

National Association for Court Management

2009 Justice Achievement Award

Projects Submitted for Consideration

Maricopa County Superior Court **Accountability Court: A Problem Solving Approach to Support Enforcement**

Hon. Colleen McNally
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Maricopa County Superior Court
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Accountability Court took the existing service of a support enforcement court and applied the principles of problem solving courts to improve the consistency of support payments into custodial homes and reduce arrears of obligors deemed by the court to be chronically noncompliant with support orders. This was accomplished by adjusting and streamlining the duties of existing staff. This enhanced program reduces the adversarial approach of a typical court setting and focuses on empowering obligors to overcome the obstacles to compliance. In addition to improving the financial stability of families, the problem-solving approach diffuses conflict between parents after divorce and may lead to better outcomes for children.

Twentieth Judicial Circuit Court ***Active Warrant Alert Calendaring System***

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On November 17, 2008 Lee County initiated a very high profile initiative, the Active Warrant Alert Calendaring System (AWACS). It was launched as a pilot project based on a directive from Florida Governor Charlie Crist. AWACS offers tremendous benefits to the courts and law enforcement agencies by providing increased efficiency, accuracy, and consistency in searching for active warrants on those defendants that are scheduled for any criminal court appearance. The Florida Supreme Court created the Judicial Inquiry System (JIS) to disseminate information from many state agencies through a single sign-on and simple query. JIS provides the conduit to 13 disparate databases. The application presently returns data from sources such as FDLE, FCIC, NCIC, DHSMV, APRISS, DOC, DJJ, and the Florida Association of Court Clerks (FACC) CCIS system.

Municipal Court of Milwaukee
Center for Driver's License Recovery and Employability

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The Center for Driver's License Recovery and Employability (CDLRE) was established by the Municipal Court of Milwaukee, Milwaukee Area Technical College, Justice 2000, and Legal Action of Wisconsin in March 2007 to increase the number of licensed drivers among low-income residents in Milwaukee County, thus supporting their efforts to secure and sustain employment. The program 1) provides direct service case management and legal services; 2) advocates system improvements in the areas of legislation, administration, and the courts; 3) aims to restore driver's education for 16-18 year olds; and 4) increases community education.

Second Judicial District
State of Minnesota
Conservator Account Monitoring, Preparation, and Electronic Reporting

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The Second Judicial District, State of Minnesota, developed and deployed a computerized, web based system for submission of required financial reports by court appointed conservators. Conservators use a computer internet browser to access the court's website where they log in with a password and access a financial reporting screen. From the financial reporting screen, the Conservator selects which financial report the conservator wishes to complete and submit. The system provides edits to ensure that required information is included, and ensures the report balances to the schedule of assets. The financial report process can be interrupted, a draft saved, and then completed at a later time. Once a completed report is submitted to the Court it cannot be changed. If errors are later identified, an amended report must be submitted rather than altering the previously submitted report. When the financial report is submitted online, the data from the report is mapped to a relational database. The data residing in the database is accessible to court personnel through their computer internet browser. Court personnel can access the data by selecting from a menu of reports or extracting certain data for further analysis. The reports produced by the system can range from simple comparative reports for one conservatorship to analytic reports across all conservatorships.

Superior Court in Maricopa County

Community Forums: A Dialogue Between the Third Branch of Government and the Community It Serves

