

# MARYLAND JUDICIARY



2002 - 2003  
ANNUAL REPORT



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# A Message From Chief Judge Robert M. Bell



During the past year, state agencies have had to rely on innovation and creative solutions to improve or expand services. The Maryland Judiciary has not been an exception, either in our fiscal restraint—or in our resolve to continue to provide the citizens of Maryland with a justice system of the highest quality. This report describes some of the ways that resolve has manifested itself in the past year.

The report also reflects the breadth of issues that confront a modern court system. Specialized courts address the specific challenges of technology on the one hand, drug abuse on the other. We find new ways to make our courts more efficient. And we engage the legal community in a statewide discussion of civility in the courtroom. In these areas and others, we have made important progress during 2002-2003, and in the following pages we report on the accomplishments of the Judiciary and the men and women whose efforts are so important to justice in Maryland.

With great pleasure, and with gratitude to our many dedicated and hard working employees, I present the 2002-2003 Annual Report.

Fiscal year 2003 proved to be both demanding and challenging for the Judicial Cabinet and the Judicial Council. The Cabinet, consisting of judicial branch leaders, serves as the principal advisory body to the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals on all matters related to or affecting the governance and administration of the Maryland Judiciary. Meeting monthly, the Cabinet addressed important policy matters this past year, including the formulation of measures relating to state judicial branch budget reductions; the formation of an ad hoc committee to study jury trial prayers emanating from the District Court; recommendations for the improvement of court interpretation and translation services; and the court appointment of the Office of the Public Defender in delinquency matters.

The Judicial Council, composed of representative judges, administrators and clerks from each court level in Maryland, was formed to superintend the Maryland Judicial Conference and its composite subject matter committees as well as to act as a high level policy advisory body to the Chief Judge. During the last year, the Council continued to direct the case time standard initiative—a derivative of the Judicial Cabinet—with a review of all case improvement plans submitted by the circuit courts and the establishment of “best practices” in these courts of general jurisdiction. Under its authority, a second statewide case management assessment was conducted and is under review. Other policy issues included the expansion of drug treatment courts, access to court records, judicial elections in the circuit courts and the review of substantive legislation affecting the judicial branch.

### CASE TIME STANDARDS

For the past two-and-a-half years, the Judicial Council has been leading and superintending case time standards initiatives in both the District and circuit courts. Rather than chisel a set of standards into stone for all to follow, the Council has continued to evaluate and monitor best practices across the state. This has allowed jurisdictions to freely discuss and exchange techniques and ideas that can be applied to benefit their programs. The result has been a wave of positive actions taken by courts statewide to make the system more efficient, without compromising justice.

Most practitioners are very pleased with the court's emphasis on time management, said Joseph F. Murphy, Jr., Chief Judge of the Court

of Special Appeals and member of both the Judicial Cabinet and Council. “It's clearly on schedule, but it's important to keep in mind that this is an ongoing analysis.”

One area in which Judge Murphy said he has seen substantial improvement has been the focus on pretrial motions to facilitate the settlement process. Many lawyers, he related, are uncomfortable about entering into a settlement if important issues are unresolved. When status conferences are held prior to trial, during which time the need for motion hearings are determined, the flow of the trial is not disrupted. Consequently, precious court time previously taken up by pretrial arguments is significantly reduced, clearing the way for more serious cases to be heard.

“Once those issues get resolved, the lawyers are in a much better situation to look at the outcome and make a predetermination,” Judge Murphy said. “Prompt disposition of important pretrial motions can speed up a case, especially when it’s used in conjunction with the settlement process.”

Daniel M. Long, Chair of the Conference of Circuit Judges, Circuit Court Judge for Somerset County and member of the Judicial Council, said he has been impressed with the increased monitoring and usage of Md. Rule 2-507—which gives judges the option to dismiss a case because of lack of prosecution. The rule encourages the prosecution of cases and gets dormant cases off the books and out of the system, he said. The rule could also be used as a tool to move attorneys and parties along faster.

“I think overall, we’re more aware of how long it takes for a case to be tried, and the need to more carefully consider delays such as requests for continuances,” said Judge Long. “I think these actions have taught us—judges, clerks, and other court officials—how to manage cases in a more effective and efficient manner.”

