



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Smarter Justice

Georgia Could Save Millions and Reduce Jailings with Court Reminders

On November 21 at The Home Depot headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia Justice Project (GJP) convened leaders from Georgia courts and state agencies to examine cost-saving measures that would improve court appearance rates and reduce jail crowding. The convening, held in partnership with national behavioral science nonprofit ideas42 and featuring closing remarks from Georgia Supreme Court Justice Verda Colvin, highlighted practical steps that could reduce arrests, prevent driver's license suspensions, and save judicial systems millions of dollars annually.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of Georgians miss a court date. More than 105,000 driver's licenses are suspended annually due to Failure to Appear, representing only a portion of missed hearings statewide. A single missed court date creates more than case delays. It costs the state an estimated \$1,496 in court personnel and law enforcement time and can trigger warrants, default judgments, and loss of employment. Research shows that many people miss court because they forget or are balancing competing obligations, meaning a simple oversight can ripple through families, workplaces, and public systems.

"It's rare to have a triple-win opportunity that benefits our clients, the court system, and financial savings for the state," said GJP Executive Director Doug Ammar. "This is one of those opportunities."

During the Court Notices and Reminder Convening, GJP and ideas42 guided participants through evidence-based interventions proven to increase court appearance rates. The same reminder strategies used by dentists and veterinarians to ensure clients show up for appointments also work for courts. By redesigning court notices to make next steps clearer and sending text reminders for upcoming hearings, courts can reduce Failure to Appear rates by 36 percent. According to ideas42, the state would save an estimated \$54 million for every 100,000 avoided missed court dates. Sending text reminders for 100,000 cases annually costs as little as \$2,390 and no more than \$41,000 depending on the platform, making this one of the highest-return investments available to Georgia courts.



Attendees also heard from local court leaders who have already implemented these strategies with encouraging results. Judge Ryan Hope of Athens-Clarke County State Court (previously of City of Athens Municipal Court), Court Services Director Nate Mingo of the City of Riverdale Municipal Court, and Clerk Charlie Lavelle of the City of Cleveland Municipal Court described how improved noticing systems have increased efficiency, reduced missed court dates, and prevented unnecessary warrants and driver's license suspensions. Sean Golan, Program Manager for the Judicial Council of Georgia and Administrative Office of the Courts, shared updates on a new statewide Case Management System that will include text reminder capabilities and behavioral-science-informed template forms.

Justice Colvin closed the program by urging jurisdictions across the state to adopt improved notice and reminder practices as a foundational step for ensuring access to justice. She emphasized that higher appearance rates benefit judicial staff, law enforcement, employers, court users, and their families.

"Improved court notices and reminders are a vital next step for our courts," said Justice Colvin. "We ensure true access to justice when the public knows when and how to fulfill their judicial obligations. There is no need more basic."

Georgia Justice Project, ideas42, and the Administrative Office of the Courts will continue working with partners statewide to expand improved notice and reminder systems and support smarter, more effective justice in Georgia. Courts and stakeholders interested in participating or seeking technical assistance may contact Emily Spears at ESpears@GJP.org.

About Georgia Justice Project

For nearly 40 years, Georgia Justice Project has reduced barriers to reentry and worked to reform Georgia's criminal legal system through direct legal representation, policy advocacy, and community engagement. GJP continues to lead statewide efforts to expand second chances and build a more equitable Georgia.

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