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BJA's Justice Today



BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE • OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

DENISE E. O'DONNELL, DIRECTOR

September 2016

In the Spotlight

BJA Hosts Smart Suite Summit

On September 7–9, BJA hosted the Smart Suite Summit, “Transforming Criminal Justice through Research and Innovation,” in Arlington, Va. The summit gathered more than 400 Smart Suite grantees, researchers, national experts, federal representatives, and thought leaders to discuss and promote data- and research-informed criminal justice policy and programs.



Four years ago, BJA launched Smart Policing, the first of the Smart Suite programs designed to employ practitioner-researcher partnerships to bring more science to criminal justice operations by building partnerships that utilize evidence-based and data-driven strategies to reduce crime, improve community safety, reduce recidivism, and prevent unnecessary confinement. The BJA Smart Suite now includes more than 10 programs and has worked with researchers and practitioners in over 200 jurisdictions on topics such as policing, corrections, community-based efforts, prosecution, and defense. This approach has netted remarkable results that are driving reform in these critical criminal justice areas.

For more information on BJA's Smart Suite or to download presentations and resources from the summit, visit the Smart Suite [web page](#).

DID YOU KNOW?

Updates to State and Territory Fact Sheets

BJA recently completed annual updates to its State and Territory Fact Sheets for fiscal year (FY) 2014. Each fact sheet summarizes funding provided by BJA during FY 2014 across all jurisdictions in a particular state or territory, as well as state- or territory-specific statistics on justice personnel and crime/arrest data during the fiscal year. These reports can be accessed [here](#) and downloaded as printable PDFs.

FEATURED PROGRAM

Annual VRN Summit Held

On September 26–28, U.S. Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch, OJP Assistant Attorney General Karol Mason, BJA Deputy Director Kristen Mahoney, and BJA Policy Office staff attended the fourth annual Violence Reduction Network (VRN) Summit in Little Rock, Ark. VRN is a comprehensive all-hands approach that leverages existing DOJ resources to deliver strategic and intensive training and technical assistance in order to reduce violence in some of the country's most violent cities. At the summit, Attorney General Lynch announced two additional VRN sites: Jackson, Mississippi, and Nashville, Tennessee.

News You Can Use

BJA Co-hosts Convening on Justice Debt and Bail Practices

On September 14, together with the Office of Access to Justice and the Civil Rights Division, OJP and BJA hosted “Progress and Promise: Momentum in the Reform of Justice Debt and Bail Practices” in Washington, D.C. At the convening, Assistant Attorney General Karol V. Mason announced OJP would make [awards](#) of nearly \$3 million to reform the assessment and enforcement of justice debt in California, Louisiana, Missouri, Texas, and Washington. BJA Senior Policy Advisor Juliene James attended and led a listening session on next steps.



The convening brought together judges, court administrators, advocates, academics, and others to share progress and lessons learned from efforts to reform the justice system's approach to legal financial obligations.

In Focus This Month

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BJA Staff Attend Safe Alternatives to Segregation Meeting

On September 26–27, BJA Director Denise E. O'Donnell, Associate Deputy Director Ruby Qazilbash, and Senior Policy Advisor Juliene James attended the Safe Alternatives to Segregation (SAS) Initiative Advisory Council meeting, hosted by the Vera Institute of Justice. The SAS Initiative currently assists three state prison systems and two jail systems in safely and effectively implementing alternatives to restrictive housing—a practice of locking individuals in cells with little access to programming or human interaction. At the meeting, Director O'Donnell announced over \$6.3 million in DOJ grant awards to study and ameliorate the effects of incarceration, including awards to the Vera Institute of Justice—\$2.2 million from BJA to expand the SAS Initiative and over \$1.4 million from the National Institute of Justice to study alternatives to restrictive housing and the impact of working in restrictive housing on correctional officer wellness.

The SAS Advisory Council comprises practitioners from state and local corrections systems that have successfully reduced their reliance on segregated housing as well as other experts in corrections management, criminal justice policy, mental health, and special populations. Advisory council members advise SAS sites on their efforts to reduce their use of restrictive housing and help inform technical assistance priorities, best practices, and the development of trainings and publications.

Grants & Funding

No BJA FY 2016 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](#)

Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program

Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program

On August 22, 2016, a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) was published in the [Federal Register](#), seeking public comment on proposed amendments to the PSOB Program regulations.

The posting of this NPRM does not change current PSOB rules, established interpretation, or other agency guidance. It is the first step in the process by which BJA changes its current rules. Interested parties have until October 21, 2016, to submit comments. When the comment period closes, BJA will review the comments, respond to them as appropriate, and prepare a final rule incorporating any changes.

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 the PSOB Program, call the PSOB Office at 888-744-6513 (toll-free) or 202-307-0635.



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