

**Strategic Plan for  
the Maryland Judiciary  
2015-2020**

*moving justice forward*



“Mere access to the courthouse doors does not by itself assure a proper functioning of the adversary process.”

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall



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[mdcourts.gov](http://mdcourts.gov)

## Greetings,

All people who come to Maryland's courts want and deserve a court system they can trust and that treats them fairly and with respect, an independent branch of government that advances justice through the rule of law, and a system that provides fair, efficient, effective and accessible justice for all.

We have worked over the past year to improve our governance structure, to modernize court and administrative processes, and to develop strategic goals for the future of justice in Maryland.

In this strategic plan, we have articulated a vision and mission, identified guiding principles, and outlined action steps to help ensure that our vision becomes reality: being an efficient, innovative and accessible court system that works collaboratively with its justice partners to serve the people with integrity and transparency.

I am pleased to share this strategic plan and commit the courts to fulfilling their mission of providing efficient, effective, and fair justice for all. Our success will depend on the dedication and leadership of our judges and staff at all levels.

Together, we are moving Maryland's justice system forward.

Mary Ellen Barbera,  
Chief Judge  
Court of Appeals of Maryland



# mission

The Maryland Judiciary provides fair, efficient and effective justice for all.

# vision

The Maryland Judiciary advances justice for all who come to Maryland's courts. We are an efficient, innovative and accessible court system that works collaboratively with justice partners to serve the people with integrity and transparency.

# goals

1. Provide access to justice
2. Be responsive and adaptable to changing community needs
3. Communicate effectively with stakeholders
4. Improve systems and processes
5. Be accountable
6. Assure the highest level of service
7. Build partnerships
8. Use resources wisely



## Critical Success Factors

- **Effective communications**
- **Accountability**
- **Dedicated and professional workforce**
- **Accessible justice**
- **Well-developed collaborative relationships**
- **Efficient systems and processes**
- **Well-resourced and fiscally responsible**

# 1 Provide access to justice

The Maryland Judiciary ensures equal access to justice. The courts develop services and programs that facilitate access to and understanding of court processes.

**As part of our action steps to meet this goal, we will:**

- Identify and respond to the many and varied needs of all those who access our courts.
- Address barriers that may prevent access to courts and legal services. Examples include expanding interpretation services and making our public spaces more accessible and easily negotiated.
- Ensure that people who come to our courts without a lawyer know about legal resources available to them. Examples include improving the information available, training staff to respond to requests, promoting the services that are available online, by phone and in person, and improving the planning and coordination of legal services delivery.

# 2 Be responsive and adaptable to changing community needs

The Maryland Judiciary provides responsive leadership, ensures a respectful forum for justice, and proactively addresses the changing needs of its constituents and employees.

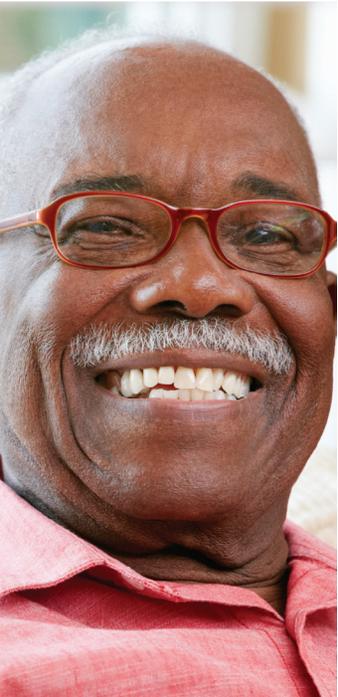
With the aim of helping families and our communities and, in particular, our most vulnerable citizens, children and seniors, we have developed these action steps:



- Use the strength of our state's vast and rich diversity to think in new ways to support our varied populations as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- With an aim of reducing recidivism, develop, expand and implement appropriate problem-solving courts and specialty dockets in areas such as substance abuse, mental health, alcoholism and other needs.
- Find new ways to meet the needs of older people who access our courts.
- Promote case management tracks that focus on business, technology and science issues before the courts to provide informed decisions and timelier, more predictable and reliable dispositions.
- Promote appropriate alternative dispute resolution (ADR) programs to provide better outcomes with less cost for the people we serve while using court resources more efficiently.
- Equip judges, family magistrates and court staff with the training, education and resources needed to address effectively the unique needs of juveniles who come before the courts.
- Deliver an accessible guardianship process that serves our older citizens and protects the rights of the person for whom guardianship is sought.
- Ensure safeguards to guide, monitor and regularly review the actions of court-appointed guardians.

## 3

# Communicate effectively with stakeholders



The Maryland Judiciary communicates effectively to inform and educate the public, the bar, justice partners and staff.

## Our action steps include:

- Strengthen public awareness of the Judiciary's programs, projects, services and initiatives using a variety of communication methods such as print, website, videos and personal interaction.
- Promote knowledge and understanding of the Judiciary through educational programs, outreach efforts and online resources.
- Develop partnerships with state, local and specialty bar associations to educate citizens about the law and the legal system.
- Provide and promote consistent and active messaging within the Judiciary and from the Judiciary to the public and other stakeholders.
- Expand the use of effective and efficient electronic communications throughout the Judiciary and to the public we serve.
- Encourage judges and staff to volunteer with community groups and bar associations.

