



## FY23 Annual State of the Court Report Circuit Court for Prince George's County

*"The Power of Transformation, Technology &  
Transparency"*



The Honorable DaNeeka Varner Cotton  
Administrative Judge  
Circuit Court for Prince George's County  
And the Seventh Judicial Circuit of Maryland

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# I. IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

## A. Name

- Circuit Court for Prince George's County

## B. County/City

- Prince George's County/Upper Marlboro

## C. Court Level

- Circuit Court

## D. Reporting Period

- July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

## E. Date

- October 13, 2023



The Circuit Court for Prince George's County is part of the Seventh Judicial Circuit of Maryland. The Seventh Circuit includes Calvert, Charles, Prince George's and St. Mary's Counties. The Honorable DaNeeka Varner Cotton is the Administrative Judge of the Circuit Court and the Seventh Judicial Circuit of Maryland.

***“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”***  
***Helen Keller***

## II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*"Change is the law of life, and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."*

-John F. Kennedy

When I began my tenure as Administrative Judge in January 2023, I decided that the Court would continue its focus on providing effective, efficient and expedient services to the thousands of great citizens that we serve throughout our County. It is a legacy that my esteemed predecessor, The Honorable Sheila R. Tillerson Adams, cultivated during her years at the helm of the Circuit Court.

Change, while difficult, is inevitable. I have seen the power of transformation, technology and transparency more than ever at the Court. The Circuit Court for Prince George's County has transformed since the implementation of the Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC) Court Management System. Gone are the days of tedious paper-based transactions. Now, we are serving our citizens electronically, making us better equipped to assist attorneys, litigants and parties.

While MDEC was a focus during FY23, the community and redefining transparency and accountability has remained paramount. The emphasis on these ideals has cemented trust, allowing communities and citizens to rely upon a system that ensures their access to equal justice.

At the Circuit Court, our mission is to provide accessible, just, timely and innovative resolutions of legal matters in a secure environment while respecting the dignity of all. During FY23, we achieved this mission for the more than 650,000 visitors that traveled through the courthouse. These visitors are more than just a number; they reflect the lives touched, disputes resolved, and justice served.



**The Honorable DaNeeka Varner Cotton**  
Administrative Judge  
Circuit Court for Prince George's County and  
the Seventh Judicial Circuit of Maryland

We will continue to maintain excellence and work collaboratively to provide a fair forum for justice for all.

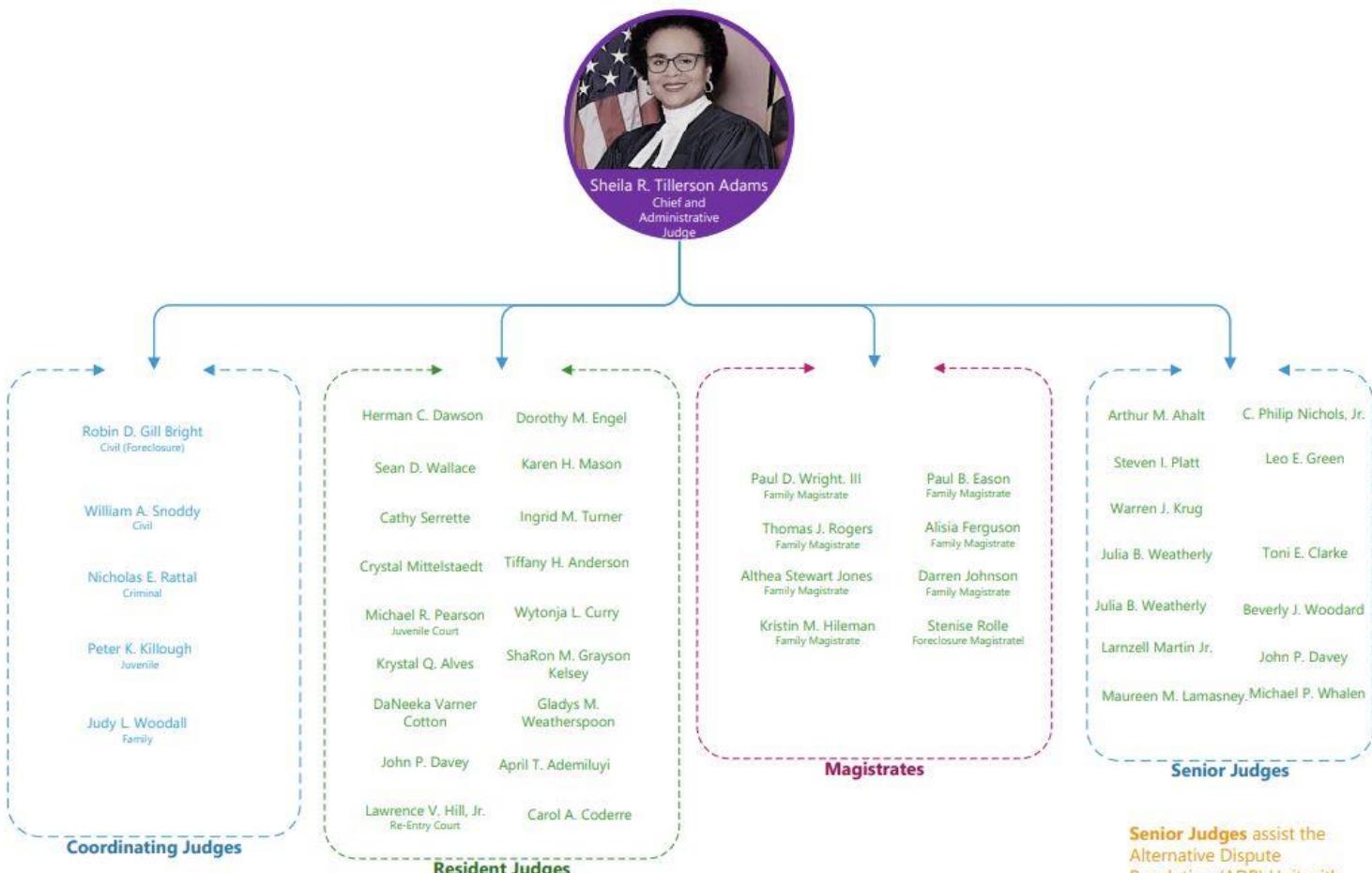
Sincerely,

*DaNeeka Varner Cotton*

The Honorable DaNeeka Varner Cotton  
Administrative Judge  
Circuit Court for Prince George's County  
and the Seventh Judicial Circuit of Maryland

### III. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE COURT

The Circuit Court is comprised of 24 Circuit Court Judges, 13 Senior Judges, and eight Magistrates. Each Judge has an Executive Administrative Aide and Law Clerk. The following organizational chart encompasses July 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022 while The Honorable Sheila R. Tillerson Adams was the Chief and Administrative Judge for the Circuit Court and the Seventh Judicial Circuit of Maryland.

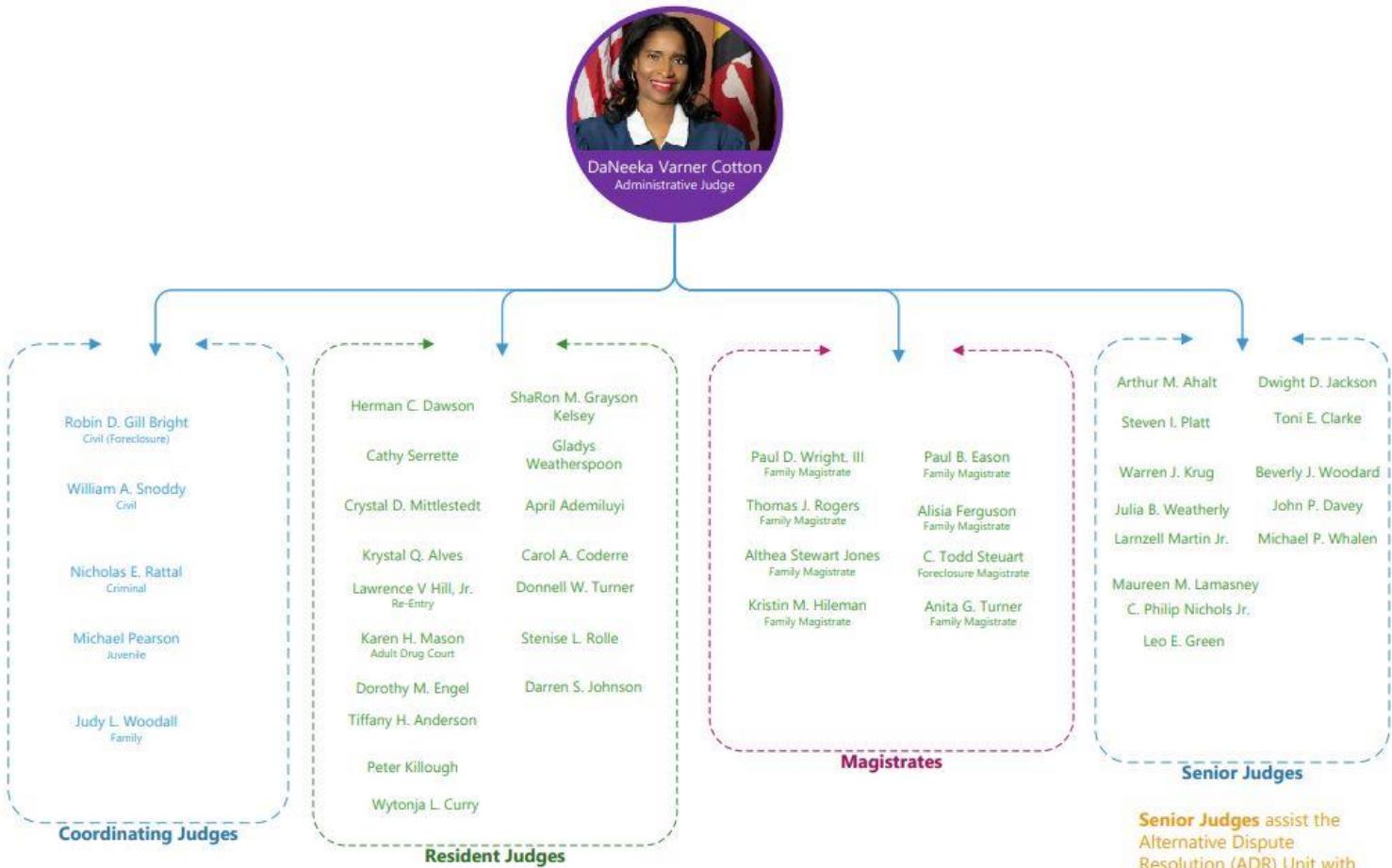


**Coordinating Judges** preside over specific case types for the Court and meet with the Chief and Administrative Judge monthly to discuss ongoing administrative and operational issues affecting the Court

The Bench is supported by **24 Executive Administrative Aides and Law Clerks** who report to their individual Judges.

**Senior Judges** assist the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Unit with civil mediations, family settlement conferences, criminal and civil trials, and criminal pleas.

The following organizational chart for the Circuit Court Judges and Magistrates covers the time from January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023 under the leadership of the current Administrative Judge, The Honorable DaNeeka Varner Cotton.



