

DELIVERY OF JUSTICE DURING THE COVID-19 EMERGENCY

CONTINUITY OF JUDICIAL OPERATIONS THROUGH TEAMWORK AND LEADERSHIP



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF JUDGE

I am pleased to present the Maryland Judiciary Strategic Plan Update for 2020.

As we know, painfully so, the COVID-19 public health emergency brought unprecedented challenges to our daily lives and laid bare the unresolved tensions within our civic society. Throughout these challenges, the Maryland Judiciary has worked tirelessly to provide access to justice while safeguarding the health and safety of court visitors, personnel, and justice partners. This report highlights the measures taken during the pandemic by the dedicated professionals who serve in the judicial branch of Maryland to continue, to the greatest extent possible, the delivery of fair, efficient, and effective justice for all.

From the beginning of the public health emergency, the Maryland Judiciary acted quickly to mitigate the risk of exposure during emergency operations. A critical part of those efforts included the creation and implementation of phased resumption of operations to guide the courts through a careful return to full operations, including jury trials, with the appropriate health and safety protocols. Some of those measures included:

- The suspension of all non-essential Judiciary activities;
- During the initial stay at home and the second surge in infection rates, the suspension of non-emergency matters, including jury trials and in-person oral arguments in the Court of Appeals and Court of Special Appeals;
- The implementation of COVID-19 health protocols in all courthouses and judicial buildings, including mask requirements and social distancing guidelines;
- The transition to new technological platforms, such as *Zoom for Government*, for remote court hearings and proceedings, enabling courts to address pending matters and new filings, slowing the growth of backlogs; and,
- The transition to the Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC) system for appellate filings with the Court of Appeals and the Court of Special Appeals for all of Maryland's jurisdictions, including the three largest, which have not yet transitioned to MDEC.

The accomplishments detailed in this year's Strategic Plan Update reflect the hard work and dedication of the Judiciary's judges, magistrates, clerks, administrators, commissioners, and staff during this historic time, working from the strong foundation and rigorous framework that they have helped to build over the last eight years and more. I am honored to work alongside them each year as they work diligently to fulfill the Judiciary's mission of providing fair, efficient, and effective justice for all Marylanders. 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.

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COVID-19: Tackling a Global Pandemic Through Teamwork and Leadership

In early March 2020, when it became evident that the world was confronting a pandemic, leaders of the Maryland Department of Health briefed Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera and members of the Judicial Council regarding the nature of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and how the courts might respond to a public health emergency. Chief Judge Barbera and members of the Judicial Council were advised by health officials about the need to maintain certain health protocols in all courtrooms and Judiciary buildings, such as wearing masks, hand washing, and social distancing to safeguard the health of the public. Less than a week later, Chief Judge Barbera issued the first of what would become a series of pandemic-related administrative orders that would restrict operations in courts to emergency proceedings, concurrent with the governor's declaration of a health emergency and a stay-at-home order. As the threat posed by the pandemic quickly became more apparent, the Court of Appeals passed rules of procedure describing the authority of the chief judge of the Court of Appeals during an emergency.

Throughout these challenging times, Maryland state courts have remained open to address matters to the extent allowed by the pandemic, providing due process and protecting constitutional rights. Chief Judge

Barbera issued the first two administrative orders responding to changing conditions and capacities, authorizing administrative judges in trial courts to take appropriate measures to protect the safety of the public, justice partners, and court personnel. The chief judge also suspended non-emergency proceedings, except to the extent that they could be handled remotely, and all non-essential judicial activities, from March 16 until April 3, 2020, balancing the need for the courts to remain operational with the need to safeguard the health and safety of Judiciary personnel and court visitors. Within days, those orders were extended, and work began to develop a phased resumption of operations for courts statewide.

On March 19, Chief Judge Barbera issued a video message apprising the public and the legal community of the impact of COVID-19 on the Judiciary and the Judiciary's response to date, namely, the need to limit the number of people in courthouses and other Judiciary facilities consistent with health advisories. In addition, the chief judge confirmed that the Judiciary would be implementing or expanding the use of existing remote technology, such as videoconferencing, to conduct emergency and other matters remotely.

Court of Special Appeals Chief Judge Matthew J. Fader provided a snapshot of how the court was able to adapt to the changing needs brought on by the public health emergency.

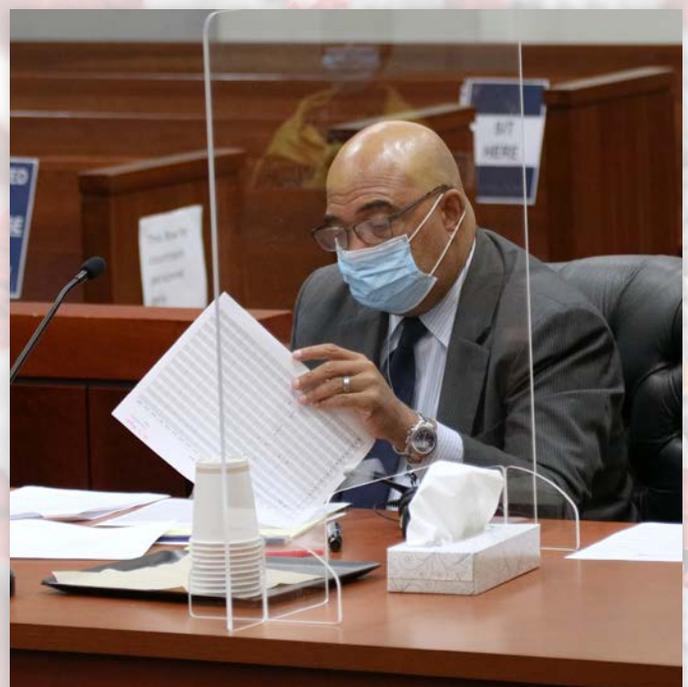
"The Court of Special Appeals was able to maintain full operations throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency as a result of the dedication, patience, and flexibility of its staff, judges, and the advocates who have appeared before us, as well as the strong support of other arms of the Judiciary," said Chief Judge

"We are very appreciative of the operational flexibility we have been afforded; the support provided by JIS, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), and others; and, the resilience and dedication of our staff and judges that have made our operations during the pandemic possible."

**CHIEF JUDGE MATTHEW J. FADER
COURT OF SPECIAL APPEALS**

"This has been an extraordinary time in the history of the Maryland Judiciary. We have monitored continuously the public health emergency and adjusted court operations, as necessary, to protect the safety of the public, judges, and Judiciary personnel, while ensuring that as many of the Judiciary's core functions as possible have been maintained throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency."

**CHIEF JUDGE MARY ELLEN BARBERA
COURT OF APPEALS**



Attorney flips through papers while adhering to COVID-19 protocols.

Fader. Through collaboration with Judicial Information Systems (JIS) and the state court administrator, we were fortunate to have completed the conversion of our legacy case management system to MDEC shortly before the pandemic hit. That, combined with the Court of Appeals approving the use of MDEC for all appellate cases, allowed us to handle most filings electronically. Through the exceptional dedication of our staff and the relative amenability of appellate arguments to remote proceedings, we were able to begin holding all of our arguments remotely beginning on April 3, 2020, and have continued to do so, with only minor interruptions, ever since. We are very appreciative of the operational flexibility we have been afforded; the support provided by JIS, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), and others; and, the resilience and dedication of our staff and judges that have made our operations during the pandemic possible.”

Court of Special Appeals Judge Laura Ripken, who then served as administrative judge for the Fifth Judicial Circuit and chair of the Conference of Circuit Judges, initiated weekly calls with circuit court administrative judges to focus on pandemic planning and to ensure that essential court functions remain operational.

“From day one of the emergency, the courts remained open and working within the restricted setting, as appropriate,” said Judge Laura Ripken. “Specifically, with respect to the 24 circuit courts in the state of Maryland, daily operations of essential functions have continued, in most cases remotely, using court approved technology. All circuit courts have procedures in place to address safety in the courthouse, including screening and the wearing of masks. The diligent work of the staff in each circuit court, including administrative staff, the staff of the clerk’s office, and judges who are on the front lines of the judicial branch are making sure that our core and essential operations continue and that we are prepared to move forward out of this public health emergency.”

District Court of Maryland Chief Judge John P. Morrissey began a series of Monday, Wednesday, and Friday calls with the administrative judges for each of the twelve districts that comprise the leadership of the District Court. These calls for both the circuit courts and District Court are used to discuss best practices, share new and ongoing concerns, and explore new approaches to expand the Judiciary’s ability to conduct court business.

“The District Court administrative judges, administrative clerks, and court staff worked,

and continue to work hard to ensure that critical functions such as bail reviews, bench warrants, emergency evaluations, quarantine and isolation violations, and body attachments are being processed along with other core District Court duties during the pandemic,” said District Court Chief Judge Morrissey. “These efforts made continuity of operations seamless at all phases of the Judiciary’s COVID-19 emergency operations plan, but especially during Phase I, when the District Court needed to make sure that applications for statement of charges, initial appearances, the acceptance of bail bonds, and the processing of new extreme risk protective order petitions and new domestic violence protective order petitions for adult respondents continued as part of the District Court’s essential responsibilities.”

On May 6, Chief Judge Morrissey issued a communication to each District Court location, based on Chief Judge Barbera’s administrative orders, that provided for the extension of all interim and temporary protective, peace, and extreme risk protective orders until such time that the court could conduct a remote or in-person hearing or communicate with the parties.

ADOPTING A PHASED RESUMPTION OF OPERATIONS

On May 22, Chief Judge Barbera issued four administrative orders on the resumption of court operations. The orders entailed five phases with the courts gradually and carefully returning to full operations, including jury trials in the fifth phase. During the various phases, the courts would continue to incorporate health and safety protocols for Judiciary personnel and visitors as well as technology to conduct remote proceedings. The chief judge also lifted the statewide suspension of grand juries, allowing them to resume at the discretion of an administrative judge and permitting the empanelling of new grand juries, as well as the extension of the term for existing grand juries, as necessary.

Later that month, Chief Judge Barbera joined the Pandemic Rapid Response Team of the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators. Supported by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), this new court initiative was created to guide courts across the country to continue essential functions and respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency. In addition, State Court Administrator Pamela Harris was appointed to the NCSC’s Post-Pandemic Planning Technology Work

Administrative Office of the Courts and District Court of Maryland provide personal protective equipment during the COVID-19 public health emergency

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and District Court Headquarters (DCHQ) spent nearly \$18 million in COVID-related expenses. This included personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies, plexiglass installation, and decontamination cleaning services for the appellate courts, circuit courts, and other Judiciary buildings.

The District Court of Maryland and the AOC supplied PPE to 52 Judiciary locations statewide and protective barriers to 45 Judiciary locations throughout the state. PPE supplies included face masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, social distancing signs and floor markers, sanitizing wipes, clear masks for lip reading, children's masks, and thermal read units to facilitate no-contact temperature checks. Additionally, the District Court and AOC provided sanitizing and cleaning services when needed.

"The teamwork and dedication of the professionals of the Maryland Judiciary made it possible to move back into full operations within a few months," said State Court Administrator Pamela Harris. "We found new approaches to performing essential functions and broke new ground during difficult and challenging times, while managing to safeguard the rule of law and due process."

Despite having to move from Phase V in October 2020 back to Phase II in November 2020 as a result of a massive surge in COVID-19 infection rates, it was the extraordinary levels of dedication, commitment, and collaboration that made it possible to perform the core functions of the Judiciary and to provide, to the greatest extent allowed by the pandemic conditions, fair, efficient, and effective justice for all.

Further, an ad hoc work group of circuit court judges collaborated to develop implementation recommendations on the resumption of jury trials that resulted in best practices. Chief Judge Barbera's administrative order scheduled Phase V full emergency operations, including jury trials in both criminal and civil matters, to begin October 5. Accompanying administrative orders also lifted suspensions previously imposed on the calculation of statutory and rules deadlines to initiate matters or begin trials in criminal matters. The *Revised Administrative Order on the Emergency Tolling or Suspension of Statutes of Limitations and Statutory and Rules Deadlines Related to the Initiation of Matters and Certain Statutory and Rules Deadline in Pending Matters*, for example, took into consideration the number of days the courts were closed to the public and stipulated that those days did not count against the time remaining for the initiation of a court matter. In addition, filing deadlines to initiate matters were extended by an additional 15 days.

PPE AND SANITIZATION SUPPLIES

	196 pieces/ 244 clamps	Plexiglass for appellate, circuit courts, and AOC
	33,784	Masks (cloth, surgical, N95, clear)
	88,950	Pairs of gloves (various sizes)
	1,580	Bottles of hand sanitizer
	174	Gallons of hand sanitizer
	330,420	Sanitizing wipes
	807	Bottles of disinfecting spray
	6	Air purifiers
	1,010	Face shields
	103	Thermometers
	400	Batteries
	2,000	Nanoskins

Group. The workgroup was tasked with evaluating the role technology should play in response to the pandemic, both immediate and long-term, whether the courts should fully return to pre-pandemic operations, or if technology should be redesigned to not only transform existing processes but to improve those processes to better serve the public.

THE MOVE TO REMOTE PROCEEDINGS

The Court of Appeals heard oral arguments remotely during the COVID-19 emergency for the first time on April 3. The Court of Special Appeals also began conducting its oral argument sessions remotely for the first time during the pandemic.

On June 11, the Judicial Council's Court Technology Committee proposed the use of a single platform as the Judiciary's preferred remote video platform to support remote hearings in the District Court and circuit courts, and certain court functions, with internal and external participants and members of the public. The committee's chair, Judge Fred S. Hecker, administrative judge for Circuit Court for Carroll County, advised the council members that during the preceding three months, judges and Judiciary staff had become creative and innovative in the use of the platform to conduct remote proceedings in the District Court and circuit courts through a variety of platforms, including teleconferencing, but without standardized guidelines or best practices.

"The courts and justice partners have adapted to the virtual courtroom technology seamlessly. In fact, we've found that there are proceedings we previously conducted in person that we can conduct just as effectively using Zoom," said Judge Hecker. "We continue to explore unique opportunities such as this to further the Judiciary's mission of providing efficient, effective, and fair justice for all."

Subsequently, the Court Technology Committee formed the Remote Hearings Work Group to review best practices for remote hearings from around the world. The research resulted in the *Report to Maryland Judiciary Judicial Council on Remote Hearings Proposed Standards and Guidelines*, which contained numerous recommendations. The report focused on two primary areas: technology processes and court business processes. Judge Hecker explained some of the features of the upgraded platform around which the best practices and recommendations were formulated, such as waiting rooms that allow for sequestration of witnesses,

breakout rooms that allow for private communication between counsel and their client, and functionality to facilitate spoken language interpretation.

Additionally, the District Court and circuit courts throughout Maryland worked with Judicial Information Systems (JIS) and local detention centers to begin offering in some locations, and expand the use in others, of video remote bail review hearings. The video hearings enhanced the safety and security of judges, court and detention center staff, and defendants by eliminating the need to bring defendants into the courthouse during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

"From the start of the pandemic, the District Court worked hard to hold remote hearings safely, including bail reviews, bail modifications, sentence modifications, criminal pleas, and drug and mental health court dockets, incorporating technological advances to reshape the way we will conduct business in the future," said District Court of Maryland Chief Judge John P. Morrissey. "On a positive note, it appears that the global pandemic has made it possible to enact innovative changes in the way the courts do business, which is a benefit to all."

PERSEVERING DESPITE THE OBSTACLES

After much hard work and preparation, including installing temperature checks, plexiglass partitions, and hand sanitizing stations inside courtrooms and other facilities, the Judiciary was able to move forward into Phase II of its phased reopening plan on June 5. Throughout the next several months, the Judiciary successfully moved into Phases III, IV, and V, with jury trials in both civil and criminal cases resuming on October 5, albeit with creative and innovative changes in venue for voir dire and deliberations.



“Throughout the crisis, the 4,300 public servants who comprise Maryland’s judicial branch of government continued to serve Maryland by reporting to work under the new guidelines or by teleworking,” said State Court Administrator Pamela Harris. “They carried out court functions by leveraging technology, practicing social distancing, restructuring dockets, and adjusting business practices in response to COVID-19. Their efforts have made a gradual resumption of full court operations possible.

