

# Seventh Judicial District



Excellence Initiative Plan  
*Update – January 29, 2020*

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## **EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE SEVENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT**

**UPDATE - January 29, 2020**

The Seventh Judicial District is dedicated to support and advance the core mission of the courts of the State of New York, “by promoting the rule of law and serving the people of this State by ensuring just, effective and timely resolutions of all matters.”

We enthusiastically embrace the Chief Judge’s Excellence Initiative and welcome the opportunity to enhance our efforts to improve the level of justice services the citizens of this State have a right to expect and deserve.

The Seventh Judicial District adopts as its premise the belief that we can always improve our procedures to help deliver the highest level of justice services possible. We continuously re-evaluate our court processes and procedures to find ways to better serve the public.

We have embraced the Chief Judge’s call to pursue alternative dispute resolution where appropriate and have begun to explore new and unique ways to make dispute resolution an integral and fundamental part of the justice system.

## HIGHLIGHTS:

The stated goal in our District is to substantially reduce the number of cases over standards and goals. Although we continue to have work to do, we have met with some success and we continue to trend downward. For example:

- At the end of Term 13, 2019, our District has reduced the number of superior criminal cases pending over S&G by **84%** from our peak point in 2016 (Term 5). The District has reduced its percentage of felony cases pending over S&G to **8%**, as compared to **24%** in 2015.
- At the end of Term 13, 2019, Monroe County (our largest county) has reduced its percentage of felony cases pending over S&G to **8%** of the total pending cases, as compared to **29%** in 2015.
- To date, our District has reduced the number of superior criminal cases pending one year or over S&G by **100%** from the end of Term 1, 2016. In terms of raw numbers, there were 21 cases one year or more over S&G at the end of Term 1, 2016. Currently, there are **no** cases pending one year or over S&G.
- At the end of Term 13, 2019, our District has reduced the number of superior civil cases pending over S&G by **74%** from our peak point in 2016 (Term 2).
- At the end of Term 13, 2019 our District has reduced the number of family court cases pending over S&G by **49%** from our peak point in 2016 (Term 1). The District has reduced its percentage of family court cases pending over S&G to **4%**.
- At the end of Term 13, 2019 our District has reduced the number of city court cases pending over S&G by **67%** from our peak in 2016 (Term 6).

On June 21, 2016, Justice Doran convened an “Excellence Initiative Cabinet.” This group consisted of the District’s supervising judges and chief clerks in Monroe County, all given the stated task of developing plans to meet our Excellence Initiative goal. This Cabinet continues its work on the Excellence Initiative on a regular basis. It continuously strives to manage and advance the administration of justice for the people we serve. The dramatic reduction in cases pending over standards and goals in all courts is directly attributable to the hard work of the judges, chief clerks, and staff in our District.

A Trial Assistance Part (TAP) was created in Monroe County in June, 2016. The TAP part was instituted to help reduce the number of cases pending over standards and goals. TAP was a trial part in which trial-ready cases that could not be tried by the

regularly-assigned judge within standards and goals were tried. As a result of the hard work of all parties involved, including TAP and the “TAP Logistics Group”, Monroe County experienced a drastic reduction of the number of cases pending over standards and goals. At its peak in 2016, Monroe County had 258 cases over S&G. As of the end of Term 13, 2019, there were 19 cases over S&G, that is an **92%** reduction in cases pending over S&G. As a result of this successful reduction, formal TAP calendars have been suspended. The “TAP Logistics Group” continues to meet on a regular basis to monitor and provide oversight of standards and goals.

In 2012, our district implemented a bi-annual case management review (Case Management Action Plan) whereby each chief clerk in every court is required to meet with each of their respective judges to discuss cases pending over standards and goals and to work toward reducing the number of those cases. A bi-annual report by each chief clerk is generated after these meetings and reviewed. The most recent CMAP reports were generated and reviewed on November 27, 2019.

### **STATED PRIORITIES FOR 2020:**

- Focus on continuing efforts to reduce the number of cases over standards and goals in each of our courts.
- Aggressively expand current ADR programs to assure presumptive ADR for every civil case type.
- Pursue more opportunities for the education of judges and staff on topics including: new laws, new policies, the importance of cultural sensitivity and the elimination of implicit bias.
- Continued commitment to ensuring diversity, including outreach to the community regarding employment opportunities, career development for current employees and providing opportunity and experience for all attorneys.
- Dedication to providing excellent service to all court users and to ensuring access to justice for all people in the district.

## **STANDARDS AND GOALS**

### **SUPERIOR CRIMINAL CASES**

A working group was assembled in 2016 to monitor pending cases. This team meets on regular basis to discuss and identify cases with the goal of reducing the backlog of cases. When necessary, judges are contacted. Additional resources are available when needed to try cases. The Superior Criminal Courts S&G working group last met on October 31, 2019. At that meeting, it was determined that increased scrutiny should be given to the seven “outside Monroe” counties. It was determined that the same policies that had been put into effect in Monroe county, with great success, should be expanded to the other counties.

On a monthly basis, the Chief Clerks in each county provide a report of cases that are 120 days old or older and either do not have a trial date or have a trial date that is outside S&G. The task force continuously monitors these cases and individual judges are contacted on an “as needed” basis.

Originally in Monroe County, and now expanded to the other seven counties, guidelines were put in place for each Judge and these guidelines are still in effect:

- Each case is provided a trial date within two weeks of arraignment. The trial date must be within standards and goals.
- Judges are to schedule multiple trials for the same week and coverage will be provided, should the need arise.
- If a trial has to be scheduled outside of standards and goals, the Judge must consult with the Supervising Judge and provide an explanation.
- Adjournments of trials should be granted only sparingly and only when absolutely necessary. A scheduled trial may not be adjourned outside S&G without permission from the Supervising Judge.
- If a case must be scheduled for trial beyond standards and goals, a scheduling order must be issued and strict adherence must be assured.
- In all death cases, a scheduling order must be issued setting forth dates for motions, hearing(s), discovery and trial.

Monitoring of cases in Monroe County takes place on a daily basis. The Supervising Judge reaches out to individual judges when necessary to discuss old cases. One extremely effective tool for reducing cases over S&G has been the requirement that judges double/triple book trials. If the judge faces having two trials or more on the same week, another judge is found to handle the additional trial.

In Monroe County, each judge gets a weekly report of their pending cases and its S&G date.

## **CIVIL SUPREME**

As referenced above, with the success of the creation and implementation of a “task force” for superior criminal courts, a similar “task force” has been established for civil supreme courts. This team of clerks and law clerks are singularly focused on reducing the number of cases over standards and goals in all civil supreme courts in the district.

A civil supreme sub-group created a “best practices” guide in 2017. The chief clerks supply bi-monthly S&G reports and the working group reviews those cases and identifies any that are markedly over standards and goals.

Other actions have been identified as further “best practices” to help reduce the number of cases over standards and goals. Those include the implementation of bi-annual calendar calls in each court in the district and the creation of a district-wide uniform report sent to all judges at the beginning of each term, listing all of their cases pending over standards and goals. Judges that have an unusual number of cases pending over standards and goals have been identified and the Supervising Judge has asked these judges to run calendar calls on a more frequent basis until their backlog is cleared.

The Supreme Court Civil S&G working group last met on September 18, 2019.

The District’s mediator is active in promoting the program to judges and various bar associations in the District.

Innovative alternative dispute resolution techniques like summary jury trials are used to promote timelier dispositions.



## FAMILY COURT

As referenced above, with the success of the creation and implementation of a “task force” for superior criminal courts, a similar “task force” has been established for family courts. This team of clerks and law clerk(s) is singularly focused on reducing the number of cases over standards and goals in all family courts in the district. The entire team has met to review their procedures and to assess any impact it has had on the number of cases over standards and goals in the district. Additionally, Supervising Judge Gallagher continues to travel to each county in the district, on an “as needed” basis, to discuss the high priority of decreasing the number of cases pending over standards and goals and to offer assistance to the judges and staff. When necessary, Judge Gallagher has reached out to individual judges who are out of compliance with their pending caseload.

The group utilizes a S&G best Practices Guide to keep cases under S&G and to monitor those cases that go over.

The Family Court S&G working group last met on January 22, 2020. The next meeting will be held on April 22, 2020. At the July 17, 2019 meeting the group discussed implementing presumptive mediation into the best practices guide. This group was revamped in 2020 to include both judges who excel in S&G and those who have a relatively high number of cases over S&G. The group is focusing on tracking those cases that are more than 120 days over S&G.