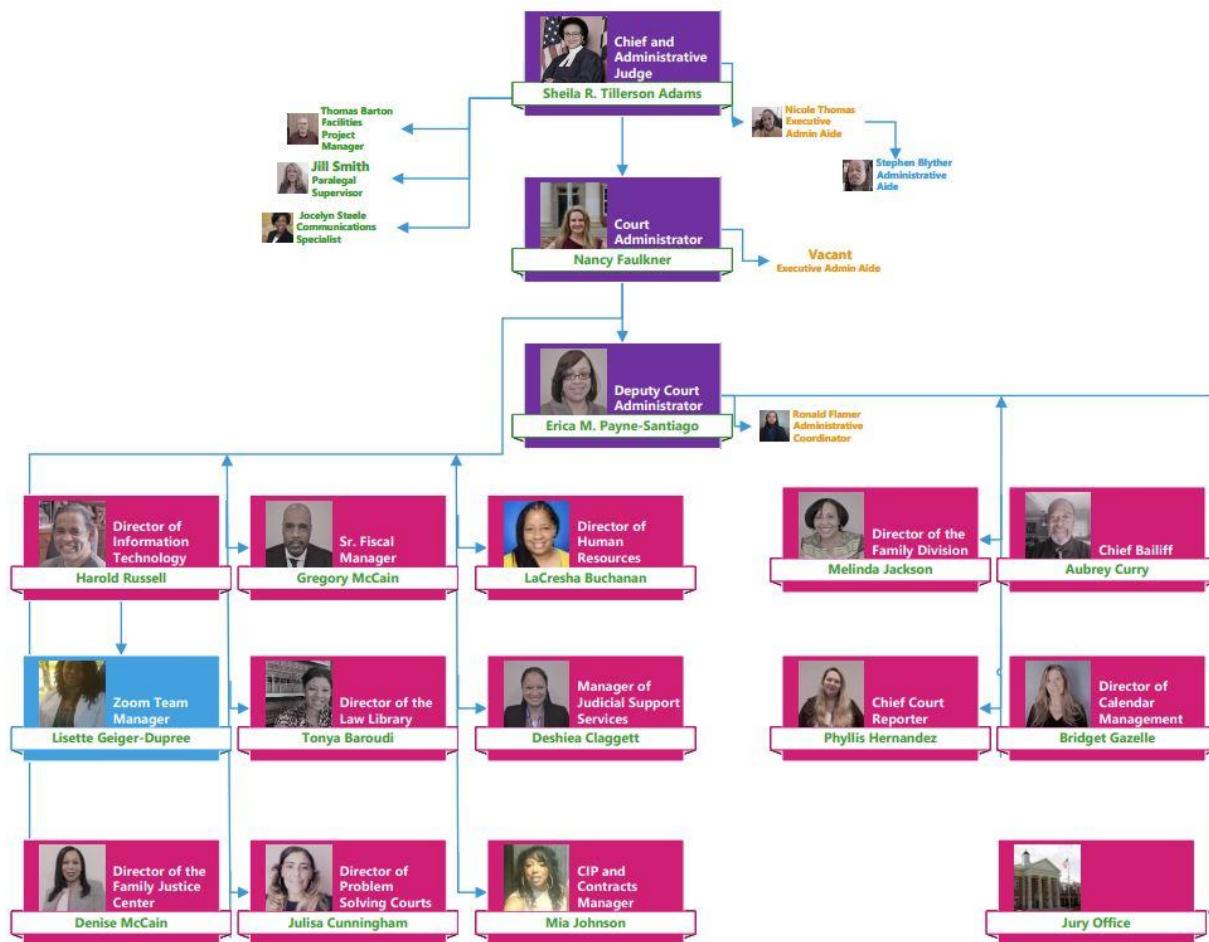
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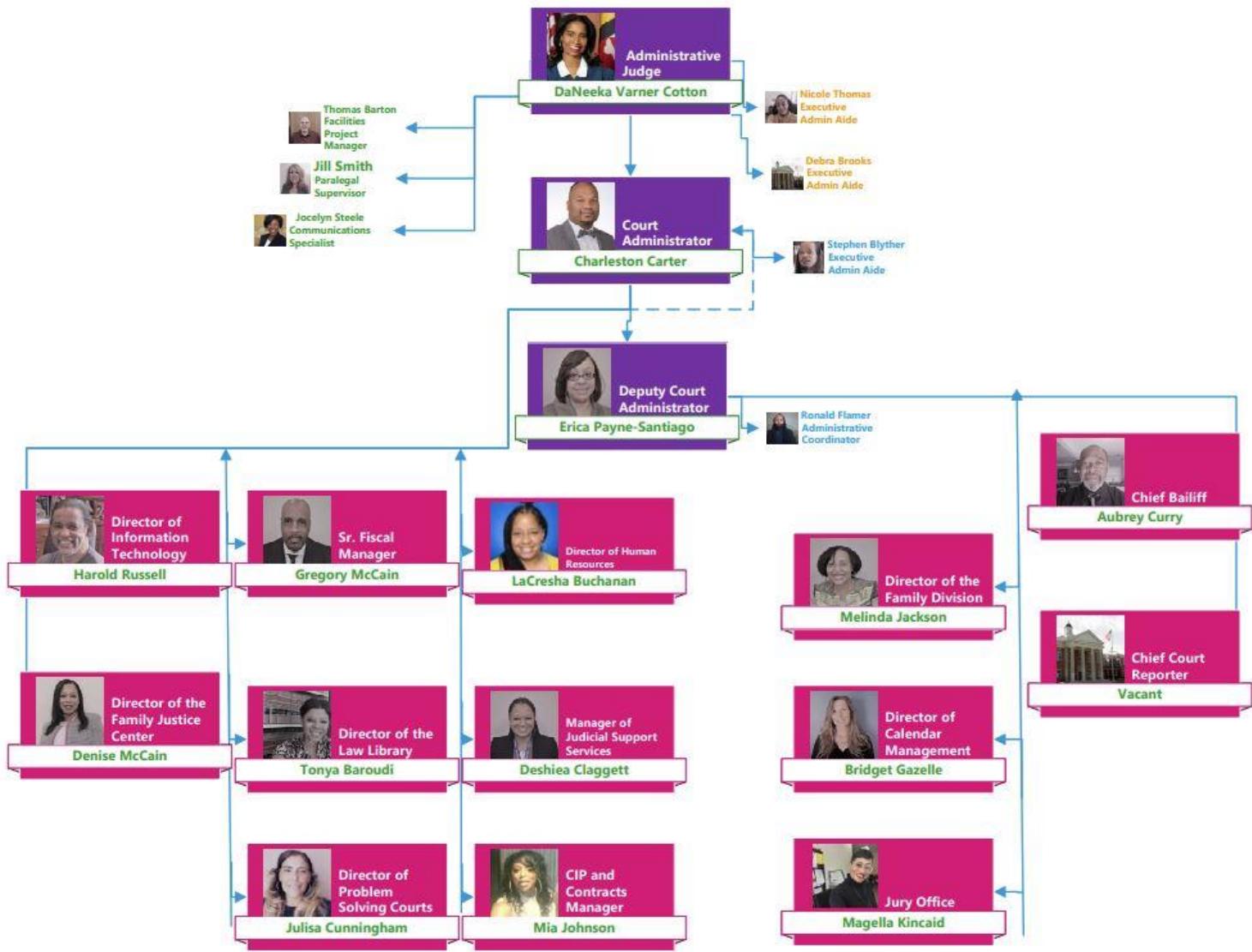
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## Administrative Team

The Circuit Court is managed by an Administrative Team that is comprised of the Administrative Judge, Court Administrator, and Deputy Court Administrator/Jury Commissioner. The Team is supported by a dedicated group of directors, managers and staff who work together to manage the operations of the Court. The following Administrative Team organizational chart covers the period when The Honorable Sheila R. Tillerson Adams served as Chief and Administrative Judge from July 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022.



The following Administrative Team Organizational Chart covers the period while The Honorable DaNeeka Varner Cotton served as Administrative Judge from January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023.



## Court Administration

The Court Administration Office is responsible for the administrative functions and daily management of Court operations to include the following: Budget and Finance; Information Technology; Human Resources; Bailiff's Office; Calendar Management; Communications; Judicial Support Services; Jury Operations; and the Judicial Substitute Executive Administrative Aides. Other services provided by Court Administration include the Interpreter's Office, Research Analyst, Children's Waiting Room and notary services.

## **Finance**

The Finance Office is made up of three employees who maximize available resources and deliver innovative financial services to internal and external customers of the Court. The Team manages the budget, monitors grants, oversees procurement processes, collects revenues and receipts, maintains systems of accounting, records financial transactions and reports results of financial operations.

## **Information Technology (IT)**

The IT Office is made up of 14 employees who ensure that the Court's technological needs are met through various methods. The Court is connected to the Prince George's County Government network infrastructure supported by the Network Services Group of the Office of Information and Technology. IT provides support for all servers hosting various Court applications and technologies.

## **Human Resources (HR)**

The HR Office is made up of three staff members who oversee the HR life cycle and provide support to over 240 staff. The office performs a variety of work in recruiting, training, employee relations and compensation.

## **Bailiff's Office**

The Bailiff's Office consists of approximately 40 bailiffs, and their primary role is to maintain courtroom decorum and to assist judges, jurors and other court personnel.

## Communications

The Communications Specialist develops external and internal communications for the Court. The Specialist also handles media relations, produces executive messages, employee newsletters and oversees social media platforms. The Specialist is also Chair of the Special Projects Committee, which plans employee events and diversity and inclusion initiatives.

## Information Desk

One Circuit Court staff member is assigned to greet visitors who come to the courthouse daily and provide information to the public.

## Interpreter's Office

The office schedules all interpreters for Circuit Court criminal, civil, juvenile and family cases. The Court offers interpreters for sign language and spoken languages at no cost to litigants. The office is staffed with an Interpreter Coordinator who oversees the scheduling of interpreters as outlined by the Maryland Judiciary.

## Children's Waiting Room

The Children's Waiting Room is an on-site resource available to parents of children ages 3 - 12 who are potty-trained. While parents are doing business at the courthouse, they can utilize this resource and have a place for their children to engage in play, relaxation and learning.

## Judicial Substitute Executive Administrative Assistants

There are three limited-term grant funded Judicial Substitute Executive Administrative Assistants who assist with office coverage for the Judges' chambers whenever a need presents itself.

## Courier Services

The Courier is responsible for the daily movement of case files and mail from various offices and Judges' Chambers. While MDEC was implemented in October 2022, the Courier is continuing to deliver and pick up cases and mail throughout the Courthouse Complex.

## Circuit Court Offices and Services

### **Law Library**

The Circuit for Prince George's County Law Library provides legal information and services to judges, attorneys, state and county employees and self-represented litigants. The library was 100% virtual for the first quarter of the fiscal year before opening to attorneys by appointment only and then to all patrons on March 28, 2022. The library received approximately 1,500 inquiries from patrons with over 66% of inquiries from the general public and the rest from attorneys and members of the Judiciary. More than 2,300 patrons visited the Law Library despite its closure to the public for most of the fiscal year. The library's online catalogue received approximately 1,900 hits and complemented almost 800 virtual requests filled by staff.

### **Office of Calendar Management**

The Office of Calendar Management is comprised of a director, two managers, one team leader and 16 employees who manage and schedule various hearings in Civil, Family, Juvenile, and Criminal. These matters are scheduled before Associate Judges, Senior Judges, and Magistrates. During FY23, Calendar Management scheduled 11,852 trials.

- Family Scheduling Clerks set cases before Magistrates and Judges. The Magistrates preside over hearings, status, scheduling conferences, and a variety of child support matters. The Judges preside over trials, contempts, modification hearings, show cause hearings, and a variety of child support matters.

On January 3, 2023, procedures were implemented for notification of in-person hearings before the Judges and Magistrates.

- Juvenile Scheduling Clerks set cases before the Juvenile Magistrates and Judges to include juvenile delinquency arraignments, emergency shelter care, permanency planning review and Children in Need of Assistance (CINA) adjudication hearings, Termination of Parental Rights (TPR), and Temporary Protective Restraining Orders.

Judges' responsibilities also include Crossover Youth Hearings, Peace Orders, Emergency Detentions, Waivers and Merits hearings.

- Civil Scheduling Clerks set cases for all non-domestic hearings, jury and non-jury trials along with Foreclosure hearings. The Foreclosure Magistrate and Judges handles all issues related to Foreclosure.
- Criminal Scheduling Clerks set status conferences, jury and non-jury trials, sentencing, three judge panel reviews, Enbanc, and all other hearing types related to criminal matters.

## Family Division

Under the leadership of The Honorable Judy L. Woodall, Family Division Coordinating Judge, the Division is comprised of four units committed to assisting families in transition by providing resources and services made possible through funding from State and County agencies. Services include parenting education, free legal and procedural assistance, supervised visitation/monitored exchange services, drug testing, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) programs, Model Court and other programs. Each unit within the Family Division provides a variety of services to assist Magistrates and Juvenile Magistrates in effectively processing cases and successfully meeting the Maryland Judiciary Performance Standards and Measures.

The Family Division is comprised of two Juvenile Magistrates who hear CINA and juvenile arraignments, and five Domestic Magistrates hear divorce, child support, custody and access cases. Currently, there are 53 employees within the Family Division. The Family Division employees have various duties depending on the unit in which they work. The following section will explain each unit's responsibilities.

## Administrative Office

The Administrative Office provides oversight and support to the other units in the Family Division and consists of the Director of the Family Division; Hispanic Liaison; Differentiated Case Manager (DCM) Coordinator; Permanency Planning Liaison; Administrative Assistant; and Management Analyst. The Unit provides oversight and support including budget management, program funding and monitoring of the Family Legislative Grant and Cooperative Reimbursement Agreement service contracts. The unit also maintains and reports statistical data.

## Administrative Support Services

The Administrative Support Services Unit is comprised of staff members to include one Manager, seven Administrative Aides and eight Hearing Room Clerks who provide support to Magistrates. Support from staff includes, but is not limited to, generating court orders, maintaining order in the courtrooms, serving as Case Managers, conducting Scheduling Conferences and responding to inquiries from litigants and attorneys. This fiscal year, members of the Administrative Support Services Unit conducted over 1,150 scheduling conferences with an average of 23 scheduling conferences per week, an increase of over 12% from the previous year. Additionally, since the introduction of MDEC in October 2022, the Administrative Support Services staff assisted the Juvenile and Domestic Magistrates as they presided over 15,800 cases respectively while using a hybrid format with contested cases heard in-person and uncontested cases heard virtually.

## Information and Referral Staff

The Information and Referral Unit is comprised of four General Clerks and one Manager. The General Clerks are responsible for providing direct customer service to the public to include litigants and attorneys. They also respond to inquiries and assist citizens in-person and by phone. Staff is also responsible for processing litigants' requests for transcriptions and compact discs.

## Family Support Services

The introduction of MDEC expanded the Unit's access to court files stemming from family matters, civil protective orders, and criminal matters and has streamlined the ability to timely submit custody evaluations, memorandums, mediation disposition forms and parenting plans. MDEC also allows the Unit to create service orders inside the system and has provided a central location for Judges and Magistrates to send service referrals to the Unit.

