

CENTER

FOR

COURT

INNOVATION

A Public/Private Partnership with the  
New York State Unified Court System

ANNUAL REPORT



2007



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## INTRODUCTION

The Center for Court Innovation is a public-private partnership that seeks to help the justice system reduce crime, aid victims, and improve public trust in justice. In New York, the Center serves as the court system's independent research and development arm, studying difficult problems and testing new solutions. The Center also works beyond New York, providing reformers across the country and around the world with the tools they need to launch their own innovations.

The Center for Court Innovation began 2007 by celebrating an important milestone: its 10-year anniversary. The New York City Bar Association hosted the celebration, which featured speeches by New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and New York State Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye, among others. In her remarks, Judge Kaye called the Center's first 10 years "a magical decade," and credited the Center with "finding new ways for our courts, while delivering justice, to save lives and improve public safety."

In 2007, the Center for Court Innovation continued to strive to live up to this lofty praise. This report documents the organization's accomplishments during the past year—and outlines plans for the year ahead. In keeping with the Center's principal areas of business, the report is organized into three sections:

- **Demonstration projects**, which the Center uses to test new ideas;
- **Technical assistance**, which the Center provides to practitioners to help them innovate and adapt model projects to local needs; and
- **Research and publications**, which the Center uses to spread knowledge and participate in the national—and international—conversation about justice.

The report also includes information on the Center's revenues and expenditures for fiscal year 2007.

## **DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS**

The Center for Court Innovation tests new approaches to justice by helping to create demonstration projects in New York City. The Center currently operates more than a dozen projects that touch the lives of thousands of New Yorkers each year. These range from small-scale experiments that work intensively with a few dozen troubled young people at a time to projects that handle thousands of cases each year in an effort to address quality-of-life crime.

### **Queens Engagement Strategies for Teens**

Located in the basement of a church in Jamaica, Queens Engagement Strategies for Teens (QUEST) offers an alternative to detention for young people charged with delinquency. The project, which began operations in 2007, provides after-school programming and supervision to participating young people—and provides judges in Queens Family Court with timely, accurate, and comprehensive information about whether youth are meeting their court obligations. The ultimate goal is to reduce the likelihood that participants are placed in Upstate facilities and increase the chances that they will pursue constructive, law-abiding lives. While the project has been open for only a few months, early returns are positive: compliance stands at 83 percent. The project was initiated by the City of New York with additional funding from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, the Butler Foundation, and the New York Community Trust.

### **Far Rockaway Youth Court**

The Far Rockaway Youth Court opened its doors in 2007. Like its companion youth courts in Harlem, Red Hook, and Crown Heights, the Far Rockaway project trains local teenagers to serve as jurors, judges, and attorneys, hearing real-life cases involving their peers. The goal is to use positive peer pressure to intervene in the lives of troubled young people who have committed minor offenses, helping them pay back the community and avoid further involvement in the justice system.

### **Red Hook Community Justice Center**

The award-winning Red Hook Community Justice Center seeks to improve neighborhood safety and revitalize court-community relations in South Brooklyn. In addition to handling criminal, housing, and family court cases, the Justice Center has made a deep investment in crime prevention. Recent projects include a number of programs focused on young people. A photography project helps encourage positive self-expression among troubled youth. A theater project brings together local teens and police officers to break down mutual stereotypes. And a new viral marketing program, launched with the help of the Independence Community Foundation, recruits teen leaders to help spread an anti-crime message among public housing residents. Thanks in part to the Justice Center, Red Hook's local precinct—the 76th—was recently named the safest in Brooklyn.

### **Midtown Community Court**

The Midtown Community Court addresses low-level, quality-of-life crime in and around Times Square, sentencing offenders to restore the local community and receive on-site social services. In 2007, the Midtown Court created a new program that works with non-custodial fathers to encourage them to get more involved in the lives of their children—including paying court-ordered child support. The Midtown Court has also forged a dynamic partnership with Common Ground Community, a supportive housing provider, to test new approaches to working with chronically homeless individuals. In honor of both its history and its continued commitment to innovation, the Midtown Community Court received the 2007 Golden Scroll Award from the Broadway Association, a prominent local business group.

