



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, September 14, 2016

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
CONTACT: Jim Goodwin 202-307-0703

OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS AWARDS NEARLY \$3 MILLION TO REDUCE UNNECESSARY CONFINEMENT, SAVE CORRECTIONS COSTS

WASHINGTON – Assistant Attorney General Karol V. Mason for the Office of Justice Programs today announced awards totaling nearly \$3 million to support reforms of justice system responses to individuals’ inability to pay fines, fees, and related charges, including eliminating unnecessary confinement.

Awarded under a new Bureau of Justice Assistance grant program called “The Price of Justice: Rethinking the Consequences of Justice Fines and Fees,” five state-level jurisdictions will receive funds targeted to implement fair and effective policies and practices related to criminal justice financial obligations, increase data-sharing and collaboration among agencies regarding assessment and enforcement of justice debt, support alternatives that promote rehabilitation, and reduce unnecessary confinement due to justice-involved individuals’ inability to pay fines, fees, and related charges. The grantees are the Judicial Council of California, the Judiciary Courts of the State of Louisiana, the Texas Office of Court Administration, the Missouri Office of State Courts Administration, and the Washington Minority and Justice Commission of the Washington State Courts.

In addition, the Fund for the City of New York, Center for Court Innovation, will provide training and technical assistance to the site-based grantees.

“Overreliance on criminal fines and court-related fees harms the poorest members of the community and erodes faith in the justice system,” said Assistant Attorney General Mason. “Today we are taking another step toward ending unfair and often unconstitutional practices that perpetuate a cycle of poverty and incarceration.”

The awarded grants are a critical start to addressing the issue of increasing transparency among stakeholders and justice-involved individuals regarding the fines, fees, costs, and consequences for non-payment, as well as how such costs can promote, rather than undermine, rehabilitation, reintegration and community trust, according to Assistant Attorney General Mason.

The grant program was developed from a growing body of research that found people are being incarcerated for failing to pay fines and fees, despite their inability to do so; justice agencies focused less on public safety and rehabilitation than on maximizing revenue; and racial and ethnic disparity in the impacts of criminal justice debt.

###

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP), headed by Assistant Attorney General Karol V. Mason, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist victims. OJP has six bureaus and offices: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; 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 Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART). More information about OJP and its components can be found at www.ojp.gov.