

SPOTLIGHT ARTICLE

BJA Smart Suite Summit's Transforming Criminal Justice through Research and Innovation

"The Smart Suite is the key to the President's vision of a stronger justice system; one that keeps us safe, neutralizes bias, and reflects our highest principles. These are goals we all share, and reaching them depends on our ability to wed science with practice," stated U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)'s Assistant Attorney General Karol V. Mason during the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Smart Suite Summit's **Transforming Criminal Justice through Research and Innovation** opening keynote address, which she co-presented with Deputy Attorney General Sally Quillian Yates.



(Assistant Attorney General Karol V. Mason (left) and Denise O'Donnell, Director of the Bureau of Justice Assistance.)

Denise O'Donnell, Director of BJA introduced the keynote speakers and lauded the Smart Suite programs. "Researcher and practitioner partnerships are critical to measuring results and documenting them," she explained.

The Summit occurred in Arlington Virginia, from September 7—9th, uniting grantees, researchers, national experts, federal representatives, and

other criminal justice leaders to discuss and promote data-informed criminal justice projects and programs through plenary sessions, workshops and learning labs. Smart Prosecution is one of ten programs within the Smart Suite, the other programs are: Smart Pretrial, Project Safe Neighborhoods, Smart Policing Initiative, Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation (a place-based program to reduce crime and revitalize communities), Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, Second Chance Act Demonstration Program, Smart (Indigent) Defense, Smart Supervision, and Encouraging Innovation-Field Initiated Programs.

Ten people from the following six Smart Prosecution sites attended the event: St. Louis Circuit Attorney's Office, Harris County District Attorney's Office (Houston), Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office, San Diego City Attorney's Office, San Francisco District Attorney's Office, and Kings County District Attorney's Office (Brooklyn). Cara Sherman, an Assistant District Attorney from Smart Prosecution's Kings County site, stated she "thoroughly enjoyed" the Summit, finding it "inspiring" and "thought-provoking." Criminal Justice Project Coordinator Sarah Labus, from Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office, described the Summit as "great," elaborating that "the implementation of innovative ideas was very intriguing. Speaking first-hand with individuals already involved was very beneficial and rewarding."

On its website, BJA explained that the Summit serves as a conduit to:

"re-examine [] every aspect of the criminal justice system to identify what is working in the field to reduce crime and recidivism and make our communities safer. The Smart Suite of programs represents a strategic approach that brings more "science" into criminal justice operations by leveraging innovative applications of analysis, technology, and evidence-based practices with the goal of improving performance and effectiveness while containing costs. The heart of the Smart Suite is practitioner-researcher partnerships that use data, evidence, and innovation to create strategies and interventions that are effective and economical. This data-driven approach assists jurisdictions to understand the full nature and extent of the crime challenges they are facing and to target resources to the highest priorities."

The Summit featured three conference-wide Plenary Session Lightning Rounds, featuring four to six panelists per session.

The first plenary session entitled, "Criminal Justice Innovation and Reform," included BJA's Second Chance Act Fellow Daryl Atkinson as one of the panelists. In the 1990s, Mr. Atkinson served approximately 30 months in prison for a drug offense, and openly discussed prison re-entry reforms, drawing upon his own experience in the system. Mr. Atkinson recounted when his family picked him up from prison in a limousine so he knew the chance to start over was his. Mr. Atkinson later graduated from college and law school and is now completing his two-year fellowship at BJA.



The second plenary session, "Criminal Justice and Reform" featured six panelists, including Dr. Craig Uchida, President of Justice and Security Strategies, Inc., who also serves as the research partner for Smart Prosecution sites Los Angeles and San Francisco. Dr. Uchida discussed the importance of results and outcomes driven data in the panel, and later in the conference, co-presented a Breakout Session entitled "Smart Policing in Los Angeles: Using Data-Driven Strategies That Work." The "Criminal Justice and Reform" panel also included Judge Victoria Pratt of the Newark Municipal Court who discussed the importance of judges' roles in procedural justice. Judge Pratt stressed that when exposed to procedural justice, defendants leave the system satisfied knowing they were treated fairly and with the justice they deserve, even when judges rule against them. Other advice from Judge Pratt for judges seeking procedural justice: never refer to district attorneys in first person possessive (e.g. by avoiding phrases like "where is my prosecutor this morning?"), using language that defendants can readily understand (e.g. simplify "You wish to proceed pro se, with "I understand you want to go forward without an attorney"), and politely explaining any courtroom delays.

