

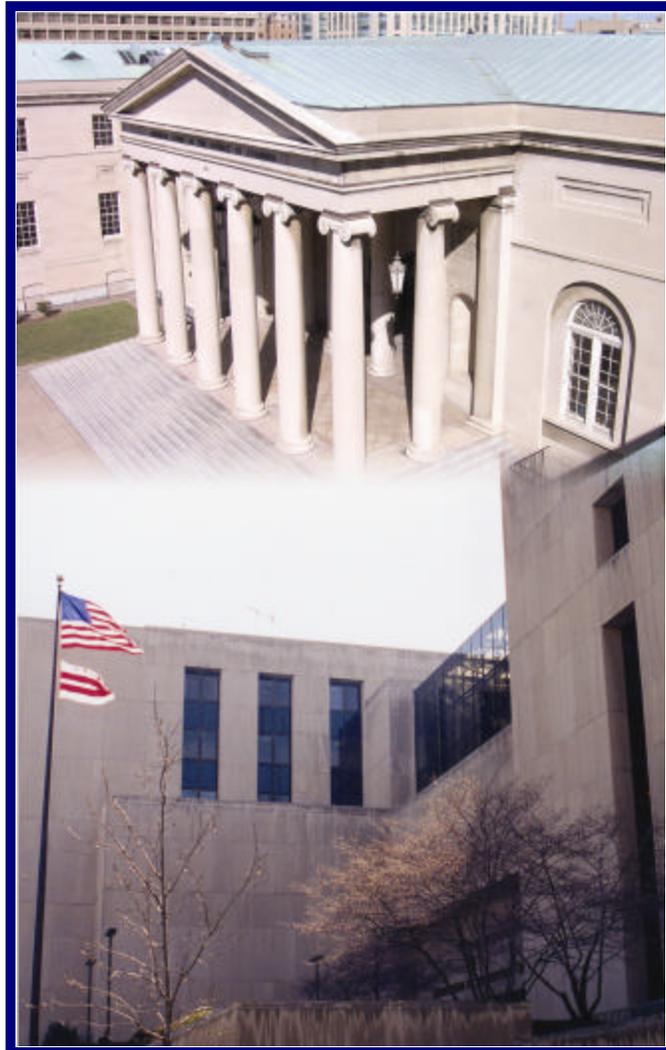
# *Delivering Justice*



**Strategic Plan of the  
District of Columbia Courts  
2008-2012**

# ***Delivering Justice***

## **Strategic Plan of the District of Columbia Courts 2008-2012**





H. CARL MOULTRIE I  
COURTHOUSE OF THE DISTRICT OF COL

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**District of Columbia Courts  
Joint Committee on Judicial Administration  
Washington, D.C. 20001**



**A Message From the Joint Committee on Judicial Administration**

Dear Friends of the District of Columbia Courts:

We are pleased to present *Delivering Justice: Strategic Plan of the District of Columbia Courts, 2008 - 2012*. This Plan will guide the Courts' judiciary and other personnel in working to fulfill our Mission to protect rights and liberties, uphold and interpret the law, and resolve disputes peacefully, fairly and effectively for the people of the District of Columbia. *Delivering Justice* defines critical outcomes the Courts seek to achieve regarding:

- ✓ fair and timely case resolution;
- ✓ access to justice;
- ✓ a strong judiciary and workforce;
- ✓ a sound infrastructure;
- ✓ security and disaster preparedness; and
- ✓ public trust and confidence.

It builds upon the successful execution of the D.C. Courts' first Strategic Plan<sup>1</sup> as well as earlier initiatives which set the Courts on a path towards modernization and greater openness and accountability.

An initiative already underway when the Courts' first Strategic Plan was developed, and one of the notable achievements of the past few years, is the transformation of the Family Court to a one-family, one-judge case management model which was completed in accordance with the D.C. Family Court Act of 2001, and has resulted in significant positive outcomes for children and families in the District of Columbia.

Another initiative already in progress was the Superior Court's conversion to the IJIS case management system. This program replaced nearly 20 aging databases with a single, integrated system that provides judges with vastly improved information on individuals, families and cases before the Court. Concurrent with the IJIS initiative, the Information Technology Division achieved CMMI-II certification for use of disciplined processes in all phases of IT projects.

In 2002, the Courts began a multi-year effort to renovate our aging facilities and campus. The Master Plan for Judiciary Square and Facilities Master Plan laid a blueprint for the renovation and revitalization of the historic buildings and grounds which comprise the D.C. Courts and other federal buildings. When completed, these capital projects will address a projected 134,000 square foot shortfall of space for enhanced operations and restore the historic D.C. City Hall and Old Courthouse for occupation by the Court of Appeals.

