

# **2003 Justice Achievement Award**

## *Projects Submitted for Consideration*

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTEGRATED COURT INFORMATION SYSTEM (iCIS)**

#### **Superior Court of Arizona in Maricopa County**

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On March 3, 2003, Maricopa County, the fifth largest trial court in the country, implemented the last module of a new integrated court information system (iCIS). The new system replaced an aging BULL mainframe that cost more than \$800,000 per year to maintain. The system was developed using in-house developers over an 18-month period. The new case management system now integrates the family, civil, probate, and criminal court departments in one leveraged case-processing environment. This system allows both the court and the clerk's office to handle cases in an intuitive, graphical user interface. Key elements to our new system were robust data integration capabilities with other criminal justice agencies and the ability to directly access images from the clerk's electronic document management system. The new system has enabled business reengineering, immediate real time reporting capabilities, and many new opportunities for the use of technology. The payback period for the iCIS project will be less than one year!

### **CIVIL TRAFFIC VIDEO HEARINGS**

#### **Scottsdale City Court**

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The civil traffic video teleconferencing program established a process by which law enforcement citing officers can appear and testify at civil traffic hearings held at the Scottsdale City Court from remote locations. The officers are able to communicate from the district in which they work with the civil hearing officer and defendant to provide testimony and, if needed, display/examine drawings and exhibits via video teleconferencing equipment through a telecommunication link. Better use of taxpayer resources is accomplished by reducing officer travel time to and from court, reducing overtime for travel-related costs, conserving transportation resources, and increasing the availability of officers by placing them back in the community in a more timely manner.

### **AUTOMATIC DEFAULT PROGRAM**

#### **Tempe Municipal Court**

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Many courts utilize a manual tracking process to identify cases where a defendant fails to take action on or before the scheduled arraignment date. If this occurs, it is crucial for a given court to enter the default, assess any related penalties and report as required, and provide notice to the defendant in a timely manner. Typically, this is a labor intensive and time-consuming process, especially for courts with high filing volumes.

In an effort to address these issues, the Tempe Municipal Court developed an automatic default program that runs after the close of each business day and locates cases where no action was taken on arraignment scheduled for the previous day. The default is automatically entered in the court's record management system, a notation is made to the case history, penalties are assessed to the financial management system, the case is reported to Arizona's Motor Vehicle Department for license suspension, and a Default Judgment Notice is generated for mailing. A report is also generated for verification purposes.

Although this project may not appear to be glamorous, by using technology and an innovative approach, the court was able to transform a routine and resource intensive default process into a seamless and efficient undertaking. As a result of this project, the court significantly reduced the time necessary to complete the case default process (estimated to be a 75 percent time savings), thus improving overall court operations.

## **FAITH AND JUSTICE: A PRACTICUM FOR CLERGY ON HANDLING ISSUES RELATING TO THE COURT SYSTEM**

### **Superior Court of California for the County of Los Angeles**

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Judges and leaders in the faith community shared the stage as they discussed the things that clergy need to know about the justice system in a one-day conference cosponsored by the Los Angeles Superior Court and the Fuller Theological Seminary. We saw three challenges that we recognized could be addressed by partnering with leaders in the faith community.

First, as recognized in the Trial Court Performance Standards, public trust and confidence is one of the foundations of a healthy justice system. With so much misinformation about the courts portrayed in popular media, and given that direct public attention is sporadic at best (and then usually focused on unrepresentative cases), it is difficult for members of the general public to formulate accurate and unbiased perceptions of the work of the court. Often, they take their lead from opinion leaders in their neighborhoods, families – and their faith communities.

Second, given sporadic attention and misinformation, people are often at a loss when they first come into contact with the justice system (or indeed, when contemplating entering the system, whether to initiate divorce proceedings, apply for a restraining order, report suspected child abuse, etc.). In those times of crisis and indecision, they often turn to family, friends – and leaders in their faith communities.