Other circuit court actions taken during the past year to improve case management/processing:

- Implemented a Civil Differentiated Case Management plan (DCM) and developed a DCM plan for criminal cases
- Adopted stricter postponement policies
- Coordinated with other agencies such as the sheriff’s department (to effectuate service of process), state’s attorney (to purge unserved, stale cases) and the public defender (to assure prompt access to their services and avoid postponements)
- Increased use of retired judges when judicial vacancies exist to alleviate the need to postpone cases

- Devised a system for the expeditious handling of criminal cases received from the District Court
- Developed a *pro se* orientation program to better educate *pro se* litigants in family cases
- Created a statistical program to effectively monitor dockets for case delays

According to the most recent case flow study, the District Court has continued to progress toward meeting strict time standards previously established by the Judicial Council. Statewide, civil case processing remained at near-standard levels. Criminal, DWI and other jailable traffic cases saw marked improvement. And the processing of the high volume of requests for trial in payable traffic citations is still significant, but also challenging.

The number of postponements was recognized early on as one of the biggest factors in achieving timely case disposition. Many measures, including strict enforcement of postponement rules, improvements in scheduling, use of preliminary inquiries and continued cooperation with the legal community and law enforcement agencies (e.g., better coordination of attorney and officer schedules, prompt submission of citations), have been credited for improved case processing in many locations.

“The mandate to improve case flow, of course, is not without its challenges,” said James N. Vaughan, Chief Judge of the District Court. “Improvements made this year are especially noteworthy because these successes were achieved in the face of cutbacks due to the state’s financial condition. The District Court remains committed to balancing timely case dispositions while ensuring that parties receive the due process guaranteed in our justice system.”



In 2003, newly elected Governor Robert Ehrlich announced that the State of Maryland had incurred a budget deficit of \$2.1 billion. Gov. Ehrlich has asked state agencies for help in reducing fiscal '03 costs and the Maryland Judiciary has responded by reducing its operating budget by more than \$6 million.

"It was necessary for the Judiciary to make strategic sacrifices," said Robert M. Bell, Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, "from canceling the annual meeting of the Judicial Conference to withholding increments and cost-of-living increases for judges and staff. Our offices have made do with fewer staff, and many judges have volunteered to pay their own way to attend committee meetings and conferences."

In the absence of the annual meeting of the Judicial Conference, the District Court held its own conference in Annapolis. To reduce costs, the conference agenda was shortened to one day, judges covered their own meal expenses, and it was held at the District Court Building in Annapolis.

"This conference is always of tremendous value to the judges," said Chief Judge Vaughan. "The conference provides judges with updates on new case law, new programs and procedures, and allows them to review and discuss appellate decisions that were either upheld or overturned."

Judge Long applauded the efforts made by the District Court, and said that circuit court judges may plan a similar conference.

"Everybody is attempting to make a contribution," said Judge Murphy. "But at the same time, the judicial branch has to be independent and our decisions can't be influenced by budgetary problems. A person who has to be sent to prison because he

committed a violent crime can't get placed on probation to save money."

With further reduction plans being discussed for fiscal '04, Judge Long asserted that further belt tightening should not come at the expense of justice. He pointed to the State of Oregon as an example. This past spring, budget cuts forced the courts in the Beaver State to lay off employees, close courthouses on Fridays, and postpone tens of thousands of minor criminal cases because there was no money to pay for public defenders.

"We need to ensure that we have the funding in place to provide adequate access to justice in all areas of the court," said Judge Long. "I think we have worked hard to maintain realistic goals while providing a good faith effort to maintain some fiscal responsibility."



The boom in electronic technologies has provided government agencies with a plethora of cost-effective programs. The Maryland Judiciary has employed a number of these technologies to streamline court information, make filing easier and cheaper, improve access to documents and forms, and reduce excess paper waste.

## Intranet Development

*CourtNet*, the Judiciary's new intranet, was launched in the Spring of 2003. To demonstrate its potential, a prototype Human Resources Department site was developed as a "one stop shop" for employee information such as forms, policies and health benefits information. The next phase of *CourtNet* will consist of units and departments building their own websites and sharing information quickly and efficiently with the rest of the Judiciary.

### **Digital Recording System**

The installation of the District Court's digital recording system was completed statewide last November within budget and on schedule. The new system will save the Court \$466,000 in annual maintenance expenses, while reducing labor and improving citizens' accessibility to the court system by greatly enhancing the quality and reliability of the court record.

