



New York State Unified Court System

2023 Annual Report

Chief Administrative Judge Joseph A. Zayas



Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson speaks of the *Lemmon Slave* case during an event at 60 Centre Street in Manhattan.



New York State Unified Court System
2023 Annual Report

Report of the Chief Administrator of the Courts for the Calendar Year January 1 through December 31, 2023

Rowan D. Wilson

Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals and the State of New York

Joseph A. Zayas

Chief Administrative Judge of the State of New York

**Associate Judges of
the Court of Appeals**

Jenny Rivera
Michael J. Garcia
Madeline Singas
Anthony Cannataro
Shirley Troutman
Caitlin Halligan

**Presiding Justices of the
Appellate Division**

Dianne T. Renwick
First Department
Hector D. LaSalle
Second Department
Elizabeth A. Garry
Third Department
Gerald J. Whalen
Fourth Department

**Deputy Chief
Administrative Judges**

Norman St. George
First Deputy
Chief Administrative Judge
Edwina G. Richardson
Deputy Chief Administrative Judge
for Justice Initiatives
Deborah A. Kaplan
Deputy Chief Administrative Judge
for the New York City Courts
James P. Murphy
Deputy Chief Administrative Judge
for Courts Outside New York City

**Administrative Judges
New York City**

Adam Silvera
Civil Matters,
First Judicial District
Ellen N. Biben
Criminal Matters,
First Judicial District
Lawrence Knipel
Civil Matters,
Second Judicial District
Matthew D'Emic
Criminal Matters,
Second Judicial District
Marguerite A. Grays
Civil Matters,
Eleventh Judicial District
Donna-Marie E. Golia
Criminal Matters,
Eleventh Judicial District
Joseph Capella
Civil Matters,
Twelfth Judicial District
Alvin Yearwood
Criminal Matters,
Twelfth Judicial District
Desmond A. Green
Civil & Criminal Matters,
Thirteenth Judicial District
Anne-Marie Jolly
New York City Family Court
Tamiko Amaker
New York City Criminal Court
Carolyn Walker-Diallo
New York City Civil Court

**Administrative Judges
Outside New York City**

Gerald W. Connolly
Third Judicial District
Kris K. Singh
Fourth Judicial District
Deborah H. Karalunas
Fifth Judicial District
Eugene D. Faughnan
Sixth Judicial District
William K. Taylor
Seventh Judicial District
Kevin M. Carter
Eighth Judicial District
Anne E. Minihan
Ninth Judicial District
Vito M. DeStefano
Tenth Judicial District,
Nassau County
Andrew A. Crecca
Tenth Judicial District,
Suffolk County
Richard E. Sise
Acting Presiding Judge,
Court of Claims



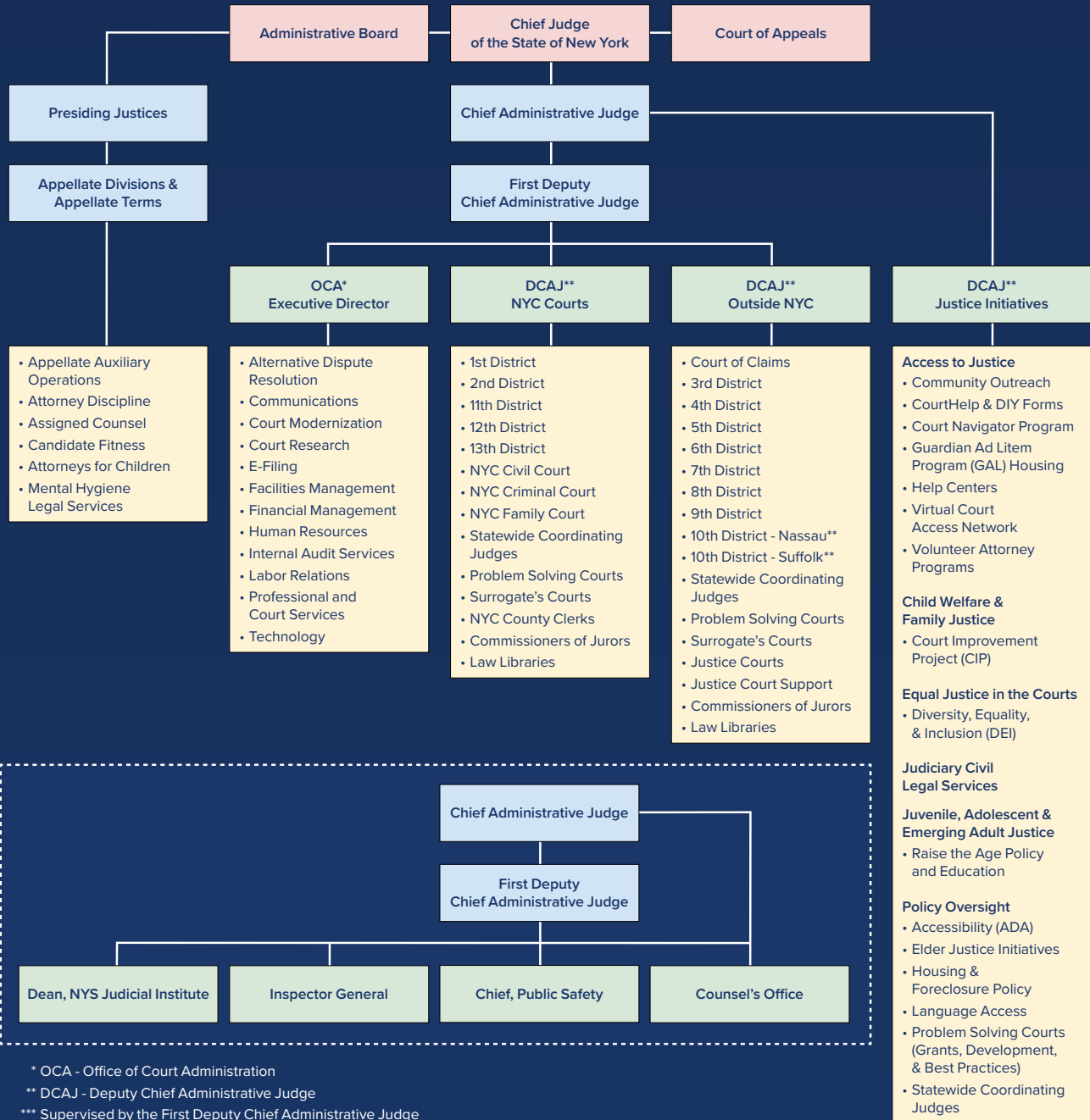
Cortland County Courthouse

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New York State Unified Court System Administrative Structure



A Message from Chief Administrative Judge

Joseph A. Zayas



One of the responsibilities I assumed as Chief Administrative Judge is compliance with Section 212 of the Judiciary Law which requires me to: “collect, compile and publish statistics and other data with respect to the unified court system and submit annually, on or before the fifteenth day of March, to the legislature and governor a report of [our] activities and the state of the unified court system during the preceding year.” This report fulfills that requirement.

But our story—the story of the Third Branch of government—is so much deeper, so much richer than a mere statistical analysis or laundry list of things we crossed off our to-do list over the past 12 months. Our story is a story of people, over 16,000 in total, with one job: to ensure that each and every person who comes to our courts for help is provided with the equal and fair justice they are entitled to under our state and federal constitutions, and the dignity and respect they are owed as human beings. This report, the first under the administration of Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson, endeavors to tell that story through both the numbers and the people behind those numbers.

It begins with brief profiles of six statewide administrative judges. Our goal is to provide a look beyond the resumes, demystify the Judicial Branch and offer a more personal and intimate view of the women and men who oversee the branch of government that so profoundly and immediately impacts the lives and livelihoods of our citizens. But in keeping with the Chief Judge’s “bottom-up rather than top-down” management style, throughout the report you will hear from “other voices,” our talented, fascinating and diverse workforce who keep the wheels of justice churning day in and day out.

Since our last annual report one year ago, the Unified Court System weathered an unprecedented and unsettling era in which we lacked permanent leadership. For several months, Acting Chief Judge Anthony Cannataro and Acting Chief Administrative Judge Tamiko Amaker nimbly navigated our ship through a time of uncertainty and controversy, and the Unified Court System, and in fact the entire state, owes them a deep debt of gratitude. But the word “acting” before their titles made it difficult or impossible to implement major change, to fully engage with our partners in the Executive and Legislative branches and to provide the forward-looking stability that our judges and staff needed. We are now settled, and eager to move forward at a time of historic opportunity for state courts.

Our past is illustrious, and our future has never looked brighter, despite the challenges we all face in the elusive effort to fulfill the constitutional promise of equal justice for all. And that’s what it’s all about—equal justice for all. Everything else—legislative goals, budget, personnel—is merely a means to that end.

