



State of Connecticut Judicial Branch

Phase Three IMPLEMENTATION of THE STRATEGIC PLAN

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Public Service and Trust Commission

Hon. Alexandra D. DiPentima, Chair

Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers

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INTRODUCTION

“In matters of truth and justice, there is no difference between large and small problems, for issues concerning the treatment of people are all the same.”

Albert Einstein

The Judicial Branch mission of resolving matters in a fair, timely, efficient and open manner, combined with our values of fairness, respect, integrity and professionalism helps ensure that every individual who enters through our doors encounters a level playing field and a system where they are heard and respected regardless of their abilities or background.

More than two years ago, Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers accepted the Branch’s inaugural long-term Strategic Plan, developed by the Public Service and Trust Commission under the leadership of Appellate Court Chief Judge Alexandra D. DiPentima.

The Plan, which was developed by the Commission with input from more than 1,500 people, has served as the blueprint of operations since 2008, as evidenced by the many changes both large and small designed to ensure maximum transparency and access to the public. The Strategic Plan’s five outcome goals of removing impediments to access, improving the delivery of services, responding to changing demographics, collaboration and accountability are broad but the implementation activities that have been completed or remain ongoing are specific to fulfilling those goals.

In many ways, implementation of the Strategic Plan is more critical than at any time in recent history. The first part of the new decade has brought with it a sense of uneasiness fueled by the uncertain prospect of economic recovery at the national, state, local, and for many, personal level. The trickle-down effects of a faltering economy directly impact Connecticut’s judicial system in the form of spiking numbers of foreclosure cases, sharply increased numbers of small claims cases, and even more cases in our Geographical Area courts.

Previous reports have described in detail the dozens of initiatives and activities that are being implemented, Branchwide, in furtherance of meeting the goals, and will not be repeated in their entirety within these pages. Rather, the following pages will detail the activities of previously established workgroups and committees that may be addressed in the coming months, such as the development of a pilot program to allow limited-scope representation; partnering

with statewide volunteer legal services networks to expand online information; launching electronic filing in small claims cases; evaluating Branch facilities and making recommendations for improved physical access; and revamping how transcripts are created by state employees on state time and providing access to audio recordings of some court proceedings.

Moving on in the third phase of the implementation of the Strategic Plan we will endeavor to continue fulfilling the Judicial Branch mission by cultivating meaningful responses to areas of need as determined by the demands of the people of the State of Connecticut. Those areas include improving how the Branch delivers its services to the public, including vulnerable children; self-represented parties; increasingly tech-savvy members of the bar and the public; and parties who opt to use court-sponsored alternate dispute resolution in civil, non-family cases, and by ensuring high standards of quality and uniformity of procedures for small claims and motor vehicle magistrates.

These new initiatives are the direct result of the Strategic Plan's fluidity: The plan was never designed to be rigid or inflexible, but rather to serve as a guiding blueprint that fosters creative responses to identified needs, even in times of challenge. Some of the new initiatives were developed in the initial plan, while others are the direct outgrowth of the implementation process. They are also a result of the Strategic Plan Assessment Committee's ongoing assessment of the environment in which the Branch operates. These initiatives are part of the evolutionary nature of the strategic planning process, which encourages forward thinking, long-term planning, measurable outcomes and achievable goals.

Alternate Dispute Resolution

Alternate dispute resolution, or ADR, is an effective tool in assisting parties and the courts by resolving matters in a fair and timely manner and resulting in significant savings in time and expenses. The National Center for State Courts, in its 2010 Future Trends in State Courts report, noted that the cost of litigation is more than some parties can withstand, and that courts should promote a modified adversary process such as alternate dispute resolution. Currently, the Branch offers court-sponsored ADR programs for various civil case types.

The Committee on Alternate Dispute Resolution will include judges, attorneys, and representatives or consultants with expertise in ADR, and they will be charged with evaluating

scheduling, case eligibility requirements, training for ADR providers, consistency and uniformity of court-sponsored programs statewide, and the efficacy of ADR in assisting in fair, timely and efficient resolution of disputes. The members will also be charged with evaluating existing case type requirements and whether other case types could also benefit from ADR in a cost-effective manner.

Re-Engineering the Clerks' Office

Technology is proving to be a boon to the Judicial Branch and the public, inasmuch as its application speeds certain processes to the level of real time. The Branch is facing the challenge of providing expanded services to more and more people in a time of shrinking budgets, a trend that is reasonably foreseeable in the future. Therefore, a full-scale analysis of the function of the clerks' offices is necessary to take advantage of improving and expanding technologies, and to ensure the best, most efficient use of it so that high quality services are timely provided.

The Committee on Re-Engineering the Clerks' Office, or RECO, will address court trends, such as the growing numbers of self-represented parties, the demand for access quickly by diverse populations, and the best ways to take advantage of technology.

Small Claims and Motor Vehicle Magistrates

Small claims and motor vehicle magistrates dispose of tens of thousands of those cases each year. These attorneys, who contract with the Judicial Branch, serve as the face of the judicial system to more litigants than any other division of the Superior Court, and the parties who appear before them expect to be treated fairly and with respect.

The Office of the Chief Court Administrator has developed a new appointment and reappointment process for magistrates designed to support the Chief Justice's goal of enhancing the public's trust and confidence in the Judicial Branch.

A Workgroup will be established to oversee implementation of the new appointment and reappointment process which will include an in-court evaluation. The members will develop an evaluation worksheet to be used during observations, and provide information to enhance the mandatory training program for all magistrates. The Workgroup will also develop a formal

system for the investigation of complaints against magistrates, and develop outcome indicators to measure the success of the initiative.

Committees dedicated to improving services to children

Children in the child protection system are among the state's most vulnerable citizens. Therefore, in the third phase of implementation, three additional committees will be charged with improving several areas related to juveniles and neglected children. The new **Committee to Expedite Child Protection Appeals** is an outgrowth of an earlier committee and will identify areas where delays occur in child placement hearings, determine whether timetables for rulings be established, and assess the need for training of court personnel and attorneys on the urgency of child protection matters.

Single parenting a child or children can be stressful enough. Combined with an unmet need for child support and it is easy to understand how overwhelmed a person can feel when faced with the daunting task of obtaining, modifying or enforcing a child support order, which often involves different Branch units and other state agencies. An internal Judicial Branch **Workgroup on Streamlining Child Support** will make recommendations to streamline the child support process, to ensure fair and timely services that will benefit children and families.

Finally, an **Advisory Board for Volunteer Advocates in Juvenile Matters** will be established to develop ways in which to increase and enhance the existing services of volunteers in providing services to children and the juvenile court system, beyond the traditional roles as guardians ad litem and/or monitors. The Board members will engage current outside groups that provide volunteer advocates to ensure positive outcomes for children and their families in court proceedings.

Automated Telephone Systems

Who among us hasn't felt trapped, stuck listening to canned music over the phone while waiting for someone, anyone, to pick up at the other end to answer a simple question? Automated Telephone Systems (ATS) appear to be an accepted if annoying part of life in all areas: government, retail, doctors' offices, museums and personal answering machines.

A new committee will be created to determine if ATS meet the needs of the Branch and the people who telephone the Branch, recommend whether and where to use ATS, and determine if there are areas that should not employ ATS. The members will also recommend statewide standards for scripts and menu choices, including Americans with Disabilities Act and Language Line availability, for all Branch systems. The committee will also examine the efficacy of introducing a statewide call center by establishing need and analyzing benefits and costs.

In conclusion

When the Strategic Plan was being developed in 2007, few could have predicted how prescient its timeliness and recommendations would become. The citizens of the state of Connecticut are collectively trying to do more with less and that extends to the operations of the three branches of government. The Branch will continue to make adjustments to its operations while still fully and fairly fulfilling its duties of delivering justice and ensuring constitutional safeguards and rights are protected every day.

The Judicial Branch rejects the idea that *having* less means *doing* less. Instead, the Strategic Plan has served to provide guidance for creating efficiencies. Under the plan, tangible activities and programs are helping to meet the needs of a diverse population, while streamlining processes and procedures to improve the delivery of services and access to justice for all citizens.

Times of great challenge should not be despaired of but instead looked upon as an opportunity to evaluate the status quo and work to elevate an organization. Faced with financial uncertainty, the Branch has chosen to continuously evolve and make adjustments so that its vision, mission and values are met every day.

