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BJA's Justice Today



BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE • OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

DENISE E. O'DONNELL, DIRECTOR

November & December 2015

In the Spotlight

Justice Mental Health Collaboration and Second Chance Conference Held in DC

The [2015 Justice Mental Health Collaboration and Second Chance Conference](#) was held December 14–18 in Washington, D.C. The conference was hosted by the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center and the National Reentry Resource Center (NRRC) and sponsored by BJA and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

The conference provided an opportunity for [Second Chance Act \(SCA\)](#) and [Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program \(JMHC\)](#) grant recipients to engage with experts in the field and interact with fellow practitioners from around the country to learn about evidence-based practices and promising approaches to reducing recidivism and improving outcomes for people released from prisons, jails, and juvenile correctional facilities.

Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch presented an address, with an introduction by Assistant Attorney General Karol Mason. BJA Director Denise E. O'Donnell spoke at the event and moderated a workshop on prevention and reentry strategies. BJA Associate Deputy Director Ruby Qazilbash and BJA Policy staff members Andre Bethea, Juliene James, Veronica Munson, NiKisha Love, and Maria Fryer also attended and presented at workshops, addressing the steps jurisdictions take when designing, implementing, and expanding criminal justice/mental health initiatives. Topics included the impact of solitary confinement on reentry and behavioral health, grants management and performance measurement, and developing action-oriented evaluation partnerships.



Plenary session with Van Jones, President and CEO of #cut50, and Mark Holden, GC and Sr. VP of Koch Industries

DID YOU KNOW?

New BJA NTTAC Catalog for Training and Technical Assistance

The BJA National Training and Technical Assistance Center ([BJA NTTAC](#)) Catalog for Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) is a new tool to promote upcoming webinars and training events to the justice community. The new TTA Catalog can be easily searched for resources that meet users' needs through the use of various filters (e.g., keyword, location, event type, program area, date). Results can be displayed in a list or as a calendar, and can also be exported into Excel. Check out the new TTA Catalog [here](#).



A Collaborative Approach to Combating Crime in Gary, Indiana's Hardest Hit Areas

Gary, Indiana faced challenges addressing its criminal activity around blighted property with existing resources, as its declining residential population led to a decreased tax base and a corresponding reduction in funding. In 2013, the City of Gary began working with the OJP [Diagnostic Center](#) to improve public safety and reduce violent crime. The Diagnostic Center then referred the city to the BJA NTTAC to implement their recommendations with two TTA programs: Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design and Crime Analysis on

News You Can Use

SPI Presents Criminology 102 Webinar

On December 14, 2015, the Smart Policing Initiative (SPI) presented a webinar on "Criminology 102: 'Busted Myths' in Criminology." This webinar was presented by Dr. Scott Decker, SPI Subject Matter Expert and Foundation Professor at the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Arizona State University.



The past two decades of research have challenged many conventional assumptions about crime and criminal justice. These assumptions include such concepts as "nothing works," that crime is going up, that simply providing more resources affects crime, and that prevention doesn't work. These assumptions are largely based on old or public misconceptions about criminal justice. Addressing these myths is important because progress can be made against crime by using

current research and data about crime problems and criminal justice responses. The webinar identified 10 of these assumptions and discussed the evidence that suggests that they are myths. Most importantly, the webinar examined how the research evidence can lead to data-driven solutions. The archived webinar slides are available [here](#).

BJA Co-hosts 10th National Prosecution Summit

The White House Domestic Policy Council and BJA, in partnership with the [Association of Prosecuting Attorneys](#), co-hosted the 10th National Prosecution Summit in Washington, D.C. on November 16–18. BJA Director Denise E. O'Donnell and BJA Policy staff members presented. The purpose of the summit was to provide prosecuting attorneys with knowledge on critical trends facing the criminal justice system, including tactics to reduce gun and gang violence, research methods for prosecutors, strategies for responding to high-profile cases, and methods for ensuring conviction integrity. The event concluded with a convening at the White House on how prosecutors can improve public trust and confidence in the justice system.



BJA Presents at American Society of Criminology Annual Conference

BJA staff attended and participated in sessions at the annual [American Society of Criminology](#) (ASC) Conference held November 18–21 in Washington, D.C. This year's theme was "The Politics of Crime and Justice." During the conference, BJA Policy Advisor Catherine McNamee moderated a panel presenting new findings produced by [Smart Policing Initiative](#) projects in three sites (Chula Vista, California; Lowell, Massachusetts; and Kansas City, Missouri). BJA Senior Policy Advisor Juliene James presented on a panel discussing implementation of the [Justice Reinvestment Initiative](#) (JRI) at the local level.



BJA Senior Policy Advisor Kim Ball presented on BJA's defense work, including Smart Defense and the [Right to Counsel \(R2C\) National Campaign](#). BJA Senior Performance Management Analyst Laura Wyckoff and the performance management team presented and hosted a panel on the use of performance measurement at BJA and how the performance measurement process informs grant management. BJA Special Assistant to the Deputy Director Thurston Bryant and BJA Associate Deputy Directors Cornelia Sorensen-Sigworth and Elizabeth Griffith also attended the event.

