

CENTER
FOR
COURT
INNOVATION

ANNUAL REPORT

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2008

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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. It pursues these goals in a variety of ways: through demonstration projects in New York that measurably improve both the lives of participants and the quality of life of entire communities; through hands-on training and technical assistance with practitioners around the U.S. and the world; and through the dissemination of research and new ideas about how to reform the justice system. This report documents the Center's primary accomplishments in 2008.

COMMUNITY JUSTICE

The concept of community justice—the idea that courts should reach out to the public and focus on neighborhood crime in new ways—is at the heart of several of the Center for Court Innovation's projects, including the Red Hook Community Justice Center, Bronx Community Solutions, Midtown Community Court, and the Harlem Community Justice Center.

In 2008, the Center co-sponsored a breakfast briefing on community justice with the *New York Times*. The briefing, which featured then-New York State Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye and Louise Casey, the British government's neighborhood crime and justice advisor, explored the growth of community justice over the past 15 years, both locally and internationally. Attendees at the event included a cross-section of officials from federal, city, and state government, along with leaders from the worlds of philanthropy and the non-profit sector.

The growing interest in community justice was also documented by *USA Today*, which ran a story about the expansion of community courts as a response to chronic misdemeanor crime and the Open Society Foundation, which published the results of a survey, conducted by the Center for Court Innovation, of community courts around the world.

The Center for Court Innovation's community justice initiatives continued to attract international interest from criminal justice officials. Among the visitors in 2008 was Jack Straw, the United Kingdom's justice secretary and lord chancellor, who, following a visit to the Red Hook Community Justice Center in south Brooklyn,

endorsed efforts in his own country to foster court-community collaboration. In an opinion article in *The Guardian* published after his visit, Straw wrote that the Red Hook Community Justice Center “has done much to increase people’s confidence in criminal justice.... We should not be so proud that we are unable to learn lessons from others. In New York, they have recognized that the courts cannot do it alone.”

Earlier visits to the Justice Center by British officials inspired the creation in 2005 of the North Liverpool Community Justice Centre. The North Liverpool pilot has been followed by 12 other community court projects across England and Wales. The Center has also brought New York’s innovations to countries as diverse as Scotland (where planning is under way for a community court in Glasgow) and China (which is looking for new responses to low-level offending). There are now 75 community courts in operation or planning around the world.

In 2008, the National Criminal Justice Association honored the Red Hook Community Justice Center as an Outstanding Criminal Justice Program, citing it for “bringing the criminal justice system and the community together to respond more effectively to public safety problems.” The Justice Center was also credited with reducing crime in Red Hook by 30 percent by Brooklyn District Attorney Joe Hynes in an op-ed in the *New York Daily News*.

The Center’s Bronx Community Solutions is animated by the same principles as the Red Hook Community Justice Center but instead of focusing on one neighborhood it works with the entire borough. In 2008, Bronx Community Solutions handled 12,000 misdemeanor cases—in the process reducing the use of jail in arraignments by one third. Seventy percent of participants were fully compliant with community service and social service mandates, a significant improvement over the 50 percent rate reported before the project began. Community service crews performed numerous restitution projects, including removing litter and graffiti, sorting donated supplies for a faith-based charity, and helping rehabilitate and maintain community gardens and green spaces. In 2008, Bronx Community Solutions also launched two new initiatives, one aimed at working with defendants charged with driving while intoxicated and the second designed to provide mental health assessments and specialized services to misdemeanants.

The Midtown Community Court—the Center’s first demonstration project, located near Times Square—continued to test new approaches to improving case outcomes. For example, in 2008, in collaboration with the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office and the Legal Aid Society, the court helped create a network of mandated and voluntary alternatives-to-prostitution programs. The network’s goal is to guide participants towards law-abiding futures and to link them to quality social services. Over the course of the year, the network served over 250 people referred from the Midtown Community Court. In addition, in 2008 the court convened legal and social service partners on a bi-monthly basis to develop new responses to the problem of human trafficking.