Public trust in the Judicial Branch is paramount to ensuring that the balance of power between all three branches of government is maintained for the public good. Scarce resources have resulted in a greater spirit of cooperation with our co-equal branches of government. The Judicial Branch looks forward to continuing to foster the recognition of co-equality between the different branches of government, while recognizing, too, their inter-independence and shared accountability to the public.

SUMMARY OF PHASE ONE
AND PHASE TWO
INITIATIVES

ACCESS

The Judicial Branch will provide equal access to all of its facilities, processes and information through the identification and elimination of barriers.

ACCESS TO FACILITIES

This committee, formed under the Physical Access (Signs) initiative, is charged with assessing the accuracy and effectiveness of existing signs both within and without Judicial Branch facilities, and the accuracy and expediency of directions to facilities as provided by the Branch.

The Committee will continue its work on the following activities:

- Assess the accuracy and expediency of directions to Judicial Branch facilities.
- Assess the accuracy and effectiveness of existing signage in and outside of Branch facilities.
- Develop a Branchwide checklist to annually assess signage in the judicial districts.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act Committee was charged with evaluating what resources are offered by the Judicial Branch to accommodate those with differing needs; assessing accessibility to that information, and recommending more effective ways to disseminate, both online and at facilities, information to people who may need an ADA accommodation. Implementation of the committee's recommendations has been carried out by Judicial Branch personnel.

The designees under the Office of the Chief Court Administrator will continue their work on the following activities:

- Perform informal ADA compliance check-ups
- Ensure that the ADA notice and website is included on all public forms
- Develop sensitivity training for all Branch staff
- Enable built-in Microsoft accessibility features on all public PCs
- Conduct annual training for all ADA contact people
- Create an Advisory Committee

As time and resources permit, the designees under the Office of the Chief Court Administrator will begin work on the following activities:

- Improve accessibility for users of the Branch's webpage
- Develop a biannual ADA newsletter for staff

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP)

The Limited English Proficiency Committee was charged with eliminating barriers to facilities, processes and information faced by individuals with limited English proficiency.

The Committee will continue its work on the following activities:

- Provide training on civil rights, national origin discrimination and the services available to LEP individuals
- Analyze the concept of plain language as a cost-effective measure in forms translation
- Develop and establish specific criteria for prioritizing assignments for interpreting requests
- Develop and implement a system for the efficient tracking and scheduling of interpreters through the use of current and future technology
- Explore the improvement of the screening process for candidates
- Expand telephonic services through the use of outside language assistance vendors to provide interpreting services outside the courtroom, and if required under exceptional circumstances, inside the courtroom, and by modifying, acquiring, and activating telephonic infrastructure and equipment
- Review statistical information on civil court requests to Interpreter and Translation Services
- Expand outreach to LEP populations through the Judicial Branch website based upon the needs identified via community organizations and establish collaborative relationships with media organizations that have targeted non-English speaking audiences
- Develop/include information links on the existing Judicial Branch webpage to direct LEP individuals to translated information and make other webpage changes as determined by community organization survey results
- Solicit Branch employees (including judges) who have bi/multilingual abilities to participate in the Branch's outreach objectives (to utilize their skills such as through the Speakers Bureau)

As time and resources permit, the Committee will begin work on the following activities:

- Train court personnel to routinely record interpreter and translator information into case management systems (e.g. CR/MVS, Edison, etc.)
- Change ITS organizational structure to: 1) Establish higher rates for services in hard-to-find languages so that the Judicial Branch can compete with other employers (i.e., court systems in adjoining states); 2) Establish a "Lead Translator" position responsible for managing translation assignments; 3) Update the Interpreter II job description for certified interpreters to emphasize the professional (rather than clerical) services interpreters provide to the courts; 4) Establish a "Master Interpreter" job classification for

those staff who pass the state certification with higher scores, or who hold multiple certifications (e.g., federal, ATA, interpreter certification in more than one language)

- Develop public service announcements based upon the needs of the LEP population
- Hire more bilingual staff for positions that directly serve LEP individuals
- Provide foreign language instruction to employees to enable them to provide basic information to LEP individuals, such as the location of the courtroom
- Permit the use of audio recordings of the advisement of constitutional rights in Spanish, as recorded by certified Spanish-language interpreters
- Utilize monitors in public areas or lobbies that are a source of ongoing information to the public in languages common to the LEP population
- Forward to the External Affairs Division recommended methods for continuing its outreach efforts to community-based organizations that serve LEP populations
- Provide training to organizations that offer computer access to individuals who have limited English proficiency, particularly libraries, on how to utilize the Branch's website and obtain resources that are available in other languages
- Reach out to organizations, particularly libraries such as the Hartford Public Library and the New Haven Free Library, which offer computer access and are already actively engaged in public education efforts with the LEP population
- Remind employees of foreign language resources available (i.e., translated materials, Judicial Branch webpages in Spanish)
- Consider taking action to address the significant number of employees who in the Branch's LEP survey expressed an interest in taking basic foreign language instruction (647 or 70% of Branch employees who responded to the survey expressed interest in receiving foreign language training)
- Emphasize and continue to encourage use of telephonic bilingual services, particularly during non-court hours and weekends
- Recognize the need for informational and instructional documents in other languages for distribution from the Judicial Branch
- Recognize the need for informational and instructional documents in other languages for distribution from contracted vendors
- Acknowledge the need for compliance documents in other languages
- Consider multi-discipline notices with Spanish on body of the form; consider combining multiple notices/letters into universal multi-disciplinary forms; consider developing universal forms for use by all members of an operating unit, or all members of a particular division
- Establish a review panel regarding translation requests comprised of representatives from Court Support Services, Superior Court Operations, and External Affairs

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

The Judicial Branch will provide a diverse and culturally competent environment that is sensitive to the values and responsive to the needs of all who interact with it.

DELIVERY OF SERVICES

The Judicial Branch will provide effective, uniform and consistent delivery of services by enhancing the management of court practices.

ALTERNATIVES TO COURT APPEARANCES

The Standing Committee on Video and Teleconferencing has been charged with exploring possibilities for expanding the use of videoconferencing and teleconferencing for court appearances in order to make judicial proceedings and services more accessible and to promote efficient and cost-effective case management.

The Committee will continue its work on the following activities:

- Upgrade the infrastructure of the Judicial Branch network to facilitate a higher quality transmission through the Branch videoconferencing system and allow for greater flexibility when using the videoconferencing systems
- Upgrade technology in the courtroom
- Continue installation of videoconferencing equipment in courtrooms and Court Support Services Division (CSSD) locations
- Train court staff on the operation of the videoconferencing equipment and how to schedule conferences involving individuals currently incarcerated at the Department of Correction
- Put a videoconferencing scheduling system into production
- Monitor the proposed rules currently pending with the Rules Committee

As time and resources permit, the Committee will begin work on the following activities:

- Purchase and install teleconferencing equipment
- Purchase and install videoconferencing and teleconferencing equipment for the administrative offices of the Judicial Branch
- Establish criteria and/or options for the use of videoconferencing in civil and family matters
- Train judges and staff on the use of videoconferencing in civil and family matters

CASE MANAGEMENT (CIVIL)

The Civil Commission is charged with reviewing the civil docket and the development of practices that will improve the administering of judicial services to litigants, the bar and the public, and will promote the resolution of cases in a fair, timely, open and cost-effective manner. The initiatives are mainly being implemented by the Commission's Case Processing and Discovery subcommittees.

As time and resources permit, the Civil Commission will review the following:

- The Discovery Subcommittee supports the use of special masters to supervise the discovery process in any civil matter where the judicial authority deems it necessary, and proposes a Practice Book rule for the appointment and use of special masters.
- The Discovery Subcommittee endorses the proposed rules concerning electronic discovery which have been presented to the Rules Committee for consideration.
- The Discovery Subcommittee proposes Practice Book Rule Section 13-30(j), which provides that a party on whose behalf a deposition has been taken shall at such party's expense provide a copy of the deposition transcript to each adverse party, be amended to provide that each party pay for its own copy of deposition transcripts or any electronic record of same.
- The Discovery Subcommittee recommends that Practice Book Section 13-7(b) and 13-10(b), which require the party answering interrogatories to attach a cover sheet to their answers, be eliminated.
- The Discovery Subcommittee suggests that the Rules Committee consider whether standard interrogatories should include questions raised by the "Medicare, Medicaid, and SCHIP Extension Act of 2007."
- The Discovery Subcommittee also considered other possible changes to the discovery process including the designation of a discovery judge and a proposal for telephonic conferences to resolve discovery disputes.
- The Discovery Subcommittee recommends that consideration be given to a rule which would permit no more than seven hours of actual deposition time with the understanding that this limitation may be waived by stipulation or by court order.