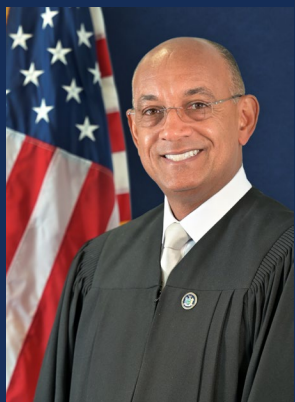
Sincerely,

Joseph A. Zayas

A Message from First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge

Norman St. George

On May 19, 2023, the Hon. Norman St. George was named First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge, the second-highest ranking administrative position within the New York State Judiciary.



In 1977, the New York State Legislature passed, and the voters approved, a constitutional amendment designed to unify what had been a decentralized and balkanized judicial system created in and for a different century. The intent of this amendment was laudable. The accomplishment of its goals has been complicated.

Under the leadership of Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson and the guidance of Chief Administrative Judge Joseph A. Zayas, we are working tirelessly to truly unify our court system as contemplated by that constitutional amendment. Our mission is to bring about comprehensive justice throughout New York State while prioritizing Access to Justice and Equal Justice in every court, in order to make the New York State Courts the best that they can be.

New York is an incredibly diverse state with large cities, small cities, huge towns, tiny villages, regions of dense population and regions where there are literally more cows than people. Each area has different customs, different mores and different needs. Consequently, any effort to “unify” the State must recognize, appreciate and consider those differences. Such a mosaic would seemingly defy unification. But even something with as many moving parts as a Rubik’s cube can be organized in an orderly, sensible way that doesn’t shortchange the red, blue, green or yellow cubelets, and in fact, enables them to work together in a magical way. That is part of the objective - to bring us all together in a way that does not try to impose a one-size-fits-all solution to every goal or challenge.

Chief Administrative Judge Zayas, in appointing me to serve as the First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge, tasked me with overseeing the trial-level courts throughout the State as well as all departments and operations within the Office of Court Administration (OCA), the administrative arm of the Unified Court System. In that regard, I work daily with the Deputy Chief Administrative Judges to assist the trial courts in the effective, efficient and appropriate administration of justice.

I was a local trial judge for many years before becoming an administrator and then Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for the Courts Outside New York City. I know that historically OCA was considered the “Office of Constant Aggravation.” The new administration is earnestly committed to changing that perception. OCA solely exists to support the trial courts in the administration of justice. We will accomplish this by partnering at every level of our Court System in every region of our State. By collaboration, communication and cooperation, we will transform OCA into the “Office of Constructive Assistance.”

This annual report illustrates the beginning. The best is yet to come!

A handwritten signature in gold ink, appearing to read 'N St George'.

Hon. Norman St. George

A Message from Executive Director

Justin A. Barry

Justin Barry was appointed Executive Director of the Office of Court Administration in August 2023 to oversee the management of OCA, coordinate the work of the various divisions, provide direction and make policy recommendations.



New York State’s Unified Court System is among the largest, busiest, and most complex in the country, consisting of 11 trial courts, four Appellate Division Departments, two Appellate Terms, and the Court of Appeals. Approximately 15,100 non-judicial staff in more than 300 locations around the State, and over 1,300 state-paid judges, work within this labyrinthine court system that touches the lives of millions of New Yorkers in thousands of ways.

Managing this complicated system in a state as broad, deep and diverse as New York is a daily challenge that requires vigilance, collaboration, cooperation, creativity, commitment and input from every part of our operation.

When I was appointed to this position in early August—after previously serving as Chief of Administration and, before that, Chief Clerk of the busiest criminal court in the nation (New York City’s)—Chief Judge Wilson, Chief Administrative Judge Zayas and First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Norman St. George made quite clear what was expected: A management style that values the interconnectivity of our myriad divisions and operations, celebrates our diversity, encourages creative solutions and rejects the thinking of “we can’t because” or “we’ve never done it that way before,” embraces innovation and recognizes that, in our case, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. We are protective, as our Constitution requires, of our status as an independent, separate and co-equal branch of government. At the same time, we are mindful of our role as partners with the Executive and Legislative branches, in the governance of this great state.

This report is a tapestry that endeavors to explain to our partners in government, as well as the general public, what we do, how we do it and how the various parts fit neatly together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. I repeat: The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

A stylized, handwritten signature in gold ink, consisting of a large, flowing 'J' and 'B'.

Justin A. Barry



NO STANDING
Anytime
Except for Loading
and Unloading of
Merchandise - Trucks
Only

NO STANDING
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Merchandise - Trucks
Only



Executive Officers

The New York State Unified Court System's
judicial leadership team consists of

Chief Judge

Rowan D. Wilson

Chief Administrative Judge

Joseph A. Zayas

First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge

Norman St. George

*Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for
Justice Initiatives*

Edwina G. Richardson

*Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for
New York City Courts*

Deborah A. Kaplan

*Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for
Courts Outside New York City*

James P. Murphy

In addition, the Chief Judge and Judge Zayas have
designated three Statewide Coordinating Judges

*Statewide Coordinating Judge for
Family Court Matters*

Richard Rivera

*Statewide Coordinating Judge for
Problem-Solving Courts*

Toko Serita

*Statewide Coordinating Judge for
Matrimonial Matters*

Jeffrey S. Sunshine

Chief Judge

Rowan D. Wilson

The Chief Judge of the State of New York serves as the Chief Judicial Officer of the State and the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals. The Chief Judge establishes statewide standards and administrative policies upon consultation with the Administrative Board of the Courts and approval by the Court of Appeals.



Chief Judge Wilson learned early on the importance of empathy, and the personal fulfillment that comes from helping others. His mother was totally blind, and her oldest child, Rowan Dudley Wilson, patiently read her whatever materials she could not get in braille—including articles and textbooks for Ph.D. coursework, as well as the packages of soup cans and other household items.

“You get great enjoyment out of helping people,” said Chief Judge Wilson. “Having been brought up in circumstances where that was my job really, things like that kind of came naturally to me.”

A native of California and the child of educators, the Chief Judge has a bachelor’s degree from Harvard University and a law degree from Harvard Law School. He clerked for a federal appellate court judge and spent most of his pre-judicial career practicing securities, intellectual property, contract and antitrust law with the Manhattan firm of Cravath, Swaine & Moore. He was the first-ever partner of color at Cravath, a firm that dates to 1819. Judge Wilson was appointed to the Court of Appeals in 2017, and on April 19, 2023, became the first African American ever elevated to the center seat reserved for the Chief Judge.

“When people ask what it means to me to be the first African American Chief Judge in state history, I have to pause, because it’s not about me,” he said. “It’s about what it means to others—the community at large, the people of New York, the people I work with, my family. I have to be mindful and recognize that my status as the first Chief Judge of color in the State of New York may mean big things to other people.”

Chief Judge Wilson notes that he was born only six years after *Brown v. Board of Education* sent “separate but equal” to the constitutional dustbin, and he was three-years-old when Alabama Governor George Wallace defied a federal court order to integrate schools. Segregation in public places remained lawful until he was four. Racial discrimination in housing remained legal until he was eight. Yet the pendulum of justice was beginning to swing, and just a few years removed from the civil rights battles of the

it working, what is it you think you need to make it work better, and tailoring the solutions on a more local basis,” he said. “We have made it clear that we want to hear from our judges and court personnel about their needs and about what they believe can assist them to allow the courts to improve in the delivery of justice.”

The Chief Judge seeks to foster an atmosphere of civility and collegiality, both as Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals and as Chief Judge of the State of New York.

“You need to respect people regardless of what views they have about things, and treat them as human beings,” Chief Judge Wilson said. “And the fundamental thing there I think is kindness—treat people kindly. You don’t need to shout at people. You can get a lot more done by treating them with respect, with attention and with kindness.”

“You need to respect people regardless of what views they have about things, and treat them as human beings.”

1960s, Rowan Wilson benefited immensely from a multicultural education.

“Diversity matters because we’re trying to arrive at the best communal decision we can,” the Chief Judge said. “It’s a diversity of all kinds of experiences. It’s good to have those different perspectives. I think that the most important thing is to set the right tone and to emphasize that we need to value each other for who we are.”

As an administrator, Chief Judge Wilson embraces more of a bottom-up than a top-down management style.

“Judge Zayas and I think that we’re better off working from the bottom up and finding out courthouse-by-courthouse and office-by-office what’s working well, what isn’t working, why isn’t



New York State Judicial Institute
2023 Judicial Summer Seminars in Tarrytown

Chief Administrative Judge

Joseph A. Zayas

The Chief Administrative Judge oversees the day-to-day operation of the statewide court system, including its \$3.3 billion budget, 3,300 state and local judges, and 15,000 non-judicial employees in over 300 locations across the state.



Joseph Zayas did not aspire to become Chief Administrative Judge. In fact, he didn't even want what he viewed as a thankless 24/7 assignment to what one of his predecessors described as "the complaint department." Most of the men and women who've held the job quit after a few years. But after one conversation with Chief Judge Wilson, he was sold, and he is now immensely pleased that he accepted the assignment and serves as the eleventh Chief Administrative Judge in State history.

