



UNIFIED COURT SYSTEM
SIXTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
THE KILMER BUILDING
31 LEWIS STREET, FIFTH FLOOR
BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK 13901
Phone: (607) 240-5350
Fax: (212) 295-4927

LAWRENCE K. MARKS
Chief Administrative Judge

VITO C. CARUSO
Deputy Chief Administrative Judge
Courts Outside New York City


EUGENE D. FAUGHNAN
District Administrative Judge

PORTER L. KIRKWOOD
District Executive

AMANDA WHALEN-GARNAR
Deputy District Executive

MEMORANDUM

To: All Judicial and Non-Judicial Personnel

From: Hon. Eugene D. Faughnan, J.S.C., Administrative Judge 6th JD 

Dated: July 16, 2021

RE: Approval for Phase I : 6th JD Court Officer Pilot Project

On May 3, 2021, I submitted a concept memorandum to DCAJ Caruso and DCAJ-JI Mendelson for a Court Officers Pilot Program to address the recommendations in the Special Advisor's report (amended highlights are annexed as Exhibit "A"). On May 10th, I had the opportunity to meet (via Teams) with Chief Magliano and Chief Baccellieri. It was an absolute pleasure meeting with them. Their passion for their profession and their commitment to improving the Unified Court System are truly inspiring. Both agreed to join our 6th District AJ's Diversity Task Force, and both assigned Lieutenants from the Academy to assist in the development of this plan. While the Chiefs enthusiastically supported our pilot proposal, they noted the importance of our proceeding in sync with their statewide efforts. In particular, they mentioned their current plans to develop statewide tactical perception/implicit bias training for court officers through the Academy.

In consideration of the Chiefs' concerns, by memorandum dated June 18, 2021, I proposed gradually moving forward with a multi-phased approach. In **Phase I** (described in detail below) all of the proposed actions and activities will fall within the parameters of current policies, practices, and protocols. Accordingly, Phase I can be implemented without delay and without

implicating any of the statewide concerns. More importantly, court users and court staff in the 6th District will see immediate improvements which directly respond to the recommendations outlined in the Special Advisor's report. Moreover, by utilizing court officers for this pilot project, their high visibility will provide an opportunity for them to set the example for all other court employees.

As of today, we have received approval from DCAJ Caruso, DCAJ-JI Mendelson and Presiding Justice (3rd Dept.) Garry to proceed with implementation of this pilot program, effective August 1, 2021.

PHASE I : Court Officers Pilot Project:

Commencing August 1, 2021 every person who enters any of the 25 facilities in the 6th District will receive a warm and empathetic welcome from a court officer. The officer's welcome will substantially comply with one of the approved greetings in the attached Exhibit "B". These proposed greetings are entirely within the parameters of the Academy training which court officers currently receive. Therefore, implementing this proposal will not add any new duties or responsibilities for security personnel. Our goal is twofold. First, we want to immediately and tangibly improve every court user's experience at the initial point of contact, and second, we want our court officers to increase and improve their interactions with the public. Specifically, we hope to foster a more active, customer service approach to "Enhance Trust between Court Officers and the Community" as recommended in the Special Advisor's report.

A thorough review of every court facility has been conducted for the purpose of identifying the approximate location of the initial point of contact. Each location has been selected taking into consideration the current safety protocols, including, but not limited to, the need for physical distance between court officers and individuals entering the facility.

Attached as Exhibit "C" is a sample of the proposed rotation plans which will be implemented for the initial point of contact at each courthouse. Under this proposal, every court officer, regardless of rank, will have a regular opportunity to be the initial point of contact for the facility. To the greatest extent possible, the initial shifts will be staffed by the highest-ranking officer in the building. This process is specifically intended to address the Special Advisor's recommendation that there be a "commitment from the top". In addition, we expect that the higher-ranking officers will be the best examples to model this enhanced customer service approach.

Before implementation, Commanding Officers will meet, both via Teams and in-person with every supervising officer to discuss this pilot project. In turn, every court officer will be reminded of the importance of, and encouraged to continually be aware of, their tone of voice, demeanor, facial expressions, and body language when interacting with anyone entering the courthouse. The goal is to provide dignified and respectful interactions every time and under every circumstance.

