

# TechBeat

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by JTIC

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## About TechBeat



TechBeat is the monthly newsmagazine of the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center System. Our goal is to keep you up to date on technologies for the public safety community and research efforts in government and private industry.

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**The NLECTC System**

The Justice Technology Information Center (JTIC), a component of the National Institute of Justice's National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC) System, serves as an information resource for technology and equipment related to law enforcement, corrections and courts and as a primary point of contact for administration of a voluntary equipment standards and testing program for public safety equipment.



JTIC is part of the NLECTC System, which includes the Justice Innovation Center for Small, Rural, Tribal, and Border Criminal Justice Agencies, which focuses on the unique law enforcement challenges faced by those types of agencies; the National Criminal Justice Technology Research, Test and Evaluation Center, which provides technology-related research and testing and operational evaluations of technologies; and the Forensic Technology Center of Excellence, which supports technology research, development, testing and evaluation efforts in forensic science. In addition, a Priority Criminal Justice Needs Initiative exists to assess and prioritize technology needs across the criminal justice community.

For information, visit [www.justnet.org](http://www.justnet.org) or contact (800) 248-2742.



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The National Institute of Justice is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the Office for Victims of Crime; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking.



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## **National Institute of Justice Launches New Criminal Justice Testing and Evaluation Consortium**

### **National Institute of Justice Launches New Criminal Justice Testing and Evaluation Consortium**

*The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) recently introduced the Criminal Justice Testing and Evaluation Consortium (CJTEC), a new program that unites the agency's compliance testing and standards development efforts with a new focus on identifying the criminal justice community's most important technology needs and developing rigorous and objective data about them.*

CJTEC Director and Chief Forensic Scientist Jeri Roper-Miller says that rather than attempting to influence current practice, the new program focuses on “getting ahead of the curve on innovative technologies. CJTEC is designed to help the entire criminal justice community get objective information as early in the adoption process as possible. The idea is to focus NIJ's resources on rigorous testing and evaluation of technologies that we expect to

come into practice in the next three to five years.”

To that end, NIJ has broken CJTEC down into four interlocking tasks that work together to bring those results to the courts, corrections and law enforcement communities. The process starts with technology foraging, also known as technology scouting, as Task 1. The idea, Ropero-Miller says, is that CJTEC will assess the full range of technologies in commercial development and try to determine what’s close to implementation for the law enforcement, courts and corrections communities.



“For example, wearables is an emerging area, and we’re doing some foraging there. We’re looking at how wearables can be deployed in both law enforcement and corrections to do a variety of tasks,” Ropero-Miller says. “A lot of people are wondering whether wearables can actually determine the safety and wellness of officers on duty. We’re looking to promote understanding of how these tools can actually

make practitioners’ lives better.”

Another example is driving under the influence of drugs (DUID); Ropero-Miller says CJTEC is taking a look at various roadside technologies and practices that will help officers determine if drivers are under the influence of marijuana or other drugs, in addition to examining new methods of alcohol testing. Task 2 at times may flow directly out of Task 1: it’s the actual testing and evaluation work.

“Through foraging, we will identify the most important issues and develop rigorous and objective data about those technologies,” Ropero-Miller says. These testing and evaluation efforts take place through the efforts of various consortium members, including lead agency RTI International and various universities, criminal justice agencies and criminal justice associations.

“These combined efforts will help us capitalize on the very best expertise in T&E, and allow us to focus on areas where information would be lacking without NIJ’s funding this work,” Ropero-Miller says.

In addition to the consortium of agencies that makes up the heart of CJTEC, the new program will also draw on the efforts of another NIJ-funded consortium, the Criminal Justice Priority Technology Needs Initiative. Ropero-Miller explains that the Initiative convenes working groups of subject-matter experts who identify specific research needs in assigned focus areas, and CJTEC will also use their reports to determine where to focus Task 1 and Task 2 efforts.

