

## **RURAL COURT SURVEY, SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS**

Throughout January and February of 2013, the BJA Public Trust and Confidence Committee - Rural Courts Subcommittee surveyed rural courts throughout the state in an attempt to understand their capacities, characteristics, needs, and challenges. The overall goal is to establish a framework for future PT&C action and collaboration with key stakeholders.

In total, 92 courts completed the survey. The results provide a great deal of information about the courts, as well as suggesting areas for future action.

The respondents self-identified, meaning they were asked to respond if they considered themselves to be a rural court. For example, one court employee in Spokane County indicated that while the City of Spokane may not be considered “rural,” parts of Spokane County are rural.

The questions spanned the following areas:

- Staffing issues, including specifically access to training and courthouse facilitators
- Security
- Incarceration and Alternatives
- Technology Resources
- Representation and Justice Issues (such as pro se help and interpreters)
- Grants
- Relationship to Local Government
- Challenges Posed by Rural Characteristics, such as transportation

Below, the survey is broken up into sections including a summary and analysis of each area. Each section analyzes the information pertinent to it and contains a discussion of potential future areas of research.

### **STAFFING**

*“As a small court and the only employee for the judges, it is hard to get away for training opportunities. They are offered, but I cannot always go.”*

*“Access to video conferencing training opportunities would be helpful.”*

#### **Training and Courthouse Facilitators**

We asked the courts about access to training opportunities for judicial officers and staff, and access to courthouse facilitators. We also asked each to prioritize these staffing concerns in relation to delivering service to the public.

Concerns about lack of courthouse facilitators were much stronger than concerns about lack of training opportunities. Almost a third of responders were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their court's access to courthouse facilitators. Of the comments received, most concerned

the fact that either the courthouse facilitators were understaffed, non-existent, or their function was taken up by the courthouse clerks or other staff.

However, the information that the courts are generally satisfied with their facilitator program may be misleading. One respondent replied that they were “satisfied” with their access to courthouse facilitators, but nonetheless stated that they wanted to see their funding increased. Another responded that they were “satisfied” with their access to facilitators, but then stated they had no program; it could be that they are indeed satisfied having no program, or that they selected that answer as a default due to lack of frame of reference (however, other courts did not answer the question, stating they could not because they did not have a program).

By contrast, over 92% of responders were somewhat satisfied or satisfied with their court's access to training opportunities. However, when responders were asked to choose the "most helpful" among ten possible improvements, few courts gave training opportunities a low rating (the most common ratings were between 4 and 7). The discrepancy may be due in part to some inconsistent answers (for example, one court responded that they are “satisfied” with access to training opportunities, and then commented that they are “not satisfied with training opportunities for staff”; another stated they were both “somewhat satisfied” and “dissatisfied”). However, it appears that most courts are generally satisfied with their training opportunities, but the subject remains of moderate importance for improvement when compared to the other categories.

Of specific areas of training that the courts commented upon, the most common concerned training on how to better handle the needs of pro se litigants.

#### *Ideas for Further Study or Action*

With respect to training, we should pass along to AOC the desire for more advanced and in-depth training programs. As for courthouse facilitators, we could explore further which courts have them, which courts don't, why, and what can be done to help. The Access to Justice Board is exploring this issue and it may be a place for the two committees to collaborate.

The Washington Courts website has a page on courthouse facilitators that suggests that "most counties have courthouse facilitator programs." It also has a link to a courthouse facilitator program list. The 2010 Washington Courts Funding Survey points out, however, that "in recent years, County Clerk offices and superior court officials had established court facilitator programs throughout the state to provide information to self-represented (pro se persons) regarding court processes and court forms," but that "facilitator and other customer service staff positions have been deeply cut, leaving the growing number of self-represented persons with little help." Board of Judicial Administration Justice in Jeopardy Implementation Committee, *Washington Courts: Consequences of Inadequate Funding*, at p. 5. This decline in services and the effect it has on rural courts in Washington may be a needed area for future study.