In November, when news broke of a major surge in COVID-19 infection rates in Maryland and across the nation, Chief Judge Barbera made the prudent decision to move the courts back into Phase II of operations until January 15, 2021. In a video message released on December 1, the chief judge assured the public that although the Judiciary might have to restrict operations further in the foreseeable future, the courts would not close and would continue to handle emergency matters as they arose to serve the public. The Judiciary, like the communities it serves, has persevered during the long COVID-19 public health emergency. The dedicated public servants of the Maryland Judiciary learned new approaches and adapted to the new reality to move justice forward in Maryland.

“During the six weeks in which the Judiciary operated in Phase V, the circuit courts conducted 88 jury trials to their conclusion without a single health incident.”

**CHIEF JUDGE MARY ELLEN BARBERA
COURT OF APPEALS**

As the pandemic continued into 2021, the Maryland Judiciary has remained committed to providing access to justice using the latest technologies and protecting due process and constitutional rights for the people it serves during these unprecedented times. While the past year proved to be a difficult challenge, the public servants of the Maryland Judiciary rose to the challenge and continued to provide justice as safely and effectively as possible. With the arrival of a COVID-19 vaccine at the end of 2020, leaders and personnel of the Judiciary are confident that the Judiciary, with changes that will be the new normal, will be able to deliver its mandate, no matter what challenges the future may bring.

Judicial Information Systems (JIS) moves to remote platforms during the COVID-19 public health emergency

During the COVID-19 public health emergency, JIS was tasked with identifying new ways to keep court operations functioning smoothly. After initially utilizing *Skype for Business* and *Zoom*, the Judiciary implemented *Zoom for Government* (ZfG), which obtained Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP) approval. FedRAMP is a U.S. government-wide program that provides a standardized approach to security assessment, authorization, and continuous monitoring for cloud products like *Zoom*.

Zoom for Government was deployed as the ideal platform to support remote hearings and meetings with internal participants and members of the public. As demand increased for video conferencing capabilities and network space, JIS created a Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) environment, purchased additional servers, and distributed laptops, monitors, and headsets to allow Judiciary personnel to work remotely. Throughout every phase of operation, JIS has taken the necessary steps to allow the Judiciary to continue operating at or near full capacity.

Additionally, JIS leveraged remote capabilities offered by Microsoft by implementing a new and improved version of *Skype for Business* called *Microsoft Teams* as *Skype* will no longer be supported by Microsoft. Throughout 2020, *Microsoft Teams* supported internal meetings and communications as well as meetings with external participants. Designed as a collaboration tool, *Microsoft Teams* brings Judiciary personnel together by providing a platform for video conferencing, real-time discussions, and document sharing and editing. JIS installed the *Microsoft Teams* application on all desktops and laptops connected to the Judiciary network.

Looking to the future, JIS will continue to find ways to leverage technology and improve the Judiciary’s ability to remain functioning regardless of environmental situations or constraints. Once implemented, the new technologies will continue to support the Judiciary’s operations on an ongoing basis to provide greater access to justice for all who interact with Maryland’s courts.

PROVIDE ACCESS TO JUSTICE



- In June, **Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbara** issued a statement reiterating the Maryland Judiciary's commitment to equal justice under law for all. She next directed the establishment of the Judicial Council's **Equal Justice Committee**. The Equal Justice Committee created six subcommittees to guide the Maryland Judiciary in eliminating policies, practices, and behaviors that may reflect bias. Each subcommittee is charged with developing strategies to more completely achieve the Judiciary's mandate of equal justice under the law.
- The **District Court in Calvert and St. Mary's counties** opened additional courtrooms due to new judicial appointments. The new courtrooms allow the clerks to create more dockets to hold additional hearings, which improves case flow and the timely disposition of cases in both Calvert and St. Mary's counties.
- The **Circuit Court for St. Mary's County's** Family Court Help Center created a dedicated telephone line for individuals seeking free legal assistance during the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- The **Circuit Court for Washington County** completed the construction of an additional courtroom, which increased the number of courtrooms in the building to seven. The new courtroom allows the Circuit Court for Washington County to increase its caseloads and docket sizes, thus providing swifter access to justice.
- The **Circuit Court for Dorchester County's** Family Court Help Center aided self-represented litigants via a remote platform. Pro bono attorneys answered legal questions, completed forms, and delivered court forms to litigants who were unable to print them at home.
- The **Circuit Court for Harford County** began participating in the Harford County Community Mediation program, to facilitate the settlement of cases without the expense of a trial. The program also includes cases that would normally fall outside the scope of a court's legal consideration.
- The Charles County Legal Resource Center & Law Library located at the **Circuit Court for Charles County** hired an attorney to provide free legal advice on family and civil matters, making the center a virtual "one-stop shop" for legal resources and information for the community.



Plexiglass partitions and blue tape divide a courtroom outfitted for Covid-19 prevention in Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County in September 2020.

- The **Circuit Court for Worcester County** refurbished its Legal Aid and Pro-Bono Services to provide better access to justice for citizens and avoid unnecessary redundancy. Services are available to residents of Worcester, Wicomico, and Somerset counties.
- To facilitate the electronic filing of court documents in jurisdictions (**Baltimore City, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties**) that are not on the Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC) system, the Judiciary made "virtual drop boxes" available for filings. Self-represented litigants who chose not to file electronically were able to file via mail or by using physical drop boxes located at the courthouses.
- Many of the **Maryland Court Help Centers** remained open during the pandemic to assist the public with reviewing documents before filing. New technology permitted District Court Help Center attorneys to take telephone calls and chats on behalf of the remote services center. While demand for remote services initially decreased at the start of the pandemic, in June 2020, the Maryland Court Help Center provided 8,317 instances of service, an all-time record number of services for a single month. In total, remote services staff provided 80,860 instances of service in FY 2020, an increase of 8% over FY 2019. For most litigants without counsel, the preferred remote service delivery method was by telephone. In FY 2020, staff provided 68,223 instances of service by phone and 11,770 by live chat. *For more information on the Maryland Court Help Centers, please see page 12.*

Maryland Court Help Centers Bring Free Legal Advice to the Public



Staff Attorney Corey Rudolph provides much-needed legal guidance at the new Catonsville Court Help Center to further the Judiciary's goal of increasing access to justice.

Maryland's network of District Court Help Centers continued to expand in 2020. Located on the second floor of the new Baltimore County District courthouse at 1 Rolling Cross Road in Catonsville, the newest walk-in center opened on March 2, just as the COVID-19 public health emergency struck Maryland. The Catonsville District Court Help Center offers free legal help via phone and chat in civil cases such as child custody, child support, child access, divorce, name change, domestic violence, and paternity for individuals who do not have a lawyer. The center is staffed by two attorneys, an administrative assistant, and a supervising attorney who are available to answer questions on weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Baltimore County District Court Administrative Judge Dorothy Wilson and Administrative Clerk Maria Fields are delighted to have the center in the new courthouse. "It is wonderful that we are able to offer this important resource to people seeking legal help with a variety of civil matters," said Judge Wilson. "The convenience of the walk-in service at the courthouse, the online live chat, and the call center makes it possible for people representing themselves to understand the court process and utilize resources to help them with their cases. In this way, the center truly provides meaningful access to justice to those who might otherwise go without it."

Mediation Services for Low-Cost Litigation

What if one or both parties in a dispute cannot afford the cost of an attorney? The circuit courts for both Howard and Carroll counties have launched a Civil Mediation Day-of-Trial program in which a trained mediator meets with the participants on the day of trial and attempts to work out a solution. If the case cannot be resolved in mediation, it moves forward to trial on the same day. Experience shows that trained mediators can assist parties in resolving a wide range of workplace, family, and other disputes, drawing upon experience working with people in conflict and other skills to help people resolve complex disputes at no cost. To standardize best practices for mediators, and to offer guidance on promoting ethical, high-quality mediation services, the Judicial Council's Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Committee, chaired by Judge Mimi Cooper, created a Standards of Conduct Work Group chaired by Senior Judge Thomas Ross. With input from judges, mediators, representatives from ADR practitioner organizations, the Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office's (MACRO) ADR staff, the District Court ADR Office, and the Court of Special Appeals ADR, they revised the existing ethics documents and prepared a newer version titled, *Standards of Conduct for Court-Designated Mediators*.

In the Court of Special Appeals, the ADR provides free ADR services before the appellate process begins, allowing the parties to resolve and settle their cases, saving time, attorney's fees, and court costs. The ADR offers mediations and pre-hearing conferences by a staff mediator (an attorney) and a senior judge team. In a typical year, ADR reviews around 1,100 civil appeals for suitability before the appeals

are allowed to proceed and provides ADR services in about 10% of the cases reviewed. Both the staff mediator and the senior judge mediator are trained in resolving complex disputes in diverse areas such as personal injury, family law, custody, contract, real property, medical malpractice, estates and trusts, worker's compensation, employment, and administrative appeal cases.

Since 2010, ADR has been providing high-quality mediation services to litigants while maintaining the integrity of the appellate process, allowing the parties and their attorneys to reach a mutually satisfying agreement for a fraction of the cost and time. Since its inception, ADR has had an overall settlement rate of nearly 70%. During the COVID-19 health emergency, ADR began providing remote mediation services. Despite the drop in cases during 2020, ADR managed to review approximately 734 civil appeals. Of this figure, the ADR Division accepted 120 cases and was able to resolve 80% of them successfully.

Court of Special Appeals Chief Judge Matthew J. Fader said, "The court appreciates the work of ADR in providing a very important service to the court, litigants, and the larger community."

Jay Knight, the director of the Court of Special Appeals ADR, sums up their work as follows, "The community benefits from ADR and our division will continue to provide the highest quality ADR services for all who come to court. We take great pride in being able to help the public during this time."

- The **Circuit Court for Harford County's** Family Law Help Center continued to serve the public even during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Between March and July, they assisted the public via phone calls and virtual conferences. In July, when the courts reopened, the help center opened to the public for onsite appointments between 9 a.m. - 12 p.m., and 12 p.m. - 4 p.m. for phone questions and virtual conferences. The help center carries a wide variety of forms in the areas of divorce, child custody, child support, protective orders, emergency evaluations, and name changes.
- During the COVID-19 public health emergency, the **Judiciary** kept the public apprised via dedicated web pages that addressed topics such as availability of clerks' offices, requisite safety measures and social distancing, remote proceedings, press access, filing court documents, and other court-based services to include help center locations and hours, mediation services, law libraries, childcare for litigants and witnesses, and Family Division services. COVID-19 related updates are available at: mdcourts.gov/coronavirusupdate.
- The **Judiciary** also created web pages devoted to streaming remote appellate hearings for the public, as well as expanded the online oral arguments to include the Court of Special Appeals. The public and members of the press can now watch oral arguments from the **Court of Appeals** and the **Court of Special Appeals** live-streamed at: courts.state.md.us/coappeals/webcasts and mdcourts.gov/cosappeals/oralargumentarchives
- The **District Court in Prince George's County** extended and made permanent its Landlord-Tenant Assistance Program (LTAP), originally

set up as a pilot program in which Community Legal Services provides Lawyer of the Day legal services to clients in failure to pay rent cases on the day of trial. This service is supported with a grant from the Maryland Legal Services Corporation and attorneys are trained and paid a stipend for their work through the Pro Bono Resource Center. LTAP was extended through the COVID-19 public health emergency and has consistently advised clients, remotely and in person. The LTAP program includes alternative dispute resolution and settlement conferences, which are available to landlords and tenants. Since December 2018, LTAP has assisted 775 tenants in failure to pay rent cases. In 2019, over 158,000 landlord-tenant cases were filed in the District Court in Prince George's County.

- The **District Court in Montgomery County** partnered with Montgomery County's Legal Aid Office, the private landlord bar, and the Montgomery County Bar Foundation Pro-Bono Program to provide information, assistance, and legal representation for qualifying tenants in summary ejection cases, both pre-trial and on the day of trial. The attorneys were trained for the program in the summer of 2020 and began participating in the program during Phase IV of the Judiciary's five-phased resumption of operations, when failure to pay rent cases resumed in the courts.
- The **District Court in Harford County** launched a pilot Landlord and Tenant Remote Hearing Program in September 2020 when courts resumed hearing Failure to Pay Rent (FTPR) cases. The use of remote technology assists the court in managing a large landlord-tenant docket while maintaining social distancing requirements due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. The docket serves approximately 70 to 80 cases per session. Court staff sets up a remote platform calendar that invites parties to participate in a remote hearing. Remote hearings are offered for cases involving peace and protective orders and bail reviews. In addition, they currently run two remote dockets, one for criminal cases and one for civil cases. Parties for the peace and protective orders are still given the option of appearing remotely or coming into the courthouse for a hearing. Staff has been able to keep up with the workflow since all have been issued laptops and are proficient with the use of technology. The court anticipates they will continue to use remote technology even after they resume full operations.



Jurors are masked and socially distanced in the Circuit Court for Prince George's County as jury trials resume.

Maryland Judiciary Forms Committee on Equal Justice to Address Inequality in the Justice System

In keeping with the Judiciary's mission to provide equal justice under the law, Maryland Court of Appeals Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera formed a new Committee on Equal Justice. The committee, which is part of the governance structure of the Judicial Council, was tasked with identifying areas that need improvement in the Judiciary's ongoing effort to dismantle any discriminatory behaviors in all aspects of the judicial system.

"We are at a crossroads in meeting the mandate of equal justice under law," said Chief Judge Barbera. "We must choose, deliberately and thoughtfully, to eliminate discrimination on the basis of race, background, or identity, whether or not it is done with intention, within the Judiciary or in the administration of justice. The Committee on Equal Justice will lead our work to identify what we must change or improve so that we provide fair, efficient, and effective justice for all in Maryland."

The committee will ensure that judges and staff increase their knowledge and understanding of ethnic disparities, discrimination, and systemic racism, including implicit bias, micro-inequalities, and micro-aggressions, as well as develop educational opportunities for ongoing Judiciary-wide engagement. The Committee on Equal Justice, chaired by Maryland Court of Special Appeals Judge E. Gregory Wells, consists of more than 40 members from the Judiciary, including judges, court administrators, clerks, and staff. The first meeting of the committee took place remotely in July 2020.

"I am honored that Chief Judge Barbera has asked me to lead this important and timely committee," said Judge Wells. "Like so many of our institutions, we seek to ensure that the Judiciary is open and inclusive to all. The Committee on Equal Justice will be taking a hard look both inward and outward and will listen to all of our colleagues, our justice partners, and the public we serve."

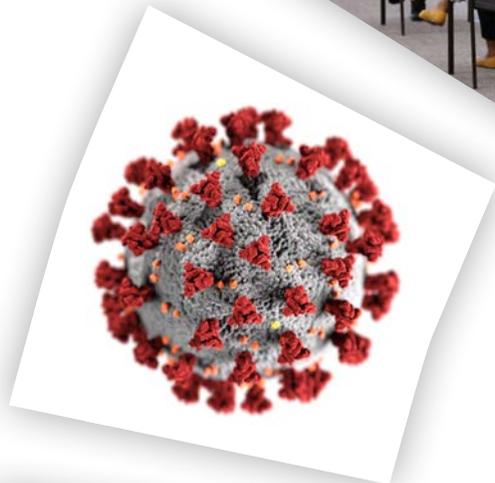
The new committee comes as a response to increased social unrest in the United States as a result of several high-profile incidences of discrimination, which prompted Chief Judge Barbera to issue the *Statement on Equal Justice under Law* on June 9, 2020, confirming the Maryland Judiciary's commitment to providing equal justice under law for all.



"All of us—members of the judicial branch and the legal community—must, as Justice Thurgood Marshall has demanded, ensure that the doors of justice open wide for all people—and that once inside, procedural fairness and due process are a given. Access to legal services and representation in matters that affect the lives of all the people in our state, whether they have means or not, is essential. No one should suffer the degradations that too often accompany poverty—and we, the stewards of the justice system, cannot allow the lack of representation in civil matters to add to the burdens of the poor. Until governments can afford to guarantee representation to all in civil matters, the provision of legal representation *pro bono publico*—for the public good—and the legal services and information we provide can fill some, but not nearly enough, of the need."