### **DV Wizard**

The DV Wizard will soon be installed in all District Court locations. Installation of this program will allow District Court clerks to enter case and trial information in domestic violence cases directly into the computer at the initial filing. As a result, important case information will be available in the courtroom computer at the time of a hearing, and after the hearing the courtroom clerk can enter the information into the computer and print peace and protective orders. The DV Wizard can also prepare corresponding attestations, certifications, and returns of service—making orders easier for recipients, such as the sheriff's department, to read and understand the judge's intent.

### **E-Filing**

In 2001, Baltimore City Circuit Court launched an e-filing pilot for processing asbestos litigation. The pilot, supported completely through user fees, has saved significant budget resources in its development and maintenance. The program enables judges to immediately access court records from the bench or from chambers, and issue and serve court orders electronically. Litigants save time and money filing and serving documents electronically. In two years, over 80,000 documents were filed with the court electronically, and 1.5 million documents were served amongst the parties. Both judges and litigants are seeking to make the program permanent. The Judiciary is also considering a new pilot e-filing project for foreclosures cases.

The District Court will soon implement a pilot project for the electronic filing of pleadings and papers in landlord/tenant cases in Prince George's County. The two-year pilot will examine the poten-



tial of electronic filing, the business processes surrounding the use of an electronic case file, the extent of litigant participation and the protection of court records.

### **E-License**

A collaborative effort by the Conference of Circuit Clerks and Judicial Information Systems (JIS) has resulted in a statewide roll-out of eLicensing in Maryland—ahead of schedule. The new system, streamlined to make the courthouse process more efficient, allows businesses to apply for their business licenses with a single visit to the courthouse. With approving agencies connected electronically, and up-to-date information stored on a new JIS server, clerks' offices can send application information to outside agencies and, after receiving approval electronically, issue the required licenses without having to wait for the Comptroller's Office to update state files and print licenses.

### **ELROI**

ELROI (Electronic Land Record Optical Imagery) is a land records imaging system that provides a quick and easy tool for searching, viewing and printing land record information. Currently operational in 13 counties, the program preserves permanent records, while helping to alleviate critical space in courthouses. ELROI should be deployed in all circuit courts statewide within the next two years.

# Specialized Programs

## BUSINESS/TECHNOLOGY CASE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

After three years of intense planning, Maryland officially began its business and technology case management program in January. Now, complex and often lengthy business and technology cases will be assigned to a separate case management program, to be heard by judges with specialized training in economic, business and technology law.

"Across the state, I've heard very complimentary things about the program from judges and litigants," said Steven L. Platt, Circuit Court Judge for Prince George's County and Chair of the Business and Technology Case Management Program and Implementation Committee. "Business/technology courts are a growing trend in the United States, mainly because they greatly enhance the efficiency of the court system by enabling businesses to resolve their disputes quickly and economically."

While many states are either beginning to institute or are planning to establish a business/technology court, Maryland has already in operation a designated case management track for every jurisdiction. The program was formulated from a blue-ribbon task force of legislators, judges, members of the Maryland bar, and business and academic leaders, looking for ways to resolve substantial disputes involving unique and specialized technological issues.

"The whole idea of the specialized court is to bring some intelligence, uniformity and predictability to the decisions in these complex cases," said Judge Platt. "By paying more attention to these cases, which are growing in number and complexity, it should free up judges to handle more cases in the general assignment."

To ensure continuous familiarity with the issues, the Task Force and subsequent Implementation Committee recommended annual education seminars, the first of

which was held in March. The three-day session focused on business and technology law and economics, as well as the use of technology in the management of both cases and the docketing of these cases.

With education completed and the program in motion, the Com-

mittee plans on implementing several recommendations from the task force committee's final report. This fall, the Court of Appeals is expected to vote on a recommendation to change court rules regarding Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). Specifically, the rule change would comprise higher standards for ADR professionals involved in business/technology cases—based on their education, training and experience with these cases. A second rule change would permit the mediator, with the agreement of the parties, to bring in an expert to clarify complex issues or specifics about the case.

This fall, designated judges will begin posting opinions on the newly developed Business/Technology Court webpage. The posting of opinions serves as a valuable tool for judges, lawyers, and business leaders—who are all looking for predictability in these cases.

"Posting opinions allows judges and lawyers to look at, review and discuss these complex cases in an effort to make them more predictable," said Judge Platt. "The more predictable a case is, the more likely it will get settled quickly."