Judge Barbara Rodriguez Mundell
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Superior Court in Maricopa County
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Judge Mundell invited judicial officers and administrative court staff to participate in multiple forums and to speak about their courts and the various court services and resources available to the community. These forums offered an opportunity to meet individuals who are interested in the court system and to share in their perspective on what we are doing well, what court issues are most important to them, and in what ways the courts can better serve the community. Judicial officers and court staff listened to comments and answered a wide variety of questions. Some forums were attended by more than thirty judicial officers (judges, commissioners and justices of the peace). Judicial officers commented that getting into the community to hear what people have to say about the courts was invigorating. Most interesting to the students was when judicial officers spoke about themselves and how they came to be on the bench. Judicial officers answered questions on how our court system works (three tiered system, family court, juvenile court, drug court, etc.) and listened to suggestions from the audience on how we might change processes. Judicial officers from our juvenile courts encouraged audience members to volunteer in one or more of our many programs; for example, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA). In addition, our chief probation officers from adult and juvenile probation attended and answered questions posed by the audience. Our jury commissioner and clerk of the court were also present and answered questions. American Sign Language interpreters and Spanish language interpreters were in attendance to assist with language needs. Attorneys from Family Law Assistance Project (FLAP) were in attendance to provide legal advice for those interested. In addition to providing multiple brochures on our various court programs, representatives from our Human Resource Department were also in attendance to answer questions.

Twentieth Judicial Circuit Court
e-First Appearance
Court Order w/ Digital Signature

Hon. G. Keith Cary
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20th Judicial Circuit Court
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This project was designed to deploy and disseminate an Intranet-based 1st Appearance preparation application for Lee County, Florida, (20th Judicial Circuit). The system provides an on-line web application to assist in the preparation of the First Appearance docket and to effectively streamline the 1st Appearance proceedings. The project has dramatically improved the efficiency of the judicial process including expedited inmate release, more expedient hearings, reduced printing costs and fewer man hours in court, thus benefiting the entire criminal justice system including the Judiciary, State Attorney, Public Defender as well as private counsel.

Maricopa County Superior Court
Distance learning/Live Streaming Education

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With over 4,000 employees working in 20 locations across 9,200 square miles, the Maricopa County Superior Court and Justice Courts require a large amount of travel, redundant training programs, and associated paperwork to meet their needs. The Distance Learning / Live Streaming Education Project was developed to eliminate paperwork and the need to travel to training, as well as to give more time back to court staff to meet the needs of our customers. By using the court's intranet one training room now broadcasts live programs to every court employee's computer. Students can interact with the speaker by emailing questions to a training account used during the broadcasts. Course registrations and follow-up evaluations are all done electronically through the network. Live programs are recorded, stored on a video server, and cataloged so anyone who missed the live program or would like to review it can access the program through video on demand.

Lubbock County District Courts
West Texas Regional Public Defender for Capital Cases

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The West Texas Regional Public Defender for Capital Cases (WTRPD) was established in November 2007 as a collaboration of eighty-five counties in West Texas to provide indigent defense services to individuals charged with the offense of capital murder. The region, which occupies one-third of the state of Texas, covers 64,353 square miles with a population of approximately 1,444,015 people. The office was established in response to the counties' desire to have qualified expert defense services available at an affordable cost to the counties. With that in mind, the counties banded together to create a cost-sharing system where all counties who voluntarily opt-in to the office could benefit from the services of public defenders, mitigation experts, investigators and legal secretaries at a reduced and consistent cost. The office began accepting clients in January 2008 and has represented fourteen capital murder defendants in eleven counties to date. Because of the arrangement, counties have already saved over \$300,000, excluding expert and travel expenses. This savings will continue to grow as the caseload increases and when one or more of the cases proceed to a contested death penalty trial.

Superior Court of California, County of Orange
Packaging of Cases

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The Orange County Superior Court is the fifth largest trial court in the nation in terms of the number of judicial officers and the population served. The court operates nine courthouse facilities throughout Orange County serving a population which now exceeds 3 million. Of the nine court facilities in Orange County, four currently handle all of the criminal case filings. There were approximately 100,000 felony and misdemeanor filings filed in fiscal year 2007-2008. Packaging of cases is to bring all of a defendant's criminal cases before one judge, at one courthouse, to be sentenced in a manner reflective of the big picture of his or her criminality and commensurate with fairness and justice. Packaging of cases involves hearing all of a defendant's cases from the various justice centers in Orange County at one justice center. Essentially, the concept is to manage a person through the system rather than a case - a "one stop shop" approach. This initiative has resulted in efficiencies in the use of resources in the Court and across multiple agencies, as well as, reduced inmate transportation and courthouse detention overcrowding. Case packaging has also resulted in increased accountability for new law violations. Additionally, through packaging, coordination of criminal sentencing will improve compliance. Since a sizeable number of cases are resolved at arraignment, case packaging also results in a tremendous savings to taxpayers and a more efficiently run court.