Family Support Services continues to foster a great partnership with the National Family Resiliency Center and the Children's Rights Council. Since the pandemic and the Court's full reopening, Family Support Services provides hybrid services which allows parties more flexibility. Based on the need of the client and at the discretion of the clinician, domestic violence assessments, custody evaluations, home inspections and mediation services can take place remotely or in-person. Additionally, the Children's Rights Council orientations continue to be conducted in-person. Since the Court fully reopened, Family Support Services

has seen an increase in the number of walk-ins and the number of parties referred from the courtroom for assistance.

#### Paralegal Unit

The Paralegal Unit is comprised of staff of five paralegals and one supervisor. During this fiscal year, the staff assisted 7,926 litigants. In addition to providing in-person and telephonic assistance to litigants, paralegals review all legal pleadings submitted to the court in Family Law cases for legal sufficiency and routinely meeting with members of the public that have inquiries as it relates Family Law. Pleadings are filed with the Clerk's Office and sent to the Paralegal Unit for review, processing, and distribution. Paralegal staff work on cases involving domestic matters, guardianships, adoptions and child support. Paralegals are allowed to give procedural guidance, but they do not give legal advice. The Paralegals routinely meet with members of the public that have inquiries as it relates to Family Law matters.

#### Permanency Planning Liaison

The Permanency Liaison provides oversight and feedback to the Court regarding CINA cases, particularly as it relates to guardianships. This fiscal year, there were 15 CINA cases, and 41 guardianship cases were monitored. Of the guardianship cases, 16 were new filings, 20 were open guardianship cases, and there were 21 monitored for adoption.

#### DCM Coordinator

The Differentiated Case Management (DCM) Coordinator is responsible for overseeing the process to improve the efficiency of case processing, which will reduce the demand for judicial intervention at every phase of the life cycle of a case. DCM plans detail how various categories of cases will be handled and the types of resources needed. The DCM Coordinator was a part of the court wide case clean-up<sup>1</sup> initiative this fiscal year. During the initial case review, a total of 6,410 Family Division cases were closed in Odyssey. The clean-up process will continue into FY2024, and approximately an additional 1,385 cases will be reviewed.

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<sup>1</sup> As a result of data conversion for the Court's legacy case management system to Odyssey, many cases required that their case status be updated from open to closed to accurately reflect the posture of the case. The Family DCM Coordinator undertook this task by reviewing each open, converted case to ascertain the appropriate case status.

## Hispanic Liaison

During FY23, the Hispanic Liaison continued to assist members of the public by conducting Self-Represented Litigant Orientations in-person at the courthouse via telephone and through community outreach at various events throughout the County. Outreach is performed at events hosted by the following: Prince George's County Memorial Library; Office of Prince George's County Public Schools; and College Park Youth and Family Services. The Liaison delivers presentations at community events on topics including procedural steps related to family cases.

## Court Reporter's Office

The Court Reporter's Office is comprised of one Deputy Chief Reporter, four Official Court Reporters, one Administrative Aide and three Court Technologists. Official Court Reporters make a verbatim record of all official proceedings and produce appeal and non-appeal transcripts upon request. The Administrative Staff processes all transcript and CD requests of proceedings held in the Circuit Court from agencies, attorneys, and parties, etc. The Administrative staff also archives all daily dockets, completed transcripts and any pending transcript and audio requests. The Court Technologists cycle through multiple courtrooms and listen attentively to court proceedings to maintain quality control and to ensure that audio is satisfactory.

## Trust Office

Guardianship matters are handled by the Trust Office, which is comprised of Circuit Court staff, including a Trust Attorney, Trust Paralegal and Guardianship Liaison. The Office also includes a Trust Clerk from the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court. The employees of the Trust Office are responsible for reviewing all petitions and motions related to the guardianship of the person and property of disabled adults and property of minors, as well as petitions to create, modify and terminate trusts. The Office reviews the annual reports of the person and annual fiduciary reports filed by guardians, prepares show cause orders regarding those reports when necessary, and issues late notices with respect to the filing of those reports.

The Trust Clerk is responsible for ensuring that all documents filed in guardianship and trust cases are properly docketed and entered, issuing true-test copies of court orders, notifying guardians concerning the reports required to be filed pursuant to the Maryland Rules, and issuing late notices reports not timely filed.

The Trust Office monitors over 8,000 active and closed/active guardianship cases with approximately 400 new cases filed annually. Although cases are considered closed after the appointment of guardians, they technically remain open and ongoing in nature due to the statutory annual reporting requirements placed on the guardians and the various motions that are continually filed in these cases.

### **Office of Problem Solving Courts**

The Office of Problem Solving Courts (PSCs) is located in the Judicial Administrative Services (JAS) Building. PSCs consist of the New Direction Youth Diversion Program, the Gun Possession Program, Adult Drug, Reentry, Veterans, Juvenile Drug, and Truancy Reduction Courts. The PSCs have extended hours of service on Wednesdays from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. to assist clients in meeting program requirements and maintaining gainful employment.

#### **Adult Drug Court**

Over the past 21 years, the Adult Drug Court has provided services to over 1,225 County residents. The Court has held 61 graduations, and 516 participants have graduated. The Presiding Judge of this Court is The Honorable Karen H. Mason. The continued collaboration between the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, Prince George's County Health Department, Prince George's County State's Attorney's Office, Prince George's County Office of the Public Defender, Prince George's County Department of Social Services, Prince George's County Sheriff's Office, Prince George's County Police Department and numerous community resource agencies have made this Drug Court one of the best in the State of Maryland. Additionally, Adult Drug Court has an on-site Prince George's County Department of Social Services crisis intervention worker.

#### **Juvenile Drug Court**

Over the past 18 years, this Juvenile Drug Court has provided services to over 339 community members. The Court has held 26 graduations, and 131 participants have graduated. The Presiding Judge for Juvenile Drug Court is the The Honorable Michael R. Pearson. The Juvenile Drug Court team, which closely monitors and intensely manages participants, is composed of the following: Circuit Court Judge; Prince George's County State's Attorney's Office; Prince George's County Office of the Public Defender; Prince George's County Board of Education; Drug Court Coordinator/Case Managers; GED Instructor; Prince George's County Department of Juvenile Services; Prince George's County

Health Department; and Prince George's County Sheriff's Office. The Juvenile Drug Court provides the following services: mentoring and tutoring services for each participant; on-site substance abuse treatment; on-site assistance with establishing medical insurance; housing search; and job readiness. Juvenile Drug Court also has a Bilingual case manager to better assist Spanish speaking families.

### Reentry Court

On October 1, 2013, the Circuit Court launched the first Reentry Court Program in the State of Maryland. Since the inception of the Reentry Court, over 640 community members have been served. There have been 32 graduates, and 24 graduations have been held. Currently, The Honorable Lawrence V. Hill, Jr. serves as the Presiding Judge. Though not all referrals meet eligibility criteria, referrals are still identified to connect participants to services in the community and with other community agencies. Services include Reentry Circle Mediation via the Key Bridge Foundation and monthly mentoring at the Prince George's County Department of Corrections.

The Reentry Court Program collaborates with the Prince George's County Sheriff's Office; Prince George's County Police Department; Prince George's County Department of Social Services; Prince George's County Department of the Environment; Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation; Prince George's County Office of the Public Defender; Prince George's County State's Attorney's Office; Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; and the Salvation Army.

### Veterans Court

In April 2015, with The Honorable Beverly J. Woodard presiding, the first Veterans Court Program in the State of Maryland was launched in Prince George's County. The Court has served 420 community members. The Veterans Court has had 20 graduations and 37 graduates. The mission of the Veterans Court is to provide and assist veterans with substance abuse treatment, housing, family counseling and help veterans obtain benefits that they are entitled to receive.

The Veterans Court Program collaborates with the Veterans Administration Medical Center; the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs; Maryland Commitment to Veterans; Prince George's County Health Department; Prince George's County Department of Family Services; Prince George's County Department of Corrections; Prince George's County Sheriff's Office; Prince George's County Police Department; Prince George's County

Department of Social Services; Prince George's County Office of the Public Defender; Prince George's County State's Attorney's Office; Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; and the Salvation Army.

### Truancy Reduction Court Program

Since the inception of the TRC Program in September 2008, it has served 558 community members, and 155 participants have graduated. There have been 28 graduations. The Honorable Althea Stewart Jones is the presiding Magistrate. The mission of the Truancy Reduction Court (TRC) Program is to improve student attendance, help students achieve academic success and identify the causes of habitual truancy by collaborative efforts between community agencies and local school districts.

The TRC focuses on identifying the underlying causes of chronic truancy and partners with community agencies to improve students' attendance and school success rates through referrals for appropriate services and support. Students completing the TRC Program demonstrate a consistent, long-term improvement in school attendance, recognize the importance of regular school attendance and the consequences of truancy, as well as participate in programs and services that improve their lives.

TRC cases are typically active for six to twelve months depending on participants' compliance. Release from TRC is dependent upon successful completion of the program (completion of all four phases and compliance with the Court's orders). Other factors include relocation, homeschool, aging out, supervision provided by another agency, and release or unsuccessful completion.

The TRC Program provides the following services: workshops focusing on education; career development, life skills and resume building; mentoring and tutoring services for each participant; on-site substance abuse testing treatment; on-site social service assistance; job readiness; and parent support group workshops. A bilingual case manager also assists with Spanish speaking families, and General Education Diploma (GED) instruction is offered to students. The Program also coordinates community service projects with participants in the community, such as the Back to School Bash and Judy's Closet to provide clothing and school supplies for participants.

### GED Program

In 2011, the PSCs launched its GED Program. The program has been very beneficial and successful. During FY23, 49 students were served, and nine obtained GED certificates.

## Prince George's County Family Justice Center

The Prince George's County Family Justice Center (PGCFJC) was established as an initiative of the Circuit Court to improve the justice systems' response to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and elder abuse with immediate and long-term solutions through a "one-stop shop process."

Since its inception in July 2016, more than 10,000 survivors have been afforded access to a comprehensive array of resources and supportive advocacy services to include the following: safety planning; crisis counseling; court accompaniment; social services; legal representation; law enforcement services (restraining orders, criminal investigations, enforcement, warrants), trauma therapy; forensic medical examinations; after care support groups or basic support (medical assistance clothing, food, and transportation). Recognized as an evidence-based best-practice by the United States Department of Justice, this integrated and collaborative approach eliminates systemic barriers to service and improves survivors' opportunities to participate in the criminal justice system process, which has been shown to improve survivors' safety, prevent revictimization, reduce domestic-related homicides and hold offenders accountable.

In FY23, nearly 1,300 survivors received varying levels of assistance to address an immediate crisis and/or more long-term systemic needs resulting from their victimization. In addition, referrals were made to another 3,500 clients to the 21 on-site partner organizations co-located at the PGCFJC for extended services provided in a seamless and coordinated manner. Requests for civil legal assistance and mental health services are the most highly sought after resources for survivors that come to the PGCFJC. The overwhelming majority of clients served (95%) were victims of domestic violence. Many of these cases involved handguns. Unfortunately, the demand for legal assistance and mental health services far outweigh capacity as the need for these services have continued to increase at an alarming rate over the last two years.

Additionally, demographic data reveals that 90% of clients served at the PGCFJC have little to no income and are largely dependent upon their abusive partner for their financial well-being. As a result, they are less likely to report abuse, seek services, or leave the abusive partner. To combat this problem and empower survivors to gain their independence and become self-sufficient, the PGCFJC invited a new organization to the collaborative, The Training Source, Inc. This non-profit will significantly enhance services provided to clients and

fill a significant void by providing education, training and services that promote positive economic mobility.

New partnerships were also established with Forensic Nursing Solutions, LLC., a private forensic nursing agency that provides certified forensic nurse examiners to conduct Sexual Assault Nurse Examinations (SANE) at the PGCFJC. SANE nurses are available on an on-call basis when needed to conduct an exam. This partnership fills a significant void and provides another option for survivors of sexual assault who may choose not to go to the hospital for a rape examination.

### **Jury Office**

The Jury Office is responsible for the summons for service in petit and grand juries. A juror is selected at random from a cross section of the citizens who reside in Maryland. This cross section is drawn from Board of Elections as well as Motor Vehicle Administration lists.

The Office is also responsible for administrative matters related to jury service. The Jury Commissioner oversees jury operations with seven staff members to include the Jury supervisor and six Jury Office employees from the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court. On average, over 1000+ jurors report for in-person petit jury duty a week.

Additionally, the Circuit Court collaborated with the County to secure the County Administration Building as a permanent alternative location for Grand Jury. This year, amenities were enhanced with technology and furnishings.

### **Circuit Court Paralegals, ADR Office, Foreclosures, Search Warrants and Senior Judges**

The Circuit Court Paralegal Unit is a multifaceted team of professionals designed to support the Administrative Judge, Coordinating Judges, Senior Judges, as well as the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and Trust Offices. The team includes ten Paralegals, two Administrative Aides and one part-time assistant. Each Paralegal is assigned to a specialty, including ADR, Civil, Criminal, Family, Foreclosure, Adult Guardianship and Juvenile, and they work closely with the respective Coordinating Judge. The Administrative Aides assist and manage dockets for the Senior Judges and the ADR Office. The Paralegal Supervisor manages the team and provides support to the Administrative Judge.