# Specialized Courts

## DRUG COURTS

Drug use in the United States has continued at epidemic levels. Consequently, state courts are often overwhelmed by drug cases involving repeat offenders. During the past decade, court systems across the country have experimented with creating specialized drug courts to rehabilitate, rather than simply jail or release, convicted drug offenders. Today, there are

nearly 1,000 drug courts nationwide and another 450 in the planning stages.

"Jurisdictions are creating adult and juvenile drug courts because they work," said Gray Barton, executive director of the Maryland Drug Treatment Court Commission. "They work because the participants—the judges, parole and probation officers, alcohol and treatment groups, etc.—make every effort to coordinate with each other. This coordination, along with serious accountability on the part of the defendant, as well as the participants, provides a powerful incentive for all parties to succeed."

Barton was recruited to head Maryland's drug court program after successfully running drug court programs in Ohio. With nine active drug courts in Maryland, he is working with 14 more courts that are interested in creating an adult, family or juvenile drug court. Drawing on his experience in Ohio, Barton realized that drug courts have to be tailored to the specific needs of the jurisdiction.

"Drug cases don't stop at the urban areas," he said. "What we're doing is adapting to the needs of each jurisdiction and the resources that are available to them."

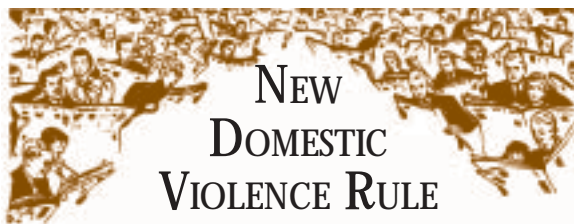
The Commission is developing a planning guide, an operations manual and a set of best practices, all of which will provide Maryland's drug courts with an outline for future programs.

### Why Drug Courts Work

Recently, a Baltimore grand jury report surveying the City's substance abuse "epidemic" determined that drug treatment courts "have been the single most effective criminal justice tool for changing the lives of addicted criminals into lives of healthy, drug-free, and productive citizens..." A report released in July by the National Institute of Justice included impressive findings regarding drug courts. In a sample of around 2,000 graduates of 95 drug courts nationwide in 1999 and 2000, the study estimated that within one year after graduation, only 16.4 percent of drug court graduates had been arrested and charged with a serious offense. Within two years, the recidivism rate rose to just 27.5 percent.

Drug courts are successful when the judge, lawyer, probation officer, treatment provider and the defendant are held accountable for their actions, said Barton. Each player has a role, he added, and at regular intervals all come before the judge to take responsibility for what the defendant has or has not accomplished. The judge is responsible for asking hard questions, and for holding everyone accountable.





## NEW DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RULE

Last November, residents of Maryland voted to approve a constitutional amendment giving District Court commissioners the power to issue interim protective orders and peace orders when courts are closed. Since the new “24-7” rule went into effect in December 2002, commissioners across the state have reported an increase in work based on these civil filings.

“In the first few months we saw about a 6 percent increase in these filings,” said David Weissert, coordinator of commissioner activity for the District Court of Maryland. “I am pleased to report that all has been working smoothly, the concerns over custody and service have been non-issues, and service has been quick, thanks to the cooperation of the various sheriffs and police agencies.”

The amendment established a process by which a citizen can file a petition with the District Court at any hour of the day, for protection from domestic violence or danger. Judges would still rule on petitions during regular court hours, but when court is not in session, it will allow commissioners to issue limited, short-term protective orders until a judge has the opportunity to rule.

In preparation for the rule change, the District Court forged agreements with state and local law enforcement personnel and readied commissioners for their new role. Seminars conducted in every district covered the rule change, the commissioners’ role in handling domestic violence cases and local issues such as how orders are delivered in jurisdictions where sheriff’s departments are closed at night (generally, state police take responsibility when no local law enforcement is available).

New forms were designed to provide commissioners with a precise and orderly checklist to guide their decisions. The process has been modeled on the decision-making process used by judges, but with strict limitations on what commissioners may decide. In addition, a comprehensive civil order manual has been created to guide clerks and commissioners.



Last year, the Maryland Court of Appeals amended Rule 6.1 of the Maryland Rules of Professional Conduct governing *pro bono* service by attorneys. The revised rule encourages, but does not require, all members of the Maryland Bar to render 50 hours of *pro bono* service annually, and to report these services to the Court of Appeals. New rules also called for establishment of local *pro bono* committees; for the creation of a statewide Standing Committee on *Pro Bono* Service; and for development of a State *Pro Bono* Action Plan to provide legal assistance for people of limited means.