Toledo Municipal Court
Paperless Protection Order

Hon. Timothy Kuhlman
Presiding Judge
Toledo Municipal Court
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The Paperless Protection Order system provides accurate, complete and timely information about protection and anti-stalking orders to law enforcement and victim service providers serving the needs of victims of violence and stalking. The system establishes a regional document image repository accessible through a browser-based interface to aid in the creation, management and dissemination of the orders and is integrated into the Northwest Ohio Regional Information System (NORIS) automated criminal justice system. Using this existing integrated information system allows the orders to be shared and moved between multiple law enforcement and court case management systems and seamlessly sent to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). Implementing this program has reduced the time required to create, manage and terminate an order by 72% while significantly improving the availability and timeliness of the order for all users of the data. Support costs are minimal because the program operates on an existing framework of applications that share information regionally.

Colfax County Court, Nebraska
Remote Language Interpreters Appearing via Video Conferencing

Hon. Mike Heavican
Chief Justice
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Since taking the bench in 1997, Judge Pat McDermott has been an advocate for both the non-English speaking population of Nebraska and for the use of technology in the court system. His most recent venture melds these two passions into a project that will serve Nebraska's Judicial Branch of government well into the future. McDermott transformed his Master's Thesis in Public Administration at the University of Nebraska at Omaha into a project designed to bring interpreters into the courtroom via technology. The project is projected to save taxpayers' dollars while increasing the speed and quality of services to Nebraska's non-English speaking population. His self-designed pilot project based in the Colfax County Court endeavored to utilize readily-available technology in a rural community to connect with state certified court interpreters based in other areas of the state. This very successful project is now expanding into other rural communities with the blessing of the Nebraska Supreme Court and the direct assistance of Judge McDermott.

Maricopa County Superior Court
Restriction Enforcement Court

Hon. Roland Steinle
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Maricopa County Superior Court
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In August of 2008, the Superior Court of Arizona in Maricopa County and the Honorable Roland Steinle in conjunction with the Adult Probation Office began Restitution Enforcement Court. As a result of creating this court program without additional resources, more than \$48,000 in restitution has been collected from August 2008 to the present. Victims receive restitution, probationers comply with court orders, and court orders are enforced thereby improving trust and confidence in the judicial system. In addition, those present learn the importance of taking responsibility for their actions, prioritizing restitution, and following through with commitments.

Maricopa County, Phoenix, AZ
Electronic Orders of Assignment

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The Electronic Orders of Assignment Project sought to improve the processing time for completing and mailing Orders of Assignment to employers for purposes of withholding child and spousal support as ordered by the Court. In addition to implementing technology to improve the process, the Clerk of the Superior Court (hereafter COSC), the Superior Court (hereafter the Court), and State agencies first collaborated to improve the relative business processes in order to address all causes of delay and inaccuracies. The automated process for generating and completing Order of Assignment complimented the business process changes and ultimately enabled an efficient, accurate, and timely process that reduced the amount of time between the Court ordering the support and the support being withheld by the employer. Current statistics demonstrate that the processing time was improved significantly. Prior to electronic Orders of Assignment, an average of 27 percent of all Orders of assignment were mailed to the employer/payor of funds with ten business days from the date of the Order. After implementing the electronic Orders of Assignment project and associated business process improvements, an average of 60 percent of all Orders of Assignment are mailed to the employer/payor of funds within ten business days of the date of the order. The Clerk's Office processes up to 2,700 Orders of Assignment each month. In addition to providing improved service to our customers, this project significantly reduced the amount of COSC staff required to process an order of Assignment from start to finish, resulting in personnel cost savings of \$218,109 across two divisions with COSC.