## ADR Office

The ADR Office is currently operating under a hybrid plan of in-person and remote hearings. In April 2023, the ADR Office reopened for in-person civil conference after a three year hiatus. The Court added a new paralegal position funded through a grant from the Maryland Judiciary's Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO) to assist, evaluate and make recommendations for improving the ADR program. The ADR Office also welcomed several new Senior Judges to its regular complement of Judges this year.

## Foreclosures

During the foreclosure moratorium, the Foreclosure Paralegal along with the Foreclosure Magistrate addressed any outstanding issues and concerns related to the processing of foreclosure cases. Upon the termination of the moratorium, in June of 2022, the Paralegals resumed normal operations. With the assistance of the Foreclosure Paralegals, the Court processed the following numbers:

### FY23 New Filings:

- 1,756 Residential
- 82 Commercial
- 358 Right of Redemption

### FY23 Case Closures:

- 1,419 Residential
- 41 Commercial
- 315 Right of Redemption

## Search Warrants

The Court issued a total of 3,567 search warrants in FY2023, which is an increase of 615 or 20% from FY2022. As the numbers continue to steadily rise, the Court added a 1000-hour employee and two employees from the Court Administration Office to assist with the increased volume of search warrants. The Information Technology (IT) Division created a new database to help streamline the process and to track search warrant returns and overall numbers.

A communication protocol was created to establish a more efficient means of providing officers with the most recent contact information for the daily assigned search warrant Judge and Assistant State's Attorney.

In March 2020, the Court converted from paper to electronic search warrants. At the same time, as part of the Court's pandemic reduced operations plan, officers were prohibited from returning previously issued paper search warrants to the Court. Once the Court resumed normal operations, an initiative was developed to facilitate the return of paper search warrants issued prior to March 2020. Four events were held at police stations across the County for in-person returns. A list of outstanding search warrant returns was provided to County Police Chiefs and resulted in the closure of outstanding warrants. The Circuit Court Volunteer Judges and the Criminal Paralegal were instrumental in the closure of 222 outstanding paper search warrants.

#### Senior Judges

Four new Senior Judges joined the office this year. The hard-working Senior Judges and staff provide invaluable assistance in maintaining the Court's heavy dockets.

## IV. ANNUAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



- **Enhanced Security Measures**

The Circuit Court for Prince George's County is committed to keeping our workforce and citizens safe when entering and conducting business within the courthouse. As heightened security issues continue to rise nationwide, the Circuit Court is committed to enhancing our security measures through all aspects of Court operations.

- **Short-term and Long-term Strategic Planning**

The Court embraces growth, change and opportunity that is anticipated for the future of the Court, its employees and the citizens that we serve.

- **Workforce Development and Training**

The Court is dedicated to providing training and opportunities to strengthen our workforce, enhance job knowledge and identify and implement alternative business processes.

- **Development and Operation Enhancements to Court Facilities**

The Court continues to enhance the framework for implementing a state-of-the-art facility with a goal to incorporate new infrastructure to improve technological capabilities, meet staff and public needs and effectively support Court operations.

- Coordination and Collaboration with Justice Partners and the Community

The Court embraces and values our justice partners and the community. Engagement, coordination and collaboration with various justice partners, residents, state and local officials is essential to create a cohesive partnership that will positively impact our citizens.

- Enhance Court Processes in Case Management to Provide Efficient Services to the Citizens of Prince George's County

The Court values the need of our citizens to have fair, timely and impartial case resolution, as the Court's vision is to "Welcome All - A Fair Forum for Justice." It is the goal of the Circuit Court to cultivate systems that improve and streamline business processes, ensure accuracy of information and resolve cases in a timely manner.

## V. PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

The Circuit Court has implemented new initiatives, programs and projects during FY23 and continued initiatives that were already in place. In this section, current, ongoing and planned programs in various offices and divisions will be explained in additional detail.

### A. Current and Ongoing

#### New Circuit Court Judges' Investiture Ceremonies



During FY23, the Circuit Court recently welcomed two new judges to the Bench. The Honorable Stenise L. Rolle and The Honorable Darren S. Johnson were appointed by Former Governor Larry Hogan to the Court, and both judges hosted investiture ceremonies to celebrate with the community, family and friends. Judge Johnson's Investiture was held on Thursday, February 22, 2023, in The Honorable Sheila R. Tillerson Adams Ceremonial Courtroom, and Judge Rolle's Investiture was held on Monday, February 27, 2023, in the same location.

#### MDEC Implementation and Communications Initiatives

The Circuit Court in Prince George's County implemented the state-wide Odyssey software with the assistance of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) to make all files and filings electronic. The MDEC Case Management System was implemented at the Circuit Court on October 17, 2022. Prior to the activation date, the Court worked for months to train employees and prepare for the new system. Leading up to the implementation, a communications plan was created to inform the legal community, employees and stakeholders. First, a



special calendar was created that indicated the Court's level of readiness or status in the months approaching the go live date. Each month was labeled a special color to denote where the County was in the process, and employees could make special notations regarding any upcoming trainings on MDEC.

The Communications Specialist also created and drafted a regular *MDEC Monday Newsletter* that was disseminated to employees to provide important updates and to feature employees and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who were involved with the implementation. A few of the MDEC Newsletters and features that were disseminated can be viewed by clicking the following links:

MDEC Newsletter: <https://conta.cc/3RSEXNT>

MDEC Newsletter featuring SME profile:

<https://conta.cc/3ovq9sL>

A key component of the MDEC communications plan was to keep members of the Maryland Bar and the public informed about the implementation in Prince George's County. Special messaging was disseminated via email and social media to let these important stakeholders know that the MDEC implementation would require patience and may cause unexpected delays in the days leading up to the go live date. However, the Court reassured the public and attorneys that it was determined to limit any interruptions in service due to the MDEC implementation.

The culminating event to launch MDEC in Prince George's County was the *MDEC Go Live Pep Rally* hosted by the Circuit Court and Clerk's Office on October 17th in the Courthouse Food Court. Employees were invited to celebrate the kickoff and during the event, people who have been working on this implementation for years, including Circuit Court and Circuit Court Clerk's Office leadership, Data Reviewers, Subject Matter Experts were honored. A major highlight of the event was the



The Honorable Sheila R. Tillerson Adams  
Chief and Administrative Judge of the  
Circuit Court for Prince George's County and the  
Seventh Judicial Circuit of Maryland



performance by the Dr. Henry A. Wise, Jr. High School Band. The Pep Rally can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/-IYJZXnJM50>

With the new electronic case management system in place, many divisions and offices have developed new ways of handling judicial business processes and services.

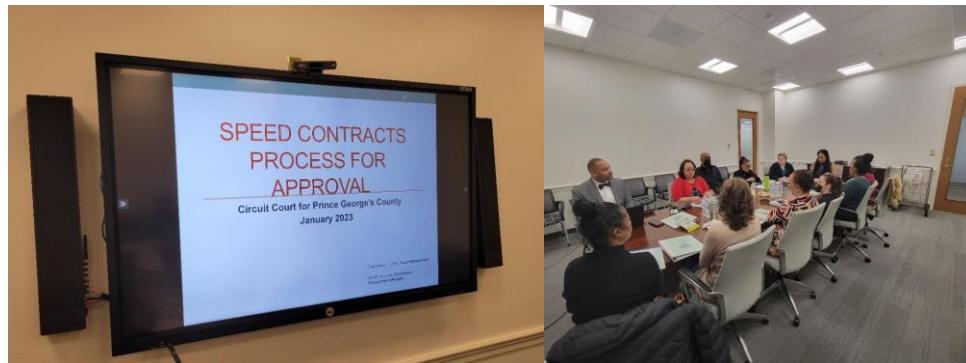
### Children's Waiting Room Reopened

The Children's Waiting Room reopened during FY23 after being closed since 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, the Waiting Room has served 64 children. The Waiting Room is an ongoing initiative offered by the Circuit Court to help parents who need a safe place for their kids to wait while they handle Court business.



### Court Administration Office

#### Streamlining Contract Process



The Circuit Court, under the leadership of the Court Administrator, has designed an initiative to streamline the contracting process as directed by Prince George's County. In March 2023, the Circuit Court Administration Office held a training session for employees who oversee and manage grants and contracts on Tuesday, March 28, 2023. The goal of the training was to ensure employees remain aware of internal processes for creating, processing and executing contracts.

## Office of Calendar Management

### Gun Docket

The Circuit Court created and scheduled a Gun Docket to timely process and resolve cases in which a gun charge is the leading count. This Docket occurs every second and fourth Wednesday and has proven to be very successful. This became necessary as the State's Attorney's Office has implemented a policy to indict all handgun offenses.

### COVID-19 Pandemic Civil Backlog

In February 2023, a committee was formed to address the Civil backlog created as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee members identified 500 cases to comply with the criteria of advancing trials that were out of time standards. The project successfully concluded on June 30, 2023 with 90% of the civil backlog cases resolved. The Court addressed the backlog project by reenforcing the closing of all cases by the Clerk's Office that met the Maryland Rule 2-507 criteria, issued *Order of Court* for cases that had affidavit of services filed but not course of action, scheduled all non-jury trials by March 31, 2023, and implemented the *Civil Case Pending Trials: Action Plan* to resolve civil jury trials for Track one and Track two.

### DCM Clean Up Project

Two members of the Quality Review Unit in the Calendar Management Office are responsible for ensuring that Civil and Criminal cases meet time standards and follow business processes as established under the DCM Plans. In March 2023, with the assistance of the Clerk's Office, the Civil and Criminal DCM Coordinators reviewed historical cases that were resolved but did not have a closed status in the legacy case management system and converted as open cases in MDEC. During the project, there were 11,247 civil cases reviewed, and 14,323 criminal cases were reviewed for closure. As of the close of FY23, the open civil case total was reduced to 1,738, and criminal was reduced to 1,617.

### Criminal Motions Docket

Two forms were created to help reduce the heavy Criminal Motions docket on Fridays, including a Motion to Withdraw Criminal Motions Form and a Motion Continuance Form.

## Criminal Settlement Conferences

In March 2023, Criminal Settlement Conferences for Tracks one and two cases of the DCM Plan were initiated to encourage settlement of these lower track cases and improve the speed of resolutions.

## Interpreter's Office

New positions were created and in October 2022, two Staff Spanish Interpreters were hired. The Interpreter's Office runs with one coordinator, who is responsible for the day-to-day operations and coordination of contracting interpreters.

The newly hired Staff Spanish Interpreters have been instrumental in enabling the office to expand interpreter services throughout the courthouse.

## Problem Solving Courts

### Ongoing Graduation Ceremonies

PSCs hosts graduations for adults and juveniles in the various courts and programs who successfully fulfill all requirements throughout each year. During FY23, PSCs hosted Joint Adult Graduations in November 2022 and May 2023. The Truancy Reduction Court Program hosted a graduation in June 2023.



### Juvenile Court Gun Possession Court

Effective February 27, 2023, under the direction of The Honorable Michael R. Pearson and the supervision of the PSCs, the Circuit Court began a new program geared towards juveniles with first-time gun possession offenses. The program's mission is to reduce gun violence, address its impact on victims and their families, identify underlying causes as to why the offender is in possession of a firearm and implement methods and lifestyle changes to avoid future handgun possession.



The Gun Possession Program is an intensive supervision, incentive/sanction-based program with a comprehensive curriculum for a first-time gun possession juvenile offender. Participants are required to attend bi-weekly court hearings, take part in weekly supervision meetings with the case manager, submit to random drug testing, participate in educational services, and partake in a specified curriculum for mental health services and substance use treatment as required by the program.

Participants must comply with community supervision requirements including nightly monitoring with electronic monitoring or GPS equipment. The program is designed to be completed within six months and progression is contingent upon a participant's completion of specific requirements. Participants are intensively monitored by team members for progress in treatment, school, community and in the home. They are assigned a case manager who will assist them with reaching program and life goals, as well as meeting all probationary requirements. A participant's progression in the program is provided in bi-weekly reports to the Court and recommendations are made to the Presiding Judge as to services, levels of care, incentives and sanctions.

Graduation from the Gun Possession Program occurs when the participant successfully completes all requirements and attains his or her treatment and educational goals as set forth in an individual treatment plan. To be eligible for the program, the participant must be a non-violent offender between the ages of 14 - 18, a resident of Prince George's County with a first-time gun possession offense and have no prior delinquency history. Referrals for the program can be received directly from the Court, Office of the Public Defender or the State's Attorney's Office.

Other New PSCs Initiatives and Programs include the following:

- PSCs is partnering with Community Advocates for Families and Youth for their Strengthening Families Program for juvenile participants.
- PSCs is partnering with the State's Attorney's Office with the Reentry Advisory Council initiative, which is helping to create an ecosystem for returning citizens.
- PSCs has partnered with MGM and will offer employment to any graduates from any of the programs who are not felons.
- PSCs has partnered with the Mount Rose Chapter of Links, Incorporated to provide monthly life skills and educational programming via the Empower Our Youth monthly sessions to the TRC and New Direction Youth Diversion Program participants.