JRI Set to Expand

The Justice Reinvestment Initiative ([JRI](#)), a flagship program at BJA, is set to expand to more states in the 2016 and 2017 state legislative sessions. BJA is supporting data-driven, comprehensive criminal justice reforms in recently launched JRI efforts in Alaska, Maryland, Montana, and Rhode Island, and plans are underway for launches in Arkansas and Pennsylvania as well. JRI provides targeted technical assistance to help state and local governments take a data-driven approach to improve public safety, reduce unnecessary confinement, and help re-entering individuals with the transition back home.



JRI is a public/private partnership involving BJA, the Pew Charitable Trusts, the CSG Justice Center, the Vera Institute of Justice, the Center for Effective Public Policy, the Crime and Justice Institute, and the Urban Institute. Based on the strength of the partnership and results to date, BJA received a four-fold increase in appropriations from fiscal year (FY) 2013 to FY 2014. This expanded investment has caused a greater number of states to be involved in JRI and allowed deeper work to ensure more sustainable and permanent changes to the way states conduct the business of criminal justice.

Immigrant Parents and Law Enforcement Promoting Community Safety Project

BJA and the [National Council on Crime and Delinquency](#) (NCCD) created the Community Safety Project curriculum for immigrant families and law enforcement officers. By providing community resources and practical strategies for immigrant parents, the curriculum aims to support them in addressing the negative outside influences that may be affecting their children. The curriculum also provides law enforcement agencies with tangible training materials to develop and sustain the knowledge and relationships necessary to successfully work with—and prevent youth violence among—immigrant populations. The resource includes a law enforcement [training](#)



Demand. Click [here](#) to learn more in BJA NTTAC's *TTA Spotlight* article.

FEATURED PROGRAM

BJA Wrongful Conviction Program Success

BJA awarded a FY 2009 Wrongful Conviction Program grant to the [Committee for Public Counsel Services](#) (CPCS) in Boston, Massachusetts. Lisa M. Kavanaugh, Innocence Program Director at CPCS, shared a success story from Massachusetts in one of their innocence cases, *Commonwealth v. Ronjon Cameron*. "Mr. Cameron was convicted of a rape in a case that literally pitted his credibility against that of the complainant," said Kavanaugh. "At trial, the prosecutor relied on DNA testing that reportedly established Mr. Cameron could neither be included nor excluded as the source [of DNA evidence]. This evidence was the only source of corroboration of the complainant's claim that Mr. Cameron raped her." Post-conviction review of the original DNA results revealed that Mr. Cameron should actually have been excluded as the source of male DNA, yet he lost his first new trial motion. Then the Innocence Program took on his case and paid for additional DNA testing that definitively excluded him as the source of male DNA. Kavanaugh said that the review of DNA testing results was paid out of BJA grant funds. Mr. Cameron has been released from prison 14 years after his wrongful conviction. BJA recently awarded a FY 2015 grant to this organization to continue their work.

More information on the judicial decision in this case can be found [here](#).

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[guide](#) to be delivered by community stakeholders—local service providers, teachers, religious leaders, staff from local community-based organizations, and law enforcement or other leaders in the local community—as well as a parent training guide to be delivered by law enforcement officers.

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Grants & Funding

No BJA FY 2015 competitive grant solicitations are currently open. Visit our [Funding Page](#) to stay up-to-date on upcoming BJA solicitations.

Don't forget to visit [OJP's Funding Resource Center](#), where you'll find OJP funding opportunities, an overview of OJP's grant process, and more!

 [Funding Resource Center](#)

In Focus This Month

Right to Counsel National Consortium

BJA Director Denise E. O'Donnell and BJA Senior Policy Advisor Kim Ball hosted the first meeting of the Right to Counsel (R2C) National Consortium on November 10, 2015 in Washington, D.C. Assistant Attorney General Karol Mason participated in the event.

The launch of the BJA-led R2C campaign brought together a multidisciplinary group of justice system stakeholders, including policymakers, prosecutors, defense counsel, judges, national organizations, foundations, and community members. R2C's mission is to inform and engage consortium members on the importance of meaningfully carrying out the Sixth Amendment Right to Counsel. The consortium is being established due to the recognized need for long-term engagement with all stakeholders in the criminal justice system to ensure the quality of public defense delivery systems.



Quality defense means ensuring that no person faces the loss of liberty without first having the aid of a lawyer with the time, ability, and resources to present an effective defense. In many states, too many defendants lack access to quality advice and representation. Over the next several years, the consortium will address the many urgent priorities facing public defenders, providing solutions individual jurisdictions can implement with BJA support and moving the country a step closer to the Sixth Amendment's promise of right to counsel. Follow us and join the campaign via the [website](#) and Twitter via #Right2Counsel.

Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program

The Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) [website](#) has been updated with new Fact Sheets and Checklists of Required Documents to assist agencies, survivors, and injured officers as they file for PSOB benefits. Enacted in 1976, the PSOB Program provides death, disability, and education benefits to those eligible for the program. Visit the [PSOB website](#) to apply for these federal benefits for law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other first responders killed or catastrophically disabled in the line of duty. For questions regarding these new resources or the PSOB Program, call the PSOB Office at 888-744-6513 (toll-free) or 202-307-0635.



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