matter experts.

JCTP was funded in August 2006 by a grant from the California Community Colleges through the San Mateo Community College District. The grant supports curriculum development and implementation throughout the program, which provides a three-tier plan over two years:

- ▶ Tier One comprises two accelerated "bootstrap" programs: Jumpstart, a 10-week session at the [College of San Mateo](#), prepares applicants for entry-level positions; Step Up to Leadership, a 15-week course at [San Jose City College](#), prepares lead court staff to advance into court administration and supervision.
- ▶ Tier Two, a certificate program in judicial studies, helps current court employees broaden their knowledge about court operations and the legal process. It is also appropriate for displaced workers and those seeking a career change.
- ▶ Tier Three, an Associate of Arts degree program, integrates court-specific coursework from Tier Two with general education requirements. Especially appropriate for court employees who want to advance into court management, Tier Three will ideally also attract part-time and full-time students who are exploring career options.

The partnership with the community college system benefits the courts in two ways: it has the potential to spread the partnership over a wider area, since community colleges exist throughout the state, and it gives the courts greater visibility as employers. Workforce investment boards in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties also helped that effort, by doing the outreach and recruitment for the Jumpstart program and by screening program applicants.

It may take several years to attract and develop a steady stream of trainees, especially for the certificate and degree programs, so JCTP hopes to continue education efforts beyond its grant period. But before it completes that two-year grant, the partnership aims to

- ▶ Establish a community college curriculum that is responsive to the education and training needs of the judicial branch

- ▶ Enroll a total of 75 students—half prospective and half incumbent court employees—in the programs leading to either a certificate or an AA degree in judicial studies
- ▶ Develop and get approval from the State Chancellor’s Office of curricula for all three tiers, to enable them to be used by community colleges throughout the state
- ▶ Develop internship programs in local courts to involve students in hands-on learning

## Impacts

- ▶ 24 students (of the original 28 enrolled) received certificates of completion in the 200-hour Jumpstart program, preparing to compete for career opportunities in local courts. They each received 12 units of community college credit.
- ▶ 31 court staff from [Santa Clara, San Mateo, and Monterey courts](#) and 1 full-time student completed 99 hours of instruction in Step Up to Leadership, each receiving 6 units of transferable credit from San Jose City College.
- ▶ 5 Jumpstart graduates were placed in paid internship or extra-help positions in the [Superior Court of San Mateo County](#).
- ▶ 4 Step Up to Leadership students were promoted while enrolled in the program.

In addition to this successful partnership with the San Mateo Community College District, several partnerships are currently under way with the University of California, [California State University at Sacramento](#), and [Michigan State University](#). (In fall 2007, California State University at Sacramento will be the first to offer two of four courses leading to a postgraduate Certificate in Judicial Studies.) Another partnership is also being developed with [Chapman University](#).

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**“We have to treat the courts as a business, or we’ll be in a continuing bind to replace highly skilled employees who leave. This program is a key to a future of attracting the best and the brightest and interesting them in a profession they may not have known existed.”**

*—Sherry Dorfman,  
JCTP program director*

## part III

### *Serving the Public's Direct Needs*

## AUGMENTED SELF-HELP SERVICES

### Providing Meaningful Access to the Courts

In April 2006, the Judicial Council set three major budget priorities for fiscal year 2006–2007. The first of these was to provide expanded self-help

services in the trial courts throughout the state of California.

Access to the courts is a major factor in building public trust and confidence in the judicial system. Making court proceedings simpler, more equitable, and more affordable is one of the best ways to ensure equal access.

Over the years, the Judicial Council has helped implement numerous ideas to improve access to the courts. The *Office of the Family Law Facilitator*, created in July 1997 by the Legislature (*Fam. Code, § 10002*) and introduced into all 58 counties, has been a key resource for the self-represented, assisting more than 450,000 litigants a year. Plain-language legal forms and simplified instructions, self-help Web sites in English and Spanish ([www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp) and [www.sucorte.ca.gov](http://www.sucorte.ca.gov))—all these have contributed to making the courts more accessible. But the integration of these services into court-based self-help centers has resulted in a much more comprehensive approach to providing meaningful access.

Pilot projects show how effective self-help centers can be. An extensive study presented to the council in 2005, *Model Self-Help Program: A Report to the Legislature*, confirms this, finding that self-help centers

- ▶ Promote public trust and confidence in the court system
- ▶ Offer a valuable way to provide services to people who need legal access and to improve the quality of justice for litigants
- ▶ Facilitate litigants' abilities to participate effectively in the legal process
- ▶ Help courts design systems that serve self-represented litigants more effectively

**WHO USES SELF-HELP?** *More than 4.3 million court users in California are self-represented litigants. Self-represented litigants are involved in*

- ▶ *In 2004, more than half of the 6 million traffic filings each year*
- ▶ *At least half of the more than 90,000 child custody mediation cases each year*
- ▶ *More than 63 percent of child support cases*
- ▶ *Almost all of the 400,000 small claims cases filed each year*

- ▶ Improve court efficiency
- ▶ Have the capacity to serve the needs of many non-English-speaking litigants

Prior to 2006—and aside from the family law facilitator and small claims advisor program—only 37 courts had any court-based self-help services. The budget for fiscal year 2006–2007 allocated funds statewide for the first time to establish baseline self-help services.