## SECURITY

*“We don’t have any security. Too small and broke to fund any type of security.”*

### Concerns and Priority for Improvement

We asked the survey participants whether they were satisfied with their court’s security, and asked them to rank security compared to other concerns based on priority. We also received information on how the courts would prioritize security if they received additional grants or loans.

Almost two-thirds (64.83%) of the courts responded that they were either “satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with security, while a little more than a third (35.17%) responded that they were “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with security. Of those that responded with comments, the common theme appeared to be that security in the courthouses is inadequate or non-existent. This trend held true even in the comments to those that responded that they were “satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the security in their courthouse.

When asked which areas of improvement would be priorities if the court were to gain access to additional grants or loans, security was the top response by a large margin (with an average ranking of 3.6). Almost 80% of those that responded stated that security would be among their priorities for increased funding.

The specific security concerns among the responders varied greatly. Some stated that security was essentially non-existent in their courthouse, others stated that security services ceased at the court after-hours despite the fact that the building remained open, some stated that employees are not properly trained in how to raise alarms, and some stated that they need additional tools such as scanners and detectors. Some courts are challenged in addressing security because of historic building restrictions. Many courts also reported that they have communicated these concerns to their governing bodies, but have been unable to get funding.

Some courts responded that security has improved recently, due to increased funding and investment in security services.

### *Ideas for Further Study or Action*

The specific security concerns stated by the counties are varied, but all the comments seem to suggest the limiting factor is funding. We could look to see if there are grant or loan opportunities for rural courts to improve their security. It may also be helpful to look at security practices and funding at rural courts across the state and elsewhere in the country to see if any model exists for increasing cost-effectiveness of courthouse security, but it may be that each court is unique to the point where standardized practices aren’t feasible.

## INCARCERATION AND ALTERNATIVES

*“Our jail refuses to do work release in any meaningful way and will not consider other alternative sanctions, even though they could make money utilizing them.”*

### Capacity Concerns

We asked the survey participants if they were satisfied with their county/city’s jail capacity and access, and whether they were satisfied with their court’s access to and use of jail alternatives. We also received information on how they would rank and prioritize jail capacity and alternatives compared to other court services and concerns.

Most courts appear to be satisfied with jail capacity and access, with roughly 25% being either “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied.” Of those who were dissatisfied, they commented that the jails were over-capacity, they needed a new jail, they had difficulty tracking inmates held in other jurisdictions, their court did not have a jail and had to transport inmates long-distances, or the jail did not have the funds for proper staffing. Some courts reported that, due to capacity issues, the jails are often only admitting those with felony-related charges. Several responders reported that due to budget issues, jail alternatives have been cut. Even in those that reported they were satisfied, there were some concerns of jails being at or over capacity, or that the jails are in need of repair and maintenance.

Most responders were satisfied with their court’s access to jail alternatives, with only 18% being “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied.” Some courts reported that their work-release programs had been terminated and wanted them reinstated. At least one court responded that they did not know what kind of jail alternatives are out there.

In terms of prioritization of improvements to jail capacity compared to other issues facing rural courts, the responders rated jail capacity fairly average, with an average ranking of 5.07.

### *Ideas for Further Study or Action*

Jail capacity issues appeared to be a concern of many responders, even those that replied that they were satisfied with their capacity. Furthermore, many reported that misdemeanor offenders are often not admitted, and that work release programs have been discontinued. All these issues appear to be due to funding constraints. Due to the capacity problems, and the low likelihood that counties and cities will be able to fund jail expansion in the near future, it might be worthwhile to look at the costs and benefits of implementing (or re-implementing) jail alternatives versus not admitting some offenders, both in terms of dollar value and social cost. However, this may be a difficult and time-intensive analysis to carry out, especially for an area of lower concern for rural courts relative to some of the other areas we surveyed.

