

Seventh Judicial District



State of the 7th Judicial District March 2021

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State of the 7th Judicial District

Introduction

The Seventh Judicial District is dedicated to supporting and advancing 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 recognize that “the assurance of equal justice under law” is our most important responsibility and therefore our guiding principle.

We 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. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided challenges in ensuring access to justice for all court users. We have seized upon the opportunities presented by these challenges to expand our ability to provide access to court proceedings to those facing both physical and technology barriers.

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.

Stated Priorities for 2021

Towards the New “Better than Normal”

- Encourage community dialogue to increase understanding of racial equality issues and collaborate on unique and novel solutions to problems with a goal of enhancing trust, removing racial barriers to justice, and ensuring equality.
- Enhance and expand the use of virtual court proceedings, including trials, evidentiary hearings, and ADR.
- Work with court partners to bridge the digital divide, ensuring that all court users have access to virtual proceedings.
- Proactively address what is anticipated to be the backlog of cases created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Excellence Initiative Standards & Goals

In 2016, all courts established Standards & Goals working groups to address the pending case load and to create best practices to reduce the number of cases over standards and goals. These working groups were highly effective and dramatically reduced the number and percentage of cases over standards and goals. These working groups have met on a quarterly basis since 2016 to continue their work and address new issues that have arisen.

For example, at the end of Term 13, 2019, our District had reduced the number of superior criminal cases pending over S&G by 84% from our peak point in 2016 (Term 5). The District had reduced its percentage of felony cases pending over S&G to 8%, as compared to 24% in 2015. To effectuate this result, the working group developed several guidelines regarding the scheduling of criminal matters and created a Trial Assistance Part to ensure the timely trial of all cases.

The efforts of the District, since 2016, in reducing the number of cases over Standards & Goals has put the District in a position to effectively address the backlog of cases that we face as we emerge from the COVID protocols. As we had a relatively small inventory of “old” cases at the start of the pandemic, we were able to keep pace with new filings, even during the reduced operations of the pandemic protocols. For example, during 2020, dispositions in superior civil cases were within 1% of new filings. Additionally, the number of superior civil cases over Standards & Goals decreased by over 20% during 2020.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, while the pre-pandemic focus on Standards & Goals could not be maintained, on a statewide basis, the Supervising Judges of the 7th Judicial District were encouraged to continue to monitor the cases over S&G, and the working groups continued to meet to discuss strategies to address the volume of cases as we emerge from the pandemic. The protocols that we put in place to address Standards & Goals in 2016 are being reconsidered and revamped. We are confident we will be able to meet the challenges created by the COVID-19 backlog.

Specifically, to address the felony criminal cases over S&G, the working group has determined that it is appropriate, in Monroe County, to reinstitute the Trial Assistance Part. All trials will occur within this trial part and be presided over by specially selected judges. In the first phase, the trial part will address the oldest cases where the defendant is incarcerated. In another effort to reduce the backlog of cases, the procedure to obtain dispositions in pre-indictment felony cases has been re-invigorated to reduce the number of cases requiring presentment to the grand jury and to ensure a timely disposition. In 2020, as a result of an effort to engage in robust pre-indictment conferencing, in Monroe County, the 7th Judicial District’s largest county, pre-indictment pleas increased by over 50% from the previous two years.

Judicial outreach has been critical to our success in reducing cases over Standards & Goals. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we regularly met 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. During the pandemic, we continued these meeting and emphasized accessing information available through the Office of Court Research, in order to address pending matters and prepare to address the backlog of cases.

Justice Doran holds monthly meetings with his leadership team to ensure we remain on track with the Excellence Initiative and to discuss all other relevant topics relative to our District's administration.

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. In addition, Justice Doran meets on a regular basis with all the judges in the District, and in smaller groups more regularly. The most recent meeting was held on February 23, 2021. At each meeting, the importance of ensuring that pending cases are addressed in a timely fashion is stressed. Judges are encouraged to hold as many appearances as possible virtually. Our efforts to ensure the timely resolution of cases included proving the judges with the resources necessary to address their cases virtually, including access to technology and suggested protocols.

Our work to ensure that cases are timely addressed has been enhanced by our working relationships with our court partners. Administrative Judge Craig Doran and the Supervising Judge for Criminal Courts 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.

Justice Craig Doran also meets with various bar associations and attorney groups to discuss and explain the COVID-19 protocols and to engage the attorneys and court partners in best serving the needs of all court users. The last meeting was held on January 7, 2021.

Other Court Initiatives

Community Outreach & Diversity

- The 7th Judicial District Administrative Judge’s Task Force (a group of over 180 court and non-court personnel who are working to improve the operations of the 7th Judicial District, the wellness of the judges and employees of the 7th Judicial District and the district’s relationship and interactions with the community) has been restructured to prioritize and emphasize those issues that are of particular importance at this moment in time. We have re-configured our many diversity and inclusion efforts into a new a new focus group – REEP (Real-Time Focus Group to Eliminate Implicit Bias, Enhance Trust, Promote Equity and Diversity).
- Our District continues its community outreach in notifying the public of civil service exam opportunities and our on-going community diversity efforts. Justice 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.
- Beginning in 2019, Justice Doran had a series of meeting with representatives from the Deaf & hard of hearing community because of concerns raised by the community regarding both the quality of the interpreting services and the procedure for addressing complaints. As a result of the meeting, an informative video was created for the community to reference and a procedure was established to efficiently address concerns.
- 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, pre-pandemic, was open 35 hours per week. This Help Center was 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.
- In early April 2020, the 7th Judicial District and the Volunteer Legal Services Project launched the virtual legal help center and have since helped over 130 court users.
- 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.
- The New York Permanent Commission on Access to Justice announced that the Seventh District is a Justice for All Strategic Action Plan implementation site. Each of the five working groups of the Justice for All initiative continued robust work and adjusted operations during the pandemic. For example, the Community Justice Council, while focusing its efforts on providing access to justice to the most vulnerable population, held virtual meetings whose attendance exceeded prior in-person meetings. Robust discussion was held regarding creative means to inform and engage the public.
- The JUST LAW initiative has completed its second year. 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. Each year, over 450 middle school students submit essays. The top 12 essay writers are publicly recognized and honored at a ceremony. The winners read their essays and are presented with their prizes. The winners are also matched with a mentor through the Rochester Black Bar association.
- A Teen Court has been active in our District for several years and is housed at the Hall of Justice, Rochester, NY.
- Several 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. The next clergy day is being planned for April 13, 2021 and will address the housing crisis.
- In March 2019 Administrative Judge Craig 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. 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 Justice Doran and published by several local papers.
- 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.
- The 7th Judicial District participates in the Rochester Racial Equity and Justice Initiative (REJI) to commit to addressing racism at all levels. The first phase 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. Most recently, in February of 2021, the team participated in a REJI workshop held over two days.
- 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.

Court Services

- 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.
- Just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 7th Judicial District worked with each of the counties in the district to address unique needs of Domestic Violence victims seeking court assistance. By collaborating with community partners and law enforcement courts in all counties in the 7th JD developed plans allowing for victims to safely access assistance filing petitions without leaving the courthouse. When the pandemic shifted our courts to virtual operations, court staff in all 7th JD counties responded in kind, adjusting each plan to allow for seamless, remote access to assistance with filing petitions for orders of protection, including virtual or socially distanced access to victim's advocates. The system proved invaluable, as the eight counties heard over 3,400 requests for temporary orders of protection.
- 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 period allowed for by law.
- Development is underway for a kiosk on the first floor of the Hall of Justice in Monroe County to allow not-for-profit agencies to be able to interface with court users and provide information and services.
- To address the housing crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic, all eight counties in the district developed a procedure to offer legal counsel and on-site ADR to 100% of tenants facing eviction.
- 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 are 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.

- In 2019, Auburn City Drug Court received a \$500,000, three-year Bureau of Justice Assistance grant for treatment court services.
- In 2020, Steuben County Drug Court received a \$395,835, three-year Bureau of Justice Assistance grant for treatment court services.
- Rochester's Human Trafficking Intervention Court received approval to operate as a Hub court and began taking cases from Monroe County Town and Village Courts in October 2019.
- In 2019, the Rochester HTC received a \$728,300 Bureau of Justice Assistance grant to support HTC operations.
- 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.
- Center for Dispute Settlement (CDS) is our local Community Dispute Resolution Center, which partners with the District to provide mediation services for certain Family Court matters and Matrimonial matters. As part of the Access to Justice Initiative, the 7th JD now provides language interpreting services to CDS for all cases that are referred by our courts to CDS. This new resource will allow our courts to refer litigants who need language interpreting services to CDS for ADR services.
- In 2020 the 7th Judicial District added a part-time ASL staff interpreter enhancing access to language for deaf and hard of hearing court users.
- The Seventh Judicial District has made a concerted effort to promote remote interpreting services throughout the District, resulting in a cost savings.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

- Throughout 2020, despite the pandemic protocols, 234 judicial referrals to the 7th Judicial District’s in-house trained mediators were made; 201 mediations were held; and 159 settlements were achieved, for a settlement rate just below 80%, which is commensurate with the historic settlement rates in our Mediation Part.
- We recently launched our Mediator Panel program to serve as another resource for litigants to resolve their claims. The initial Panel consists of Supreme Court Civil/Commercial mediators and we are now accepting applications for mediators who handle Supreme Court-Matrimonial, Family Court and Surrogates Court matters. We publicize the Panel through our website, judicial staff, and a CLE held on November 19, 2020. Justices in our District refer counsel/litigants to both our Supreme Court mediators and the Panel and litigants select the mediator of their choice.
- To bolster the existing presumptive ADR, in Term 1 2021, the District launched a mediation pilot in the Supreme Court-Civil Division, in which all post-Note of Issue cases (not previously mediated) and certain selected pre-Note of Issue cases are mandatorily referred to the Mediation Part for ADR with our Court Attorney Referees/Supreme Court Mediators. Although mediation is not mandatory for the parties, we are realizing success through this program in its early phase. Of the 63 cases referred to mediation in January 2021 through this pilot, the two mediators have already scheduled or held 15 initial conferences and 13 mediations and have settled five (5) cases, with an additional 14 pending possible mediation.
- In November of 2020 the District began hosting “settlement days” for multiple insurance companies, through which we dedicate certain days to a given insurance company to mediate several cases in one day.
- Recently, the District established a Consent to Mediate pilot which permits attorneys/litigants to voluntarily consent to mediation at any time during litigation, without the need for a status conference or Order of Referral to Mediation. When both parties voluntarily sign a Mediation Consent Form, the case is directed immediately into mediation with our mediators.
- The Center for Dispute Settlement (CDS) is our district’s sole CDRC. In all counties except Monroe, all Article 6 matters are screened for eligibility for referral to CDS for mediation. Pre-COVID, 76% of mediations conducted by CDS yielded settlement.
- 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.

- All Family Courts in the District utilize The Child Welfare Court Improvement Project's Child Permanency Mediation Program for Article 10 matters. This program was first utilized in 2019 as a pilot by our Monroe County Supervising Family Court Judge Stacey Romeo and was opened to all Family Court judges in 2020.
- OCA selected Monroe County to begin a presumptive mediation pilot program for contested matrimonial matters. Pursuant to the Pilot Plan, the assigned judge or CAR holds a preliminary conference within 45 days, during which ADR is discussed with counsel and counsel is required to discuss the issue with their clients. If no agreement on an ADR process is reached, a second preliminary conference is held. Upon completion of discovery and/or filing of the Note of Issue, and in post-judgment matters, the Court again reviews the matter for mediation. The district also offers divorce mediation and custody/visitation mediation through CDS and we are currently exploring the possibility of utilizing a CAR who has mediation training and experience to conduct mediations in matrimonial matters.
- 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.

Wellness & Staff Development

- The 7JD offered four Office of the Inspector General/ Bias Matters virtual training programs: Judiciary, Court Leadership Group, and 2 sessions for non-judicial employees.
- Dan Lukasik, UCS Judicial Wellness Coordinator presented Wellness Programs for both the Judiciary and non-judicial staff. Managing Your Mental Health During COVID-19 and Mindfulness and Well-Being programs.
- 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 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. Plans will be initiated for a second picnic to occur as COVID conditions permit.
- We look forward to offering employee wellness events 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 7th JD on January 21, 2020. All judges, court legal staff and chief clerks were encouraged to attend. The meeting focused on the implementation of the 7th JD plan as well as broadening the understanding of ADR.

Operations

- Across the District, and most notably in Monroe County, new procedures have been put in place to increase the number of cases resolved by Superior Court Information. The primary goal is to increase a resolution in post-divestiture cases. However, in all counties, the attorneys are permitted to request a conference with a superior court judge in a pre-divestiture case.
- The Special COVID Intervention Part (SCIP) began in Rochester City Court and Monroe County Court (for town and village matters) in September of 2020 and was thereafter expanded to all the county courts within the Seventh Judicial District. The part provided an opportunity for tenants facing eviction to legal access representation as well as community and government services at one central location. In addition, all cases were offered the opportunity to engage in on-site immediate ADR.
- A working group titled Moving Forward has been created to address operations during the COVID pandemic. The goal is to develop a new, better-than-normal, model for court-related operations, review what worked well and what could have been performed better in order to improve future operations, and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas.
- There are two major construction projects underway that will enhance court operations. In the Monroe County Hall of Justice, the fifth floor is being renovated to create a new Help Center/Law Library, two courtrooms, a jury room and an attorney research room. The Steuben County Courthouse Renovation Project consolidates court operations located in three buildings into one building. This renovation creates additional chambers, courtroom, and office space. Additionally, planning continues with the Courts and the City of Auburn to identify additional space for chambers, courtroom, and office space to meet the court's needs.
- In Monroe County, a Foreclosure Master Calendar (a/k/a "Compliance Calendar) was created and is presided over by the District-Wide Coordinating Judge for Foreclosures. 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, a foreclosure hub court was created in Ontario County, and presided over by Justice Doran. The Ontario hub hears cases from Livingston, Ontario and Steuben Counties.
- All 7 of the "rural" counties of the 7th Judicial District have a Centralized Arraignment Part (CAP). The opening of the 7th CAP, in early 2020 allowed us, on March 30, 2020, to hold 100% of arraignments virtually - a mere 14 days after Judge Marks issued Administrative Order 68 requiring virtual arraignments where possible.

- In 2020, the 7th Judicial District CAPs held over 10,000 arraignments.
- 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 2020
 - Education - 100% compliance for both Judges and Clerks
- In the Summer of 2019 Administrative Judge Craig 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.
- Although Justice Doran’s “open-door” policy remained in place during the pandemic, Justice Doran held scheduled virtual open office hours to allow judges and employees an opportunity to discuss any issues or questions with him. Justice Doran is planning virtual “town hall” meetings for the spring of 2021.
- The Seventh Judicial District’s Administrative Judge’s Task Force continues to be extremely active and has held several meetings during the pandemic. The group was restructured and reinvigorated. Each of the operations working groups has been asked to begin to meet again to determine what changes should be made to enhance operations.
- 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 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 2019 Justice Doran and Justice Taylor (7th 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 Chief Administrative Judge Marks as the 7th Judicial District presumptive ADR Plan.

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, 20 have been completed.
- Monroe County is participating in the National Center for State Courts' Remote Jury Selection Pilot Project along with six other states. This project uses videoconferencing technology platforms to select juries, eliminating the need to bring large groups of potential jurors into the courthouse. We are preparing to make our resumption of jury trials better than "normal". We aim to be prepared to conduct a trial using remote voir dire upon the resumption of jury trials.
- Three judges in the 7th Judicial District participated in a pilot to test NY Bench for Supreme Civil cases. That pilot has concluded, and the program expanded all JSC and acting JSC using UCMS superior civil.
- Auburn City Court is one of six courts working with the Center for Court Innovation to provide teleservices for drug courts. The project allows the court to improve and increase its use of teleservices for treatment, supervision, and court oversight.
- 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 displaying 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, six of the eight counties in the District have made the transition.
- Four of the eight 7th JD counties have transitioned to UCMS criminal.
- Monroe County was selected as a pilot county for criminal case e-filing. Yates county has been selected as the second pilot site for the 7th JD.