“We’re essentially doing secondary research, as well as potential test and evaluation efforts, in the areas they identify. We’ll be doing landscape studies of available technology, similar to those RTI does now with the Forensic Technology Center of Excellence, as well as more traditional operational evaluations where we put the technology in the hands of users and let them assess practicality, robustness, probability of implementation and ability to meet or exceed manufacturer’s claims,” she says. “We’ll also be doing assessments of the impact of putting this technology into place in the criminal justice setting.”

CJTEC’s Task 4 will back up those efforts by continuing NIJ’s standards development process, previously conducted by the Justice Technology Information Center (JTIC has been closing out efforts throughout 2019, and will end on December 31.) CJTEC takes over the management of the existing Special Technical Committees (STCs) of practitioners, subject-matter experts and laboratory personnel, including those for ballistic- and stab-resistant body armor. Those efforts are expected to wind down in 2020 with the release of new versions of the existing standards. CJTEC will then turn its emphasis to new areas to include ballistic shields, firearms and civil disturbance unit (CDU) equipment.

“We expect CDU equipment to be a fairly major enterprise. We’re looking at its full range and we expect several standards to be updated or created,” Ropero-Miller says. “This will be a major part of what we’ll be working on over the next two to three years. There’s a great deal of interest in making sure that officers not only have the tools to do their work safely and reliably, but they also have access to safe and effective policies and procedures. We’re looking at creating a broader STC that focuses on all kinds of personal protective equipment.”

And finally, Task 3 maintains a long-standing NIJ effort: Operation of the Compliance Testing Program (CTP). The majority of the staff that ran the program under JTIC moved over to CJTEC, with a goal of making the transition so seamless that program participants and the criminal justice community barely noticed a change.

“The goal was to have no interruption in the testing process. We communicated the need for a brief shutdown to the stakeholders, and they planned accordingly,” says CTP Manager Alex Sundstrom. “We’re now back up and running and everything is on track.”

Sundstrom did note that manufacturers have slowed down on developing new ballistic-resistant models that comply with the 0101.06 version of the standard in anticipation of the publication of the 0101.07 version. This allowed staff to temporarily focus on ballistic-resistant Follow-up Inspection and Testing (FIT) and prepare for the inception of a FIT program for stab-resistant models as well.

CTP Task Lead Lance Miller notes there were several challenges in switching program management from one company to another, as well as physically moving operations from the Washington, D.C., metro area to Raleigh, N.C.

“There were several challenges, but we focused on making the change seamless to program stakeholders to the largest extent possible. There are still a lot of things going on behind the scenes, but as issues emerge, staff has responded. We’ve been continuously communicating with NIJ, and I believe that nearly everyone felt the transition was indeed seamless,” he says.

For more information on CJTEC, contact Jeri Roper-Miller at [jerimiller@rti.org](mailto:jerimiller@rti.org) or NIJ Program Manager Steve Schuetz at [Steven.Schuetz@nij.ojp.gov](mailto:Steven.Schuetz@nij.ojp.gov).

*Article photo: Justice Technology Information Center*

*Main photo: Justice Technology Information Center*





## **Vicarious Trauma Series Provides Coping Assistance to Forensic Professionals**

### **Vicarious Trauma Series Provides Coping Assistance to Forensic Professionals**

*Grieving family members, unable to understand the need for autopsies when their loved ones obviously died in a fire. Parents and spouses wondering if terrorism or an accident caused a serious plane crash. And the seemingly unending quest to identify victims of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center.*

All of those challenges – from the March 25, 1990 Happy Land Social Club fire and the Nov. 12, 2001 American Airlines Flight 587 crash, in addition to the 9/11 victims – faced members of the New York City Medical Examiner’s Office during the tenure of Dr. Thomas Brondolo as deputy commissioner. When Dr. Brondolo left that office, he began reflecting on the need for research and the development of resources to help coroners and medical examiners deal with the aftermath of such stressful events. The results of that research, conducted under a partnership between St. Johns University and Kent State University, were presented during

an October webinar, “Handling Difficult and Disturbing Cases for Coroners and Medical Examiners,” presented as part of a National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Forensic Technology Center of Excellence (FTCoE) webinar series on experiencing and coping with exposure to vicarious trauma. Like all of the webinars in this series, an archival version of the event can be accessed [here](#).

