

National Association for Court Management
2004 Justice Achievement Award
Projects Submitted for Consideration

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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The Interactive Community Assistance Network (*I-CAN!*) project is a network of web-based legal services and interactive kiosks that provides self-represented litigants with easy access. *I-CAN!*'s multilingual, interactive and tutorial modules enable self-represented litigants to create properly formatted pleadings and complete legal forms using a touch screen or web interface. Users are able to obtain immediate technical assistance from Legal Aid staff by using Internet phone technology that has been integrated into *I-CAN!*. Currently, 13 modules are available in English and Spanish, and 5 in Vietnamese. *I-CAN!* has helped to demystify the court process and procedures. The project, implemented in 2000 in partnership with the Legal Aid Society of Orange County, has been funded through federal, state and local grants. The *I-CAN!* system is currently in use in 9 California counties and is proposed for use in 7 additional California counties. Courts in the states of Oklahoma, Massachusetts, Virginia, Minnesota and Colorado have *I-CAN!* projects funded, and New York and the District of Columbia courts have applied for funds to implement *I-CAN!*. *I-CAN!* has also been linked with the services offered on the Judicial Council of California Self-Help website. *I-CAN!* was a recipient of the Judicial Council of California 2003 Ralph N. Kleps Award.

The Mental Health Court Video Conferencing Program
Los Angeles Superior Court

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The Mental Health Court Video Conferencing Program provides a much-needed balance between the due process of the legal system and the medical treatment that many mentally ill clientele of the Court require. Through video conferencing between the mental health facility and the Court, mental health patients continue to receive treatment within specialized facilities, while simultaneously participating in personal court proceedings. Use of video conferencing significantly reduces the trauma that the patient would normally experience as a result of transportation to criminal justice system facilities. Video conferencing also tends to reduce the time and expenses involved in concluding criminal cases that involve mental health patients.

Navigating the Dependency Court: A Guide for Parents Los Angeles Superior Court

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The Navigating the Dependency Court: a Guide for Parents Program answers basic questions that parents have prior to entering the courtroom. The program enables parents to understand what to expect during the Dependency Court process.

Interpreting Management Program North Carolina's 26th Judicial District

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The Interpreter Management Program provides assistance to non-English speaking (NES) parties appearing in Mecklenburg County courts. Foreign language interpreters are provided at Judicial Branch expense for indigent criminal defendants; witnesses for indigent criminal defendants; witnesses for the State; indigent respondents in involuntary commitment proceedings; and parties to juvenile, Chapter 50B domestic violence, and custody mediation proceedings. The primary objectives of the Interpreter Management Program are to: 1) Ensure that language does not create a barrier to accessibility or impede the administration of justice; 2) Serve NES parties with competent and skilled interpreters; and 3) Maximize the utilization of contract resources and reduce operational costs to North Carolina and its taxpayers.

Community Building Initiative Resource Team Project North Carolina's 26th Judicial District

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In 1999, the Mecklenburg County Alliance for the Improvement of Justice was formed and charged with developing a five-year strategic plan for the 26th Judicial District. This diverse group of court, government, and community leaders decided that the goals they would develop should be grounded on the widely accepted and respected Trial Court Performance Standards: Access to Justice; Expedition and Timeliness; Equality, Fairness, and Integrity; Independence and Accountability; and Public Trust and Confidence. From the outset, the area of Equality, Fairness, and Integrity drew special interest and much discussion among the members of the Alliance. As a result, a strategy was developed around the goal of ensuring that cases are decided without undue disparity among like cases and upon legally relevant factors. Specifically, the group sought to develop a mechanism which would capture whether real or perceived disparate treatment and discrimination, especially that based upon race and ethnicity, existed within the 26th Judicial District. Because the court system did not possess the inherent expertise or credibility in addressing issues of racial and ethnic equity and inclusiveness, an external community resource was sought to provide the necessary assistance and guidance. Fortunately, court officials became aware of a local organization called Community Building Initiative and their innovative Resource Team Model. In short order, a partnership was formed and the judicial district set forth on its groundbreaking and courageous journey of self-examination, discovery and self-improvement. This joint effort is called the 26th Judicial District/CBI Resource Team Partnership Project.