The third challenge is the converse of the second one. We know that members of the faith community themselves are frequently uncertain about how to interact with the justice system on behalf of those they counsel. They may have information that they want to bring to bear about the character of an accused defendant; the nature of a family in turmoil; or the community support available for a child involved in a custody determination.

In each of these challenges, knowledge ability of faith leaders about the courts is critical. They do not need to become attorneys – indeed, they should be discouraged from providing legal advice – but they can provide better, more accurate counseling and assistance to the degree they have a basic understanding of court procedure.

### **TEACHERS' COURTHOUSE SEMINAR PROGRAM AND CD-ROM**

#### **Superior Court of California for the County of Los Angeles**

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High school government teachers are brought to the courthouse to pique their interest in the courts and are provided with a CD-ROM-based set of curriculum materials. Together, the tour and materials are intended to encourage teachers to teach more and better about the state trial courts.

### **BRING PAYROLL FUNCTION IN-HOUSE**

#### **Stanislaus County Superior Court**

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The Stanislaus County Superior Court was the first superior court in California with more than 200 employees to leave the county HR/payroll system and contract with a private vendor. This all resulted from the passage of SB2140 which made California superior courts their own employer and no longer part of the county. By taking this proactive approach, the court saved \$242,000 the first year. Now that we are in our second year, the court expects to save \$255,000.

### **JUROR PAYMENT ON DATE OF SERVICE**

#### **Stanislaus County Superior Court**

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The objectives were to reduce the cost of preparing and mailing small checks to jurors for jury service and improve juror relations by awarding payment on the day of service. The immediate payment of jurors has had the desired effect of reducing court costs (as well as county auditor costs) and improving juror relations. The implementation of the program was made possible by cooperation of county staff working with court staff. The willingness to think outside the box and to assume responsibility for handling multiple cash transactions, initially, made this success possible.

### **ANNUAL REPORT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES GUIDE**

#### **Superior Court of California, County of Ventura**

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The Ventura Superior Court created an annual report and community services guide for wide circulation throughout the community to provide basic information about the services offered by the court. It is an eight-page, newsletter-style publication designed to be interesting, informative, and easy to read. It gives highlights of court activity during the past year, information on the many court programs and services available, and useful and informative facts about the court. While containing the goals and accomplishments of an annual report, the primary focus of the annual report and guide is to provide information about court programs and services provided to the community.

The guide is a direct effort to both inform and educate the public. Both English and Spanish-language versions were created and distributed as widely as possible. Over 115,000 English copies were received by households throughout the county as an insert in the Sunday edition of the *Ventura County Star Free Press*, and 17,000 Spanish-language versions were distributed through the weekly *Vida* Spanish-language newspaper. Copies were also distributed through government offices, libraries, schools, community-based organizations, and community events such as the Ventura County Fair. The court contributed by making copies available at facility lobbies, the jury assembly room, and online at the court's Web site.

### **GO TO COURT FOR A CAREER**

#### **Superior Court of California, County of Ventura**

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The Ventura Superior Court's Go to Court for a Career Program utilizes the daily pool of prospective jurors to expand the reach of its human resources recruiting program. Recognizing that the jury pool was an untapped source of potential employees, the court created the Go to Court for a Career Program to provide information to the public about career opportunities with the court. Each day as a part of juror orientation, a representative from the human resources unit gives a brief presentation about job opportunities and the benefits of working for the Ventura Superior Court. Jurors are provided with a listing of available job openings and instructions on how to apply for a position with the court. The program reaches approximately 40,000 potential applicants each year, and the feedback received from applicants and the public has been uniformly positive. There are few, if any, direct costs and the amount of time and money spent administering the program is small.

### **TIP OF THE DAY**

#### **Superior Court of California, County of Ventura**

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The Ventura Superior Court opened its first self-help legal access center located at the Ventura courthouse in 1998. Later that same year, the court opened a second self-help legal access center in the Colonia neighborhood of Oxnard. The centers provide clients with educational materials and one-on-one assistance with traffic citations, minor criminal matters, and most areas of civil law, so they can better understand the justice process and navigate the court system. Although the Colonia center was successful in providing

information and assistance directly to the community, statistics and staff reports indicated it was underutilized.