### Probation Services

We asked the survey participants if they were satisfied with their court's access to probation services to ensure compliance with pre-trial and post-conviction conditions. Roughly 68% were either "satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied," while roughly 32% were either "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied." In terms of prioritization of improvement to probation services ranked against other issues facing rural courts, the average ranking was 5.3.

The concerns with probation services primarily involved funding. Many reported that they had no probation officer (often due to budget cuts) and no work release programs, thus probation orders cannot be monitored. One reported that while they do have probation officers, they are nevertheless overworked, and they have been forced to discontinue pre-trial supervision in most cases. Another reported concerns about DOC beyond funding issues—namely that DOC is not engaging in proper supervision with the funds they have, and is not engaging in honest dialogue with the court. At least one responder wants AOC and BJA to lobby to get lower the cost to courts for these services.

Some Courts  
reported very little  
access to jail  
alternatives

### Chemical Dependency, Domestic Violence, & Mental Health Providers

We asked the survey participants if they were satisfied with their community's access to CD, DV, and MH providers. Approximately 75% were either "satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied," while roughly 25% were either "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied." In terms of prioritization of CD, DV, and MH services ranked against other issues facing rural courts, the average ranking was 5.5.

There was a wide range of comments and concerns in this area. Many courts reported that they had no DV services, or that the DV provider is located in a neighboring county. At least one court reported language access problems, specifically a lack of Spanish-speaking services. A large number of comments focused on the lack or poor state of MH services, either due to there being too few services, or the fact that those with mental health issues are simply re-cycled through the system.

### Ignition-Interlock, Alcohol/Drug Use, & Electronic Home-Monitoring

We asked the survey participants if they were satisfied with the availability and verification of IID, EHM, and alcohol/drug use monitoring. Overall, the large majority of responders were either "satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with these monitoring services, with just under 14% being "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied." In terms of prioritization of IID, EHM, and alcohol/drug use monitoring services ranked against other issues facing rural courts, the average ranking was 6.9.

The comments received in this area were fairly mixed. One reported that these monitoring services are not readily available. Another stated that they do not engage in EHM monitoring, but that they are satisfied with their available IID and SCRAM monitoring. One court reported that their IID reports occur every 90 days, whereas the devices should be downloaded at least every 30 days. Finally, one court reported that they send people to a for-profit entity for alcohol monitoring and home detention, and that they had concerns about certification and minimum reporting and monitoring requirements.

Overall, based on the generally high rates of satisfaction of responders in their monitoring services, and the few comments received, improvements in this area appears to be of relatively low importance compared to others.

#### *Ideas for Further Study or Action*

Of the three-subcategories above, it appears that lack of probation oversight and poor access to mental health services were the chief concerns. Lack of adequate mental health services has long been an issue both in our state and across the country, and funding issues will continue to hinder improvements in this area. One respondent suggested that AOC and BJA need to take a more active role on funding issues for probation services. Concerning probation oversight, we could try to discern where the need is greatest, i.e. in either pre- or post-trial supervision (or some other area of supervision), and determine the benefit of providing adequate probation services versus the economic and social costs of not doing so. The Misdemeanant Corrections Association also occasionally has funds (from WTSC) to help courts start up a probation department; we could look to see if they have available resources, or refer rural courts to them.

Because of the costs of providing adequate probation and mental health services may be prohibitive in the current economic climate, one idea that was raised was to support some type of college class/program where college students would visit courts with specific needs and work on new ways to address them. This idea could obviously be used on court needs beyond the areas of probation and mental health services as well.

## **TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES**

*Respondents cited video conferencing as the most helpful technology improvement.*

### Current Resources and Needs

In an effort to identify the extent to which respondents viewed technology resources as an issue in their courts, respondents were asked whether they are satisfied with their court's access to technology and technology support (Question 1) and whether they were satisfied with their court's technology based research sources, i.e. Westlaw, Lexis, etc. They were also asked to rank their technology needs among the top 10 most helpful improvements that could be made to their court, to indicate whether their court has adequate access to technology to address the needs

of and effectively deal with pro se litigants, and to indicate how helpful web based information and live chat services would be to serving pro se litigants in their court. Finally, respondents were asked to indicate which technology resources/solutions would be helpful to their court.

