

PROVIDING TIMELY, RELEVANT TRAINING THROUGH JUSTICE CLEARINGHOUSE ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

AN INTERVIEW WITH ELIZABETH ORTIZ,
ARIZONA PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Every organization and agency is facing many of the same challenges: budgets are being squeezed, people are being asked to do more with fewer resources, under tighter timelines and often with little to no time for reinvesting in training for their teams.

We spoke with Elizabeth Ortiz, Executive Director of the Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys Advisory Council to understand the challenges this membership organization was facing, and how they chose to partner with JCH to provide a wide array of educational opportunities for their members.

Justice Clearinghouse Editors (JCH): Tell us a little bit about APAAC and what it is that your organization does, who you serve, etc.

Elizabeth Ortiz: The Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys Advisory Council (APAAC) has been around for over 40 years and was created by statute. As a state entity, our primary purpose under the statute is to train



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prosecutors and prosecution staff...so our “umbrella,” includes the state, county and city prosecutors within the state of Arizona.

JCH: So, let’s go back a few years. What was happening with APAAC that started you down this path towards building a relationship with Justice Clearinghouse?

Elizabeth: APAAC has not received any general fund money from our state legislature. Our funding comes from a very small percentage of the fines and surcharges that defendants pay when go through the criminal justice system. And for the past few years, we have seen a steady, yearly decline in that revenue.

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About that time, we came across Justice Clearinghouse. We were very impressed with both the variety and the quality of webinars, and the team's responsiveness whenever we reached out to Justice Clearinghouse for any reason. We decided to create an organizational membership so that all our prosecutors in Arizona would have access to Justice Clearinghouse's trainings.

When we met with Aaron (Gorrell, founder of Justice Clearinghouse) we had such a great discussion about the value of the trainings that Justice Clearinghouse had been doing. At the time, we were trying to figure out a way that we could allow more prosecutors to access those trainings. Many individual prosecutors offices have a very limited training budget. So even though there wasn't a high cost to the webinars, even that low cost would often be prohibitive for individual prosecutors to access them.

And so that's when APAAC and Justice Clearinghouse brainstormed and came up with the idea of doing an organizational membership...I believe APAAC is the first organization to do a cooperative agreement that would give our members unlimited access.

JCH: So what were some of the deciding factors as to why you wanted to become an organizational member?

Elizabeth: The factors were first and foremost, that the trainings were relevant and broad in scope because our prosecutors

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deal with anything from DUI cases, death penalty cases, domestic violence, drugs, to car theft. They deal with victim trauma issues. They deal with criminal justice, and administration issues.

The prosecutors across the state are dealing with such a wide variety of issues. Justice Clearinghouse trainings really covered a very wide scope of related issues. We found those trainings to be really top quality. We were very impressed. We were able to find a subscription price that fit within our budget and met the need of our prosecutors.

**JCH: A lot of associations provide trainings or webinars or at least have considered doing so at some point in time. How did this approach support your own program?**

**Elizabeth:** We have a very robust webinar series of trainings that are original to APAAC. We have an onsite training center at our APAAC office that will seat approximately 30 in-person attendees. We also webcast and record those trainings and then place them in our on-demand library on our website for members.

So for us, Justice Clearinghouse is another resource for our prosecutors. It doesn't replace the training that APAAC does. It supplements the training and it brings a slightly different perspective because it's coming from another organization.

***JCH: I like how you've explained it. Partnering with Justice Clearinhouse complements what you're already doing.***

Elizabeth: I am so proud of the trainings that APAAC does. Our trainings are absolutely top notch. When you bring in other top-notch trainings that are created and presented from a completely different organization, sometimes you get different topics, and sometimes similar topics, but with a different perspective on the issue. And that's what we want. We want to give our prosecutors that full perspective on all issues.

***JCH: So what have your association members said about Justice Clearinghouse's webinars? How have they benefitted? How have they been able to apply what they've learned?***



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**Elizabeth:** We're in our 3rd or 4th year with Justice Clearinghouse, and the feedback that we've gotten is that the topics are relevant, the advertisements and the announcements for the webinars are timely and do a good job of describing what the webinars are about.

From an administrative point of view, Justice Clearinghouse has just really done a great job in making the experience very user-friendly.

***JCH: Putting your consulting hat on for just a moment... Let's say an employer or another association is considering building a similar relationship with Justice Clearinghouse. What would your advice be in terms of the decision-making process, interacting with Justice Clearinghouse, etc.***

**Elizabeth:** Last year, I was president of the National Association of Prosecutor Coordinators. In one of my president letters to the members, I outlined why organizations should consider associating themselves with Justice Clearinghouse.

I encouraged my colleagues to think of Justice Clearinghouse as an opportunity to do more for less. That if they did have a training program and they were able to continue to fund that program, then Justice Clearinghouse could complement their own in-house training programs. But if you have to cut back on those training programs, due to a lack of resources, you can provide a wide variety of relevant, top-notch relevant training probably for a much lower price than what it costs to put on one training yourself.