WACDL Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers

Amy I. Muth
President

Teresa Mathis
Executive Director

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Stephanie Happold
Data Dissemination Administrator
Administrative Office of the Courts
PO Box 41170
Olympia, WA 98504-1170

Dear Ms. Happold:

Thank you for soliciting feedback on the JISC Data Dissemination Policy. We write in response to your request.

The Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers believes that all criminal defense attorneys should have the most comprehensive access to JIS information as authorized by statute and court rule. Giving defense attorneys the most information possible allows them to provide better representation for their clients and improves the functioning of the criminal justice system.

With regard to the proposed Data Dissemination Policy, we offer three thoughts.

First, the ability to quickly obtain case history information through JIS, using screens such as the DCH screen, is critical for attorneys to properly represent their clients. Currently, private attorneys, as Level 1 users, are only able to access SNCI information, and not DCH information. It appears that the proposed modifications to the policy eliminate the definition of “compiled reports,” which would open the door to Level 1 access of screens like DCH.

We understand that the policy is intended to increase access to DCH screens through AOC, which would include access to JIS data through JIS LINK, which is how most defense attorney access the information. However, Section III, D., which authorizes court clerks to disseminate data only from their particular court, seems needlessly restrictive. A statewide DCH request would pose no additional burden on administrative staff.

Second, we are concerned that the positive nature of this change will be limited by the outdated nature of the JIS backend. We urge the Committee to prioritize implementation of these changes as soon as possible by making any necessary technical accommodations.

1511 Third Avenue
Ste 503
Seattle, WA 98101
(206) 623-1302
Fax (206) 623-4257
info@wacdl.org
wacdl.org

Finally, we also support streamlining access to all financial data available through JIS. Analysis of the criminal justice system is aided by understanding the numbers and anything the DDC does to facilitate that is worthy of our support.

Thank you for soliciting our input. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Amy I. Muth
President

Aimée Sutton
Member, WACDL Board of Governors