- PSCs has partnered with Parole and Probation to increase supervision services for the Adult Dug Court Program.
- PSCs has implemented quarterly alumni meetings for all the Adult Programs.
- PSCs hosts new Parent Support groups led by GED Instructor Onetia Murray monthly.
- PSCs partnered with The Denney House to provide mentoring sessions to juvenile participants.
- PSCs participated in a campus tour of Prince George's Community College in April 2023.
- PSCs hosts weekly life skills sessions facilitated by Onetia Murray for adult program participants.

## Family Division

### Model Court Program

The Honorable Cathy H. Serrette leads the Prince George's County Model Court Team. The Circuit Court was designated a Child Welfare Model Court with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges in 2010. Model Courts serve as national laboratories for the development of meaningful systems to change how child abuse and neglect cases are processed through the court and through the child protection system. The Circuit Court's Model Court Team includes the following: Prince George's County Department of Social Services; Maryland Department of Juvenile Services; Prince George's County Office of Law; Prince George's County State's Attorney's Office; Prince George's County Office of the Public Defender; Court Appointed Special Advocates; child advocacy attorneys; and other stakeholders with the goal of providing comprehensive and coordinated services for the most vulnerable children. This collaboration has resulted in much better communication between agencies, as well as helped to streamline services for youth. The team developed an Emancipation Checklist, which stakeholders use to track milestones toward self-sufficiency for emancipating youth, and it has become part of a national study. The team implemented Transitional Planning court hearings for youth ages 17 and older and developed an Emancipation Manual for youth exiting care.

Through the Model Court Program, the Court hosts an Annual Reunification Celebration for juveniles who have been reunited with parents or guardians through the CINA process. The Court holds a celebration each June that features inspirational speakers, reunified families and a luncheon. Books and gifts are donated to children and families.

After virtual CINA hearings were implemented by the Court and Model Court stakeholders when the pandemic hit in March 2020, uncontested CINA proceedings have continued to be held virtually. Magistrates and court staff conducted hearings from within the courthouse with parties appearing virtually via Zoom. Contested hearings began to be set in person in April 2023. Through the Model Court Program and bi-monthly stakeholder meetings, CINA cases have continued to be heard timely without delays since June 2020. By hearing most cases virtually, there has been increased attorney and party availability. Also, many youths have been able to participate in hearings from school, and parents have been able to participate from work, which has assisted with job retention and has prevented loss of wages.

During the fiscal year, there were approximately 140-150 CINA petitions filed, and two assigned Magistrates were scheduled to hear approximately 1600 hearings. The Magistrates and their staff also handled hundreds of juvenile delinquency arraignment hearings. Also, through the Model Court Program and bi-monthly stakeholder meetings, a plan was implemented for parents who do not have access to technology to go to the Court Appointed Special Advocates Office to participate in hearings via Zoom.

A charitable fund, the Court Appointed Special Advocates Fostering Opportunities Fund, was established through a private donor/former Juvenile Magistrate. The Fund provides current and former youth in foster care access to opportunities that they would not have had otherwise and helps normalize their experiences in foster care. Referrals can be made to support summer camp fees, sports and team fees, after school enrichment, medical/vision/dental needs, apartment accessories, enrichment and goal achievement opportunities, emergency support, and out of state college fees.

#### Cross-Over Youth Practice Model (CYPM)

The Prince George's County Model Court Team partnered with the Georgetown University Center for Juvenile Justice reform to identify youth who become involved in both the dependency and delinquency systems and coordinate services to improve outcomes. The Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM) Team is a standing committee that meets virtually bi-monthly. The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services and Prince George's County Department of Social Services co-chair the Case Consultation Team which meets at least quarterly to address specific cases. Since its 2014 inception, the CYPM program has identified over 200 youth.

The goals of the CYPM are to reduce the number of youth placed in out-of-home care, reduce the number of youth placed in congregate care, reduce the disproportionate representation of children of color (particularly in the crossover population) and to reduce the number of youth crossing over and/or becoming dually adjudicated. Since CYPM's implementation, youth involved in the child welfare and delinquency systems are being handled by the same judge or magistrate.

More than 20 states, with some states having multiple sites, have adopted the CYPM to better serve children in both the delinquency and dependency systems. The CYPM Team made staff and materials available to several other jurisdictions in Maryland to assist those jurisdictions with the creation of their programs. In 2018, Maryland Department of Juvenile Services committed to implement the CYPM model in all counties in Maryland and be involved in various trainings. The meetings stopped during the pandemic from April 2020 until December 2020, but the Model and the program continued. Meetings resumed virtually in 2021 and occur bi-monthly via Zoom. Cross-over youth hearings are also held virtually.

#### Bridge from Youth Experiencing Success (YES) Committee

The Bridge from Youth Experiencing Success (YES) Committee was established through an Administrative Order from The Honorable Sheila R. Tillerson Adams, Circuit Administrative Judge, on September 11, 2018. The Honorable Cathy H. Serrette and Magistrate Althea Stewart Jones co-chair the Committee. The goal of the Committee is to establish a center that will assist every young adult who exits from the child welfare system in Prince George's County in receiving the most culturally competent transitioning services and support needed to thrive. The mission of the YES Center is to holistically address youths' educational, employment, mental health, and housing needs and assist them in obtaining permanent connections in the community.

#### Family/Domestic Cases Pilot Project

In FY22, under the direction of The Honorable Judy L. Woodall, Family Coordinating Judge, a pilot project was initiated to assist the court in meeting time standards in Family/Domestic cases. Pending cases in which service was obtained, yet neither party had taken further action, orders were prepared instructing parties of procedures and deadlines to complete the next steps. The project continued in FY23 adding an additional 419 cases, resulting in the filing of 71 answers, 215 requests for default and the closing of 100 cases by either litigant request or order of court. Currently, there are 33 cases pending.

## National Adoption Day

The Circuit Court hosted the 2022 National Adoption Day Program on Thursday, November 17, 2022. The theme of the virtual program was *Our Families: No Child Left Behind*.

Family Coordinating Judge Judy L. Woodall served as the chairperson. The guest speaker, Miguel Franco, and his husband, Bobby Perez, are the proud parents of three adopted children. Several County and community organizations also supported the event and always make contributions to the adoptive families each year.



## Reunification Celebration

The Circuit Court hosted the 7th Reunification Celebration on Thursday, June 22, 2023. The Honorable Cathy H. Serrette presided. Fourteen families were reunified from May 2022 through April 2023 and were invited to the celebration. The Honorable C.T. Wilson, who represents the 28th District in the Maryland House of Delegates, was the guest speaker, and Wala Blegay, Vice-Chair of the County Council, and Councilmember Krystal Oriadha provided encouraging remarks as well. A parent who had been reunified also spoke.



Stakeholders who worked collaboratively to effectuate that outcome were also honored, including Prince George's County Department of Social Services, Court Appointed Special Advocates, Prince George's County, Maryland Legal Aid (attorneys representing the children), The Law Offices of Darlene A. Wakefield (attorneys representing the children), the Prince George's County Office of Law CINA attorneys, and the Prince George's County Office of the Public Defender (parental defense attorneys and panel attorneys).

## Law Library

### National Library Week Book Drive

The Law Library continued its annual National Library Week Book Drive this year with the courthouse community donating over 350 children and young adult books to the YMCA of Prince George's County.

### Growth in Legal Resources

The Law Library increased its collection of legal resources for non-attorneys by adding to its online catalogue links to electronic versions of Nolo publications that are provided by the Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library.

### Legal Resources for Family Magistrates

The Law Library, in cooperation with the Family Division, started in FY23 providing Magistrates with *Fader's Maryland Family Law* and other legal resources.

## PGCFJC

### Multi-Year Evaluative Impact Study

The PGCFJC has contracted services with a team of researchers from Bowie State University to conduct a multi-year evaluative impact study designed to assess and evaluate the impact of services provided to survivors. The initial phase of the study will include a comprehensive needs assessment and report detailing the identified needs, challenges, and objectives of the PGCFJC. This report will serve as the foundation for structuring the impact evaluation. Focus group sessions will be held to gain insight from key stakeholders and integrate those perspectives into the evaluation process. A comprehensive evaluation report with the findings of the evaluation will include a summary of the evaluation objectives, methodology, data analysis, and key findings. In addition, recommendations will be provided for program improvement based on the evaluation results. The study will be completed in FY24.

### FY23 Holiday Hope Events

The PGCFJC sponsored the Thanksgiving and Christmas Holiday Hope Projects. Due to ongoing concerns with spreading the COVID-19 virus, drive-by distribution at the Center was utilized. During the Thanksgiving event, food and turkeys were distributed to 31 clients and 102 children received toys/gifts at the Christmas event. These efforts were made possible by

the generous support and collaboration of Circuit Court Judges employees, local community and Greek organizations, and individual donors who contributed to the event. Many Circuit Court employees worked as volunteers to distribute the collected items to those in need for both events.

### Diversity and Inclusion and Employee Engagement Programming

The Special Projects Committee is comprised of employees from various divisions who plan programming to increase employee engagement and highlight various diversity and inclusion initiatives and commemorative holidays that celebrate the contributions of diverse communities and people of color.

#### Annual Employee Appreciation Cookout

Each year, the Court shows appreciation for employees by hosting the Annual Employee Cookout. The event allows employees to network and fellowship in a more relaxed environment. To see a recap of the event, click the following link: [2022 Circuit Court Employee Appreciation Cookout - YouTube](#)

#### Annual Hispanic Heritage Month Program

The Special Projects Committee celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month with a virtual program. On September 20, 2022, the Committee hosted a panel discussion featuring Circuit Court Associate Judge Gladys M. Weatherspoon, Truancy Reduction Court Case Manager Rebeca Alvarez Valdes and Family Division Bilingual Information Clerk Jenny Rodriguez.



Moderated by Hispanic Services Liaison Norberto Martinez, the panelists shared information about their various backgrounds and cultures. They also shared what they love most about their cultures as well as who inspires them the most. After the panel discussion, employees participated in Hispanic Heritage Month trivia. Finally, Angela Ingram, Founder of House of Culture and Soul Folklore Academy, performed Salsa with an Afro-Cuban flair. Through her art, Angela showed how the African Diaspora has heavily influenced many Latin dances, such as Salsa and Flamenco.

## Annual Breast Cancer Walk



The Circuit Court Special Projects Committee hosted the Second Annual Breast Cancer Walk on Tuesday, October 25, 2022. During the event, Erica M. Payne-Santiago, Deputy Court Administrator and Jury Commissioner, welcomed the attendees and provided uplifting remarks to encourage survivors and remind employees about the importance of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The Special Projects Committee recognized each cancer survivor by name who works at the Circuit Court. Then, the walk began at the Atrium Entrance near the horses and continued onto Judges Drive before heading to Main Street in Upper Marlboro.

## Annual Employee Holiday Celebration

The Circuit Court's Employee Holiday Celebration hosted by the Special Projects Committee was held on December 16, 2022. The goal of the event is to ensure that all employees feel valued and appreciated and have fun celebrating the holiday season.



## Annual Black History Month Program

The Special Projects Committee hosted the Annual Black History Month Program on Tuesday, February 28, 2023. The theme was, *American History is Black History*, and program attendees' knowledge of trailblazing Black Americans was tested during a Black History Bingo Game. During the event, Charleston L. Carter, Circuit Court Administrator, performed a folktale called, *Two Sides to Every Story*. Likewise, Scott Forbes, a Bailiff, performed three gospel selections with a few members of his



gospel group. The quartet-style performances focused on the legacy of the gospel music tradition in the Black culture and church.

### Annual Women's History Month

The Annual Women's History Month Program was held on Thursday, March 23, 2023. This year's theme was, *It's Time to Elevate: Embrace and Empower Yourself*. The event was hosted by Delicia St. Hill, (PGCFJC) Family Justice Center Bilingual Program Advocate and Intake Specialist.



Circuit Court employees also shared their stories of overcoming and resilience in their personal lives and careers. A few employees also were featured in a video expressing how they empower themselves daily for success.

### Employee Appreciation Summer Ice Cream Event

The Circuit Court hosted an Ice Cream Social at the courthouse for employees to enjoy sweet treats on Thursday, June 29, 2023. The goal of the event was to present employees with a small token of appreciation for their hard work and dedication.



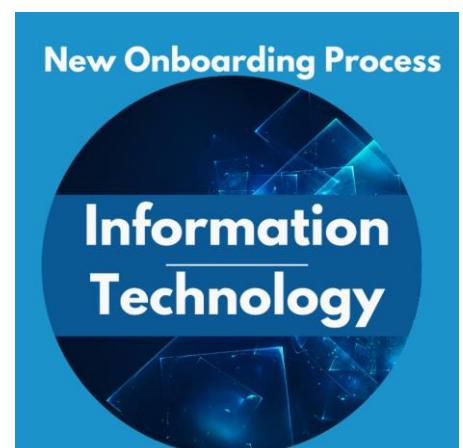
## Information Technology

### New Onboarding Process

IT developed a new onboarding process, effective March 1, 2023, for new employees. Now, supervisors must submit the [IT Security Access Request Form](#) when new employees arrive. Additionally, the Security Access Request Form should also be submitted to modify an existing employee's computer access.

