WASHINGTON COURTS

**April 24, 2015**

**TO:** JISC Data Dissemination Committee

**FROM:** Stephanie Happold, AOC Data Dissemination Administrator

**RE:** John Saul request for King County District Court financial information.

## Issue

Can the Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) release King County District Court financial information to John Saul, a freelance reporter?

## Background and Recommendation

Freelance reporter John Saul submitted a request to the AOC for the amount of fines assessed by King County District Court (KCDC) for each year since 2010. He also requested the amount of fines collected, the offenses for which the fines were assessed, the names of collections agencies used, the amount paid to collection firms, and copies of the agreements. The AOC Data Warehouse does not have information on the names of collections agencies used, the amount paid to collection firms, and copies of the agreements. Further, the AOC is not authorized to release any financial data contained in the AOC Data Warehouse. Therefore, the request is being brought before the Data Dissemination Committee (DDC) to review.

The JIS Committee (JISC) authorized the DDC to act on its behalf in reviewing and acting on requests for JIS access by non-court users.[1] The DD Policy sets forth criteria which this Committee may use in deciding these requests:

- The extent to which access will result in efficiencies in the operation of a court or courts.
- The extent to which access will enable the fulfillment of a legislative mandate.
- The extent to which access will result in efficiencies in other parts of the criminal justice system.
- The risks created by permitting such access.[2]

During the past year, the Committee granted the ACLU its request for financial data housed in the AOC Data Warehouse. AOC staff recommends approval of Mr. Saul's request, however, with conditions similar to those imposed on the ACLU. Mr. Saul should meet with AOC staff to ensure there is an understanding of the data requested and what can reliably be provided. Also, the reports should be reviewed by a person delegated by this Committee. Last, the cost recovery fees should be applied and include the time spent meeting with the AOC staff to understand the desired data.

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[1] JISC Bylaws, Article 7, Secs. 1 and 2.
[2] DD Policy, Sec. IX.C.