In January, the Court of Appeals sent a letter and reporting form to all licensed lawyers in Maryland informing them about the revised rule and subsequent responsibilities. By mid-July, over 95 percent of the required *pro bono* report forms had been filed, with over 25 percent filed online.

The Standing Committee met monthly to address issues such as interpreting questions about what qualifies as *pro bono* service and overseeing the reporting process. The Committee also recently compiled a resource manual for local *pro bono* committees which included a “Needs Assessment Guide” with survey instruments to use in conducting local legal needs assessments as required by Rule 16-902, a template for the Local *Pro Bono* Action plan, an online resource listing and a primer on legal services in the state.

The Standing Committee has continued to visit with local committees and provide technical assistance and *pro bono* market research for their planning process. Over three-quarters of the counties have appointed local *pro bono* committees and are at varying stages of development. Harford County, the first to convene a meeting, has received a 50 percent response rate so far to their needs assessment of local social and human services agencies.



## PROFESSIONALISM TASK FORCE HEARINGS

The Maryland Judiciary's Professionalism Task Force wrapped up its series of town hall meetings in mid-July. In all, 22 meetings were held statewide over the course of 10 months. The primary function of the meetings was to conduct a lawyer "self study" of the concepts of professionalism.

"We had impressive turnouts in every location," said Court of Appeals Judge Lynne A. Battaglia, chair-designee of the Task Force. "These meetings focused on what we—attorneys and judges—think professionalism is among Maryland attorneys and what it could be."

At the meetings, attorneys were asked to fill out an anonymous two-part questionnaire. The first section inquired about demographic information, such as area where they live and practice (urban, city, rural), race, gender, years practicing law, etc. The main section posed a series of questions regarding professionalism issues and expectations. During the meetings, Judge Battaglia opened the floor to discussion on such topics as to the meaning of professionalism, how professionalism has changed over the years, how it is perceived by attorneys with varying years of experience, and how professionalism is affected by new technologies, increased competitiveness, and the rising cost of practicing law.

Data from the questionnaires and the minutes of the meetings will be analyzed and compiled into a draft report that will also include a history of professionalism in Maryland and how professionalism is being addressed in other states and jurisdictions. The Task Force, estab-

lished by Chief Judge Bell in April 2002 to study and advance professionalism in Maryland's legal community, will review the draft report and formulate recommendations. Judge Battaglia said she expects a final report to be presented to the Court of Appeals in November.



## COURT INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION SERVICES

The Committee on Court Interpretation and Translation Services released its final report in December. The comprehensive report outlined recommendations for interpretation services, and prioritized a list of documents recommended for translation. The report grouped specific needs into several categories: recruitment and certification; the process to obtain an interpreter; quality/evaluation of interpreters; standardizing forms; enhanced training; and the translation of forms, orders and brochures.

Since the report was released, a statewide Standing Committee has been formed to prioritize and implement recommendations from the report. Progress on implementing the recommendations, however, has been restricted due to budgetary constraints.

In January, a new rule went into effect to govern the use of interpreters in the court. Rule 16-819 established three different categories of interpreters—certified, eligible and non-certified—and mandated the use of a certified interpreter when at all possible. The rule set guidelines for the use of more than one interpreter in certain kinds of cases, and addressed removal of interpreters from a proceeding for good cause.



Keep up with all the Court News  
at the Judiciary's Website  
[www.courts.state.md.us](http://www.courts.state.md.us)



# A LEGACY OF SERVICE TO FAMILIES

The Maryland Judiciary takes pride in the family court reform efforts undertaken since the creation of circuit court family divisions and family services programs in 1998. These efforts have improved the experience of families and children whose lives are touched by the family justice system. Over the past year, key improvements were implemented to make it easier for self-represented persons to navigate the family justice system, to extend the types of services offered and the number of families assisted, to develop best practices for various court programs and to improve the timeliness of termination of parental rights cases.

The Judiciary stepped up efforts this past year to systematically evaluate court performance in serving families and children. Site visits are conducted regularly by the Administrative Office of the Court's Department of Family Administration (DFA) to ensure court compliance with the *Performance Standards and Measures for Maryland's Family Divisions*.



Two grants recently awarded from the State Justice Institute will permit the Judiciary to develop four survey instruments to gather input from court users including litigants, attorneys, self-represented persons and mediation clients, and use a nationwide model on improving access to the family justice system to study five Maryland *pro se* assistance projects.

