

SPOTLIGHT ARTICLE

NEIGHBORHOOD PROSECUTION AND COLLABORATIVE COURTS UNIT



(From left to right: Anthony (Tony) Moore – Community Justice Initiative (CJI) Coordinator, Natasha Robertson – Deputy City Attorney, Neighborhood Prosecution and Collaborative Courts Unit (NPU), Janet Long – Senior Clerk Typist, Donna Armistead – Word Processing Operator, Lara Easton – Chief Deputy City Attorney, NPU, Ann Marie Council – Deputy City Attorney, NPU, Melissa Bond – Director of CJI)

By: Lara Easton

**Chief, Neighborhood Prosecution and Collaborative Courts Unit (NPU)
San Diego City Attorney's Office, Community Justice Initiative (CJI)**

Lara Easton is the Chief of the Neighborhood Prosecution and Collaborative Courts Unit (NPU) at the San Diego City Attorney's Office. Ms. Easton graduated summa cum laude from San Diego State University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice Administration, and a double minor in Political Science and Sociology. She received her Juris Doctorate from California Western School of Law in San Diego, graduating cum laude. While in law school, Ms. Easton interned with the San Diego District Attorney's Office, the California Innocence Project, and was an Associate Editor of the California Western Law Review.

After graduating from law school, Ms. Easton was a Deputy District Attorney in Marin County, before returning to San Diego to work in the San Diego City Attorney's Office. At the San Diego City Attorney's Office, Ms. Easton worked in many different units, including the NPU, working closely with law enforcement on issues that impact the community as a Neighborhood Prosecutor. She also worked in the City Attorney's Civil Division, advising on purchasing and contracting issues. She returned to the NPU as the Senior Deputy City Attorney and was recently promoted to Unit

Read about San Diego's Community Justice Initiative (CJI) on pages 1-2

Learn about The Pretrial Justice Presentation made to Baltimore City on page 3

Read about San Francisco's upcoming Intelligence-Driven Prosecution Symposium on page 3

Turn to pages 4-5 to read about the new FY '16 Smart Prosecution Sites

Chief. Ms. Easton was born and raised in San Diego, and has committed her professional career to making her community a better and safer place to live.

The Community Justice Initiative (CJI) began in 2014 as

a response to the changing criminal justice landscape in California, including budget cuts to the courts and Public Safety Realignment (Assembly Bill 109), which transferred responsibility for housing many offenders from state prisons into county jails. Additionally, the launch of CJJ coincided with the passage of Proposition 47, which reduced many drug and theft offenses from felonies to misdemeanors. With these changes, the San Diego City Attorney's Office experienced a great influx in cases.

The San Diego City Attorney's Office recognized that the California criminal justice system offers little, if any, intervention opportunity for individuals charged with misdemeanor offenses. Summary probation alone does not provide adequate supervision for probationers; it does not sufficiently monitor individuals, impose consequences, modify behavior, or provide linkages to community support and services.

To address these concerns, the San Diego City Attorney's Office, under the leadership of City Attorney Jan Goldsmith, launched the San Diego Community Justice Initiative (CJJ, then called San Diego Community Court) in November 2014. This is a targeted approach, designed to address some of the challenges associated with a specific offender population. CJJ is a city-wide, post-filing alternative sentencing program for individuals committing low-level misdemeanor offenses. Since receiving the Bureau of Justice (BJA) Smart Prosecution grant funding in FY '15, CJJ has expanded to offer risk and needs assessments, along with case management and targeted service referrals for participants.

The NPU of the San Diego City Attorney's Office has spearheaded the office's CJJ efforts, but it is truly a team approach. Every Deputy City Attorney and staff member has played a role in the program's success. In NPU, the support staff has worked as hard on the project as any Deputy City Attorney. Donna Armistead and Janet Long have worked on the project since the beginning, clocking in long hours and solving many problems. In February, Deputy City Attorney Natasha Robertson joined NPU and has worked on the expansion of the program under the grant. With the grant funding, NPU added Anthony (Tony) Moore to the team as the CJJ Coordinator. Mr. Moore is the face of CJJ, administering the risk screenings, answering questions in court, and is leading the community engagement efforts. In October, NPU welcomed aboard Melissa Bond as the new Director of CJJ, to continue NPU's success and shape the program going forward.

The research partner, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), has also been a great help with the project. SANDAG has ensured that CJJ maintains fidelity with its goals and program outline. SANDAG has also raised issues for the office to address; for instance, SANDAG highlighted the low number of participants completing the proxy risk screening and the exit survey. SANDAG's assistance allowed CJJ to make changes in progress to improve the program and the research. Because of the efforts of these dedicated people, participants have completed over 25,000 hours of community work service,

amounting to over a quarter of a million dollars in taxpayer savings since CJJ's implementation. The completion rate has remained steady, with 84% of participants successfully completing the program and having their cases dismissed. Thanks to the grant, they have implemented risk and needs assessments and brought a Case Manager on board to work solely with participants.