Just over 90% of those who responded indicated that they were either satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their access to technology and technological support, and 89.89% indicated that they were either satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their access to research resources. Despite those numbers, access to technology and technological support was ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> among the ten improvements respondents would find most helpful to their courts (with an average ranking of 4.4). 59.72% of the respondents would like better access to video conferencing for court hearings and trainings, 52.78% would like additional computer software, and 51.39% would like additional technological support and information.

A review of the respondents' specific comments revealed dissatisfaction with case management systems, frustration with the antiquated DOS based JIS system, a desire for more wireless internet access and requests for programs that would permit access to JABS and warrant reviews using an iPad. One court indicated that the clerk is the only person in the courtroom with a computer. The vast majority of comments, however, expressed a desire for some sort of video conferencing ability. One court commented "This court does not have a local jail, instead house inmates in several different facilities. Because of location difficulties, the court does not have video capabilities with the jails, Judge, public defender or prosecutor."

#### *Ideas for Further Study or Action*

Consistent with the comment of the court cited above, the survey suggests that the most urgent technological need for the majority of rural courts is access to video conferencing software and the equipment to support it. This doesn't come as much of a surprise. Most rural courts don't have their own jails, so in-custody defendants are housed in neighboring city or county jails. Additionally, part-time courts have part-time judges, public defenders, and prosecutors that are only together at the same facility on a limited basis. This creates tremendous challenges in holding pre-trial hearings. To get a better understanding of how difficult and expensive the solution to this issue may be, it would be helpful for us to follow up our survey with one focused on gathering information from those courts that currently have video conferencing ability. It would be helpful to know what software those courts are using, the equipment necessary to support the software, the costs associated with its implementation and how they obtained funding. We could then create a fact sheet with that information as well as the cost benefits of implementing a video conference system, such as a lack of a need to transport defendants, increased security, and so on.

## REPRESENTATION AND JUSTICE ISSUES

*Over 70% of respondents reported adequate access to interpreters.*

### Interpreter Services Available Resources and Needs

The courts were asked whether they had adequate access to interpreters, whether or not they lacked access to interpreters in certain languages, and whether they had access to interpreters on short notice. The courts were then asked what additional resources would be beneficial to their court.

Most courts (73.63%) stated that they have adequate access to interpreters, with 13.19% reporting that they do not have adequate access (it appears that 13.18% did not respond to either option- taking out the non-responders changes the results to 85% and 15%, respectively). Roughly a quarter of the responders stated that they did not have access to certain language interpreters. Finally, of those that responded, 43.24% stated that they had access to interpreters on short notice, while 56.76% did not.

When asked what interpreter services would be beneficial to their court, 58.44% selected in-person translators, 41.56% selected language-line, 57.14% selected translated forms, and 37.66% selected court personnel with bi- or tri-lingual skills.

### *Ideas for Further Study or Action*

Unfortunately, we did not receive comments in this area, but the numbers provided above give us a good starting place for thinking about future study. While most courts appear to be satisfied with their available interpreter services, they did list some areas where they would like to see improvement, notably increasing in-person translators and having forms translated into other languages. While increasing the number of in-person translators was high on the list, improvement here may be constrained by each court's access to funding. However, translated forms may be an area where improvement is more easily attainable. We can identify areas where forms are consistent across the various courts as well as which forms are most commonly used, and then look into having them translated for all courts to use.

One Court reported additional public education on this judicial branch and the Courts as an area needing improvement.