**CHIEF JUDGE MARY ELLEN BARBERA
COURT OF APPEALS**

- In 2020, the Judiciary's **Access to Justice** office used online and radio advertising to promote the Maryland Court Help Centers. Campaigns focused on two areas that were affected uniquely by the pandemic: housing and family law. In the spring of 2020, radio ads reminded litigants that they could ask legal questions about child custody, visitation, and divorce remotely via phone and live chat. In the fall, advertisements encouraged litigants to seek legal advice early when facing eviction or foreclosure.
- The **District Court** operated Day of Trial Mediation programs for landlord-tenant cases in eight locations across Maryland, including Baltimore City, and Baltimore, Charles, Harford, Howard, Prince George's, St. Mary's, and Washington counties. Mediators are available to help the litigants work out a variety of settlement options such as developing a payment plan for unpaid rent, reconciling amounts paid or received to determine the amount of rent still owed, negotiating move-out dates and conditions, or discussing other aspects of the landlord-tenant relationship that may be causing conflict between the parties.
- The **District Court in Washington County** opened a local District Court Help Center to provide free limited legal services for people who are not represented by an attorney. The help center provides counseling in landlord-tenant matters, small and large claims, consumer matters, return of property cases, domestic violence/peace orders, and expungement.
- The **District Court in Allegany and Garrett counties** began a Pre-Trial Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program to provide mediation to people with pending civil cases. The District Court ADR Office led the program by reaching out directly to parties, and once they request mediation, they are referred to the University of Maryland Carey School of Law Mediation Clinic. Resolving cases through remote mediation allows the parties to reach an agreement without the need to visit the courthouse and is also an opportunity to provide mediation services in geographical areas where mediation is unavailable due to a lack of providers.



Maryland Court Help Centers at a Glance

The Maryland Judiciary's network of Court Help Centers provides free legal advice, information, legal forms, and assistance to litigants without counsel in civil matters. In 2020, the in-person network of District Court Help Centers expanded, adding new locations in Catonsville and Hagerstown. In FY 2020, the Court Help Centers provided 140,682 instances of service via multiple service delivery methods. The greatest demand was for telephone assistance, followed by in-person assistance at the walk-in court help centers. Services are also available via live chat, email, and video conferencing. Remote services proved crucial during the pandemic, and demand grew 8% from the prior year.

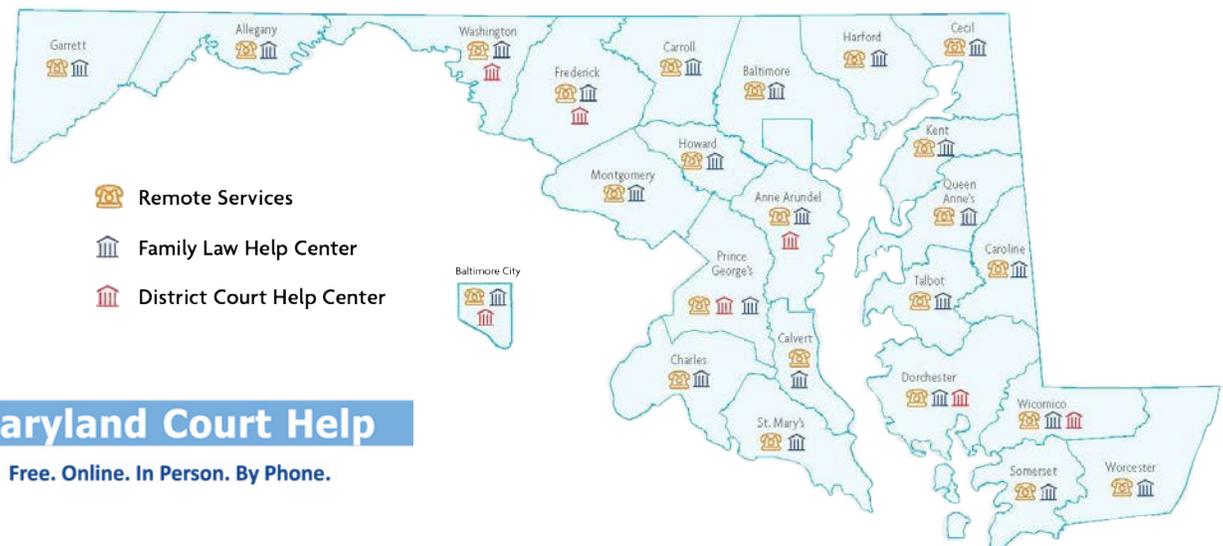
COVID-19 IMPACT - MARYLAND COURT HELP CENTERS

While the COVID-19 public health emergency significantly impacted Maryland Court Help Centers, the staff behind the scenes worked creatively to provide continuity of services for litigants without counsel. Although the walk-in centers were temporarily closed to the public, litigants were still able to access civil legal assistance using remote technology. Prior to closure, demand had increased at all walk-in centers compared to the same period in FY 2019. Despite the obstacles, the help centers were able to assist large numbers of Marylanders.

District Court Help Center attorneys continued to provide legal advice and information to self-represented litigants remotely. They were also able to assist litigants with limited English proficiency using state-of-the-art telephonic interpretation services



Circuit Court for Prince George's County.



Maryland Court Help

Free. Online. In Person. By Phone.



in languages such as Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Portuguese, Yoruba, Amharic, Wolof, and others. Maryland Court Help Center users most often sought remote assistance with family law matters, including divorce, child custody, and child support. The next greatest area of demand was for housing matters, including failure to pay rent, tenant holding over, wrongful detainer, and breach of lease matters. In FY 2020, staff provided 68,223 instances of service by phone and 11,770 by live chat.

NETWORK OF DISTRICT COURT HELP CENTERS GROWS

In FY 2020, the network of District Court Help Centers (DCHCs) provided 17,023 instances of service to litigants in every Maryland county. Additionally, Family Law Court Help Centers provided more than 39,000 instances of walk-in service in FY 2020. New technology permitted DCHC staff to answer telephone inquiries arriving at the Judiciary's remote services center from anywhere with internet access. During this time, DCHC attorneys answered telephone calls and chats on behalf of the remote services center.

CIRCUIT COURT HELP CENTERS EXPAND WITH THE USE OF THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY

During FY 2020, Access to Justice completed the transition to the use of interpreter management software. The goal of the project is to improve local courts' experience with the court interpreter program. Maryland's network of court law libraries also uses

technology to connect people to legal information and provide technical assistance to those who need it. Technical assistance includes helping litigants navigate websites and legal databases, upload and download documents, scan and print documents, and locate online resources. Law libraries are a resource for the Judiciary, the legal community, and the public.

In FY 2020, the Prince George's County Circuit Court Law Library produced video tutorials to help non-attorneys understand how to access court forms and search the Maryland Rules of Criminal Procedure. These tutorials were uploaded to the library's website and YouTube. The same year, Access to Justice made available free one-hour online classes providing step-by-step instructions to litigants who require assistance in completing frequently used court forms. Court users can sign up for live classes or watch pre-recorded classes on demand. In FY 2020, Maryland Court Help Center staff provided 31 live webinars and on-demand webinars were viewed 550 times. The greatest demand was for two video tutorials, *Filing a Failure to Pay Rent Case* and *Filing Your Case in the District Court of Maryland*.

As demand for free legal assistance grows in Maryland, the help centers will find new ways to assist the public by adding to their resources. Plans are underway to produce videos on subjects such as domestic violence, mediation, and language interpretation. There are also plans to host webinars on topics that are relevant to self-represented litigants and produce additional informative videos to play in courthouses around Maryland on topics that are customized for each location.

MARYLAND COURT HELP CENTERS

The number of individuals without counsel remains high in Maryland. In FY20, 83% of domestic cases had one or more parties without counsel throughout any stage of the case.

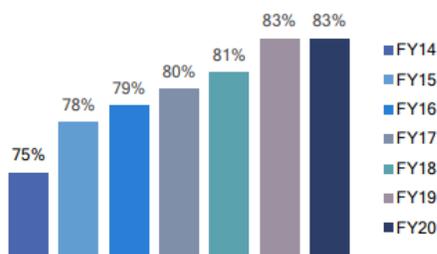


Figure 2. Domestic Cases - One or More Self-Represented Parties - Any Stage of the Case

DISTRICT COURT HELP CENTERS INSTANCES OF SERVICE FY11 TO FY20



*The walk-in District Court Help Centers were closed temporarily due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, beginning in March 2020.

BE RESPONSIVE AND ADAPTABLE TO CHANGING COMMUNITY NEEDS



- **The Allegany County Adult Drug Court Program** added the position of case manager to the drug court team. Under the supervision of the program coordinator, the case manager is responsible for keeping statistics regarding the program’s participants and identifying defendants who would be a good fit for the program based on their desire to achieve a healthy, drug-free lifestyle and become productive members of their community.
- **The District Court in Montgomery County and the Circuit Court for Montgomery County** launched a new Re-Entry Program (DCREP), which was modeled after the **District Court in Baltimore City’s** DCREP. The program provides job training, resume writing, job placement, and career counseling to defendants selected for the program. It is a partnership between the court, justice stakeholders, local and state government agencies, and private businesses. The goal is to provide tools and resources to litigants that will allow them to achieve stable employment and a life that does not involve criminal activity. The courts intend to expand the program in the coming year as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.
- Due to social distancing requirements brought about by the COVID-19 public health emergency, the need for remote hearings became crucial. To tackle this challenge, the **Judicial College** partnered with **Judicial Information Systems (JIS)** to develop a remote hearings training program. Training resources include a Remote Hearings Bench Book, Quick Reference Guides, Quick Reference Cards, and various webinars for judges, magistrates, and court personnel. The first educational session became available in August 2020.
- The **Judicial College** fast-tracked its continuing education initiatives, but for a virtual audience. From 2018 to 2020, the Judicial College increased virtual course offerings by 333%. These virtual courses allowed participants to continue learning while reducing travel time and expenses. In 2021, the Judicial College will be offering an entire course catalog in a virtual format using a variety of online platforms, including lunchtime webinars.
- To keep operations running smoothly during the COVID-19 public health emergency, the **Judiciary’s Budget and Finance** worked with the **Judiciary Human Resources** to establish an emergency teleworking policy and procedure guideline that includes the processing of work tasks such as revenue batches, vendor records, budgeting, and reporting. The initiative also resulted in the drafting of the department’s first online webinar for the FY 2022 budget workshop.
- The **State Board of Law Examiners** administered the February 2020 Uniform Bar Examination to 302 examinees at the Baltimore Convention Center on February 25 and 26, 2020: 117 examinees passed the exam for an overall pass rate of 39%. The pass rate of 55% for first-time examinees was consistent with prior February bar exams.
- The **Maryland Court of Appeals** issued two administrative orders related to admission to the Maryland Bar in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency that allowed for the in-person July 2020 Uniform Bar Examination to be administered remotely using secure exam software. The remote examination was extremely successful, with 564 examinees

REMOTE HEARINGS AND MEETINGS



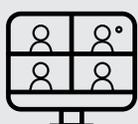
1,700

Remote meetings in the first month (*June 2020*)



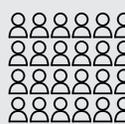
21,315,695

Minutes of remote meeting time



69,000

Remote meetings (*December 2020*)



472,709

Participants in remote meetings

passing out of 802, for an overall pass rate of 70%. The pass rate of 79% for first-time examinees was consistent with prior July bar exams. For comparison, see: mdcourts.gov/sites/default/files/import/ble/pdfs/passfailstats.pdf

- Throughout Maryland, plexiglass barriers were installed at **district and circuit courthouses** on all shared workstations and courtrooms, including barriers at the bench in front of the judge, the clerk, and the witness stand. In addition, signs and stickers were placed on courtroom benches and floors to educate the public about preventing the spread of COVID-19, and video monitors carried the message via CourtTV.
- The **Circuit Court for Montgomery County** expanded services to meet the evolving needs of drug court participants. These services included the implementation of structured housing offerings, morning meetings, daily chores, job search requirements, volunteer projects, and accountability meetings regarding overall compliance with housing and drug court requirements. The creation of a women's docket, treatment, and pro-social activities has provided new opportunities for female participants. Additionally, the drug court transitioned into a virtual platform during the pandemic and welcomed two keynote speakers during one of its online graduations. Washington Football Coach Ron Rivera and U.S. Rep. David Trone, Maryland's 6th District, provided uplifting and inspirational messages to five graduates.
- The **Circuit Court for Kent County's Law Library** created a workspace for the public to gain access to library resources. The area is equipped with a computer, printer, internet access, and online legal research tools. This is the first time Kent County has had a dedicated space for individuals to research legal topics in the courthouse.
- The **Judiciary's Juvenile and Family Services** provided funding to various community initiatives in 2020, including the Cultural & Racial Identity Initiative and Anti-Racism Efforts. The Maryland Court Appointed Special Advocates Association (CASA), in partnership with Juvenile and Family Services, developed and launched a new initiative to promote the cultural and racial identity of the children CASA serves. This initiative involved training for CASA program leadership to develop an understanding of and appreciation for the cultural background of the

children. The training was held in three regions, including the Eastern Shore, Western Maryland, and the Baltimore metropolitan area. This kind of training for CASA volunteers assists judges and courts in getting a wider perspective of the best interests of children in child welfare cases.



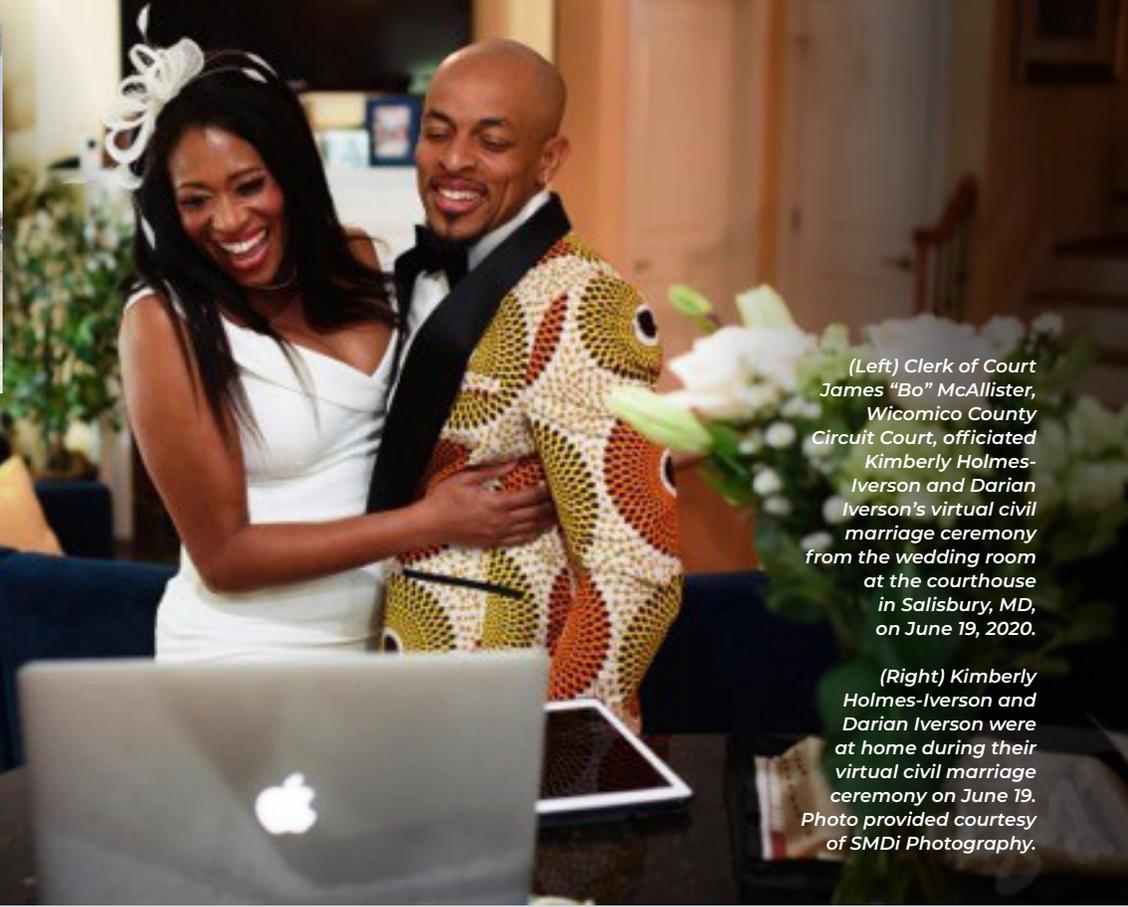
(Above) Socially distanced prospective jurors wait their turn during the jury selection process.