Also in 2008, the Midtown Court’s volunteer executive board helped organize a benefit to raise awareness regarding support services for women who are survivors of violence and exploitation. The board created a “Go Bag” campaign, where donors contributed to health/safety kits for women seeking to leave their abusers. The

Midtown Court also crafted a new response to unlicensed street vendors, starting a Banking and Business 101 class to introduce street vendors to financial literacy and basic banking information.

How does the public view community justice? At the Harlem Community Justice Center, researchers compared the perceptions of self-represented tenants with tenants in the centralized Manhattan housing court. They found that Harlem tenants viewed the experience in more positive terms and were more likely to perceive the court process and outcome as fair. In addition to housing cases, the Harlem Community Justice Center also works with young people and parolees returning to the neighborhood following incarceration (see below).

YOUTH

In a typical year, over 1,000 young adults between the ages of 16 and 18 are arrested on misdemeanor charges on Staten Island, and nearly 400 juveniles under the age of 16 are arrested for delinquency. Because these young people are rarely linked to meaningful interventions, the Center for Court Innovation helped the New York State Unified Court System establish the Staten Island Youth Court.

The Staten Island Youth Court, which opened in December 2008, trains teenagers to serve as judges, jurors, and advocates, hearing actual cases involving peers who have been arrested on either delinquency or misdemeanor charges. With the consent of the Richmond County District Attorney's Office, eligible cases are referred to the youth court by judges in Family and Criminal Court. At the hearings, youth court members ask the respondents questions about the incident, focusing on the young person's family, educational situation, and involvement in the community. The jurors then deliberate and craft meaningful sanctions, emphasizing community restitution and links to services like tutoring and anger management.

In addition to Staten Island, the Center operates youth courts in Harlem and in Brooklyn (in the neighborhoods of Red Hook and Greenpoint), and is assisting with the planning of a youth court in Newark, New Jersey.

Youth courts are just one example of the Center creating new resources for at-risk youth. As part of a citywide initiative to rationalize and reduce the use of juvenile detention, the Center runs an alternative-to-detention program—Queens Engagement Strategies for Teens, or QUEST—located in the Jamaica, Queens. QUEST is an after-school program for youth who have open delinquency matters pending in Queens Family Court, holding participants accountable for their actions while offering them and their families meaningful support. In 2008, QUEST worked with 136 participants from 50 different schools, achieving a compliance rate of 84 percent. In 2009, the Center will replicate the QUEST model on Staten Island. Both of these projects, as well as sister projects run by other agencies in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, are supported by a state-of-the-art technology application devised by the Center.

In 2008, the Center's Youth Justice Board—an after-school program that engages teens in public policy debates—focused on the challenges faced by youth aging out of foster care. The participants designed, wrote, and facilitated peer-led workshops for youth in foster care and served as consultants in the creation of New York's first "Teen Space," a youth-friendly waiting area that opened in December in Queens Family Court. In

addition, the board's recommendations for improving teenagers' experiences in Family Court were featured in the New York *Daily News* and *City Limits*.

The Center's Youth Expanding Community Horizons by Organizing (also known as Youth ECHO) tests the idea that popular teenagers can help market an anti-crime message to their peers. Participants in Youth ECHO were identified using ethnographic research techniques in a public housing complex in Red Hook, Brooklyn. After several months of after-school training, Youth ECHO members met with guerilla marketing professionals to explore ways to develop and deliver a successful grassroots marketing effort. They designed a multi-faceted anti-drug campaign that included a block party, web site, documentary film, ring tone, and t-shirts—all designed to communicate the message, "Drug Dealing: It's Not Worth It."

By linking truant students to needed services, the Center's attendance courts seek to reduce delinquency among troubled teens in New York City middle schools. The attendance courts, which were conceived by the Center for Courts and the Community (a project of the Center for Court Innovation that seeks to improve civic education and judicial outreach efforts), are located in Isaac Newton Middle School in Harlem and Public School 27 in Red Hook, Brooklyn.