The third plenary session featured five panelists including Kristine Hamann, Executive Director and Founder of the Prosecutors' Center for Excellence and Site Champion for Smart Prosecution site St. Louis' Gun Redirect Program. Ms. Hamann discussed best practices for prosecutors, based on her experience at the Manhattan District Attorneys' Office and as the New York State Inspector General.



Dispersed between the three conference-wide panel sessions, attendees selected five, 75-minute Breakout Sessions of their choosing. Brooklyn prosecutor Cara Sherman found the breakout sessions related to Evidence-Based strategies "particularly enlightening and directly on point with what we want to accomplish through our initiative in Brooklyn."

Smart Prosecution grantee site prosecutors Ann Johnson, Harris County's Human Trafficking Section Chief, and Philippa Barrett, Director of Diversion from St. Louis Circuit Attorney's Office, presented "Evidence-Based Strategies for Prosecutors: Prostitution Diversion Program (SAFE Court) and Gun Redirect Program," with APA's Director of the Smart Prosecution Initiative, Beth Merachnik, serving as the session's moderator. Co-presenter Philippa Barrett "really enjoyed presenting with Ann [Johnson]." She explained that while she and Ms. Johnson's programs are "different in subject matter," that the two sites "have some pretty interesting similarities in design, support, and programming." Ms. Barrett said the audience was "very tuned in" and posed great questions about St. Louis and Harris County's Smart Prosecution initiatives. Session attendee San Diego Deputy City Attorney Natasha Robertson described it as "great" and that she learns something new every time she hears other sites discuss their initiatives.



Other Smart Prosecution-oriented session topics included: Violence Reduction Assessment Tool, Enhancing Crime Analytics, Substance Abuse Coalitions and Collaborations, Aligning State and Local Criminal Justice Reform Policy Efforts in Wisconsin, Using Data to Identify Currently Active High-Risk Felony Individuals; Appearing at Arraignment/Early Entry of Counsel, and Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion Improving Quality of Life Through Harm Reduction. Prosecutor Erica Corns from San Francisco, stated her favorite presentation was deference-focused “Social Network Analysis as a Tool for Violence Prevention and Control” that was co-presented by a researcher, prosecutor and police major.

For all sessions, please refer to the official [BJA Suite Summit agenda](#). BJA uploaded many of the PowerPoint presentations from the [breakout sessions](#).

Many connections between the Smart Prosecution sites and other Smart Suite Programs began and strengthened during the Summit, and continue to last after the Summit. San Diego’s Deputy City Attorney Natasha Robertson explained, “We were really impressed with all of the presentations, and learned a lot. We enjoyed the community engagement presentation, and are excited to add community engagement to Community Justice Initiative (CJI). Additionally, the LEAD presentation was full of valuable information and advice for us, and we have already started planning to meet up with the presenters when they are in San Diego in a month or two. We appreciated the opportunity to meet with the staff at BJA, and to talk with them about what they are looking for from Smart projects.” Philipa Barrett added

that catching up with Smart Prosecution sites and speaking about their various projects while engaging in informal peer-to-peer conversation and networking was one of the best parts of the Summit. “For example, we sat at lunch one day with the San Diego team and brainstormed about research partners, funding, and staffing...that was really valuable.” She added, “I met many folks along the way who I had talked to or seen speak in the past.”

Thank you to BJA for uniting research, practitioners, and criminal justice experts to foster justice, reduce crime and recidivism rates to make our communities safer.

CONTACT US

David Adams

Senior Policy Advisor,
Bureau of Justice Assistance
US Department of Justice

david.adams@usdoj.gov

TTA Providers:

Beth Merachnik

Director,
Smart Prosecution Initiative
Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
11 DuPont Circle, Suite 240
Washington, DC 20036

beth.merachnik@APAINc.org

Margo Badawy

Staff Attorney,
Smart Prosecution Initiative
Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
11 DuPont Circle, Suite 240
Washington, DC 20036

margo.badawy@APAINc.org

Kristi Sipila

Project Associate,
Smart Prosecution Initiative
Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
11 DuPont Circle, Suite 240
Washington, DC 20036

kristi.sipila@APAINc.org

Connect with us on the web:
SmartProsecution.org | APAINc.org
[@APASmartPros](https://twitter.com/APASmartPros) | [@APAINc](https://twitter.com/APAINc)

SITE ACTIVITY

BALTIMORE

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

SITE HIGHLIGHTS:

- A PEER-TO-PEER SITE VISIT TO LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY IS SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 25-27TH. THE PURPOSE OF THE TWO-DAY SITE VISIT IS FOR THE TEAM TO LEARN FROM A JURISDICTION THAT HAS SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTED A PRE-TRIAL SERVICES PROGRAM FOR DECISIONS REGARDING BAIL AND PRETRIAL RELEASE.
- A PEER-TO-PEER EXCHANGE WITH MESA COUNTY COLORADO IS SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 7TH. THE PURPOSE OF THE EXCHANGE IS TO DISCUSS COLORADO'S PRETRIAL DECISION-MAKING PROCEDURES AND POLICIES AS BALTIMORE CITY DEVELOPS ITS OWN AUTOMATED PRETRIAL RISK ASSESSMENT FOR PROSECUTORS TO USE FOR DECISIONS REGARDING BOND AND PRETRIAL RELEASE.

BROOKLYN

PROJECT: THE BROOKLYN YOUNG ADULT JUSTICE INITIATIVE

SITE HIGHLIGHTS:

- CASE VOLUME CONTINUES TO INCREASE IN THE BROOKLYN YOUNG ADULT COURT. ON AVERAGE THE COURT PART HANDLES BETWEEN 80-100 CASES PER DAY. AS OF SEPTEMBER 14TH, THERE WERE MORE THAN 1800 CASES PENDING IN THE COURT PART.
- THE RESEARCH PARTNER, CENTER FOR COURT INNOVATION (CCI), IS DEVELOPING A WEB-BASED SURVEY TO BE SENT TO ALL STAKEHOLDERS INCLUDING: PROSECUTORS, DEFENSE ATTORNEYS, LEGAL AID, BROOKLYN DEFENDER SERVICES AND JUDGES.

WEEKLY NEWS: SCHUMER, GILLIBRAND ANNOUNCE \$2 MILLION IN FEDERAL FUNDING FOR JOB TRAINING PROGRAM PROVIDED TO NYCHA RESIDENT

[READ MORE](#)

HOUSTON

PROJECT: SAFE COURT (SURVIVORS ACQUIRING FREEDOM AND EMPOWERMENT)

SITE HIGHLIGHTS:

- A PEER-TO-PEER SITE VISIT TO NEW YORK CITY CRIMINAL COURT, QUEENS PROSTITUTION DIVERSION COURT, IS SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 20-21ST. THE CENTER FOR COURT INNOVATION (CCI) IS COORDINATING THE SITE VISIT. CCI WILL LEAD ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON KEY

TOPICS AND CONVENE NEW YORK CITY STAKEHOLDERS TO MEET WITH THE HARRIS COUNTY TEAM.

- PROJECT LEAD ANN JOHNSON CO-PRESENTED A WORKSHOP TITLED "EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES FOR PROSECUTORS" AT THE BJA SMART SUITE SUMMIT ON SEPTEMBER 7TH WITH ST. LOUIS PROSECUTOR PIPPA BARRETT. MS. JOHNSON'S PRESENTATION ON SAFE COURT FOCUSED ON: THE HUMAN TRAFFICKING PARADIGM SHIFT, THE PROCESS OF IDENTIFYING VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND ENTERING THEM INTO THE PROGRAM, COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND STAKEHOLDERS, DATA COLLECTION AND EVALUATION, ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND ADOPTION, AND PUBLIC POLICY REFORM EFFORTS.

WEEKLY NEWS: TEXAS WORKS WITH TRUCKERS TO REDUCE HUMAN TRAFFICKING

[READ MORE](#)

LOS ANGELES

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

SITE HIGHLIGHTS:

- THE SITE IS EXPLORING MOTIVATION INTERVIEW (MI) TRAINING FOR INTERCEPT STAFF. SITE CHAMPION FAYE TAXMAN IS ASSISTING THE SITE BY IDENTIFYING SMES FOR MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEW (MI) TRAINING.
- CURRENT STATISTICS FOR INTERCEPT FOR THE PERIOD JULY 1, 2015 -SEPTEMBER 28, 2016 INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING: 437 CASE REFERRALS, 284 CASES INITIATED, 2 PARTICIPANTS RECIDIVATED AT 6 MONTHS, 0 PARTICIPANTS RECIDIVATED AT 12 MONTHS, AND 284 RISK ASSESSMENTS COMPLETED.

