



District of Columbia Courts Rank #1 in Nationwide Access to Justice Survey

The National Center for Access to Justice (NCAJ) recently released the 2016 Justice Index, a survey of state-level courts; the DC Courts ranked #1. The survey evaluated courts on four factors: legal representation in civil matters, providing information to and assisting litigants who represent themselves, language access, and removing barriers for court users who have physical or mental disabilities.

“We are gratified that our efforts have been shown to have had a real, meaningful impact on access to jus-

tice in the District of Columbia,” said DC Court of Appeals Chief Judge Eric T. Washington. “Justice for all is a hallmark of the American constitutional system and a fundamental value. While we were commended for our efforts to appoint counsel, we recognize that there are still a large number of litigants who appear in our courtrooms without representation. For that reason, we continue to work to provide access to everyone who seeks justice in the DC Courts, through resource centers, pro bono

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DC Superior Court’s Multi-Door Division Team Assists Park Southern Residents in Southeast, DC

By Jeannie Adams, Director of the Multi-Door Division

Earlier this year, a team of Multi-Door employees facilitated the election process of a new board of directors at Park Southern, a 360-unit apartment complex in Southeast, Washington DC. At the request of the Honorable Judge John Mott, Multi-Door met with all of the named parties to the pending civil lawsuit to develop a process to facilitate the election of a new board of directors. No election had taken place at the complex for a number of years, and the court extended its services to help ensure that the election went forward. Multi-Door worked with all of the stakeholders to manage the logistics of the election, including: certifying an eligibility list of residents and candidates, determining



Multi-Door staff from left to right: Andre Randall, Miati Tagliferro, Claudette Taylor, Jeannie Adams and Robert Hosea.

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Open To All Trusted By All Justice For All

Court of Appeals Welcomes New Deputy Clerk of Court



Mr. Herbert Rouson, Jr. has been appointed to serve as the new Deputy Clerk of the Court of Appeals, effective September 6, 2016. Mr. Rouson currently serves as Director of the Superior Court Special Operations Division. Prior to assuming the position of Director of Special Operations, Mr. Rouson served as a systems accountant in the Courts' Budget and Finance Division. Before joining the District of Columbia Courts, he held several positions with the Washington Gas Light Company. Mr. Rouson is a graduate of Hampton University and the American University Washington College of Law. Please join us in welcoming Mr. Rouson to the Court of Appeals.

Magistrate Judge Kenia Seoane Lopez Participates in DC Humanities Council Event

In celebration of the 225th anniversary of Washington, DC, Humanities DC, recently held an event called "The Modern DC Woman." The event hosted a panel of influential women in the District including DC Superior Court Magistrate Judge Kenia Seoane Lopez (*pictured center*); Pamela Perkins, CEO of Human Communication Institute; Nikki Peele, Owner of ReSPIN Public Relations; Brianne Nadeau, Ward 1 DC Council Member; and Jennifer Krafchik, historian with the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument.



At the event, which was held at the 14th Street Busboys and Poets, the panelists discussed the history and present day experiences of women in the District. Humanities DC coined the term "Humanitini" for this series of events, creating an informal environment where the goal is to reach an audience of millennials who are new to DC, and inspire them to learn about DC history and culture in an interactive setting. The panel members gave priceless advice to the women in the room, sharing their experiences, mistakes and victories.

"It's okay if you don't know what you want to do, I never imagined that I would be a judge, I didn't think I was capable of that work but you have to find mentors who see you in the light you want to be. You're a work in progress," said Magistrate Judge Seoane Lopez.

For more information on future Humanitini events visit www.wdchumanities.org.

E-filing in the District of Columbia Courts



DC Court of Appeals Adopts E-filing

On August 8, the DC Court of Appeals began accepting documents via e-Filing for all existing cases.

Early next year the Court will mandate eFiling for all but self-represented parties. The new system, online at <https://efile.dccourts.gov> or via the Appellate Cases Online (ACO) link on the Courts' website (www.dccourts.gov/aco), provides access for eFiling and allows real-time viewing of docket information on all public cases in the appellate court.

"We are pleased to launch our public access system, which will allow eFiling of documents as well as online viewing of docket information," said DC Court of Appeals Chief Judge Eric Washington. "Our Strategic Plan includes a goal of using technology to enhance case processing... andto broaden accessibility of court information..." The Court of Appeals' new eFiling and ACO project advances that goal dramatically."

[DC Court of Appeals Administrative Order 2-16](#) governs the eFiling and ACO system.