Approximately 60% of the individuals who accept case management continue working with the Case Manager even after their community work service is completed and their criminal case is dismissed. The Case Manager works with the participants on securing housing, job searches, anger management, parenting skills, budgeting, and college enrollment. Additionally, participants are linked with mental health services as well as various resources such as VA benefits, food assistance, and job training.

As of December 28, 2016, 3320 offers have been made since the program's inception in November 2015, with 2,220 of those offers accepted. 310 people failed to complete CJJ with 1630 completing. During the grant period, 329 participants completed risk screenings, with participants scoring medium or high- risk being offered in-depth needs assessments and case management. As of November 18, 2016, 60 participants have completed needs assessments and been referred for case management.

On December 1, 2016, the San Diego Misdemeanants At-Risk Track (SMART) pilot program was launched. This program is new in that it specifically targets chronic offenders living in the community, specifically: low-level misdemeanor offenders who cycle through the system without access to services, coordination of care, or meaningful incentives to engage with social service providers. Many are arrested, taken into custody and released, only to be arrested again before the original charge comes to trial. To stop this cycle, the City Attorney's Office, in collaboration with the San Diego Police Department and the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, created the SMART pilot program. This newest program under the CJJ umbrella stays true to the goal of offering tailored intervention to the high-risk offender population that is otherwise without access to resources or services.

As with any new program, CJJ has faced logistical challenges. They have overcome those challenges through their great partnerships. Specifically, they are very fortunate that the San Diego County Office of the Public Defender has been behind CJJ at every step in the process. The Public Defenders have fought for the program and have helped overcome logistical issues that threatened to derail expansion. Additionally, the San Diego County Sheriff's Department generously donated its time and staff to complete assessments for participants. This cooperation preserved grant funding to pay for a dedicated Case Manager at Alpha Project, a CJJ service provider.

The team is looking forward to expanding CJJ's reach by increasing their community engagement and looking for ways to better connect participants with services in the community.

SITE ACTIVITY

FY '14 SMART PROSECUTION SITES

HARRIS COUNTY (*HOUSTON*)

PROJECT: *SURVIVORS ACQUIRING FREEDOM AND EMPOWERMENT (SAFE) COURT*

SITE HIGHLIGHTS: The site welcomes Kim Ogg as its newly-elected Harris County District Attorney and Kim McTorry as its new SAFE Court prosecutor and Project Lead. Ms. McTorry will continue leading the site as it utilizes supervised, targeted intervention and treatment for young adults between the ages of 17 and 25 years old charged with misdemeanor prostitution.

Members of the District Attorney's Office, SAFE Court program visited local community service programs during the holiday season to show their support.

WEEKLY NEWS: Groups Raise Awareness of Human Trafficking in Advance of Super Bowl...[READ MORE](#)

LOS ANGELES

PROJECT: *INTRODUCING NEW TOOLS USING EVIDENCE AND RISK ASSESSMENT TO CONFIRM ELIGIBILITY FOR PROSECUTION TREATMENT (INTERCEPT)*

SITE HIGHLIGHTS: Project INTERCEPT offers prosecutorial diversion strategies, such as participation in community panels, for participants charged with certain misdemeanor crimes. SME Elizabeth Barnett provided the site with a full day of Motivational Interview training (and an additional Skype session) to Neighborhood Justice Panel (NJP) case managers and other INTERCEPT team members in December. Motivational Interviewing is a goal-oriented, client-centered, counseling style for eliciting positive behavior change by helping Project INTERCEPT participants explore and resolve uncertainty about their actions. Because of the training program, the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office is incorporating Motivational Interviewing as a staff development tool to improve Project INTERCEPT'S outcomes. On December 4, Project Lead Jose Egurbide participated on Dr. Anyssa McNeil's radio show "Foster 2 Foster", to discuss how NJP pre-filing diversion program can assist 18–25-year-old foster youth charged with first offenses while in foster care.

WEEKLY NEWS: Cops Crack Down on Hollywood Nightlife Crime...[READ MORE](#)

SAN FRANCISCO

PROJECT: *CASE STRATEGIES UNIT (CSU)*

SITE HIGHLIGHTS: The SFDA will host the West Coast Intelligence Driven Prosecution (IDP) Conference in partnership with DANY on March 9-10. The training will

assist the site as CSU uses data and predictive analytics for strategic prosecution to make connections between criminal events, defendants, witnesses and victims to facilitate more effective investigations, charging decisions, and case dispositions.