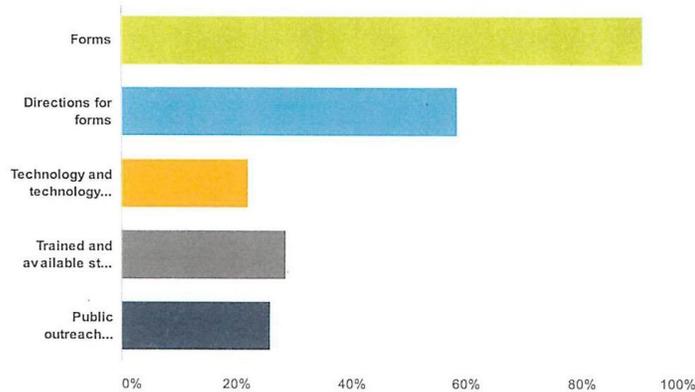
Resources for Pro Se Litigants

**SURVEY RESPONSE**

Rural Courts Survey

**Q13 Please indicate whether your Court has adequate access to the resources listed below to address the needs of and effectively deal with pro se litigants.**

Answered: 77 Skipped: 15



Answer Choices	Responses
Forms	90.91% 70
Directions for forms	58.44% 45
Technology and technology assistance	22.08% 17
Trained and available staff to aid pro se litigants through the court process	28.57% 22
Public outreach materials	25.97% 20
Total Respondents: 77	

*Available and Desired Resources*

We asked the courts what resources they had to help pro se litigants as well as what additional resources would be helpful in doing so. Just over 90% reported that they had adequate access to forms, 58.44% reported they had adequate access to form directions, 22% reported they had adequate access to technology and technology assistance, 28.5% reported that they had adequate access to trained and available staff to aid pro se litigants through the court process, and 25.97% reported they had adequate access to public outreach materials.

In regards to what resources would be beneficial to the court in serving pro se litigants, we asked the courts to select what would be of help to them from a list of potential options. In descending order based upon the percentage of courts that selected them, the additional desired resources were: “easily understandable forms and instructions” (70.93%); “web-based information about the court system, and how to prepare for what to expect” (61.63%); “court-assistance officers” (52.33%); a “court help line” (45.35%); “training for staff to provide assistance and

information/direction to pro se litigants” (37.21%); forms and case status (24.42%); “LiveChat” services (23.26%); and “docket information” (22.09%).

There appears to be some inconsistency in the responses received. In Question 13, only 28.5% reported that they had adequate access to trained staff to help pro se litigants, yet in Question 21 additional training was only selected by 37.21% of responders. It may be that, while available training is inadequate, additional training is lower on of lower priority than other needs; however, we did not ask the responders to rank their needs, but to select all that apply. So there is some difficulty in reconciling these responses and in determining court training needs.

### *Ideas for Further Study or Action*

Based on the responses received, it appears the greatest needs of rural courts in serving pro se litigants are in the areas of technology services, easily understandable forms, assisting pro se litigants navigate the court system, and training for staff (but note the inconsistent answers to training above). In regards to technology, we could look to what technology practices certain courts have adopted in assisting pro se litigants, and see if they are applicable to other rural courts as well. Some courts, for example, are able to assist pro se litigants digitally fill out their forms, while others only help fill in forms by hand.

Concerning training, we could look into what training the different rural court staffs receive in how to serve pro se litigants, and see if there are any additional training resources available elsewhere, such as from AOC. Furthermore, increasing numbers of pro se litigants is a nationwide trend, and so there may be some responsive practices that other states have adopted that could be applicable in Washington as well.

Regarding forms, there is an effort under way to convert family law forms to plain language. This may alleviate many of the needs that rural courts identified in this area. But it may be beneficial to identify which additional areas of law that plain language forms are needed.

Finally, courthouse facilitator staffing and funding is an issue that the Access to Justice Board is currently looking at. We could see what information they have in this area, and if it would be beneficial to rural courts or to any future research.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT INTERACTION**

*Respondents generally found local government more supportive than other branches of government.*

### Local Governments’ Understanding of Court Independence and Autonomy

We asked the courts whether local governments understand and respect their independence and autonomy. Most felt that their local government understands and respects their autonomy, with 76.6% saying they either “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree,” and 23.4% saying they either “somewhat disagree” or “strongly disagree.”

