

BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE FACT SHEET

INDIGENT DEFENSE PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) is committed to serving and supporting the criminal justice system, including the courts. BJA recognizes that public defenders play a vital role in ensuring the administration of justice, and as such has dedicated attention and resources to supporting and enhancing indigent defense across the nation. Below are current projects and programs that BJA is supporting.



Sora Shimazaki/Pexels

Current Projects:

The Sixth Amendment Training and Technical Assistance Initiative

The Sixth Amendment Training and Technical Assistance Initiative helps to ensure that states and local government are provided with the capacity and tools necessary to meet the obligations established by the Sixth Amendment. Key Sixth Amendment rights outlined include: a speedy trial, a public trial, effective counsel, an impartial and representative jury, ability to confront and cross-examine any witnesses, and the ability to obtain witnesses and evidence. This initiative will also support pathways for evidence-based best practices to reach courts and defender systems at the state and local levels that support authentic adoption, implementation, and sustainment of effective approaches. Through the initiative, BJA disseminates information about practices, structures, and models that can be replicated and made available through training, technical assistance, and strategic planning services to courts and defender systems at state and local levels. For more information, visit: <https://www.strengthenthesixth.org/>.

Capital Case Litigation Training and Technical Assistance Initiative

The Capital Case Litigation: Training and Technical Assistance Initiative provides support to defense counsel, prosecutors, and the judiciary nationwide on implementing improvements throughout the field of capital case litigation, while supporting litigators with the tools and resources to mitigate risk for error. This includes support for defense counsel by ensuring they have the skills, training, and most up-to-date practices to litigate serious and violent crimes. This includes providing effective training programs, resources, and tools for state and local defense attorneys to build their capacity as capital litigators and ensure effective representation in state capital cases. This utilizes training sessions, such as onsite mentoring or technical assistance, cross-site or train-the-trainer, peer-to-peer, telephone, and/or web-based trainings, as well as a capital litigation listserv for prosecutors. For more information, visit: <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/ccli/training-technical-assistance>.



Funding Opportunities:

Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program (JAG)

The Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program is the leading source of federal justice funding to state and local jurisdictions. The JAG Program provides states, tribes, and local governments with critical funding necessary to support a range of program areas including law enforcement, prosecution, indigent defense, courts, crime prevention and education, corrections and community corrections, drug treatment and enforcement, planning, evaluation, technology improvement, crime victim and witness initiatives, mental health programs, and related law enforcement and corrections programs, including behavioral programs and crisis intervention teams, and implementation of state crisis intervention court proceedings and related programs or initiatives. These initiatives include, but are not limited to, mental health courts, drug courts, veterans courts, and extreme risk protection order programs. For more information, visit: <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/jag/overview>.

John R Justice Program

The John R. Justice Program provides student loan repayment assistance to state, local, and federal public defenders and local and state prosecutors who commit to extended service in those roles. The program's purpose is to offer an incentive to attract and retain qualified public defenders and prosecutors who will remain employed in that capacity for a minimum of 36 months. For more information, visit: <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/john-r-justice-jrj-program/overview>.

Upholding the Rule of Law: Wrongful Conviction Review Program

Upholding the Rule of Law: Wrongful Conviction Review (WCR) Program, supports wrongful conviction (WCR) entities providing high-quality and efficient post-conviction representation for defendants in post-conviction claims of innocence. Where possible, the WCR Program seeks to identify actual perpetrators of crimes, bring justice to victim(s), and enact measures to prevent future errors and ensure justice, thereby enhancing public safety. These funded strategies are led by a WCR entity that focuses on review of post-conviction claims of innocence. BJA also supports efforts to assess and reduce risk of error via conviction integrity efforts. BJA makes training and

technical assistance available to grantees and to the field, including on conviction integrity and review units (CIUs or Units). In FY2023, funding will be available to support CIU efforts. For more information, visit: <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/urlpwc/overview>.

Encouraging Innovation: Field Initiated Program

Encouraging Innovation: The Field Initiated Program seeks to prevent and reduce crime and enhance the criminal justice system through innovative approaches that accelerate justice by identifying, defining, and responding to emerging or chronic crime problems and systemic issues using innovative approaches. The program supports strategies to address these issues, including trying new approaches, addressing gaps in responses, building or translating research knowledge, or building capacity. It furthers DOJ's mission by providing resources to support state, tribal, and local efforts to test new approaches to build and translate knowledge and to address gaps in national approaches or research, especially to address issues in jurisdictions experiencing increases in crime, overdose, and behavioral health needs tied to crime, and advance innovative improvements within the justice system. For more information, visit: <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/encouraging-innovation-field-initiated-programs/overview>.

Please check our web site at bja.ojp.gov for other upcoming funding opportunities.

ABOUT BJA

BJA helps America's state, local, and tribal jurisdictions reduce and prevent crime, lower recidivism, and promote a fair and safe criminal justice system. BJA provides a wide range of resources—including grants, funding, and training and technical assistance—to law enforcement, courts and corrections agencies, treatment providers, reentry practitioners, justice information sharing professionals, and community-based partners to address chronic and emerging criminal justice challenges nationwide. To learn more about BJA, visit bja.ojp.gov or follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/DOJBJA) and X (@DOJBJA). BJA is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs.