

MESSAGE FROM THE STATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR

This past year has been one of great progress for the Administrative Office of the Courts. We have made great strides in enhancing current programs, and developing new initiatives, including those that focus on increasing access to justice. The enduring effects of the State's fiscal challenges, coupled with increasing demands on limited judicial resources, have led the AOC to redouble its efforts this year to maximize system-wide efficiencies and bolster existing resources. The tragic New Castle County Courthouse shootings on February 11, 2013 brought security issues, which have long been a Judicial Branch priority, to the forefront during this past year. Although the event shook our judicial system at its core, the overwhelming support from judges and Judicial Branch staff, Capitol Police and other security personnel at all levels, the other branches of government, and many others, fostered advancement in security initiatives promoting the safety of all who work in, or enter into, our courthouses. Those efforts are on-going and are discussed below, along with some of the many AOC initiatives.

The FY 2013 Message of the State Court Administrator would not be complete without acknowledging Chief Justice Myron T. Steele's strong and deft leadership of the Judicial Branch and tremendous support of the AOC over the past nine and one-half years. Although his retirement on November 30, 2013 was well-deserved after his 24 years serving on the Bench, I personally feel the loss of his outstanding and decisive management, his strong advocacy for the Delaware Courts and his long-standing commitment to enhancing the core services provided by the Courts. The AOC is honored to have served a key role in helping to advance Chief Justice Steele's outstanding legacy in the area of court administration.

Court Security/Facilities

While security has been a long-recognized critical need of the Delaware Courts and a primary focus area for the AOC, the tragic shooting on February 11, 2013 at the New Castle County Courthouse raised a new awareness about court security. The AOC has worked with the Courts, Capitol Police, Facilities Management, and others, to coordinate the response to the shooting and to implement the security plan and priorities which were developed based upon the statewide security reviews conducted by security experts following last February's tragic events. Those initiatives have included new branch-wide security policies, including the establishment of courthouse security committees and a statewide emergency notification system, training for court security officers, the development of other security resources for court staff, installation of addi-

tional ballistic materials and security cameras in all state courthouses, and the redesign of the New Castle County Courthouse and Family Court Kent County Courthouse lobbies, as well as other structural security projects.

Self-Represented Litigants/Procedural Fairness

The AOC continued its efforts to implement the recommendations of the *Delaware Courts: Fairness for All Task Force* to better serve self-represented litigants. This past year brought advances in ongoing initiatives and the implementation of new programs to address gaps in access to justice services for self-represented litigants and Delaware's Limited English Proficient (LEP) population. Those efforts included the following:

- Doubled the volunteer attorney roster for the AOC's Limited Legal Assistance program (LLAP) which offers consultation services to self-represented litigants in Family Court. Over 95% of participants report that the program provides a valuable service. With the numbers of self-represented litigants on the rise, calls for assistance continue to increase and the AOC has stepped up efforts to meet this growing need;
- Enhanced language access services by expanding the LLAP to Spanish speaking litigants (who report a 100% satisfaction rate with the new program) and developing an online video series in Spanish explaining civil case processes in Delaware Courts;
- Served on the advisory committee organizing the National Summit on Language Access in the Courts, and coordinated a team of Delaware Judges and AOC staff to attend the Summit. Participants joined teams from 48 other states, three territories and the District of Columbia to develop strategies for addressing language access issues. In addition, the AOC's Court Interpreter Program received the 2013 John Neufeld Court Achievement Award in October, which recognized our leadership role in language access on a national level and the program's many initiatives to advance services provided to LEP litigants in Delaware;



Honorable Patricia W. Griffin

Continued on next page

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

- Supported national language access initiatives through work related to the Conference of State Court Administrators' Language Access Advisory Committee and the Council for Language Access Coordinators;
- Participated in the Delaware State Bar Association Committee on Access to Justice which reviewed proposed changes to consumer debt collection cases in the Court of Common Pleas.

Delaware Supreme Court Task Force Initiatives/Committees

The AOC continued to support Delaware Supreme Court Task Force initiatives that focus on access to justice and procedural fairness issues for Delaware's underserved populations including:

◇ **Delaware Access to Justice Commission:** Initial work began on the potential establishment of an Access to Justice Commission in Delaware in FY 2013. Following the recommendations of the Access to Justice Exploratory Committee, which was convened by Justice Jack B. Jacobs on behalf of the Delaware Supreme Court, staffed by the AOC, and included representatives from the Courts, Delaware State Bar Association, legal services organizations and others, the Delaware Supreme Court entered an Order on November 13, 2013 establishing a Delaware Access to Justice Commission. The Commission, established for an initial two-year period, will focus on providing a coordinated approach to investigating and addressing gaps and critical needs related to access to justice in Delaware.

◇ **Delaware Racial Justice Improvement Project (RJIP):** The work of the RJIP, led by Supreme Court Justice Henry duPont Ridgely, completed its work on a number of initiatives supported by a grant sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the American Bar Association. The RJIP, comprised of several members from the Judicial Branch, other criminal justice system partners and staffed by the AOC, focused its reform on the Department of Probation's policies and standards to guide probation officers in the supervision of probationers. The Task Force took the following steps, among others, related to the possible influence of race on discretionary decisions of probation officers:

- All supervisory probation officers received training on implicit bias and bias-free decision making. Implicit bias training has now been incorporated into the mandatory training received by all new

probation officers;

- The Department of Probation & Parole Professional Conduct Policy was amended to expressly prohibit discriminatory decisions by probation officers;
- Modifications to the Delaware Department of Correction's (DDOC) case management system will enable officers to manage and track probation violations and the type of sanctions that are implemented on probationers as a result of violation. These new functions will provide the Department with a tool to better manage its offender population and will allow the probation officers to have a guideline that drives the sanctions based on predefined, objective criteria. The hope is that this evidence-based approach to guide probation officers' discretion in imposing graduated sanctions for probation violations will assist the DDOC in efforts to promote bias-free decision-making and reduce the number of violation reports to the Courts or Board of Parole;
- An additional initiative to promote bias-free decision-making was undertaken by the Delaware State Police. That effort involved the development of automated traffic "warnings" so that information about warnings, in addition to traffic tickets, would be stored electronically and be easily accessible for later review;
- The Delaware Criminal Justice Council's *Declaration of Leading Practices to Protect Civil Rights and Promote Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Criminal Justice System* was implemented. The Declaration mandates that Delaware criminal justice agencies and the courts adopt policies on bias-free decision-making, use of deadly force, internal and external complaint process, and other areas that will promote racial and ethnic fairness, in order to receive preference to receive grant funding allocated through the Criminal Justice Council;
- The Task Force sponsored a train-the-trainer session on implicit bias for Probation and Parole as well as for judicial staff;
- Judicial Officers participated in educational sessions on implicit bias in October 2012.

◇ **Mental Health and Criminal Justice Task Force:** The AOC continues to facilitate the work of the Delaware Supreme Court Task Force on Criminal Justice and Mental Health (co-chaired by Supreme Court Justice Henry duPont Ridgely and Superior Court Judge Jan R. Jurden), including publication of the Updated Strategic

Plan which sets forth the revised recommendations of the Task Force.

- ◇ The General Assembly's **Victims' Compensation Assistance Program Review Committee**, chaired by the State Court Administrator and staffed jointly by the AOC and the Controller General's office, was established to review the financial stability of the VCAP program resulting in a report setting forth the committee's analysis and recommendations which was submitted to the General Assembly on January 7, 2013.

Grant Writing

The AOC coordinated numerous grant applications on behalf of the Courts and was successful in obtaining federal grant funding to support several judicial branch initiatives. Examples included:

- Coordinated the preparation of the Justice of the Peace Court's grant application that resulted in an award from the State Justice Institute to fund a project coordinator to assist the Justice of the Peace Court's community court project. The project coordinator will assist with the planning and development of a resource center which will serve as a centerpiece for the newly created community court in the City of Wilmington;
- Secured funding from the Office on Violence Against Women and managed the planning and implementation of the Victim Awareness and Safety Enhancement Project in the New Castle County Superior Court Mental Health Court and Court of Common Pleas Trauma Informed Probation Court. The project's goals are to provide justice-involved victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault with the tools to end the cycle of violence and abuse, address the root cause of the problem that may have led to their involvement with the criminal justice system, and help reduce recidivism;
- Obtained grant funding from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to support a State Judicial Outreach Liaison officer who will assist the Court of Common Pleas with the creation of a Driving Under the Influence Court in Delaware (pursuant to H.B. 378, 146th General Assembly (De. 2012)), educate the Judiciary on the issue of impaired driving and traffic safety, and provide community outreach services;



From left: Robin Jenkins, founder of the Summer Youth Volunteer Program; Amy Quinlan, Deputy State Court Administrator; Karlis Johnson, Court Administrator for Court of Chancery; and Patricia Griffin, State Court Administrator.

- Additionally, the AOC partnered with the Criminal Justice Council to prepare the Courts' cooperative applications for grant solicitations including the FY 2013 Adult Drug Court Discretionary and the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Programs.

Community Outreach

The AOC continued to expand its community outreach efforts in 2013 through enhanced programming and new initiatives focused on providing educational opportunities to Delaware youth and the community.

- FY 2013 represented another successful year for the Supreme Court and Delaware Bar Association iCivics project. Founded in 2009 by former United States Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, iCivics provides a free civics curriculum that meets Common Core State standards. The Delaware Supreme Court, in conjunction with the Women and the Law Section of the Delaware State Bar Association and the AOC, brought iCivics into the state's elementary and middle schools during the month of May for the last two years. Judges and lawyers volunteer to demonstrate online lessons in the classroom and share their knowledge of working in the legal system.
 - The AOC continues to work with schools and community organizations to bring innovative civics educational opportunities to the schools and community, including the Youth Forum for middle school students which provides an opportunity for students to learn about the court system by working with real life judges and attorneys in an impromptu mock trial held in a real courtroom.
- The Summer Youth Volunteer Program celebrated its fifth year by expanding its services into the Court of Chancery and the Division of Revenue. The "brain child" of the AOC's Manager of Support Services, Robin Jenkins, the program continued to expand with 49 students enrolled this summer. Through this volunteer program, students involved in the foster care system and others receive invaluable work experience and learn new work and life skills.
- The AOC continued its efforts with a myriad of other community outreach projects, including facilitation of the Delaware high school mock trial program and coordination of, and participation in, the Miracle on the 34th Street program (for younger students, the Delaware

Continued on next page

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS



Cast from Miracle on 34th Street presentation, New Castle County Courthouse, December 12, 2013

State Bar Association, in partnership with the Judiciary, stages a reenactment of a Miracle on 34th Street's courtroom scene).

- The AOC partnered with the Salvation Army's Keep a Job program to present a job skills seminar at the New Castle County Courthouse on April 19, 2013. The one-day conference entitled "Brighten Your Path for Success" introduced the participants of the Keep a Job program to the Delaware Judiciary, provided information about how the courts serve the public, and discussed employment opportunities within the Judicial Branch. Representatives from the Court of Common Pleas, Family Court, Capitol Police, the AOC, and the Salvation Army presented information on a variety of topics related to employment skills and the courts. Participants were given an opportunity to practice their newly acquired skills through mock interviews and received tips from experts on resume writing and the job application process.
- Serving on the steering committee, AOC staff assisted in the planning and presentation of the first Sisters in Success Conference on May 13, 2013 at Baylor Women's Correctional Institution. Delaware's First Lady, Carla Markell, presented the keynote address for the day-long conference which was led by the Honorable Jan R. Jurden, Delaware Superior Court Judge. The conference brought together a team of professional women from the local community to offer a series of

workshops designed to provide Delaware's justice-involved women with the tools necessary to make a successful transition back into the community.

Collections

The AOC's Office of State Court Collections Enforcement (OSCCE) continued its efforts to implement new collection initiatives and improve the efficiencies of our current operations. In 2013, OSCCE was successful on several fronts:

- Extended its collections support to Court of Common Pleas outstanding judgments, with future support of Court of Chancery judgments in process;
- Expanded and enhanced the Tax Intercept Program which included the automation of the Department of Correction Fees database through the Delaware Criminal Justice Information System;
- Incorporated web payments (ePay) and five payment kiosks into daily operations;
- Continued to work on other technology advancements and cooperative partnerships with other state and national agencies to increase information sharing capability, capacity, and response time.



First Lady Carla Markell speaking at Baylor Women's Correctional Institution during the Sisters in Success Conference

Measuring Performance

Efforts continue to revamp and implement performance measures and process improvement in the Judicial Branch. The AOC sponsored internal strategic planning initiatives in FY 2013 which focused on finding ways to better assess its performance and existing processes and programming. Moving forward, ongoing process improvement and enhanced performance measures will serve as the un-

derpinning of many of the Courts' planned initiatives, including technology enhancement projects, grant requests, access to justice initiatives and Judicial Branch training.

Training

The AOC aggressively expanded its judicial staff training program in 2013. Existing programming was updated

and additional classes on a number of new subject areas and new computer-based training were added to the course catalog geared towards providing more effective and accessible training to a broader audience of judicial branch staff. Some examples include:

- Created New Employee Development Program with a web-based component that includes added content such as customer service and information on providing legal information as opposed to legal advice;
- Sponsored Process Improvement Training for AOC and court personnel;
- Expanded available training modalities including the addition of computer-based training (CBT). Specific examples include:
 - Obtained Lynda.com licenses for court staff use. The new tool allows court staff to access, either at their desk or through newly created on-site learning labs as their schedule permits, training on many of the off-the-shelf software programs used by the courts, such as Microsoft Outlook, Word or Excel.
 - Developed new CBT on a variety of topics such as the Employees' Code of Conduct, Emergency Notification, and Safety and Emergency Procedures for the New Castle County Courthouse, Family Court and Justice of the Peace Courts. Safety and Emergency Procedures for the Kent and Sussex County courthouses are currently under development and will include training on the location of emergency exits and an overview of the courts;
 - Rolled out a new Lunchtime Learning Series. These one hour training sessions are designed to accommodate busy schedules and heavy workloads. Past topics include E-mail Etiquette, Time Management, Legal Information vs. Legal Advice, and Organizational Tools;
 - Launched new Supervisor Series designed for those who either supervise others, or are on the path to doing so. Series topics include developing your employees, setting performance objectives, delivering feedback, conducting effective interviews and coaching employees;
 - Designed a new AOC staff learning and development website that allows court employees to register for courses, access computer-based training, provide feedback or suggestions for future classes, and obtain information regarding the New Employee Development program, the Judicial Administration Certificate program and statewide training programs.

Information Technology

The Judicial Information Center (JIC) continues to work to

enhance its service-oriented approach for technology to better meet the Courts' needs. FY 2013 has been a period of change and growth as JIC strives to meet the technology needs of the Judicial Branch. JIC's focus during the past year has remained on establishing a secure technology foundation through stabilization of its technical and human resources infrastructure and completion of small projects as it builds that foundation. In addition to completing a number of outstanding technology projects, key accomplishments in the last year included:

- The addition of wireless capabilities to all main court-houses statewide
- Contexte Case Management system stabilization
- Supreme Court Oral Arguments (Online Video)
- Completion of critical infrastructure and process improvements including:
 - * Documentation of current Enterprise and Business Architecture and Information Technology (IT) hardware inventories
 - * Establishment of System Performance Metrics and a monthly dashboard
 - * Development of an IT Information Security Plan
 - * Full overhaul of JIC COOP Plan
 - * Development and implementation of Performance Management Process/Cycle for JIC employees

JIC's five-year strategic plan concentrates on the following key success factors: accomplishing system stability and reliability; excellent customer service and support; documentation of existing and future architecture, inventories, processes, policies and procedures; collaboration with Courts and partner agencies and business process improvement; and accountability. Significant strides are being made in the following areas: implementing additional critical systems stabilization and infrastructure improvements (hardware and software), which is on target for completion in the winter of 2014; improving response time and effectiveness of responses to helpdesk inquiries and better tracking capabilities for trouble calls; upgrading of equipment and software; staffing critical managerial and other positions; and enhancing staff skills.

Looking ahead to FY 2014, I anticipate that the AOC will continue to experience change over the next year, with the departure of long-term friends and staff members, including Franny Haney, who retired from the AOC after almost 29 years of service to the Judiciary, and the evolution which will occur with a new Chief Justice at the helm. We look forward to the challenges and finding new ways to enhance the support services that the AOC provides the Courts.