DC Superior Court's Criminal Division and Domestic Violence Unit Accepting Criminal Case Documents Electronically

The DC Superior Court's Criminal Division and Domestic Violence Unit began to accept criminal case documents via e-Filing for all but self-represented parties on July 18th. Prosecutors have been e-filing the complaints in such cases for over a year, but the system has now been expanded to allow defense attorneys to e-File as well. On September 26, 2016, defense attorneys handling cases in those two divisions will be required to e-File. As with all other Superior Court divisions with e-Filing, self-represented parties may e-File, but are not be required to do so.

"I am pleased to see the latest phase of our eFiling implementation put into place. E-filing ensures that documents are available sooner and improves the speed and accuracy of filing," said DC Superior Court Chief Judge Lee Satterfield. "With e-Filing, our system is stronger and both lawyers and the public are better served."

[Superior Court Administrative Order 16-12](#) governs e-Filing for criminal cases in the Domestic Violence Unit and Criminal Division. The order protects personal information, specifying that certain private identifying information shall be redacted.

DC Courts Prepare for New 2018-2022 Strategic Plan

By Brandon Davis, Junior Deputy Clerk

The District of Columbia Courts are currently preparing to develop their new 2018-2022 Strategic Plan. As the current 2013-2017 Strategic Plan slowly comes to an end next year, the Courts have begun gathering information from court employees and the public to help create the new plan.

The Courts sponsored a “You Be the Judge” outreach event designed to gather information directly from the public. From May 17 - 19, 2016, surveys were administered by nearly 100 judicial officers, administrators and employees to gather feedback from court participants and visitors. The survey was available in three different languages—English, Spanish, and Amharic—and administered throughout the Courts’ complex. More than 1,300 surveys were completed, all of which will contribute to identifying priorities and areas of focus for the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan.

The outreach event solicited information from court participants in three areas: Access to Justice, Fairness of the Courts, and Demographics. In both the “Access” and “Fairness” sections of the survey, participants were asked to measure how they view the Courts on a scale of one through five (one being “Strongly Disagree” and five being “Strongly Agree”). Specifically, participants were asked about their experience in the courthouse on the day of the survey. The demographic section asked court participants questions such as the reason for visiting the Courts and how often they came to the courthouse.

Survey results indicated that the public’s overall perception of the Courts is positive. On average, 82% of the participants provided positive responses in the Access and Fairness sections. The highest result came from the question “I felt safe in the court building,” receiving 90% positive responses. In addition, the results indicated that 30% of the people surveyed came to the Courts as a party to a legal matter; 50%

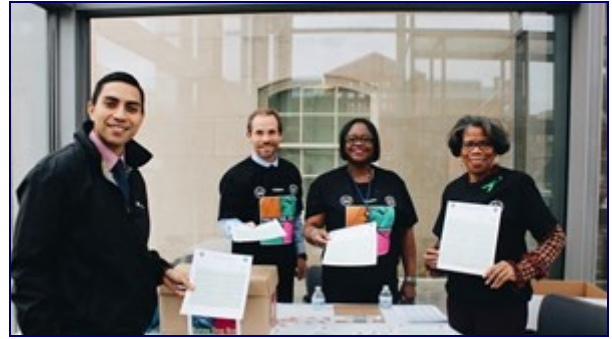
attended a trial and 37% of the court users had legal representation during the three days the survey was carried out. The survey results also revealed that 63% of court participants were residents of District of Columbia and 13% were visiting the D.C. Courts for the first time.

While the survey initiative sought the voice of court participants, the opinions of court employees who volunteered to conduct the survey were also heard. At the conclusion of the outreach event, the volunteers were asked to complete a survey of their own to provide feedback on their experience, and what they might have learned from it. Most of the volunteers described the experience as “valuable”, while also stating that it was great that the Courts looked to the public for feedback.