The CCT Security Access Request Form should be submitted 3-4 business days prior to any new employee's official start date. The purpose of this form is to ensure that employees have the correct access to Odyssey forms, reports and task queues.

Some of the benefits of implementing this new policy are as follows:



- All users will have all required access before the commencement of their employment with the Circuit Court.
- There will be a faster turnaround for receiving updated account information.

## B. Planned

### Paralegals Office

When Prince George's County joined the rest of the Seventh Circuit Counties in converting operations to MDEC, a need was identified for establishing a circuit-wide Odyssey workflow for the assignment and scheduling of three judge panel reviews. Representatives from the four counties worked with Judicial Information Systems (JIS) to establish a business process. An Odyssey Quick Reference Guide (QRG) was drafted and is awaiting final approval and publication.

### Administrative Office

#### Business Processes Development for Circuit Court

The Circuit Court Administrator has developed a project to devise a manual for all business processes handled by the Circuit Court. Each Director was charged with submitting protocols and processes that detail the duties and responsibilities that are handled by their respective offices. Ultimately, the goal will be to create a manual that will encompass all court operations and maintain continuity for succession planning.

### Family Division

#### YES Center Plans

The initial goal of the YES Committee was to establish a center that would house former youth that have aged-out of foster care. Pending the allocation of housing by developers, an interim plan is in place, which consists of a drop-in center of services on a daily basis.

A full launch is expected in late Fall 2023. The Prince George's County Government donated space for the drop-in center. Most of the services will be provided by agencies, universities, and programs already providing services in the County. The County also agreed to designate housing units in four upcoming new developments throughout the blue line corridor. The completion of those developments is unknown currently. Site designation and funding for a full YES Center comprised of housing and services continues to be explored.

## Law Library

### New Westlaw Course

For FY24, the Law Library is planning a Westlaw legal research refresher course for courthouse Westlaw users.

# VI. OPERATIONS

## A. Staffing

The Circuit Court has 242 positions. The staff consists of 155 full-time positions, 37 part-time positions and 50 full-time grant positions. In addition, the Court has 24 Judges, 24 Law Clerks, 8 Magistrates and 13 Senior Judges.

The Circuit Court departments are comprised of Finance and Procurement, Human Resources, IT, Law Library, Court Reporters, Bailiffs, Research, Communications, Interpreter Services, PSCs, Calendar Management, Trust Office, Paralegals, Judges' Chambers, Judicial Support Services, Children's Waiting Room, Jury Office, Family Division, PGCFJC and the Virtual Team.

### Recruitment Initiatives

The Circuit Court seeks to fulfill vacancies as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and other related matters. The Circuit Court streamlined the hiring process for filling vacancies from 90 to 60 days. To ensure that the positions are filled within a timely manner and with highly qualified candidates, positions are posted for a minimum of 14 days as part of the streamlined process; however, if the position is a hard-to-fill vacancy, it was posted as "Open Until Filled" until a candidate is identified. For specialized positions, HR collaborates with hiring managers to solicit candidates with specialized skills and training.

In addition, to ensure that the hiring process was not delayed as we transitioned back to in-person reporting, the Circuit Court continued to conduct virtual interviews but eventually shifted back to in-person interviews.

### Retention Initiatives

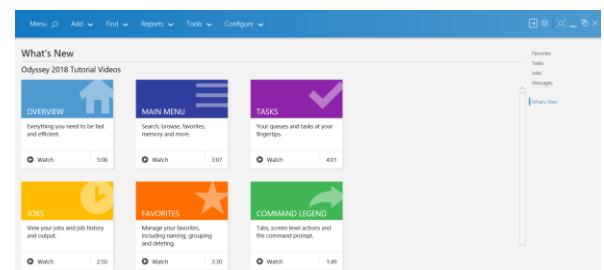
To address the nationwide impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the workforce, a temporary hybrid telework program was implemented from April 2022 to October 2022 to increase employee retention. MDEC along with the hybrid telework program provided a positive outcome as the Circuit Court's attrition rate decreased.

## B. Technology

The Circuit Court has undergone a technical transformation during FY23, especially due to the implementation of MDEC, which is facilitated by the Odyssey Program. In addition, new innovations along with existing tools that are in use throughout the courthouse are described in this section.

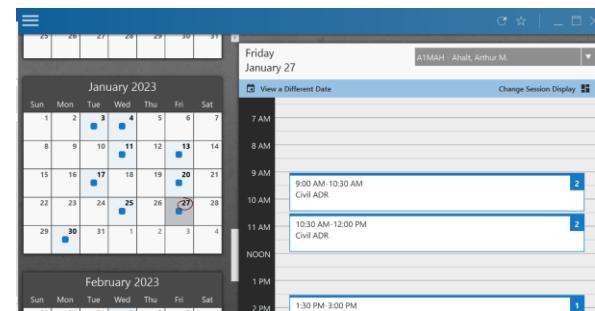
### Odyssey

The Odyssey Case Management System (CMS) is a fully integrated case and financial management system designed specifically for statewide deployment. It is a web-based computer system, allowing configuration to be accomplished centrally while supporting statewide and county-specific rules. Standardization in the Odyssey CMS implements notable features, such as accurate Quarterly Case Status Reports. Odyssey is also a person-based system, which allows for a directory of people and entities. For example, a judge can access all criminal cases that a defendant has in other courts around the state.



### Enterprise Justice Judge Edition

Enterprise Justice Judge Edition and a touch screen allows judges to access and control critical case information rapidly and securely from the bench. Judge Edition transforms paper chaos into seamless, electronic information and quickly provides judges with up-to-date case data at their fingertips.



### Epson Projectors

Epson projectors are installed in all 32 courtrooms. The attorneys will use projectors and document cameras to display exhibits, videos, documents, etc.



## Polycom G7500

All 34 courtrooms have Poly G7500 equipment. Users can easily connect to meetings via Zoom or almost any platform in small and medium-sized rooms. Users experience quality audio, utilize advanced camera capabilities, and access quick wireless content with the use of one sleek video bar.



## Polycom Touch Control (TC8)

The TC8 is an intuitive touch interface that provides easy access to Poly video conferencing solutions. The sleek design features an 8" high-resolution touch display to ensure the control options are clear and accessible. A single cable carries both power and data to reduce clutter. Users can quickly initiate, join, or share content to focus on better collaboration.



## ListenTALK® - listentech.com

Using this one-way and two-way communication device, you can field questions and engage your group without raising your voice or repeating yourself. It is a completely wireless tour guide system that allows you to communicate on the go, wherever you are. ListenTALK's tour guide headsets and receiver devices can be paired, and multiple groups can be created in seconds. Our Interpreter's Office is now using the ListenTalk devices for court hearings.



## Voice Conferencing

Two Polycom Voice Conferencing units are available in each courtroom. They are used for conference calls or conference hearings.



## Audio Recording

Currently, 26 courtrooms have CourtSmart audio/video recording systems installed. The CourtSmart systems provide the functionality to stream audio for recording courtroom proceedings. It can upload all recordings to a centralized server and permanently archive audio files to Blu-Ray media and external storage. A Plexiglas recording display indicates the status of the recording for the bench and parties.



When the system is recording, the display glows blue, and if the system is not recording, the display blinks. Should the system be muted intentionally, the display will flash. The typical courtroom has six to eight microphones. These microphones allow for conversations to be muted for privacy. No formal training is required for litigating cases in a courtroom equipped with CourtSmart Technologies.

## Infrared Bodypack Listening Receiver

The Williams Sound WIR RX22-4N Bodypack is the infrared listening receiver for compatible Williams Sound transmitters. The bodypack features four channels and operates on the 2.3, 2.8, 3.3, 3.8MHz bandwidth. The WIR RX22-4 can be used with mono or stereo headphones, earphones or a neck loop. These receivers are currently available in seven courtrooms.



## FTR (For the Record)

Currently, six courtrooms have FTR installed. FTR Reporter is a software-based solution that works by capturing, annotating, playing back, and managing the record of court proceedings. Up to four channel audios can be recorded and managed. FTR Reporter also incorporates all of the functionality in the companion product FTR Log Notes, facilitating electronic court reporting through linked notetaking and review and playback of pre-recorded content.



## Wi-Fi

There are secured and unsecured Wi-Fi access points located throughout the Circuit Court provided by the state and the County. Users can access unsecured Wi-Fi by opening up the browser and agreeing to the terms. This access is good for 24 hours.



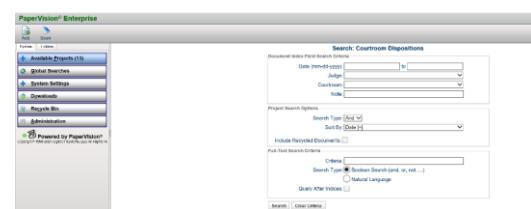
## Electronic Signage

There are two 32" electronic signs and one 45" electronic sign in the courthouse; one is in the Marbury Atrium, the other is in the Duvall corridor, and the 45" is in the JAS building. This signage is an interactive directory that directs the patronage to the various rooms in the courthouse. The signage is available in English or Spanish.



## Enterprise Scanning

Circuit Court is scanning, indexing, and organizing documents to simplify the process of hard copies. This fully featured document capture and indexing system will maximize the Court's productivity with highly efficient scanning within a network environment.



## High-Tech Courtroom

The Honorable Sheila R. Tillerson Adams Ceremonial Courtroom, in the Marbury Wing on the third floor, is the newest high-tech courtroom. It has the following capabilities: integrated and electronic evidence presentation with multiple flat screen displays allowing the Judge, jury, and gallery to view; video conferencing for arraignments, remote witnesses, and secluded witnesses; integrated assistive listening and interpretive systems; Judges' control of the technologies from the bench; overflow capacity to observe courtroom activity from another courtroom; and streaming capabilities.

## Apple iPads

All Judges and Directors are issued iPads, which permit communications via email, Zoom, Teams or Polycom apps. The Duty Judge can receive and send documents with or without a signature via email. In case of inclement weather, the Judge can conduct hearings remotely.



## Docket Display

The courthouse has combined liquid crystal displays (LCDs) to display courthouse docket information. The LCD panels are located throughout the courthouse.



## SharePoint

SharePoint is a web application platform in the Microsoft Office 365 suite for team collaboration, blogs, wikis, and company news. SharePoint is a secure place to store, organize, share, and access information from almost any device.



## Online Payment of Fees

Online payment service is available to litigants in Family cases to pay referral services, i.e., custody investigation, mediation, psychological evaluations, etc. Payments can be made via the Circuit's Court website: <https://circuitcourt.princegeorgescountymd.gov/>

## Automated Interpreter Requests

The Circuit Court offers sign and spoken language interpreters without cost to litigants. On the Circuit Court's website, applicants can fill out one of two forms, the Request for an Interpreter Form or the Cancel Interpreter Form. Once the form is completed by selecting the send button, the form will be emailed directly to the Court's appropriate division. The forms can be found on the Circuit Court's website: <https://princegeorgescourts.org/267/Interpreters>

## HDI iClass Card Reader

They were designed for door applications requiring standard wall switch mounting. iCLASS is a powerful, secure 256-bit encryption that provides an extra layer of encryption to protect identity data.



## 2N Verso (Video Doorbell)

This technology allows users to take video calls from the entrance without picking up a handset. Upon verification, court employees remotely open the door to permit access.



## Amcrest Web Cameras

Amcrest webcam technology gives a built-in noise-reducing microphone and superior stereo audio, allowing unclouded and natural sound recording for the best video calling experience in a noisy environment.



## Talk A Phone

The courthouse has Talk A Phones installed in the parking garage, with three on each level. Talk A Phone's VOIP 200 Series phones are excellent security solutions for visitor management, front door entry, secured areas, and other locations where access control is essential. In addition, the video call station interconnects with the IP video attendant station for a one stop access control intercom solution. Talk A Phones also provide an area of rescue/refuge for those unable to evacuate a building in an emergency with a designated place to wait for assistance and the capability to communicate with emergency responders.



## LYNX System - Wireless Solutions

Lynx software utilizes panic buttons and mass notification software. One of the many avenues is the Lynx Alerts App, which is downloaded on a smart mobile device; another is sending mass emails to recipients.

Inovonics' wireless intrusion detection devices and mobile duress (panic) buttons are designed with today's applications in mind. Their application supports hundreds of security devices across the courthouse environment. They are providing coverage throughout the courthouse and eliminating the need for labor associated with wired installs.



## PGCFJC's Hope Tech Suite

The PGCFJC's centralized database and intake system, HOPE Tech, has enhanced coordination and communication between partners and further streamlined intake for survivors. This system features data collection and efforts to analyze trends, assess performance and captures data for various grantors with pre-populated grant performance measures. With this new technology, the PGCFJC will have the capacity to significantly improve monitoring, evaluation and tracking trends.

## C. Training

### MDEC Training for Circuit Court Employees

In preparation for the transition to MDEC, employees attended mandatory Odyssey classes in Annapolis at the Administrative Office of the Courts starting in August 2022.