The budget provided \$8.7 million—\$3.7 million from the Trial Court Trust Fund and \$5 million from the Trial Court Improvement Fund—to be distributed to all 58 trial courts. The funding

- ▶ Allocated \$34,000 per court to allow at least 12 hours per week of attorney-supervised self-help assistance at each court
- ▶ Allocated a second amount to each court as a percentage equal to its county's share of the state population
- ▶ Encouraged the courts to direct 80 percent of the allocation to staffing needs

*continues >*



## IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD

*There are cases when the courts must put themselves in the place of a parent or guardian. And those instances are much more sensitive if they involve children whom a doctor has recommended treating with psychotropic medications.*

*Under Welfare and Institution Code section 369.5 and rule 5.640 of the California Rules of Court, once a child is declared a dependent child of the court—or, in some courts, a minor ward of the court—only a juvenile court judicial officer can authorize the administration of psychotropic medications. These medications may include, but aren't limited to, antidepressants, mood stabilizers, hypnotics, antianxiety medications, and antipsychotics.*

*The best interest of the child is paramount in these cases. To assist judges, who may find themselves outside their realm of expertise, the Northern/Central Regional Office (NCRO) of the AOC launched the **Psychotropic Medications Pilot Program**. The project provides judicial officers with expert medical consultants to help them make informed decisions on authorizing such medications.*

*Six trial courts are participating in the two-year pilot program: the Superior Courts of Glenn, Inyo, Lake, Lassen, Plumas, and Tuolumne Counties. The NCRO sought qualified psychiatrists to assign to cases, and by June 2007 it had selected and was finalizing service agreements with four.*

*The psychiatrists are expected to start consulting on actual cases with the start of fiscal 2007–2008. An analyst at NCRO says it is likely that the doctors will be brought into the majority of cases involving juveniles and psychotropic medications. The six participating courts together hear approximately 200 such cases a year. The pilot program continues through June 2008.*

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## AUGMENTED SELF-HELP SERVICES, continued



The self-help team from the [Superior Court of Ventura County](#) regularly attends community events, such as the Obon Festival on July 14, 2007, in Oxnard pictured here. The team distributes information and provides outreach to the community.

As efficient and effective as self-help centers are, the fiscal year 2006–2007 funding only begins to serve that need. In a survey before the budget process, the council asked the trial courts what self-help services they would like to provide and what costs would be associated. Responses came from more than 90 percent of the courts, with a total funding need of \$44.2 million. This reflects the nationwide pattern of courts needing to respond to growing numbers of self-represented litigants (see “Who Uses Self-Help?”).

Beyond the current \$8.7 million, which is slated to be an ongoing allocation, the budget for fiscal year 2007–2008 allocates another \$2.5 million for courts to use to expand services. The Judicial Council will be seeking additional funding in subsequent years.

Providing assistance to those who want to help themselves is just one way the courts directly serve

*continues page 76 >*

## THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF PEER INFLUENCE

*In its efforts to educate and provide direct services to the public, the Judicial Council has also reached out to the state’s youth population. Teens are much more likely than older drivers to be involved in risky driving incidents, including DUI-related motor vehicle crashes.*

*In late 2005, with funding from the [California Office of Traffic Safety \(OTS\)](#), the council collaborated with the youth/peer court system to begin developing and implementing a state-wide [Peer Court DUI Prevention Strategies Program](#).*

*The council chose to focus on peer courts because they target at-risk juveniles and have been successful in modifying self-destructive behaviors and developing decisionmaking skills through involving peer juries to determine sentencing options for juvenile offenders. The OTS and the council hoped that a program to educate youths on the dangers of drinking and DUI offenses would help decrease DUI fatalities, which have risen 32 percent since 1999.*

*The program first selected eight peer courts to help develop the DUI prevention curriculum for use in youth/peer courts as well as in school programs. The courts selected were the [Superior Courts of Fresno, Humboldt, Orange, Placer, San Joaquin, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, and Sonoma Counties](#).*

*In March, August, and December 2006, the peer courts held planning sessions with a committee of judicial officers, law enforcement, and education and juvenile justice experts. By March 2007, they had drafted a full*