"I accepted the assignment only because I was inspired by the vision of our new Chief Judge, and our perfectly aligned perspective on how this mammoth court system and its administrative arm, the Office of Court Administration (OCA), could best serve the interests of justice," Judge Zayas said. "OCA is there not to tell judges what to do,

Fordham University and Columbia Law School, he landed a job with the Legal Aid Society and spent many years working with the criminal trial division, criminal appeals bureau and the capital defense unit. He was appointed to New York City Criminal Court in 2003 and subsequently served as an Acting Supreme Court Justice, a Judge of the Court of Claims, a Supreme Court Justice, an Administrative Judge, and most recently as an Associate Justice of the Appellate Division, Second Department. His personal and professional experiences made him a strong believer in problem-solving courts, such as Drug Court, Mental Health Court and Youth Court.

"Look, judges are not firemen or firewomen or police officers," Judge Zayas said. "We don't usually think of judges as 'rescuers,' but judges and treatment courts are saving people's lives."

"OCA is there not to tell judges what to do, but to be supportive... to work more closely with them."

but to be supportive of the judges. We want to be able to work more closely with them. We want to know what they need to do their jobs better, and we think that that's going to produce better outcomes when it comes to dispensing justice and supporting the judges."

Judge Zayas, the first Latino to serve as Chief Administrative Judge, grew up in poverty in a West Harlem housing project. His father suffered from mental illness, and his mother, occasionally on welfare, taught her five sons discipline and empathy.

"We learned growing up that you love people, that you are kind to people," Judge Zayas recalled. "I remember once saying, 'I hate that teacher!' and boy, I got a smack right upside the head. 'Don't you ever say you hate anybody! We love people!' So that's how I was raised."

Judge Zayas was motivated to attend law school by the articles he read as a young man in the New York Times about civil rights. After graduating from



Chief Administrative Judge Joseph A. Zayas and Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson visited the Capt. William H. Thompson, Sgt. Thomas Jurgens and Sgt. Mitchel Wallace Court Officer Academy in Brooklyn.

First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge

Norman St. George

The First Deputy Chief Administrative oversees all trial-level courts throughout the state, as well as all departments and operations within the Office of Court Administration. He also directly supervises the courts in the Tenth Judicial District, Nassau and Suffolk Counties.



The son of a West Indies immigrant father and a mother from the American heartland, the Hon. Norman St. George brings a diverse background to his position as First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge.

“I believe I’m able to relate in some way to everyone and anyone,” Judge St. George said. “And I think that makes a difference when you are attempting to work with people and gain trust and respect. I can always find something in common.”

Judge St. George, who previously served as Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for the Courts Outside New York, was tapped for the newly created First Deputy position one day after Judge Zayas was named Chief Administrative Judge. In announcing the appointment of Judge St. George, Judge Zayas cited his “legal acumen, superb managerial skills, intimate knowledge of the workings of the

Judge St. George’s father emigrated from a small fishing village in Jamaica, West Indies in 1965, when he was offered a track and soccer scholarship. “He had no money, and this was his chance to make a better life for himself.” He grasped the opportunity, earning three master’s degrees and a doctorate from Columbia. Judge St. George’s mother came from the Midwest and worked as a guidance counselor in the Long Beach school district.

Judge St. George cites two quotes that he says help define him and his style, one by Henry Longfellow and the other by Robert F. Kennedy. Longfellow: “The heights by great men and women reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night.” Kennedy: “You see things the way they are and ask why, and I dream things that never were and say, why not?”

“I believe I’m able to relate in some way to everyone and anyone. And I think that makes a difference.”

court and exemplary character.” He oversees all trial-level courts throughout the state and all departments and operations within the Office of Court Administration.

Judge St. George’s judicial career began in 2004, when he was appointed and then elected to the Nassau County District Court. He was subsequently elected to the Nassau County Court and Supreme Court. Judge St. George served as the Supervising Judge of the District Court and the Administrative Judge of the Tenth Judicial District, Nassau County. In 2021, Judge St. George was appointed as the Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for all courts outside New York City. Before ascending to the bench, Judge St. George practiced tax law, served as an Assistant District Attorney on Long Island, ran his own law firm, served as a managing partner of a Wall Street law firm, and, along the way, gained experience in a wide array of criminal, commercial, and civil matters. Judge St. George is a graduate of Hofstra University School of Law.



Chief Administrative Judge Joseph A. Zayas and First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Norman St. George at OCA Headquarters.

Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives

Edwina G. Richardson

The Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives leads the Office for Justice Initiatives (OJI), which is tasked with ensuring meaningful access to justice for all New Yorkers in civil, criminal, and family courts, regardless of income, background, or ability. Judge Richardson directs several youth and family justice initiatives, including the Unified Court System's Child Welfare Court Improvement Project, emerging adult justice projects, and the ongoing implementation of the seminal law that raised the age of criminal responsibility in New York State. Additionally, she is responsible for programmatic oversight of the Judiciary Civil Legal Services grant.



Early on, Judge Edwina Richardson adopted the motto of her alma mater, CUNY Law School, as her own credo: “Law in the service of human needs,” plus her own addendum: “We should give more to the world than we take.”

As the Deputy Chief Administrative Judge tasked with ensuring meaningful access to justice for all New Yorkers, Judge Richardson has a weighty responsibility, but one she embraces enthusiastically.

“I don’t hide my passion for equal justice,” Judge Richardson said. “I have been Black and female my entire life.”

In high school, Judge Richardson was among a handful of students, but the only one of color, offered the chance to take up to two college courses. During the registration process, it was suggested that two courses might be too much for her, even though the person making the comment knew

Her portfolio includes oversight of some 300 problem-solving courts and more than a dozen local Equal Justice Committees, implementing the recommendations contained in the October 2020 Report from the Special Adviser on Equal Justice examining racial bias in the state court system, as well as the November 2020 recommendations made by the New York State Judicial Committee on Women in the Courts to enhance gender fairness in the state courts. In 2023, the Office of Diversity & Inclusion, the court system’s longstanding office tasked with promoting opportunities for equal employment and ensuring a diverse workforce, was added to the Office for Justice Initiatives.

“Our goal, our job, our mandate is to eradicate racial intolerance at all levels of the court system,” Judge Richardson said. “We have an obligation to educate our judges, educate our court personnel, to recognize instances of bias, whether it’s conscious, explicit, express or implicit and unconscious.”

“We should give more to the world than we take.”

nothing of her abilities or record. All he knew was what he saw: A Black girl. She took two courses, aced them both and went on to earn bachelor’s, master’s, doctoral, and law degrees. Even as one of the highest-ranking judges in the state, Judge Richardson still endures insensitive comments such as, “You don’t look like a judge.”

A proud daughter of the Bronx, Edwina Richardson grew up in the Wakefield section and attended public schools.

“I like to remind people that being a Black woman who grew up in this society, that I am not immune from the very same messages that I’ve been receiving from the womb, those messages that tell us that in our society certain people are ‘less than...’ just because of who they are, where they’ve come from or what they may look like,” Judge Richardson said. “I have spent many years exceeding people’s narrow expectations of me.”



Hon. Edwina G. Richardson, Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives, delivers the commencement address at St. John's University School of Law on Sunday, May 21, 2023. Judge Richardson received the St. Thomas More Award from Dean Michael A. Simons, left, and President Brian J. Shanley.

Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for New York City Courts

Deborah A. Kaplan

The Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for the New York City Courts is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the trial-level courts located in New York City. Judge Kaplan works with the Administrative Judges of the various courts in New York City to allocate and assign judicial and non-judicial personnel resources to meet the needs and goals of those courts.



Deborah A. Kaplan was appointed Deputy Chief Administrative Judge of the New York City Courts (DCAJ-NYC) on October 1, 2021. As DCAJ-NYC, Judge Kaplan is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the trial courts in New York City and ensuring that these courts fulfill the public's right to equal access to the courts, and the fair, timely and efficient resolution of cases. In addition to her administrative roles, Judge Kaplan hears matrimonial and many other civil matters.

Previously, Judge Kaplan served as the Administrative Judge in Supreme Court, New York County, Civil Term, one of the busiest courts in the nation. Prior to that position, Judge Kaplan served as the interim Administrative Judge for Civil and Criminal Matters in Richmond County from September 2017 to January 2018. From 2015 to 2018, Judge Kaplan was the Statewide Coordinating Judge for Family Violence Cases. In that position, Justice Kaplan worked collaboratively with the state's administrative judges and judges and staff who handle domestic violence and integrated domestic violence matters statewide, refining practices and promoting better and more consistent outcomes in matters involving family violence, including elder abuse.