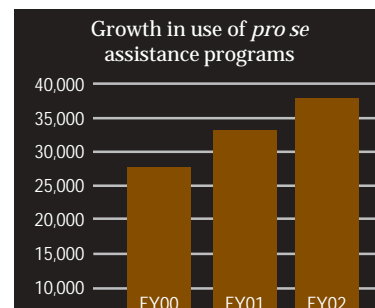
Major reforms by Judge Martin P. Welch, Juvenile Judge-in-Charge for Baltimore City Circuit Court, have led to a reduction in the backlog of juvenile cases. Two innovations have helped cut the backlog of cases in half and reduced the average length of time to disposition for a termination of parental rights (TPR) case from 12 months to 100 days. The first:

TPR pre-trial conferences are now scheduled 60 days from the filing of the TPR petition. The second: In cases where one parent objects, a trial date is set within the 180-day time frame, with emphasis on locating the missing parent.

In Montgomery County, the transfer of the juvenile court from the District Court to the circuit court has provided the jurisdiction the opportunity to adopt innovations in juvenile case management—particularly the move to a centralized service center. Now, a number of juvenile and family programs and services in the county are housed in a single place. This consolidation has enabled the court to move toward new endeavors, such as the development of a DCM plan for juvenile cases.

Responding to the growing demand for *pro se* assistance—requests the past two years have increased 36 percent—DFA and the Maryland Legal Assistance Network (MLAN) proposed a set of best practices for court-sponsored *pro se* programs. The *Pro Se* Best Practices Task Force examined the usage of Maryland's programs, national trends and individual court practices to draft a comprehensive document that addressed program operations; access, language and literacy; service delivery; situation analysis and referrals; program development; and outreach and community education.

DFA was awarded a grant of \$213,000 that will be used to fund Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs in several counties.



From the Family Divisions & Family Services Programs Annual Report, FY-2002

## EARLY RESOLUTION COURT

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The sheer volume of cases in Baltimore City District Court is astounding. In fiscal 2002, 435,379 motor vehicle, criminal and civil cases were filed in Baltimore City—nearly 100,00 more than any other county. Baltimore City represented 39 percent of the State's criminal cases filed that year.

In early 2002, a study funded by the Abell Foundation for the Baltimore Efficiency and Economy Foundation looked at the backlog of misdemeanor cases filed in Baltimore City and provided several recommendations, including the restructuring of the existing Early Disposition court. The idea was reviewed and approved by a subcommittee workgroup of the Baltimore City Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. After receiving funding support from the General Assembly, Baltimore City's Early Disposition court was renamed Early Resolution (ER) court and restructured to make the court more efficient.

Fast-forward to April 2003 and the results are impressive. The number of first-time offender criminal cases that were resolved has more than doubled (2,476 before restructuring to 5,171). In addition, 1,162 citations were resolved.

"The program is working well at trimming the trial dockets," said Baltimore City District Court Judge Ben C. Clyburn, who chaired the workgroup and frequently sits in ER court. "ER court works for those cases where you can make an offer to a person that's in everyone's benefit—the defendant, the court system and the public—to have it resolved right then and there."

The court was designed to handle a high-volume of cases where community service and/or drug education



and treatment may be appropriate. The court primarily handles first-time offenders who were issued a citation by a police officer with an assigned court date, or have been released on their own recognizance and who qualify for referral to community services, the First-Time Offenders Diversion Program, or other appropriate dispositions.

On a typical day, the court will handle between 120-180 cases. The judge listens to each case, then provide the defendant with an option in lieu of going to trial. For a minor infraction, the judge may offer the defendant community service that can be served that day. For first or second time minor drug offenses, the judge may propose drug screening, with treatment if appropriate, and community service.

Judge Clyburn noted that most of the defendants who appear in ER court agree to community service or complete the diversion program, in exchange for having the offense stricken from their criminal record. The court has drastically reduced the trial docket, cut down on postponements, increased community service, and enabled police to stay on the streets rather than in the courtrooms.

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The three-year grant was awarded by the Children's Justice Act Committee of the Maryland State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect. The grant will allow the programs to provide service to 65 additional Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) children each year for three years. Statewide, only 15 percent of children in the jurisdictions that have CASA programs are being served by CASA volunteers. The grant funding will enable the CASA programs to increase the number of children served statewide by 30 percent during the three-year grant cycle.