Comments varied greatly on this subject. Many courts that answered some form of “disagree” felt that their local government did not understand their needs or respect their autonomy; for example, one stated that their city is attempting to dissolve the court and merge it with another city’s, despite the fact that their city has not cut the budget to any other department. Another commented that their local government wouldn’t adequately staff the court, and then later complained when the court couldn’t adequately handle the number of incoming defendants.

Many who responded “somewhat satisfied” made comments related to budget constraints and the effect that had on their relationship with the local government; for example one stated that they had to share staff, but understood that, under current conditions, “that is just the way it is.” Another stated that, due to budget and furlough issues, the understanding and respect with local government was there, but it was grudging, and that judges were somewhat resented by other departments.

Finally, many courts commented that they had a good working relationship with their local government, and that the government understood and respected their needs. The comments of those who “strongly agreed” varied slightly, but generally stated that they had a good relationship with their local government, which respected their needs and autonomy.

### Local Leader Support

We asked the courts whether local leaders support their court. Overall, 84.27% either “strongly agreed” or “somewhat agreed,” while 15.73% either “somewhat disagreed” or “strongly disagreed.”

Overall, most responses tracked pretty closely with the responses above, with occasional variation. Some comments were in relation to concerns specific to their court (such as the local government not understanding the court’s need for new facilities). Others noted that local leaders were open to listening to the needs of the court. Some, however, noted that local leaders’ bias affected their court; for example, one court reported that “most political leaders are strongly conservative and support the court only to the extent that they perceive the judge to be also.” Another reported that local government leaders, including the police chief, are pushing to cut court funding without understanding the effect this would have on access to justice for the city’s citizens. Finally, some noted how local leaders didn’t understand that increasing funding for law enforcement results in increased filings and, in turn, a need to increase court funding as well.

### Other Branches of Government Understanding of Court Needs & Operations

We asked the courts whether the other branches of government understand their court’s needs and operations. Overall, 80% either “strongly agreed” or “somewhat agreed,” while 20% either “somewhat disagreed” or “strongly disagreed.”

Again, the responses here usually tracked those of the prior two questions. Virtually all the comments dealt with the local government not being well-informed on what the court does and needs. For example, one commented that local leaders don’t understand what their court does, and have no interest in learning more about the court and decline invitations to visit; another said that “education of the other branches of government is an ongoing operation”; yet another stated

that the “only reason I didn’t note strongly agree is that sometimes education in this area is needed.” So it appears that lack of understanding of what the court does is a concern of many courts (even among some of those in the “agree” category).

### *Ideas for Further Study or Action*

The answers to the three questions above largely overlapped (some courts even replied in the latter two questions to refer to their comment to question 14). But most of the concerns seemed to revolve around the fact that the local government doesn’t understand what the court does and why their needs are important. This concern seems to be especially prevalent in the context of funding from local government. It may be that cutting many court programs actually cost the county or municipality money in the long run; for example, cutting court support staff may save money in the short term, but could result in more incorrect filings, more continuances, and more court delays, all of which result in costs that add up over a period of time. It might be beneficial to look into conducting a cost-benefit analysis of certain court functions, or to see if similar studies have been done elsewhere. However, considering that every court is different, and that certain costs and benefits may be difficult to quantify monetarily, this could be a time-intensive project.

## **GRANT INFORMATION AND PRIORITIZATION OF POTENTIAL FUNDING AREAS**

*Access to information about available grants was noted as a possible funding source to address security concerns for many respondents.*

### Information and Priorities

We asked the courts whether it would be helpful for them to receive information about grants to rural courts for courthouse facilities. We also asked the courts what improvements would be prioritized if they received grants or loans to improve courthouse facilities.