Judge Kaplan currently chairs the New York State Judicial Committee on Elder Justice and co-chairs the New York State Justice Task Force and the New York County Supreme Court, Civil Branch Gender Fairness Committee. She is a member of the New York State Judicial Committee on Women in the Courts, and the New York State Courts Advisory Committee on Court Access for People with Disabilities. Among many other previous leadership roles outside of the court system, she is a past president of the Brooklyn Women's Bar Association, a past president of Women's Bar Association of the State of New York (WBASNY), past co-chair of the New York Hague Convention and Domestic Violence Bench Guide Consulting Committee,

past member of the New York State Fatality Review Board and past committee co-chair of the New York City Task Force on Domestic Violence.

Judge Kaplan is also the recipient of numerous awards, including the Jewish Lawyers Guild Distinguished Jurist Award, the New York State Trial Lawyers Association Champion of Justice Award, special honoree of the Brandeis Association, the New York Women's Bar Association President's Special Award, the Center for Elder Law & Justice Vision Award, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Center for Elder Justice Champion of Justice Award and WBASNY's Marilyn Menge Award.

Judge Kaplan frequently lectures at state and national conferences, bar associations and court programs across the state, on different subject areas including matrimonial law, elder justice, case management and alternative dispute resolution.

So, Judge Kaplan went to law school and upon graduating, spent over a decade at the Legal Aid Society, representing indigent people charged with crimes. She was awarded the Society's highest honor—the Orison S. Marden award. Thereafter, prior to becoming a judge, she worked in the court system as a law clerk, as counsel implementing the first drug treatment courts, and as counsel to two prior Deputy Chief Administrative Judges.

As DCAJ-NYC, Judge Kaplan's responsibilities include oversight of case management and operations in each and every court, technology development, human resource issues, disciplinary matters, and dealing with facility issues ranging from leaky roofs to flooded basements to nesting hawks on a courthouse roof. It means, among many other initiatives, implementing the Child Victims Act, developing a comprehensive and detailed plan to address the large number of gun

“There is simply nothing more important than eliminating bias of any and every kind...”

She received her undergraduate degree from SUNY Albany and her law degree from St. John's University School of Law.

Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Kaplan did not plan to become a lawyer or a judge. In fact, she majored in English, minored in History and wanted to be a writer and an English teacher. The reason she changed her mind and decided to go to law school was as a direct result of her student teaching experience, which she did in a community outside of Albany. Her students, their parents and other relatives would come to her seeking assistance with a variety of complex legal issues which they were unable to handle on their own. While she could not offer any legal advice, she could read the court notices and try to explain what they meant. She realized then that there were many people who needed someone to stand up for them in court and ensure their rights were being respected and they were being treated with care and compassion.

cases pending in Supreme Court Criminal Term, as well as the significant number of robbery cases, and focusing on expediting older criminal cases. It also means ensuring that mental hygiene hearings are handled fairly, efficiently and effectively and that Alternative Dispute Resolution options in our courts are continually expanding. Additionally, it includes being laser-focused on further diversifying the workforce in the New York City Courts and encouraging the advancement of the careers of our valued employees.

According to Judge Kaplan, “There is simply nothing more important than eliminating bias of any and every kind - including racial, gender, gender identity, religious, sexual orientation, age, disability - from court operations and creating a court system that promotes fairness and diversity and treats every person who works here and every person who comes here seeking relief that only we can provide, with the respect and dignity they deserve.”

Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Courts Outside New York City

James P. Murphy

The Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for the Courts Outside New York City is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations and allocating and assigning judicial and non-judicial personnel of the trial courts in 57 of New York's 62 counties.



Srowing up in an Irish Catholic household in Syracuse with eight kids, a guy learns a lot about collaboration, cooperation, dispute resolution and humility.

“When you are one of eight, no matter how important you think your issue is, it may not be the priority for the family that day,” said Deputy Chief Administrative Judge James P. Murphy. “Whatever the task was that we had, we all worked together. And I’d be lying if I said we always saw eye-to-eye on everything. There were certainly times when we had to compromise whatever our position was in order to accommodate the family needs.”

It was good training for the person in charge of day-to-day trial court operations in 57 counties outside of New York City.

civil litigation while also serving as an assistant Onondaga County district attorney and as a member of the County Legislature. He was elected to Supreme Court in 2005 and, since then, has held a number of administrative positions, including Supervising Judge for 200 town and village justices, and Administrative Judge for five sprawling counties in Central New York.

“Our judges and non-judicial staff are incredibly devoted public servants who would do anything to try to make this system better,” Judge Murphy said. “I’m very deeply committed to our court family and to the court system and justice system in New York. I’ve dedicated my whole life to it. I believe it. I live it. I’m here to provide whatever assistance I can. Please don’t hesitate to call me. I’m very accessible and willing to help in any way I can.”

“You didn’t win the debate by being the loudest in the room.”

Judge Murphy said he was heavily influenced by his father, Supreme Court Justice Thomas J. Murphy, his mother, Mary Jane Murphy, and an ethnic heritage that inadvertently trains future lawyers and judges.

“We’re pretty good at debate and argument in the Irish culture,” he said. “I remember big, big family gatherings where aunts and uncles debated every issue on the face of the earth. It was certainly passionate, but it never devolved into screaming, hollering or calling names. You didn’t win the debate by being the loudest in the room.”

Judge Murphy always planned to become a lawyer and stocked up on history, English, economics and political science classes at St. Lawrence University. He met his future wife when he was about 15 years old. “There was nothing that we wanted to pursue other than each other,” he said.

After graduating from Syracuse University College of Law, Judge Murphy remained in his hometown, primarily practicing municipal law and



Hon. James P. Murphy presided over the annual memorial service and rededication of the Hon. John P. Balio Ceremonial Courtroom at the Oneida County Courthouse.



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A Commitment to Justice

The mission of the Unified Court System (UCS) is to deliver equal justice under the law and to achieve the just, fair and timely resolution of all matters that come before our courts. In the service of our mission, the UCS is committed to operating with integrity and transparency, and to ensuring that all who enter or serve in our courts are treated with respect, dignity and professionalism.



Above: First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Norman St. George, Chief Administrative Judge Joseph A. Zayas, and Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson, received awards from the National Judicial College during the 60th Anniversary Celebration at the New York Athletic Club in New York City

Left: The Henry B. Northrup Award for Excellence in Enhancing Equal Justice in the Courts was presented to Hon. Edwina G. Richardson by Hon. Norman St. George. This award is presented to those devoted to fulfilling the promise of racial equity in the New York State court system.



Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives Edwina G. Richardson joins students from Creative Art Works and their mentors at Bronx Family Court on Wednesday, August 16th, 2023, where they displayed a mural that will be on permanent exhibit in the court.

Equal Justice

The court system’s mission to ensure equal justice has resulted in:

- Mandatory bias training for judges and court personnel
- Specialized training for Town and Village Justices
- Implementation of community-based events and programs to enhance the trust between court officers, litigants and communities of color
- Addressing practices for the selection and appointment of judicial leadership positions and promotional opportunities for non-judicial staff

We offer centralized and tailored bias education and training programs for judges, court officers and court personnel, developed in consultation with experts from the Perception Institute. Judges received mandatory bias training in 2023 at the Judicial Institute, and an online option was accorded town and village justices.

The quest for equal justice is both a global and local calling. Locally, we utilize Equal Justice Committees in each Judicial District—panels that understand regional dynamics and local nuances. These Committees are staffed by judges and professional court staff, including clerks, court officers, analysts, court attorneys, interpreters, court reporters and more. Some Equal Justice Committees also include representatives from local bar associations, community organizations, legal service providers, academic community members and other members of the public.



“I wanted my courtroom to be a place where everyone feels welcome, everyone feels included, where everyone feels, regardless of the outcome—win, lose or draw— that I’m not going to prejudge you based on what you look like or where you come from and that you’re going to get a fair shake in my courtroom, whether you love my decision or hate my decision, and that’s still what I aspire to.”

Hon. Lillian Wan – First Asian American woman to serve as an Appellate Division justice anywhere in the state



“Diversity is more. It’s more culture. It’s more perceptions. It’s more experience. It’s more ideas. Contact your local equal justice committees. Know who they are. Seek them out. They want to hear from you.”

Randy Bowens
Statewide Equal Justice Coordinator



Stakeholders convene during an Attorney Emeritus session

Access to Justice

Through partnerships, pro bono programs, self-help services and technological tools, the Office for Justice Initiatives strives to ensure access to justice for all who enter New York State courts through a variety of initiatives, among them:

- DIY (Do-It-Yourself) Form Programs:** Figuring out the correct form necessary to proceed with a case can be a real challenge, especially for someone without legal training or experience in dealing with the courts. DIY Form Programs guide the user through a series of questions and then provide the relevant forms and detailed instructions.
- CourtHelp:** CourtHelp is a website to help unrepresented court users navigate the court without having to ask a clerk for assistance. Using CourtHelp, litigants can easily obtain the needed information on their own. In 2023, there were approximately 4,643,173 visits and 16,221,560 page views of the CourtHelp pages. The total number of page visitors was 2,750,995.
- Help Centers:** Help Centers, which are staffed by court personnel, are neutral locations where unrepresented court users can obtain information about the law and court procedure. Our Help Center staff assisted more than 108,000 unrepresented court users in 2023.
- Attorney Emeritus Program:** The Attorney Emeritus Program (AEP) works with the organized bar and legal services programs to place experienced attorneys who are at least 55 years old and have a minimum of 10 years' experience in pro bono civil legal service opportunities. Working with the court system, the Feerick Center for Social Justice at Fordham Law School has co-administered the AEP since the program's launch in 2010. Over 4,500 attorneys have enrolled to become Emeritus volunteers since the AEP's inception. In 2023, the Feerick Center overhauled the data collection and technology infrastructure to make it easier for volunteers to take part.



“Often what you see from the outside is not what we are on the inside, so don’t be judgmental. Don’t be quick to make decisions about us. Speak to people and learn about who we are, because you may be very surprised—very, very surprised—to find out what a Hasidic life and culture is really like.”

Hon. Rachel Freier – Acting Supreme Court Justice, believed to be the first Hasidic woman to hold public office in U.S. history

Are you having problems with custody or visitation?

Use this **FREE, EASY AND DO-IT-YOURSELF** computer program to make your court papers

Is the other parent not following the custody/visitation order?
 Use the Enforcement Petition Program

Do you want to change the custody/visitation order?
 Use the Modification Petition Program

NYS DIY Forms
 WWW.NYCOURTHELP.GOV

¿Desea iniciar una petición de paternidad?

Utilice este programa de computadora. **“HÁGALO-USTED-MISMO” (DIY)**
 Es GRATIS y FÁCIL.

Puede utilizar este programa si:

- Usted es la madre y no está casada con el padre del menor
- Usted cree ser el padre y no está casado con la madre del menor

NYS DIY Forms
 WWW.NYCOURTHELP.GOV



Queens Family Court Help Center

- **Rural Access:** OJI partners with the New York State Bar Association Task Force on Rural Justice, the Rural Law Center of New York, the ADR Office, and the Permanent Commission on Access to Justice to develop court access hubs in rural areas throughout the State. Several community-based hubs exist in the Albany, Syracuse and Westchester regions.
- **Virtual Court Access Networks (VCAN):** Remote access to court services and proceedings allowed uninterrupted access during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that technology has been embraced on a permanent basis in many jurisdictions. With VCAN, court users no longer need to travel considerable distances to the courthouse for a 10-minute court appearance. For individuals who lack access to computer technology, convenient satellite sites have been installed at several locations. There are currently 27 VCAN sites operating statewide.
- **Volunteer Programs:** OJI coordinates a host of robust volunteer programs throughout the State for dedicated attorneys and non-attorneys interested in helping unrepresented litigants.
- **Consumer Debt Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Program:** This program operates in all five New York City boroughs, providing pro bono limited scope legal representation to unrepresented defendants in consumer debt cases.
- **New York City Family Court Volunteer Attorney Program:** In May 2021, the New York City Family Court Volunteer Attorney Program moved from an in-person program to a remote (video and telephonic) program, providing consultations to people who do not have an attorney in custody/visitation, support, guardianship and/or family offense cases.



“One of the things I like most about this job is that I can interact with people who are coming in and give them help when they are overwhelmed. Litigants coming in don’t know what to do next.

They’re overwhelmed by the legal system and the immensity of it, and so my job is to serve as the link between a member of the public and the court system, to show them how to navigate the system.”

Chris Lund
Principal Law Librarian, Sixth Judicial District

- **New York City Civil Court Virtual Volunteer Attorney Program:** In collaboration with the City Bar Justice Center’s Civil Court Project, the program offers free online and phone consultations to people who do not have an attorney representing them in New York City Civil Court. Volunteer attorneys assist with a wide range of Civil Court matters.
- **Court Navigator Program:** Court Navigators are specially trained and supervised non-lawyers who provide general information, written materials and one-on-one assistance, including moral support, to unrepresented litigants. It is our intention to expand the Court Navigator Program, as recommended in the 2020 Equal Justice Report and, more recently, by the Commission to Reimagine the Future of New York’s Courts.
- **Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) Program:** The GAL Program recruits, trains and provides NYC Housing Court Judges with a pool of guardians to safeguard the rights and prevent the eviction of tenants unable to advocate for themselves due to a mental impairment.



The Chief Judge conducted hearings on Civil Legal Services at the Court of Appeals, Albany.

Permanent Commission on Access to Justice

The Permanent Commission, created to expand access to civil legal services and improve access to justice, provides support for the preparation of the Chief Judge's annual statewide hearing to assess the unmet needs for legal representation in proceedings involving fundamental human needs. Additionally, the Permanent Commission assists in developing recommendations to the Legislature and the Executive about the level of public resources necessary to meet those needs.

The Permanent Commission also has ongoing responsibility to study, analyze and develop recommendations on all aspects of civil legal services for low-income New Yorkers. It issues recommendations for improved and increased access to civil legal services. For more information, visit: <https://ww2.nycourts.gov/accesstojusticecommission/index.shtml>

Business Council for Access to Justice

The Business Council for Access to Justice was established to provide strategic advice and support on critical initiatives, from educating the business sector on the importance of policies supporting equal access to justice, to fostering pro bono service by corporate counsel, to partnering with legal service providers on specific projects designed to close the access-to-justice gap in low-income communities. The Business Council is a diverse group of experienced business leaders whose work serves to complement the efforts of the Permanent Commission on Access to Justice.

Judiciary Civil Legal Services

The Judiciary Civil Legal Services (JCLS) unit is responsible for programmatic leadership and oversight of the JCLS program. JCLS funding provides low-income New Yorkers with meaningful access to the courts and the legal assistance they need to secure the essentials of life, such as housing, family safety and stability, access to healthcare and education, and subsistence income.

In 2023, the UCS granted 82 providers a total of \$98.6 million for civil legal services and access to justice services. This critical initiative benefits millions of New Yorkers each year. The JCLS unit coordinates with the Permanent Commission on Access to Justice to study and develop civil legal services funding recommendations and initiatives, such as housing part pilots in the courts outside New York City, public access computer terminals located in courthouses and the community, and the establishment of virtual information centers.

New York State Justice Task Force

The Justice Task Force seeks to promote fairness, effectiveness and efficiency in the criminal justice system; to eradicate harms caused by wrongful convictions; to further public safety; and to recommend judicial and legislative reforms to advance these causes throughout the State of New York. When created in 2009, the Justice Task Force was one of the first permanent task forces on wrongful convictions in the United States.



Vanessa L. Gibson
President of the Borough of
The Bronx
Presents this
Citation of Merit

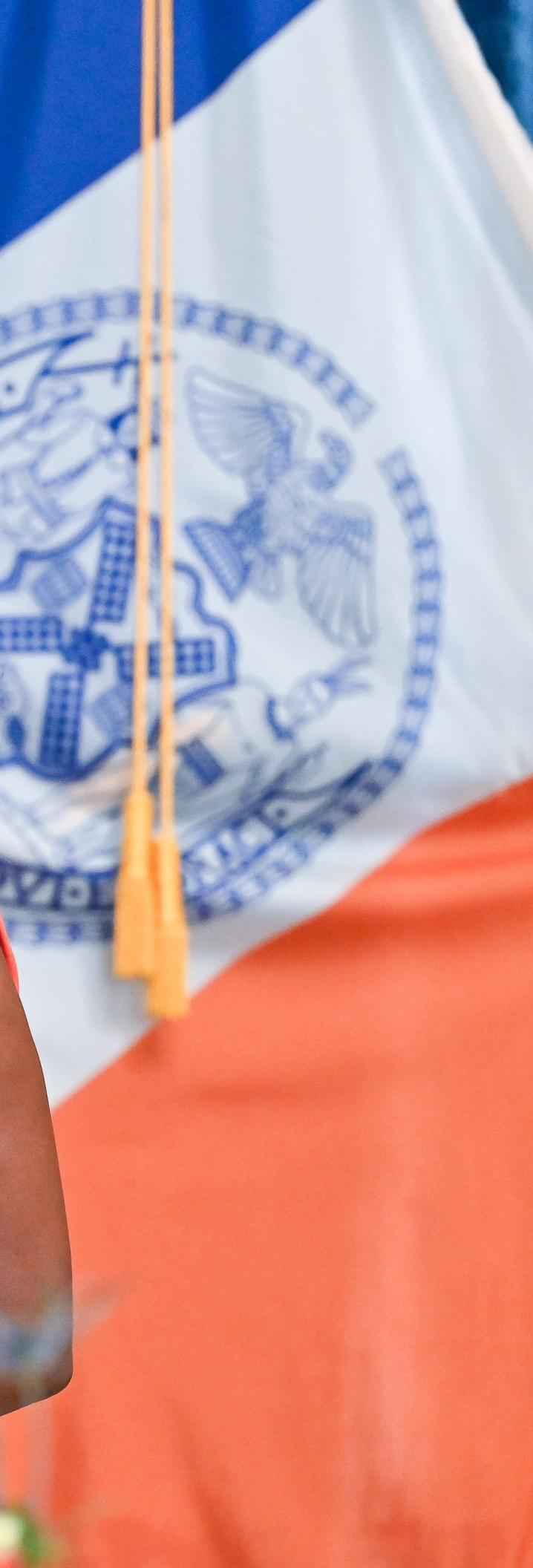
to
Hon. Dianne T. Renwick

In recognition of your contributions to the City of New York and the residents of The Bronx, you have distinguished yourself as a community leader and the first African American Woman presiding Justice of the Appellate Div. First Dept. You have dedicated your career in public service to our borough and its citizenry and have left an indelible mark on our borough and our city. You are truly a role model for our residents and exemplify what it means to be a leader. For these reasons and more, on behalf of the more than 1.4 million residents who call this borough home, I, Vanessa L. Gibson, President of the Borough of The Bronx, salute you.

