

SMART PROSECUTION

San Diego City Attorney's Office Smart Prosecution Initiative Community Justice Initiative (CJI)

Statement of the Problem

In 2013, there were 55,455 misdemeanor arrests in San Diego County. Forty-four percent (24,455, or an average of 67 per day) of these misdemeanor crimes occurred in the cities of San Diego and Poway. When California passed Proposition 47 in 2014, it reduced certain crimes from felonies to misdemeanors. Additionally, due to budget cuts and legislative changes, the number of misdemeanor cases handled by the City Attorney's Office increased. As these factors may have caused some setback, the City Attorney's successfully established San Diego Community Court in November 2014. San Diego Community Court is a city-wide, post-plea program to provide individuals charged with misdemeanor offenses the opportunity to engage with the community by performing targeted community work service. Upon completion of the program, criminal charges are dismissed. This program gives individuals the opportunity to not only have their cases dismissed, but provides immediate accountability and access to social services, as well as promoting positive community stewardship.

Strategies and Tactics

The City Attorney's Office expanded the scope of San Diego Community Court, in part due to the support of the Bureau of Justice Assistance through its "SMART Prosecution" grant. Through this expansion effort, the program was renamed the **Community Justice Initiative (CJI)**, and a CJI Coordinator was hired to help expand the program. The primary expansion goals of the initiative include: (1) conducting a standardized participant assessment to understand risk and need; (2) a dedicated case manager to provide participants with personal counseling and direction in accessing services; (3) strengthening the current documentation effort to ensure decisions and

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strategies are informed by data; and (4) engaging with the community to a greater degree. These initiatives will lead to achievable goals of continual expansion and program stability.

Partnerships and Collaborations

CJI represents a partnership between the San Diego City Attorney's Office which serves as the lead agency, San Diego Public Defender's Office, San Diego County Sheriff's Department, and two non-profit service providers – Urban Corps of San Diego County and Alpha Project. These two service providers are experienced at linking participants with resources and services appropriate to their situation, including alcohol and drug addiction programs, mental health services, education programs, and job training.

Research Methodology

SANDAG will complete a process and an impact evaluation of CJI. SANDAG will collect and analyze data to answer questions including: (1) the number and predictive factors of clients accessing referral-based services; (2) the number and predictive factors of individuals completing the program; (3) circumstances of client drop-out; (4) recidivism rate of participants; and (5) cost-benefit of CJI. Armed with this "action research," program partners will make in-progress adjustments that help deliver the best outcomes for participants.