



**Royal Commission**  
into Family Violence

### **WITNESS STATEMENT OF JETHRO ANTOINE**

I, Jethro Antoine, Director of technology and of New Jersey programs, Center for Court Innovation, 520 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, New York, say as follows:

1. I am authorised by the Center for Court Innovation to make this statement on its behalf.
2. I make this statement on the basis of my own knowledge, save where otherwise stated. Where I make statements based on information provided by others, I believe such information to be true.

#### **Current role**

3. I am the Director of technology and the Director of New Jersey programs at the Center for Court Innovation. I oversee the Center's technology programs and program initiatives in New Jersey. As Director of technology I provide leadership and direction for the Center's enterprise applications, infrastructure, support services, development, and teams responsible for all aspects of computer hardware, network, data storage, desktop systems, applications, telecommunications, security and privacy, help desk support, and software development.
4. I am currently working on a number of projects that explore the use of new technology in the pre-trial setting, as well as projects that may impact the initiatives around supervised release of offenders.

#### **Background and qualifications**

5. I am a graduate of New York University, New York Law School and Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.
6. Prior to joining the Center, I practiced law with the law firm Dumler & Giroux and in private practice. At Dumler & Giroux, my practice involved the negotiation of contracts and other agreements. I also served as a senior management consultant in the public and private sectors.

7. I have worked at the Center for Court Innovation for the past 13 years. I joined the Center as a part of its technological team, where I was responsible for the development of a case management system for a number of alternative court programs operated by the Center. I worked with a number of stakeholders in New York on the analysis and development of specifications for a State-wide case management system, used to record information about individuals who were sentenced in problem solving courts. I was appointed Deputy Director of the technology team before I moved into the Center's operational arm.
8. I was the founding project director of Newark Community Solutions, where I oversaw all aspects of the project, including programming, operations, development and services. From 2007 until 2010, I was the project's principle planner.
9. I returned to the Center's main office last year to take on the role of leading the technology team. My work is primarily in technology, but it touches upon court operations in problem solving courts.

#### **Center for Court Innovation**

10. The Center for Court Innovation is a not-for-profit organisation or think tank that works with courts and communities both within the United States and abroad on issues involving alternative courts, alternative sentencing options and innovative approaches designed to address societal issues.
11. Founded as a public/private partnership between the New York State Unified Court System and the Fund for the City of New York, the Center creates operating programs to test new ideas and solve problems. The Center grew out of a single experiment, the Midtown Community Court, created in 1993 to address low-level offending around Times Square. The project's success in reducing both crime and incarceration led the Court's planners, with the support of New York State's chief judge, to establish the Center as an ongoing engine for justice reform in New York.
12. The Center's projects include community-based violence prevention projects, alternatives to incarceration, re-entry initiatives and court-based programs that seek to promote positive individual and family change, and many others.
13. The Center comprises a team of researchers, planners, technologists, attorneys, social workers and others who have come together to advance a simple idea: that if given the right tools, the justice system can aid victims, reduce crime, limit the use of

incarceration and improve public trust in government. We are committed to helping judges and other key players test new approaches to the delivery of justice, and we believe in the value of rigorous research.

14. The Center performs original research of its projects; evaluating innovative programs to determine what works and what does not, and disseminates the lessons learned, helping justice reformers around the world launch new initiatives.

### **Information sharing**

15. All jurisdictions in the United States, and the courts within those jurisdictions, including those here in New York State, face the challenge of facilitating information sharing.
16. Court processes necessarily involve the collection and storage of information. Over time, and in their individual silos, many courts have developed systems that address a very narrow part of that need to collect and store information. Similarly, service sector agencies, including police departments, have developed a system, probably several decades ago, that allows them to focus on their work and be able, to some extent, to be successful in what they do.
17. At the time that these systems were developed, the cost of technology and of system development was very, very high. Today, the technological landscape has advanced to a point where we are able to build, for considerably less cost, systems that aggregate and analyse information. We exist in an age where we recognise the importance and the value of sharing information and system interoperability. We now question why we should have to insert information into a database when a partner agency has already done so, or why we can't access information that is in a government database when that information may lead to better service delivery.
18. We have shifted away from an almost accountant's view of information; as something that exists in a ledger, and that can be added to or subtracted from, and reported on. Now, private firms as well as public organisations look at information and appreciate that there is strategically important insight contained within it. We understand that relationships are as important as the individual discrete facts such as name, number and address. We know that information can shed light on the people who live in a particular place and the challenges that they may face. Information may reveal that a young person is growing up in a community where family violence is on a discernible

upswing, as are emergency hospital visits, for instance. Depending on the context, that information can be very valuable.

