

# The Sixth Amendment Initiative 2021 Program Overview



The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), funds a training and technical assistance (TTA) initiative to support the protection of constitutional rights under the Sixth Amendment. The TTA initiative is a unique project aimed at enhancing the capacity of state and local governments to uphold Sixth Amendment rights. This 2021 Program Overview describes the work of the Center for Court Innovation (the Center) and its partner, the National Legal Aid & Defender Association (NLADA).

## Project Goals

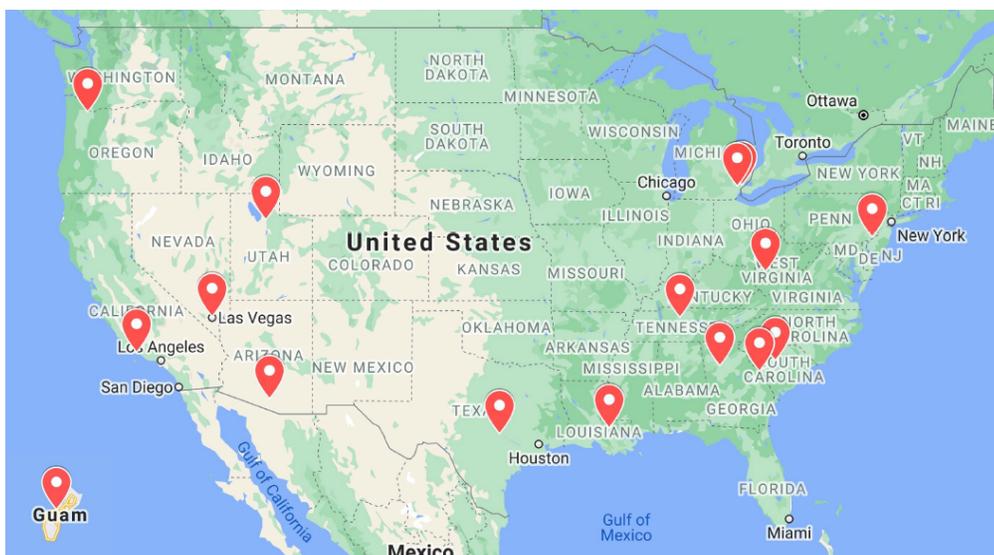
Each site receiving TTA is supported by a two-person team, an attorney practitioner with criminal court experience and a researcher with experience in data capacity-building. Informed by data and research, the TTA teams support individual sites in their efforts to build systems and tools to protect the following rights found in the Sixth Amendment:

-  **The right to a speedy and public trial by an impartial jury**
-  **The right to know the nature of the accusation**
-  **The right to confront and call witnesses**
-  **The right to have a lawyer's assistance**

## Phases of Project Work

- 1 Initial planning and needs assessment** — TTA teams work with local planning teams to conduct on-site needs assessments, summarize key findings, and develop tailored action plans.
- 2 Summary report** — TTA teams produce summary reports for the sites distilling strengths, challenges, and recommendations based on their needs assessments.
- 3 Moving through the strategic plan** — TTA teams provide ongoing remote and on-site support to the sites in carrying out their strategic plans.
- 4 Sustainability planning** — TTA teams work with the sites to make plans for continuing progress after TTA support ends.

## Project Sites



Review the Center's and the NLADA's report, "[BJA's Sixth Amendment Initiative: Strengthening the Constitutional Protections of the Accused](#)," to learn about the successes and challenges faced by the first 10 participating sites.

Click [here](#) for a full list of sites participating in the Sixth Amendment Initiative.

## Progress Snapshot

### By the numbers:

- 16 Strategic planning sites
- 580 TTA and research calls
- 14 On-site needs assessments and reports with tailored action plans
- 11 Diagnostic calls and reports detailing potential research support to meet sites' action plan goals
- 2 Preliminary site visits
- 5 Follow-up TTA site visits
- 5 Follow-up TTA site visit reports
- 5 Peer-to-peer learning opportunity webinars

TTA teams come from the Center for Court Innovation and the National Legal Aid & Defender Association.

To access additional resources in support of the Sixth Amendment, email [vavonesl@courttinnovation.org](mailto:vavonesl@courttinnovation.org) or call 917-573-1845.

[www.StrengthenTheSixth.org](http://www.StrengthenTheSixth.org)

## Video Conferencing in the Criminal Courtroom

The COVID-19 pandemic closed courthouses and led to widespread adoption of video in almost every jurisdiction in the country. The Center and NLADA partnered to host a three-part webinar series on the use of video technology in criminal court.

- [Is Video Conferencing the New Normal?](#)  
A discussion among defenders about the use of video technology at initial appearances in adult criminal cases.
- [Remote Justice: Communication in the Virtual Courtroom](#)  
Formerly incarcerated individuals and current justice reform advocates, a judge, and a psychologist share their experiences using and observing video in the courtroom.
- [Remote Justice: International Perspectives on Video Court](#)  
Panelists from France, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States discuss the past, present, and future use of video in criminal courtrooms around the world.

*"We saw as one of the benefits of moving to in-person appearances [from video] with the public defender present an increase in the amount of collaboration between not just the public defender and potential future clients, but also the ability to communicate with the judge and the district attorney about possible bond adjustments."*

Lindsay Blouin, Esq., Deputy Chief District Defender, Office of the Public Defender, East Baton Rouge Parish, LA, on the parish's 8-week pilot program. This quote comes from the webinar "Is Video Conferencing the New Normal?"



Listen to the podcast, [In Practice | Virtual Court: Barriers to Access and Fairness at Initial Appearances](#), to learn about the pros and cons of the use of video conferencing at initial appearances in adult criminal court.



Access the report, "[How Video Changes the Conversation: Social Science Research on Communication Over Video and Implications for the Criminal Courtroom](#)," to learn how social science research can inform the long-term debate about video's role when courts can safely reopen.

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