### **Harlem Community Justice Center**

Located on 121st Street in the heart of East Harlem, the Harlem Community Justice Center is a multi-faceted community court that seeks to improve the local housing stock, reduce youth crime, and help ex-offenders make a smooth transition back to the community following incarceration. In 2007, the Justice Center expanded its reach to include custody and visitation cases. The goal is to prioritize the needs of children and help defuse tension in these highly adversarial cases.

### **Bronx Community Solutions**

Bronx Community Solutions seeks to apply the community court model of combining punishment and help to all non-violent misdemeanor cases in the Bronx. While still young, the project has already reduced the use of jail and increased the use of alternative sanctions in the Bronx. In 2007, 11,000 offenders were assigned to the program. Participants completed 70,000 hours of community service, worth \$450,000 to local neighborhoods. Compliance with community and social service mandates averages 70 percent, a significant improvement over compliance rates in the Bronx before the project's inception. In an effort to promote transparency, the project maintains a blog (<http://changingthecourt.blogspot.com/>) that receives an average of 36,000 page views a year. Bronx Community Solutions was also featured in *The New York Times* in 2007.

### **Center for Courts and the Community**

The Center for the Courts and the Community was created with the New York State Unified Court System to help promote new and innovative community engagement and education efforts across the state. Among its initiatives, the Center for Courts and the Community has been working to strengthen and expand the network of 100 active youth courts throughout New York State, including hosting a statewide summit in Brooklyn in the fall of 2007. Based on a model piloted in Buffalo, the Center for Courts and the Community created two attendance courts in New York City to combat middle school truancy. The Center for Courts and the Community also published a new book, *Personal Stories: Narratives From Across New York State*, a collection of first-person stories from participants in New York drug courts.

### **Other Demonstration Projects**

The teenagers who sit on the Youth Justice Board presented recommendations for improving the lives of children in foster care to the chief administrative judge of New York City's Family Court. The Crown Heights Community Mediation Center explored new ways to educate young people about peaceful conflict resolution. Researchers documented that the Brooklyn Mental Health Court has helped improve case outcomes for mentally-ill offenders. The Bronx Juvenile Accountability Court worked with dozens of troubled young people, providing judges in Bronx Family Court with a reliable, community-based alternative to placement. The Queens Community Cleanup put thousands of low-level offenders to work repairing conditions of disorder in Long Island City and Jamaica. The Child and Adolescent Witness Support Program provided therapy and other services to young people in the Bronx who have been a witness to or victim of sexual abuse, physical assault, domestic violence, and homicide. In addition, a number of projects that the Center helped to initiate, including the Brooklyn Treatment Court, the Manhattan Family Treatment Court, and the Brooklyn Domestic Violence Court, continue to operate and have been fully institutionalized within the New York court system.

### **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

In addition to operating its own projects, the Center for Court Innovation actively seeks to encourage justice agencies across the state and around the world to launch their own innovations. To advance this goal, the Center provides hands-on training and technical assistance to judges, attorneys, court administrators, probation officials, community leaders, and others. In the process, Center staff—based both in New York City and the Center's Upstate office in Syracuse—have helped support the implementation of hundreds of reform initiatives aimed at reducing crime, aiding victims, and improving public trust in justice.

### **Drug Court**

In June 2007, the National Association of Drug Court Professionals honored the Center for Court Innovation, Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye, and the New York State Association of Drug Treatment Court Professionals with its National Leadership Award. The award recognized New York's efforts to "go to scale" with drug courts. Over the past decade, the Center for Court Innovation has played a key role in transforming New York's approach to addicted offenders. This includes piloting the Brooklyn Treatment Court, the first drug court in New York City. The Center also helped develop a management information system that is used throughout New York to track progress in treatment. Center researchers authored a multi-year evaluation of New York's drug courts that documented significant reductions in recidivism. Finally, on an ongoing basis, the Center works in concert with the New York State court system to train drug court judges, attorneys, and administrators.