Finally in 2008, the Center for Court Innovation created a unique tool to help New York City Family Court judges. The Passport to Adulthood ensures that the complex issues faced by youth in foster care are addressed in a timely and thorough manner. With support from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Center is working with jurisdictions around the country, including Arizona, New Orleans, and Washington D.C., to help them adapt the Passport. In the days ahead, the Center for Court Innovation intends to continue its work in this area, helping New York City Family Court administrators use data to improve the permanency planning process.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE/SEXUAL ASSAULT

Starting with the creation of the Brooklyn Domestic Violence Court in 1996, the Center for Court Innovation has encouraged courts to test innovative solutions to domestic violence. In 2008, staff from the Center worked with courts across the State of New York, conducting training programs in more than 20 jurisdictions on topics such as supervised visitation and children's exposure to intimate partner violence. With the help of funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, the Center also provided hands-on assistance to practitioners—from Hawaii to Ohio and from New Orleans to St. Cloud, Minnesota—interested in creating specialized domestic violence courts. The Center's expertise was also sought out by international reformers, including practitioners in Ghana and Australia.

The Center for Court Innovation helped to create and implement a partnership to address gender violence at Syracuse University. Staff from the Center trained fraternity and sorority members at the school, who in turn facilitated anti-violence workshops attended by their peers. An impact evaluation revealed that the curriculum was successful in decreasing sexism and increasing participants' sense that they could intervene to prevent gender violence.

With the Center's help, Suffolk County, N.Y., completed a countywide evaluation of sex offender management practices and issued recommendations to improve the response to these difficult cases. The Center also completed a process evaluation of a problem-solving matrimonial court in Nassau County, N.Y., and an in-depth examination (completed with the help of researchers from John Jay College of Criminal Justice) of the commercial sexual exploitation of children in New York City.

Finally, the Center's Child and Adolescent Witness Support Program provided counseling to victims of sex abuse and child witnesses to domestic violence in the Bronx. With support from the Avon Foundation, the Witness Support Program also convened special groups for child witnesses of homicide.

REENTRY

Approximately 2,200 formerly incarcerated individuals return to Upper Manhattan each year. In one section of East Harlem, according to the Justice Mapping Center, one in 20 males have been incarcerated, the highest such concentration in New York City.

The challenge of helping ex-offenders make a successful transition from incarceration to community life has been the focus of the Harlem Community Justice Center. Operated in partnership with the New York State Division of Parole, the Justice Center's reentry court provides parolees with both the support and structure they need to live crime- and drug-free lives. A recent analysis that followed graduates for 12 months documented a parole revocation rate of only 19 percent. In recognition of this work, the cable news channel NY1 in July named the initiative its "New Yorker of the Week."

In 2008, the Harlem Community Justice Center, in partnership with the New York City Mayor's Office, helped initiate a planning process to focus more resources on the issue of reentry. The Upper Manhattan Reentry Task Force engaged in a comprehensive needs assessment process, conducting individual interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders, making site visits to model reentry programs, and analyzing current data on crime and reentry in Upper Manhattan. In the days ahead, the Task Force will move from analysis to action, attempting to mobilize a coalition of government and community-based agencies in an effort to improve parolees' chances of finding jobs.

DRUG ABUSE

The Center for Court Innovation's work on substance abuse dates back to 1996 when it helped develop the Brooklyn Treatment Court, the first drug court in New York City and one of the largest felony drug courts in the country. Then, in 2003, in one of the most ambitious drug court studies to date, Center researchers found that New York's drug courts, which link drug-addicted offenders to treatment and provide strict judicial supervision to rigorously monitor their compliance, achieved statistically significant recidivism reductions, even over a three-year post-arrest period.

The Center currently helps support New York's 170 drug courts through the development of new programs, staff training, public education, and research. For example, the Center is working with the state court system to

implement a juvenile drug court that is expected to help troubled juveniles break the cycle of drugs, alcohol, and crime. The new court, which is based in Nassau County, is part of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's "Reclaiming Futures" initiative, and funded in part by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Working with the court system, staff from the Center provide regional training to drug courts across New York, including lessons on relapse prevention, vocational/educational programs, and post-traumatic stress disorders. The Center is also developing an on-line training program, a web-based multi-media learning system that will include streaming video presentations by national experts, downloadable documents, online quizzes, and a virtual tour of a drug court.

In 2008, the Center for Courts and the Community (<http://courtsandcommunity.org>) created a short curriculum to help educate youth about the important work of drug courts. The curriculum uses excerpts from *Drug Courts: Personal Stories*, a book that tells the stories—in their own words—of drug court participants. The Center for Court Innovation was also featured in a front page *New York Times* story on the national drug court movement.