**Assisting Court Customers with Educational and Self-help Services
Superior Court of California**

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The San Francisco Superior Court's ACCESS project (Assisting Court Customers with Educational and Self-Help Services) was started as a pilot project funded by the Administrative Offices of the Court to serve self-represented litigants in San Francisco. The goal of ACCESS is to assist litigants accessing our courts, as well as members of our community who have not yet entered the legal system but want information and education on various areas of civil law and the courts. ACCESS assists litigants with civil harassment restraining orders, unlawful detainers, name and gender changes, guardianships, and small claims. Particular emphasis is placed on disenfranchised communities that have traditionally been denied access, such as limited or non-English speakers, people of color, immigrants, low-income people, seniors, dependent adults, and lesbians, gays and transgendered people. The languages that are currently targeted are: Spanish, Chinese (Cantonese), Russian, Tagalog and Vietnamese.

**King County District Court Mental Health Court
King County, Washington**

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The King County District Court Mental Health Court is one of the oldest mental health courts in the nation. Holding its first hearing in February 1999, the Mental Health Court works with mentally ill misdemeanants by developing a court ordered mental health treatment plan that works as a diversion from prosecution or jail. Once the defendant voluntarily opts-in to the Mental Health Court, a referral is made to an appropriate treatment agency and an intake appointment is made for the MHC client. Thereafter, frequent review hearings are held and the MHC client is monitored to ensure compliance with treatment. The goals of the MHC are to decriminalize the mentally ill through informed case management; to enhance community safety by proper adjudication of the mentally ill offender; and to improve the lives of the mentally ill. In February 2004, an outcome evaluation was completed on the MHC. In this evaluation, the results indicated a 76% reduction in offense rates, an 88% reduction in violent offenses, and a 91% reduction in incarceration rates for those clients who had graduated from the MHC. This makes the King County District Court Mental Health Court one of the most effective and efficient problem solving courts in the nation.

**The 26th Judicial District/Mecklenburg County DWI Treatment Court Program
Mecklenburg County, NC**

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The problems of alcohol abuse and driving while impaired continue to be a concern, not only for our nation, but also for Mecklenburg County. Established in March 2002, the Mecklenburg County DWI Treatment Court grew out of the Mecklenburg County Drug Treatment Court (DTC) Program, which has been serving DWI offenders since its inception in 1995. The DTC Program administrators believed that it would benefit all participants to separate the DWI offenders from the regular groups to allow the court and treatment operations to focus on the dual problems of alcoholism and driving while impaired. The DWI Treatment Court Program is a multi-agency organization that consists of the presiding Judge, public defender, district attorney, case manager, probation officer, criminal court coordinator, program director, and treatment provider. All of these agents work toward providing treatment for individuals, who are in the court system, suffering from alcohol and drug abuse.

**The Permanency Planning Mediation Project
Mecklenburg County, NC**

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The Mecklenburg County Permanency Planning Mediation Project was initiated to help achieve permanence within one year for children in protective custody. Mediation provides an opportunity for increased parental involvement in the development of a case plan tailored to the family's specific needs, as well as an opportunity for the Department of Social Services to clearly articulate their expectations early in the case. The active participation of parents in the development of case plans decreases resistance to treatment, assists with other conditions necessary to achieve family reunification, and increases compliance. Failure of the parents to comply with detailed and specific case plans developed in mediation are easier to verify and may lead to earlier decisions to develop alternative placement options for children. By assisting with moving a case to permanence more quickly and efficiently, the Permanency Planning Mediation Program provides cost savings to both the foster care and court systems. Perhaps of even greater significance is that providing this service to families often leads to more stable, loving homes for abused and neglected children.