In addition to monitoring cases for S&G purposes, as part of the Case Management Action Plan, chief clerks are asked to monitor and report on the number of weeks between the filing of a petition and the first appearance. Our goal is to ensure that the public understand that their cases are important and are being promptly heard.

The 7<sup>th</sup> JD has initiated a targeted court observation program with Jurists struggling to meet S&G benchmarks, to identify issues and generate strategies for improvement. The 7<sup>th</sup> JD has a designated Court Attorney to monitor Standards and Goals.

Recently, in Steuben County, the task force noticed a spike in the number of cases over standards and goals. After consulting with the Chief Clerk and the Judges, it was determined that the problem was due, in large part to the lack of available Attorneys for the Children serving Steuben County. In response, the Legal Aid Society of Rochester has opened an office in Steuben County to provide AFC services.

## CITY COURT

As referenced above, with the success of the creation and implementation of a “task force” for superior criminal courts, a similar “task force” has been established for city courts. This team of clerks and law clerk(s) is singularly focused on reducing the number of cases over standards and goals in all city courts in the district. The team began its work by identifying the reason for backlog of particular cases and to offer solutions. They meet on a regular basis to monitor and report. The team also met with the felony logistics group to gather ideas on how the successful methods utilized to reduce the backlog of felony cases could be emulated to work in city courts. Statistics are monitored on a weekly basis. In Rochester City Court, each judge receives a weekly report of their cases. Data was formulated to determine what case types are the most over S&G. That data indicated the bulk of cases over standards and goals were criminal mischiefs, AUOs, and DWIs. Strategies were discussed amongst the judges on how best to reduce the number of these cases pending over standards and goals.

The City Court S&G working group last reviewed the data over several days in December 2020. The next meeting is scheduled for the first quarter of 2020.

With respect to the city courts outside of Rochester, dashboard data is reviewed at the end of each term and there is follow-up by the clerks when there are concerns.

With the formulation of the “standards and goals task force” one idea generated from the successful reduction of felony cases over standards and goals was the implementation of a trial assistance part in Rochester City Court (the largest city court in the district). This part will be put into place, if necessary, and would be singularly tasked with presiding over trials to assist in trial backlog.

At the end of Term 9, 2019, the District has reduced the number of city court cases pending over S&G by **57%** from its peak point in 2016 (Term 6). With the implementation of these other tools, it is anticipated that a further reduction will occur.

## SURROGATE’S COURT

We have now included Surrogate’s Court in our bi-annual case management review (CMAP). We have developed Surrogate’s Standards & Goals working group, similar to the active working groups in our other courts tasked with ensuring compliance with Standards and Goals.

The Surrogate's Court S&G working group is in a data clean-up phase. All the courts in the 7th JD are working on their pending case reports, to work to dispose as many stale cases as possible, pending the next phase. The last meeting was held on July 19, 2019.

## **JUDICIAL OUTREACH**

Judicial outreach has been critical to the success of the Excellence Initiative. We continue to meet with the judges to discuss new procedures to decrease the number of cases pending over S&G and to ensure timely resolution of all cases within S&G:

- There has been regular and frequent contact between the supervising judges in all courts and their respective judges to discuss the Excellence Initiative and to assist the judges in proper case management.
- Justice Doran holds regular meetings with his supervising judges to ensure we remain on track with the Excellence Initiative and to discuss all other relevant topics relative to our District's administration.
- Justice Doran meets on a bi-annual basis with all of the judges in the District, and in smaller groups more regularly. The most recent meetings were held in December 2019 and the next meetings are to be held in June 2020. At each meeting, the importance of the Excellence Initiative is stressed.
- Judges are provided term numbers after each release.