Finally, in 2008 Center researchers completed a comprehensive process and impact evaluation of the Staten Island Treatment Court, finding that, among other things, the program led to a 46 percent reduction in re-arrests over one year.

OTHER AREAS OF INTEREST

The popularity of mental health courts, community courts, drug courts, and other problem-solving courts has brought new challenges, including the need for government to coordinate problem-solving courts on a statewide basis. To help guide states, the Center for Court Innovation, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, brought together 18 policymakers, researchers, and practitioners in April 2008 for a roundtable to identify ways to support statewide coordination. Among other things, participants discussed strategies for finding resources in difficult economic conditions, promoting uniformity without stifling innovation, disseminating information about best practices, and setting statewide standards. The results were published in a report—the first ever publication on this topic—disseminated on the Bureau of Justice Assistance web site.

Researchers from the Center also surveyed more than 1,000 trial court judges concerning their attitudes and practices with respect to problem-solving. The results of the survey indicated broad support for problem-solving methods—more than three out of four judges expressed support for problem-solving justice—and offered encouraging news for those interested in integrating problem-solving court principles in conventional court settings. The Center's work on the topic of problem-solving justice was featured in *Miller-McCune* magazine in an article titled, "There's a problem with problem-solving courts: Taxpayers don't undersand how well they work."

With the support of the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Center began a new venture to ensure that tribal communities have access to training and ongoing technical assistance about problem-solving principles and practices. The new initiative, which is called the Tribal Justice Exchange, offers a range of services including on-

site needs assessments to assist tribal communities in reforming their approach to justice, visits to the Center's demonstration projects, and information-sharing opportunities among tribal and non-tribal justice systems.

With the help of its partners at the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Center for Court Innovation also continued its multi-faceted policy inquiry examining the lessons to be learned from failed criminal justice reform efforts of the past 25 years. The goal of this effort is to encourage innovation by acknowledging that it is impossible to have trial without error. To date, the Center's "failure" work has included interviews with dozens of leading practitioners and scholars, a roundtable, presentations before hundreds of criminal justice officials, and numerous publications, including contributions to the *National Law Journal*, *The Guardian*, *Court Manager* and *Executive Exchange* (the national publication of probation officials) and a report examining the Center's own operational errors.

SPREADING THE WORD

The Center directly affects tens of thousands of people a year through its demonstration projects and consulting work, but countless more are touched around the country and world as the Center disseminates its ideas.