**R.A.P. PROGRAM (Responsibility, Accountability and Pride)
Baytown, Texas Municipal Court**

Baytown, Texas Municipal Court
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The goal of the Baytown Municipal Court was to find a program that would hold juvenile offenders accountable for their actions. We wanted them to understand there are consequences for poor decisions and choices. The R.A.P. Program is a form of alternative sentencing for juveniles in our city. The program consists of a classroom session for the juvenile and their parent/guardian, community service sessions, furnishing school attendance records to the court and 180 days probation. The classroom session and the community service sessions are held on Saturday mornings. Peace Officers supervise the community service sessions which consist of cleaning up in city parks, painting over graffiti in the city, working an area in the Adopt-A-Street Program, cleaning up after special events in the city, weeding and sweeping the Justice Center Complex, painting fire hydrants, washing police cars and fire trucks, cleaning up under local bridges, working with Habitat for Humanity and nursing homes and refurbishing bicycles to provide to needy families. After meeting all the requirements of the program and successfully completing the 180-day probation period, the violation is “dismissed after deferment” and does not appear on the juvenile’s record.

**Computer-Based Training Module
Tempe Municipal Court**

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The court environment, terminology, and processes can be overwhelming to someone who is unfamiliar with that system. This is often true for the public as well as newly hired employees. The Tempe Municipal Court embarked on a yearlong effort to develop a computer-based training (CBT) module that is formatted to a compact disc. The project was originally intended to provide self-paced learning opportunities to new hires and volunteers as part of their initial orientation to the court. As development progressed it became apparent that certain sections had direct application and benefit to the general public. The overview of the Arizona Court System and options/instructions on how to address civil traffic and criminal complaints are but a few examples. The interactive training module, which takes only a half hour at most to complete, uses various teaching methods (i.e. – text, lecture, streaming video, practical experiences, and reinforcement exercises) to educate learners regarding general court structure, basic court procedures and the both the civil traffic and criminal complaint processes from the initial citation phase to adjudication. The individual user can select the order in which he/she progresses through the module as well as the overall learning pace. The uniqueness of this cutting-edge project is both its utility and apparent simplicity. The entire computer-based training module was conceived of, designed and scripted, and stars Tempe Municipal Court staff. This type of project could be replicated in any jurisdiction, at a relatively low cost, and serves to educate others about the court system and can aid courts in better connecting with users that have previously had little or no interaction with a court. In the process, courts may become more understandable, accessible, and thus, less intimidating to the average citizen.

**Domestic Violence Registry
Superior Court of California, County of Orange, Central Justice Center**

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The Superior Court of California, County of Orange, Central Justice Center developed a Domestic Violence Registry for capturing and storing domestic violence related restraining orders. Once captured on the court's optical disk system, a copy of the restraining order can be retrieved electronically and sent by fax to a requesting judicial or law enforcement officer without the need to touch any hard copy paper file. Access to information stored in the Domestic Violence Registry (DVR) is available across the state 24 hours per day, 7 days per week via computer terminals located at specified court locations and at the Sheriff's main dispatch center. The court's Detention Release Unit serves as the primary contact and service provider for judicial officers requesting DVR information and the Sheriff's Department serves as the primary contact and service provider for law enforcement.

**Prison Re-entry Drug Court Program
Eighth Judicial District Court**

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The goal of the Prison Re-entry Drug Court Program is to relieve the prison population through the early release of eligible, non-violent inmates to an intensive drug abuse treatment program supervised by the District Court. Research shows that treatment is the most effective way to combat drug abuse and its impact on families and communities. Drug Courts, through judicial oversight, are effective in keeping participants accountable for their day-to-day behavior and in providing the external motivation necessary for them to succeed in treatment. The Drug Court Program consists of treatment to detoxify participants from all substances, regular monitoring and supervision including frequent drug testing and appearances in court, educational and vocational assessment and assistance, intensive counseling and support services, and aftercare support and assistance. Positive reinforcement, sanctions and judicial oversight are tools used to motivate changes in negative behaviors. The Drug Court Program is voluntary and lasts for a minimum of one year. A participant must be drug-free for six months, must be employed, must have completed a GED as necessary, and must have developed a discharge and aftercare plan before being eligible to graduate from the program. Post graduation, inmates are monitored through status checks and random drug tests until they have been granted parole or expired their sentence.

