



News Release

Superior Court of California County of San Francisco

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REPORT FINDS SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN SAN FRANCISCO'S CRIMINAL CASE BACKLOG

SAN FRANCISCO – San Francisco Superior Court has reduced its inventory of pending felony cases by one-third and misdemeanor cases by two-thirds in the past two years, according to findings in an independent report released today.

The report, "Developing Effective Practices in Criminal Caseflow Management," by John Greacen, of Greacen Associates LLC, and Fred Miller, of the Administrative Office of the Court's (AOC) Executive Office Programs, finds significant progress in the Court's ongoing efforts to manage criminal cases.

"The San Francisco County criminal justice system has made substantial progress in its management of criminal cases over the past two years," according to the report. "The leaders of all county criminal justice entities should be proud of and share in the credit for those accomplishments."

Gordon Park-Li, the Chief Executive Officer of the Court, praised the Court's Justice Partners for working with Judges to achieve efficiencies in handling the criminal caseload in San Francisco.

"The Court is proud of the improvements we have made over the past two years with the help of our Justice Partners," Park-Li said. "We look forward to continuing this collaboration in the future as we tackle ongoing criminal justice issues in San Francisco."

The report emphasized that "the criminal justice system in San Francisco County still

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faces significant challenges – large numbers of felony and misdemeanor cases awaiting trial, large number of older pending felony cases, relatively long average trial lengths, a misdemeanor trial rate twice the statewide average, and a continuing jury service burden considerably higher than the national average.”

The consultants commended the Court for jury management strategies that have cut by half how often eligible San Franciscans serve jury duty – down from once every year to once every two years. Nevertheless, the report also urged the Court to continue making strides in the “jury service burden (that is) considerably higher than the national average.”

In 2006, with the AOC’s assistance, the Court invited independent consultants to review the Court’s processing of felony and misdemeanor cases. The consultants issued a report in March 2007 that made numerous recommendations, which included better collaboration with Criminal Justice Partners; the development of “reliable” criminal caseflow data reports; and improvements to criminal case management processes.

At the end of FY 2008, the Court asked the consultants to return to assess the Court’s progress. The consultants returned in November 2008 to observe criminal proceedings, meet with judges and Court administrative staff. They also met with representatives of the District Attorney’s Office, the Public Defender’s Office, conflict attorneys, private bar, Probation Department and the Sheriff’s Office. The consultants provided the Court with their follow-up report this week.

The report emphasized that the Court and “its criminal justice partners have implemented successfully many of the recommendations from the earlier report.”

The progress achieved is the direct result of the combined efforts of Judges, Court Staff and Justice Partners. Presiding Judge James J. McBride, Park-Li, the San Francisco Bench and Court staff will continue to work with Justice Partners to build on the strategies that have improved criminal caseflow management and to fulfill the report’s remaining recommendations.

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