In addition to the forgoing, Phase I will specifically address the Special Advisor's recommendation to "Facilitate Navigation of the Courthouse". Attached as Exhibit "D" is a sample of the proposed rotation plan for court officers when they are not at the initial point of contact. Once again, every court officer, regardless of rank, will have the opportunity to engage in this enhanced customer service model. During their rotation, each officer will actively look for individuals who need assistance navigating the courthouse. The court officers will utilize their current academy training with respect to engaging court users and appropriately responding to their questions within the facilities. The officers will also receive enhanced training (as available through the Academy) in, among other things, tactical perception/implicit bias, language access and interacting with persons with disabilities. In addition to the academy training, officers will be provided and may use questions which substantially comply with those outlined in Exhibit "E". These efforts should dramatically improve court user's ability to navigate within the courthouse as well as improve the relationship between court officers and the community.

While Phase I represents a fairly modest start to addressing the Special Advisor's recommendations, if we truly embrace this enhanced customer service model, it has the potential to have a significant, long term impact on the relationship between court officers (and all other court employees) and the public.

EXHIBIT “A”

Excerpts from MEMORANDUM

Dated: May 3, 2021

RE: Request to Approve Court Officer Pilot Project

In an effort to begin implementing the directives of Chief Judge DiFiore and the recommendations in the Report from the Special Advisor on Equal Justice in the NYS Courts, the 6th Judicial District is seeking authorization to conduct a Court Officers Pilot Project.

Court Officers Pilot Project:

In a nutshell, the 6th District seeks approval to utilize Court Officers to welcome court users to every facility throughout the district. Every court officer, regardless of rank, will regularly be given the opportunity to act in this specific role.

The first, but lesser goal, is to address recommendation # 12 in the Report from the Special Advisor “**Facilitate Navigation of the Courthouse**”. Since Court Officers are almost always the initial point of contact for court users, having them “welcome litigants and answer basic questions about how to navigate the building and adhere to general procedures and practices” (see, Special Advisor’s Report, page 8) provides an obvious and practical solution. While many court officers already do this informally, establishing a rigorous pilot program that codifies this behavior into a routine part of the officers’ daily activity will have several important additional benefits.

Arguably the most important benefit directly addresses recommendation # 11 “**Enhance Trust between Court Officers and the Community**”. If our court officers cheerfully address the public at the initial point of contact it will fundamentally change their relationship with court users. Over time, this active customer service model, will enhance trust between court officers and the community and provide a positive interaction at, or near, the moment of entry into our facilities. Furthermore, it will tangibly reduce the public’s level of tension and anxiety when attending court proceedings.

In addition, and equally important, we hope to permanently alter the culture, and some of the underlying attitudes, of our court officers. Specifically, we want to significantly increase our officers' focus on the service aspect of their profession while still maintaining the same level of protection in our court facilities. While ensuring safety is the court officers' primary charge, we believe that mandate is compatible with an enhanced customer service approach. In fact, we believe that implementation of an active customer service model will improve the overall safety of court facilities. Our long-term goal is to extend this institutional cultural change to all job titles, but in an effort to specifically address the recommendations in the Special Advisor's Report, we will begin with the court officers through this pilot program.

EXHIBIT B

Court Officer Greetings/Script

Initial Point of Contact

1. Good morning/afternoon and welcome to the _____ County Courthouse.
 - a. How may I help you?
 - b. Are you familiar with this courthouse or can I assist you?
 - c. Ask COVID-19 screening questions
 - d. Provide information regarding scanning at the metal detector.
2. Respond with appropriate information as necessary
3. Fill out property voucher if necessary and provide information regarding the return of the property.
4. End with a positive closing statement. For Example, **“Thank you, (You are all set, The court room is to your left, Please go to the second floor, Please wait in the waiting room and you case will be called shortly, etc.”**

Exhibit C

Facility: Broome County Annex weekly rotation

Mag Station	AM Contact Person	PM Contact Person
Monday	CO Duffey	CO Hayes
Tuesday	CO Testani	CO Gosine
Wednesday	CO Besaw	CO Ligator
Thursday	CO Gosine	CO Testani
Friday	CO Besaw	CO Hayes

Exhibit D

Facility: Broome County Annex weekly rotation

Facility Navigation	AM Contact Person	PM Contact Person
Monday	CO Ligator	CO Testani
Tuesday	CO Hayes	CO Besaw
Wednesday	CO Duffey	CO Hayes
Thursday	CO Ligator	CO Duffey
Friday	CO Duffey	CO Testani

EXHIBIT E

Court Officer Assistance Script

Secondary Points of Contact

1. Good morning/afternoon, can I help you?
2. Good morning/afternoon, are you familiar with this courthouse or can I assist you?
3. Good morning/afternoon, do you need assistance?
4. Good morning/afternoon, how can I help you?
5. Always end with a positive closing statement. For Example, **“If you need anything else, please let me know” or “If you need any further assistance, please see me or any Court Officer and we’ll help you?”**