September 22nd, 2023

Vanessa L. Gibson
Vanessa L. Gibson





A Commitment to Fairness

It goes without saying that a court system must be fair, but it also must be perceived as fair by those who use our courts and those whose lives are impacted by our judicial system. Win or lose, those who come to our courts for justice must be assured that their voice is heard, that their case is respected, that they are respected. We affirm our responsibility to promote a court system free from any and all forms of bias and discrimination and to promote a judiciary and workforce that reflects the rich diversity of New York State.



Above L-R: For the first time ever, an all-Latino bench heard oral arguments at the Appellate Division, Second Department, in Brooklyn. The bench included (left to right, seated): Justice Lourdes M. Ventura, Justice Betsy Barros, Presiding Justice Hector D. LaSalle and Justice Helen Voutsinas. Standing are (left to right) retired Judges Ariel Belen and Reinaldo Rivera and Chief Administrative Judge Joseph A. Zayas.

Left: The Board of Supreme Court Justices of the 12th Judicial District, and the Bronx Borough President's office celebrated Dianne T. Renwick's appointment as the first African American woman Presiding Justice of the Appellate Division, First Department, in the rotunda of the Bronx County Courthouse.



During the 16th Annual Holocaust Remembrance program at Queens Supreme Civil Term, New York City Civil Court Judge Mojgan Lancman (left) and Holocaust survivor light memorial candle.

Office of Diversity and Inclusion

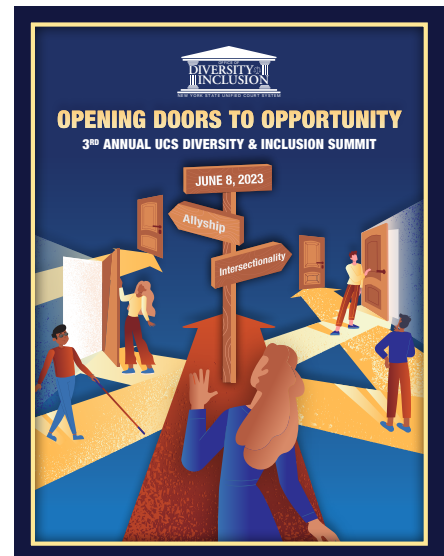
The Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) provides resources to judicial and non-judicial personnel on diversity-related matters, and identifies and develops practical mechanisms through which the court system strives to ensure a diverse workforce and bias-free work environment. In pursuing its objective of ensuring an atmosphere where all people feel comfortable, valued and productive, ODI regularly works with other UCS offices and commissions such as the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission, the Richard C. Failla LGBTQ Commission, the Inspector General’s Bias Unit, and the New York State Judicial Committee on Women in the Courts. ODI is housed within the Office for Justice Initiatives.



Tony Walters, Director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson

Diversity contributes to the myriad perspectives, approaches, talents and aspirations that court employees bring to their work. Considerations of diversity may include nationality, ethnicity, race, gender identity or expression, and other aspects of background and identity, such as: age, religion, geography, family status, sexual orientation or physical and mental ability. Some of our differences are unique to us as individuals, while others connect us to groups of people; the strength of diversity is realized by valuing all these differences. 2023 achievements include:

- Hosting the court system’s third Diversity Summit, an annual forum to inform and enlighten court employees on topics relating to diversity, equity and inclusion. Nearly 240 judges and non-judicial personnel attended the virtual program held in June. “Opening Doors to Opportunity” explored the concepts of Intersectionality and “allyship” — the actions leaders take to support colleagues from historically underrepresented communities. Featured speakers included Diya Wynn, a nationally recognized leader from AWS Machine Learning Solutions Lab, and Sandra Perez, Executive Director of NYC Pride.



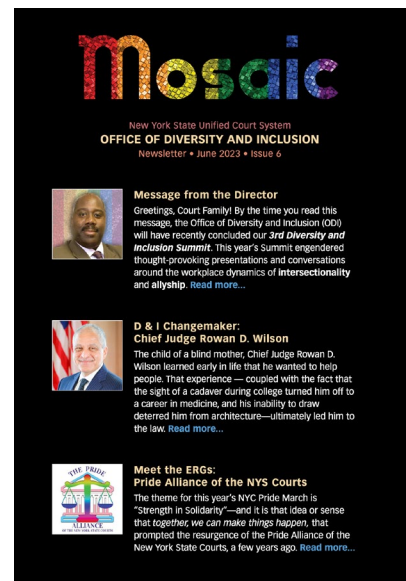


Acting Chief Judge Anthony Cannataro received the Columbian Lawyers Association Charles A. Rapallo & Justice Antonin Scalia Award from Judge Donna-Marie E. Golia.

- Sponsoring theme-month programming to enhance awareness of and respect for the array of traditions comprising New York State’s rich mosaic of cultures. 2023 programs included celebrations of Black History Month; Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage; LGBTQ Pride; Hispanic Heritage and Native American Heritage Month. ODI also collaborated with the NYS Judicial Committee on Elder Justice to provide a program on Ageism and Elder Abuse that was held during Older Americans Month in May.
- Providing training programs for court personnel, including presentations to new recruits at the Court Officers Academy, during new employee orientation, at association meetings for Court Clerks, and at Professional Development and Leadership/ Management seminars.
- Expanding ODI’s monthly series of “Diversity Dialogue” podcast interviews in which employees discussed their background and career path, as well as the importance of maintaining an inclusive workforce: <https://ww2.nycourts.gov/diversity-dialogues-28056>
- Publishing a UCS-wide newsletter, *Mosaic*, three times per year. *Mosaic* is widely disseminated as a tool for building understanding and appreciation of the need for diversity within the court system, while highlighting progress and benchmarks in these areas.
- Partnering with Equal Justice in the Courts Committees in judicial districts statewide on diversity-related initiatives and community-based events.
- Collaborating with the National Center for State Courts as part of a consortium of DEI professionals from state courts throughout the country.
- Networking with leaders of the UCS Employee Resource Groups (ERGs, also known as fraternal and affinity organizations) through monthly updates and as partners for cultural celebrations and outreach events.



Court leadership attend the 33rd annual Black History Month program at New York County Courthouse





From the desk of

Mary Lynn Nicolas-Brewster

Executive Director, Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission

As a person who is passionate about social justice, I am grateful for the opportunity to advance equity in the courts and to make an impact. Our many programs encourage continued dialogue on meaningful issues within the court system.

The Williams Commission's recent Family Court Report has served as a catalyst for impactful change in the state's family courts. Our pipeline programs for students of color to the legal profession and for attorneys of color to the judiciary have been tremendously successful. The Legal Fellowship program provides recent law school graduates with opportunities to clerk with judges. The Williams Commission's Judicial Mentor Program has seen 25% of our mentees ascending to the bench to create a more diverse judiciary. Participants in our professional development academies have acquired skills to help them promote within our court system. Our recent curriculum and student perspectives video to complement the award-winning documentary, "A Bridge to Justice: The Life of Franklin H. Williams," encourages young people's civic participation and spurs their interest in the law, including careers in the law and the courts, and in the pursuit of equal justice.

It is an honor to work with the Co-Chairs, Commissioners and dedicated full-time staff to continue the good work of Ambassador Franklin H. Williams, who urged us to not give up the struggle to eradicate racism in our courts. As a beacon for advancing diversity, the Williams Commission's goal is to ensure that the court system fulfills its promise of equal justice.



Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission

The Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission, named in honor of attorney-statesman Ambassador Franklin H. Williams, is the first court-based entity in the United States ever established to safeguard racial and ethnic fairness in the courts.

Established over 30 years ago, the Commission comprises 28 judges, attorneys, court administrators and private practice attorneys appointed by the Chief Judge. The Commission, co-chaired by Associate Judge Shirley Troutman of the Court of Appeals and Associate Justice Troy K. Webber of the Appellate Division, First Department, has been at the forefront of efforts to eradicate systemic racism in the courts through its policy initiatives, conferences, programming and meetings with court leaders and community stakeholders.