(Below) The jury booth is outfitted with plexiglass in the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County.

- The **District Court in Cecil County** partnered with the **Circuit Court for Cecil County** to create the Cecil County Adult Drug Intervention Track, which allows District Court defendants to participate in drug court. The new program has a capacity for 25 participants who will receive probation before judgment and are placed in the program as a condition of their probation. Each participant that successfully completes drug court and conquers his or her addiction has the chance for a new beginning.
- The **District Court in Baltimore County** received a grant to develop a mental health court and an adult drug court to serve an increasing number of defendants in the county with mental health and substance use issues. In addition to drug treatment, the programs will provide educational opportunities and access to housing, counseling, and other support services.
- The **District Court in Howard County's** Adult DUI/Drug Court program celebrated its 290th graduate with a 95% success rate. This rigorous, court-supervised program helps participants reach sobriety and is completed in lieu of jail time. The program receives funding from the AOC's Office of Problem-Solving Courts.
- The **District Court in Frederick County** began its Mental Health Court (MHC) program as a community-based resource for defendants with mental illness by integrating psychological treatment with the resolution of criminal cases. The program began in the fall of 2020 in a brand new office that was renovated from a former cashier's office and a storage room.



(Top) Baltimore City Veterans Treatment Court participant is congratulated by mentor during a graduation ceremony in November 2020.



(Left) Clerk of Court James "Bo" McAllister, Wicomico County Circuit Court, officiated Kimberly Holmes-Iverson and Darian Iverson's virtual civil marriage ceremony from the wedding room at the courthouse in Salisbury, MD, on June 19, 2020.

(Right) Kimberly Holmes-Iverson and Darian Iverson were at home during their virtual civil marriage ceremony on June 19. Photo provided courtesy of SMDi Photography.

Circuit Court for Wicomico County Makes Virtual Weddings Memorable

For couples who would not let a global pandemic stand in the way of their big day, the Circuit Court for Wicomico County found ways to make their day meaningful and special.

"It became apparent early on that finding a way to allow people to move forward with their plans to marry was important," said Judge S. James Sarbanes, administrative judge, Circuit Court for Wicomico County. "In a time that has been full of uncertainty, anxiety, and loss, I'm proud that we were able and willing to innovate to bring joy to couples starting their lives together."

Small adjustments led to a more streamlined marriage process, a result of employing the latest technology to allow for virtual weddings. Applicants email or mail their marriage license request to the clerk's office and schedule a videoconference to finalize the application process. The clerk also discusses options for performing the actual ceremony.

"If the couple would like us to perform the ceremony virtually, I utilize our special wedding room using our remote platform," said Clerk of Court James "Bo" McAlister, Circuit Court for Wicomico County. "This saves the applicants a trip to the courthouse and helps us maximize social distancing. It is more efficient than having couples randomly appear at our office. At times, we also save the cost of postage and printing."

Clerks' offices statewide will continue offering remote marriage licenses as an option until the COVID-19 State of Emergency is lifted and the proclamation of the health emergency is rescinded, superseded, amended, or revised by additional orders.

Restructuring Maryland's Problem-Solving Courts During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

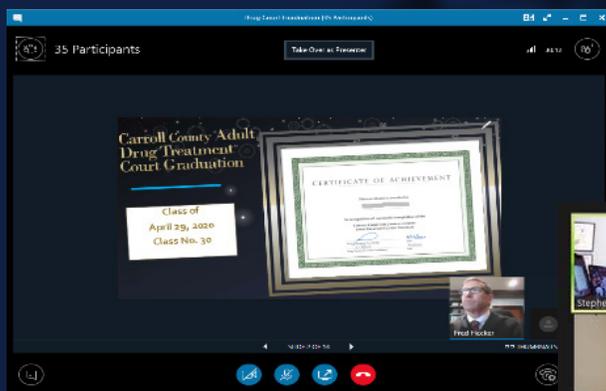
When the COVID-19 public health emergency hit, the Administrative Office of the Courts' Office of Problem-Solving Courts (OPSC) worked with local court coordinators throughout the state to find alternatives to in-person meetings and programs.

Problem-solving courts rely heavily on face-to-face interactions with participants, and often require in-person drug-testing. In order to solve the problem of keeping the program going in the face of the pandemic, the OPSC held strategy sessions via teleconference with the state's problem-solving court coordinators, circuit court administrators, and District Court administrative clerks to identify the obstacles they faced and ways to overcome them. As a result, the OPSC was able to resume the problem-solving court sessions through virtual platforms to assist one of the public's most vulnerable populations.

Maryland's problem-solving courts were some of the first court programs to operate remotely during the pandemic. Within days of courthouse closures, court functions such as meetings, hearings, case management, telehealth services, and court supervision were operating remotely with tremendous success. Maintaining close contact with program participants assures a higher degree of successful outcomes for participants and their families. Despite the hardships caused by the pandemic, the Maryland Judiciary was able to keep courts operating smoothly and saw many successful outcomes.

Judge Fred S. Hecker, who runs the Carroll County Circuit Court Adult Drug Treatment Court, created a virtual graduation ceremony format for continuing drug court graduations during the pandemic using PowerPoint and Zoom.

"Fortunately, the Carroll County Circuit Court did not miss a single graduation ceremony as a result of the COVID-19 court closures," said Judge Hecker. "Graduation ceremonies are as important to the drug court team as they are to the graduates. Virtual graduation ceremonies provide a unique opportunity for the court to recognize the remarkable achievements of our graduates, and to celebrate their success along with them."



(Right) Judge Stephen H. Kehoe's Talbot County Drug Court celebrated a virtual drug court graduation in December of 2020, marking a milestone for the county as the first of its kind.

(Left) Judge Fred S. Hecker's Drug Court graduation ceremony includes a presentation with graduation certificates for all the participants.



COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY WITH STAKEHOLDERS



Video Briefings Keep the Public Informed During the Covid-19 Pandemic



Chief Judge Barbera appears in many video messages to the public informing of court operations during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

When the COVID-19 public health emergency hit Maryland in early March 2020, Maryland Court of Appeals Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera remained in close contact with Judiciary personnel and the public via frequent video briefings regarding the status of the courts. These video updates allowed the chief judge to communicate effectively with stakeholders and court staff and were

viewed thousands of times. In addition, the videos were featured on the Judiciary's website, in several issues of the Maryland State Bar Association's monthly publication, and were shared through various social media platforms, online news sources, newspapers, and television outlets, helping to spread Chief Judge Barbera's messages to all Marylanders.

- Many circuit courts including the **Circuit Court for Washington County** implemented a new system to stream video bail review hearings and first appearances. Through a joint agreement with Washington County government entities and the Administrative Office of the Courts, the video conferencing system was installed in February 2020 and has allowed the court to operate more effectively.
- The **Judiciary's Access to Justice** implemented the Court Interpreter Management Software System to streamline all communication between interpreters and the courts. The software, which is a cloud-based, mobile-friendly system, has been customized to meet the Maryland Court Interpreter Program's needs, and allows interpreters to cancel, schedule, and reschedule assignments or accept or decline assignments via email or mobile app. The software also updates the interpreter calendar and generates invoices.
- Circuit courts and **District Court of Maryland** hosted video conference meetings with state and local bar associations to explain the Judiciary's five-phased COVID-19 reopening plan and its implementation. In addition, the District Court held virtual monthly meetings with other local justice partners, including sheriffs' offices, the Division of Parole and Probation, state's attorneys' offices, and the Office of the Public Defender to address systemic issues involving the criminal justice system. Communicating via video conferencing was a crucial tool during the COVID-19 pandemic for allowing stakeholders to address areas of concern and share information.
- The **District Court in Prince George's County** held a remote debt collection stakeholder meeting and distributed communications updates regarding the debt collection docket, allowing participants to share concerns and ask questions. Other stakeholder meetings

Judiciary Creates Remote Hearing Toolkit

As the COVID-19 pandemic surged throughout Maryland, the Judiciary's Access to Justice created a Remote Hearing Toolkit to walk the public and self-represented litigants through the process of participating in a remote electronic proceeding. The toolkit, available online at mdcourts.gov/legalhelp/remotehearing, explains in detail exactly what is a remote electronic hearing, and answers some common questions, such as, "How do I use Zoom?" or "What if I don't have access to the internet or a phone?" or "What platform does the court use for remote hearings?" Included in the toolkit are step-by-step instructions on how to join a Zoom hearing and, for non-English speakers, how to request a court interpreter.

Judiciary Coordinates COVID-19 Planning with Local Health Officials and Justice Partners

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera and Judiciary leadership continuously maintained communications with the Governor's Office and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to secure COVID-19 vaccinations for judges and Judiciary employees, initially for front-line staff and subsequently for the remaining employees.

In addition, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Judiciary participated in monthly conference calls with the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), state's attorney's offices, and the Office of the Public Defender regarding virtual hearings, the transportation to court for incarcerated individuals, and the review of the local jail populations. The Judiciary worked with justice partners to ensure that incarcerated individuals were able to participate in remote hearings wherever possible and that those eligible for release were released expeditiously.

The Judiciary also maintained communication with the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) regarding available assistance to tenants affected by the COVID-19 public health emergency.

included landlord-tenant stakeholders meeting; criminal and jailable traffic stakeholders; and the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, which involved law enforcement agencies, county officials, legal service providers, and domestic violence advocates.

- The Judiciary's **Government Relations and Public Affairs** created special COVID-19 web pages to provide constant updates for the public regarding the phased reopening plan for the courts, local court information, administrative orders, information for jurors, news releases, a timeline of happenings, informative videos, and courthouse stories. Information for Judiciary employees regarding COVID-19 was distributed via email and posted to the CourtNet.
- The Judiciary's **Access to Justice** launched a local print and radio advertising campaign to promote the use of Maryland Court Help centers during the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- On October 5, when the Judiciary initially entered Phase V of its five-phased reopening plan, Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera issued a press release and a video, **Jury Duty COVID-19 Safety Precautions**, to inform members of the public who are called for jury duty about the safety measures and structural changes they would see in the courtroom. Additionally, circuit court judges conducted interviews with local reporters and provided courthouse tours of the jury assembly area, courtrooms, and security checkpoints. The reopening of the courts to conduct jury trials received extensive coverage in the press, including *The Daily Record*, the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Washington Post*, Fox Baltimore, *The Southern Maryland Chronicle*, *Hagerstown Herald-Mail*, and more.



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Judiciary's 2020 Conflict Resolution Month Bookmark Contest Goes Virtual

Celebrating its 15th successful year, the Judiciary's Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO) would not let a global pandemic stop the hosting of the annual Conflict Resolution Day Bookmark Art Contest. This year, the contest was held virtually, focusing on themes of resolving or preventing conflicts, peer mediation, apologizing, respecting differences, talking things out, solving problems together, listening, tolerance, diversity, inclusion, and building peace. One aspect of the contest allows for teachers, parents, and students to discuss ways to resolve conflicts peacefully in a positive manner by creating beautiful works of art.

Parents and students were universally enthusiastic about the contest, with one parent saying, "Thank you for continuing the contest virtually. It is events like these that help create a sense of normalcy during odd times, especially with the creation of beautiful artwork!"

MARYLAND JUDICIARY
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

*Celebrating
65 Years*

1955 – 2020



A MESSAGE FROM THE

State Court Administrator

As we celebrate the 65th anniversary of the establishment of the Maryland Judiciary's Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), it is worth remembering the reason for its creation, as well as the numerous transformations, milestones, and successes the AOC has experienced during its existence.

As the central support agency for the state judicial branch, the AOC provides a broad range of support services to Maryland's courts in the areas of administration, operations, information technology, education, management, legal, government and public relations, financial, human resources, and various court programs. Above all, the AOC exists to ensure that the citizens of Maryland receive fair, effective, and efficient justice by supporting court innovations and services statewide.

Over the course of 65 years, there have been numerous changes and innovations to be proud of, such as the introduction of the Court Interpreter Program, Problem-Solving Courts, Court Help Centers, the new Parenting Plan and Guardianship programs that protect the state's most vulnerable citizens, and the implementation of the Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC) integrated case management system.

Since 1972, many of these innovations have been in partnership with District Court Headquarters (DCHQ). The symbiotic relationship between the AOC and District Court Headquarters has created opportunities for sharing and conserving valuable Judiciary resources.

There have been too many innovations to name them all. Each AOC unit, its leadership, and staff have been instrumental in creating more than six decades of success in service to the courts and the people of Maryland.

As we close out this unprecedented year that challenged all of us to deliver justice in very different ways and also created personal difficulties for many, I would like to thank all judges and employees of the Maryland Judiciary for their hard work, dedication, and unwavering professionalism in helping to navigate the COVID-19 global pandemic as safely as possible under extraordinary circumstances. As we progress to our 'new normal,' I am confident that we will continue to succeed in our mission of providing fair, effective, and efficient justice for all. I look forward to the future accomplishments and advancements of our dedicated public servants. As Edward Brooke III once said, 'to stand still is to regress.'



**STATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR
PAMELA HARRIS**

THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

Today

JUDICIAL COLLEGE

The Judicial College was established in 1981 as the former Judicial Institute to provide educational opportunities for judges. It has since increased its number of course offerings by 200% and now provides Professional Development courses and Technology Education classes.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Internal Affairs is comprised of Fair Practices, Internal Audit, and Legal Affairs. It was created in 2014 to provide legal and audit-related advice and support to the Maryland Judiciary.

JUDICIAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS (JIS)

Established in 1976, JIS was created to develop and implement applications to support criminal and juvenile court case management for the Circuit Court for Baltimore City. It is now a system connecting more than 70 courts, administrative offices, and partner agency locations with connection speeds over 40 times the capacity of the initial network.

PROGRAMS

Programs provides grant funding, subject matter expertise, Judicial Council committee support, and other services to courts and justice partners in the areas of access to justice, juvenile and family services, mediation and conflict resolution, problem-solving courts, and research and analysis.

OPERATIONS

Operations was created in 2014 to address matters related to the efficient operations of the courts and assists in the development of consistent statewide operations, policies, and best practices. They are responsible for the Office of Facilities and Security Administration as well as Budget and Finance, Human Resources, and Procurement, Contract and Grant Administration.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The government relations and public affairs functions were established under the Maryland Court of Appeals on June 11, 1997, as the Court Information Office. Currently, Government Relations and Public Affairs operates under the Administrative Office of the Courts and focuses on internal and external communications, media and government relations, and public outreach.



Maryland Court of Appeals Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera and State Court Administrator Pamela Harris.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

Established 1955

After a constitutional amendment was passed in 1944, administrative direction for the courts of Maryland became the responsibility of the chief judge of the Court of Appeals.

In the 1953 Judicial Commissions Report, the Burke Commission prioritized the topic of an administrative office first in its list of items for further review. The State Bar Association concentrated a portion of its 1955 midwinter meeting on the topic. The Commission on Judicial Administration, successor to the Burke Commission, reiterated the need for an office of Administrator of Courts, and a bill modeled after the Model Act already approved by the Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws was prepared under its direction (Dixon, 1956).

During the 1955 Maryland General Assembly legislative session, Chapter Law 343 authorized the formation of the Administration of Courts declaring, "there is hereby created an Administrative Office of the Courts, which shall be headed by a Director who shall be appointed by the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals of Maryland and shall hold office during the pleasure of the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals of Maryland" (Chapter 343, Acts of 1955).



Judges of the Court of Appeals, circa 1956/1957



Judges of the Court of Appeals 2020. From left to right: Judge Brynja M. Booth, Judge Michele D. Hotten, Judge Robert N. McDonald, Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera, Judge Shirley M. Watts, Judge Joseph M. Getty, Judge Jonathan Biran

Judge Frederick W. Brune was appointed chief judge of the Maryland Court of Appeals in 1954, where he served until 1964. In June of 1955, Professor Frederick W. Invernizzi, who had previously served as special assistant to the chief judge, was appointed director of the Administration of Courts. Invernizzi and the office staff, which consisted of the director and two stenographers, began their formal operations in September of 1955. Invernizzi held this position until Governor Marvin Mandel named him to the District Court in 1973.

