Sentinel Events Initiative

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A sentinel event is a significant negative outcome that signals underlying weakness in the system or process.

- Wrongful release (individual quickly reoffends)
- Wrongful arrest or conviction
- In-custody death
- Officer-involved shooting or officer injury
- Excessive, expensive pretrial detentions
- “Near miss,” “good catch,” high frequency/low impact
The Sentinel Events Initiative explores a non-blaming, all-stakeholder, forward-looking mechanism for learning to detect and address criminal justice system weaknesses.

Successfully implemented:
- Medicine
- Transportation
- Industry/Production
- US Forest Service
The goal of sentinel event reviews is to reduce **significant negative outcomes** in the criminal justice system.

Bad events are often the result of multiple small actions:
- Getting past the “bad apple” framework
- “Swiss cheese” approach
NIJ is committed to the Sentinel Events Initiative

- Visiting Fellowship
- Roundtables
- Working Groups
- Publications
- Research Investments
- Strategic Plan

- Pilot Site Implementation
  - Milwaukee
  - Baltimore
  - Philadelphia
- National Demonstration Project
Attorney Generals play a natural leadership role

- Sees whole system panoptically
- Aware of potential public funds liability consequences of both reviews and event repetitions
- Can build capacity to make reviews possible for smaller departments/jurisdictions
National Association of Attorneys General

Thursday, June 21
If It is Broke[n], Fix It: Innovative Approaches to Diagnosing, Repairing, and Improving Systems

NAAG 2018 Summer Meeting
New Orleans, La. | June 19-21, 2018