## 4

# Improve systems and processes

The Maryland Judiciary is forward-thinking and focused on continuous improvements to systems and processes, helping the courts to better serve the people and provide for prompt, efficient and just resolution of cases.

**In order to achieve this goal, we will:**

- Implement the electronic case management system, Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC), throughout the state to improve efficiency, streamline processes, modernize records management and provide more convenience for people who file cases in our courts, including e-filing, a welcome tool for the bar and self-represented litigants who wish to streamline filing.
- Identify, evaluate and implement the best of the new technologies to improve communications, operations, financial systems, video-conferencing, etc.
- Encourage and improve communications among courts to enhance and standardize coordination of policies and procedures within the Judiciary.
- Standardize case flow standards as the electronic case management system, MDEC, continues to be launched statewide.



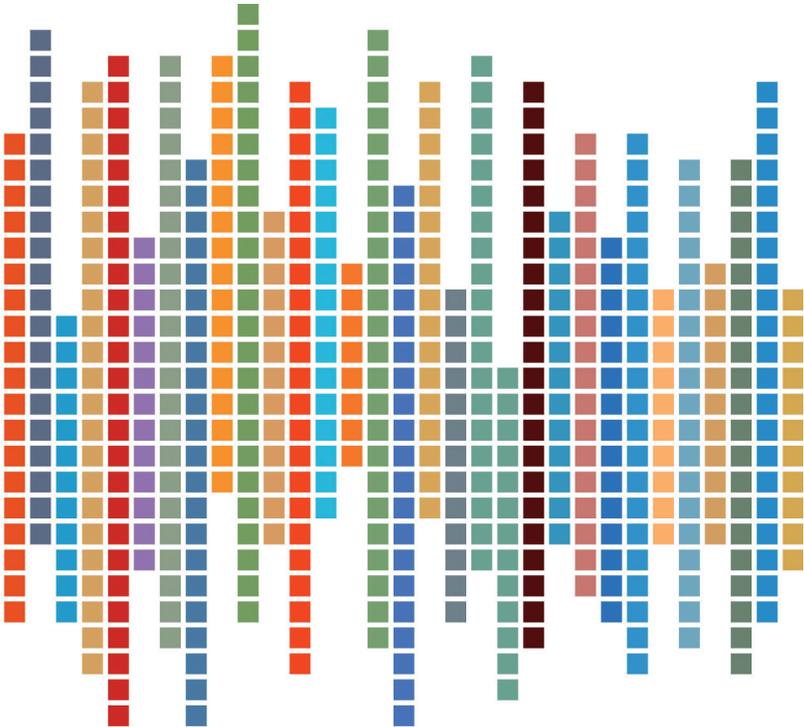
## 5

# Be accountable

The Maryland Judiciary holds itself to the highest standards of excellence and administers justice with diligence and integrity.

## Our action plans to reach this goal include:

- Resolve cases as early as possible while ensuring the rights of the parties.
- Make our processes more transparent, allowing the public to see what we do and how long it takes to do it.
- Continuously review and improve upon case-time standards, the standards by which the court experience can be measured at every level of Maryland's courts.
- Improve the public's access to data, such as posting case flow statistics on the Judiciary's website.
- Inform the public about court records: what information is included, what is accessible, and how to access court records.



# 6 Assure the highest level of service

Because a dedicated and professional workforce is essential to providing quality service to all, the Maryland Judiciary trains, develops and supports a professional and skilled workforce.

## Our action plans include:

- Establish and support ongoing training and professional development programs for staff that focus on customer service, interaction with the public and integration of technology into court processes.
- Identify and develop incentives to improve teamwork, professionalism and a deeper understanding of the Judiciary's mission and goals to serve Marylanders.
- Share information about key issues and topics throughout all levels of the Judiciary's workforce.
- Listen and respond to suggestions and feedback from employees at every level.



# 7 Build partnerships

The Maryland Judiciary works collaboratively with its justice partners and the public to fulfill its mission.

## Our action plans include:

- Promote partnerships with the business community and leaders to ensure an understanding of the Judiciary and its role in the community.
- Work with a statewide lawyers' committee to educate the public, as well as other branches of government, about the rule of law and the role of the Judiciary.
- Enhance our court programs and services by actively working with the executive and legislative branches, government agencies and other stakeholders to foster the necessary resources to efficiently meet the evolving needs of Marylanders.



# 8 Use resources wisely

The Maryland Judiciary uses public funds wisely to assure sufficient resources for personnel, facilities, programs, equipment and technology, all with the aim of efficiently administering justice and providing exceptional public service.

## Our action plans include:

- Develop a strategy for ensuring the equitable distribution of resources across the Judiciary to ensure that all courts have access to similar programs and services.
- Assess the Judiciary's use of resources, including evaluations of organizational structures, staffing plans, safety and security, service delivery and funding availability.
- Use advanced technologies to improve court processes and provide opportunities for data sharing among justice partners.