According to the FTCoE website, forensic nurses, crime scene investigators, forensic practitioners, medicolegal death investigators and other professionals experience vicarious trauma through exposure to the aftermath of violent crime and to its victims. Often, these professionals present symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and may use unhealthy coping mechanisms such as substance abuse or



other forms of self-medication. Also, the criminal justice culture’s stress on self-reliance often keeps these individuals from seeking the help they need. Some research efforts have taken place on coping with vicarious trauma for first responders, but fewer resources are available for forensic professionals. With this webinar series, the FTCoE seeks to explore common strategies and resources derived from existing research and offer guidance to forensic practitioners and the broader criminal justice community on how they can be leveraged. Events also address recommended methods of maintaining workforce resiliency.

Other webinars in the series include:

- Digital and Multimedia Forensics: The Impact of Disturbing Media. Speaker: Dr. Kathryn Seigfried-Spellar.
- The Vicarious Trauma Toolkit – an Evidence-Informed Resource for Organizations. Speakers: Dr. Beth E. Molnar and Karen Irene Kalergis, MA.
- Psychological Survival in a Violent Career. Speaker: Dr. David Christiansen.
- Psychological Survival in a Violent Career: Follow-up. Speaker: Dr. Christiansen.

Additional FTCoE Resources on vicarious trauma include an episode of Just Science, the center’s podcast series (Forensic Advancement: Just Psychological Resiliency) that includes an interview with Dr. Christiansen, and an older webinar titled “Health, Stress, and Wellness

in Policing: Current Issues and Emergent Solutions.”

Additional FTCoE webinars on topics as varied as using Rapid DNA in disaster victim identification, providing assistance to victims of sexual assault and the latest firearm/toolmark research can be found [here](#). Access to all events is free. Notifications about upcoming events are published in the FTCoE’s weekly electronic newsletter; subscribe [here](#).

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## Just Science Continues DNA Season

### *Forensic Technology Center of Excellence*

The NIJ Forensic Technology Center of Excellence (FTCoE) continues to produce episodes of the DNA season of its ongoing *Just Science* podcast series, which focuses on DNA evidence and its use in forensic investigation. Topics addressed in the series include solving the Golden State Killer case, investigative genetic genealogy, labs and Lean Six Sigma, genetic variation and the post-conviction dynamic.

The always-evolving use of DNA evidence has had a significant impact on the criminal justice system. Since the National Commission on the Future of DNA Evidence met in in the 1990s, DNA has become one of the most respected disciplines in forensic science.

All episodes can be accessed on the FTCoE [website](#). The FTCoE also provides related reading on its [website](#), which provides links to several reports on NIJ-funded research reports on the use of familial DNA in the criminal justice field.



# Report on Impact of Marijuana Legalization Released

*National Institute of Justice*

*Measuring the Criminal Justice System Impacts of Marijuana Legalization and Decriminalization Using State Data* (July 2019) details a National Institute of Justice (NIJ)- and Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)-funded research project designed to analyze the impact of marijuana legalization and decriminalization on state criminal justice system resources. The project goal was to analyze quantitative and qualitative data in 11 targeted states to address three research questions:

1. What are the impacts of marijuana legalization and decriminalization on criminal justice resources in Colorado, Washington and Oregon?
2. What are the impacts on criminal justice resources in states that border states (Nebraska, Nevada, Oklahoma, Utah and Kansas) that have legalized marijuana?
3. What are the impacts of marijuana legalization and decriminalization on drug trafficking through northern and southwest border states (Arizona, California, Idaho, Oregon and

Washington)?

Analysis of project data suggests that legalizing the recreational use of marijuana resulted in fewer marijuana-related arrests and court cases; legalizing marijuana did not have a noticeable impact on indicators in states that bordered those that legalized; and there were no noticeable indications of an increase in arrests related to transportation or trafficking offenses in states along the northern or southern borders. Interviews with law enforcement officials did identify a number of concerns about the legalization of marijuana, including the potency of marijuana products, increased marijuana use among youth, the influx of people from out-of-town or out-of-state, and increases in incidents of drugged driving.

Download the report from [here](#).

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