## **ATTORNEY OUTREACH**

Attorney outreach has also been critical in our efforts with the Excellence Initiative:

- Administrative Justice Doran and his Supervising Judge for Criminal Courts (Judge Renzi) have met several times with the Monroe County District Attorney, Monroe County Public Defender, and Monroe County Conflict Defender to obtain their input and cooperation. These meetings are on-going and occur as needed. Problems and possible solutions are discussed.
- Administrative Judge Craig Doran has also met with various bar associations and attorney groups to discuss and explain the Excellence Initiative and to engage the attorneys and court partners in this endeavor.
- Meetings between Justice Doran and members of the bar are on-going. "Chambers chats" are scheduled with Judge Doran and members of the local bar associations. The last meeting was held on January 23, 2020.
- Justice Doran and Justice Taylor, the Presumptive ADR committee chair, have met with members of the various bar associations to discuss the implementation of presumptive ADR.
- Justice Doran sent a letter to the leaders of all area bar associations discussing the 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District ADR Plan as well as the Chief Judge's Court Consolidation Plan. Judge Doran asked the bar leaders to forward the letter to the bar association members.

## **OTHER EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE HIGHLIGHTS**

### **COURT SERVICES**

- The Seventh Judicial District has made a concerted effort to promote remote interpreting services throughout the District, resulting in a cost savings.
- The Seventh Judicial District initiated a Pilot Program for permitting issuance of temporary orders of protection by electronic means at offsite locations. In Monroe County, the first location was through the court's collaboration with the University of Rochester Medical Center HEAL Clinic and the Willow Domestic Violence Center. This provides victims of domestic violence in a hospital/medical center setting the opportunity to apply for TOPs electronically through Family Court. Thereafter, LifeSpan (a local elder abuse provider) was trained to be part of the Monroe County Pilot. This Pilot has been expanded to Ontario, Seneca, and Yates Counties.
- In September, 2017, the Department of Justice's Office of Violence Against Women Grant was awarded to UCS, the Society for the Protection and Care of Children, and Willow Domestic Violence Center. The grant is a three-year grant that encompasses three goals: first, the project will directly increase the provision of supervised visitation services in the City of Rochester and Monroe County; second, the project will promote the creation and implementation of local training for court-based and court-related personnel; and third, to develop a New York State blueprint model that will provide technical assistance to similarly situation communities. The grant award was for \$350,000.00.
- Rochester City Court implemented a plan commencing at the beginning of Term IV, 2018, whereby all housing actions commenced by the City of Rochester are assigned to one judge at specified times each month. With this formulation of a more streamlined assignment of city housing actions in Rochester City Court, it is expected that we will better be able to serve the Rochester community.
- Beginning in Term I 2020, Rochester City Court started a Specialized Housing Expedited Part (SHEP). The Part allows Small Claims actions brought by tenants who live in housing with reported and uncorrected Housing Code violations to have their actions heard in the shortest time period allowed for by law.
- Mandatory parental education is on-going in our District. A Focus Group has been formed and is chaired by the Hon. Richard Dollinger. The Focus Group has been meeting and will report as necessary on progress.

- An Opioid Court (Opioid Stabilization Part) began operation in Monroe County and Ontario County in December 2018. These Courts provide immediate intervention, treatment and supervision to high-risk defendants with severe opioid use disorders. Cases considered appropriate for OSP will be flagged for screening. Currently we are developing a process to operate a Centralized Opioid Arraignment Part in Monroe County to ensure that those who are arrested and have an opioid addiction receive intervention and treatment.
- Rochester's Human Trafficking Intervention Court recently received approval to operate as a Hub court and began taking cases from Monroe County Town and Village Courts in October 2019.
- The District's mediator continues to be successful in resolving civil cases throughout the District.
- A Custody and Visitation Mediation Diversion Project was initiated in Monroe County in August, 2018. Parties are referred to mediation directly from the court clerk's office and, if an agreement is reached, parties do not have to appear in court. The initial pilot was completed in November 2018 however, the pilot was deemed to be a success and in conjunction with the Center for Dispute Settlement, the number of cases diverted to mediation has been expanded.
- The Monroe County Supreme Court has implemented a Presumptive Mediation pilot for matrimonial actions. The program operates in a manner similar to the Presumptive Mediation program in Suffolk County. At the first conference, the parties are provided with a date and time to attend a mediation session. Future sessions are at the discretion/advice of the parties and the mediator.
- Justice Doran appointed Justice William Taylor to serve as the 7th Judicial District's ADR Coordinator, to oversee and enhance the many alternative dispute resolution pilots and programs currently underway in the district.
- Civil Restorative Justice Project - This project is entering its pilot phase with the identification of civil cases amenable to resolution using Restorative Justice principles that have proven to be successful in criminal cases. The project is based in the Monroe County Supreme Court with an Advisory Committee comprised primarily of attorneys who represent individual plaintiffs and defendants, municipalities, health care organizations, not-for-profits, general corporations, and parties in domestic relations disputes. The M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence in Rochester and a university professor with extensive research on international restorative justice issues, are also involved. Following the completion of this phase, anticipated by the fall of 2019, the Committee will focus on educating the members of community, the bar and the judiciary about Restorative Justice and providing a forum they can use to resolve civil cases using Restorative Justice techniques.