# 2015 Maryland Judicial Council\*

## Helping to Achieve the Strategic Goals

The Maryland Judiciary, the third branch of state government, serves and answers to all the citizens. Its central core of governance — its “board of directors” — is the Maryland Judicial Council. The Council has been newly revamped and reorganized to help the Judiciary fulfill its mission to provide fair, efficient, effective and accessible justice for all. The Council develops recommendations for the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, who serves as the administrative head

of the Judiciary, and is the central hub for all policy changes, judicial reforms, legislative issues, and other developments both internally and externally.

The Judiciary’s committees have been streamlined and reorganized, reporting to the Maryland Judicial Council as part of a coordinated, interdisciplinary effort to fulfill the Judiciary’s mission.

### Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera, Chair

Court of Appeals

### Chief Judge Peter B. Krauser

Court of Special Appeals

### Judge John W. Debelius, III

Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges

### Chief Judge John P. Morrissey

District Court of Maryland

### Judge Sheila R. Tillerson Adams

Prince George’s County Circuit Court

### Judge Nathan Braverman

Baltimore City District Court

### Judge Kathleen Gallogly Cox

Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges

### Judge Thomas C. Groton, III

Worcester County Circuit Court

### Judge Susan H. Hazlett

Harford County District Court

### Judge Karen A. Murphy Jensen

Caroline County Circuit Court

### Judge James A. Kenney, III

Chair, Retired and Recalled Judges Committee

### Judge Karen H. Mason

Prince George’s County District Court

### Judge Thomas G. Ross \*\*

Queen Anne’s County Circuit Court

### Judge Barbara Baer Waxman

Baltimore City District Court

### Judge Alan M. Wilner

Chair, Standing Committee on Rules of Practice and Procedure

### Judge Eugene Wolfe

Montgomery County District Court

### Pamela Q. Harris

State Court Administrator

### Barbara D. Domer \*\*

Frederick County Circuit Court

### Sharon L. Hancock

Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Clerks

### Jennifer R. Keiser

Vice Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Administrators

### Loretta E. Knight \*\*

Montgomery County Circuit Court

### Carol Llwellyn-Jones

Administrative Clerk,  
District Court of Maryland District 2

### Judy Lohman

Administrative Clerk,  
District Court of Maryland District 6

### Faye D. Matthews

Deputy State Court Administrator

### Sally W. Rankin

Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Administrators

### Wayne A. Robey

Vice Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Clerks

### Roberta L. Warnken

Chief Clerk, District Court of Maryland

\* Members listed by position on Council.

\*\* Judicial Council Member in 2014 who contributed to the development of this plan.

# 2015 Council Committees

## Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee Judge Thomas G. Ross, Chair

Promote the use of appropriate dispute resolution processes throughout the courts. Provide an avenue for courts to vet changes to their alternative dispute resolution rules and standards of conduct.

## Court Access and Community Relations Committee Judge Larnzell Martin, Jr., Chair

Address barriers to access to the courts and legal services in Maryland, strengthen public awareness of the Judiciary's programs, projects, services and initiatives, and promote knowledge and understanding of the Judiciary.

## Court Operations Committee Judge E. Gregory Wells, Chair

Address matters related to the efficient operations of the courts and assist in the development of consistent statewide operations policies and best practices.

## Court Technology Committee Judge Gary G. Everngam, Chair

Ensure the technology operations of the Judiciary are efficient and effective. Provide advice and guidance regarding the implementation of technology and its effect on judicial operations/functions.

## District Court Chief Judge's Committee Chief Judge John P. Morrissey, Chair

Advise the Chief Judge on the operation of the District Court in all its locations and aid the Chief Judge in the administration, operation, and maintenance of the District Court statewide.

## Domestic Law Committee Judge Kathleen Gallogly Cox, Chair

Provide guidance and direction regarding policies, rules, and legislation surrounding family domestic law, including domestic violence. Recommend policies, rules, and legislation that improve the effective administration of domestic law.

## Education Committee Judge Susan H. Hazlett, Chair

Guide, promote and encourage the education, training and professional development of all Judiciary employees.

## Juvenile Law Committee Judge Michael J. Stamm, Chair

Provide guidance and direction regarding policies, rules and legislation surrounding juvenile law, including juvenile justice and child welfare. Recommend policies, rules, and legislation that improve the effective administration of juvenile law.

## Legislative Committee Judge Daniel M. Long, Chair

Protect and promote the Judiciary's interests regarding new laws and initiatives.

## Specialty Courts and Dockets Committee Judge Nicholas E. Rattal, Chair

Promote and oversee the development, implementation and evaluation of specialty courts and dockets in the courts.

## Retired/Recalled Judges Committee Judge James A. Kenney, III, Chair

Advise the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals and other members of the Court on matters relevant to retired/recalled judges.



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**Thurgood Marshall Memorial  
State Circle, Annapolis**