Clark County Court (Nevada)
Traffic Division Uses Virtual Court Model to Improve Customer Service and Revenue Collection in the Las Vegas Township Justice Court

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The Las Vegas Township Justice Court in Clark County, Nevada demonstrated the power of a virtual court with the culmination of a traffic fine amnesty program in February 2009 that dramatically increased the collections of fines by directing individuals to the court's integrated voice response and online collection systems (IVR/Web). Revenues collected in the first three months of 2009 by the systems outpaced all previous years. The IVR/Web systems were developed in 2006 to enable the Clark County Courts to create a virtual court model allowing individuals to conduct business with the courts from anywhere in the world. The system is the first phase of a complete court system that aims to improve access to justice, reduce wait times and expand customer satisfaction.

Superior Court of California, County of Ventura
Deaf and Hearing-Impaired Community Outreach

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The Deaf and Hearing-Impaired Community Outreach Program is an innovative solution for providing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) services and community outreach to the hearing-impaired, while ensuring the availability of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting services for the court. It creates a job-share position for the only two court ASL interpreters working within Ventura county. The position serves as both an ASL Interpreter and an ASL Community Liaison. Both interpreters work a minimum of 40 hours per two-week pay period. The job-share approach enables the ASL interpreters to accept assignments outside the court while also ensuring adequate coverage for the court. It is cost effective in that it maintains consistent availability while paying for only one position. At times when ASL needs are low, the interpreters are able to conduct community outreach activities and provide services such as Deaf culture training to court staff and partner agencies. This program promotes effective use of funding while providing consistent communication access for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community of Ventura County. It has improved the court's ability to manage workloads and guarantee business continuity.

Superior Court of California, County of Ventura
Web-Based Video Content

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The Superior Court of California, County of Ventura, is utilizing a web-based service to host court video content of family law self-help workshops. This service was initially designed for web-casting public meetings and archiving the content. The video content is accessed through the court's website, ventura.courts.ca.gov, and is available 24/7 to anyone with access to the Internet. The design of the product, Granicus, provides many unique opportunities to self-represented litigants and the court. Self-represented litigants can view the workshops from home at their convenience and at their own pace. They can jump ahead to specific information within a program and repeat that information as much as they like. Related documents, such as court forms, are synchronized to appear next to the workshop video content. Video content is offloaded and stored at Granicus's redundant datacenter, eliminating the need for the court to invest in additional bandwidth or servers. Network congestion from multiple, simultaneous requests for streaming content is, therefore, not an issue. Utilization reports present a wide variety of information in graphs that can be saved in .pdf format for easy dissemination. Providing the workshops on video relieves the court senior attorney/family law facilitator from repeating multiple presentations twice a week. It creates additional time for them to assist the large number of other users of the court's Family Law Self-Help Center.

District of Columbia Courts
Stay on the Right Side of the Law

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Stay on the Right Side of the Law is an interactive introduction to the judicial system for third grade students in the District of Columbia public schools. The students are introduced to the program through an art contest which solicits art work (for prizes) depicting what it means to “stay on the right side of the law.” Students come to the courthouse for a brief introduction to the three branches of government, an explanation of why we need courts, and an overview of the District of Columbia Courts. They then participate in a mock trial of *The Three Little Pigs*, which is facilitated by one of the Courts’ judicial officers. Students play the roles of judge, courtroom clerk, prosecutor, defense counsel, witnesses, etc. Some students participate as jurors, deliberating and rendering a verdict. The art contest winners receive their prizes during the field trip to the Court. All the students receive an instructional booklet personalized for their class with pictures of the winning art work. The booklet has a hypothetical civil and criminal case, a glossary of legal terms and a word search puzzle, in addition to the introductory information that is covered in the courthouse visit, so the students can continue their learning once they return to school. The program was implemented to enhance students’ civics education, demonstrate positive conflict resolution, and enhances perceptions of the District of Columbia Courts as open, accessible and positive community institutions, thereby increasing public trust and confidence.