*continues >*

*DUI prevention curriculum. Youth/peer court participants who attended the **Statewide Youth Summit** in August 2006 also helped identify strategies to be incorporated into the curriculum.*

*The program's second phase began in 2007, and to date,*

- ▶ *Ten peer courts have received minigrants to replicate and implement the DUI prevention curriculum and youth/peer court model*
- ▶ *In a series of training workshops, members of the planning committee and the Phase 1 peer courts shared with Phase 2 participants their best practices and lessons learned during the curriculum development*
- ▶ *A statewide Web site containing DUI prevention curriculum that would be a required component for youth/peer court participants is being developed*

*The Judicial Council and the OTS are also collaborating on a two-year outreach program, through September 2008, to bring DUI education and court proceedings to schools. Through the program, the AOC will partner with four mentor courts to conduct live DUI court proceedings and sentencings, or similar educational programs, in some 300 California middle schools and high schools.*

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Participants in Peer Court programs (also known as Teen Courts) are youth, ages 12 to 17, who have typically been arrested on misdemeanor charges. DUI Peer Courts target those youth convicted of driving under the influence (DUI) charges. Pictured above are participants in the **Superior Court of Santa Barbara County** DUI Peer Court.



## AUGMENTED SELF-HELP SERVICES, continued

a public need. The courts also provide aid to those who, due to age or infirmity, cannot be legally responsible to help themselves. (See “In the Best Interest of the Child,” “The Positive Effects of Peer Influence,” “Protection for Those Who Can’t Help Themselves.”)

### Impacts

- ▶ All 58 California trial courts now have attorney-staffed baseline self-help centers.
- ▶ Courts have been able to expand self-help services in family law and to begin addressing other critical legal needs in civil courts, such as guardianships, landlord-tenant disputes, consumer matters, conservatorships, restraining orders, and simple probate issues.
- ▶ Court programs work with local legal services providers and bar associations to design systems for referring litigants to the most appropriate level of service, given their situation and the legal issues involved.
- ▶ As a group, self-help centers at the state’s larger courts offer services in more than a dozen languages, including American Sign Language, Arabic, Cantonese, Farsi, Korean, Laotian, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

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### PROTECTION FOR THOSE WHO CAN’T HELP THEMSELVES

*Conservatorship cases deal with those people no longer able to take care of themselves or their property. In such cases, the courts must assume oversight of these persons, their affairs, and the actions of those appointed as conservators. Even with court oversight, the relationship between private or family conservators and their conservatees can be open to abuse, including insurance and medical claim fraud.*

*In January 2006, Chief Justice Ronald M. George announced the appointment of a **Probate Conservatorship Task Force** to make recommendations to improve the management of these cases in California trial courts.*

*Among other things, the task force was charged with seeking input from a broad range of stakeholders, including conservators and conservatees, family members, and advocacy groups; reviewing the laws governing conservatorships, ethical constraints, and related rules and procedures; and making recommendations to the council for reforms and improvements to conservatorship administration. The task force was also to review the assigning of judges in conservatorship cases, and the education and training of judicial officers and court personnel in such matters.*

*In March 2006, the task force held full-day public hearings in Los Angeles and San Francisco to hear testimony from stakeholders and the public. It created a voicemail box and e-mail address to allow additional public input. And it formed three working groups—Rules and Laws, Education and Training, and*  
*continues >*

*Comparative Jurisdiction and Best Practices—to focus on those areas of its charge.*

*The task force also worked closely with the Legislature on its package of reforms, which the governor signed into law in September 2006 as the **Omnibus Conservatorship and Guardianship Reform Act**. The act makes comprehensive reforms to the probate conservatorship system and improves court oversight of these cases.*

*Finally, the task force drafted its report of recommendations, which was circulated for public comment in the spring of 2007. Key points in the draft include recommendations to*

- ▶ *Expand self-help services statewide to include modules on conservatorships*
- ▶ *Establish a written bill of rights for conservatees*
- ▶ *Have one judge preside over each conservatee’s matters, from start to finish, to help ensure continuity and informed and consistent oversight*
- ▶ *Automatically appoint counsel for a proposed conservatee in all cases*
- ▶ *Give judges the authority to declare continuing litigation to be not in the best interest of the conservatee*
- ▶ *Encourage the Legislature to adequately fund court services to safeguard the lives and estates of conservatees*

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**“Conservatees are vulnerable members of society who enter our system with the expectation that they and their property will be protected by a fair judicial system pursuant to a high standard of fiduciary duty.”**

*—Chief Justice Ronald M. George,  
January 13, 2006, on appointment  
of the Probate Conservatorship  
Task Force*



In March 2006, the task force held full-day public hearings in Los Angeles and San Francisco to hear testimony from stakeholders and the public.

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