Courthouse 101
Superior Court of California, County of Ventura

Superior Court of California, County of Ventura
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Courthouse 101 is a no-cost orientation program presented by the court to familiarize new attorneys with court policies, procedures, programs, and services. Its goal is to reduce mistakes, omissions and delays by new attorneys that impact both the attorney and the court. The program is held during the lunch hour on a business day to ensure access to all areas of the courthouse, judges and staff. It includes a presentation of technology utilized by the court, an overview of services that are available, a selection of written and digital materials that can be reviewed at the attorney's convenience, and a "behind the scenes" tour of court facilities that includes the opportunity to meet key individuals. During the various presentations, crucial information and important tips are shared that many attorneys would otherwise learn only through many years on the job. Courthouse 101 is a collaborative effort between the Ventura Superior Court and the Ventura County Bar Association Barristers. It provides the maximum amount of information and personal contact at minimum cost in terms of time and resources.

Automated Tentative Rulings System
Superior Court of California, County of Ventura

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The Ventura Superior Court's Automated Tentative Ruling System allows attorneys and the public to access tentative rulings on civil, family law and probate motions using the Internet. It replaces a phone-based system that relied on older technology and was labor intensive for the court to operate and maintain. The system is accessed by visiting the court's website. Tentative rulings are available by 4:00 p.m. the day before the hearing and can be accessed any time of the day or night, including weekends. Copies of a ruling can be printed for reference or additional review. Approximately 50 tentative rulings are posted daily. The ability to access the rulings by telephone has been maintained for those without Internet access, however special software now converts the written ruling into an audio recording. This has eliminated the need for secretaries to dictate each tentative ruling.

**Centralized Collections of 14th Circuit and 60th District Court
Muskegon County Court Collections Department**

60th District Court
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The Muskegon County Court Collections Department project calls for the centralization of collections efforts for the District and Circuit Courts of Muskegon County. Three employees staff the Court Collections Department: Chief Collections Officer, Collections Officer, and Court Collections Clerk. Staff focuses on the collection of all ordered fines, court costs and restitution; including crime victim rights fees, district court probation oversight fees, attorney fees, forensic fees, screening fees, and DNA fees. Working directly with defendants a formal Agreement and Order for Installment Payments (AOFIP) for each court is established. This agreement consolidates all of an individual's court debt into one plan, regardless of the number of actual court cases outstanding. Cases are prioritized within the AOFIP based on issues related to probation terms, restitution balances, and age of the cases based on sentencing date. A separate AOFIP must be done for each court because of technical differences in the Judicial Information Systems (JIS) utilized by each court and by specific tracking needs. Microsoft Access software is the platform used to support the department's client database. This client database is integrated with the JIS systems to a certain degree. We can automatically download payment, balance, and case status information to the Access database, ensuring that accurate financial reports can be maintained. The most difficult task was to change the public's perception that Muskegon County courts did not actively enforce orders and that no significant penalty would befall you if you failed to pay your obligations. That goal has been reached successfully. Muskegon County now has a viable collection entity that ensures enforcement of court ordered monetary sanctions.

**Court Protective Order Repository – Law Enforcement Protection Order Repository
Arizona Supreme Court, Administrative Office of the Courts—Information Technology Division**

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The Arizona Supreme Court, Administrative Office of the Court, initiated a cross-branch justice integration project with the Arizona Department of Public Safety to improve the timeliness, accuracy, and availability of protective orders issued by the courts. The objective of this project was to electronically collect protective order data into a single point of reference that would be accessible to meet the increased needs of both the judicial and executive branches of state and local governments, specifically law enforcement and judicial personnel. The project involved storing statewide protective orders data in a centralized area when Arizona law enforcement query, review and edit the order information and then communicate them electronically to National Crime Information Center.