In 2002, the Standing Committee on Fairness and Access celebrated its 10-year anniversary

<sup>1</sup> *Committed to Justice in the Nation's Capital: Strategic Plan of the District of Columbia Courts, 2003 – 2007.*

leading the Courts' efforts to ensure equal access and treatment for all court participants. This Committee continues its role as standard-bearer in eradicating bias of any kind in the delivery of justice.

In 2004, the Court of Appeals established the D.C. Access to Justice Commission, which seeks to enhance access to civil justice for all persons without regard to economic status. Also that year, the Courts' new website was recognized by *Justice Served*<sup>TM</sup> as one of the top ten court websites worldwide. With new features continually being added, the website is a significant tool for enhancing public access to the Courts. Most recently, the Court of Appeals began streaming live audio of oral arguments over the web, and the Superior Court implemented interactive juror services and on-line access to civil case docket information.

The Courts' first Strategic Plan called for the adoption of performance standards and measures to enhance operations. In 2005, the Joint Committee approved a set of courtwide performance measures addressing key areas such as equality and fairness, access and convenience of court services, timeliness of court processes, fiscal responsibility, and treatment of court participants. Following a year-long study period, the Superior Court recently adopted time standards for disposition of cases in all operating divisions.

The Superior Court has collaborated with the D.C. Bar to offer on-site assistance to low-income residents who cannot afford an attorney. Between 2002 and 2007, resource centers were established in Family Court, Landlord Tenant Court, Probate Court, Small Claims Court, and most recently for tax sale cases.

The 2008 – 2012 Strategic Plan continues the Courts' commitment to enhancing access and services for court users, upgrading our technological capabilities, improving infrastructure, providing training opportunities for judicial officers and personnel, and enhancing public outreach and accountability. With a steady focus on our Mission, the Plan focuses attention where work remains to be done or emerging issues require a response, such as an increasing number of court users with mental health issues.

Although their titles have been changed,<sup>2</sup> the strategic issues identified in the earlier plan remain the Courts' priorities, with the exception of security and disaster preparedness which has been elevated from a goal to a strategic issue. The Plan has been consolidated and simplified, from 18 goals and 67 strategies to 9 goals and 35 strategies.

In developing this Plan, the Courts conducted an extensive outreach effort to gather the views, perceptions and expertise of those who are served by the justice system, as well as those who serve the justice system. Litigants, attorneys, victims, witnesses, jurors, law enforcement officers, and other court participants expressed their opinions in surveys and focus groups held during 2006 and 2007. The Plan also reflects the input of the Courts' judicial officers, senior managers, supervisors and front-line personnel. In all, the Courts heard from nearly 2,500 stakeholders in the justice system. Their feedback was invaluable in crafting this Plan and we wish to thank everyone who contributed their time and ideas.

The Courts' Strategic Planning Leadership Council (SPLC) deserves commendation for designing and implementing the inclusive planning process that produced this Plan. The SPLC is co-chaired by the Honorable Noël Anketell Kramer of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, and the Honorable Ann O'Regan Keary of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, and includes Anne B. Wicks, Executive Officer, Garland Pinkston, Jr., Clerk of the Court of Appeals, Duane B. Delaney, Clerk of the

<sup>2</sup> Strategic issues have been re-titled as follows: 1) *enhancing the administration of justice* has been changed to *fair and timely case resolution*; 2) *broadening access to justice and service to the public* has been shortened to *access to justice*; 3) *promoting competence, professionalism and civility* has been changed to *a strong judiciary and workforce*; 4) *improving court facilities and technology* has been re-titled as *a sound infrastructure*; and 5) *building trust and confidence* has been changed to *public trust and confidence*.

Superior Court, and judicial officers and senior managers from the Court of Appeals, Superior Court, and Court System.

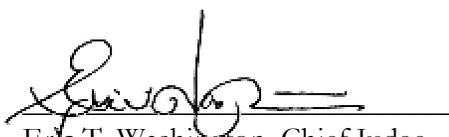
The Joint Committee is exceptionally proud of the accomplishments of our judicial officers and personnel, and their dedication and perseverance in the face of heavy workloads and staffing shortages in recent years. The D.C. Courts face myriad challenges in administering justice effectively. Public expectations of the role of courts are changing. In town hall meetings, District of Columbia residents overwhelmingly stated that they want the Courts to take a leadership role in addressing community problems while at the same time continuing to resolve cases fairly and expeditiously. As the District becomes increasingly diverse, more citizens are coming to court who speak little or no English. Advances in technology bring increased demands to provide more information on cases before the court as well as increased electronic or off-site access to court information and services. Competition for skilled personnel is increasing as the Courts retool positions to be more knowledge-based and less clerical. Finally, the Courts face intense competition for resources. The Strategic Plan serves as a guide to respond to these and other challenges.

We look forward to working with members of the Bar and other organizations and individuals committed to enhancing the administration of justice. The people of the District of Columbia deserve a court system that exemplifies the best of American justice. We believe our Vision captures this ideal:

*Open To All ♦ Trusted By All ♦ Justice For All*

On behalf of the judges and staff of the District of Columbia Courts, we commit ourselves to achieving this vision for the people of this great city.