An article published in the Maryland Law Review in 1956 pointed out that in “the twentieth century perhaps the most significant contribution to judicial reform will prove to be the developing movement to vest in a chief judge administrative authority and responsibility for the state’s judicial system, advised by a judicial conference and assisted by an administrative office.” (Dixon, 1956).

References:

Dixon, Robert G., Jr. (1956). *Judicial Administration in Maryland - the Administrative Office of the Courts*. [online] DigitalCommons@UM Carey Law. Retrieved from: digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/mlr/vol16/iss2/3/.



**Court of Appeals Chief Judge
Frederick W. Brune
1954-1964**



**Court of Appeals Chief Judge
Stedman Prescott
1964-1966**



**The Maryland Judicial Center,
187 Truman Parkway, Annapolis**



**The Administrative Office of the Courts
(AOC) Building, Taylor Avenue, Annapolis**



**Governor Marvin Mandel
1969-1979**



STATE COURT ADMINISTRATORS



Frederick W. Invernizzi
Director
1955 - 1973



William H. Adkins II
State Court Administrator
1973 - 1982



James H. Norris, Jr.
State Court Administrator
1983 - 1990



George B. Riggin, Jr.
State Court Administrator
1990 - 1999



Frank V. Broccolini
State Court Administrator
2000 - 2013



Pamela Q. Harris,
State Court Administrator
2013 - Present

IMPROVE SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES



- The **Administrative Office of the Courts**, through a collaborative effort between **Government Relations and Public Affairs**, **Judicial College**, **Security Administration**, and **District Court Security**, developed and produced a year-long security educational initiative called “The Security Series: Protecting Justice, Keeping Our Courts Safe.” The program aimed to ensure that each Judiciary employee had a thorough understanding of proper procedures to follow in the event of an emergency. The program featured 12 internal emails during the year, and offered supplemental guidance for employees, including videos, webinars, and quick reference cards.
- Freeing the Maryland Judiciary from traditional locations during the COVID-19 pandemic, **Judicial Information Systems (JIS)** mobilized to ensure that the Judiciary’s teleworkers had the necessary equipment and software. JIS implemented the Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) and configured additional servers to handle the extra capacity. Laptops, monitors, and headsets were delivered to teleworking staff to facilitate video and teleconferencing via *Skype* for

Business, *Microsoft Teams*, and later *Zoom for Government*. Additional equipment was deployed to courtrooms around the state to support functionality such as Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) and Digital Evidence Presentation. In the future, remote hearings and remote courthouse and administrative operations, such as Online Dispute Resolution, will continue to expand.

- **Judicial Information Systems (JIS)** improved the eWarrant program by acquiring a new software application to improve ease of use and adoption of the system, creating the ability for judges to sign and return warrants quickly. When the new platform was implemented in June of 2020, enrollment doubled to 240 users and 21,000 eWarrants were signed. Previously, the average number of warrants signed electronically was approximately 6,000 per year. This represents a 466% increase with the new system.
- The **Circuit Court for Caroline County** established a security committee to assess the court’s security needs, prioritize a list of suggested improvements, and secure funding for such plans. New equipment was installed



Judicial Information Systems acquired and distributed 1,469 laptops to support the Judiciary’s remote operations during the COVID-19 public health emergency. This initiative was key to supporting the Judiciary and providing the resources needed to enable remote operations, as well as adhere to new requirements for remote hearings and virtual courtrooms.

NEW LAPTOPS

625

500 District Court
125 Circuit courts, Court of Appeals,
and Court of Special Appeals

400

Laptops and
docking stations
for remote hearings

194

Laptops for remote hearings

250

Laptops for the initiation of telework

1469

Total laptops deployed



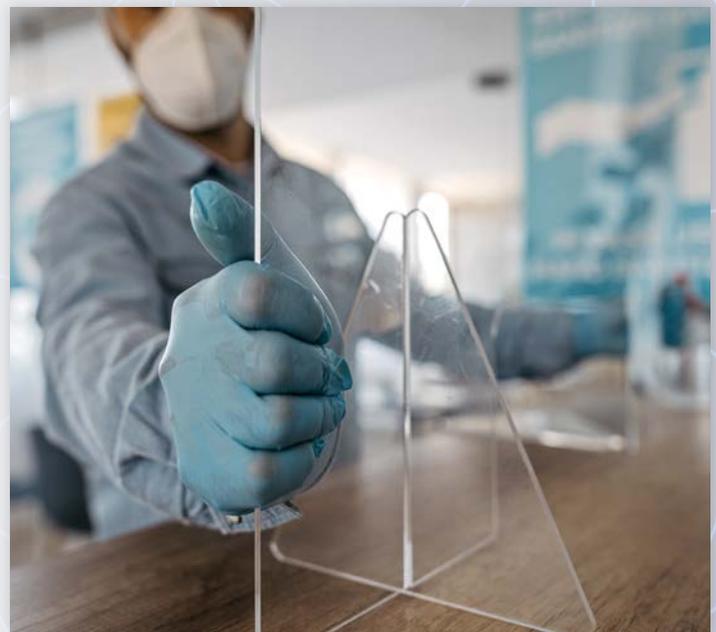
(Above) Video surveillance camera.

(Below) Dash camera.

in 2020, including a magnetometer and x-ray machine, as well as a new control, alarm system, and cameras.

- The **Administrative Office of the Courts** (AOC) installed a GPS and video monitoring system for all AOC fleet vehicles. The system allows the Judiciary to track each vehicle in real time so that **Facilities Administration** can ensure that safety features, mileage, and maintenance are accurate. The new monitoring system allows Judiciary staff to utilize the fleet in a more efficient and cost-effective manner, ensures better maintenance, and provides greater safety for the drivers. In addition, the mileage and destinations are retained in the GPS system, so drivers no longer need to keep a manual log.
- The video surveillance system at the **District Court in Charles County** was replaced to include a new digital video recording (DVR) system which captures activity 24 hours a day, seven days per week at the local district courthouse. The new DVR system provides an extra layer of security for court employees and the public and provides video surveillance whether the courthouse is open or closed.
- The **Jury Use and Management Subcommittee** of the Judicial Council's Court Operations Committee created a Jury Finance Manual in 2020 as an internal best practice guide for jury offices on how to structure payment procedures and reconciliation processes for greater efficiency and auditing purposes.
- The **Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County** clerk's office received an upgraded network infrastructure to provide better access to customers and stakeholders via a faster, more reliable network. Additionally, wait times have been reduced, permitting clerks to assist customers in a timelier fashion.
- The **District Court in Montgomery County** implemented an Intra-District Cross Training initiative by devising a plan to have employees from each of its locations in Rockville and Silver Spring acquire court-specific knowledge of how the other location operates. This training was focused on creating consistent and uniform processes to ensure customer satisfaction and professionalism for all court visitors.
- The **Circuit Court for Carroll County** designed a safety and security plan for the clerk's office. Following a security assessment in 2019, the court leadership established a security committee to meet with community partners such as the Westminster City Police Department and Carroll County Sheriff's Office to discuss safety and security concerns. The committee also offered training opportunities to employees, such as active shooter protocols. Additionally, bulletproof glass and key card access devices were installed throughout the office.
- The **Circuit Court for Wicomico County** created "ticket windows" for various departments within the clerk's office. These "ticket windows" are now centrally located in one hallway near the entrance of the courthouse, preventing court visitors from entering employee workspaces and helping to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. This arrangement has also enhanced security for all staff members and building occupants.
- The **Circuit Court for Wicomico County** constructed its fifth courtroom in the building. This new, modern, non-jury courtroom provides a secure, modern space for the magistrate to hear family cases.

- The **District Court in Cecil County** worked with the Pre-Trial Supervision Program at the Cecil County Detention Center to improve the number of defendants who are screened for the program. The pretrial program has a capacity of 20 people, and in 2020, more than 145 individuals were screened based on a risk-assessment tool used for potential placement. In addition, the **District Court in Talbot County** worked with the Pre-Trial Release Program at the Talbot County Detention Center to improve communication between the detention center and the court. In the new, streamlined process, the court receives the risk/needs assessment prior to each bail review hearing and a detention center staff member attends the bail review hearings.
- The **District Court in Frederick County** developed and implemented pre-trial conference packets to schedule pre-trial conferences in civil cases. Forms were created for attorneys to complete and return to the court via e-filing. Judges can review the form to determine whether an in-person pre-trial conference is needed or if the trial can be scheduled with attorneys. The new process eliminates the need for attorneys to attend court for such a short meeting and reduces the in-person contact due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Statewide, the circuit and district courts began preliminary renovation and expansion of the clerk's offices to improve the safety of the office space for employees due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Plexiglass barriers were installed between each clerk, and the new office will include eight new clerk stations with cubicles instead of the existing open workstations. The clerks' desks were moved at least six feet apart and their equipment, including printers, scanners, and telephone lines, was moved to allow them to work within social distancing guidelines. The completed project will contain high-walled cubicles that allow for better social distancing.
- The **District Court in Baltimore County** began planning a new landlord-tenant electronic bulk filing pilot program that will allow for the bulk filing of a high volume of failure to pay rent cases. The new process, once fully implemented, will allow for landlord-tenant cases to be more easily processed, tracked, and monitored.
- The **District Court in Baltimore City** enhanced courtroom audio-visual capabilities by installing additional microphones, speakers, and several webcams to enhance the participants' virtual court experience.



(Top) Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County takes precautions as jury trials resume by adding plexiglass barriers, and spacing tables and chairs.

BE ACCOUNTABLE



- The Judiciary's **Security Administration** implemented a new officer field training program to enhance professional development of its officers. This program allows newly hired Special Police Officers (SPO) to be assigned to a field training officer who will ensure that all job functions of the SPO are recognized, demonstrated, and acknowledged during a two-week evaluation period. SPOs have been trained to perform the Judicial Home Security Assessments, which enhance the residential and personal security of the judges. In addition, Security Administration obtained police radios that connect to the Anne Arundel County Police radio network for better communication with the police department in emergency situations.
- The **Circuit Court for Allegany County** clerk's office created a continuing education curriculum focused on the Maryland code and court rules to expand the court staff's knowledge of the rules and how to apply them. The clerk's office has been distributing supplemental information as it applies to specific departments, including civil, criminal, juvenile, and land records.
- In 2020, the **Judicial College** released a mandatory *Preventing Sexual Harassment* course for all Judiciary employees and new employees as part of the onboarding process. The course was developed in a partnership with Fair Practices, Government Relations and Public Affairs, and the Judicial College, and will ensure that all employees have an understanding of the laws prohibiting sexual harassment; the best practices for the prevention, intervention, and correction of sexual harassment; and, the internal resources available to victims of sexual harassment.
- The Judiciary's **Operations** designed and implemented a statewide rollout of the Everbridge Emergency Communication system. This system replaced an outdated system, RAVE, and ensures that, in the event of an emergency, Judiciary leadership can communicate reliably and effectively with employees and justice partners. This rollout included personalization of the system by court and training for Judiciary staff, judges, and court leadership.
- The **Circuit Court for Prince George's County and the District Court in Prince George's County** upgraded their alert system via the county's "Alert Prince George's" public communications system. Now the courts can send alerts regarding delays, closings, and emergency situations on an enhanced software platform with expanded notification capabilities. Subscribers receive information regarding traffic conditions, government closures, public safety incidents, and severe weather, as well as court matters.



ASSURE THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF SERVICE



- The **Circuit Court for Wicomico County's** clerk's office enacted a 24-hour email service to respond to public requests. This email account proved especially useful during the COVID-19 public health emergency as it has saved the public from making unnecessary trips to the courthouse. Court staff monitor, respond, and redirect messages to the appropriate department as needed. The email service also has a cost savings benefit as the clerk's office has decreased its use of postage and printing and has reduced traffic in the courthouse during the pandemic. The email service has also been helpful with marriages since couples can now apply for their license entirely online and also have their ceremony performed online. The Circuit Court for Wicomico County has received positive feedback from the public.



- To improve the efficiency of the hiring process for law clerks at various courts, the **Judiciary Human Resources** along with **Judicial Information Systems (JIS)** developed a new online application and virtual onboarding process to reduce paperwork and errors that may occur during the hiring process. Human Resources can now assist with job postings, recruiting, and the hiring process through the CONNECT system. This new virtual onboarding process allows for law clerks to receive immediate training and awareness from JIS Security, organizational information, and access to the Maryland Judiciary computer network on the first day of employment if the JIS security access request form has been submitted timely. As a result, the hiring process for new law clerks has been significantly enhanced due to new processes and partnerships with judicial chambers, JIS, and Human Resources.



(Top) Jury commissioner speaks to socially distanced audience.

- **Judicial Information Systems (JIS)** facilitated a major update to modernize the CONNECT human resources system user interface to make the application easier to use remotely. The system can now be used to encrypt e-mail and provides greater security when sharing sensitive data. In addition, an enhancement to the Microsoft Windows Update Business Center was introduced that allows Judiciary-issued laptops to receive JIS-delivered system updates and patches while off the Judiciary network. These efforts greatly improved security when sharing information.

- The **District Court in Howard and Anne Arundel counties** worked with District Court Headquarters to provide lactation pods in the lobbies of the courthouses for use by nursing mothers. The pods allow nursing mothers to attend court proceedings and have a safe, clean, and private space available for their use. The lactation pods are designed to meet the physiological needs of breastfeeding mothers by providing a “mother-friendly” environment in areas with limited space. Mothers can let themselves in, lock the door for maximum privacy, and then let themselves out.



- The **Circuit Court for Carroll County** redesigned its website to improve customer service, increase transparency, and improve communication with the public. As a result, it is much easier to find information and locate forms and fees for services. The new website also appries the community regarding scams and how they can protect themselves. New online features allow people to download forms, avoiding unnecessary trips to the courthouse.



- The **District Court in Harford County** designated a remote location in the commissioner’s office at the Harford County Detention Center to be utilized by essential court staff in the event of an emergency. The commissioner’s office is Wi-Fi enabled, permitting commissioners to easily transfer forms between judges and clerks for signatures.



- The **District Court in Baltimore County** created a new docket structure when relocating to the new Catonsville courthouse in the Rolling Crossroad Professional Park. The new docket structure allows for more efficient scheduling and more expeditious disposition of cases among eight courtrooms.



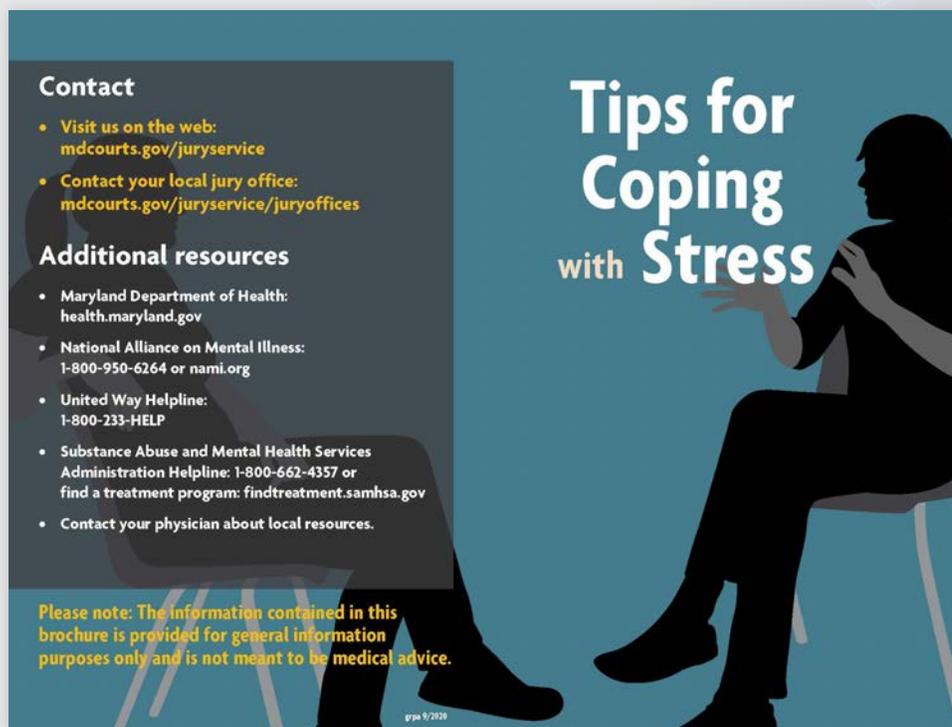
- The **District Court in Anne Arundel County** relocated a commissioner’s office to the new Central Holding and Processing Center at the Anne Arundel County Detention Center in Annapolis. The new central booking facility allows for all arrests in Anne Arundel County to be booked and processed for an initial appearance in one centralized location. It also provides a more secure environment for initial appearance hearings and improves safety and security for court staff, law enforcement officers, and defendants.



