

COMMUNITY-FOCUSED COURT PLANNING

Community-focused court planning began locally in 1999. That year, the Court's Community-Focused Court Planning Team held focus group sessions with 12 community groups. Comments from those sessions and an initial analysis of data obtained from surveys of the general public, jurors, and court users were used by the Planning Team to develop recommendations for the Court's Draft Long-Range Strategic Plan due in December of 1999. These recommendations were adopted by the Court and incorporated into the Draft Plan. After a year of experience and further analysis of the 1999 survey data, the Plan has been refined. As required of all California courts, a final version of the Plan was submitted in December of 2000.

The recommendations of the Planning Team have been adopted as goals and policy directions to address issues and concerns raised by the public and to serve as a road map for the Court's future over a 6-year planning cycle established by the California Judicial Council. These goals and policy directions fall into 12 categories which are set forth alphabetically in a bullet-point summary below.

Community-focused court planning is an ongoing process. Many recommendations made in 1999 require fine-tuning. Implementation of some of the recommendations will take time given our local resources. Some programs will require the cooperation and assistance of other government agencies. Also, after study and evaluation, there may be some goals and policy directions the Court decides to not follow. Many of the recommendations will require new funding which the Court will actively seek. Your support will go a long way to obtaining that funding for your court.

Events continue to take place requiring additional planning. For example, effective January 2001, the Legislature converted all employees working for trial courts in California from county employees to trial court employees. A number of personnel issues face the Court as we implement this transition. A Facilities Task Force mandated by the Trial Court Funding Act of 1997 will make recommendations in 2001 that will likely relieve counties of the responsibility of providing court facilities and managing courthouse construction funds.

Whatever the future holds, the Court and the Community-Focused Planning Team will strive to implement the Long-Range Strategic Plan. To maintain a connection to the public, the Court has adopted the recommendation that the Planning Team be its permanent court-community advisory group. Progress reports will be made in our newsletter, *Focused on the Community* which we hope to publish quarterly. In 2002, we hope to publish the first of our Annual Public Reports.

Administration / Management / Labor

- Complete the transition of employees from county administration to local court management. Develop a court personnel system & seek funding to support that system.
- Provide education and training opportunities for court personnel to promote professional growth.
- Complete the transition of administrative, management and fiduciary duties and services

previously provided to the Court by the county.

Case and Calendar Management

- Evaluate/establish a pre-preliminary hearing settlement procedure in the Stockton and Manteca branches or some other mechanism to decrease police officer overtime and inconvenience to civilian witnesses.
- Maintain a formal Judge Pro Tem program for small claims cases. Evaluate expansion to traffic cases.
- Address criminal case and calendar management from a customer service perspective.
- Continue Drug Court in a way consistent with Proposition 36.
- Evaluate/expand Drug Court to Juvenile Dependency Cases.
- Continue/evaluate the expansion of Domestic Violence Court.
- Continue the SAFR House collaborative program involving the court, Probation Department, and Mental Health Department. Evaluate expansion of a mental health court for low level offenders suffering from mental illness.
- Evaluate/establish a Truancy Court calendar in the Stockton branch.
- Establish an employments efforts calendar in Family Court to monitor the efforts of parents to obtain employment. Provide job training and referral by collaborating with other agencies.
- Evaluate/establish a Family Law Center.
- Evaluate/expand night court for small claims cases in Stockton. Evaluate/establish night court for small claims cases in the Lodi, Manteca, and Tracy branches. Evaluate/establish Saturday court for small claims cases in each branch.
- Evaluate/establish night court or Saturday court for juvenile and adult traffic cases.
- Continue/evaluate the enhancement of alternative dispute resolution in small claims and civil harassment cases.

Court Planning

- Continue the Community-Focused Court Planning Team as a permanent community-court advisory board.
- Vest long-range planning and oversight responsibilities in the Superior Court Executive

Committee.

Customer Service

- Evaluate/establish a Self-Help Center for litigants in civil and family law matters who are not represented by an attorney. Coordinate with the existing Pro Per Clinic.
- Review /improve signage & calendar posting in each of the branches.
- Evaluate expansion of Clerk's office hours in the Lodi, Manteca, Stockton, and Tracy branches.
- Support the county staff working the county's Information Booth.
- Investigate expansion/expand court information in the phone books.
- Form a task force to identify & evaluate solutions related to child care for court users.

Disabled Access and Accommodation

- Review courthouse facilities and procedures with accommodation of disabled in mind.
- Work with the Central Parking District to acquire parking in lots adjacent or next to the Stockton courthouse for customers & jurors with disabilities.
- Assign and train a staff person to be a liaison with the disabled community.
- Review/modify court & county facility emergency plans for provision of the needs of the disabled.

Facilities

- Master plan for the design and construction of needed facilities. Secure funding to cover planning costs and retain a qualified consultant.
- Assemble a court facilities team to evaluate and implement the facilities master plan and decide on construction priorities.
- Evaluate/establish a county-wide arraignment court physically connected to or near the County Jail facility in French Camp.
- Evaluate/establish video arraignment court for the Stockton, Lodi, Manteca, and Tracy branches.