**Automated Case File Outcard Program
Orange County Superior Court**

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The Orange County Automated Case File Outcard Program is a simple program set up to function through MS Office as a template to a shared file folder that will create the essential information required to track a case file to any location. Aside from the case tracking information, the sender is able to include additional instructions to the Records Management Clerk. The card prints on standard 3”X5” blank card stock continuous feed index cards. In Orange County, every courtroom clerk, and other designated employees send their file request to a printer in Records Management or to an off-site file location as necessary. A clerk then clicks on the outcard file and the outcard(s) automatically print to a local dot matrix printer. The cards are the exact size for the window of the outcard folder.

**District Court Consolidation
Pierce County District Court**

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In an effort to enhance the efficiencies of the district court operations and meet the service demands and economic challenges facing Pierce County, the County Council adopted an ordinance on January 13, 2003 to consolidate four separate courts into one District Court. The management team from District Court One, the largest of the four courts, developed a systematic approach to identify primary issues, set goals, and ensure all parties impacted by the consolidation were informed of impending changes. Consolidation cost savings included the closure of three courthouses and the elimination of four staff positions. A creative approach was needed in closing facilities, addressing personnel matters, and dealing with consolidation of records to ensure a smooth transition and compliance with ordinance requirements. The court’s Technical Specialist played a key role in developing computer macros to simplify the transfer and re-filing of over 12,000 cases. All outlying court files were physically transferred and re-filed under one court. All financial records and accounts were audited, reconciled and integrated into one centralized system. The essential elements for successful consolidation of all four courts were completed by May 2003.

**Special Oral Argument Session for Educational Outreach
Supreme Court of California and California Court of Appeal, Sixth Appellate District**

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The legitimacy and effectiveness of the judicial system depends on the confidence and understanding of the public. In California, and across the nation, there is a lack of accurate knowledge regarding the operation of courts. Common misconceptions are enhanced by the often inaccurate portrayals of the judicial system on television and in the news media. As part of ongoing efforts to educate the public, the Supreme Court of California (Court of Last Resort), Sixth District Court of Appeal and Administrative Office of the Courts collaborated to stage a special oral argument session of the California Supreme Court, which was attended by over four hundred high school students. Prior to oral arguments, students were provided with summaries of the cases, the legal issues they raised and further discussion points which were consistent with the required civics curriculum of the schools. In addition, local attorneys visited classrooms before and after the oral arguments to help clarify the operation of the legal system and disposition of specific cases. The project required the cooperation of the California Supreme Court, the Sixth Appellate District Court, San Jose Superior Court, the bar associations and school districts of four counties, and the Administrative Office of the Courts, as well as many support personnel. The oral arguments were broadcast via closed circuit television, as well as the California Channel, enabling a potential audience of millions to witness first hand the work of the California Supreme Court. Prior to oral arguments, the Justices answered questions posed by the students who attended the session. Analysis demonstrated that the students not only enjoyed the experience, but gained a much better understanding of the operation of the judicial system. Specifically, students commented that they learned the difference between popular notions and the actual operation of the courts, were extremely impressed by the competence and impartiality of the justices, and gained an understanding of judicial process. The key component of this outreach project was allowing each of the four hundred students who attended to observe a live argument, which they had studied. As importantly, the project created an easily replicable model for appellate court educational outreach, which will make future projects much easier to operate. Through the hard work of many people, this project succeeded in promoting trust, confidence and understanding of the courts while simultaneously laying the groundwork for future efforts.

**Centralized Post Conviction Relief Unit
Maricopa County Superior Court**

Judge Colin F. Campbell
Trial Court Administrator
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The Centralized Post Conviction Relief Unit consolidates the front-end case processing of post conviction relief petitions in criminal cases, rather than assigning case on filing of the petition to the sentencing judge or successor. All cases go through a supervising post conviction relief judge who screens cases for timeliness and waiver issues. The judge also supervises the cases for assignment of counsel, transcript preparation, and filings of briefs. Once a case is fully briefed, it is assigned to the sentencing judge for ruling.