- All Family Courts in the 8 counties of the 7th JD are participating in the Child Support E- Share pilot which allows litigants to file for child support and paternity cases at their local child support unit and receive their court date and summons immediately. This work group which is comprised of stakeholders from the NYS Office of Temporary & Disability Assistance , DOT and the Courts has been formed to maximize the use of this technology . It is hopeful that this workgroup model will be expanding to the other participating counties throughout the state, as well as, ad additional family courts that currently are not participating in the Child Support E - Share project.
- Monroe County has developed a Behavioral Health Crisis and Assessment Center to divert low-level offenders who are in crisis. The Court has partnered with Monroe County to allow courts to consider this as a post-arraignment option to assist eligible defendants in obtaining treatment.

### **WELLNESS & STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

- The Seventh Judicial District held its Ninth Annual Fall Fest Wellness Event on October 7, 2019. This event offered a morning seminar on Race, Equity and Inclusion and an afternoon educational seminar followed by an evening of socializing and dinner. The two-track education seminar provides both a legal CLE agenda for Judges, Magistrates and Law Clerks and a track for District Court Managers. In addition, there was be a retirement specialist to offer information and appointments. Dinner was open to all District employees. The dinner event is a time for staff and judiciary to show support of one another and share an evening together outside of the courthouse.
- A district wide picnic was held on May 31, 2019 at a centrally located park in Ontario County. Staff grilled hamburgers and hot dogs and attendees provided additional dishes. The event allowed staff and judges to enjoy a relaxing evening together.
- Employee Wellness events are scheduled in each of the counties each month.
- A Cancer Support Group, open to judicial and non-judicial employees, has recently been formed. This group will offer assistance and resource material to newly diagnosed employees.
- Our District is offering supervisory training to new chief clerks and mid-level supervisors. This training offers enhanced management and supervisory training skills. In addition, it is anticipated that additional training will be offered to all interested staff and would include court-related topics and well-being.

- Enactment of a mentor judge program for recently elected local judges, pairing new judges with “veteran” judges for guidance, suggestions, etc.
- Each of the counties has engaged in active shooter drills to educate staff to be prepared in case of such an emergency.
- An ADR training program was held in two locations in the 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District on January 21, 2020. All Judges, court legal staff and chief clerks were encouraged to attend. The meeting focused on the implementation of the 7<sup>th</sup> JD plan as well as broadening the understanding of ADR.

### OPERATIONS

- In the Summer of 2019 Judge Doran visited each of the 8 counties to discuss operations, changes in the law (including Criminal Justice Reform and ADR) as well as to “check-in” with the managers and staff. The visits gave the staff an opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns.
- The Seventh Judicial District’s Administrative Judge’s Task Force continues to be extremely active. New steps have been taken to create “Scheduling/Use of Technology” and “Standardized Best Practices/Deployment of Staff” focus groups in each county in the District. Additionally, a Best Practices sub-committee is charged with creating a guide for judges to use in all courts in the District. Their work is on-going. The most recent meeting of the full Task Force was held on November 14, 2019.
- Justice Doran has convened a Seventh Judicial District SAFE Act Committee, comprised of each county’s sheriff, county clerk, and supreme and county court clerk. The committee has met three times, most recently on May 31, 2019. The mission of this committee is to discuss general firearms-related issues, MHL 9.46-related issues; and Safe Act permit re-certification protocols and processes. The work of the committee is on-going. A sub-committee was created to help develop a process and for handling and processing re-certifications. At the most recent meeting, the group discussed the implementation of the Extreme Risk Protection Order Law.
- In June 2017, the New York State Commission of Correction evaluated all of the court juvenile holding areas in the District. All holding areas were found to be in compliance.
- Each county in the district has begun implementation of plans for centralized arraignment parts. There are currently 6 CAPs in operation and a 7<sup>th</sup> will open on February 3, 2020.