Interpreters and Improved Access for Non-English Speakers

- Pre-translate arraignment advisements into written scripts in different languages.
- Encourage interpreters to ask the court to slow down or repeat when necessary.
- Encourage non-English speaking criminal defendants to seek clarification from the court concerning concepts that are not understood.
- Continue the cooperative relationship between the court and community groups representing non-English speaking communities on issues relating to translation of court proceedings.
- Establish a formal method of training San Joaquin County residents to become registered court interpreters for the Southeast Asian languages and enhance the training of those who are currently registered. Recruit enough interpreters in these languages to fill the need.
- Using Language Lines, provide translation services for court users at all clerk's counters and the Information Booth at the Stockton Branch.
- Revise existing phone trees to accommodate multi-lingual access and information.

Jury Duty

- Work with the Central Parking District to acquire additional and more accessible parking for jurors & work to obtain funds for that parking.
- Encourage grand juries to meet on days other than days when there are typically large jury calls.
- Work with the county to increase the size/ remodel the Jury Assembly Room in the Stockton branch or obtain overflow jury assembly space.
- Work with the county to improve or remodel bathroom facilities adjacent to the Jury Assembly Room in Stockton.
- Improve the Jury Assembly Room in Stockton. Such improvements might include the replacement of furniture, installing more telephones, installing modems for laptop computers, installing Direct-TV, providing better reading materials, and improving the environment with suitable art or historical pieces for walls.
- Evaluate/establish feasible jury assembly room accommodations at the Lodi, Manteca, & Tracy branches.

- Evaluate/provide comfortable places for seated jurors to wait prior to court sessions in the Stockton branch where they do not come into contact with witnesses, litigants, family members and attorneys.
- Conduct a survey to determine what foods and beverages jurors would like available at the snack bar & whether jurors would patronize the snack bar up to 3:30 P.M. Work with the Department of Aging, the agency that runs the snack bar, to fulfill the desires of jurors if possible.
- Continue the newly established Jury Service court committee to evaluate and monitor jury service in San Joaquin County. Include at least one member of the public. The committee's responsibilities include conducting and evaluating regular exit surveys, evaluating jury service compliance, evaluating jury summons procedures to ensure the fair cross-section requirement, and recommending jury reforms and ways to implement those reforms.
- Encourage the Legislature to increase the amount of jury compensation to the same amount paid Federal jurors.
- Continue to implement the award winning Jury Duty Compliance and Education Program.
- Educate the public about the importance of jury service and about jury service reform measures through: the publication of informational pamphlets; live orientations by judges; creation of a summons insert which contains information about the One-Day / One-Trial Rule and the civic obligation to serve; presentation of programs to civic groups; remodeling of the court's web page on jury service; newspaper commentaries; and public service announcements.

Juvenile Justice

- Develop a Scared Straight program in collaboration with the Probation Department and the California Youth Authority.
- Develop a video-tape to be played in the lobby of the Juvenile Justice Center concerning juvenile justice procedures, Scared Straight information, and information for parents.
- Develop a reading program in collaboration with local educators & impose participation as a condition of probation.
- Continue and evaluate newly established juvenile traffic calendars in Lodi, Manteca, Stockton, and Tracy branches.

Public Education

- Educate youth and provide them with positive experiences and impressions of the justice

system through the Courtroom to Schoolroom programs, including the Classroom Speaker programs, Courthouse Tours program, the First Impressions Program, the Youth Mentoring Program, and annual Mock Trial Competition.

- Provide educational opportunities for the general public about their justice system through presentations to community groups and the publication of a regular newsletter, commentaries in local papers, informational pamphlets & brochures, a catalogue of court outreach programs, and an annual public report.
- Establish a Bench-Bar-Media group.
- Provide formal training for media personnel on criminal justice matters.
- Establish and fill the position of Court Public Relations Officer.
- Issue press releases to the media concerning court related information of public interest.

Race-Culture-Gender-Economics

- Continue/expand the newly established Court-Community Leadership and Liaison Program for members of the major ethnic communities and the community of people with disabilities. Participants attend an Academy for training about justice system issues. Participants then provide an informational resource for members of their communities and advise the courts about court related problems or concerns in their communities.
- Develop a video training program on cultural issues in the Southeast Asian community for statewide use by judges and court personnel.
- With input from the Court - Community Liaisons, develop informational programs for their communities.
- Make available race, cultural, and gender sensitivity training for judicial officers in addition to that provided by the Judicial Council and the California Judges Association. Provide similar sensitivity training for court staff. Utilize available professional and community resources.

Use of Technology

- Revise and expand the court's web site to include more interactivity for court users and to provide educational information to the public.
- Support public education programs with the appropriate use of technology.
- Hire and retain qualified technical support staff.

- Study and plan to provide electronic filing for court users.
- Upgrade current case management systems.
- Provide electronic access to court records for the public.

CONTACT US

If you have suggestions for improvements or any questions about the Court's Long-Range Strategic Plan, please contact us. Also, let us know if you would like to be put on the Court's mailing list to receive future publications.

You may direct your written correspondence to Terry Costa, Lead Judicial Secretary, San Joaquin County Superior Court, 222 East Weber Avenue, 3rd Floor, Stockton, California, 95202.

You may visit the Court's newly remodeled web site at www.stocktoncourt.org. E-mail contact information is listed at our site.

More information about the California court system is available on the California Judicial Council's web site at www.courtinfo.ca.gov.