Hearings and Reports

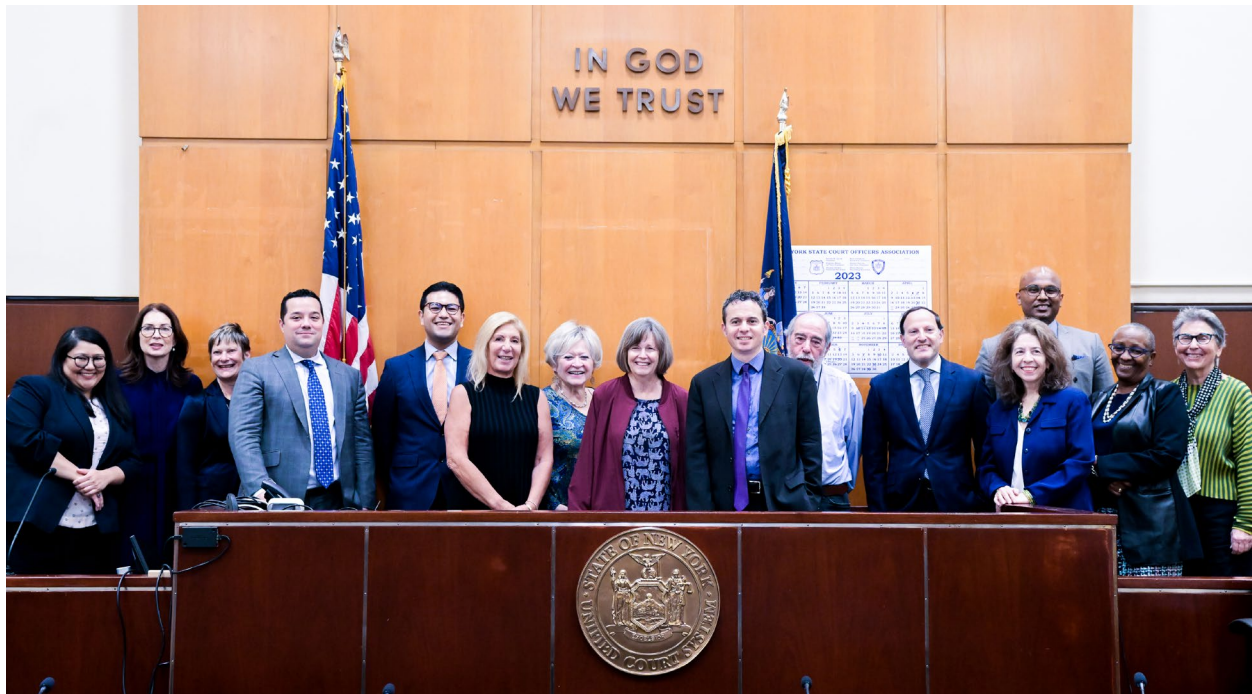
The Williams Commission was invited to testify during a November 1, 2023 joint public hearing, held by the New York State Senate Standing Committee on Judiciary and the New York State Senate Standing Committee on Children and Families, about New York State Family Courts. The Commission's Executive Director, Mary Lynn Nicolas-Brewster, Esq., spoke about the Commission's 2022 findings regarding New York City Family Courts and offered additional recommendations to improve them.

In December, the Williams Commission released a Report on Appellate Division Character and Fitness Committees. After meeting with each of the four Appellate Division Presiding Justices and several members of their respective staff, the Williams Commission developed recommendations to improve the Character and Fitness process, including streamlining the committee member application and applicant complaint processes.

Juneteenth 2023

On June 13, 2023, the Williams Commission held a one-day symposium on race titled *The Reconstruction Amendments—The Road to Freedom and Civil Rights*. Focusing on the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, the program examined their impact on the historical struggle for civil rights by communities of color.

Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson delivered the morning keynote address and reviewed the historical impact of the Thirteenth Amendment. Hon. Shira A. Scheindlin, retired U.S. District Court, Southern District, provided the afternoon keynote address focusing on the Fourteenth and Fourth Amendments and the need for criminal justice reform. New York State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins delivered remarks on the John Lewis Voting Rights Act and voting reforms. Two panels of legal experts discussed the Fourteenth Amendment and the current path to citizenship for undocumented persons, and the Fifteenth Amendment and the struggle for voting rights by communities of color.



The Franklin H. Williams Commission presented a program on the 50-year evolution of the New York City Housing Court

The 50th Anniversary of NYC Housing Court

On October 11, 2023, the Williams Commission held *A Long Way Home: The 50-Year Evolution of the New York City Housing Court* in New York County Housing Court’s Ceremonial Courtroom. The program featured Hon. Fern A. Fisher, a former Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for New York City Courts and the Executive Director of Legal Hand Inc., as a keynote speaker. She discussed the creation and history of Housing Court and its early challenges and successes. Two panels of attorneys, lawmakers, government officials and academics provided spirited discussions about the current issues in housing courts and potential ways to improve them.



“You have to make sure you work harder than anyone on your team, anyone in your class, anyone that you may be in competition with. Success starts and it ends with hard work.”

Dr. Christine Farrow – First female and first African American Commissioner of Jurors in Erie County

An Impactful Week in Buffalo

October 22, 2023, marked what would have been Ambassador Williams’ 106th Birthday. That week, the Williams Commission hosted several events for the public and the court in Buffalo. On October 24, 2023, the Commission met with Administrative Judge Kevin M. Carter to discuss his diversity efforts and how the Commission can assist. That evening, several local high school and college students were celebrated at a Red Carpet event. The students had participated in a video providing their perspectives to the Emmy-nominated documentary, *A Bridge to Justice*. Two students were also awarded scholarships for winning an essay contest about Ambassador Williams. A panel discussion about the importance of multicultural education concluded the program.

On October 25, 2023 Dr. Christine Farrow, Erie County Commissioner of Jurors and Franklin H. Williams Commissioner, hosted an Erie County jury outreach program at Calvary Baptist Church. A panel of judges and attorneys spoke about the importance of jury service and answered audience questions.

Finally, on October 25 and October 26, 2023, the Commission hosted its Professional Development Academy for court employees in the Eighth Judicial District. Attendees learned about resume writing, interviewing and other skills crucial for professional development and advancement.



The Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission held a “Red Carpet” premier of its new film on student perspectives of Ambassador Williams. The event was held in the Erie County Ceremonial Courtroom in Buffalo.

Continuing Efforts and New Initiatives

Throughout 2023, the Williams Commission continued many of its longstanding programs, including Heritage Month events; the Judicial Mentorship program; the Everything You Need to Know About Becoming a Judge program, which included a specialized Family Court event; the Law Day program; the Legal Fellowship program, which was expanded to New York City; and the summer law student internship program. The Special Masters Program was expanded to the Bronx, and the newest class of Special Masters was sworn in. The Commission also hosted a Leadership Academy for non-judicial personnel.

The Commission is preparing a new initiative for 2024: an Adopt-A-School program. It will be a pipeline for students and young people to gain interest in civil rights, the courts and the legal profession. Commissioners will work with a school in their judicial district to engage students in a discussion on Ambassador Williams’ life and the importance of civic engagement. The Adopt-a-School program will feature our Bridge to Justice educational curriculum.

To honor the legacy of Ambassador Williams, and to educate the public about this “hidden figure” of the civil rights movement, the Commission is seeking to have a street co-named after him. The Williams Commission

presented a proposal to the Community Board Transportation and Landmarks Committee that would rename a street located in front of one of Ambassador Williams’ previous residences.

In 2024, the Commission will update its Family Court report. The Commission will also work collaboratively with the Commissioners of Jurors and the Statewide Jury Coordinator’s Office to issue a report with recommendations addressing barriers to jury service and jury diversity. The Commission plans to host two public hearings on this important issue.

For more information, visit: <http://ww2.nycourts.gov/ip/ethnic-fairness/index.shtml>



“What I want, what I’ve always wanted, was not to be held back and not to have obstacles placed in front of me. Give me a fair shot, give me an opportunity, and I’ll earn it. And that’s what the dream is, and I think that’s what people come here for. And that dream is still alive.”

Hon. Shahabuddeen Ally – First Muslim man elected to the bench in New York State



From the desk of

Kay-Ann Porter Campbell
Inspector General

As the newly appointed Inspector General, my goal is to ensure that our employees and court users know that there is an office to address misconduct, fraud, criminal activity, bias and discrimination within the New York State Court System. Whether you are an entry-level employee, a high-ranking employee or a member of the judiciary, you should know that you will be treated with respect, receive the utmost confidentiality in the process, and the investigation will be conducted thoroughly, professionally and timely by our professional and highly qualified staff.

Of particular importance is the Office of the Managing Inspector General for Bias Matters, which is near and dear to my heart, having served at the helm of that office for the past 21 years.