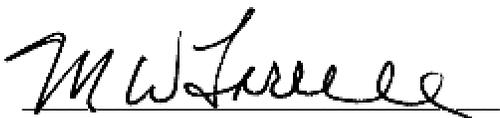
Sincerely,



Eric T. Washington, Chief Judge  
Court of Appeals  
Chair, Joint Committee



Rufus G. King, III, Chief Judge  
Superior Court



Michael W. Farrell, Associate Judge  
Court of Appeals



Geoffrey M. Alprin, Associate Judge  
Superior Court



Lee F. Satterfield, Associate Judge  
Superior Court



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# Introduction

*Delivering Justice: Strategic Plan of the District of Columbia Courts, 2008 – 2012* reflects the collective wisdom of many individuals and organizations. Litigants and their families, attorneys, jurors, witnesses, law enforcement officers, advocates and other court participants, judges and court staff responded to a year-long outreach effort completed in early 2007. In all, the Courts heard from nearly 2,500 people who care about the justice system.

Our outreach effort began at the March 2006 Judicial-Bar Conference. Over 200 attorneys responded to a detailed survey soliciting their opinions on the Courts' performance in areas such as expedition and timeliness, access to justice, treatment of litigants, and independence and accountability of the Judicial Branch. Over the summer, 50 Bar members participated in focus groups hosted by each operating division of the Superior Court and the Court of Appeals. These sessions provided in-depth feedback on issues raised in the survey and an opportunity for dialogue with presiding judges and court administrators.

**The law is ... a majestic edifice, sheltering all of us, each stone of which rests on another.**

**John Galsworthy, Justice, Act 2.**

The Courts solicited input from many organizations involved in the justice system, including voluntary bar associations, legal services providers, government agencies and nonprofit organizations. Valuable feedback was received from stakeholders such as the American Association of Retired Persons' Legal Counsel for the Elderly, the Council for Court Excellence, the George Washington Law School Community Legal Clinic, the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice, the Pretrial Services Agency, the Public Defender Service, the University of the District of Columbia School of Law and

the United States Attorney's Office.

In January 2007, the Courts sought feedback directly from court users. 1,400 persons participated in an exit survey conducted at three court facilities. Respondents provided their views on safety in the courthouse, access to courtrooms and offices, knowledge of court staff, treatment by judges and staff, fairness, and other issues. While the majority (80%) of court users reported overall satisfaction with their court experience, the survey results identified areas for improvement that are addressed in the Plan.

Finally, the Courts listened to the expertise of our own talented judiciary and staff, garnering detailed opinions and recommendations from over 750 individuals who completed surveys or attended focus groups. The enthusiastic and thoughtful comments provided by our workforce demonstrated again the high degree of commitment to delivering excellent service that is a hallmark of the D.C. Courts.

The release of *Delivering Justice: Strategic Plan of the District of Columbia Courts, 2008 – 2012* marks an important milestone in the Courts' evolution as a strategically managed organization. It is the second strategic plan developed since the Courts instituted courtwide strategic planning as a core business process.<sup>1</sup> As such, the Plan builds upon the Courts' successful execution of its 2003-2007 Strategic Plan,<sup>2</sup> which set forth a comprehensive strategic agenda in the areas of financial management enhancement, master space planning, integrated case management, judicial and staff training, and racial, ethnic and gender fairness.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In 2001, the Joint Committee on Judicial Administration established the Strategic Planning Leadership Council and appointed a full-time Strategic Planning Director to implement a courtwide strategic planning and management process. Under this process, the Courts develop a courtwide Strategic Plan every five years, and annual division-level Management Action Plans (MAPs) that specify performance objectives and targets to help achieve courtwide strategic goals. New performance management systems link compensation to performance results for managers and employees.

<sup>2</sup>*Committed to Justice in the Nation's Capital, Strategic Plan of the District of Columbia Courts, 2003-2007.*

<sup>3</sup>It should be noted that a number of important initiatives were already underway at the time the 2003 – 2007 Strategic Plan was developed. This includes, for example, the Family Court implementation which was mandated by the District of Columbia Family Court Act of 2001, as well as the work of the Standing Committee on Fairness and Access, the IJIS case management system, and the master space planning projects.

Our new Plan continues and builds upon the successes and initiatives of the earlier Plan.