Judiciary Strives to Make the Juror Experience Less Stressful

A survey by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) indicated that 58% of jurors experienced stress while performing jury duty, and for longer trials, that number jumped to 96%, with some jurors experiencing serious stress symptoms.* To inform jurors about potential stress, the Judiciary created a new brochure that provides tips and resources to help jurors mitigate any symptoms of stress or anxiety they may be feeling. The brochure was designed to be a resource for judges to distribute during trials when jurors appear to be significantly affected, especially for trials involving graphic evidence, emotional testimony, and lengthy or high-profile trials.

*Source: <http://www.thejuryexpert.com/2009/05/juror-stress-the-hidden-influence-of-the-jury-experience/>



Contact

- Visit us on the web: mdcourts.gov/juryservice
- Contact your local jury office: mdcourts.gov/juryservice/juryoffices

Additional resources

- Maryland Department of Health: health.maryland.gov
- National Alliance on Mental Illness: 1-800-950-6264 or nami.org
- United Way Helpline: 1-800-233-HELP
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Helpline: 1-800-662-4357 or find a treatment program: findtreatment.samhsa.gov
- Contact your physician about local resources.

Please note: The information contained in this brochure is provided for general information purposes only and is not meant to be medical advice.

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BUILD PARTNERSHIPS



- The **District Court in Montgomery County** has partnered with Montgomery County's Legal Aid Office and members of the Montgomery County Bar Association to provide legal representation for qualifying tenants in summary ejectment (rent) cases. Tenants facing eviction often need assistance to navigate state and local laws. The new program will provide tenants with pre-trial information as well as pre-trial and day-of-trial representation so they can work out an agreement in court to meet their rent obligations. What initially began as a pilot program for landlord-tenant proceedings, other than summary ejectments, grew to include summary ejectment cases after collaborations between the District Court, Legal Aid, landlord's bar, and volunteer lawyers proved that the program could be successfully expanded. Despite delays due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, training for the volunteer lawyers continued and was completed in July 2020. The program will officially launch once the Judiciary enters Phase V of its reopening plan.
- The **Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC)** provided enhanced training for the Judiciary's Security Administration Special Police Officers (SPO) between March and June 2020. This training, which included more than 90 law enforcement courses, was completed through the newly acquired and nationally recognized Police One Academy, a virtual law enforcement training website. These training courses exceed the state's law enforcement standard set by the Maryland Police and Corrections Training Commission.
- The **District Court in Frederick County** participated in a virtual Law Day event with Frederick County Public Schools. Teachers and students submitted their questions to the court in advance and several questions were selected to be answered via video message.
- The **Maryland Judiciary** partnered with the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) for the acquisition of PPE and safety devices during the COVID-19 public health emergency to ensure that employees received the supplies needed to continue serving the public. Additional funding was provided by the Judiciary's **Security Administration** to assist the circuit courts and the District Court in enhancing personal safety with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and plexiglass shields to meet social distancing requirements.



Bronze sculpture of Harriet Tubman called "Harriet Tubman: Journey to Freedom" is unveiled at the Circuit Court for Dorchester County.

- The **Circuit Court for Dorchester County** hosted an unveiling of a 9-foot, 2,400-pound bronze sculpture of Harriet Tubman called "Harriet Tubman: Journey to Freedom" in honor of The Day of Resilience 2020. The statue is a replica of an original sculpture by celebrated artist Wesley Wofford, depicting Tubman confidently leading a slave girl toward freedom on the Underground Railroad. The statue was placed on temporary exhibit outside the courthouse until October 9 and was organized by Adrian Holmes and Alpha Genesis Community Development Corporation, with support from the Constituency for Africa, Dorchester County, and the City of Cambridge.
- The Judiciary's **Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO)** partnered with the Maryland Association of Public Library Administrators to provide the public with conflict resolution resources and mediation services through local libraries. Initially, the project began as an effort to reach out to communities that struggle with conflict and identify resources to address those needs. During the pandemic, many of the resources were available online. The project supports MACRO's mission to promote the use of quality alternative dispute resolution services to address the community's changing needs.
- The **Circuit Court for Charles County** partnered with the County Commissioners of Charles County to create a Charles County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

(CJCC) focused on addressing criminal justice matters in Charles County and to act as a county government advisory body to support and enhance collaborative efforts between key justice officials, agencies, and departments, and to offer a forum for public participation with respect to improvements to the criminal justice system. The partnership supports a long-standing goal of the court to broaden community relationships with local justice partners. A local CJCC can produce many benefits for the community, including a better understanding of crime and criminal justice problems, greater cooperation among agencies and units of government, clearer objectives and priorities, more effective resource allocation, and better-quality criminal justice programs. Despite the COVID-19 public health emergency, the CJCC's members continued to meet via virtual meeting platforms.

- The **Maryland Judiciary** has partnered with Lead4Life, Inc. in a Parent Mentoring Initiative Program (PMI) to act as a resource for parents or legal guardians who are responsible for children in need or are undergoing the reunification process. Through peer mentorship, parents or legal guardians are able to work with a team of experienced managers, mentors, and clinical staff to develop their guardianship abilities so that they may reunite their families. Funding for the PMI is provided by the AOC in recognition of the fact that peer support groups and peer mentoring services such as those provided by Lead4Life are a recognized “best practice” for family preservation and will enhance the court’s ability to serve participating families.
- The **District Court in Kent, Caroline, and Talbot counties** participated in a newly formed Domestic Violence Roundtable to discuss current practices concerning victims of domestic violence, their impact on the victims, and to brainstorm regarding future initiatives. Participants in the roundtable include county clerks, civil and domestic violence clerks, bailiffs, and family services coordinators from each county. The group meets several times a year and will focus on communication, safety, bilingual resources, grant funding, alternative dispute resolution, mediation, and the use of protective orders to improve services for victims of domestic violence.

- The **District Court in Baltimore City’s** three property owners – the Baltimore City Department of General Services, the Maryland Department of General Services, and J4P Associates – collaborated throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency to maintain the cleanliness and safety of the courthouse buildings and promote social distancing.



(Top) Maryland Court of Appeals Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera and Maryland District Court Chief Judge John P. Morrissey speak with Governor Larry Hogan during the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new District Court in Catonsville on October 27, 2020.

(Middle and Bottom) Dividers and plexiglass screens have been added throughout courtrooms in the Circuit Court for Prince George’s County as well as the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County.





Second from left, Kendall Timmons, Program Coordinator, First Judicial Circuit Truancy Reduction Court Program. Second from right, Robin Davenport, Executive Director, CASA of the Mid-Shore, third and fifth from right, Nicole Higgins and Alison Bergeron, Case Managers, First Judicial Circuit Truancy Reduction Court Program. At center third row is Anna Krupka, Case Supervisor, CASA of the Mid-Shore. (Photo courtesy: Kendall Timmons)

Courthouse Staff “Goes Purple” for National Recovery Month

National Recovery Month is a national observance held every September to educate Americans that substance use treatment and mental health services can enable those with mental and substance use disorders to live healthy and rewarding lives. According to the most recent data from Maryland

state health officials, 1,187 people died from opioid-related causes between January and June of 2020. That’s an increase of 9% from 2019 (1,085). In 2018, Maryland set a record for opioid-related deaths between January and June, with 1,193. To raise awareness and support National Recovery Awareness month, the staff of the **Circuit Court for Worcester County** wore purple to show solidarity with the sheriff’s office, local government agencies, and the health department as they strive to bring awareness regarding the opioid crisis in their area.

“Not only do we do the work of the court, we also encourage recovery in the community by the participation of court staff,” said Susan R. Braniecki, Worcester County Circuit Court Clerk.

Judges Participate in Mock Trials with High School Students to Increase Awareness About the Legal System

Early in 2020, before the pandemic, the Circuit Court for Carroll County hosted the regional championship, which included schools from Anne Arundel, Howard, and Carroll counties. Every year, students from Carroll County Public Schools fill a circuit court courtroom to participate in a mock trial with real judges. Since 2018, the Circuit Court for Carroll County has partnered with the State's Attorney for Carroll County and Carroll County Public Schools to hold mock trials for local high school students as part of the Maryland Youth and the Law (MYLAW) High School Mock Trial Competition. The objectives of the competition are to cultivate an appreciation among high school students of the legal system and the important role of courts and lawyers in society. Some students are inspired by the mock trials to pursue a career in the legal profession. Circuit court judges volunteer for the mock trials, which are held in circuit court courtrooms.

"It's always a pleasure to judge this competition," said Judge Richard R. Titus, Circuit Court for Carroll County. "The teams are amazingly well-prepared, and it is refreshing to see young adults so passionate about learning the intricacies of our legal system."



The annual Carroll County Mock Trial Competition is a unique partnership between the Circuit Court for Carroll County, Carroll County Public Schools, and the State's Attorney for Carroll County. Every year the competition is held in a Carroll County Circuit Court courtroom. Pictured in the back row (left to right) are Carroll County Board of Education member Dr. Patricia Dorsey, and judges Fred S. Hecker and Richard Titus along with members of the County Championship Team from Westminster High School.



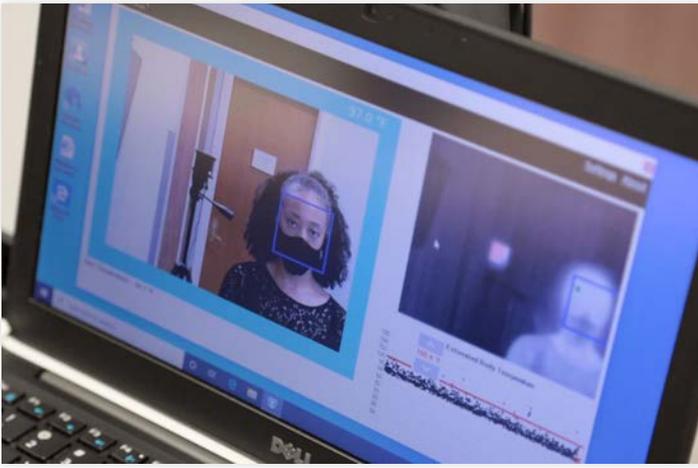
Second from left, Kendall Timmons, Program Coordinator, First Judicial Circuit Truancy Reduction Court Program. Second from right, Robin Davenport, Executive Director, CASA of the Mid-Shore, third and fifth from right, Nicole Higgins and Alison Bergeron, Case Managers, First Judicial Circuit Truancy Reduction Court Program. At center third row is Anna Krupka, Case Supervisor, CASA of the Mid-Shore. (Photo courtesy: Kendall Timmons)

Truancy Reduction Court Program Partners with CASA of the Mid-Shore to Improve School Outcomes

The Circuit Court for Dorchester County Truancy Reduction Court Program (TRCP) collaborated with CASA of the Mid-Shore to plan and implement a pilot program for CASA involvement in truancy cases in Dorchester County. Funded by a special grant from the Administrative Office of the Courts, the program's goal is to identify and meet the needs of the participants, shorten the time it takes to eliminate barriers to school attendance, and advocate for greater services. In January 2020, the TRCP team participated in a half-day training hosted by CASA of the Mid-Shore at the Circuit Court for Dorchester County. The training included individuals who are interested in becoming CASA volunteers, court-appointed advocates who provide personalized care and attention to improve the educational outcomes for youths in care. Circuit Court for Dorchester County Family Magistrate Daryl Walters led the group in a conversation about the importance of education, the similarities between TRCP and Child in Need of Assistance cases, and the need for positive adult role models for at-risk youths. TRCP is confident the pilot program will be extended throughout the state to benefit all at-risk youths.

USE RESOURCES WISELY





(Above) Thermal imaging camera records employee's temperature.

(Below) Jurors are sworn-in via Zoom.

- The **District Court in Allegany County** upgraded and installed a new security system, replacing an 11-year-old system that frequently malfunctioned. The new system is critical to the safety and security of the building as well as the judges, court staff, and justice partners' offices located inside the courthouse.

- The **Circuit Court for St. Mary's County** utilized the virtual platform Doxy.me, a telemedicine virtual platform for mental health, to continue offering its Co-Parenting Conflict Resolution Counseling Program and the Six-Week Intensive Co-Parenting Education Program during the COVID-19 public health emergency. The ability to provide these two programs online in a secure, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act compliant format allowed for a continuum of services to help parents address issues of co-parenting and custody.
- The **Maryland Judiciary** initiated a new process that streamlines the onboarding method for new hires utilizing the Judiciary's CONNECT system. The new process utilizes existing technology and resources to create a modern, efficient, paperless process at the Annapolis Complex, which includes the Court of Appeals, the Court of Special Appeals, the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library, the Administrative Office of the Courts, Judicial Information Systems, District Court Headquarters, and the District Court commissioners.
- The **Circuit Court for Calvert County** relocated and reconfigured its law library to better serve the community by providing adequate space and privacy. Security cameras were also installed to provide a higher level of security and a conference table was added to hold meetings.
- The **Circuit Court for Calvert County** reconfigured and relocated its Adult Treatment Court (ADC) and Family Services office to better utilize courthouse space. The ADC now houses the coordinator and all case managers, as well as Family Services, in one centralized location.
- The **Circuit Court for Kent County** renovated part of its facility to include office space and a conference room to host Alternative Dispute Resolution mediation services. The new project supports the community as it provides a private space to complete paperwork on domestic violence matters and also provides space for socially distanced small group discussions on legal matters.

- The **Circuit Court for Worcester County** underwent general upgrades, including installing LED lights, new carpet and paint, and an upgrade to its HVAC system, which included the removal of hazardous material. The new HVAC system has individual controls and meets Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards, as well as provides improved energy efficiency.
- The **Maryland Judiciary** provided nearly \$29 million in grants for fiscal year 2021 to support court innovations and court services statewide. The grants were earmarked for juvenile and family services, mediation, conflict resolution, problem-solving courts, security initiatives, and access to justice initiatives.
- The **District Court in Charles County** implemented a pilot program to demonstrate whether the use of barrier shields at the security checkpoint in the front of the courthouse provides bailiffs with added protection against the spread of COVID-19. The study revealed that since bailiffs must work inside courtrooms and with members of the public, the plexiglass shields provide little added protection. However, they do assist in preventing members of the public from grabbing a weapon or other contraband off the x-ray conveyor belt.

The **Circuit Court for Baltimore County** developed a pilot program to accept applications for public defender representation in the circuit courthouse as an accommodation during the COVID-19 public health emergency. This on-site application process reduced the number of litigants who failed to apply for public defender assistance in a timely manner, thus alleviating postponements in trial dates due to lack of counsel. The program also helps the Judiciary in its mission to provide fair, effective, and efficient justice to all. Circuit Court for Baltimore County judges maintain paper copies of public defender applications in the courtrooms, and the County Detention Center keeps a supply of applications in the video room for use by inmates whose bail reviews and arraignments are handled remotely. Each week, dozens of defendants are helped by this new streamlined process. In addition, a criminal case manager reviews the application in the presence of the defendant to ensure completeness and emails it to the commissioner the same day. The circuit court sets all arraignments for re-arraignment—ordinarily a lengthy four- to six-week process—if no counsel has entered an appearance by that date. The circuit court also offers the defendant another opportunity to apply for a public defender if he or she declined the first time, thus eliminating delays in the system and enhancing the defendant’s right to counsel in criminal actions. The program was created by Judge Robert Edward Cahill, Jr., Circuit Court for Baltimore County, in January 2020 and is still in use.