The "Tip of the Day" program and associated outreach efforts have significantly increased the number of clients receiving assistance at the Colonia self-help legal access center, at little or no cost to the court. The "Tip of the Day" program consists of announcements made in Spanish each weekday morning at 10:30 a.m. on KOXR radio. The announcements provide public service information to the Spanish-speaking community and publicize the services available at the self-help legal access centers. Program topics have included subjects such as landlord and eviction issues, restraining orders, child custody and support, automobile insurance and accidents, as well as information regarding the self-help legal access centers.

## **INTERACTIVE COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE NETWORK (I-CAN!)**

**Superior Court of California, County of Orange**

**Legal Aid Society of Orange County**

**Judicial Council of California/AOC**

**Legal Services Corporation**

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In 2000, the Orange County Superior Court, in partnership with the Legal Aid Society of Orange County, implemented the Interactive Community Assistance Network (*I-CAN!*) project. *I-CAN!* is a network of Web-based, interactive kiosks and computer workstations designed to provide self-represented litigants convenient and effective access to vital legal services. Its multilingual, interactive and tutorial modules enable self-represented litigants to create properly formatted pleadings and complete legal forms.

Using a touch screen interface and audiovisual presentations, *I-CAN!* answers frequently asked questions, provides court tours, and educates users on the law, filing procedures, and steps needed to pursue or defend their matter. Internet phone technology has been integrated into *I-CAN!* to enable users to obtain immediate technical assistance from help center staff at the Legal Aid Society of Orange County. *I-CAN!* has also helped to demystify the court process and procedures.

The project has been funded through model project grants from the Legal Services Corporation, the State Bar of California, the Judicial Council of California, the Orange County Superior Court Family Law Facilitator's Program, the Orange County District Attorney's Office-Family Support Division, and from various cities through Community Development Block Grants.

The *I-CAN!* system is currently in use in nine California counties and is proposed for use in seven additional California counties. The courts in the states of Oklahoma, Massachusetts, and Virginia have *I-CAN!* projects funded. The states of New York, Minnesota, and the District of Columbia courts have applied for funds to implement *I-CAN!* projects.

In partnership with the California Administrative Office of the Courts, plans are in place to link *I-CAN!* with the services offered on the Judicial Council of California Self-Help Web site.

## **IDAHO COURT ASSISTANCE OFFICE PROJECT**

### **University of Idaho College of Law**

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All counties in Idaho have experienced a uniformly high rate of self-representation in most types of cases in recent years, with some counties reporting as many as 80-90 percent of the litigants being pro se in family law cases. This phenomenon has slowed the judicial process and led to growing dissatisfaction with the court system on the part of the litigants and mounting frustration on the part of all parties involved, litigants and court personnel alike. Accordingly, the mission of the Court Assistance Office Project is to connect pro se litigants with attorneys where possible and to provide informational resources to assist them in representing themselves where attorney representation is unavailable or not desired by the litigant.

By maintaining comprehensive court assistance officer education, a vast library of court forms and social service brochures, and an extensive user-friendly Web catalog, the goal is to be a one-stop clearinghouse for patrons to access legal services and other resources for litigants involved in civil matters, particularly in family law matters such as domestic relations cases. Our most important objectives are to improve the operation of the court system and increase public satisfaction with the courts.

## **JUDICIAL HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGIC INITIATIVE**

### **Nineteenth Judicial Circuit, Lake County, Illinois**

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Lake County's Judicial Human Resources Strategic Initiative was designed to increase the retention and "happiness" of the court's employees. The original human resources program was a county-driven, reactive, top-down format and provided limited new programs or original thinking. In deciding to "lead the county into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" the circuit, following its strategic plan, developed a Core Support Services Unit with a specific judicial human resources function to support the almost 300 employees consisting of support staff, probation officers, juvenile counselors, state employees, court reporters, and judges. This unit must balance and sometimes modify conflicting and competing ideologies from its county board and the state-level administrative office for the courts.

