

# NEWS RELEASE

## Superior Court of California County of Alameda

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Superior Court of Alameda County Wins Technology Award for Risk Assessment Program**

New program automates reviews of defendants' criminal background.

**Oakland – May 16, 2023** – The Superior Court of Alameda County won the Justice Ming Chin Award for Technology Innovation for its automated risk assessment program that quickens the pace of justice by creating pretrial reports as defendants are booked into jail.

The Court's new program is allowing eligible defendants arrested for certain non-violent crimes to be released within 24 hours while also providing the court an almost instant, comprehensive criminal background check on every person booked into a jail in Alameda County.

The program is also saving taxpayers millions of dollars by reducing the jail population and eliminating the need to have staff present 24 hours a day to conduct interviews, research criminal backgrounds and write pretrial reports.

"This program is a game changer for Alameda County and a shining example for all courts in California," said Judge Charles Smiley, the Superior Court of Alameda County Presiding Judge. "I'm proud of our team that continues to work to bring justice to all county residents."

About 10% of the roughly 74 people booked into jail each day in Alameda County are eligible for release before arraignment. Eligibility considers the risk to public safety, the alleged crime committed, past failures to appear in court, criminal history, and numerous other factors. Release may be conditioned on requirements that the arrested person stay away from certain persons and places or abide by specific personal conduct orders.

If a defendant is eligible for release before arraignment, the program automatically reviews the person's criminal past gathering data from local and state databases. A report is created and sent for judicial review along with the probable cause declaration from the arresting police officer.

Defendants not eligible for pre-arraignment release are also assessed and automated reports are included in a package of information that is sent to the prosecutor, defense attorney and a judge prior to an arraignment.

The Court began work to automate its pretrial risk assessment program in February 2022 to save costs, make sure defendants who were eligible for release were not spending unnecessary time in jail, and to ensure each person arrested has a full pretrial report completed before their arraignment hearing. The program was implemented in October 2022.

Previously, pretrial reports were conducted by a probation officer and included an interview of the person arrested. Both aspects of that program caused hardships. Having a probation officer on duty 24



hours a day was costly and time consuming while attempting to interview every person arrested was impossible.

“This is yet another example of how our dedicated staff works tirelessly to provide justice to all,” said Chad Finke, Court Executive Officer. “We’re honored to be recognized for this cutting-edge program.”

The Justice Ming Chin Award for Technology Innovation is administered by the Technology Committee of the Judicial Council of California. The award seeks to recognize “technology programs or solutions that have increased access to justice through innovation.”

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