First Judicial District of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia Courts)
Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Pilot Program

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The epidemic of mortgage foreclosure filings in Philadelphia and elsewhere prompted the development of the Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Pilot Program that relies on a simple premise: prevent homeowners from losing their properties to foreclosure one address at a time. Temporarily diverting certain foreclosure filings into an alternative case management process allows for time to bring lenders, homeowners, and their lawyers together with counselors, mediators, and others to help the parties come to terms and reach agreements. As the name implies, the Program applies to only owner-occupied residential properties and the goal is to keep residents in their homes. The program is run under the aegis of the First Judicial District (FJD) Common Pleas Court Trial Division Civil Section. The Mortgage Diversion program obviously benefits the homeowner residents and the lenders, but it also prevents neighborhoods from the blight of boarded-up foreclosed homes. This in turn slows the downward slide in home values and then reduces the potential for rising crime rates in neighborhoods where abandoned homes exist. Importantly, the Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Program relies on the *pro bono* contributions of volunteer attorneys, some of whom who act as judges *pro tempore* to economize on judicial resources. While some of the counselors and other partners in the effort may be initially paid for their contributions, their sponsors absorb the costs or find alternative funding so that there is no cost for the court or the participants. To that extent, all the services utilized are *pro bono* services. Volunteerism, case management, and common sense meet in the courtroom to prevent heartbreak, save homes, and preserve neighborhoods. This is a program that not only *can* be put into effect in other jurisdictions, but absolutely *should* be instituted in courts wherever foreclosure threatens the wellbeing of ordinary citizens’ fabric of the community.

Magistrates' Court of Victoria
Court Integrated Services Program

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The Court Integrated Services Program (CISP) is a service established by the Department of Justice and the Magistrates' Court of Victoria to ensure that defendants receive support and services to address the underlying causes of reoffending and make communities safer. The CISP commenced in November 2006 at the Melbourne, Sunshine and Latrobe Valley Magistrates' Courts. The CISP is a presentence program and provides a coordinated, team based approach to the assessment and referral to treatment of defendants. The support and range of services provided to defendants on the program is dependent on the assessed needs of the individual. The program provides three levels of intervention. Case management is provided for a maximum period of four months to those defendants who are identified as moderate to high-risk of re-offending and have multiple needs that require intervention. A multidisciplinary team of case managers at the three CISP locations assist defendants in accessing drug and alcohol treatment and support, crisis accommodation and housing support, disability services, mental health and acquired brain injury services. The CISP has the added flexibility to allow for judicial monitoring of cases where deemed necessary and appropriate by a judicial officer. The CISP is currently being evaluated by the University of Melbourne to determine the effectiveness of the program in meeting its objectives, and PriceWaterhouseCoopers is undertaking an economic evaluation to determine the cost effectiveness of the program.

Fulton County Superior Court
Judicially Hosted Settlement Conference

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The Judicially Hosted Settlement Conference is an Alternative Dispute Resolution process for use in trial-ready cases. The strength of this process is that it utilizes both interest based and rights based techniques. A senior judge controls the process and acts as a facilitator of communications between the parties. The judge is trained in both mediation and case evaluation skills, and his or her role varies with the circumstances of the individual case and the goals to be accomplished. Using mediation techniques, the judge attempts to separate the people from the problem by helping the parties focus on their respective interests, explore alternatives that satisfy their needs, and construct a consensual resolution of the issues. The judge is also prepared to evaluate the relative strengths of the case based on the parties' respective legal theories. The judge's experience as a jurist helps the parties form a realistic framework for settlement. The JHSC is founded on the philosophy that any agreement voluntarily arrived at by the parties through a process of cooperation and compromise is a more productive resolution of their conflict than a judgment imposed by a court as a product of an adversarial process and that parties will be better satisfied, and more likely to abide by an agreement of their own creation.