19. It is important to consider what efficiencies we are able to extract by building new information sharing systems; what a brave new world, where systems talk to each other, will offer us.

### ***Court systems in the United States***

20. For some time in the United States, the Federal Government and the National Institute of Justice have been encouraging State court systems to explore the value of building systems or capabilities that allow them to talk to one another.
21. The Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative Advisory Committee, the Federal Advisory Committee to the U.S. Attorney General on justice information issues, over a decade ago called for the design and development of an information system architecture that would support both the operational requirements of justice agencies and the requirements for a national system for information sharing among the justice community. The Advisory Committee's concept of justice information sharing is defined in the broadest terms possible, reaching across disciplines, levels of government, and branches of government.
22. To be of any value, centralised databases, including court databases, require jurisdictions around the country to be able to connect; to submit information; and then to extract information as necessary. However simply building a database that allows that is not sufficient. You need to also incentivise jurisdictions to use the database, once built. Some of that incentive will be the provision of funding, so that the organisations concerned can build data exchanges or systems that would allow them to exchange information with the centralised database.
23. This is an ongoing process in the United States. It happens on the State level, with a recognition by the States that it is to their strategic advantage to make their systems such that they can communicate with each other. That then needs to trickle down to local jurisdictions, because it is those local jurisdictions that are feeding the information into the superior level systems.

### ***Recognising the benefits of information sharing***

24. The challenge presented by information sharing, and the question of whether to develop new systems, is the same at every jurisdictional level: it requires a

consideration of the status quo, against what we anticipate the benefits will be under a new regime.

25. I would suggest that many of the systems that exist in courts and in service agencies presently are not intuitive and, in some cases, require very specialised equipment. They are seldom browser based, and they do not reflect the user's experiences of technology in their day-to-day lives; technology that is otherwise two-feet away from them at any given time, in the form of their cell-phone.
26. Our newer case management systems, whether they are cloud based systems or systems that are stored on enterprise based servers that can be accessed through browsers, allow those systems to be accessed from anywhere. That is an incredible advantage. An intuitive user interface greatly reduces the burden for training, and our employees become much more efficient.
27. Today, systems are built that anticipate you are going to want to share information at a later date: we build in hooks, or ways to pull information from another system, that has a similar data exchange hook built into it. The systems are built using language and approaches that assume interoperability. There is this hidden or future value in making a decision to upgrade systems.

### ***Implementation***

28. To recognise the value of information sharing is only the first step: actually accomplishing it can be a significant task. Not only do we have to identify where the opportunities lie, and where the efficiencies lie, but then we must determine how we are going to govern the relationship among the parties involved going forward.
29. We always begin with 'what do we want to accomplish?', and then 'who should be at the table, so that we can accomplish what we want to accomplish?' In other words, we ask, 'is it enough to connect our police databases to our court databases, or are there other systems that should be interconnected?'
30. Collaboration is at the heart of the information sharing. We must ensure that all of the relevant stakeholders are at the table and are in agreement that strategic information common to all will be to the stakeholders' advantage. As to precisely what it is you are building, that will be determined by what function it is intended to serve. Mandating the issues around governance and long term financing can and should be determined from the outset.

### ***Integration with existing systems***

31. All jurisdictions had a point where they transitioned from paper to an electronic database: depending on where we are talking about, that may have happened in the 1950s or the 1960s. At that point, if someone had said, "I wish to access a particular court case from 1934", there was not necessarily an immediate expectation that the record would have been incorporated into the new system. When the transition to electronic databases was made, we recognised that they were going to be revolutionary or game changing, and that any difficulties surrounding that transition were outweighed by the associated benefits. We appreciated that there would be a point at a later date that allowed us to enter past information, as well as new. Essentially, we were essentially looking forward. We have since worked out how to incorporate past information into the electronic system, through the use of scanning technology and hyperlinks, in particular.
32. Today, we are faced with going from one electronic database to a more advanced electronic database. Undeniably, quite a significant amount of the effort, including the planning; the requirements gathering and the determination of functional specifications, will relate to data migration. That cannot be avoided. We know that on the day that we launch a new system, there are going to be extant cases, and people will require access to them. However that alone should not deter more widespread advances in information sharing.

### ***Data access privileges***

33. When we think about information that is made available to public agencies, or that is collected by public agencies and that they then wish to share, we also need to think also about the role of data access privileges that can be overlayed into the system.
34. How data privileges may operate can be demonstrated, for example, by considering the interactions between two systems: a police system and a court system, accessed by members of those respective organisations and by the public. The police system is used by officers to enter information that is generated when a person that is arrested. The court system, on the other hand, is populated by court administrative staff and clerks when they initialise court cases. As we know, the court staff would prefer to be able to access information that was entered into the police system, including the police report. Instead of then re-entering that information into the court system from a hard copy of the report, that information would be shared. In this

scenario, the users of the court system, including judges and attorneys, could see 100% of that information. Into the court system, we could also build an interface so that the public could see information about when a case is scheduled, the court room where the matter will be heard, the charges, and so on. Of the information that is available to the public on that interface, only the police charge would have originated in the police database.

