

BJA's Justice Today



BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE • OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

DENISE E. O'DONNELL, DIRECTOR

February 2014

In the Spotlight

BJA Director Denise E. O'Donnell provided opening remarks at a Congressional Briefing on February 18, 2014, sponsored by Representative Danny Davis and hosted by the RAND Corporation. The briefing announced new research funded by BJA on correctional education that explores knowledge gaps and opportunities for leveraging academic and vocational education programs to improve the reentry outcomes of incarcerated adults and juveniles.



BJA Director Denise E. O'Donnell

"The findings and recommendations in this study underscore the critical importance of effective academic and vocational education programs in helping incarcerated individuals successfully reenter communities upon release," said Director O'Donnell. "This knowledge serves to tell us which programs should be developed and funded—and which programs provide the greatest return on taxpayer dollars."

Read the full RAND report: [How Effective Is Correctional Education, and Where Do We Go from Here? The Results of a Comprehensive Evaluation.](#)

DID YOU KNOW?

NTTAC Launches Interactive Web-Based System for BJA TTA Grantees

BJA's National Training and Technical Assistance Center (NTTAC) launched the BJA TTA Portal (formerly known as the Online Collaboration Portal, or OCP)—a web-based system that facilitates increased collaboration among BJA staff and BJA's TTA grantees. Some of the system's key features include the ability to view up-to-date information on TTA activity trends, search directories to identify relevant BJA criminal justice partners, and a geographic information system to visually see the distribution of BJA NTTAC TTA activity across the United States. Within the BJA TTA Portal, BJA TTA grantees who support similar criminal justice topics can interact with one another through various interest groups and communities of interest.

The BJA TTA Portal will enhance information sharing capabilities and make it easier for BJA staff and TTA grantees to work together in the provision of TTA services. For more information on the BJA TTA Portal, call 1-855-BJA-TTAC (1-855-252-8822) or e-mail nttac@bjatraining.org.

News You Can Use

Improving the Response to Misdemeanors by Adopting Community Court Practices

A new report by the National Center for State Courts concludes that criminal courts throughout the country could adopt practices honed in community courts—such as new assessment tools, enhanced monitoring of court orders, information technology, procedural justice efforts, and expanded sentencing options—to improve performance. The report was a comprehensive evaluation of the Red Hook Community Justice Center that found that the project reduced the use of jail, lowered recidivism, and saved taxpayers money. [Read more.](#)

Register for the Community Justice Summit

Register now for "[Community Justice 2014](#)," an international summit on criminal justice reform that will cover a range of topics, including procedural justice, risk/needs assessment, alternative sanctions, and community restitution. Hosted by the Center for Court Innovation in partnership with BJA and the California Administrative Office of the Courts, the summit will be held in San Francisco, CA on April 22-24, 2014.



Grants & Funding

[Charles Colson Task Force on Federal Corrections](#)

Closes March 12, 2014

[Second Chance Act Technology Career Training Program for Incarcerated Adults and Juveniles](#)

Closes March 17, 2014



FEATURED PROGRAM

BJA NTTAC Provides Assistance to Ensure Right to

[Adult Drug Court Discretionary Grant Program](#)

Closes March 18, 2014

[Second Chance Act Reentry Program for Adult Offenders with Co-Occurring Substance Abuse and Mental Health Disorders](#)

Closes March 18, 2014

[FY 2014 Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation \(CTAS\)](#)

Closes March 24, 2014

[Smart Supervision: Reducing Prison Populations, Saving Money, and Creating Safer Communities](#)

Closes April 7, 2014

In Focus This Month

Statewide Justice System Reform Programs Show Early Results

BJA, in partnership with the Urban Institute, issued the [Justice Reinvestment Initiative State Assessment Report](#), outlining positive results states are making by reducing prison populations and costs through BJA's Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI).

The report describes the progress, challenges, and preliminary outcomes of 17 JRI states from 2010 to summer 2013. Many of these states are on track to realize a significant return on investment by implementing evidenced-based policies that direct resources to the right places. Of the 17 states, 8 had JRI policies in effect for at least one year. All eight have experienced meaningful reductions in their prison populations, and five of them have met or exceeded their population reduction goals. Although projected savings vary across the 17 states and time periods, the report estimates that there will be a total projected savings of as much as \$4.7 billion over a 10-year period.



Counsel Services in Mississippi

In the years since *Gideon v Wainwright* (1963), state governments and policymakers have struggled with finding the most effective ways to make their courts fair, promote public safety and fiscal responsibility, and ensure quality representation for all defendants at every stage of a criminal proceeding.

Recently, BJA NTTAC provided funding for the [Mississippi Office of the State Public Defender](#) (OSPD) to work with the [Sixth Amendment Center](#) (6AC), a non-profit organization that specializes in providing right to counsel technical services to examine how the delivery of trial-level public defense is provided across the state. For more information, read a recent [blog post](#), authored by BJA Policy Advisor Kim Ball.

Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program

Enacted in 1976, the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program provides death, disability, and education benefits to those eligible for the program. For details regarding these federal benefits for law enforcement officers, firefighters, and first responders killed or catastrophically disabled in the line of duty, call the PSOB Office toll-free at 888-744-6513 or 202-307-0635, or visit the PSOB [web site](#).



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