New Catonsville District Courthouse Opened with a Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony

On October 27, 2020, the Catonsville District courthouse in the Rolling Crossroads Professional Park officially opened with a socially distanced tour and ribbon-cutting ceremony. Located on nearly six acres, the new Catonsville District courthouse is Maryland's first green courthouse. Celebrating at the event were Maryland Court of Appeals Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera, District Court of Maryland Chief Judge John Morrissey, District Court of Baltimore County Administrative Judge Dorothy J. Wilson, Governor Larry Hogan, and Secretary Ellington E. Churchill, Jr. of the Maryland Department of General Services.

"The District Court is where the vast majority of Marylanders experience the court system," said Chief Judge P. Morrissey. "Our new Baltimore County District Court will be a step forward in courthouse design while integrating best practices for security and technology within a facility that will be certified for its environmental responsibility."

"The new and much-anticipated Catonsville District Court courthouse brings additional courtrooms to the people of Baltimore County, allowing more cases to be heard on a daily basis," said Chief Judge Barbera. Just as important, this facility is designed to house onsite services that provide legal assistance and information, increasing access to justice for all in Baltimore County. The Maryland Judiciary is committed to ensuring that the courthouses and other Judiciary facilities meet the evolving needs of all Marylanders. We appreciate the support of the Governor's Office and the General Assembly in making the new Catonsville courthouse a reality."



Secretary Ellington E. Churchill, Jr., secretary of the Maryland Department of General Services (DGS), Maryland Court of Appeals Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan, District Court of Maryland Chief Judge John P. Morrissey, and District Administrative Judge Dorothy J. Wilson, District 8, Baltimore County celebrate the ribbon cutting of the new Catonsville District Court courthouse.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



During this past year, the Covid-19 public health emergency led the Maryland Judiciary, along with the rest of the world, into a time of uncertainty as schools, businesses, and government agencies were forced to close for in-person operations. As the courts adjusted to a new normal brought about by the pandemic, administering justice, recording land records, and addressing emergency matters could not cease. Judges, clerks, and administrators had to explore ways to continue to serve the public and interact with justice partners, while keeping everyone safe. Initiatives that may have been in the planning stages had to be advanced to ensure sustainability of the effective and efficient administration of justice. The implementation of those initiatives led to renewed discussions about the way forward. The following are a few initiatives for the upcoming year resulting from those discussions, as well as some that were in the pipeline:

- Expand the use of remote technology for court proceedings, spoken language interpretation, jury selection, and meetings with internal and external partners.
- Expand the use of the *Guide and File* automated interview tool to other case categories to assist more self-represented litigants effectively navigate court processes and improve their interaction with the courts.
- Implement additional proficiency-based educational programs, such as Supervisor and Manager CORE, to ensure Judiciary personnel are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform their jobs.
- Formulate and begin implementing the recommendations of the Committee on Equal Justice, its subcommittees – Access and Fairness; Diversity and Inclusion Education; Operations; Sentencing; Rules Review; and Community Outreach.
- Reimagine the delivery of judicial education and professional development courses, including instructor-led distance learning.
- Finalize and implement a comprehensive customer service program for the Judiciary.
- Continue planning for and implementation of the statewide case management system (MDEC) to the remaining three jurisdictions – Montgomery and Prince George’s counties, and Baltimore City.
- Continue to roll out the IT Regional Support model, strategically placing technical support resources around the state ensuring all courts have greater access to needed support with quicker response times.
- Expand the use of *Zoom for Government* within the courts to provide livestreaming of the audio of public court proceedings.
- Develop recommended policies surrounding the access, retention, and usage of court data.
- Explore viable options for a central automated portal for payment of court costs and fees.
- Continue to enhance case management processes for greater efficiency, fully optimizing MDEC and other applications.
- Enhance the Judiciary’s external Dashboard to include information on other areas, such as services to assist self-represented litigants through the various self-help programs.
- Implement an online dispute resolution (ODR) system for use in civil small claims and traffic cases.
- Implement a web-based portal for the text messaging program and expand the program to additional case types.



PAMELA Q. HARRIS
STATE COURT
ADMINISTRATOR



HONORABLE JOHN P. MORRISSEY
CHIEF JUDGE
DISTRICT COURT OF MARYLAND

JUDICIAL COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES



The Maryland Judicial Council serves as the central governance body of the Judiciary. The Council develops recommendations for the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals and is the central hub for all policy changes, judicial reforms, legislative issues, and other developments, both internally and externally.

The committees, which report to the Maryland Judicial Council, are an essential part of a coordinated interdisciplinary effort to fulfill the Judiciary's mission. They are inclusive, recruiting talented professionals throughout the Judiciary to work together to accomplish key tasks that move the Judiciary forward to serve the people of Maryland.

MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL 2020

** Member of Executive Committee*

Honorable Mary Ellen Barbera, Chair*
Chief Judge, Court of Appeals

Melissa Batie
Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Administrators
Court Administrator, Circuit Court for Wicomico County

Honorable Keith A. Baynes
Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges
Circuit Court for Cecil County

Honorable Pamila J. Brown
District Court in Carroll and Howard Counties

Honorable Angela M. Eaves
Circuit Court for Harford County

Honorable Matthew J. Fader*
Chief Judge, Court of Special Appeals

Marina Fevola
Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Administrators
Court Administrator, Circuit Court for Kent County

Markisha Gross
Administrative Clerk
District Court in Montgomery County

Honorable Katherine Hager
Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Clerks
Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County

Pamela Q. Harris*
State Court Administrator
Administrative Office of the Courts

Honorable James A. Kenney III (Ret.)
Chair, Senior Judges Committee

Honorable Karen H. Mason
Circuit Court for Prince George's County

Honorable Patricia L. Mitchell
District Court in Montgomery County

Honorable John P. Morrissey*
Chief Judge, District Court of Maryland

Honorable Charlene M. Notarcola
Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Clerks
Circuit Court for Cecil County

Honorable Laura S. Ripken*
Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges
Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County

Honorable Bonnie G. Schneider
District Court in Caroline, Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot Counties

Mary K. Smith
Administrative Clerk
District Court in Howard and Carroll Counties

Roberta Warnken
Chief Clerk, District Court of Maryland

Honorable Alan M. Wilner (Ret.)
Chair, Standing Committee on Rules of Practice and Procedure

Honorable Brett W. Wilson
Circuit Court for Dorchester County

Honorable Dorothy J. Wilson
District Court in Baltimore County

Faye D. Gaskin, Secretary
Deputy State Court Administrator

2020 COMMITTEES

Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee

Honorable Mimi Cooper, Chair

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

Court Access and Community Relations Committee

Honorable Pamela J. White, 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. Promote knowledge and understanding of the Judiciary.

Court Operations Committee

Honorable Brett W. Wilson, Chair

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

Court Technology Committee

Honorable Fred S. Hecker, Chair

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

District Court Chief Judge's Committee

Honorable John P. Morrissey, Chair
Chief Judge, District Court of Maryland

Aid the Chief Judge of the District Court in the administration, operation, and maintenance of the District Court statewide.

Domestic Law Committee

Honorable Cynthia Callahan, 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

Honorable Susan H. Hazlett, Chair

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

Equal Justice Committee

Honorable E. Greg Wells, Chair

Ensure that judges and staff increase their knowledge and understanding of ethnic disparities, discrimination, and systemic racism, including implicit bias, micro-inequities, and micro-aggressions.

Juvenile Law Committee

Honorable 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

Honorable W. Timothy Finan, Chair (until October 2020)

Honorable Stacy A. Mayer, Chair (October 2020 - December 2020)

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

Major Projects Committee

Honorable John P. Morrissey and Pamela Harris, Co-Chairs

Address policy-related matters regarding the implementation and ongoing operation of new and existing technology projects, as well as the establishment of priorities for the implementation of those projects.

Senior Judges Committee

Honorable James A. Kenney III (Ret.), Chair

Advise the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals and the Judicial Council on matters relevant to retired and recalled judges.

Specialty Courts and Dockets Committee

Honorable Nicholas E. Rattal, Chair

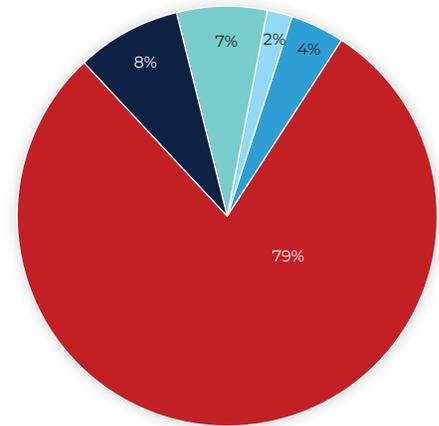
Promote and oversee the development, implementation, and evaluation of specialty courts and dockets in the courts.

MARYLAND JUDICIARY AT A GLANCE



PERSONNEL PROFILE FISCAL YEAR 2020

JUDGES	
Court of Appeals	7
Court of Special Appeals	15
Circuit Court	174
District Court	124
Total Judges	320
MAGISTRATES	
Circuit Court Magistrates ¹	71.9
Total Magistrates	71.9
LAW CLERKS	
Law Clerks	174**
Total Law Clerks	174
JUDICIAL SUPPORT PERSONNEL	
Court of Appeals	38.00
Court of Special Appeals	92.50
Circuit Court Clerks' Offices	1,468.0
District Court	1,452.50
Administrative Office of the Courts	391.40
Judicial Units ²	33.60
Total Judicial Support Personnel	3,476.00
Contractual Employees ³	356.00
Total State-Funded Judicial Branch Personnel	4,397.90
LOCALLY FUNDED JUDICIAL BRANCH PERSONNEL	
Orphans' Court Judges ⁴	66
Circuit Court Personnel	993.20
TOTAL LOCALLY FUNDED JUDGES AND PERSONNEL	1,059.20



- Judges
- Magistrates
- Law Clerks
- Judicial Support
- Judicial Support Personnel Contractual Employees

- 1 Does not include two temporary magistrates.
- 2 Judicial Units include the Commission on Judicial Disabilities, Rules Committee, State Board of Law Examiners, and Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library. The Attorney Grievance Commission and Client Protection Fund are also units of the Judiciary; however, they are staffed through those entities.
- 3 Includes District Court bailiffs.
- 4 Three judges sit on the Orphans' Court in Baltimore City and each of the counties with the exception of Harford and Montgomery Counties in which circuit court judges sit as judges of the Orphans' Court.

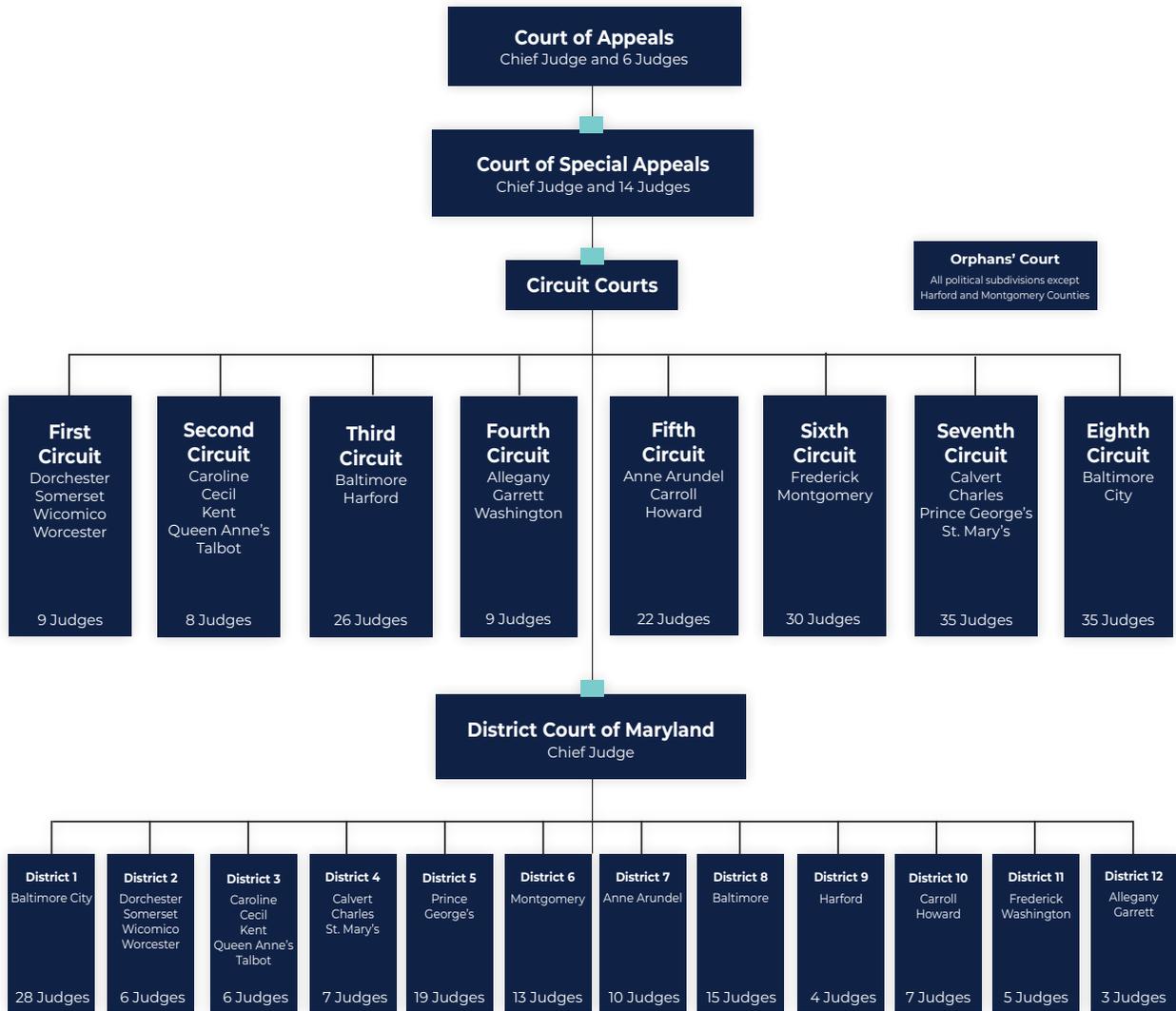
JUDICIAL REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES* FISCAL YEAR 2020

Revenues	\$439,419,802
Expenditures	\$595,299,856

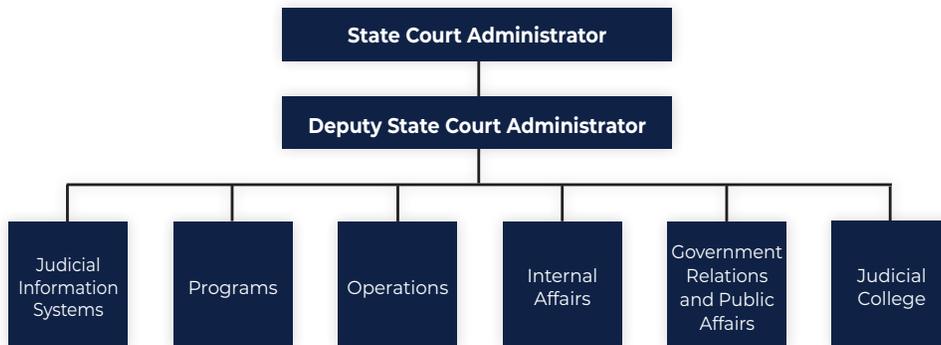
* Revenues and expenditures include all fund types. Category includes revenues and expenditures associated with child support reimbursements for magistrates. Includes revenues and expenditures associated with Family Law.

** Circuit court law clerks only.

MARYLAND JUDGES BY COURT, FISCAL YEAR 2020



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS



The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) is the central support agency for the state judicial branch. It provides a broad range of support services to Maryland's courts in operations, information technology, management, legal, government relations, financial, administration, and programs.

MARYLAND JUDICIARY TOTAL FILINGS AND TERMINATIONS FISCAL YEAR 2020

	FILINGS	TERMINATIONS
Court of Appeals	688	678
Court of Special Appeals	2,309	2,393
Circuit Courts	180,692	181,754
District Court	1,391,750	1,407,291
TOTALS	1,575,439	1,592,116

NOTE: Due to the transition to Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC), data on filings and terminations are obtained from multiple source systems, which may result in some differences in the comparability of data across jurisdictions and between reporting periods.