Security and disaster preparedness have emerged as significant matters for the Courts since September 11, 2001, and have been included here as a new strategic issue. The remaining strategic issues, fair and timely case resolution, access to justice, a strong judiciary and workforce, a sound infrastructure, and public trust and confidence, are enduring goals carried forward from the earlier Plan.<sup>4</sup>

*Fair and timely case resolution* is the Courts' core mission. It is, therefore, the first strategic issue in the Plan. The D.C. Courts have long enjoyed a reputation for high quality justice, and are committed to ensuring fairness, due process and equal protection for all litigants. At the same time, the Courts recognize the truth in the statement, "justice delayed is justice denied" and are committed to resolving cases expeditiously. A major initiative under the new Plan is the implementation of time standards for case disposition, appropriate to their type and complexity, across all operating divisions of the Courts. The Courts will strive to balance the dual goals of fairness and timeliness by monitoring and reporting to the public on the effectiveness and impact of time standards on the quality of case outcomes.

*Access to justice* is an increasingly complex and important strategic issue for the D.C. Courts, as the District of Columbia's population becomes more diverse. As the seat of the Federal Government and home to a vibrant local community with a compelling history of its own, the city of Washington, D.C. attracts visitors from around the world. The area is highly transient, with many residents staying for only a few years while on a government or military assignment. The District is experiencing an explosive growth in the immigrant population, many of whom speak little or no English and have very different expectations of the Courts based on their native cultural experiences. Economic renewal of downtown areas coupled with a

<sup>4</sup> In the Courts' 2003-2007 Plan, *fair and timely case resolution* was titled *enhancing the administration of justice, a strong judiciary and workforce* was titled *promoting competence, professionalism, and civility*, and *a sound infrastructure* was titled *improving court facilities and technology*.

lack of affordable housing is driving many long-time residents to neighboring suburbs in Maryland and Virginia. A growing economic disparity between new residents, often well-educated with high incomes, and long-standing residents, many of whom are elderly or low-income, presents challenges for the Courts in providing equal access to justice. Unlike higher-income residents, low-income residents with little job security may not be able to leave work to attend a court hearing or serve as a juror. Similarly, younger residents may be comfortable conducting court business electronically, while older residents may not take advantage of electronic services offered by the Courts. The Plan recognizes the Courts' long-standing commitment to reducing barriers to access through the work of the Standing Committee on Fairness and Access and more recently, the D.C. Access to Justice Commission and other initiatives.

*A strong judiciary and workforce* are vital to the Courts' ability to administer justice effectively.

The D.C. Courts are fortunate to have a judiciary that is recognized as one of the most distinguished in the country and an administrative staff of highly talented and experienced public servants. The Courts recognize the importance of continuing education to prepare our judiciary and personnel to deliver justice in a constantly changing environment. The Plan envisions a work force which reflects the diversity of our community, and a work environment which promotes high achievement and job satisfaction. The Courts' Judicial Education and Management Training Committees will continue to work with the Center for Education and Training to achieve this goal.

**All citizens are equal before the law.  
The humblest is the peer of the  
most powerful.**

**John Marshall Harlan, Dissenting opinion, Plessy  
v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537, 559 (1896).**

The Courts must maintain a *sound infrastructure* that supports effective operations. Facilities must be habitable, functional and accessible, and technology must be leveraged to maximize staff productivity and public access. The Courts are nearly half-way through implementing a 10-year Facilities Master Plan program. Building on the successful implementation of an integrated case management system, the Plan highlights continued investment in technology to expand e-filing, public access to court records, and an improved jury management system.

Courts across the country, and indeed all public institutions, face security risks and threats that were unheard of a decade ago. With 150,000 cases filed annually and thousands of

people entering the courthouse every day, the D.C. Courts must ensure the safety and security of all court participants. Our location in the Nation's Capital presents additional security risks. The Plan identifies *security and disaster preparedness* as a key strategic issue, with personal safety, preservation of vital records, and continuity of operations in the event of an emergency, as important goals. The Courts' Security Committee will continue to make a major contribution to the Courts' efforts in this area.

*Public trust and confidence* in the Courts is essential to maintaining an orderly democratic society. People must have confidence that judges resolve cases fairly and impartially, without external influence. To ensure independent judicial decision-making, the Courts must make certain that the judicial branch is separate and independent from the executive and legislative branches which control funding and legislation that may have an impact on the Courts. Unlike other state courts, the D.C. Courts uniquely

**Court facilities should not only be efficient and comfortable, but should also reflect the independence, dignity, and importance of our judicial system ... It is difficult for our citizens to have respect for the Courts and law, and for those who work in the Court, if the community houses the Court in facilities that detract from its stature.**

**National Center for State Courts, 1991.**

interface with both local and federal executive and legislative branch agencies in carrying out our mission.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, as a public institution the Courts must be accessible and accountable. We seek to operate openly and to foster communication and information-sharing with the community, justice system agencies and stakeholders. A strategy of the Plan is increased community outreach to enhance public awareness of the role and operations of the D.C. Courts as well as to enhance our understanding of public perceptions and expectations of the judicial branch. The Courts also continue a major initiative implementing courtwide performance measures to enhance operations and public accountability in the Plan.