WEEKLY NEWS: THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES AND PHILIPS LIGHTING PILOT NEW PATHWAY TO SMART CITY UTILIZING CONNECTED STREET LIGHTING INFRASTRUCTURE

[READ MORE](#)

SAN DIEGO

PROJECT: THE COMMUNITY JUSTICE INITIATIVE (CJI)

SITE HIGHLIGHTS:

- CURRENT STATISTICS FOR CJI (SINCE SCREENING BEGAN IN APRIL 2016) IS THE FOLLOWING: 209 PROXY SCREENINGS FOR RISK HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED, AND 32 COMPAS ASSESSMENTS FOR MEDIUM AND HIGH RISK INDIVIDUALS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED.
- THE TEAM IS PLANNING TO HOLD A CJI TRAINING PROGRAM FOR CITY ATTORNEY STAFF THIS MONTH.

- ON SEPTEMBER 15TH, THE SITE PARTICIPATED IN A PEER-TO-PEER EXCHANGE WITH LOS ANGELES CITY ATTORNEY'S MANAGING ATTORNEY JOSE EGURBIDE AND ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR WILL SHEFFIE OF PROJECT INTERCEPT TO DISCUSS AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT, STAFF ROLES, STRATEGIES, CHALLENGES, AND LESSONS LEARNED.
- A TRAINING PROGRAM IS SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 12TH FOR PUBLIC DEFENDERS. THE SITE IS EXPLORING THE ABILITY TO OFFER CLE CREDITS TO ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION.

SAN FRANCISCO

PROJECT: CRIME STRATEGIES UNIT (CSU)

SITE HIGHLIGHTS:

- ON AUGUST 31ST, MANAGING ATTORNEY FRANK CARRUBBA MET WITH SAN FRANCISCO POLICE DEPARTMENT (SFPD) ANALYSTS, SFPD TASK FORCE COMMANDER OF PATROL BUREAU AND CAPTAIN OF INVESTIGATIONS TO DISCUSS A CAR THEFT INITIATIVE. CSU PRESENTED CASE STUDIES DEMONSTRATING INTELLIGENCE-DRIVEN PROSECUTION. AS A RESULT, FOUR SFPD ANALYSTS WILL TAKE TURNS ROTATING INTO CSU TO GAIN KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF INTELLIGENCE- GATHERING AND INFORMATION-SHARING BETWEEN POLICE AND PROSECUTORS.
- ON SEPTEMBER 26TH, THE SITE PARTICIPATED IN A PEER-TO-PEER EXCHANGE WITH LOS ANGELES CITY ATTORNEY'S GRANTS MANAGER, JANETTE FLINTOFT TO DISCUSS IDENTIFYING GRANT OPPORTUNITIES.

WEEKLY NEWS: MAYOR ANNOUNCES NEW FUNDS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

[READ MORE](#)

ST. LOUIS

PROJECT: THE GUN REDIRECT PROGRAM

SITE HIGHLIGHTS:

- AS OF SEPTEMBER 21ST, 16 INDIVIDUALS ARE PARTICIPATING IN ST. LOUIS CIRCUIT ATTORNEY'S GUN REDIRECT PROGRAM.
- THE TEAM IS EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF NEWLY-ENACTED MISSOURI LEGISLATION PERMITTING THE CARRYING OF CONCEALED FIREARMS WITHOUT A PERMIT ON SMART PROSECUTION'S GUN REDIRECT PROGRAM (GRD). THE NEW LAW GOES INTO EFFECT ON JANUARY 1, 2017.
- PROJECT LEAD, PIPPA BARRETT CO-PRESENTED A WORKSHOP TITLED "EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES FOR PROSECUTORS" AT THE BJA SMART SUITE SUMMIT ON SEPTEMBER 7TH WITH HARRIS COUNTY PROSECUTOR ANN JOHNSON. MS. BARRETT'S GRD PRESENTATION CENTERED ON: PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW AND SCREENING PROCESS, DATA DRIVEN OUTCOMES SUPPORTING GRD, COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES, STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN, ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND ADOPTION, AND PUBLIC POLICY REFORM EFFORTS.

WEEKLY NEWS: BRAINSTORMING SOLUTIONS: WASH U STUDENTS THINK UP WAYS TO REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE

[READ MORE](#)

Please [contact us](#) to recommended articles for inclusion in the upcoming Smart Prosecution Weekly News.

This newsletter was supported by Grant No. 2014-YX-BX-K001 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.