COURT OF APPEALS FILINGS AND DISPOSITIONS FISCAL YEAR 2020

	FILINGS	DISPOSITIONS
Regular Docket	62	72
Petitions for Certiorari	467	477
Attorney Grievance Proceedings	118	93
Bar Admission Proceedings	1	1
Certified Questions of Law	4	1
Miscellaneous Appeals	35	33
Judicial Disabilities	1	1
TOTALS	688	678

The Court of Appeals is Maryland's highest court. It hears matters almost exclusively by way of certiorari, a process that gives the Court the ability to decide which cases to hear. By law, however, the Court of Appeals is required to hear cases involving legislative redistricting and removal of certain state officials. The chief judge of the Court of Appeals sits with the six other judges on the court to hear oral arguments in an appeal.

COURT OF SPECIAL APPEALS FILINGS AND DISPOSITIONS FISCAL YEAR 2020

Appeals Filed	2,309
Appeals Disposed	2,393
Opinions Filed	1,206

The Court of Special Appeals is the intermediate appellate court. It reviews a trial court's actions and decisions in given cases and decides whether the trial judge properly followed the law and legal precedent. Judges sitting on the Court of Special Appeals generally hear and decide appeals in panels of three. Sometimes, all 15 judges sit together, en banc, to hear the case.

CIRCUIT COURT STATEWIDE FILINGS AND TERMINATIONS FISCAL YEAR 2020

	FILINGS	TERMINATIONS
Civil General	49,930	54,031
Civil Family	76,073	74,678
Juvenile	9,600	9,452
Criminal	45,089	43,593
Totals	180,692	181,754

Circuit courts generally handle more serious criminal cases, major civil cases, including juvenile and other family law cases such as divorce, custody and child support, and most cases appealed from the District Court, Orphans' Courts, and certain administrative agencies. Circuit courts also hear domestic violence cases. Each county and Baltimore City has a circuit court. Cases in circuit courts may be decided by either a judge or a jury.

DISTRICT COURT STATEWIDE MOTOR VEHICLE, CRIMINAL, CIVIL, LANDLORD-TENANT FILINGS AND TERMINATIONS FISCAL YEAR 2020

	FILINGS	TERMINATIONS
Motor Vehicle ¹	522,811	510,044
Criminal ²	112,728	119,294
Civil ³	246,613	268,355
Landlord-Tenant	509,598	*509,598
Totals	1,391,750	1,407,291

* Landlord-tenant filings are used as a proxy for terminations in the totals for District Court. Given the paper-only process used in most locations and quick processing of landlord-tenant cases, we assume that all matters are concluded.

- 1 Includes DWI, serious, and non-serious traffic cases by incident (including cases prepaid before trial), as well as parking/red light requests for trial, Natural Resources citations, and Maryland Transit Administration citations.
- 2 Criminal filings include fugitive warrants.
- 3 Civil case filings are comprised of the following categories of filings: civil complaints; domestic violence; peace order; possession; miscellaneous petitions; aids of execution; municipal infractions; civil citations; emergency evaluations; forfeitures of contraband; and injunctions.

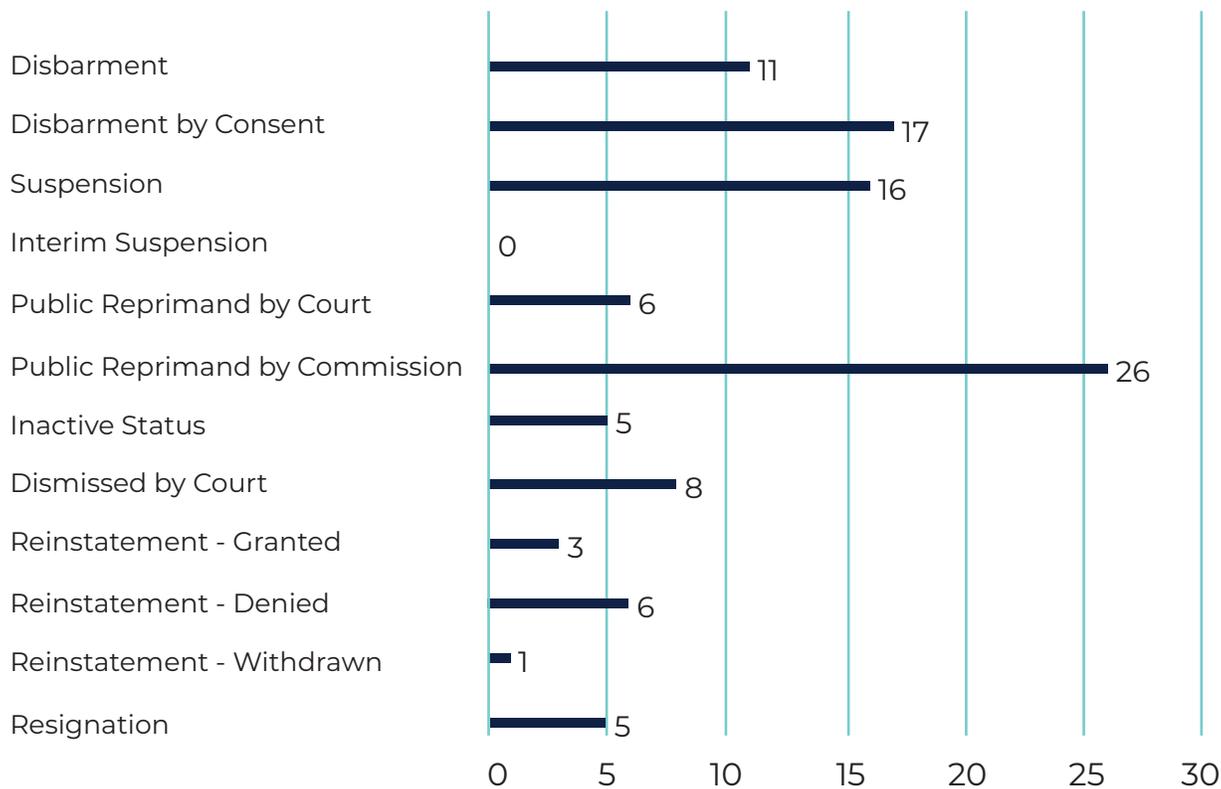
Note: Due to the transition to Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC), data on filings and terminations are obtained from multiple source systems, which may result in some differences in the comparability of data across jurisdictions and between reporting periods.

The District Court is where most people experience the court system. Cases heard here include motor vehicle (traffic) and boating violations and other misdemeanors and specified felonies, domestic violence and peace order petitions, landlord-tenant disputes, small claims and other civil cases involving limited dollar amounts, and replevin (recovery of wrongfully taken or detained goods). Each county and Baltimore City has at least one District Court location. A case in the District Court is tried before a judge only; there are no jury trials in District Court.

RELATED JUDICIAL BOARDS, COMMITTEES, COMMISSIONS, AND ENTITIES



ATTORNEY GRIEVANCE COMMISSION AND OFFICE OF BAR COUNSEL FISCAL YEAR 2020



ATTORNEY DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS: TOTAL NUMBER: 104

The Attorney Grievance Commission oversees the conduct of both Maryland lawyers and non-members of the Maryland Bar who engage in the practice of law in the state. The Office of Bar Counsel investigates and, where indicated, prosecutes attorneys whose conduct violates the Maryland Lawyers' Rules of Professional Conduct as well as those engaged in the unauthorized practice of law. The Office of the Bar Counsel also reviews notifications of overdrafts on attorney escrow accounts.

CLIENT PROTECTION FUND OF THE BAR OF MARYLAND FISCAL YEAR 2020

CLAIMS	
Decided Claims	108
Claims Approved for Payment	39
Total Payment on Approved Claims	\$246,203
Revenue from Assessments	\$827,213

The Client Protection Fund of the Bar of Maryland (formerly “The Clients’ Security Trust Fund”), was created in 1965 for the purpose of maintaining the integrity and protecting the good name of the legal profession. The Fund, supported financially by practicing attorneys, reimburses claimants for losses caused by theft of funds by members of the Maryland Bar, acting either as attorneys or as fiduciaries.

MARYLAND COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL DISABILITIES FISCAL YEAR 2020

SOURCES OF ALL COMPLAINTS	
Attorneys	4
Investigative Counsel Initiated Inquiries	11
Inmates	32
Public	149
Judges	0
Total Verified Complaints	196
COMPLAINTS BY LEVEL OF COURT	
District Court Judges	50
Circuit Court Judges	123
Orphans’ Court Judges	12
Court of Special Appeals Judges	8
Court of Appeals Judges	2
Other	1
Total	196
DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS*	
Filing of Charges by Investigative Counsel	1
Dismissal With Warning ¹	1
Dismissal with a letter of Cautionary Advice	4

* The majority of complaints in fiscal year 2020, as in prior years, were dismissed because the allegations set forth in the complaints were either found to be unsubstantiated, or the conduct complained about did not constitute sanctionable conduct.

¹ Please be advised new rules governing the Commission were implemented on July 1, 2019. As a result, a matter that was previously labeled a “Dismissal with a Warning” is now a “Dismissal with a Letter of Cautionary Advice” pursuant to Maryland Rule 18-425(b). In FY20, the Commission had one (1) warning and four (4) letters of cautionary advice.

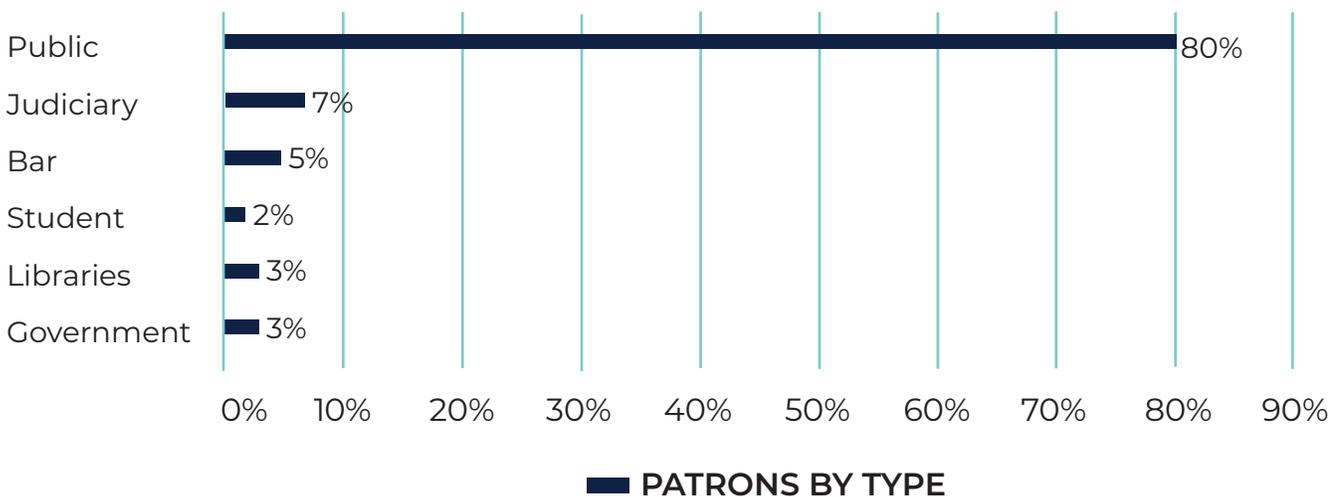
The Maryland Commission on Judicial Disabilities is an independent body with the power to investigate complaints against Maryland judges and, when warranted, conduct hearings concerning such complaints and take certain actions or make recommendations for other actions to the Court of Appeals.

STATE BOARD OF LAW EXAMINERS FISCAL YEAR 2020

	APPLIED	SAT	PASSED	CLEARED
Uniform Bar Exam ¹	1,261	1,138	690	645
Uniform Bar Exam Transfer ²	312	0	0	178
Admission without Examination ³	448			229

- 1 Pursuant to Rules of the Court of Appeals enacted March 1, 2019, Maryland administered the Uniform Bar Exam (UBE) published by the National Conference of Bar Examiners beginning with the July 2019 exam session. See Maryland Rule 19-203.
- 2 Attendant to the adoption of the UBE in Maryland, the State Board of Law Examiners began in July 2019 to accept UBE score transfers and applications filed by applicants who had achieved a qualifying UBE score in another jurisdiction within the most recent 3 years prior to filing. UBE Transfer applicants are not required to sit for or pass a bar exam in Maryland but must meet other admissions requirements. See Maryland Rule 19-207.
- 3 Attendant to the adoption of the UBE in Maryland and the advent of UBE transfer applications, the Court of Appeals eliminated the Out-of-State Attorney Exam in favor of Admission Without Examination for experienced out-of-state attorneys beginning on July 1, 2019. See Maryland Rules 19-215 & 216.

MARYLAND THURGOOD MARSHALL STATE LAW LIBRARY FISCAL YEAR 2020



The Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library responds to requests for legal information through email, telephone, in-person visits, and traditional mail. The bulk of requests, 80%, came from members of the general public. More than half of the requests, 70%, arrived through email, up from 55% in fiscal year 2019. Overall, reference staff recorded a total of 10,703 reference interactions in fiscal year 2020, a decrease of 2% from fiscal year 2019.

The Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library is open to the public and serves the needs of Maryland's government and citizens by building and preserving collections of legal information resources, promoting access to these collections, and creating educational opportunities that enhance the understanding of legal information. The Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library operates the People's Law Library, a Maryland legal self-help website.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON RULES OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE FISCAL YEAR 2020

Reports Published *	8
New Rules Proposed	66
New Appendices Proposed	0
Amended Rules Proposed	108
Amended Appendices Proposed	1
Deletion of Rules Proposed	38
Deletion of Appendices Proposed	0

* The 201st Report, the 202nd Report and one Supplemental Appendix Report, the 203rd Report and one Supplemental Report, the 204th Emergency Report, the 205th Report and one Supplemental Report, totaling 734 pages. Topics addressed in these Reports include:

201st Report: Motion to Vacate Judgment of Conviction or Probation before Judgment • Civil Judgments • Child Support Guidelines Financial Statements • Parenting Plans • Guardianship Proceedings • Compliance with Applicable Standards by Court-designated Mediators and Settlement Conference Presiders • Statutory Waiver of Certain Fees

202nd Report: Public access to Judicial Records • MDEC Rules

Supplement Appendix to 202nd Report: Public Access to Judicial Records (Marked)

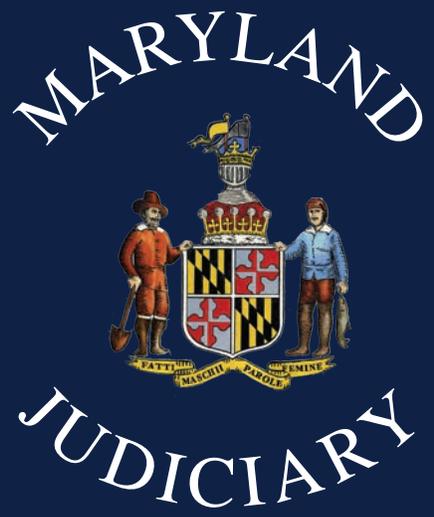
203rd Report: Receivers and Assignees • In Rem Foreclosure of Local Government Tax Liens • Oaths and Affidavits • Discovery Procedures for Enforcement of Civil Judgments • Judicial Review of Decisions of the Workers' Compensation Commission • Repeal of Rule Pertaining to the Maryland Professionalism Center • District Court Commissioners' Secondary Part-Time Employment • Judicial Disciplinary Proceedings • Informal Briefing • Scheduling of Cases for Briefing and Argument in the Court of Special Appeal

Supplement to 203rd Report: Notice of Intent to Transfer a Qualifying UBE Score

204th Report: Emergency Powers and Authority of the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals • Coordination with the Governor

205th Report: Proceedings Conducted by Remote Electronic Means • Expediting of Proceedings Involving Children Eligible for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status • Transfer by District Court of Final Domestic Violence Protective Orders to Circuit Court • Expansion of MDEC Provisions to Appeals and Other Proceedings Emanating from Non-MDEC Courts

Supplement to 205th Report: Case Management Plan Pertaining to Special Immigrant Juvenile Matters
The Standing Committee on Rules of Practice and Procedure, often referred to simply as the Rules Committee, considers proposed amendments and additions to the Maryland Rules of Procedure and submits recommendations to the Court of Appeals.



MARYLAND JUDICIAL CENTER

187 Harry S. Truman Parkway | Annapolis, MD 21401

410-260-1488 | mdcourts.gov