The District of Columbia Courts' mission is to protect rights and liberties, uphold and interpret the law, and resolve disputes peacefully, fairly and effectively, for the people of the District of Columbia. The residents of the Nation's Capital deserve a court system which exemplifies the best of American justice, and we capture this commitment in our vision of a courthouse which is *Open To All, Trusted By All, Justice for All*. The Plan offers a roadmap to achieve this vision.



<sup>5</sup>Criminal matters are prosecuted by both the local Attorney General of the District of Columbia and the United States Attorneys' Office. Adult probationers are processed by the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency, a federal agency, while juvenile probationers are supervised by the Social Services Division of the Family Court. The Courts are federally funded and therefore interface with the United States Office of Management and Budget and the United States Congress regarding funding.

# Mission of the District of Columbia Courts

**To Protect Rights and Liberties,  
Uphold and Interpret the Law,  
and Resolve Disputes Peacefully,  
Fairly and Effectively  
in the Nation's Capital.**

The Courts embrace the following ideals in performing its mission:

- ◆ The Courts will be accessible to all persons.
- ◆ The Courts will treat all persons fairly, courteously, and respectfully.
- ◆ The Courts will be responsible stewards of public resources, operating effectively, efficiently, and openly.
- ◆ The Courts will resolve individual cases based on the merits and the rule of law.
- ◆ The Courts will be impartial, free of bias, and rigorous in ensuring due process and equal protection under the law.

## Vision of the District of Columbia Courts



The Nation's Capital deserves a court system that exemplifies the best of American justice. In this spirit, the District of Columbia Courts will continuously strive to be a model court system that leads the nation in providing high quality justice while being accessible, innovative, and responsive to the changing needs of our diverse community.



# Values of the District of Columbia Courts

We Are Honored to Be in Public **S**ervice

We Are Committed to **E**xcellence in the Administration of Justice

We Are Responsive and **R**espectful to Others

We Seek to Make a **V**aluable Contribution Each Day

We Act With **I**ntegrity and Impartiality

We Embrace **C**hange For Its Potential to Make Us Better

We Strive to **E**xceed Expectations At All Times

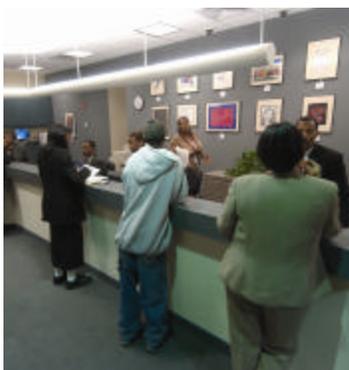
**Shared values bring a wholeness to individuals and organizations so they can weather the storms of change. We are what we value.**

**Sheila Murray Bethel**

## Strategic Issue 1

# Fair and Timely Case Resolution

Fair and impartial court processes are essential to the just resolution of disputes. We must ensure that cases are resolved on the merits in accordance with the rule of law, while providing due process and equal protection. Court proceedings and treatment of litigants must be free of bias, as well as the appearance of bias. At the same time, courts must resolve cases in a timely manner and avoid undue delay. The effective administration of justice requires a careful balancing of the goals of fairness and timeliness.



## Goal 1.1

The D.C. Courts will resolve cases fairly and impartially, without regard to race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, economic status, or mental or physical disability.

### Strategy 1.1.1

Foster understanding and respect for all people through diversity training for judicial officers and court personnel.

### Strategy 1.1.2

Ensure that jury pools reflect the characteristics of the D.C. community.

### Strategy 1.1.3

Enhance the quality and availability of legal representation for indigent parties.

### Priority Action:



Implement a new automated jury system that will enhance the juror summoning and qualification process, thereby increasing participation in jury service by all segments of the community.

## Fair and Timely Case Resolution



## Fair and Timely Case Resolution

### Goal 1.2

**The D.C. Courts will resolve cases promptly and efficiently.**

#### Strategy 1.2.1

Use time standards, alternative dispute resolution, and best practices to manage cases.

#### Strategy 1.2.2

Implement case scheduling practices to minimize delays for court participants.

#### Strategy 1.2.3

Provide accurate and timely information to judicial officers, court personnel, and other court participants.

#### Strategy 1.2.4

Ensure that magistrate and senior judges are effectively used.

#### Priority Actions:



Pilot staggered schedules for high volume calendars in all divisions to reduce waiting time for court participants and enhance case processing efficiency.



Perform reviews of IJIS case records to identify related parties in order to enhance informed judicial decision-making.



## Strategic Issue 2

# Access to Justice

Justice must be available to all members of our community. Differences such as culture, economics, language and physical traits can serve as barriers to justice. Courts must continually strive to identify and eliminate barriers to access, assist personnel in understanding persons with different needs, and provide appropriate information and services to ensure accessibility.



## Access to Justice

### Goal 2.1

**The D.C. Courts will promote access to justice for all persons.**

#### Strategy 2.1.1

Regularly review court processes and services to identify and eliminate barriers to access.