In terms of information, 86.67% of responders would like to receive information about grants to rural courts, while 13.33% do not want to receive such information. In terms of prioritizing spending of potential grants or loans, we asked the courts to select any and all areas they would improve. Improvement to security was the most common priority at 78.75%, followed by improvements to courtrooms at 53.75%, improvements to clerk’s offices at 36.25%, improvements to client and witness meeting rooms at 35%, and improvements to jury rooms at 27.5%. The information gathered from this question unfortunately does not show what improvements are more important to rural courts when compared to others; it only shows what improvements were more commonly requested (we did not ask the courts to prioritize the various improvements, only to select those that applied to them). But based on the information received in this question, and the responses elsewhere in the survey, we do have pretty good insight into what are the areas the courts would most like to see improved. And from the survey as a whole it appears that security is the most common and highly prioritized area for improvement amongst rural courts.

### *Ideas for Further Study or Action*

The large majority of the courts surveyed would like to receive information about grants to rural courts. We could provide them with that information or refer them to entities that may know about potential grants. In terms of the various areas of improvement, we could try to gather information on what areas rural courts prioritize over others, but again, based on the totality of the information received in the survey, we were able to get a pretty good idea as to the areas the courts would like to see improved.

## **CHALLENGES POSTED BY RURAL CHARACTERISTICS**

### Rural Challenges and Transportation Issues

We asked the courts whether the rural characteristic of their court presented any challenges. We also asked whether a lack of local transportation service impacted their ability to provide services. For the most part, the answers to these questions largely supplemented the information provided elsewhere in the survey. The responders often commented that their rural characteristic resulted in a lack of CD, DV, and MH resources, or that service providers were located far away from many court users. Many also noted the lack of proper court and jail facilities. Some also said that the rural nature of their court has resulted in perception issues with the public; that some users assume that service will be poor because it is a rural court, while other people don't understand that the police and the court are two different entities with different functions and needs. Finally, one court said that there was a lack of support for rural courts from Olympia, both from the legislature and the Supreme Court. The clear perception is that these are issues specific to rural courts.

Many courts noted that transportation is an issue in providing services to the public. They reported that there is often a lack of bus routes to more isolated areas, and this lack of adequate transportation service has resulted in many people being late for or missing court appearances. One court further noted that this problem is only compounded for low-income users that don't have access to a car. Furthermore, many stated that inadequate transportation isn't just an issue in accessing the courthouse; it is an issue for many service providers that are located remotely as well. However, many responders stated that transportation was not a problem for people accessing their court.

### *Ideas for Further Study or Action*

Most of the issues raised in these comments overlap with the prior sections of this report. However, lack of adequate transportation was a common concern for many courts. This issue is certainly difficult to address fully, but certain technologies and practices, such as conducting hearings by phone or via videoconference, may be able to mitigate the challenges posed by inadequate transportation services. We could therefore look into what technology resources could help courts facing transportation problems.

## CONCLUSION

The most significant issues for rural courts appear to be courthouse security, a lack of courthouse facilitators, video-conferencing and access to information about grants available for courthouse facilities. Our sub-committee recommends that these issues be considered by the BJA, and recommendations made as to the priority of addressing these concerns.

### Appendix – Rural Courts Survey – Summary Data

Participants:

#### **Public Trust & Confidence Committee**

Justice Mary Fairhurst, Chair  
Ms. JulieAnne Behar, Member  
Judge Bill Bowman, Member  
Judge James Docter, Member  
Barbara Fox, Member  
Honorable Kay Holland, Member  
David Johnson, Member  
Honorable Michael Killian, Member  
Kay Newman, Member  
Dennis Rabidou, Member  
Andy Sachs, Member  
Judge Laurel Siddoway, Chair  
Dr. Marion Smith, Member  
Judge Elizabeth Stephenson, Member  
Shirley Zimmerman, Member  
Margaret Fisher, Coordinator

#### **Rural Courts Subcommittee**

Judge Laurel Siddoway, Chair  
Judge Bill Bowman, Member  
Judge James Docter, Member  
Dennis Rabidou, Member  
Dr. Marion Smith, Member  
Kirsten Barron, Member

With editorial support and drafting from Burton Eggertsen

More details on the report.

Scope – rankings relative

- Perspective
- Interpose Charts from survey