Prior to attending the classes in Annapolis, all employees were required to review Tyler University videos that would allow in-person training sessions to be more effective. A specific curriculum was created for employees who fall under the Court Administration and Judges' Chambers categories. The classes were as follows:



- Introduction to Enterprise Justice (Odyssey)
- Cases Basics
- Documents Basics
- Events Basics
- Tasks
- List Manager Basics

- Document Tasks

### PSCs

- National Association for Drug Court Professionals (NADCP) Intensive training
- Annual training with current vendors utilized by PSCs for alcohol monitoring and global tracking systems.
- Maryland Association of Pupil Personnel Fall 2022 Conference
- Narcan Training by the Health Department
- Annual PSCs Symposium



### Court Reporter's Office

- Supervisory training
- Court tech/monitoring training

### Law Library

- American Association of Law Libraries Annual Conference
- Maryland Futures Conference sponsored by the Maryland State Library Agency
- Maryland Library Association Annual Conference
- Maryland Court Help Center Provider Conference

### Family Division

- Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) 60th Annual Conference
- Custody and Visitation-Related Assessments Training through the Maryland Judiciary
- Center for Alternative Dispute Resolution Annual Conference
- 40 Hour Basic Mediation Certification Training
- Eastern Regional Interstate Child Support Association 60th Annual Conference
- Mid-Atlantic Association for Court Management Conference
- National Center for Juvenile Justice National Conference on Juvenile Justice
- Fred Pryor Customer Service Training for Managers and Supervisors.
- Family Division Manager graduated from Court Supervisor/Manager Certificate Program (CSMC)

## PGCFJC

- 4th Annual North Carolina Family Justice Center and Collaborative Communities Conference
  - Information gleaned from this conference facilitated efforts to work as a multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional collaborative and effective coordinated community response to survivors of intimate partner violence.

## IT

- Courtroom Equipment Training

The IT staff offers free training to attorneys, their staff, and pro se litigants on the Epson Projectors installed in every courtroom. Training is mandatory for the use of the equipment and must be completed at least three days before the scheduled court hearing. Interested parties must contact the Circuit Court Virtual Team by completing and submitting the [IT Equipment Training Request Form](#).

## Paralegals

The ADR Coordinator is completing the third year of the Judiciary's Court Professional Certification Program. Expected graduation date is October 20, 2023.

## **D. Docket Efficiency**

### DCM Plan Clean Up Project

Two members of the Calendar Management Quality Review Unit are responsible for ensuring that Civil and Criminal cases flow within time standards as established under the Circuit Court DCM Plans. In March 2023, those employees assisted the Clerk's Office with the DCM cleanup project by closing historical cases that were not closed prior to the conversion to MDEC. During the project, there were 11,247 civil cases reviewed, and 14,323 criminal cases were reviewed.

### May 2023 Analysis of Pending Case Summary

As a result of the DCM clean-up project, issues have been identified and addressed as follows:

- Test cases created in our legacy system converted to Odyssey and required deletion. Cases were excluded during our data conversion due to misidentification to resolve inconsistencies.

- Out of County cases from our legacy system converted to Odyssey and require deletion. These cases should have been excluded during data conversion as a result of incorrect type code. Tickets have been submitted to delete these cases.
- The Circuit Court has been directed to resolve cases where entry was incorrectly docketed with the incorrect disposition or case status. This is being addressed by the Circuit Court Clerk's Office.
- Upon the conversion of Contexte to MDEC, a large number of cases were coded with closed status but converted to MDEC to open status. These cases have been reviewed and closed by the Clerk's Office.

## **E. Post-COVID Adaptations and Innovations**

After the COVID-19 pandemic declined, the Court created new convenient solutions as it relates to accessing virtual links, when needed.

### **Virtual Hearing Links Website**

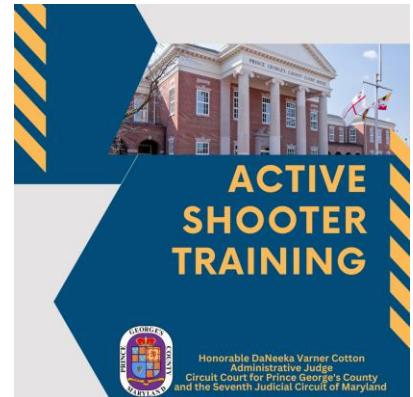
Previously, attorneys and litigants would have to call the Office of Calendar Management or various Court officials if they did not have required Zoom links to access virtual hearings. To improve this issue, the Court's Zoom Team Manager created a website to improve efficiency. When the Office of Calendar Management sends virtual hearings to the docket, the Virtual Team would schedule cases in Zoom. From there, the data is automatically posted to the Virtual Board through the execution of reports.

The website's master portal retrieves data from the Virtual Board to generate and send a hearing specific email. As plaintiffs and attorneys search for their link information, the Court can collect data and update its case management system with their most current contact information. The Virtual Team ensures that the website contains the most accurate and current information. The website to obtain Zoom links is: [www.CircuitCourtDocket.org](http://www.CircuitCourtDocket.org).

## F. Emergency Preparation Planning Activities

### Active Shooter Training

During FY23, the Circuit Court hosted Active Shooter Training for all courthouse occupants. The training instructed employees as to what procedures to take in the event of an active shooter situation.



### Courthouse Building Security Committee

The Building Security Committee is chaired by The Honorable Tiffany H. Anderson, Circuit Court Associate Judge, and co-chaired by The Honorable Lisa Hall Johnson, District Court Administrative Judge. The Committee is comprised of stakeholders from each agency and office housed in the courthouse, including the Prince George's County State's Attorney's Office, Circuit Court, District Court of Maryland, House of Ruth, Circuit Court Clerk's Office, District Court Clerk's Office, Prince George's County Sheriff's Office and Parole and Probation. External stakeholders include the Upper Marlboro Police Department and Prince George's County Police Department. The Committee meets quarterly and discusses important security issues and plans for emergencies that could possibly occur at the courthouse.

## VII. FACILITIES

### A. Space

The Courthouse Complex is comprised of four wings (Bourne, Duvall, Marbury and Marbury Expansion) in the Upper Marlboro Courthouse; the Circuit Court Judicial Administrative Services Building; the PGCFJC building; and offices in the County Administration Building.

During FY23, there have been changes and additions to spaces in the courthouse, and there are renovations and changes planned in FY24.

#### The Sheila R. Tillerson Adams Ceremonial Courtroom

On December 15, 2022, the Circuit Court Judges honored the Chief and Administrative Judge Sheila R. Tillerson Adams with the naming of the Ceremonial Courtroom in recognition of her contributions.



#### Alternative Dispute Resolution Office Reopening and Renovations

The Alternative Dispute Resolution Office, located in the County Administration Building, is currently operating under a hybrid plan of in-person and remote conferences. In April 2023, the Alternative Dispute Resolution office reopened after a three year hiatus for in-person civil hearings. The office space received a refresh to provide an updated space for attorneys and litigants.

#### Renovations to the Commissioner's Entrance to the Courthouse

The Commissioner's Entrance of the courthouse was closed in October 2022 for renovations. The area was expanded to permit easier access and travel for employees and visitors while enhancing security. The Entrance reopened in July 2023.



## Renovations to the Court Reporter's Office

The Court Reporter's Office is currently under construction. The staff was relocated to another office area within the courthouse until renovations are completed.

## B. Security

### Security Command Center

IT staff was joined by the Prince George's County Sheriff's Office in the Command Center to monitor the 327 security cameras throughout the Courthouse Complex. The Center also has the capability of being monitored by designed Court officials 24/7. It has state-of-the-art technology that has enhanced the Court's ability to always maintain security and safety for its occupants and visitors.



### Ballistic Film

The courthouse installed ballistic film on the ground floor and the first floor of all buildings within the Courthouse Complex. The security film helps protect the courthouse's vulnerable areas: the ground and first floors. This film does not allow the glass to break into dangerous sharp pieces. The film was installed in the following wings and buildings with the Courthouse Complex: Bourne; Duvall; Marbury; Marbury Expansion; Judicial Administrative Services Building; and the PGCFJC.



### New Security Key Cards

To enhance safety and security, new security key cards continued to be disseminated to courthouse occupants. The upgraded employee key cards are used to access buildings throughout the Courthouse Complex.



## Emergency Alerts

Throughout the year, the Circuit Court disseminates important information pertaining to security. For example, one notification that was disseminated reminded courthouse occupants not to share their security badges to gain access to buildings. This is important to ensure that safety is not compromised and courthouse employees understand the importance of complying with protocols to ensure safe courthouse access.



**SECURITY  
ID BADGES**  
**FOR COURTHOUSE EMPLOYEES**

- Sharing Security ID Badges is prohibited.
- If your security badge is confiscated due to violation of this policy, it will be deactivated for a period of time.
- We need your cooperation to keep the Courthouse Complex safe and secure.

## **VIII. LEGISLATIVE**

### **A. Concerns**

As there has been a significant increase in the number of criminal cases filed in Prince George's County Circuit Court (most notably criminal indictments), a need exists for additional Associate Judges.

### **B. Recommendations**

The Circuit Court's recommendation is to submit a formal request for two additional Associate Judges in Prince George's County to ensure that the Court continues to hear and resolve cases in a timely manner.

## IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

Throughout the various offices and programs, the Circuit Court executes its initiatives due to collaboration and partnership with external stakeholders that play an integral role in the services that the Court provides to the citizens of Prince George's County.

### A. Justice Partners

#### Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, co-chaired by the Administrative Judge of the Circuit Court, the Administrative Judge of the District Court and the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer of Public Safety for Prince George's County, is comprised of stakeholders who meet regularly to address criminal justice issues affecting citizens throughout the County.



#### PGCFJC

The PGCFJC has 21 on-site local government and private nonprofit agencies that work with the Center to address victims' needs. The coordinated response model has proven to be a more efficient and effective service delivery process. On-site partnering organizations include the following: Prince George's County Police Department; Prince George's County Sheriff's Office; Prince George's County State's Attorney's Office; Prince George's County Department of Health; Prince George's County Department of Social Services; Prince George's County Family Services; University of Maryland Capital Regional Health (Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Center); Community Crisis Services, Inc.; Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center; Catholic Charities; House of Ruth; Community Advocates for Family and Youth (CAFY); Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI); Maryland Legal Aid; Community Legal Services, Inc.; Women's Law Center of Maryland; Juanita C. Grant Foundation; Synergy Family Services, Inc.; and The Training Source, Inc.

#### Family Division

The Family Division continues to partner with National Family Resiliency Center, an organization that provides co-parenting classes. During FY23, those classes converted to

online and are available to litigants in English, Spanish, and closed captioning. Further, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Children's Rights Council, another partner, continued their monitored exchange services for families exchanging their children for weekend visits. Virtual visits were offered to some families in lieu of in-person visits.

The Family Division continues to partner with the Community Legal Services Clinic (CLS). During FY23, CLS has continued to provide free legal services to 4,961 litigants by utilizing a hybrid process which allows meeting with clients both virtually and in-person.

The Prince George's County Drug Lab continues to work collaboratively with the Family Division when this type of testing is required for litigants. The drug lab hours are from 10:00 a.m. - 7:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and it is closed on Wednesdays. Testers were required to wear a mask and have their temperatures taken. Under the lab's modified processes, only two testers were allowed in the lab at one time.

### **PSCs**

PSCs has numerous ongoing partnerships within each of its programs to provide essential services to participants that are integral to their rehabilitation process and to change the trajectory of their lives. Some of the justice and community partners include:

- Maryland Office of Problem Solving Courts
- National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP)
- Justice for VETS (JFV)
- Prince George's County Office of the Public Defender
- Prince George's County State's Attorney's Office
- Maryland Department of Juvenile Services
- Prince George's County Health Department
- Prince George's County Department of Corrections
- Prince George's County Sheriff's Office
- Prince George's County Police Department
- Prince George's County Department of Social Services
- Prince George's County Public Schools
- Prince George's County Public Works and Transportation
- Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

Residential Inpatient and Outpatient Services Providers include the following:

- Salvation Army
- The Bridge Center
- Champ House Sober Living
- The Denney House
- Avenues Recovery Center
- Walden Pyramid Inpatient Center
- Hudson Health Recovery Center
- Gaudenzia Inpatient Center
- Jude House Inpatient Center
- Field and Fields Outpatient Services
- Utopia Outpatient Services
- Insight Outpatient Services
- MAT Clinics, Inc.
- Mettle Works Mental Health Services
- Community Advocated for Family and Youth

### Law Library

The Law Library has several community partnerships and memberships that are integral to their career development and success in providing comprehensive services to library patrons. Library staff are members of several professional organizations, including:

- Membership and Mentoring Committee of the Government Law Library section of the American Association of Law Libraries
- American Library Association
- Law Library Association of Maryland

### **B. Grants**

Throughout FY23, various Circuit Court offices and divisions were awarded grants to provide needed resources and services. The Circuit Court was awarded grants totaling \$7,042,600. The Court's Finance Office oversees and monitors the grants. Below, additional details are provided.

### Cooperative Reimbursement Agreement (CRA)

This Federal formula funding is provided by the State of Maryland under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act with matching funding provided by the County. Funding supports the Circuit Court's child support enforcement programs. The Magistrates preside over hearings and make recommendations to the judges of the Circuit Court on various types of cases. The issues are varied and can include establishment of civil support obligations and enforcement of Court-ordered child support obligations.