#### Strategy 2.1.2

Enhance access to the Courts through satellite or community-based service centers, videoconferencing, electronic filing and case information, and other means.

#### Strategy 2.1.3

Conduct periodic training to ensure that judicial officers and court personnel understand the needs of persons who face potential access barriers.

#### Strategy 2.1.4

Provide court forms and written materials that use plain language and are available in multiple languages.

#### Strategy 2.1.5

Enhance access for self-represented persons by providing *pro se* filing packets and offering on-site assistance in all operating divisions.

#### Strategy 2.1.6

Collaborate with mental health advocates and law schools to assist cognitively impaired court users.



## Access to Justice

### Priority Actions:

-  Convene focus groups with organizations serving the Latino community to explore ways to enhance access and services for court users.
-  Develop written materials that explain court processes and procedures (e.g., “What Happens in Arraignment Court,” and a glossary of legal terms for court users) to enhance understanding for the public.
-  Post Superior Court Rules online to assist attorneys and parties in conducting court business.
-  Implement wireless connectivity within the Moultrie courthouse as a convenience for court users.
-  Expand Internet availability of case information to enhance public access.



## Strategic Issue 3

# A Strong Judiciary and Workforce

The effective administration of justice depends upon a team of judicial officers and court personnel who are committed to public service and well-prepared to perform their duties. Continuing professional education and training is vital, since we administer justice in a constantly changing legal, technological and social environment. Our workforce must reflect the diversity of the community we serve in order to maintain the trust and confidence of the public.



## Goal 3.1

**The D.C. Courts will maintain a skilled and diverse workforce, and foster high achievement and job satisfaction.**

### Strategy 3.1.1

Provide training to judicial officers and court personnel which increases professional knowledge and skills and enhances job performance.

### Strategy 3.1.2

Promote diversity by attracting and retaining personnel of differing backgrounds and experiences.

### Strategy 3.1.3

Implement programs to enhance employee performance and satisfaction.

### Strategy 3.1.4

Develop an organizational culture that fosters open communication and information-sharing among judges, managers, and staff to enhance decision-making, teamwork, and a cohesive work environment.

### Strategy 3.1.5

Establish a workforce planning and development initiative to address future human capital needs.

### Priority Actions:



Expand the employee orientation program to include an introduction to the entire court system.



Enhance staffing resources of the Center for Education and Training to facilitate greater coordination with the Courts' Judicial Education and Management Training Committees.

## A Strong Judiciary and Workforce



## Strategic Issue 4

# A Sound Infrastructure

Court facilities must support efficient operations and command respect for the independence and importance of the judicial branch in preserving a stable community. Modern technology must be employed to achieve administrative efficiencies and enhance the public's access to court information and services.



## Goal 4.1

**Court facilities will be accessible to the public and support effective operations.**

### Strategy 4.1.1

Ensure that court facilities are easily navigable and accessible to all persons, particularly persons with disabilities.

### Strategy 4.1.2

Provide functional and comfortable work space for judicial officers and court personnel.

### Priority Actions:



Complete building renovations in accordance with the Courts' Facilities Master Plan.



Help the public better navigate the Court by implementing a Court Greeters Program.



Improve access to the Moultrie Courthouse while maintaining a safe environment.



Seek funding to address facilities enhancements needed to improve access for persons with disabilities.



Seek funding to enhance the security, functionality and habitability of the adult holding areas and the administrative offices occupied by the U.S. Marshals Service in the Moultrie Courthouse.

## A Sound Infrastructure



## A Sound Infrastructure

### Goal 4.2

**The D.C. Courts will employ technology to support efficient operations and informed judicial decision-making.**

#### Strategy 4.2.1

Ensure that technology investments are aligned with the Courts' strategic goals and are cost-effective.

#### Strategy 4.2.2

Maximize staff productivity by providing up-to-date, stable and reliable technology and customer support.

#### Priority Action:



Secure a new Court of Appeals case management system to replace the existing system which is over twenty years old.



## Strategic Issue 5

# Security and Disaster Preparedness

The people of the District of Columbia must have confidence that their courts are safe and secure, and will continue to operate during an emergency or disaster. Heightened security risks in the Nation's Capital pose significant challenges which we must continuously assess and plan for diligently. Court personnel must perform their daily duties without concerns for their safety or that of the public, and respond quickly and effectively in the event of an emergency.



## Security and Disaster Preparedness

### Goal 5.1

**The D.C. Courts will provide a safe and secure environment for the administration of justice and ensure continuity of operations in the event of an emergency or disaster.**

#### Strategy 5.1.1

Improve and continuously assess the safety of persons in the courthouse, and regularly test the effectiveness of security and emergency preparedness procedures.

#### Strategy 5.1.2

Provide routine communication and training on security and emergency preparedness procedures to judicial officers and court personnel.

#### Strategy 5.1.3

Ensure that the Courts' Continuity of Operations Plan is coordinated with all justice system components, continuously assessed and updated, and appropriately communicated.