Compounding this balancing and modifying act is the competition for limited dollars. More than 26 specific programs have been developed under this initiative, most with employee input. Many of the programs developed are low or no cost programs and involve employees in the decision making process and in program management. The programs also provide management with the tools to reward employees and provide guidance to the employees concerning their jobs. The developed programs have been positively received by the employees, have shown a reduction in turnover, and have increased morale through employee participation in many of the programs.

**KENT COUNTY COMMUNITY PROBATION PROGRAM”**

**17<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court, Family Division, Kent County, Michigan**

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Community probation is a unique and non-traditional way of providing decentralized and personalized court supervision to delinquent juveniles and their families who reside in a specific sector of the county or metro area. The program relies heavily on recommendations made by the Reinventing Probation Council and documented in the publication “*Transforming Probation Through Leadership: The ‘Broken Windows’ Model.*” The primary objective of community probation is public safety. Court probation officers team up with area law enforcement officers and work hand-in-hand with the officers and other significant players in their sector (i.e. neighborhood associations, schools, churches, social agencies, etc.) to meet the goal of reducing recidivism.

A driving force that provides a backdrop for working with young offenders on community probation is the concept of balanced and restorative justice. Each treatment plan developed for all youth placed on community probation, along with the resultant court order, covers all the key components of balanced and restorative justice and, more specifically, community safety, competency development, and accountability. An on-going evaluation component focusing on the sector of the city from which the court receives the most police referrals for delinquency demonstrates a 44 percent reduction in felony recidivism.

**THE 26<sup>TH</sup> JUDICIAL DISTRICT S.T.E.P FAMILY SERVICES PROGRAM**

**26<sup>th</sup> Judicial District,**

**Mecklenburg County, North Carolina**

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Administrator

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The 26<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Mecklenburg County S.T.E.P Family Services Program seeks to break the generational cycle of crime and addiction for the offender and his/her children while fostering a family-focused, child-focused culture. Designed to meet the increasing needs of the underserved population within the drug treatment court and other identified criminal justice system programs, the Family Services Program provides educational books, resources, and materials, in addition to subsidized childcare and parenting skills training workshops for parents who have children from birth to five years of age.

Recognizing that the entire family is impacted by the dysfunction of substance addiction, the Family Services Program involves the entire family in the recovery process. The emphasis of the program is to create a healthy family environment that will enable families to thrive and children to be healthy and prepared to succeed at the time that they enter school. The Family Services Program addresses all of the family dynamics of substance addiction and strongly encourages family participation. Established in November 1998 as a component of the Mecklenburg County S.T.E.P Drug Treatment Court Program, the Family Services Program has served more than 800 families and provided quality childcare for 105 children.

### **OFFICER COURT DATE APPLICATION**

#### **26<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina**

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The Mecklenburg County Court System has struggled with maintaining a high level of effectiveness and efficiency due to bottlenecks and confusion associated with various manual processes. The scheduling of police officers was a huge strain on the system, and the process was labor intensive. Users spent 1-2 hours daily entering court date exclusions, in addition to seven hours every two weeks to create reports; using a complicated process, the staff manually set up macros to create the officer court date book every six months. Errors in scheduling cases based on an officer's court assignment were common and data was available only to the data entry clerks, thus creating delays and oversights.

The Officer Court Date application (OCD) is designed to address the scheduling needs of police officers working for various agencies. OCD has definite statewide implications, as the process and system flow is both efficient and expedient in the court arena. One advantage of the OCD application is that perpetual, real-time, easy-to-read officer court assignments are available online in the courtrooms along with historical information and other data. The main output of the system is that the OCD book can now be created in minutes, at any time, and emailed as a soft copy to off-site agencies, reducing the need for printed reports.