WEEKLY NEWS: Muni Street Collisions Rising, Crime on Buses Down...[READ MORE](#)

FY '15 SMART PROSECUTION SITES

ST. LOUIS

PROJECT: *THE FELONY REDIRECT PROGRAM (FRP)*

SITE HIGHLIGHTS: The site welcomes Kimberly Gardner as the newly-elected St. Louis Circuit Attorney. The Gun Redirect Program (GRP) merged into the site's existing Felony Redirect Program (FRP) due to changes in the state's gun law (effective January 1, 2017). The new law allows Missourians to carry concealed firearms without a permit. Before the merger, the GRP had 26 active participants.

Currently, the FRP has 17 active participants. Seven people have accepted offers and are waiting to plea. Three people are being screened, and four have graduated from the program.

WEEKLY NEWS: Counseling Efforts Seek to Stop Violence Before it Happens...[READ MORE](#)

BALTIMORE

PROJECT: *IMPLEMENTING EVIDENCE-BASED RISK ASSESSMENT DURING THE PRETRIAL PHASE*

The site continues data gathering to develop an Evidence-Based Risk Assessment for use by charging prosecutors during the Pretrial Phase. On December 19, team members attended a meeting with State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby, Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) Secretary Stephen Moyer, and Pretrial Release Services Director Robert Weisenoff about acquiring DPSCS data needed to develop and validate its pretrial risk assessment tool.

On December 9, Subject Matter Expert (SME) Bo Zeerip Senior Deputy District Attorney, Mesa County, Colorado, presented Pretrial Justice: Maximizing Release, Safety, and Court Appearance to stakeholders. Bo discussed the history of bail, the purpose and use of pretrial risk assessment and how it ensures court appearance rates, development of Mesa County's Supervision Praxis, engaging stakeholders, and how an effective pretrial assessment improves community safety.

WEEKLY NEWS: Community Group Works to Reduce Crime in Baltimore...[READ MORE](#)

KINGS COUNTY (BROOKLYN)

PROJECT: THE BROOKLYN YOUNG ADULT JUSTICE INITIATIVE

The King County District Attorney's Office (KCDAs) will hire a fourth Assistant District Attorney (ADA) in January. The new ADA will assist the site with its goal of diverting young adults up to 24 years old charged with misdemeanor offenses who pose the greatest risk for re-offending and/or are facing more serious criminal consequences from the criminal justice process. KCDAs Smart Prosecution team members are also developing a process with their partner, Brooklyn Justice Initiative (BJI) to assess offenders earlier in court process, such as during arraignment. The purpose is to provide community-based services and treatment at the front-end of the criminal justice process.

As of December 19, KCDAs reports that its specialized prosecution unit has approximately 200 high-risk cases pending in the Young Adult Court Part with over 2,000 cases pending overall in the Part. The team met with stakeholders in December to discuss reducing case numbers.

BJI and the team's prosecutors and stakeholders from the defense bar will conduct an office-wide training in January on the Smart Prosecution Initiative. The agenda includes intake process and assessment.

WEEKLY NEWS: Brooklyn Set to Finish 2016 as Safest Year Ever...**READ MORE**

SAN DIEGO

PROJECT: THE COMMUNITY JUSTICE INITIATIVE (CJI)

SITE HIGHLIGHTS: In December, the team trained the Public Defender's Office on its Smart Prosecution program. The training discussed goals to restore justice and increase effectiveness and efficiency within the judicial process through the post-plea initiative that provides accountability, early intervention and swift consequences for participants charged with eligible misdemeanor offenses. The site is also working to engage community members about its program; on December 15, the City Attorney's Office hosted its first community engagement meeting.

The site reports an increase in CJI participants engaging in proxy screening (risk) assessments in November: on the November 14, 24 people accepted CJI offers and 24 people were screened. Two weeks later, an additional four people were accepted into CJI and four more were screened.

As of December 28, 3320 offers have been made since the program's inception in November 2015, with 2,220 of those offers accepted. 310 people failed to complete CJI with 1630 completing. Since the start of the program, in November 2015, the site reports an 84% successful completion, and over 1500 participants have completed the program, with a combined 25,000+ hours of community service. At the end of November 2016, the program's acceptance rate was approximately 66%.

On February 13, the CJI staff are planning a Risk and Needs Assessment Training for CJI Stakeholders, City Attorney staff and Judges.

WEEKLY NEWS: New California Laws Taking Effect in 2017...**READ MORE**

FY '16 SMART PROSECUTION SITES

The FY '16 Smart Prosecution sites have been busy during the start of their grant award: assembling their team, meeting with research partners and stakeholders, reviewing their budget, discussing potential technical assistance and peer-to-peer support and planning the first steps toward launching their program. The teams are setting dates to begin drafting strategic plans.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

PROJECT: USING OUR BRAINS: REDUCING RECIDIVISM AMONG YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

SITE HIGHLIGHTS: The site is studying pre-filing diversion models/restorative justice programs in other jurisdictions as it begins to develop its own diversion initiative for youth (ages 12-17) and young adults (ages 18-24) who commit certain crimes, such as theft, destruction of property and non-injury simple assault cases with victim consent. The goal of restorative justice is to repair the harm between the victim, community, and the offender participant, and to better understand and address the circumstances leading to the crime.