#### Strategy 5.1.4

Implement procedures to protect the Courts' vital records in the event of an emergency or disaster.

#### Priority Actions:

 Enhance courtwide readiness to operate during emergencies by developing division-level Continuity of Operations Plans (COOPs) which integrate with the courtwide COOP.

 Ensure that staff are well-prepared to respond to security risks and emergencies by conducting mandatory staff training on security and emergency preparedness procedures.



## Strategic Issue 6

# Public Trust and Confidence

Trust and confidence in the courts are essential to maintaining an orderly democratic society. The people must perceive the judicial branch as fair and independent in resolving cases. At the same time, as a public institution courts are accountable for their performance and use of public funds. We must continually strive to be open and accessible to the community, while ensuring the independence of court decisions.



## Public Trust and Confidence



### Goal 6.1

**The D.C. Courts will inform the community about the role of the judicial branch, promote confidence in the Courts, and foster the sharing of information among justice system agencies and the community.**

#### Strategy 6.1.1

Inform the public about the Courts through town hall meetings, community forums, a Judicial Speakers Bureau, and judicial participation in Law Day events at area schools.

#### Strategy 6.1.2

Actively participate in District and justice system interagency committees, work groups and other forums to address community issues.

#### Strategy 6.1.3

Ensure adherence among court personnel, court participants and the judiciary to applicable professional practice standards and codes of conduct, dress and behavior.

#### Priority Actions:



Host a Courtwide Open House to inform the community about the Courts.



Develop a community outreach plan to enhance understanding of public perceptions and expectations about the Courts and to provide information to the public.

## Goal 6.2

### The D.C. Courts will be accountable to the public.

#### Strategy 6.2.1

Prepare budget submissions that support effective and efficient operations, and manage funds prudently.

#### Strategy 6.2.2

Ensure the availability of case and workload information, financial reports and audits, and budget submissions.

#### Strategy 6.2.3

Implement courtwide performance measures and regularly issue reports on how the Courts are performing.

#### Strategy 6.2.4

Establish programs and procedures based on proven practices and research that enhance the administration of justice.

#### Strategy 6.2.5

Seek independent assessments of court operations, programs, and services.

#### Strategy 6.2.6

Provide effective supervision of juvenile probationers to promote public safety and rehabilitation, and reduce recidivism.

#### Priority Action:



Develop mechanisms for reporting concerns about judicial and staff treatment of court participants to enhance trust and confidence in the Courts.

## Public Trust and Confidence



# About the District of Columbia Courts

The D.C. Courts are a fully unified court system comprised of the Court of Appeals, a court of last resort, the Superior Court, a trial court of general jurisdiction, and the Court System, which provides administrative support functions to both Courts. The National Center for State Courts consistently ranks the D.C. Courts as among the highest volume court systems in the United States, with more than 150,000 cases processed annually.

The Court of Appeals reviews all appeals from the Superior Court as well as decisions and orders of D.C. Government administrative agencies. The Court of Appeals is also responsible for attorney discipline and management of admissions to the District of Columbia Bar, which at more than 80,000 members is the second largest mandatory bar in the United States. The Court is assisted by the Committee on the Unauthorized Practice of Law, the Clients' Security Trust Fund, the Board on Professional Responsibility, and the Committee on Admissions. Final judgments of the Court of Appeals are reviewable by the Supreme Court of the United States.

The Superior Court handles the vast majority of non-administrative legal matters in the District of Columbia, with Civil, Criminal, Probate, and Tax Divisions, a Domestic Violence Unit, and a Family Court which processes child abuse and neglect cases, adoptions, divorce and custody suits, paternity and support, mental health and mental retardation, juvenile delinquency and supervision cases, and operates the District of Columbia's juvenile probation department. A Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division offers a comprehensive alternative dispute resolution program with arbitration, conciliation, and mediation services for civil and family cases. The Special Operations Division provides juror management, sign and foreign language interpretation, administrative processing of tax cases and notices of appeal, a law library, and on-site child care for parents attending court proceedings and court employees