COMPLEX LITIGATION

The Complex Litigation Committee is charged with reviewing and evaluating the Complex Litigation Docket Program, including the program's criteria and standards, and to identify possible areas of improvement.

As time and resources permit, the Committee will begin work on the following activities:

- An alternative to the referral of cases to the Complex Litigation Docket (CLD) based upon the length of trial would be the transfer of the case to another judicial district by the Chief Court Administrator.
- System changes should be considered in order to provide the capability of readily identifying the filer of a motion/objection on the Case Detail page of the Branch's website.
- Procedural requirements for filings should be adopted, such as the inclusion of the party number on all CLD filings to facilitate the process.
- The scheduling of CLD events should be entered into the Edison system so that this information may be available for viewing on the Branch's website.

COURT RECORDING MONITORS AND COURT REPORTERS

This committee, formed in the fall of 2009 is charged with improving access to transcripts, the quality of transcripts provided, and the delivery of services provided by the Court Transcript Services Unit. Under the leadership of the chair, Justice Joette Katz, the committee in July completed its preliminary assessment of the multitude of issues surrounding the accessibility and production of transcripts, and unanimously approved fourteen recommendations. The recommendations, listed below, will be further explained and explored in a report that will be delivered to the Chief Justice and the Office of the Chief Court Administrator in the fall of 2010.

The Committee has unanimously recommended the following:

- The Judicial Branch should adopt this Committee's recommendation of the definition of the court record, which is the official memorialization of what occurs during official court proceedings.
- This Committee recommends that the court record belongs to the public, under the custody of the Judicial Branch, subject to applicable disclosure law.
- The Judicial Branch should adopt this Committee's recommendation that the Branch creates, maintains and administers the court record.
- The Judicial Branch should adopt digital audio recording as the standard for recording proceedings.
- The Judicial Branch should eliminate the practice of compensated 'CU' time by court reporters.
- The Judicial Branch should eliminate the practice of allowing court reporters and court recording monitors to produce transcripts for private parties on Judicial Branch time.
- The Judicial Branch should develop uniform standards for the type of work court reporters and court monitors may perform while on Branch time.
- The Judicial Branch should develop standard training for all court recording monitors and ensure compliance with those standards, to ensure uniformity of the memorialization of court proceedings.
- The Judicial Branch should own and provide all equipment used to memorialize court proceedings including, but not limited to, stenographic equipment, software and dictionaries.
- The Judicial Branch should maximize public access to the digital audio recordings of court proceedings, subject to applicable disclosure law.
- The Judicial Branch should adopt several pilot programs including but not limited to making the digital audio record available to attorneys in certain juvenile matters.
- The Judicial Branch should consider the use of the use of Real Time reporting in selected cases.

- The Judicial Branch should internally provide CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) as recommended by the Judicial Branch's Committee on Americans with Disabilities Act.
- The Judicial Branch should create a list of transcriptionists/companies whose transcripts meet Branch standards and are acceptable for use in all court proceedings.

In the future, as necessary, this Committee will:

- Reconvene, as necessary, to assess the state of the recommendations, and make new recommendations as warranted to improve access to transcripts, the production of transcripts, and discuss emerging technologies.

CRIMINAL PRACTICE COMMISSION

The charge of the Criminal Practice Commission is to improve the criminal justice system. Through combined efforts of judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys and court staff, information will be exchanged, issues will be identified and resolutions will be proposed that will enhance efficiency, professionalism and civility in the criminal courts and will improve the delivery of services to litigants, the bar, victims and the public.

The Commission will continue its work on the following activities:

- The Habeas Reform Committee will meet to identify issues and make recommendations regarding habeas proceedings.
- The Immigration Committee will continue to meet to make recommendations on what would be the ideal process for the Judicial Branch to follow regarding issues related to immigration.

As time and resources permit, the Commission will begin work on the following activities:

- Address the need for uniformity among the Judicial Districts in such areas as: continuance requests, discovery issues, appearance requirements at the dismissal of diversionary programs, the role of the Court Service Center
- Explore designating a statewide judge for domestic violence
- Explore having separate dockets for self-represented individuals
- Explore staggering the times scheduled on promises to appear and on other dockets
- Explore having a domestic violence docket in each court
- Explore ways to decrease the number of court appearances (i.e., do paperwork for diversionary programs prior to the court date)
- Explore the possibility of evening and/or weekend court
- Determine the best allocation of courthouse space, including the need for a confidential area in the courthouse for defense counsel to speak with clients
- Examine the criminal canvass
- Explore online/electronic adjudications that allow for the payment of fines in appropriate cases
- Increase cooperation between the bench and the bar
- Explore ways to separate the victim advocates from the prosecutors' offices
- Get defendants to sign the criminal canvass

JURY

The Jury Committee is charged with determining whether the Judicial Branch uses the best practices for summoning notification, management and utilization of jurors, and to recommend new approaches and initiatives.

The Committee will continue its work on the following activities:

- New juror orientation video

As time and resources permit, the Committee will begin work on the following activities:

- Improved juror facilities
- Training for judges regarding jury matters
- Juror pre-screening pilot programs
- Improved juror utilization
- Counseling for jurors in stressful cases
- Filming of jury video
- Statewide secure juror service line
- Expansion of jury website
- Enhanced security of personal identifying data

SELF-REPRESENTED PARTIES

The Committee on Self-Represented Parties was charged with examining ways to assist self-represented parties in effectively participating in the court process by enhancing the guidance and assistance provided by the Branch to those who interact with the court without representation either by choice or by necessity. A Workgroup was created to implement their recommendations.

The Workgroup will continue its work on the following activities:

- Organize civil and family forms by subject matter
- Permit the legal services network to access the Judicial Branch website, and in turn, the Judicial Branch shall be permitted to link to the legal services' website
- Develop an unbundling pilot project in the area of foreclosure law
- Convert most commonly used Judicial Branch forms and publications to plain language and expand access to these publications to include non-judicial facilities
- Create a video-taped family support magistrate advisement of rights in English and Spanish
- Create "how-to" videos for self-represented parties to guide them through some of the basic procedures in civil and family litigation
- Develop a very limited unbundling pilot project in the area of family law
- Establish a Court Service Center and/or Public Information Desk in every court location that lacks one now
- Recommend that the Branch does everything it can to support funding for legal aid

As time and resources permit, the Workgroup will begin work on the following activities:

- Provide quality and ongoing training for judges and staff in delivering the highest quality of service to the public, especially in the area of dealing with self-represented parties
- Create a dedicated docket for self-represented parties, a pilot project to be implemented only under optimal staffing conditions
- Create, where applicable, plain language publications about new and existing mediation programs to be displayed in all Court Service Centers, clerks' offices, Law Libraries, and non-judicial locations
- Create an effective marketing plan to better promote existing mediation programs so that self-represented parties are aware of available mediation options at the earliest possible stage
- Apply plain language and readability principles to the Connecticut Practice Book so it is more easily understood by self-represented parties

Delivery of Services: Self-Represented Parties

- Expand the mediation services administered by the Community Mediation, Inc., Hartford Area Mediation and the Dispute Settlement Center to include an increased number of GA and juvenile courts, along with a pamphlet wall where possible.
- Make wireless access readily available in courthouses and upgrade infrastructure and equipment for all Court Service Center and Public Information Desk locations.
- The Judicial Branch should establish an ongoing collaborative relationship with Probate Court administration to discuss ways that both entities can continue to improve resources and services available for self-represented parties.
- Form a Probate Court workgroup with representatives from the Judicial Branch and Probate Court Administration to create long-term plans and improvements to new and existing Branch and Probate services.
- Group all materials, including relevant forms, publications, and available audio visual resources, and display them together online to make it easier for the public to locate and access these materials. Consideration should also be given to including a link to the Law Libraries' "Pathfinder" series.