On December 14, team members along with DC Attorney General Karl Racine met with DC US Attorney Channing Phillips and his staff to discuss a partnership for the initiative. The site will meet again with the DC US Attorney on January 26 to discuss eligibility and the referral process. A Strategic Planning meeting will occur after this date.

WEEKLY NEWS: In Southeast D.C., a Project is Turning Confiscated Guns Into Art...**READ MORE**

KANSAS CITY

PROJECT: JACKSON COUNTY MISSOURI PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE SMART PROSECUTION INITIATIVE

SITE HIGHLIGHTS: The site is looking to build a robust victim advocate unit to help victims and families of violent crime, and to also address retaliatory violence. The geographic-based prosecution initiative targets violent crimes occurring in the East Zone, Kansas City's notoriously violent neighborhood. On December 6, the site participated in a call with Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) victim witness specialist Dan Levey, previously employed by an Attorney General's office for nine years, who assisted agencies initiate victim service programs. Dan will provide information regarding victim services as the site moves forward with its initiative.

The site also participated in Peer-to-Peer Exchanges with the New York County District Attorney's Office (DANY) on December 11 and the Pima County District Attorney and the Maricopa County District Attorney's Office on December 22 to discuss victim witness service unit and services.

WEEKLY NEWS: KCPD Says Anti-Violence Initiative is Helping to Reduce Gang-Related Crime...[READ MORE](#)

MIAMI

PROJECT: *THE GUN VIOLENCE REDUCTION INITIATIVE*

SITE HIGHLIGHTS: The site is in the process of hiring another investigator and expects to be fully-staffed by January 2017. The investigator will join a team of prosecutors, investigators, and community and victim witness specialists to work directly with police and the community to prosecute shootings and homicides at the Northside District Station. The site members will meet with APA to discuss their Strategic Plan on January 17, 2017.

WEEKLY NEWS: Local Activists Hold Anti-Gun Violence Rally in Northwest Miami-Dade...[READ MORE](#)

NEWARK

PROJECT: *ESSEX COUNTY SMART SOCIAL MEDIA INITIATIVE*

SITE HIGHLIGHTS: Team members met with their Research Partners the week of December 5. The team has started to look at different criteria for designing a Matrix with its research partner. The Matrix is a real-time screening tool to identify offenders, their social media usage, gang affiliations, criminal background and history, as well as crime hotspots. The matrix tool will assist the team with its goal of developing a specialized unit to investigate and prosecute cases based on suspects' usage of social media. The site members will meet with APA to discuss their Strategic Plan on January 11, 2017.

WEEKLY NEWS: New Jersey Banking on Shift From Bail Money to Risk Assessment...[READ MORE](#)

SAVANNAH

PROJECT: *THE CHATHAM COUNTY SMART PROSECUTION PROGRAM*

SITE HIGHLIGHTS: The site welcomes new members to its initiative: Noah Abrams, Gun Prosecutor; Jonathan Puhala, Savannah Regional Intelligence Center (SARIC) Detective; and Ebony Turner, Graduate Student working with researcher Dr. Chad Posick. These team members will focus on group and gang violence by identifying local hotspots and tracking the most violent offenders active in these areas. Site members met with APA on December 15-16 to discuss their Strategic Plan.

WEEKLY NEWS: 2016 An Eventful Year for Chatham County...[READ MORE](#)

FY '16 3PI SITES

SEATTLE

PROJECT: *SHOTS FIRED*

SITE HIGHLIGHTS: Four members of the team will attend the San Francisco Crime Strategies Symposium, March 9-10. The training will assist the site as it begins implementing its initiative aimed to address increasing firearm violence occurring in hotspot locations within the jurisdiction.

The site hired a new crime analyst in December, who will be joining the team late-January. The analyst, trained in social network analysis, will acquire and review data, standardize data collection methods and protocols for the Crime Strategies Unit, map crime incidents, and identify crime hot spots.

WEEKLY NEWS: Pair of Felons Posted Facebook Photos Posing With Assault Rifle...[READ MORE](#)

ST. LOUIS

PROJECT: *THE ST. LOUIS CIRCUIT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE AND THE ST. LOUIS METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT INITIATIVE*

SITE HIGHLIGHTS: The offices are formulating plans to address "chronically high levels" of violent crime, notably homicides and aggravated assaults occurring within the jurisdiction.

WEEKLY NEWS: Missouri to Loosen Requirements for Concealed Carry, Triggering Debate...[READ MORE](#)

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