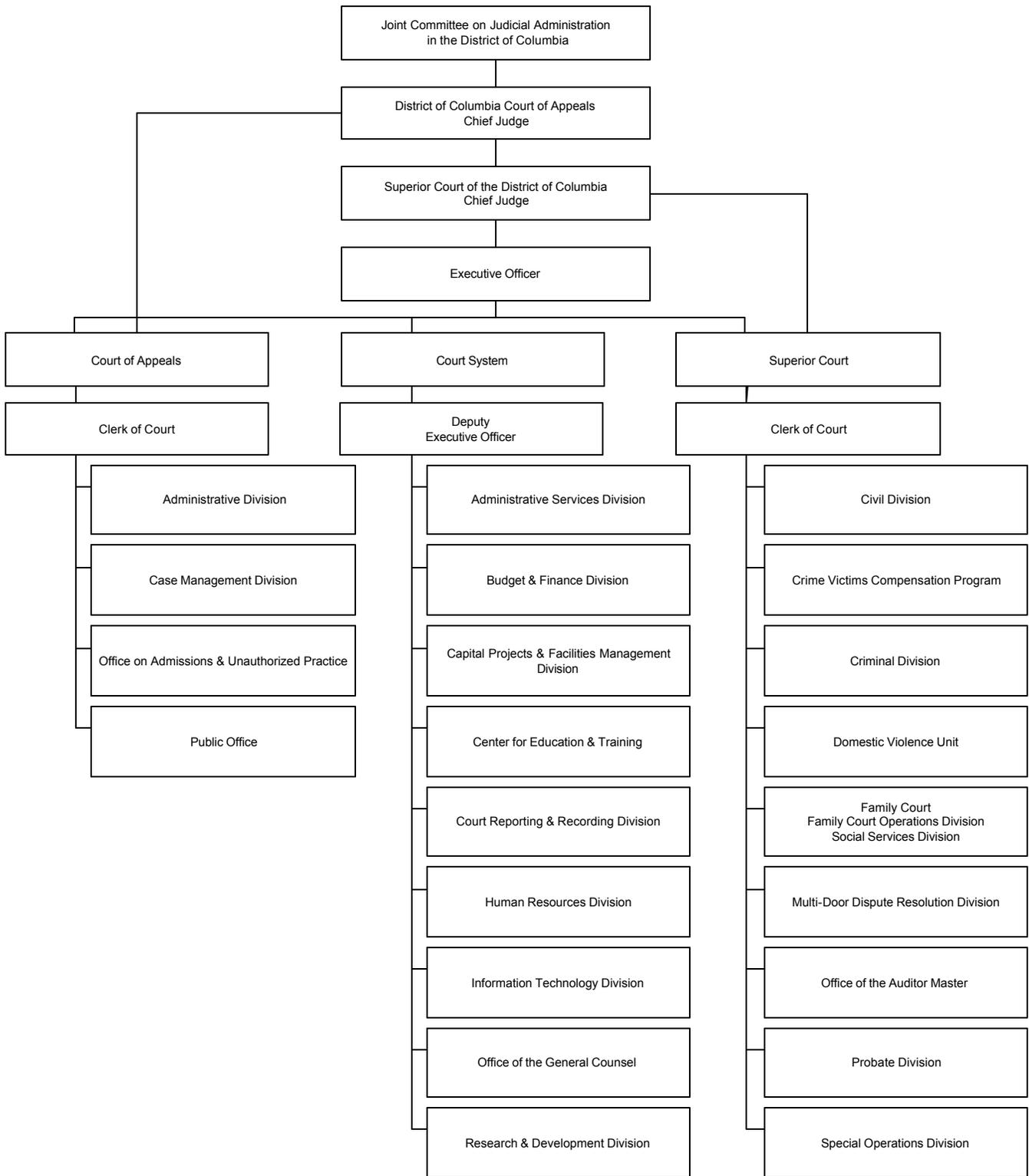
whose regular child care is unavailable. The Crime Victims Compensation Program assists victims of violent crime and their families with crime-related expenses such as medical care, counseling, funeral expenses, lost wages and support, and emergency housing. In addition to hearing cases involving local issues, the Superior Court is a frequent venue for matters that uniquely occur in the Nation's Capital such as citizens exercising their First Amendment rights to redress grievances against the Federal Government, or engaging in civil disobedience in an effort to highlight issues of national importance.

The Court System includes the Executive Office, the Administrative Services Division, the Budget and Finance Division, the Capital Projects and Facilities Management Division, the Center for Education and Training, the Court Reporting and Recording Division, the Human Resources Division, the Information Technology Division, the Office of the General Counsel, and the Research and Development Division.

The District of Columbia Courts have 127 judicial officers, including two Chief Judges, 66 associate judges, 25 magistrate judges, and 34 senior judges who hear cases on a part-time basis. The Courts employ a staff of approximately 1,100 employees. Court governance is provided by the Joint Committee on Judicial Administration, a policy-making body chaired by the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals and comprised of the Chief Judge of the Superior Court, an Associate Judge of the Court of Appeals, and two Associate Judges of the Superior Court. An Executive Officer is responsible for the administration of the Courts subject to the supervision of the Chief Judges. Unique among state courts, the D.C. Courts constitute the Judicial Branch of the District of Columbia Government and yet are directly federally funded. The Courts' annual budget is approximately \$250 million.

For more information about the D.C. Courts, visit our website at [www.dccourts.gov](http://www.dccourts.gov).

# District of Columbia Courts Organizational Structure



# Strategic Planning Leadership Council

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Associate Judge, D.C. Court of Appeals

Honorable Ann O'Regan Keary  
Associate Judge, D.C. Superior Court

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