- Since its inception, the 7JD has processed 6,706 CAP arraignments. Currently, the CAPs are being used for both arraignments and to file and process Desk Appearance Tickets.
- We are proactive in ensuring compliance with requirements in our Town and Village Courts, including:
  - UJCA § 2019-a compliance - 100% of Town Court compliance in 2019;
  - Education - 100% compliance for both Judges and Clerks;
- With the new legislation whereby the age of criminal responsibility was raised, a district “Raise the Age” task force was formed. During the summer of 2019 Justice Doran traveled to each county in the District and met with each county’s RTA team to ensure each county is ready for the expansion of the Raise the Age Law on October 1, 2019.
- Monroe County Family Court is a pilot site for a Language Line Remote Video Interpreting Pilot for Sign Language. The pilot went live on October 1, 2018. A mobile laptop is utilized for the probation intake on family offenses, front counter operations and in the DV Court itself. If this is successful, we can expand its use throughout the District and for Saturday arraignments in City Court. It is anticipated that an interpreter can be made available within 30 seconds and in 36 languages besides ASL.
- A new procedure designed to increase the number of cases resolved by Superior Court Information in Monroe County is being developed to commence in January, 2020. The procedure will be invoked post-divestiture from the local courts. Prior to that time the procedure will be used to screen DWIs.
- In Monroe County, a Master Calendar (a/k/a "Compliance Calendar) was created and is presided over by Justice Doyle. Each foreclosure is wheeled out to an assigned judge for the Order of Reference. The cases are then re-assigned to Justice Doyle for monitoring of receipt of the Judgment of Foreclosure and execution thereof. Justice Doyle, together with his law clerk and Referee Jaya Madhavan, handle all settlement conferences in Monroe County. Upon completion of the settlement conference, Justice Doyle places each case on a compliance calendar to ensure timely receipt of the appropriate papers to dispose of each case. In the fall of 2019, this procedure was implemented in both Ontario and Seneca Counties, with plans to use those two courts as hubs for district wide foreclosure calendars.
- At Justice Doran’s urging, the judges have made the Excellence Initiative a priority in their workload management. By way of example, Justice Taylor has made a local rule titled “Excellence Initiative” that requires “strict compliance with the Standards and Goals of the Unified Court System.”



- The Seventh Judicial District has taken a novel approach to the handling of lead and asbestos cases by designating a single judge to hear all such cases. This approach aids in resolution of the cases and preserves court resources.
- Justice Doran and Justice Taylor (7<sup>th</sup> JD ADR coordinator) convened a Presumptive Mediation Planning Committee to work on the implementation of ADR for every civil case type. The full committee met on May 22, 2019 and was divided into working groups based upon case type. Those working groups continued to meet and they all submitted reports to Justice Taylor on July 19, 2019. Those reports were combined into a cohesive report that was approved by Judge Marks as the 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District presumptive ADR Plan.

### **COMMUNITY OUTREACH & DIVERSITY**

- Our District continues its community outreach in notifying the public of civil service exam opportunities and our on-going community diversity efforts. Judge Doran has appeared on WDKX, a local urban contemporary radio station to promote the clerical series exams. Employment outreach through a variety of community organizations resulted in an over 400% increase in the number of minority applicants who took the Clerical Assistant Examination in 2019 versus 2014.
- Additionally, the Monroe County Jury Office is committed and active in its on-going jury diversity efforts. The District, on a periodic basis, welcomes students and staff from Monroe Community College's Educational Opportunities Program. On these visits to the Hall of Justice, Rochester, NY, students are advised of the career opportunities available within the courts. Hiring and testing procedures are explained and students were encouraged to sign up to receive job and exam alerts. This was the fourth annual visit from MCC students. Access to Justice is a vital part of our District.
- We have an active student ambassador-internship program, community outreach and court tour program. Law school students, interns, and externs are placed in many different courts and offices, while gaining real-life work experience. There is also a vibrant court tour program.
- There is a Help Center located at the Monroe County Hall of Justice library that is open 35 hours per week. This Help Center is staffed the majority of the time by court personnel, with the remaining time by members of the Volunteer Legal Service Project. The Help Center has provided services to 3,354 people, to date, in 2018.