## PUBLIC OUTREACH

In 1999, a survey report from the American Bar Association entitled “Perceptions of the U.S. Justice System,” found that while citizens indicated a desire to learn more about the judicial system, over 75 percent said they wanted to obtain information about the judiciary from judges, not lawyers or academics.

“I truly believe that there is a strong desire to know more about what’s going on in the courts and how to utilize the legal system,” said Montgomery County Circuit Court Judge Marielsa A. Bernard. “I think many people are intimidated about the court system. Outreach programs such as these public forums [see below] put a face on the courts, which hopefully makes residents feel more comfortable with our judicial system.”

- Judge Bernard was one of many judges and court officials who donated their time to better inform Maryland citizens about their court system. She has held two very successful public forums in the past year. The forums, which attracted more than 500 people, focused on issues related to domestic violence. Attendees also had the opportunity to meet judges and ask questions about the court system.



- For the first time since it was established 35 years ago, the Court of Special Appeals sat outside Annapolis. Last year, two three-judge panels heard arguments at Maryland’s two law schools, the University of Maryland School of Law and the University of Baltimore School of Law. The temporary move, a progressive idea increasingly applied in other states, gave students the opportunity to observe arguments and discuss cases in general with the lawyers and judges.



- In Prince George’s and Howard counties, circuit and District Court judges invited high school students into their courtrooms to observe trials

and learn about the court system. The ‘Kids in the Courts’ program provided

students with the opportunity to hear a variety of cases, such as juvenile, criminal, motor vehicle, and *pro se* cases, as well as bail review hearings. After the trials, judges opened the floor for students to ask questions about the court process and learn about the different roles in the courtroom.

- The ‘Kids in the Courts’ program was a derivative of Anne Arundel District Court Judge Vincent Mulieri’s successful ‘Schools and the Courts’ program. Twice a year, Judge Mulieri invites high school students into his courtroom to observe drunk driving cases. The program includes “sobering” presentations on the consequences of drunk driving and substance abuse, given by members of the Drunk Driving Monitoring Program, Department of Parole and Probation, police and Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

- Bel Air District Court Judge Mimi Cooper, with the help of District Court Judge Angela Eaves and several volunteers, recruited third grade classes from three local elementary schools to hold a series of hearings depicting the fairytale, “Goldilocks and the Three Bears.” The trials were held in an effort to draw the children into courtroom activities.

- In Annapolis, the Court of Appeals, Maryland State Law Library and Maryland Center for Civic Education (MCCE) collaborated to present a workshop for social studies teachers and students. The educational program focused on the function of the judiciary as settlers of legal disputes, the organizational structure of our State court system, and an inside look at how a criminal misdemeanor worked its way from the lowest to highest court in the State.



## NEW DISTRICT COURT BUILDINGS

The District Court of Maryland celebrated the opening of three new courthouse buildings in 2003, with another expected to open in early 2004. These new facilities will enhance access to the judicial system for citizens in these communities, and will allow the Court to respond effectively to an ever-increasing number of cases.

In Westminster, a 41,926 square-foot, three-story structure was dedicated in August. Located across the street from Carroll County's original courthouse—still in use by the circuit court—the new courthouse has two state-of-the-art courtrooms and houses the Department of Parole and Probation, Juvenile Services, the Public Defender's Office, and the District Court commissioner.

The John R. Hargrove, Sr. District Court Building in Baltimore City contains five state-of-the-art courtrooms and houses a number of court offices and court-related agencies. The 87,203 square-foot courthouse opened in April. It was named after the late John R. Hargrove, Sr., who once served as administrative judge in Baltimore City, and sat on the circuit court and the U.S. District Court.

The Princess Anne District Court building in Somerset County was completed in June. The 10,800 square-foot facility has one state-of-the-art courtroom and houses judges' chambers, clerks' offices and District Court commissioners' offices, along with court-related agencies.

The Silver Spring District Courthouse in Montgomery County is expected to be completed in Spring 2004. The 79,000 square-foot facility will house 10 court-related agencies, and provide ample functional and administrative space for building operations. The four-story building will feature four state-of-the-art courtrooms.



*Carroll County District Court  
101 North Court Street, Westminster*



*Baltimore City District Court  
700 E. Patapsco Avenue, Baltimore*



*Somerset County District Court  
12155 Elm Street, Princess Anne*



*Montgomery County District Court\*  
8552 2nd Avenue, Silver Spring*



*\* photo courtesy of Department of General Services*



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