### Family Division Legislative Initiative Grant

The Judicial Institute of Maryland Administrative Office of the Courts provides funding to the Prince George's County Circuit Court Family Division that provides two services: (1) a one-stop information and referral center; and (2) the Family Support Services Unit, which provides a variety of services (e.g., mediation, domestic violence coordination, clinical assessment and referral services).

### Office of Problem Solving Courts - Adult Drug, Juvenile Drug, Reentry and Veterans Programs

The Judicial Institute of Maryland Administrative Office of the Courts provides funding to enhance operations. Funding received may only be used to support Judiciary staff assigned to PSCs and enhance any other ancillary services that will be utilized by and for the betterment of the community members served by this court program.

### PGCFJC: *Saving Lives, Restoring Hope* - Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)

The Maryland Crime Control and Prevention provides funding for operational costs to include staff, supplies, training, outreach and education. PGCFJC's *Saving Lives, Restoring Hope* project will strengthen and improve ongoing efforts to provide survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and elder abuse. A range of comprehensive services by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals are co-located in one facility for community-wide intervention. Recognized as a "best-practice," this collaborative initiative will eliminate barriers to service and enhance victims' access to critically needed resources in the aftermath of trauma and victimization.

## Empowerment After Abuse: Economic Justice Initiative III - Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

The PGCFJC's Economic Justice Initiative Program is a VAWA grant funded program provided by the Maryland Crime Control and Prevention. The Initiative was established to assist survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking to obtain financial stability in the aftermath of abuse. Additionally, guidance is provided as to legal representation in non-family law matters (housing, employment, consumer debt, and foreclosure). The program enables survivors to overcome immediate economic barriers to achieve long-term financial independence, economic empowerment and safety.

## Memorandum of Understanding - Administrative Office of the Courts Security Grant

The Court shall acquire through the County procurement process, security-related goods/services, as described in strict accordance with the memorandum of understanding with the Administrative Office of the Courts.

## Office of Violence Against Women (OVW): Improving Criminal Justice Response

PGCFJC was awarded the U.S. Department of Justice - OVW's Criminal Justice Responses to Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking Program Grant. This funding will aid PGCFJC to enhance operations and increase survivors' access to services throughout Prince George's County.

The grant money will also be used to open new satellite offices to provide more accessibility to citizens across Prince George's County. Officers in each location will facilitate services via virtual intake, and people in need will have greater access to obtaining services such as emergency shelter, protective orders and crisis intervention.

With the additional funding, PGCFJC has extended its hours of operation to include evenings and weekends to better serve citizens in the County who are in crisis and need assistance to escape abusive situations and conditions. With more accessible hours, citizens can obtain protective orders, access safety planning crisis intervention counseling, file police reports and receive other services provided by law enforcement outside of the work week. The new enhanced hours of operation are Thursday evenings, 5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.; Friday evenings, 5:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.; and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m.

## Federal Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) - Adult Drug Court and Veterans Court Treatment Discretionary Grant

The U.S. Department of Justice provides funding for a four year term to promote initiatives and enhancements with the Adult Drug and Veterans Court Programs.

### Improving Survivors Access to Critical Resources (GDVC)

The Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention provides funding to domestic violence centers to respond to incidents of family violence, domestic violence, and dating violence.

### MACRO-Court ADR Programs and Projects

The Judicial Institute of Maryland Administrative Office of the Courts provides funding to support the Maryland Judiciary's mission to provide fair, efficient, and effective justice for all. MACRO's Conflict Resolution Projects Grants provide funding for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Programs or projects which develop, improve, and expand high quality ADR services statewide.

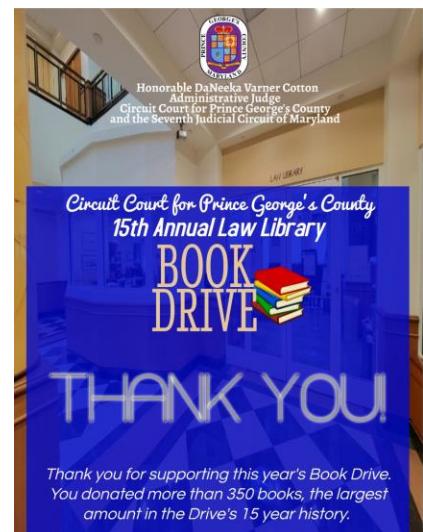
The Circuit Court added a new Paralegal funded through this grant to assist, evaluate and make recommendations for enhancement of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Program. Enhancements include quality assurance and training.

## C. Community Outreach

### Law Library

#### 15th Annual Book Drive

The Law Library hosted its Annual Book Drive during National Library Week, April 24 - April 28, 2023. During the Drive, more than 350 books were donated. Those books were donated to the YMCA in Prince George's County. Through its various programs, the YMCA nurtures children in a playful academic environment and partners with community leaders and organizations to make an impact in the community. This year's event produced the largest donation amount in the 15-year history of the Book Drive.



## Community Presentations and Engagement

During FY23, Library staff served as a presenter for the *Law on the Frontlines: Legal Reference for Public Libraries Training Program* for public librarians. Law Library staff also hosted librarians from the Montgomery County Circuit Court Law Library and the Prince George's County Detention Center for professional development sharing and growth.

## PGCFJC

### National Teen Violence Month Art Contest

February is recognized as National Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month, during which time domestic violence advocates and organizations shine a spotlight to raise awareness and guide teens towards healthy relationships to lead safe lives free of violence. In

February 2023, PGCFJC engaged in this effort and implemented its first Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month Art Contest called, *Real Love*.

Students were invited to submit original visual art depicting their expression of what real love should or should not look like. More than 35 students entered submissions. The art was judged by members of the PGCFJC Foundation that sponsors the contest. Prizes were awarded and winners were acknowledged at a ceremony held at the PGCFJC. Winning submissions hang on the walls of the PGCFJC for all to see.



### Tours of PGCFJC and Community Events

PGCFJC conducted a host of tours of the facility for several judges, Prince George's County council members, civic organizations, local law enforcement agencies and advocates interested in learning more about the PGCFJC model. Further, staff participated in several outreach activities during the year that were sponsored by church, nonprofit, government and civic organizations. Participation in these outreach events helped to increase awareness and visibility of the PGCFJC and educate the community about resources available to them.

### Marketing Outreach Campaign

PGCFJC implemented an aggressive marketing campaign that included radio broadcast and print advertisement. Commercials, public service, and social media with more than 37,000 hits or impressions were heard on two radio stations. Billboard posters were prominently displayed on two major high-traffic thoroughfares that garnered a significant

amount of attention as indicated by the number of calls from clients that saw them and subsequently came in for services.

### Circuit Court Judges Host Luncheon for Prince George's County Council

The Circuit Court Judges hosted a luncheon for the newly elected Prince George's County Council on Tuesday, March 14, 2023, in The Honorable William D. Missouri Conference Room located at the Courthouse.



### Art Exhibition at the Courthouse

The Circuit Court's Annual Art Exhibition was held July 13 - August 13, 2022. On July 14th, a special reception was held to celebrate and honor nearly 30 MTC Art Studios, Inc. students whose works of art were featured. The exhibition, *Art That Feels, Art That Heals*, featured art that heals the wounds of everyday life. According to MTC Art Studios Director Mavis Turner, some students chose to express their emotions through the pandemic, while others simply made expressions to free the soul. Students used various mediums, including digital, colored pencil, watercolor paint, graphite pencil and acrylic paint to create their masterpieces.



## Mock Trial Competition

In February 2023, seven Circuit Court judges presided over cases during the Maryland Youth and the Law Annual Mock Trial Competition in the Seventh Circuit. At the center of each year's competition is a new criminal or civil legal case that allows students to think critically about issues. During the competition, students portray the defense or plaintiff/prosecution and are scored on their performances by judges or attorneys.



## Veterans Appreciation Ceremony

The Circuit Court honored veterans throughout the County and State at the Annual Veterans Appreciation Ceremony on Thursday, May 18, 2023, in the Jury Lounge. During the event, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Secretary Robert Finn served as the keynote speaker, and Dr. James A. Dula from the Prince George's County Office of Veterans Affairs provided additional remarks.



Veterans were acknowledged for their service and presented with special pins and certificates. The Veterans Appreciation Ceremony Committee was chaired by The Honorable Peter K. Killough who is also a veteran.

## Senior Judge Speaks at Citadel

The Honorable C. Philip Nichols, Jr. spoke at The Citadel Inn of Court in Charleston, South Carolina on Thursday, April 6, 2023. The Citadel Inn of Court Pre-Law Society is a cadet/alumni organization made up of pre-law students and Citadel graduates in the legal professions. The Inn of Court was founded by Col. Edward Tucker in 1981. Col. Tucker designed the Inn to enhance pre-law studies at The Citadel and to become a place where pre-



law students could interact with one another, learn about careers in law, and meet Citadel legal alumni.

### **Black History Month Program in Capital Heights**

Circuit Court Judge Stenise L. Rolle and Charleston L. Carter, Court Administrator, attended First Baptist Church of Capitol Heights' Annual Black History Month Program on Sunday, February 19, 2023. The event was held during the church service and even featured Mr. Carter performing a folktale called, *Two Sides to Every Story*. Carter's performance highlighted the beauty and cultural significance of the storytelling tradition in the Black culture.



### **Law Links Intern Program**

The Circuit Court continues to welcome Prince George's County students in the Law Links Intern Program to work at the courthouse and with various justice partners throughout the County during the summer. Student interns were exposed to various opportunities that included a visit with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Maryland Honorable Matthew J. Fader and the Chief Judge of the Appellate Court of Maryland Honorable E. Gregory Wells.



### **PSCs**

During FY23, PSCs continued to engage in community events and deliver presentations to community organizations about the various programs and services that are offered by the Circuit Court. Presentations were made at the following events/programs listed below:

- October 2022 - PSCs created an informational video for public consumption.
  - The video is posted on the Circuit Court's website and provides more information about each PSCs program, eligibility requirements and contact information.
- Ongoing - Joint presentation for the PSCs Foundation Board of Directors
  - All coordinators gave an overview of their respective programs to include eligibility factors, services offered, program model and the benefits of graduation. As Board

members seek to develop initiatives and fundraising events, this information will help them fulfill the goal of fully supporting PSCs in the community.

- February 2023 - New Direction Youth Diversion Program Presentation for Pupil Personnel Workers Professional Development Training
  - The New Direction Program presented an overview of its infrastructure, including the referral process, services offered, and provided program updates to the Pupil Personnel Workers who make the referrals. This will help ensure that the workers have the most up-to-date information regarding the program and know who to contact for additional assistance.
- September 2022 - PSCs Joint Presentation for Police Academy (recruits & crisis negotiators)
  - Each year, PSCs is invited to present information on all programs for the new Prince George's County Police Department recruits. During the session, PSCs Coordinators provide recruits with the eligibility requirements of the programs and share how police officers can help through continued partnership.
- June 2023 - PSCs Presentation at Community Forum sponsored by the Blaq Rose Garden Missing & Murdered Advocacy Center and Sweatism, LLC
  - PSCs Coordinators provided information about each program the Court offers.
- Monthly - PSCs Representation on the Prince George's County Veterans Collaborative Monthly Committee Meetings
  - Veterans Court staff attend these monthly meetings to promote collaboration and partnership among stakeholders who help veterans in various capacities.
- Monthly - PSCs Representation in the Truancy Court Work Group Meetings to review legislative policies
- Ongoing Internship Opportunities for Bowie State University Students
  - PSCs has a partnership with Bowie State University's Criminal Justice Department. Due to this collaboration, students participate in non-paid internships with PSCs. Interns learn the functions and roles of all PSCs programs. They also attend court appearances, team meetings and complete administrative duties and writing assignments.

- Quarterly PSCs Representation at Foundation Board meetings
  - The PSCs Foundation, LLC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit created to support the mission and sustainability of the Courts through fundraising and to increase awareness of the diverse programs that are offered in the County.
- Quarterly - PSCs Representation at Prince George's County Department of Health Overdose Fatality Report (OFR) Meetings
  - The role of PSCs is to review case studies involving individuals who have fatally overdosed in Prince George's County to establish best practices to prevent further deaths. This meeting is also a platform to discuss new resources in the community and any new program updates from all participating agencies.
- Quarterly - PSCs Alumni Meetings
  - Graduates of various PSCs meet quarterly to share updates and discuss their progress.
- Bi-monthly - PSCs Representation on the Prince George's County Workforce Development Board Youth Standing Committee
  - PSCs representatives attend these meetings regularly to engage with key stakeholders from the private and public sectors providing leadership, direction and policy oversight for the workforce delivery system in Prince George's County.

## X. OTHER CONCERNS/ISSUES

In the midst of the complexities of our modern world, the Circuit Court, like most of the State of Maryland, has found itself grappling with the challenging task of recruiting and retaining its dedicated workforce. This challenge is amplified by a specific need for professionals fluent in Spanish, a language crucial for effective communication with a significant portion of the clients that are served. The transformative world around us has shifted the paradigm of work, with an ever-growing demand for flexibility. As a result, the implemented telework policy is a testament of adaptability and an understanding of the needs of our workforce.

Change, as they say, is the only constant. In this ever-evolving landscape, the Circuit Court's vision is a commitment to our staff and the public we serve. The road ahead is paved with unity, growth and innovation. Our future remains bright.