Now, 25 percent less time is spent maintaining the OCD book than on the previous manual version. The automation of the process has greatly improved the accuracy and dependability necessary to ensure that the scheduling of police officers for court in Mecklenburg County is as mistake-free as possible while allowing improvement in the scheduling process for the future. What was once a distant goal is now a reality. Technology has permeated even those areas of our judiciary that were at one time thought to be destined in paper forever.

### **PHILADELPHIA MUNICIPAL COURT'S CLAIMS PROJECT**

#### **Philadelphia Municipal Court**

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CLAIMS (Civil Litigation Automated Internet Municipal Court System) is an integrated, Web-based case management, document management, and electronic filing system that enables the court to electronically process virtually all aspects of their up to 160,000 civil cases per year. CLAIMS permits the court to operate almost entirely without the use of paper and completely automates case processing, including case initiation, docket entries, notices, calculation of filing fees, payment of filing fees, scheduling, service of process, courtroom dispositions and judgment execution.

**Truancy Court Program  
Rhode Island Family Court**

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The Rhode Island Family Court has taken a lead role in reducing the dropout rate in Rhode Island and specifically the core cities. The Family Court has established Truancy Courts in all the core cities and has established a positive reinforcement to encourage each child to remain in school. The Truancy Court meets weekly with students, parents, school staff, and local service providers to provide the necessary support to address the causes and solutions to fight truancy and provide youth with the opportunity to a better education.

**DALLAS COUNTY FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT COUNSELING PILOT PROJECT  
Dallas County Criminal Courts**

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This project was designed to complement the services provided to offenders referred to the Dallas County Criminal Courts Collections Department. The project targeted offenders with high debt to income ratios for whom the addition of fines, fees and costs to their debt load would likely cause them to default on their personal financial obligations, court-ordered fines, fees and costs, or both.

Under the project, a financial management counselor (FMC) was hired to provide financial counseling to participating offenders. The FMC would evaluate an offender's financial situation, provide personal debt management counseling, and, when requested, work with an offender's personal creditors to delay or reduce monthly payments while the offender participated in the program. Without suffering severe financial setbacks, a large percentage of program participants were able to fully meet their court-ordered obligations.

## **MUNICIPAL COURT CLERK CERTIFICATION PROGRAM**

### **Texas Court Clerks Association**

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Texas Court Clerks Association

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The Municipal Court Clerk Certification Program was established to encourage professional development and educational growth among municipal court personnel, while improving court performance and uniformity amongst the 843 municipal courts in Texas. Through a three-part certification program, that goal is being met.

The Municipal Court Clerk Certification Program consists of three levels: Level I, Level II, and Level III. In order to complete each level a participant must successfully pass an exam and forty hours of education/training. The Municipal Court Clerk Certification Program is sponsored by the Texas Court Clerks Association in cooperation with the Texas Municipal Courts Education Center, the Texas Municipal Courts Association, and Southwest Texas State University.

### **Court Self-Help Program**

#### **Waukesha County Circuit Court**

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In response to the growing number of self-represented litigants in the Waukesha County Circuit Court, the judicial, executive, and legislative branches of government provided support to develop a solution to the challenges this increased population has brought to the court. The Waukesha County Court Self-Help Program is the first full-service pro se program in the State of Wisconsin. The mission of the Program is to increase equal access to justice for self-represented litigants, to improve satisfaction with and understanding of the court process, to more efficiently process cases, and to utilize court staff time more effectively.

The Program offers services to individuals in Family Court matters such as prejudgment divorce and legal separation, and post judgment divorce, legal separation, and paternity. The Program offers an on-site Court Self-Help Center and a comprehensive, interactive website. The Center has the following services available to its customers: a full time customer service representative who is available to answer procedural questions; forms, instructions, and procedural information available for sale; a library of legal research tools, attorney directories, and community resources; and public access computers, a printer, and copy services.

With the exception of the customer service representative, all of the services offered in the Center are also available for free on the website. However, the customer service representative is available by telephone or email to website users. After one year of service to the community, the program has made more