- There is currently a Help Center operated by VLSP that operates through the Rochester Public Library. The mission of the VLSP program is to ensure the existence of a panel of skilled volunteer attorneys to resolve legal problems. The goal is to ensure that there are no unmet civil legal needs of the poor. VLSP is currently working to expand the program.
- Justice Doran wrote an op-ed piece on the Chief Judge's Excellence Initiative and the District's efforts in timely resolving cases. This op-ed piece was distributed to local newspapers during the first week of January, 2018.
- Justice Doran and Justice Taylor authored an op-ed about the exciting changes the presumptive ADR program will bring to the court system. The piece was published in local papers in June 2019.
- Prior to the enactment of the GENDA legislation, the 7th JD had replaced all Men's/Women's single use/single use handicap restroom signs to "Gender Neutral" signs. This process paved the way for an open dialogue and smooth transition to the OCA multi-use restroom signs.
- Building entrance signs are being developed for entrances to all courthouses throughout the 7th JD that highlight the court's mission, its non-discrimination policy, restroom policy and provide an avenue to register customer service complaints.
- Our District is collaborating with The Center for Youth and other court partners to help address homeless LGBTQ youth in Rochester to help provide court and systems navigation support. A house was donated to the Center for Youth for this project. This collaboration is in its infancy but it is anticipated that it will have a positive impact on this homeless youth population.
- Creation of a local courtroom interpreter internship program in conjunction with the University of Rochester (and other local colleges) designed to introduce courtroom interpreting as a potential career path.
- The New York Permanent Commission on Access to Justice announced that the Seventh District will be a Justice For All Strategic Action Plan implementation site, building on the Suffolk County pilot. Our District is the second site in the state for this Justice For All project pilot. A Justice for All Leadership Committee was formed and has met. A Justice for All Advisory Committee has also been formed and is continuing to meet. Six focus groups have also been formed.
- In honor of 2019 LGBTQ Pride Month, and with the partnership of the Failla Commission, the District hosted a seminar entitled "The Spark in the Tinder: Stonewall" on June 12, 2019.

- A JUST LAW initiative has been instituted and the first year has been completed. J.U.S.T. L.A.W. is a collaborative effort among the City of Rochester, 103.9 WDKX, The Rochester Black Bar Association, The Rochester City School District and the Seventh Judicial District to help students understand the law and the legal system. Over 450 middle school students submitted essays on the topic "What Justice Means to Me...". The top 12 essay writers were recognized at a "Step Jam" event and on March 14, 2019 all 12 essay winners were honored at a ceremony at the Hall of Justice in Rochester. The winners read their essays and were presented with their prizes - cash and Samsung tablets. On April 6, 2019 all 12 winners were matched with a mentor through the Rochester Black Bar association. Planning is underway for the 2019-2020 JUST LAW competition.
- As a result of Justice Rosenbaum's visit to School No. 29 as part of the JUST LAW program, he formed a mock trial team of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders. Justice Rosenbaum has made over 5 visits to the school to discuss the "case" and hold "pre-trial conferences". On April 11, 2019, 57 children visited the Hall of Justice in Rochester where 19 children participated as attorneys, witnesses and jurors in the mock trial.
- A Teen Court has been active in our District for a number of years and is housed at the Hall of Justice, Rochester, NY
- A number of landlord/tenant issues were raised by the media and tenants during the winter of 2017-2018. As a result, a committee of a variety of agencies/tenants/landlord representatives/court staff was formed and has met on several occasions. With the Justice for All initiative, this committee is now under the auspices of one of its focus groups.
- A "Faith Leaders" event was held in Monroe County on April 25, 2019. An invitation was extended to a large and diverse group of local clergy to come and learn about the courts. The event was a success. A standing Seventh Judicial District Clergy Outreach Committee has now been formed (as a subcommittee of the AJ Task Force) charged with planning future events. Two other events were held in 2019.
- Justice Doran met with members of the Franklin Williams Commission in June, 2018. In preparation of this meeting, a Seventh Judicial District Outreach-Access to Justice Report was prepared.
- A Rochester Community Response Team (CRT) has been formed. Justice Doran is a member of this team. The CRT is an initiative proposed by a group of community leaders in positions that provide opportunity to address systemic disparities. These volunteers organized under the auspices of "Unite Rochester" work to promote communication, trust, community education, and a positive, non-violent plan to respond to events or issues of race and racism. The CRT will also

engage in activities to raise awareness about race and racism, and inspire a more inclusive and creative approach to solving community problems.

