



News Release

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Seattle Municipal Court announces results of criminal case processing study

Seattle - The Seattle Municipal Court (SMC) applied for and received a \$50,000 State Justice Institute Grant in March, 2010 to study criminal case processing in Seattle's criminal justice system. The study was conducted by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), a national organization whose mission is to improve court systems around the country. The primary objectives of the study were to identify ways to improve operations, staffing and performance of the court's criminal processing systems in light of shrinking resources and a desire to promote best practices in adjudicating limited jurisdiction cases. Each year, SMC handles over half a million parking citation, 60,000 traffic infractions and more than 15,000 criminal matters.

NCSC consultants met with prosecutors, defense attorneys, representatives of the Seattle Police Department, judges and court staff; consultants reviewed court reports, studies, performance statistics, strategic plans and analyzed the way criminal cases are handled from filing to case closure. The consultants concluded that SMC is a "soundly run, innovative, urban limited jurisdiction court" that effectively processes cases, experiments with different case processing methods to create efficiencies and has a history of collaboration with justice system partners. Major recommendations contained in this study focused on upgrading accounting and electronic record technologies (consultants acknowledge that without adequate funding for technology improvements, progress will be slow), improving how the court manages its calendars and working with prosecution, defense and police to electronically deliver police reports and audio/video information required in criminal cases.

Judges and attorneys will use the findings of this report to introduce new case scheduling and management practices while expanding the use of technology to improve services in the coming year. Copies of the full report can be obtained from the SMC web site (www.seattle.gov/courts) or by calling Yolande E. Williams (206) 684-8710 to request a copy.

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