



FREE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

**Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)
Criminal Courts Technical Assistance Project**

**SPECIAL CASEFLOW MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE
(CMII)**

BJA's Criminal Courts Technical Assistance Project (CCTAP) is launching a special initiative to provide state and local courts with training and technical assistance to support caseflow management improvement programs designed to reduce case processing delay and promote more efficient use of judicial system resources. Special emphasis will be given to developing and/or expanding Differentiated Case Management (DCM) strategies and to designing improved case scheduling systems. These services are free of charge to state and local courts and related agencies. The initiative contemplates providing services to up to ten state court systems (e.g., state administrative offices and/or local courts they designate) during 2010. Agencies interested in utilizing the CCTAP's caseflow management improvement services should contact the CCTAP as soon as possible.

BACKGROUND

The current fiscal crises have only exacerbated problems many courts have been experiencing for some time regarding their ability to manage and appropriately dispose of their criminal caseloads, and these problems are increasingly impacting other justice agencies as well as the public's confidence in the judicial system. Widespread jail crowding resulting from extended pretrial detention of nonviolent and, frequently, misdemeanor defendants has emerged as a prominent symptom of the breakdown in efficient case processing practices.

The situation is generated by a number of factors including: (1) the increasing complexity, if not volume, of cases filed, requiring greater case screening, interagency coordination, court hearings, scheduling and judicial oversight; (2) legislative sentencing enhancements that curtail the latitude for plea negotiations and, in many cases, elevate prior misdemeanors to felony status; (3) growth of a range of "problem solving court" dockets which need to be integrated into the general court management structure; and (4) a new generation of judges and staff in court

management positions who have not had the benefit of training in court management and delay reduction principles that was fostered through national training sponsored during the '80's by BJA and, previously, LEAA.

The current severe fiscal crises facing most states have aggravated the situation, resulting in both significant reductions in staff in some courts and, in some cases, decisions, such as in California and Florida, to defer filling authorized judgeships altogether. Increases in violent crime and gang activity, and the increasing number of juvenile waiver cases being added to the adult system have added to the strains under which many courts are operating.

Among the immediate capabilities that need to be strengthened in many courts which the CMII is designed to promote are: (1) case management systems that ensure the application of differential judicial system oversight, interagency coordination, and scheduling required to adequately dispose of the diversity of cases and case types being handled; (2) case scheduling practices tailored to the needs of individual cases that ensure appropriate judicial supervision of the case process as well as increase scheduling certainty and reduce continuances and the consequent costs to public agencies, litigants, and public confidence; (3) information systems to competently manage present caseloads rather than primarily report on past activity; (4) adequate support services at both the front end (e.g., case screening, pretrial release and supervision) and the back-end (e.g., pre-sentence reports, disposition alternatives and probation services); and (5) on-going staff and judicial training to address the management tasks needed to address the range of caseflow functions courts must now perform.

**FOCUS OF THE CCTAP CASEFLOW MANAGEMENT
IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE**

The CCTAP's Caseload Management Improvement Initiative (CMII) is designed to provide a range of training and short-term technical assistance to state court administrative offices and state and local courts to strengthen caseload management capabilities and practices. Available CCTAP-CMII services -- which will be tailored to the needs and priorities identified by individual AOC's and/or local courts -- can include:

- Workshops for judges and judicial system personnel regarding effective caseload management strategies and practices and guidance in adapting them to their respective jurisdictions;
- On-site consultation by senior practitioners and other professionals to review current caseload processes and practices and provide recommendations, as appropriate, for improvement;
- Peer-to-peer visits to courts/justice agencies with promising caseload management practices potentially adaptable to other jurisdictions; and
- Office-based assistance, including facilitation of conference telephone calls among peers regarding common issues being addressed; development of relevant practitioner-oriented materials to promote self assessment of caseload management practices and self improvement efforts; and dissemination of relevant resource materials.

REQUESTING CCTAP'S CMII SERVICES

The CCTAP's CMII training and technical assistance services can be requested by letter or fax to Caroline Cooper or Joseph Trotter at the CCTAP project office at

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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American University (see contact information below). The letter should describe briefly the services requested, the objectives which the requesting agency hopes to achieve as a result of the services, and the needs generating the technical assistance request. Summary background information relevant to the technical assistance requested, including any prior studies undertaken, should also be included. Within five days of receipt of the request, project staff will contact the requestor to discuss the request in more detail, obtain additional information, if needed, and plan for service delivery.

Recipient agencies of the project's on-site case management improvement training and/or technical assistance are required to (1) designate a local coordinator who is familiar with relevant case processing practices in the jurisdiction to work with the CCTAP to plan the training and/or on site study agenda; and (2) participate in the CCTAP's evaluation and follow-up activities following provision of the training and/or technical assistance services to provide information on recommendation implementation and/or other developments subsequent to these services. All on-site services will be planned and scheduled in collaboration with the requesting official.

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