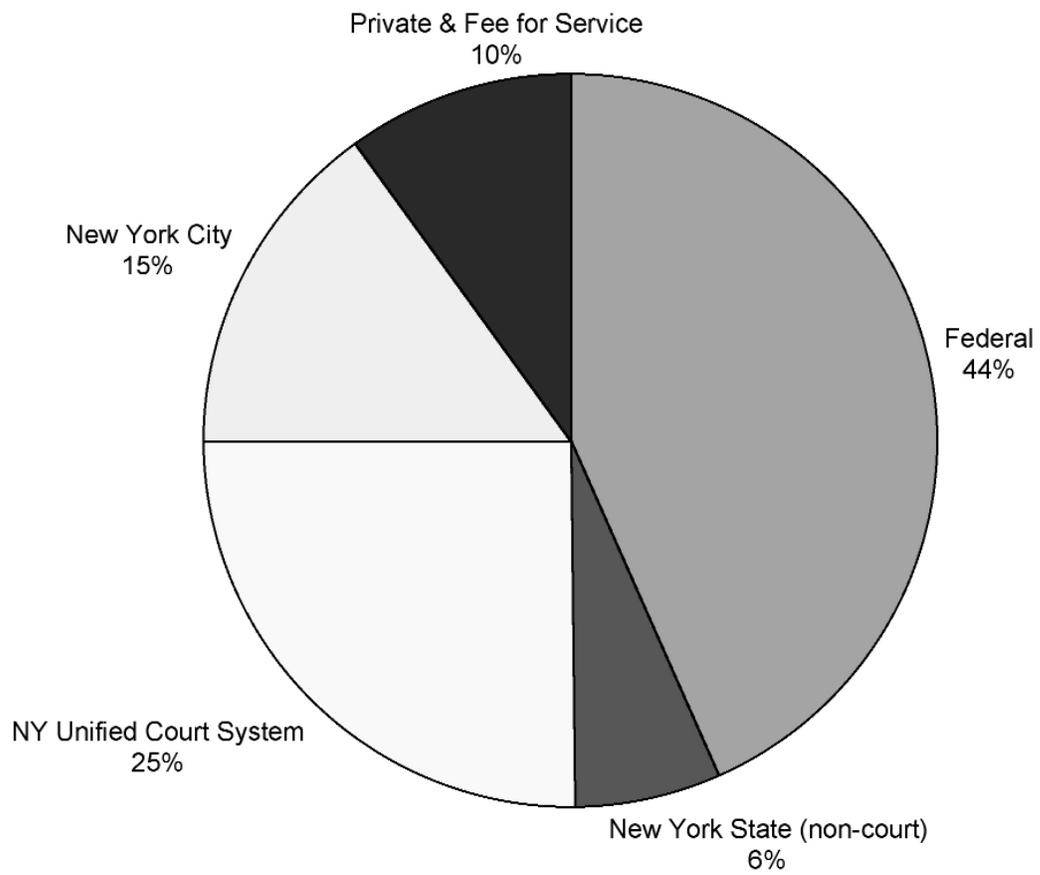
The Center's web site, www.courtinnovation.org, draws over 60,000 visits per month. Visitors download over 200,000 copies of Center publications every year. The web site offers interviews, original research, practical tools, and, in a new feature, podcasts that highlight the work of innovative justice leaders and policymakers. (The Center's podcast, "New Thinking," is a featured podcast on iTunes.) Justice Served named www.courtinnovation.org one of the Top 10 sites of 2008.

In 2008, the Center, in partnership with Pace Law School and the New York State Judicial Institute, launched the *Journal of Court Innovation* to spark new thinking about how courts work and the role they play in society. In an effort to bridge the worlds of theory and practice, the *Journal* includes in-depth examinations of provocative experiments, interviews with leading thinkers and practitioners, and book reviews that highlight cutting-edge scholarship. The most recent issue of the *Journal*, published at the end of 2008, was devoted to innovations in jury reform.

During the course of 2008, Center authors contributed chapters to a new book, *Resolving Family Conflicts* (Ashgate), which looks at new trends in family dispute resolution, and articles to *Judicature*, *Justice Quarterly*, *New York Law Journal*, *Government Law & Policy Journal*, *Violence Against Women*, *Court Manager*, *The Guardian*, *Family & Intimate Partner Violence Quarterly*, *International Review of Law, Computers, & Technology*, and *Court Review*, among other publications.

**Center for Court Innovation
Fiscal Year 2008
Sources of Funding**

Total Funding = \$17.1 Million



**Center for Court Innovation
Fiscal Year 2008
Statement of Expenditures**

Operations	
Bronx Community Solutions	1,193,000
Bronx Child Witness Support Program	95,000
Brooklyn Mental Health Court	421,000
Center for Courts & Community Attendance Court	335,000
	53,000
Crown Heights Community Mediation Center	356,000
Harlem Community Justice Center	1,091,000
Midtown Community Court	1,246,000
Queens Plaza Cleanup	277,000
QUEST	524,000
QUEST Futures	162,000
Youth Court	111,000
Red Hook Community Justice Center	2,069,000
Upstate Office (Syracuse)	147,000
Youth Justice Board	153,000
Subtotal Operations	8,233,000
Technical Assistance/Training	
Domestic Violence	1,825,000
Drug Courts	604,000
Community Courts	1,076,000
Subtotal Technical Assistance/Training	3,505,000
Administration	
Project Safe Neighborhoods (pass-thru)	1,164,000
Planning, Research, Technology & Administration	1,587,000
Center core (Indirect Costs @ 9%)	1,304,000
Subtotal Administration	4,055,000
Indirect Costs - FCNY Fee @ 9%	1,304,000
TOTAL	17,097,000

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