SMALL CLAIMS

The Bench/Bar Centralized Small Claims Committee was charged with reviewing Practice Book Rules, recommending uniform practices throughout the state, considering legislative proposals, and examining whether any changes should be made in the small claims process.

The Committee will continue its work on the following activities:

- Development of case initiation e-filing for small claims

As time and resources permit, the Committee will begin work on the following activities:

- Mediation pilot for small claims
- Complete integration of small claims in civil e-filing system

TECHNOLOGY PLAN

The Information Technology Division is charged with developing and implementing a three-year technology plan to address infrastructure requirements to ensure that the technical infrastructure needed to support on-going Branch operations, as well as any new initiatives anticipated over the next three to five years, would be in place.

The Information Technology Division will continue its work on the following activities:

- Business Continuity– SAN & NAS for APC
- Network – Wide Area Network Upgrade
- Network – Data Center
- Hardware – Virtualization/Server
- Network – Field Switch Upgrades
- Hardware – Video Conferencing
- Process Improvement – Automated Regression Test Tool
- Process Improvement – Tutorial Development Software
- Applications - Replace CRMVS and CIB

As time and resources permit, the Information Technology Division will begin work on the following activities:

- Contracted Services – Contract Vendor for Security Audit
- Software – Network Security & Information Protection
- Software – Identity Lifecycle Manager
- Network – Migration to FTR Version 5.2
- Business Continuity – APC Phase II
- Hardware – Windows Server Software Upgrades
- Directory Services – Portal Self Serve
- Hardware – Alpha Rewrite on Integrity
- Hardware – Ongoing Server Replacement
- Hardware – Statewide Wireless Implementation
- Hardware – FTR Statewide Deployment
- Becoming Our Own Internet Service Provider (ISP)
- Accelerate Retiring Family/Civil Cater Application

UNIFORMITY OF COURT PROCEDURES

The Committee on the Uniformity of Court Procedures was charged with examining practices and procedures in civil, housing, family and juvenile courts to facilitate the uniformity of practice statewide. Implementation of the Committee's recommendations has been carried out by court operations personnel under the direction of the Committee co-chairs, the Honorable Douglas C. Mintz and Attorney Frederic S. Ury.

The designees under the Office of the Chief Court Administrator will continue to work on the following activities:

- Establish procedures for the monitoring and posting of changes to standing orders to ensure accurate and current information is provided on the website and made available to the public at all times
- Develop a survey regarding trial management orders to assess the use and usefulness of the uniform trial management orders

As time and resources permit, the designees under the Office of the Chief Court Administrator will begin work on the following activities:

- Develop a three-phase process for civil jury trials
- Review the advisability of submitting legislation to invest the court with discretion in allowing fee waivers in civil causes of action

COLLABORATION

The Judicial Branch will improve its communication and collaboration with the Executive and Legislative branches of government and their agencies, the Bar, other partners, and the public, as well as within the Branch, to better serve the needs of all who interact with it.

CHIEF COURT ADMINISTRATOR/ATTORNEY GENERAL

This initiative was developed in response to a focus group conducted with attorneys from all departments within the Office of the Attorney General, who frequently interact with the Judicial Branch. The information from that focus group highlighted the need for the creation of a mechanism to facilitate ongoing communication between the Judicial Branch and the Office of the Attorney General.

The representatives from the Office of the Chief Court Administrator and the Office of the Attorney General will continue its work on the following activities:

- Applicability of Practice Book rule § 4-7 to family cases
- Electronic filing of administrative appeals
- Service of process issues
- Coverage issues in family cases

CHIEF COURT ADMINISTRATOR/CLERKS AND THE BAR

This Workgroup was charged with improving communication and enhancing the relationship between and among the clerks' offices, local bar associations and members of the bar as a whole. Specifically, the Workgroup was charged with developing a program to be followed in all judicial districts for periodic meetings between judges, court staff, bar associations, members of the bar and legal support staff. These meetings, which are now called The Legal Exchange Program, provide a forum for the discussion of local issues, new statutes, rules or policies and local issues, as they arise.

The Workgroup will continue its work on the following activities:

- Conduct survey/focus group of the bar and legal support staff to assess needs/wants/identify problems in advance of meetings and use to set agenda.
- A specific agenda should be created for each judicial district and should include topics submitted from the bar/legal support staff and from judges and Branch staff. Topics on statewide programs/initiatives may be included at all locations, e.g., developments in e-filing.
- Prepare a list of available technology to assist the chief clerks when developing future programs. For example, a cordless microphone would be helpful for the presenters and to those asking questions from the audience.
- These programs should be held twice a year, once in the fall after the October Practice Book and statutory changes go into effect, and a spring session with dates starting in late March/early April.
- Invite the various divisions and units of the Judicial Branch to participate in the Legal Exchange program.
- This Workgroup should work closely with the individuals implementing the recommendations of the Committee on Uniformity of Court Procedures.
- Consider scheduling programs based on needs/requests of the bar on a specific topic(s) within civil, criminal, family, juvenile or housing to allow for detailed presentations to smaller groups.

As time and resources permit, the Workgroup will begin work on the following activities:

- As a follow-up to the Legal Exchange Program, information culled from these sessions should be posted on the Judicial Branch website.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE INFORMATION SYSTEM (CJIS)

The Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) Governing Board was created in 2008 by state statute with the passage of Criminal Justice Reform Public Act 08-01. The Act mandates the development and implementation of a centralized information technology system capable of providing “immediate, seamless and comprehensive sharing” of information to all branches of government, state agencies, departments and boards central to the criminal justice system. The Honorable Patrick L. Carroll III co-chairs the Governing Board with Lt. Gov. Michael Fedele.

The Governing Board will continue its work on the following activity:

- Create, design, develop and implement the statewide Connecticut Information Sharing System

As time and resources permit, the Governing Board will begin work on the following activities:

- Build the Criminal Information Sharing System (CISS)
- Ensure that the Offender Based Tracking System (OBTS) has data purity
- The Administrative Committee, Technology Committee and Implementation Committee will develop performance objectives that measure the success of the objectives set by their committees
- The Board’s Technology Committee will create a central repository for official Connecticut Impaired Driving Record Information System (CIDRIS) forms
- The Connecticut Impaired Driving Record Information System and the Offender Based Tracking System will be placed under the purview of the CJIS Governing Board

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Judicial Branch will ensure a judicial system where all participants can expect and experience clear, fair and consistent justice from an independent and impartial judiciary.

CIVILITY/DECORUM IN THE COURTS

Through greater interaction between the Branch and the Standing Committee on Professionalism of the Connecticut Bar Association, and through ongoing discussions with Branch committees and commissions, civility and courtroom decorum will be improved.

Key members of the initiative will continue their work on the following activities:

- Judge Agati has been extensively involved in the Standing Committee's Law School Liaison Subcommittee, which is seeking opportunities to involve the bench and the bar in the law schools' professionalism education for students.

COURTHOUSE OBSERVATION AND SIMULATION TEAM

The Courthouse Observation and Simulation Team was formed to address consistency in the quality of the delivery of services from one courthouse to another.

The Team will continue its work on the following activities:

- Continue regular and ongoing observations of court facilities of all types to assess the quality of service delivery, the effectiveness of service excellence training, and the need for any subject matter education for staff.

COURT SECURITY

The Court Security Committee was established as a permanent committee charged with providing recommendations on security within Judicial Branch facilities and emergency preparedness planning.

The Committee will continue to work on the following activities:

- Develop a policy to require marshals to notify local law enforcement, in addition to the state police, whenever a threat is made against a judge
- Adopt a policy prohibiting Judicial Branch employees from using their identification card when in a Branch facility on personal business
- Work with the Jury Committee to review the safety of jurors in Judicial Branch facilities
- Develop and publicize procedures for the uniform screening of counsel and support staff regarding the bringing of equipment, files and exhibits into the courthouse during a trial
- Develop a series of general questions which all judicial marshals should be able to answer regarding their facility
- Develop a procedure for the utilization of the physical security inspection checklists utilized by Judicial Marshal Services
- Develop a policy permitting the wearing of hats in Judicial Branch facilities
- Update the Judicial Branch Security Manual to ensure that it meets the current needs of the Branch

EXPECTATIONS OF THE PUBLIC

The Committee on Expectations of the Public was charged with examining and recommending ways to define and communicate clear and consistent information about expectations and court processes for all who enter Branch facilities or interact with the Branch. Implementation of the committee's recommendations is being carried out by Judicial Branch personnel.

