

# NCSC Completes Efficiency Study of the Winnebago County Circuit Court



The National Center for State Courts has completed its efficiency and operations review of the Circuit Court of Winnebago County. The study, which was almost entirely grant funded, was requested by the Court to ensure that it was following best practices in a variety of areas, most notably criminal case processing.

The study identified a number of challenges to efficient processing of criminal cases, including the following:

The pretrial discovery process, an area in which “delay often occurs in courts nationwide.”

“High personnel turnover in both prosecution and public defense law offices attributed to limited staffing and low compensation levels.”

The need for certainty in jury trial dates.

Working with the Court’s criminal division judges, the study identified a number of potential strategies designed to overcome these challenges, including the following:

Implementation of case management orders.

Promoting plea cut-off dates in concert with the State’s Attorney.

Development of a continuance policy to guide expectations.

Supporting initiatives toward electronic discovery exchange and subpoenas.

“We appreciate receiving the assistance of the National Center,” said Chief Judge Eugene Doherty. “We had begun work on some of these concepts even before receiving this report. It is encouraging to know that the national experts feel we are on the right track.” Doherty indicated that the Court would move methodically to address and implement the measures suggested in full collaboration with its criminal justice partners in the offices of the State’s Attorney and Public Defender.

A full copy of the study is available upon request by contacting the Office of the Chief Judge via [kfink@17thcircuit.illinoiscourts.gov](mailto:kfink@17thcircuit.illinoiscourts.gov).

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