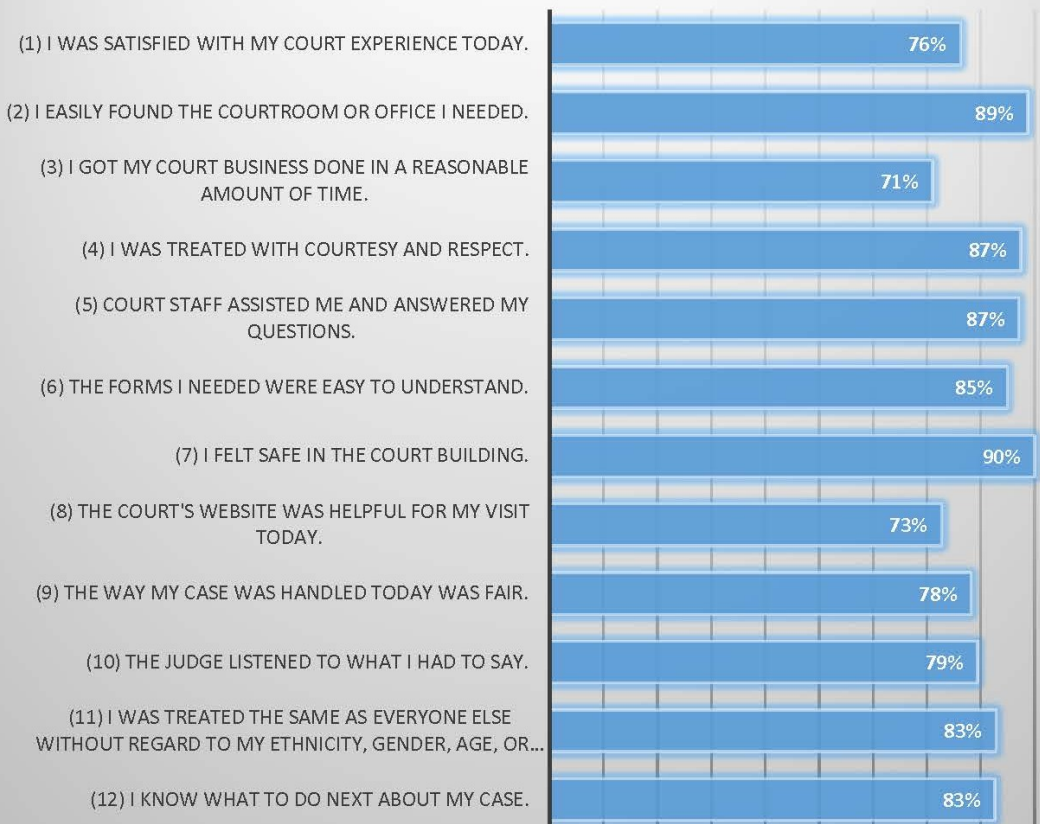
When asked about the impact of the survey, one volunteer Edouard Haba, stated that: “the Courts are here to serve the people, so knowing what the people want and knowing about the services that we provide will help us put a better plan in place.” Mr. Haba further stated that the goals set within the strategic plans of new and old are “continuous,” and though we are making the proper improvements, “it’s all about building on those improvements to make the court better for the people we look to serve.”

The outreach event was coordinated by the Strategic Planning Leadership Council (SPLC), which is charged with developing the District of Columbia Courts' Strategic Plan. SPLC will use the Court Participants Survey results, and other data and information collected from stakeholders of the Courts to undertake the process of developing the new 2018-2022 Strategic Plan to be presented to the Joint Committee for Judicial Administration for approval in the summer of 2017.

On May 17-19, 2016, the DC Courts surveyed court users on their experiences in the Courts. The survey also asked questions to assess if DC Courts are accessible and treat people with fairness and respect. Volunteers wore "Today! You Be the Judge - Improving Justice Together" t-shirts and handed out surveys at entrances and exits of the Historic Courthouse, Moultrie Courthouse and Court Buildings A, B and C. See below a summary of the responses to some of the survey questions.



2016 Court Participant Survey "Strongly Agree/Agree" Responses



proof of residency, providing written notice to tenants of the election, approving ballot design, and conducting site visits to the property prior to election day.

The election took place on April 15, 2016, from 7 a.m. till noon and again from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. to accommodate all residents. The Multi-Door team patiently assisted the tenants, ensuring all those eligible to vote had access to the ballot and understood the ballot instructions. Upon conclusion of the vote, the team conducted two separate counts of all ballots and posted the results for tenants and candidates. Residents of Park Southern expressed their appreciation and gratitude to the team for the court's intervention in this case. Hopefully, this election is a new beginning for this DC community. The complex has a tremendous amount of potential and some of the best views of the city!

programs, interpreters and the elimination of physical barriers.”

NCAJ began compiling the Justice Index in 2014 “to make access to justice a reality for all.” In NCAJ’s words, “With clear, concise and public findings, the Justice Index allows [j]udges, [court] administrators and advocates to see where their efforts do the most good at the lowest cost [and] the public to learn about justice system performance and demand accountability.”

The DC Courts have long been committed to enhancing access to justice. The Courts created a Standing Committee on Fairness and Access in 1997 and the DC Court of Appeals established the DC Access to Justice Commission in 2005. “The DC Courts’ Vision Statement was unveiled in 2003, as part of its first strategic plan: Open to All, Trusted by All, With Justice for All. That is a vision we strive for every single day. And while we are pleased to be ranked first, that does not mean that our work is done. Ensuring Access to Justice for All is a goal we constantly work towards,” explained Chief Judge Washington.