The designee under the Office of the Chief Court Administrator will continue its work on the following activities:

- Publish a tri-fold brochure in the areas of Criminal/Motor Vehicle Matters and Small Claims that provides information on what to expect when a person goes to each of these courts.
- Revise the notices generated by the Connecticut Child Support Enforcement System (CCSES) served on the defendants at their last known address, two to three weeks before any court date, advising them of the court date, time and place to include information to help litigants better prepare for court and know what to expect at their court appearance.
- Implement the reading of a greeting/announcement at the beginning of the day by the clerk or a judge in the Housing Court. The greeting/announcement would provide an oral overview or roadmap of what would happen during the day, emphasizing important points, such as not leaving the court until instructed to do so by a clerk, a judge, or a housing specialist.
- Revise the housing court notice of hearing to include language making it clear to litigants that failure to come to court can result in the entry of a judgment.

As time and resources permit, the designee under the Office of the Chief Court Administrator will begin work on the following activities:

- All brochures, letters and notices should be tested at several courts. The drafts, as approved by Legal Services, should be provided to the court service centers, public information desks and clerks' offices in several locations along with a brief survey to assess whether the information is helpful to the public.
- An information sheet entitled "What to Expect on the Day of Your Small Claims Hearing" should be sent to each litigant along with the Notice of Hearing.
- Revise the Notice of Hearing sent to litigants in small claims matters to incorporate plain language principles, emphasize important information, and update or correct court directions.
- Develop a simplified procedure and a fillable form to permit a defendant to request that a satisfaction of judgment be entered by the court in the event that a plaintiff fails to file the satisfaction of judgment with the court.

- Include questions and answers containing information on the post judgment process and the consequences of a small claims judgment with the notice of judgment sent by the court in small claims matters.
- Review and revise the “Not Guilty” letter for Criminal/Motor Vehicle matters to be certain that the information provided is accurate.
- Revise the language of the “Not Guilty” letter that is sent to people who plead “Not Guilty” in order to incorporate information on what will happen on the initial hearing date.
- Review the Notice of Hearing that is sent and consider adding material to assist the public as they come into the motor vehicle court on the day of their hearing.
- Reactivate the Superior Court Operations Division’s Web Board.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS ADVISORY BOARD

The External Affairs Advisory Board is charged with developing a comprehensive plan with specific action steps to educate the public, senior citizens, members of community organizations, and students about the role and function of the Connecticut Judicial Branch.

The Board will continue its work on the following activities:

- Provide evaluation forms to the judges and to the community organizations each time that a judge addresses an organization.
- Cultivate relationships with educational organizations, particularly those involving social studies teachers.
- Have judges visit schools and talk with students about the consequences of criminal behavior.
- Contact Sunday morning talk shows and radio stations about Judicial Branch-sponsored programs (like the Foreclosure Mediation Program). Explore the feasibility of developing a DVD with judges discussing how these types of programs work.
- Incorporate into every speaking engagement a request, if approved by both the judge and the organization, to contact the local media about the event.
- In an era of diminishing resources for the media, provide ways to educate them about the courts, absent the day-to-day court beat reporter, such as using the website to its full potential (i.e. statistics) and providing opportunities for judges to educate the media about the courts (i.e. having judges visit media organizations to assist them in learning about the courts).
- Attend social studies teachers' conferences and consider doing a workshop.
- Establish a "regional judge liaison" to work between the court and the schools in a particular area.
- Continue monitoring of inquiries from the news media and stories about the Judicial Branch.
- Continue marketing positive stories about the judiciary and the Judicial Branch to news organizations.
- Continue contacting editorial boards when necessary to present the Branch's position on an issue.
- Develop a plan to cultivate minority news organizations including predominantly non-English speaking media organizations.

Judicial Performance Evaluation Program

The Judicial Performance Evaluation Program Committee was directed to examine the Branch's existing judicial performance evaluation program, and consider the feasibility of establishing evaluation programs for judges who preside over high volume courts; family support magistrates, judge trial referees, small claims and motor vehicle magistrates, and quasi-judicial officials. Subsequently, the Chief Justice directed the Chief Court Administrator to establish the Judicial Performance Evaluation Program Advisory Panel, which is a permanent standing committee, to review and implement the recommendations developed by the Judicial Performance Evaluation Program Committee.

The Advisory Panel will continue its work on the following activities:

- Develop a questionnaire for evaluating the performance of Supreme Court Justices and Appellate Court Judges
- Develop a mechanism to evaluate the performance of judge trial referees similarly to judges doing the same work
- Develop a peer development process for judges
- Expand the categories of judges subject to evaluation
- Modify the present Attorney Questionnaire so as to provide the opportunity for a fair, proper and comprehensive evaluation of the judge
- Develop a mechanism for the electronic distribution of attorney questionnaires

As time and resources permit, the Advisory Panel will begin work on the following activities:

- Expand the pool of those who evaluate judges who are assigned to high volume courts and as presiding judges to include court staff.
- Solicit input for the evaluation system for trial judges from other constituents in the judicial process in addition to jurors and attorneys, as is presently the case.
- Supplement the information concerning the respondent that is currently required (e.g., years of practice, type of practice, etc.) with an optional question asking whether the outcome of the trial or hearing was favorable or unfavorable to the respondent's position.
- Refer the Attorney Questionnaire and the Juror Questionnaire to an appropriate expert for an overall evaluation as to (i) their adequacy for measurement of a judge's performance of his/her duties and the production of useful information for the judge's education and professional development; and (ii) the number of responses required to produce statistically reliable and meaningful data.
- Retain an expert to examine the evaluation questionnaire

- Engage in a joint effort with the bar to educate the bar on the policies, practices and procedures in place to protect and preserve the anonymity of attorneys submitting an evaluation questionnaire
- Develop a mechanism to evaluate non-judicial officers
- Develop a mechanism to utilize the Branch's website to inform the bar about the judicial performance evaluation program
- Develop a mechanism to utilize the Branch's website to inform the bar about the efficacy of the electronic distribution and execution of evaluation questionnaires
- Modify the evaluation form for all Superior Court judges to contain a check-box inquiring of counsel whether that judge should be considered for assignment to the complex litigation docket (referred from the Complex Litigation Committee)
- Revise the evaluation form to remove any reference to a case caption or docket number and include language to give the bar assurance that the information is not attributable to a specific lawyer (referred from the Complex Litigation Committee)

PUBLIC SERVICE EXCELLENCE

The Public Service Excellence workgroup is charged with developing methods to advance and foster a service excellence culture throughout the entire Judicial Branch.

The Workgroup will continue its work on the following activities:

- Develop Public Service Excellence training for managers and supervisors that stresses the responsibility and accountability they have for the staff they supervise
- Develop service excellence training for all Branch staff in every division

As time and resources permit, the Workgroup will begin work on the following activities:

- Develop a second phase of training that reinforces the 7 Habits and helps managers and supervisors apply them in the workplace
- Our Service Excellence Promise
- Unit-specific Pillars of Service Excellence workshops

UTILIZATION OF JUDGE TRIAL REFEREES

The Committee on the Utilization of Judge Trial Referees is charged with addressing and making policy recommendations for the effective use of judge trial referees, who bring long experience at the bar and bench to their work and are often asked to take on some of the more nettlesome and difficult cases, in a manner that will best serve the needs of the Judicial Branch and enhance the services provided to the public by Connecticut's courts.

The Committee is co-chaired by Judge Linda K. Lager and Judge William J. Lavery. The committee is currently in its information-gathering phase and plans to submit recommendations to the Chief Court Administrator in the fall.

WEBSITE ENHANCEMENT

The Judicial Branch Web Board, a pre-existing operational committee, is charged with reviewing the content of the Branch's website, ensuring adequate site navigation, and enhancing the website to allow users to conduct business online.