- In March 2019 Judge Doran convened an Attorney Courtroom Equality (ACE) working group to develop a program to encourage veteran attorneys to allow their junior attorneys an opportunity to argue motions and engage in trial presentation. The group developed a statement, distributed it to all Supreme, County, Family and City Court Judges in the 7th Judicial District and asked the judges to indicate if they wished to participate in the program. Those wishing to participate will have his/her name listed as a participant on the 7th Judicial District web page. In order to encourage courtroom equality, a participating judge can offer additional time or the opportunity for more than one attorney to present to the court. This policy is aimed at addressing the report of the New York State Bar Association on gender disparity in the courtroom. An op-ed on this topic was written by Judge Doran and published by several local papers.
- The Access to Justice Committee held training regarding “Mindful Communication and Service for Transgender People” on January 10 and January 11, 2019. The training covered common language, best practices, ethical and legal responsibilities and an introduction to transgender name change cases for both adults and minors.
- The Monroe County Courts participate in the County's Community Threat Assessment Committee. The committee meets every two weeks to provide information coordination and to prevent fragmented responses and threat management gaps.
- In January 2019, Justice Doran attended a training sponsored by the Race, Equity and leadership (REAL) core team titled "Real Action 101: Advancing Racial Equality". The result of that training was an invitation to continue with a second project, co-sponsored by REAL and the Racial Equity and Justice Initiative (REJI) to commit to addressing racism at all levels. The project will be implemented in three phases. The first phase, currently underway, involves the creation of a Change Team comprised of court personnel from all levels of the 7th Judicial District Court System. This team has begun a conversation regarding racism, question internal policies and procedures, and form a structure to enact change
- Justice Doran, working with the Monroe County Bar Association, has made available in all courtrooms and to all judges in the Monroe County Hall of Justice and the City of Rochester Public Safety Building, cards to be used to assist lawyers in need of assistance to get help.
- Judge Doran has authored and had published an Op-Ed in support of Chief Judge DiFiore’s Court Consolidation Plan. A second OP-Ed has been authored

discussing the benefits of the Court Consolidation Plan relative to geographic and demographic diversity.

- On January 14, 2020, Judge Dollinger, the Supervising Judge for Matrimonial matters, held a meeting with the staff and matrimonial attorneys in Steuben County to discuss the use of state forms, presumptive mediation and mandatory parental education. Judge Dollinger plans similar meetings in the other counties of the 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District.

### TECHNOLOGY

- The 7th JD is actively engaged in the Courtroom Modernization Program that will provide enhanced technology into our courtrooms. The technology will include audio, integrated For The Record (FTR) recording capacity, telephone and other enhancements. The 7th JD received permission to install this technology in 40 courtrooms. To date, three have been completed with the remainder being targeted for completion by the end of May.
- In collaboration with DOT, Monroe County Family Court has been piloting a "Check In Module" that will allow attorney/litigants to be checked in electronically, notify fact finders as to what cases are ready to be called and notify litigants that their case is ready to be heard in court. Lobby monitors will be display the status of cases all with the goal of expediting court cases.
- The district has embraced the NYSCEF E-Filing Program for Supreme Court civil cases and Surrogate's cases. All counties in the District currently have e-filing in civil and surrogate cases.
- UCMS Supreme Civil is being implemented throughout the District. Monroe County was the first "ADBM County" in the state to make this transition. Currently, five of the eight counties in the District have made the transition. The transition for the remaining three counties will be completed by June of 2020.
- Six of the eight 7<sup>th</sup> JD counties have opted to implement the UCMS criminal data base using the non-conversion of data method in 2020.
- A Criminal Court E-filing working group has been formed and is being chaired by Supervising Judge of Criminal Courts Alex Renzi. Monroe County was selected as a pilot county for criminal case e-filing. This pilot is expected to commence in 2020. Yates county has been selected as the second pilot site for the 7th JD.