Seattle Municipal Community Court
Seattle Municipal Community Court

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Seattle Municipal Community Court (SMCC) warrants recognition as a national leader of the community courts movement. SMCC opened for operations in March of 2005 as the 26th community court in the nation and the 1st in Washington State, through a partnership of the Seattle Municipal Court, the Seattle City Attorney's office, and the Associated Counsel for the Accused – the primary defense counsel serving SMCC. The SMCC transitioned from a downtown focus to citywide in 2007 as a result of a *Community Based Problem Solving Criminal Justice Initiatives* federal grant under the United States Department of Justice (DOJ), one of only ten awards made nationwide following a competitive grant process. In April of 2009, the DOJ selected SMCC as one of only three Community Court Mentor sites, tasked with helping other jurisdictions nationwide build and advance their own community court projects. SMCC warrants further recognition due to the selection of a unique target population. While many community courts serve first time and moderate offenders, in contrast, Seattle serves "chronic public system users" – defendants who repeatedly commit low-level crimes, fail to comply with sanctions, fail to appear for court hearings and use expensive jail resources when they could more effectively be rehabilitated through alternative strategies. SMCC strives to slow down the cycling of low-risk, quality of life crimes offenders through the criminal justice system. Rather than relying on lengthy and costly jail sentences, defendants are typically assigned between 16 and 48 hours of community service and are also mandated to make social services linkages individually tailed to address their underlying issues. Failure to comply is punished by swift and certain imposition of short jail terms. Since its inception, the program has generated over 21,000 hours of community service to Seattle neighborhoods from over 2,400 Community Court defendants. Another 10,000 hours of such service has been performed by pretrial diversion candidates monitored through the community court program. Thus, Seattle Municipal Community Court is part of a growing number of courts in the United States and around the world that are using problem solving techniques and restorative justice principles to make a positive difference in their communities.

Fulton County Superior Court
Business Court

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The Business Court facilitates the timely and just resolution of complex commercial cases in a timely and cost efficient manner while meeting the special needs of complex civil cases such as the large amounts of documentary evidence, complex discovery issues, high ratio of dispositive motions, and complex questions of substantive law, which require additional judicial time and expertise to resolve. By grouping like cases before judges with expertise, and experience in the substantive area of law, these cases can be resolved more efficiently than on the general docket by avoiding the learning curve on the substantive matters (through repeated exposure), being familiar with the unique discovery and management needs of these types of cases, and having a flexible docket without criminal cases in order to timely schedule hearings. Since its inception in October, 2005, the Business Court, has had a constant case load of 40+ complex cases and has served more than 155 businesses and 200 lawyers in Fulton County Georgia.

Buffalo City Court
Buffalo City Court Veterans Program

Hon. Sharon S. Townsend
Administrative Judge, 8th Judicial District
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Buffalo City Court Veteran's Program presents an opportunity to help veterans in trouble with the law. Many Veterans are known to have a warrior's mentality and often do not address their treatment needs for physical and psychological health care. Many who are referred to the Veterans' Treatment Court are homeless, helpless, in despair, suffering from alcohol and drug addiction, as well as having serious mental illness. Their lives have been spiraling out of control. This collaboration of unique partners affords the opportunity for these veterans to regain stability in their lives, families are strengthened, the homeless are in housing, the employable are employed, and our society is the beneficiary.

San Bernardino Superior Court
Safety Program

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In order to promote a safe working environment and significantly reduce workers compensation injuries and associated cost, San Bernardino Superior Court has developed a safety program designed to increase and promote health and safety awareness among court employees and to reward those who are the most successful. The program includes a focus on training staff and supervisors to identify and eliminate safety hazards, use proper work techniques to prevent injuries, incentives and communication materials to increase safety awareness.