### **Domestic Violence Court**

In collaboration with New York's deputy administrative judge for operations and planning, the Center has worked to spread domestic violence courts, youth offender domestic violence courts, and integrated domestic vio-

lence courts throughout New York State. This effort has included research, technology, training, and hands-on consulting during both the planning and implementation stages. In 2007, the Center launched an innovative web-based training program for judges that uses streaming video to educate users about the complicated dynamics of domestic violence. The Center also helped the court system develop new courts, including an integrated domestic violence court in Manhattan and the state's first domestic violence family court in Queens. With the help of a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, the Center also began to work nationally, helping courts in Louisiana, Washington, Illinois, and other states develop new approaches to domestic violence cases.

### **Community Court**

There are three dozen community courts around the U.S. modeled after the Center's pilot projects in Midtown, Red Hook, and Harlem. In 2007, with the help of the Center, several additional cities began high-profile efforts to adapt the community court model, including San Francisco, New Orleans, and Newark. Replication efforts are not confined to the United States. Over the course of the past year, the Center's technical assistance team worked with innovators in jurisdictions as diverse as Scotland, South Africa, Australia, Ireland, China, Canada, and the Republic of Georgia.

### **Mental Health Court**

Working with the New York court system, the Center provided technical assistance to mental health court planners in Nassau County, Montgomery County, Chautauqua County, Niagara County, and Queens County. By early 2008, New York is expected to have 17 mental health courts in operation, most of them based on the model created by the Center for Court Innovation in Brooklyn.

### **Sex Offender Management Court**

In 2007, the Center worked with the New York State Unified Court System to open the Brooklyn Sex Offense Court. The new court joined six others around the state that closely monitor sex offenders' compliance with court orders and enhance services for victims. Along with the Nassau County Sex Offender Treatment Court, the Center also helped spearhead a year-long process to develop recommendations for improving the justice system's response to sex offending.

### **Problem-Solving Justice**

With the help of the U.S. Department of Justice, the Center for Court Innovation convened court managers and clerks from New York's 5th and 7th Judicial Districts to solicit their views about how best to integrate problem-solving principles into the daily administration of the courts. The program educated participants about problem-solving justice and those practices and principles that might be used outside of specialized courts. The event also solicited feedback from the court managers, asking them to identify challenges and concerns and brainstorm

new ideas about to how make this new approach to justice fit more easily into the existing infrastructure of the courts.

### **Technology**

The Center is working closely with technologists from the New York State Office of Court Administration to build a Universal Case Management System, which will track criminal cases and monitor court-ordered mandates. The system will help court managers flag cases for referral to problem-solving courts, saving staff time and ensuring that cases don't fall between the cracks. In addition, technology staff from the Center are working on several citywide projects with the New York City Mayor's Office, including efforts to expedite the arrest-to-arraignment process, to improve the notification of litigants about upcoming court appearances, and to enhance communication among juvenile justice agencies.

## **RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS**

By performing original research, making presentations at conferences, convening roundtable conversations, and writing books and white papers, the Center for Court Innovation seeks to make an impact in criminal justice policy circles.

### **Research**

The Center rigorously examines the results of all of its demonstration projects, asking what works, what doesn't, and why. The Center is committed to an "action research" model, in which researchers develop performance benchmarks in close coordination with project staff and then provide regular, data-driven feedback to identify successes and challenges, and spark changes in practice.

The Center also conducts independent research on problem-solving innovations across the country. In the past, researchers at the Center have conducted a number of influential and much-cited studies, including a randomized trial that examined the efficacy of batterer intervention programs, an evaluation of court-monitored drug treatment programs in New York State, and an analysis of which practices piloted in problem-solving courts could most easily be employed outside of the specialized court context.

Research highlights from 2007 include the completion of a national survey that examined how criminal courts respond when domestic violence offenders don't comply with a batterer program mandate. The results indicated that the vast majority of courts do not consistently impose sanctions for non-compliance. Another study, completed in collaboration with Safe Horizon, compared two domestic violence prosecution policies—one that involved declining to file cases when the victim is non-cooperative and the other promoting mandatory case filing. The results suggested that there were no significant differences in re-arrest rates.

In 2007, *Judicature* published the results of a study by the Center that examined the experience of defendants at the Red Hook Community Justice Center. The study found that the vast majority of defendants thought that

their cases were handled fairly at the Justice Center. The results were the same regardless of race, criminal charge, and court disposition.

Also in 2007, the Center published a new book, *Documenting Results: Research on Problem-Solving Justice*, a collection of highlights from the work of the Center's research department over the past decade.

### Failure

In partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice, the Center convened a roundtable of judges, court administrators, probation officials, prosecutors, police chiefs, defense attorneys, and others from around the country to examine failed criminal justice reforms. The inquiry was an effort to shift the way criminal justice officials perceive failure, from a debilitating stigma to a necessary companion and contributor to success. The Center's study of failure has attracted national attention, including coverage in the *National Law Journal*, *Community Corrections Report*, *Government Executive*, *Executive Exchange* (the magazine of the National Association of Probation Executives), and numerous criminal justice blogs.

### Internet

The Center has dramatically expanded and re-fashioned its internet presence. The Center's web site, [www.courtinnovation.org](http://www.courtinnovation.org), contains hundreds of articles, fact sheets, interviews, how-to guides, and other resources for criminal justice officials interested in problem-solving reform. In 2007, traffic to the Center's web site reached an all-time high with more than half a million visitors downloading over 200,000 publications.

## LOOKING AHEAD

In the year ahead, the Center for Court Innovation will continue to test new ideas and spread the results to the field. New projects currently in the works include:

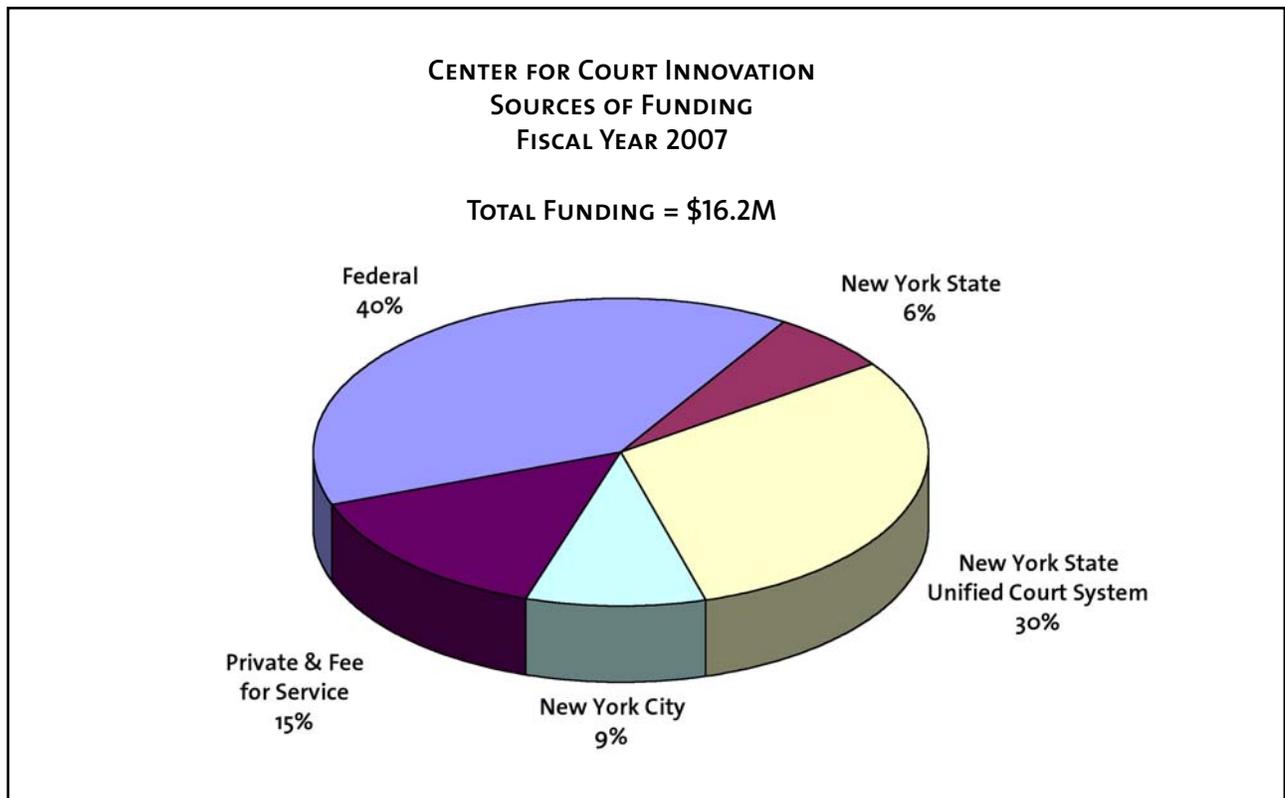
- A scholarly journal, the *Journal of Court Innovation*, published in collaboration with the New York State Judicial Institute and Pace Law School.
- A national effort to disseminate the *Passport to Adulthood*—a checklist developed to help Family Court judges coordinate services for teenagers aging out of foster care.
- A collaboration with the New York State court system, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to aid troubled teens in Nassau County.
- The development of an online learning system for New York's drug treatment courts.
- Planning for the replication of the Bronx Community Solutions model in two locations: Manhattan and Syracuse.
- A survey of community courts across the world.
- A program in Queens Family Court for young people who have pending delinquency matters and exhibit mental health disorders.