The Web Board will continue its work on the following activities:

- Appellate system case look-up section
- Attorney discipline records
- Information about the Court Support Services Division
- Information in different languages
- Self-help in the areas of juvenile, family and probation
- Expand E-filing
- Jury postponements
- Navigation
- Plain language
- Site design and navigation

As time and resources permit, the Web Board will work on the following activities:

- Improve visibility of link on website, which is undergoing redesign over the next few years, to Spanish-language materials
- Consider adding an email link, as part of the Judicial Branch website redesign, so that users can sign up for updates on newly translated materials

ALL GOALS

Access
Changing Demographics
Delivery of Services
Collaboration
Accountability

CULTURAL COMPETENCY

The Advisory Committee on Cultural Competency is charged with assessing the training needs of the Branch and developing an ongoing, comprehensive training program addressing cultural competency for all Judicial Branch staff. It is also charged with prioritizing and implementing the recommendations developed by the Committee on Diversity in the Branch Workforce, a phase one initiative of the strategic plan, which was created to recommend an action plan to promote and ensure diversity in the hiring and retention of Branch employees and to ensure a culturally competent workforce.

The Committee will submit a prioritized implementation plan to the Chief Court Administrator for the following activities:

- Address issues of cultural competency through training for new and existing staff.
- Conduct a survey of Judicial Branch staff to identify the areas employees think are in need of improvement in relation to cultural competency.
- Develop and implement a cultural competency training curriculum; provide evaluations to each participant upon completion of training; provide pre- and post-training tests to measure levels of competency.
- Develop a centralized, mandated training program for Affirmative Action Coordinators to ensure that the interview process is conducted in an appropriate and consistent manner at all times. Refresher courses should be offered biannually, and the rate of attendance tracked.
- Assess Affirmative Action Coordinators on levels of competency through periodic self-assessments and/or post-training testing.
- Develop and implement a system for Affirmative Action Coordinators to report any concerns regarding appropriateness of the interview processes as they occur. Also, a system should be developed to ensure that any such concerns are investigated and acted upon prior to any action being taken on the recruitment in question.
- Track the number of issues reported by Affirmative Action Coordinators.
- Develop questions to include on the interview form that will measure the cultural competency of an applicant, or the ability for an applicant to become culturally competent.
- Ensure all Branch staff involved in the interviewing process receives training regarding the inclusion of cultural competency as part of the hiring criteria and the importance it has as part of the required criteria for hire/promotion.
- Update the existing “*Guidelines to Effective Interviews*” booklet to include cultural competency as a criteria for assessment of applicants.
- Evaluate and develop methods to retain employees and provide opportunities to enhance their career mobility.

All Goals: Cultural Competency

- Evaluate the existing Mentoring Program to determine if it meets the needs of staff in providing increased access to career opportunities within the Branch.
- Include a career mobility program as part of the Mentoring Program, to be developed by the Mentoring Committee in conjunction with Administrative Services Division Human Resources Management Unit.
- Assess existing materials and the extent of the Branch's current outreach efforts to students in high schools, business and technical schools, career academies, and colleges.
- Assemble and maintain a pool of Judicial Branch employees who would be accessible to the Volunteer/Intern Coordinators to make presentations.
- Promote careers with the Judicial Branch by developing class materials and a speakers' bureau for Connecticut high schools, business schools, technical schools, career academies and colleges. Market the speakers' bureau, job shadow and court aide programs to high school administrators, and track the number of requests.
- Market the Connecticut Courts Curriculum.
- Develop a system to collect and determine distribution of Branch workforce data and data on the population served by the Branch; determine how that data can be effectively utilized to support the goal of developing and retaining a diverse and culturally competent staff.

NEW INITIATIVES IN PHASE THREE

ALTERNATE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ADR)

CHARGE

- Strategy: Increase the utilization and effectiveness of Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR).
- Activity: Improve the ADR scheduling process through the use of technology.
Provide training in ADR for judges, court personnel and volunteers.
Provide consistent ADR programs in each Judicial District.

Alternate dispute resolution (ADR) is a tool that assists the parties involved in disputes, as well as the Judicial Branch, in resolving matters in a fair, timely, and efficient manner. The above activities will be accomplished by creating a committee whose charge will be to study and assess currently available court-sponsored ADR programs for civil, non-family cases, and propose changes that will improve the utilization and effectiveness of ADR for pending civil cases.

The utilization of ADR programs can have a measurable impact on the time it takes to dispose of a case and can result in significant savings in time and expenses for the parties. Parties who utilize ADR should be confident that they will be treated fairly and with respect, and that the ADR providers will maintain a high level of professionalism and uphold the integrity of the program.

Currently, the Branch offers the following court-sponsored ADR programs for civil cases: Arbitration, Attorney Trial Referee, Attorney Trial Referee/Special Master for Civil Cases, Court Annexed Mediation, Early Intervention, Early Neutral Intervention, Expedited Process Track, Fact-Finding, Foreclosure Mediation, Housing Specialists for Housing Matters, and Summary Jury Trials.

The committee will address the following items including, but not limited to: cases eligible for ADR programs; the scheduling process for cases referred to ADR; training for ADR providers; consistency of the delivery of court-sponsored ADR programs statewide, and the efficacy of ADR programs in assisting in the timely, fair and efficient resolution of disputes.

The committee will also consider the types of cases that are currently eligible for referral to an existing court-sponsored ADR program and whether other case types could benefit from such a referral. The committee will consider whether additional or alternative court-sponsored ADR programs could be offered in a cost-effective manner, taking into account relevant ADR services readily available in the private sector.

The committee will consider whether the current technology utilized to schedule and manage cases referred to ADR is adequate. The committee will focus on factors such as the volume and type of cases in which ADR is requested or referred, the length of time it takes for a case to be evaluated and scheduled for an ADR program, the method of notice to the parties, and the occurrence rate of requests for continuance of an ADR session. The committee should determine whether scheduling functions may be streamlined by eliminating manual processes that may be converted to automated functions through technology. The ability to more expeditiously schedule cases for ADR will benefit the Branch and the parties involved. The committee will communicate with the Branch's Information Technology Division and the Superior Court Operations Division in the evaluation of technology as a tool to improve the ADR scheduling process.

As uniformity is an important component in court practices, the committee will examine the selection and training of ADR providers to ensure a selection process that supports uniform practices and standards. The committee will study whether there are an adequate number of well-qualified judges, attorneys, court personnel and volunteers who can provide ADR services, and the manner in which they are selected. It is crucial that the ADR providers be well-trained, knowledgeable and highly-skilled in order to facilitate effective discussion and negotiation between the parties, increasing settlement success rates for ADR cases. This will also lead to increasing the public's trust and confidence in the merits of the ADR program. The committee will consider in its evaluation the training used to identify cases amenable to mediation and other ADR program referrals. The committee will consider whether there should be required training for providers in order to qualify them to provide ADR services.

The committee will evaluate the consistency of the delivery and efficacy of the ADR programs. In order to determine consistency and efficacy, the committee should study the

practices and standards used by ADR providers in each Judicial District and whether those practices and standards may differ from district to district. This study will include conducting surveys of ADR providers. The committee will explore the possibility of creating a formal list of rules of practice for each ADR program. In addition, the committee will evaluate whether a certification process for ADR providers would be feasible.

In considering each of the above issues, the committee will examine the ADR programs and practices of other states, as well as private ADR providers, and identify those practices which could be incorporated to enhance the Branch's court-sponsored ADR programs. The committee should also consider other issues, including whether ADR program participation should be mandatory, whether there should be separate ADR dockets, and whether judges should be allocated to "mediation only" assignment dockets.

The committee should be demographically and geographically diverse, and include judges, attorneys, and representatives or consultants with expertise in alternate dispute resolution. Therefore, it is recommended that the committee be comprised of:

Representatives from various state bar groups

A member of the Connecticut Bar Association or the chair of its Dispute Resolution Committee

A member of the American Board of Trial Advocates

A member of the Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association

A member of the Connecticut Defense Lawyers Association

Attorneys who currently serve as fact finders or arbitrators

A business executive, possibly from the Connecticut Business and Industry Association, or the insurance industry

A member of the Connecticut Medical Society

A representative from the academic community with experience in alternate dispute resolution

A member of a community mediation organization that does landlord/tenant or foreclosure mediation

Delivery of Services: Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR)

A present or former CLD judge

An active judge trial referee mediator

An active line judge mediator

A current or former civil presiding judge

The committee will develop outcome indicators to measure the success of each intermediate activity included in this project. The committee will also develop outcome indicators that show the combined contribution of the individual activities included in this project toward attaining the specific strategy addressed and its accompanying performance measure, as defined by the Strategic Plan.

