

**Los Angeles City Attorney's Office**  
**Smart Prosecution Initiative**  
**INTRODUCING NEW TOOLS USING EVIDENCE AND RISK-**  
**ASSESSMENT TO CONFIRM ELIGIBILITY FOR PROSECUTION**  
**TREATMENT**  
**("INTERCEPT")**

**Statement of the Problem**

Los Angeles is the second largest city in the country. During FY '14, prosecutors in Los Angeles City Attorney's Office reviewed 118,000 criminal cases and filed 43,898 misdemeanor criminal complaints, and 34,850 citations. Throughout the City of Los Angeles, the justice system has faced significant burdens stemming from shifting and limited resources. Recession-driven cutbacks forced the closure of eight Los Angeles County courthouses and 80 courtrooms, the termination of 1,000 court related positions, and the elimination of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Department.<sup>1</sup> With misdemeanor offenses consuming 40% of all judicial resources annually, misdemeanor court dockets became additionally strained, further limiting the courts' abilities to hear misdemeanor cases, tailor effective sentences, and monitor individuals.

In 2011, the California legislature passed Assembly Bill 109, a prison realignment measure that shifted responsibility for 46,000 individuals convicted of crime from state prisons to county jails. This further burdened local jail resources leading to increased overcrowding. As a result of overcrowding and resource constraints, individuals charged with misdemeanor offenses received significantly reduced jail terms, including immediate release following sentencing. Therefore, jail sentences no longer carried the same deterrent effects for individuals charged with misdemeanor offenses.

Two regions in Los Angeles, South Los Angeles, and Hollywood, experience chronically high poverty, unemployment, and high crime rates. South Los Angeles is comprised of three Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) divisions: Southeast, Southwest and 77<sup>th</sup> Street. From 2011 through 2013, these three divisions accounted for approximately 31% of Part I offenses (homicide, rape, aggravated assault and robbery) throughout the City of Los Angeles. In particular, the 77<sup>th</sup> Street Division consistently ranks higher in violent crime among all 21 LAPD police divisions.

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<sup>1</sup> 2015 Los Angeles Superior Court Annual Report; Recently, two new courtrooms opened, one in downtown Long Beach and one in San Fernando Valley.

LAPD maintains one of its divisions in Hollywood. In 2011, the Hollywood division Part I crime rate of 38.8% per 1,000 residents was significantly higher than the 27.7% citywide for Part I offenses.

### **Strategies and Tactics**

The goal of the Los Angeles City Attorney's INTERCEPT program is to implement evidence-based strategies to address target problems in the South Los Angeles and Hollywood communities by intercepting individuals arrested for misdemeanor offenses before they escalate their criminal behavior, and to link them to individually tailored recommendations for services to prevent reoffending. INTERCEPT is a pre-trial diversion program, preventing individuals from facing the harsh collateral consequences of a misdemeanor conviction. Predicated on intensive crime analysis conducted in the first six months of the initiative, INTERCEPT relies on the application of a risk needs assessment designed by the Center for Court Innovation (CCI) to screen program participants. Based upon crime reports and the assessment, LACA administrative coordinators leverage resources by linking program participants to appropriate community-based services.

Additionally, in lieu of criminal courts, neighborhood justice panels (NJP), akin to restorative justice panels, have been established for program participants in South Los Angeles and Hollywood. Each NJP consists of three volunteer community panelists, one program participant, a volunteer mediator-facilitator, and victim (if willing to participate). The NJP can provide a transformational change for individuals by addressing their crime, its impact upon the community and a plan to repair the harm.

### **Partnerships and Collaborations**

The Los Angeles City Attorney's Office has established partnerships and collaborations to enhance evidence-based practices for Project INTERCEPT. The LAPD is currently engaged in The Smart Policing Initiative and is sharing arrest data with the INTERCEPT Team. Justice and Security Strategies (JSS), the research partner for both the City of Los Angeles's Smart Policing and Smart Prosecution, provides comprehensive crime analysis and evaluation.

CCI provided technical assistance and evaluation of two risk assessments for potential use in INTERCEPT. Upon selection of the CCI risk assessment, CCI provided training to Smart

Prosecution team members and other LACA staff for administering the risk assessment to participants admitted to INTERCEPT.

### **Research Methodology**

JSS will conduct a process and impact evaluation of INTERCEPT, focusing on the two NJPs in South Los Angeles and one NJP in Hollywood. The process evaluation will involve multiple methods, including interviews, reviews of pertinent documents, observations, and statistical analyses of individuals convicted of misdemeanor offenses and client-based data.

JSS will analyze LACA data to determine the impact of INTERCEPT on participant recidivism. Individuals will be tracked for a one-year period to determine new arrests, charges, and convictions. In addition, data from a group of similar individuals charged with misdemeanor offenses in 2011 will be analyzed to determine whether they differ in outcomes from INTERCEPT program participants. This analysis will provide a comparison of those who went through the traditional criminal justice process versus those who participate in INTERCEPT.