- The creation of a task force that will develop recommendations to improve the supervision and reintegration of offenders returning from confinement to Upper Manhattan neighborhoods.
- A national survey that will document the attitudes of criminal court judges toward problem-solving justice.
- A roundtable that brings together court administrators to discuss how to promote statewide coordination of problem-solving courts.

In all of these ways and more, the Center for Court Innovation will continue to advance a simple idea: that the justice system has an important role to play in aiding victims, changing the behavior of offenders, and improving public safety in crime-plagued neighborhoods.

### FINANCIALS

The Center for Court Innovation has steadily grown in size and stature since its creation in 1996. What was once a small group of a dozen or so planners working on a single operating project has grown into an organization with more than 150 employees and more than a dozen demonstration projects. Fiscal year 2007 was the Center’s largest to date—see below and the facing page for a breakdown of revenues and expenditures.



**CENTER FOR COURT INNOVATION  
FISCAL YEAR 2007  
EXPENDITURES**

**OPERATIONS**

Bronx Community Solutions	1,436,800
Bronx Child Witness Support Program	72,200
Brooklyn Mental Health Court	431,600
Center for Courts & Community	498,800
Crown Heights Community Mediation Center	354,600
Harlem Community Justice Center	1,096,100
Midtown Community Court	1,682,800
Queens Plaza Community Cleanup	279,300
QUEST	360,100
Attendance Court	18,500
Far Rockaway Youth Court	119,800
Red Hook Community Justice Center	1,593,600
Red Hook Public Safety Corps	691,500
Upstate Office (Syracuse)	235,800
Youth Justice Board	158,500

**SUBTOTAL OPERATIONS** **9,030,000**

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE/TRAINING**

Domestic Violence	1,319,100
Drug Courts	353,400
Community Courts	94,300

**SUBTOTAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE/TRAINING** **2,586,800**

**ADMINISTRATION**

Project Safe Neighborhoods (pass-thru)	896,700
Planning, Research, Technology & Administration	2,310,500
FCNY Fee @ 9% (fiscal, legal & administrative support)	1,334,200

**SUBTOTAL ADMINISTRATION** **4,541,400**

**TOTAL** **16,158,200**

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