The committee will submit its recommendations to the Chief Court Administrator by June 2011.

AUTOMATED TELEPHONE SYSTEMS (ATS)

CHARGE

Strategy:	Determine if Automated Telephone Systems (ATS) serve the needs of the Judicial Branch and its stakeholders, in terms of service, efficiency and cost, compared to traditional non-automated systems.
Activity:	Collect existing research on effectiveness and cost of ATS in general and in state and federal courts. Analyze performance, as to cost and effectiveness, of Court Operations Systems through analysis and test groups. Provide recommendations as to use and content of ATS and/or non-automated answering systems, including a Branchwide call center with extended hours.

Automated Telephone Systems (ATS) appear to be a fact of life in all areas: government, courts, retail, doctors' offices, even art museums and personal answering machines. What is not clear is if ATS meets the needs of callers and if they are efficient and cost-effective *in all situations*. Anecdotal evidence, as well as some readily available studies, indicate that a high percentage of the end uses of these systems are not enthusiastic supporters, but accept ATS as inevitable. The effect on Judicial Branch stakeholders, both internal and external, has not been determined nor analyzed as to impact and cost. Input from the public has not been collected in a systematic way, nor reviewed.

Most, but not all, courthouses currently have automated answering systems in place, as well as, within Court Operations, Support Enforcement offices and the Jury Service Line. The scripts and menu choices vary by court and by office. Administrative and staff offices vary also, with many having direct lines answered by the assigned individual with voice mail backup, rather than a main line answered by staff. Other offices have a main telephone number, with an ATS providing options, including direct dialing of extensions. Offices and courts do not have after hours coverage through ATS or staff, and there is no statewide call center. Jury Administration does provide Jury Service Lines after hours with instructions on reporting and directions.

This committee will determine if ATS systems meet the needs of the Branch and of the people who call the Branch. The committee will recommend whether and where to use ATS systems, as well as determining if there are areas which should not employ ATS. The committee will also recommend statewide standards for scripts and menu choices (including ADA and Language availability) which all employed systems must adhere to. The committee will also examine the efficacy and cost of a statewide call center, establishing need and analyzing benefits and costs.

In order to accomplish this, the committee will require adequate information; this information will be acquired through research on the national, state and local level. Cost/benefit analyses may be acquired from federal and state courts and governments, as well as vendors and academic research. Within the Branch, a starting point will be the existing data collected by the Courthouse Observation and Simulation Team, with additional surveys or other information gathering instruments to be designed and implemented as appropriate.

The committee should be drawn from both within and outside the Branch, taking advantage of existing expertise and various perspectives from internal and external communities. Therefore it is recommended that the committee be comprised of:

Designee of the Chief Court Administrator

An administrative judge from a large judicial district

An administrative judge from a medium or small judicial district

A chief clerk or deputy chief clerk from a large judicial district

A chief clerk or deputy chief clerk from a medium or small judicial district

Representatives from various units within the Judicial Branch

A representative from the Courthouse Observation and Simulation Team

A representative from Materials Management Services

Member of the bar

Member of the public

The committee will develop outcome indicators to measure the success of each intermediate activity included in this project. The committee will also develop outcome indicators that show the combined contribution of the individual activities included in this project toward attaining the specific strategy addressed and its accompanying performance measure, as defined by the Strategic Plan.

The committee will submit its recommendations to the Chief Court Administrator by June 2011.

CHILD SUPPORT

CHARGE

Strategy: Simplify and streamline the process of obtaining a child support order, as well as the modification and enforcement of a child support order, so individuals may more quickly obtain the services they need without contacting numerous offices.

Activity: Whenever possible, provide a single point of resource within each courthouse for those individuals seeking child support, or the modification or enforcement of a child support order.

Develop instructional step-by-step materials to assist self representative parties.

Obtaining, modifying, or enforcing a child support order can be a very confusing process. It is confusing in part because of the number of Judicial Branch units involved, as well as other public and private agencies. An individual can start the process at a clerk's office, be directed to a support enforcement office or a department of social services office, be redirected to a clerk's or family relation's office, and then instructed to fill out the forms at a court service center.

The processing delays encountered by a parent who is in need of child support may contribute to the family's already difficult financial situation. Once the obligee's matter is heard by the court, the obligor may already be several months in arrears. Implementing an income withholding may further delay the distribution of resources to the child.

A workgroup should be established to make recommendations to simplify and streamline this process as much as possible. To ensure representation from all agencies/entities that assist individuals with child support establishment/modification/enforcement matters, it is recommended that the workgroup be comprised of members of Court Operations Unit, Support Enforcement, and Family Relations.

EXPEDITE CHILD PROTECTION APPEALS

CHARGE

Strategy: Reduce the time the court process takes so that children can achieve permanency as soon as possible

Activity: Identify areas at the appellate court level where delays occur

Assess the need for increased training of court personnel and attorneys on the urgency of child protection matters

Propose rules and new procedures to expedite child protection appeals

“While timeliness is important in all court disputes, it is particularly important in cases involving the rights and interests of children – especially those who are involved in and forced to remain in unstable and sometimes violent circumstances. Because childhood is so short, time-wise, and children need stable and safe environments, it is critical that timely and efficient decision-making occurs by those who exercise legal decision making authority over children. This is especially so in cases involving custody, paternity, dependency, termination of parental rights and adoption.” Pennsylvania – Appellate Court Procedural Rules Committee (April 2009).

Shortening the timeframe it takes for children to achieve permanency is essential for the well being of those children who are involved in the child protection system. To that end, in early 2010, Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers created the Committee to Expedite Child Protection Appeals. Following a series of meetings, the Committee delivered a report to the Chief Justice outlining the steps taken to expedite child protection appeals to date. Included in the report, the Committee recommended that a task force be created to continue addressing the need for expediting appellate proceedings involving neglected children. This committee will serve as that task force.

As recommended in the report from the Committee to Expedite Child Protection Appeals, the new committee should undertake the following: identify additional areas where delays occur; determine whether mandatory or directory timetables for rulings should be established; assess the need for training of court personnel and attorneys on the urgency of child protection matters; establish clearer case management and stricter enforcement of existing rules; and determine whether new internal procedures or legislation is needed.

The committee should consider revising Chapter 79 of the Rules of Appellate Procedure, which establishes the rules for appeals in juvenile matters, to address: rewriting the current appellate briefing rules to permit abbreviated briefs when no legal issues are involved; limiting oral argument to only matters where arguments are necessary; assessing whether published decisions should be required for all appellate rulings; and reviewing the current practices for petitions for certification in child protection cases. The committee should also explore the current practices for the review of fee waivers in child protection cases.

In its efforts, the committee should review the extensive literature on the impact of prolonged instability on children in foster care and reports from other states that have addressed these issues. It should also seek out the input of the public and consider the rights of all parties to these proceedings.

The committee should be diverse and include judges and attorneys with expertise in child protection law. Therefore, it is recommended that the committee be comprised of:

A Supreme Court justice

An Appellate Court judge

A Superior Court judge

Members of the bar who specialize in child protection law

Judicial Branch professional staff

The committee will develop outcome indicators to measure the success of each intermediate activity included in this charge. The committee will also develop outcome indicators that show the combined contribution of the individual activities included in this charge toward attaining the specific strategy addressed and its accompanying performance measure, as defined by the Strategic Plan.

The committee will submit its recommendations to the Chief Justice by spring 2011.

RE-ENGINEERING OF THE CLERKS' OFFICE (RECO)

CHARGE

Strategy:	Fundamentally redesign/re-engineer the business processes of the clerks' offices to reduce costs and eliminate inefficiencies while continuing to enhance service to the public.
Activities:	Move to a business model that reflects the public's expectation for responsible use of resources. Create an environment where the interest of the public takes precedence over the convenience of using familiar but outdated business processes. Implement performance standards and measurements for clerks' offices to establish best practices and enhance accountability.