Overall, the DC Courts had the top score in the 2016 Justice Index, followed by Massachusetts, Hawaii and Maryland. The survey results are presented on line in an interactive format: <http://justiceindex.org/2016-findings/findings/>.

According to the Justice Index website “The Justice Index is an online resource that relies on findings, indicators, indexing and other data-analytics tools to help ensure that a person’s ability to protect and vindicate her rights in a state justice system does not depend on whether she can afford a lawyer, speak and understand English, or navigate the legal system without an accommodation due to a physical or mental disability.”

Save the Date

DC Courts Employee Awards Ceremony

*Thursday,
September 22, 2016
2:30pm*

DC Superior Court's Social Services Division Hosts Youth Open Mic Night



Kathy Crawford and Dr. Michael Barnes from the Family Court Social Services Division.

On June 16, the DC Superior Court, Metropolitan Police Department, and the East River Family Strengthening Collaborative (ERFSC) co-sponsored a Youth Open Mic Night at Sousa Middle School in Southwest, DC. The event's goal was to strengthen community relationships, prevent crime before it occurs, and forge positive interaction between local law enforcement and juvenile probation officers. The event provided a safe and fun environment for children in the area come together and have a little fun!

Resources were available on topics such as workforce development, case management, mentoring and parenting. Local community members enjoyed summer treats such as popsicles and ice cream, courtesy of the Family Court Social Services Division, and local students shared poetry, danced and played. Juvenile probation officers from Court Social Services, police officers and representatives from community groups happily engaged with attendees, dancing with them, answering questions and enjoying the food provided.

Thanks so much to all who attended and the event, the Family Court Social Services Division appreciated MPD and ERFSC joining us for this great kickoff to Summer 2016!



The new and improved Marriage Bureau in the District of Columbia Superior Court is now open on the JM level (JM-690) of the Moultrie Courthouse.

The new location will ease access and improve the Court's service to the public.

New Pilot Initiative Launched for Issuing Electronic Court Orders in Paternity and Support Cases

The Paternity and Support Branch of the DC Superior Court Family Court Operations Division, in collaboration with the DC Courts IT Division and the DC Office of the Attorney General (OAG), have successfully launched a pilot project to submit and approve court orders electronically. This project is the result of working group that was created by the Family Court's Paternity and Child Support Subcommittee. The electronic process has greatly reduced the amount of time it takes to prepare orders that were previously handwritten. As a result, proposed orders are submitted to the judge faster, which has also reduced the amount of time it takes for the parties to see the judge.

The new process allows the OAG attorney and paralegal the ability to populate court orders with the information contained in their system such as the case caption, names of the parties and minor children, addresses of the parties and even employer information. Once the proposed order is complete, OAG attorneys submit the orders through a shared server with the Court directly to the judge.

Once the case is called the judge opens the proposed orders and makes changes if necessary. The tables where the parties sit in the courtroom have a monitor and everyone can see the order as the judge is going through the content of the orders with the parties and their counsels. If the order is a consent, the parties sign the orders in court using an electronic signature pad and the judge can sign the order with a click of a button. After the order is finalized the orders are electronically dated and the court filed stamp automatically appears on the order. The orders are then automatically printed and provided to the parties.

Once the order is approved, a "flattened" version of the order is created which does not allow the order to be changed. Those flattened orders are then up-

loaded to the OAG secure site nightly, allowing OAG to extract the data from the PDF file and update the information in the OAG case management system. The flattened versions of the orders generated are uploaded by the courtroom clerk into to the Courts' OnBase document management system.

Besides the time savings, the new process has created efficiencies by eliminating the use of customized carbon copy court order forms, which were previously filled out manually by the parties or the court. Additionally, the electronically signed orders, uploaded to the Courts' OnBase document management system, have eliminated the need to scan paper forms. The end result is a court order which is free of handwriting and completely legible. The electronic orders have significantly decreased the motions to correct clerical errors since all of the information is generated from a case management system and the likelihood of human errors has been reduced.

The initiative is currently in an initial pilot phase with plans to expand into all of the Paternity and Support courtrooms by the end of this year. Magistrate Judge Kenia Seoane Lopez played an instrumental role in carrying forward the initiative, with the technological support of the DC Courts IT Division — specially, Vaidehi Koppolu, Manager of the IT Division Business Analysis Branch, and Business Analysts Pete Cuiry and Kenny Gross. The pilot program would also have not been possible without the collaboration of the OAG Child Support Services Division, in particular: Assistant Attorney General Andrea Johnson, Tushar Desai (IT Client Services Manager), Suresh Dodda (Senior Developer), Harold Johnson (Manager, Application and Paternity Development Unit), and Joseph Allen (Chief, Systems and Automation Section).