35. The court system so described is an example of a system that utilises information that was entered into another system, and shared with it, and then presents a broader set of information to another group of users, the court participants, that have limited rights and perform a particular role. Further, the very same system has another interface accessible by the public, and the design of that interface and the rules that have been built into its logic restrict the information. This all follows from planning and, again, a consideration of what we are looking to accomplish, regarding not only the systems that we want to build, but also the information we wish to share.
36. Privacy concerns can be addressed, and they should be addressed, in planning and design.

#### **Red Hook Community Justice Center**

37. The Red Hook Community Justice Center is a multijurisdictional community court project in the Red Hook district of Brooklyn, a borough of New York City. It serves as an example of the Center for Court Innovation developing and implementing a solution that allows a number of previously existing, discrete systems to talk to each other, and be more user friendly for those concerned.
38. In Red Hook, a single judge hears neighbourhood cases from three police precincts, covering approximately 200,000 people, who would under ordinary circumstances go to three different courts: civil, family and criminal. The judge hears matters involving juveniles, and that may involve family violence. In hearing these cases, the Justice Center recognises that neighbourhood problems do not conform to the arbitrary, jurisdictional boundaries of the modern court system. Red Hook offers a swifter and more coordinated judicial response.
39. The Red Hook judge has an array of sanctions and services at his or her disposal. These include community restitution projects, short-term psychoeducational groups, and long-term treatment, including drug and mental health treatments, and trauma-focused psychotherapy. Red Hook features an on-site clinic staffed by social service

professionals who use trauma and evidence informed approaches to assess and connect individuals to appropriate services. The Justice Center also works to connect court-involved youth to strengths-based programming, including project and peer education programs.

40. The Center for Court Innovation built a case management system for Red Hook staff to collect information about individuals who were sentenced or mandated by the court to participate in the project. This includes biographical information that assists staff to decide what types of services or treatment would be appropriate for a particular person. The same system is also used to track the person's progress that occurs as a result of or subsequent to any court appearances.
41. When the system was originally designed, it was identified early on that we wanted the court actors, including the judge and the attorneys, to use the system because that would facilitate the sharing of information. It provides the judge with a screen containing all of the information that is needed regarding a person that appears before him or her. Some of that information is found in the New York State's case management system, including the person's criminal history. Other information comes from separate databases. When making a decision about what is best for a person, it is very important that all of the relevant information is before the decision maker.
42. The purpose of the Center's case management system is to streamline the decision making process; to offer better, clearer, more accurate information for all involved, and especially for judges. We know that often a judge will not have all the information available to the parties. That information may be in the court room, however it may be buried in a stack of paper before each attorney, or be in the hands of a social service provider. The judge is left to ask, "Well, what happened last time we saw this person?" or "When did we see this person last?" It requires the judge to ask the right questions and the attorney, for instance, to present the most relevant information. Our case management system overcomes those issues.
43. Unfortunately, the system in Red Hook does not allow the users to enter information back into the New York State system. There is a prevailing mindset amongst government, even when they agree to participate in a system like Red Hook, that only it can be trusted to enter information into its own systems. That is a significant hurdle to overcome, and it effects the efficacy of the system more generally. Ideally, we would want to be able to contribute to the official record or official system, to the



extent that some action or activity has taken place relating to a service that we deliver. We would wish to streamline the process so that it doesn't have to be entered twice. That is yet to happen, and it reflects the organisational culture of those involved.

44. Slowly, however, that culture is changing. As government contracts out services to agencies more and more, there is a requirement that those service providers use particular State data collection systems, and there is a need for those providers to contribute for contractual obligations to be met.
45. The next iteration of the Center's case management application is being built on a popular cloud-computing platform. Where in the past, agencies would run case management applications or programs from software downloaded on a physical computer or server in their building, cloud computing allows users access the same kinds of applications through the internet. The Center's cloud-computing based case management system will provide increased flexibility; security; and disaster recovery. Crucially, the application will be adaptable to phones and tablets, allowing for portability and flexibility -- frontline staff will not be tied to a desktop computer. And a dashboard feature will give managers and researchers real-time access to the metrics and information they identify as important.
46. Most importantly, this new application is being built with the intent that third-parties, like treatment providers and government partners, will access some of the data we collect and will in-turn contribute information from their systems.



**Jethro Antoine**

Dated: 12 August 2015