Emerging technologies sometimes conflict with existing business processes; just because the latest computer program allows a user to perform an essential task more quickly does not mean that it is being used to its fullest. If the user is not adequately trained or motivated to embrace change, then all of the world's best available technology makes no difference. In other words, it is just as important to analyze processes and procedures to understand how to make the most of every resource, human and technological.

The Judicial Branch is expected each day to meet its mission of resolving matters in a fair, timely, efficient and open manner. Very often, the start of fulfilling that mission begins in the clerk's office of a courthouse. This judicial "front-line" is where, for many people, a lasting impression of their judicial system is made, whether they are jurors, attorneys, self-represented parties, defendants or victims. In the existing budget climate, which is expected to last for at least the foreseeable future, the court system is being ever stretched, as the impact of a stressed economy results in an increased need for services. And yet, even with more demands, the Judicial Branch is rightly expected to fulfill its essential functions without delay. This of course can and is being done; however, this time of challenge has provided a real opportunity to find efficiencies in processes, to make more effective use of resources, and to creatively and innovatively respond to and meet the demands of the public.

The National Center for State Courts, in its 2010 Future Trends in State Courts report, focused exclusively on the need for state judicial systems to re-engineer how they conduct

business. From New England to California and Washington State to Florida, state courts are reexamining existing practices to meet the changing needs of an increasingly electronic world, and Connecticut is no exception. The Strategic Plan's release in 2008 spurred the creation of a quality assurance program unit within the Court Operations Unit, to help the Branch meet its outcome goals of access to justice, responding to changing demographics, improving the delivery of services, collaboration and accountability to the public.

Under the quality assurance program, assessments of business processes and on-site workflow analysis were undertaken to help develop the best business practices possible. What the unit has found is that technology, though available, does not always meld with processes and practices established decades ago. Conversely, those processes and practices are obsolete when applied to emerging technology, such as the expansion of electronic filing, which results in nearly real-time practice in many civil cases. Motions that used to take days to be calendared, often leading to delayed hearings, can now be e-filed and automatically calendared, and in-court decisions on motions can be entered electronically by a clerk in a courtroom instead of hours or days later by a data entry operator. Attorneys can file case documents in the middle of the night, from home, if they choose, and those documents are available for review at nearly any time of the day. Going forward, the Branch is committed to expanding e-filing to family matters and other case types, moving ever faster towards a paperless, real-time environment.

A workgroup on Re-Engineering the Clerks' Office, or RECO, will examine current trends and coming initiatives to determine how best to respond to changing demands. The RECO workgroup will analyze current practices and key office functions and develop a plan to streamline and re-engineer those practices and procedures, taking advantage of new technologies and capitalizing on the efficiencies that those technologies create. The workgroup should also make recommendations for the best use and necessary skill set of office staff in a changing environment. The workgroup will work closely with the Quality Assurance Unit to develop performance measures and establish baselines to track progress and measure the effectiveness of changes implemented. The resources necessary to implement recommendations should also include technical support and training of staff who have shown themselves to be innovative and creative thinkers. Members of the workgroup should include:

Delivery of Services: Re-Engineering of the Clerks' Office (RECO)

Clerks' office line staff

Branch staff with expertise in local and central subject matters

Statisticians

Caseflow experts

Central office managers

The RECO workgroup shall report its progress quarterly to the Chief Court Administrator.

MAGISTRATES

CHARGE

Strategy: Revise the appointment, reappointment, and evaluation process for attorneys who serve as magistrates in accordance with C.G.S. § 51-193l and develop a comprehensive training and education plan for the magistrates.

Activities: Current magistrates were appointed for one year effective July 1, 2010.

Beginning fall 2010, magistrates will be sent reappointment packets, which will require the completion of an application, submission of three references, and submission of a Certificate of Good Standing. Applicants will be interviewed by designees of the Chief Court Administrator.

Magistrates will be evaluated at least once per year.

Complaints against magistrates are to be investigated, reviewed and placed in the magistrate's file.

A comprehensive training and education plan is to be developed.

The Judicial Branch contracts with attorneys to serve as magistrates in accordance with C.G.S. § 51-193l. These magistrates preside over small claims and motor vehicle dockets under the authority of C.G.S. § 51-193t and C.G.S. § 51-193u.

The magistrates dispose of tens of thousands of small claims and motor vehicle matters per year. They serve as the face of the judiciary to more litigants than any other division of the Superior Court especially to those with no appeal process for their 107,000 decisions in small claims. Parties appearing before the magistrates should expect to be treated fairly and with respect by professionals who have taken oaths, as attorneys and magistrates, to uphold the law.

The Chief Court Administrator has developed a new process for the appointment and reappointment of magistrates. Effective July 1, 2010, all currently appointed magistrates were reappointed for a term of one year. Magistrates will be appointed or reappointed on a rolling basis after the submission of an application packet and being interviewed by a panel designated by the Chief Court Administrator.

A workgroup will be established to oversee the new appointment/reappointment process. Under the new process, all magistrates will be observed and evaluated at least once per year. The workgroup should develop an evaluation worksheet to be used during these observations. The workgroup should also enhance the mandatory training program provided to all magistrates. In addition, the workgroup should develop a formal system for the investigation of all complaints concerning magistrates.

The workgroup will include Superior Court Operations employees responsible for magistrate matters and judges appointed by the Chief Court Administrator and will work in cooperation with the Bench/Bar Centralized Small Claims Committee and Chief Administrative Judge of Civil Matters to implement the activities.

The workgroup will develop outcome indicators to measure the success of each intermediate activity included in this initiative. The workgroup will submit updates to the Chief Court Administrator on a quarterly basis.

VOLUNTEER ADVOCATES IN JUVENILE MATTERS

CHARGE

- Strategy: Develop ways of increasing and enhancing the existing services of volunteers in providing services to children and the juvenile court system beyond their current role as a guardian ad litem and/or monitor
- Activity: Explore the feasibility of providing volunteer advocates in delinquency proceedings
- Explore the utilization of different models of service, including an “assisting the attorney” model

The child protection system in Connecticut has gone through some significant changes in recent years. The central focus of the system, however, has remained the same: how best to protect the children of the State of Connecticut. One of the tools currently utilized by the Branch to facilitate that focus has been the use of volunteer advocates in juvenile proceedings. In an effort to capitalize on this invaluable resource, the Judicial Branch will establish an Advisory Board for Volunteer Advocates in Juvenile Matters.

The Advisory Board will engage in a dialogue with the current groups providing volunteer advocates for children to the Branch to ensure positive outcomes for children and their families in the court proceedings. The Board should develop ways of increasing and enhancing the existing services of volunteers in providing services to children and the juvenile court system beyond their current roles as guardians ad litem and/or monitors.

The Advisory Board should explore the feasibility of providing volunteer advocates in delinquency proceedings in addition to abuse and neglect proceedings. The Board should also explore the utilization of different models of service, including an “assisting the attorney” model.

The Advisory Board should be diverse and include representation from all system stakeholders. The Board should include judges, attorneys, and representatives or consultants with expertise in juvenile matters. Therefore, it is recommended that the committee be comprised of:

Judges who handle juvenile matters

Designee from Children in Placement

Designee from Child Advocates of Connecticut

Chief Child Protection Attorney

Child Advocate or designee

Members of the bar who specialize in Juvenile matters

Representative from the Office of the Attorney General

Representative from the Legislature

Judicial Branch professional staff

The Advisory Board will develop outcome indicators to measure the success of each intermediate activity included in this project. The Advisory Board will also develop outcome indicators that show the combined contribution of the individual activities included in this project toward attaining the specific strategy addressed and its accompanying performance measure, as defined by the Strategic Plan.

The Advisory Board will submit its recommendations to the Chief Court Administrator by spring 2011.

INITIATIVES COMPLETED

Access

Information/Privacy

Changing Demographics

Diversity in the Branch Workforce

Delivery of Services

Family Support Magistrate Rules

Problem Solving in Family Matters

INITIATIVES NOT ADDRESSED

Access

Facilities (Administration)

Utilization of Facilities

Collaboration

Chief Court Administrator/Information Sharing

Accountability

Assignments/Allocation (Judges)

Career Paths

Judges' New Assignment Assessment/Orientation

All Goals

Training