Over the last few years, I have worked tirelessly to promote awareness of the IG's Office by conducting informational meetings, via Teams, with many employees in the various judicial districts statewide as well as all the Equal Justice Initiative Committees. In furtherance of the Court System's Equal Justice Initiative, the goal is to ensure that every employee knows the role and function of the IG's Office, and that there is an office to address bias and discrimination.

In addition to informational meetings with employees, I also wanted to ensure that our court users know about our Office, so we updated our posters, which are displayed in various spaces around courthouses, and added QR codes, allowing court users to access the information in various languages.



Inspector General

The Inspector General's Office is responsible for the investigation and elimination of infractions of disciplinary standards, criminal activities, conflicts of interest, misconduct, misfeasance and incompetence on the part of non-judicial employees of the UCS, and persons or corporations doing business with the UCS, with respect to their dealings with the courts.

Kay-Ann Porter Campbell, who served two decades as Managing Inspector General for Bias Matters, works diligently to eliminate bias in the court system and leading efforts to promote a safe, inclusive environment, was promoted to Inspector General in 2023.

Managing Inspector General for Bias Matters

A specialized unit within the Office of the Inspector General—the Office of the Managing Inspector General for Bias Matters—investigates allegations of bias based upon race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, gender dysphoria, domestic violence status, prior criminal record, age, marital status, disability, national origin, creed or religion that affect the workplace or the terms and conditions of employment of UCS personnel.



Anti-Discrimination & Anti-Harassment Policy

The Unified Court System's anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policy is applicable to judges and non-judicial personnel. It prohibits conduct and communications, including electronic and social media communications, that demean, disparage or harass others based on race, sex, gender identity and other protected categories. The UCS has zero tolerance for bias, harassment and discrimination. For more information, visit: <https://www.nycourts.gov/whatsnew/pdf/UCS-AntiDiscrim-AntiHarass.pdf>

Americans with Disabilities Act

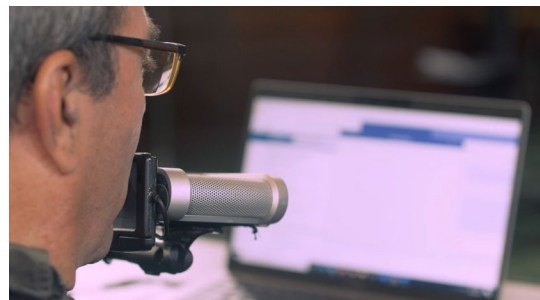
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law prohibiting discrimination against individuals with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. The Unified Court System is committed to fully complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act by providing services, programs and activities in a way that assures equal and full accessibility for all court users.

In 2021, the UCS first developed and implemented a revised procedure for receiving and processing requests for reasonable ADA accommodations, entrusting District Executives and NYC Chief Clerks with assisting litigants, jurors, attorneys and other court users in obtaining the accommodations they need.

In 2022, use of the new online request for accommodation pilot form was expanded to all New York City trial courts, and in 2023 the pilot form and associated software application were further enhanced and streamlined to improve processing of requests for judicial and administrative accommodations.

The Statewide ADA Coordinator and the ADA Unit continued to provide trainings and webinars in 2023 for judges, court managers, court personnel and members of the bar, on the UCS' responsibilities under the law, the use of the online form and app and the process for requesting accommodations.

For more information, visit: <http://ww2.nycourts.gov/Accessibility/index.shtml>



"The court system has offered me an incredibly rewarding career. A lot of the time, town and village justices would have no idea that I was a quadriplegic using my lower lip to access books, multiple computer screens and information to answer their legal questions."

Dave Whalen
Attorney, Office of Justice Court Support



— From the desk of —

Matthew Skinner

Executive Director, Richard C. Failla LGBTQ Commission

Since its establishment in December 2016, the Richard C. Failla LGBTQ Commission has acted as a forceful advocate for LGBTQ issues and LGBTQ members of the legal community, providing a bridge between the judiciary's leadership and LGBTQ individuals in the courts and profession. The Failla Commission works with court officials to promote equal participation in, and access to, the courts and legal profession by all persons regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, from initiatives to enhance judicial and workforce diversity, including our mentoring program, to efforts to help ensure that issues facing LGBTQ litigants are fairly addressed by the courts. In addition, the Failla Commission also collaborates with LGBTQ advocacy organizations, bar associations, and community groups to raise awareness about LGBTQ issues and foster a more equitable, supportive environment for LGBTQ members within the justice system, legal profession, and wider community.

The Failla Commission brings together stakeholders, educators, and leaders to enlighten, raise awareness, and make a difference. By elevating our united voice, we are better able to establish a dialogue for change; first, by making recommendations that identify where change is needed, and then, working to implement that change. We both acknowledge our court system's complicated past relationship with the LGBTQ community and work intensively to move forward with confidence in the present into a better future. Our public portfolio includes extensive cultural competency training and other educational programs for judges, non-judicial personnel and court partners, alongside sharing the story of our community through the lens of legal history that has played out in the courts.

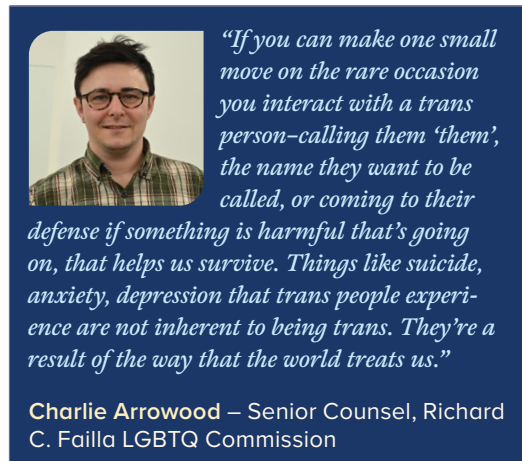
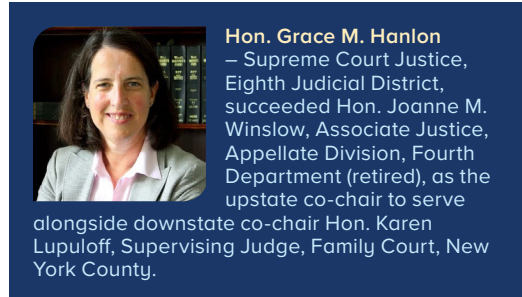
The Failla Commission uses our LGBTQ judges and court staff in New York State as both individual and collective engines for even greater change. We always strive to increase visibility and build an even bigger and stronger presence in our court system.



Richard C. Failla LGBTQ Commission

The Richard C. Failla LGBTQ Commission of the New York State Courts is dedicated to promoting equal participation and access throughout the court system by all persons regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. To fulfill this mission, the Commission will protect and enhance diversity and promote the presence of the LGBTQ judicial and non-judicial personnel within the Unified Court System. In furtherance of its mission, there were several highlights in 2023:

- Acting Chief Judge and Co-Chair Emeritus Anthony Cannataro and then Chief Judge Rowan Wilson appointed a new downstate co-chair, Hon. Karen Lupuloff (Supervising Judge, New York County Family Court), a new upstate co-chair, Hon. Grace M. Hanlon (Supreme Court Justice, Eighth Judicial District), and new members Hon. James L. Hyer (Supreme Court Justice, Ninth Judicial District), Hon. Seth M. Marnin (Court of Claims Judge), and Hon. Javier E. Vargas (Court of Claims Judge). Justice Joanne M. Winslow (retired Associate Justice, Appellate Division, Fourth Department) stepped down as upstate co-chair after serving in that role for nearly six years, a record for the Failla Commission; she will remain involved as a member going forward.
- Launched a formal judicial mentoring program and then saw the first successful alumnus of the program ascend to the bench with Judge Marnin, the first transgender judge in New York State and the first transgender male judge in the United States.
- Partnered with the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission and other court system and bar groups to bring Associate Justices Martin J. Jenkins and Kelli M. Evans from the California Supreme Court, respectively the first and second openly gay members of that bench, to New York for “State High Courts in 2023: A Bicoastal LGBTQ Pride Month Conversation” with Associate Judge Cannataro from the New York Court of Appeals.
- Received the 2023 Pride in Government Award from the NAACP Mid-Manhattan Branch.
- Brought the second annual Judge Paul G. Feinman Award ceremony to Buffalo, where we honored William “Bill” Gardner, a retired partner at Hodgson Russ LLP. He played an instrumental role in the successful litigation efforts that resulted in striking down New York’s sodomy (*People v. Onofre* (1980)) and sodomy solicitation (*People v. Uplinger* (1983)) statutes in the early 1980s. Bill also successfully defended his Uplinger win from the New York Court of Appeals at the U.S. Supreme Court in 1984.
- Attended and spoke at the National LGBTQ+ Bar Association’s 2023 Lavender Law Conference in Chicago and the Federal Bar Council’s 2023 Fall Bench and Bar Retreat in Connecticut.
- Created LGBTQ History Month program for the Corporation Counsel and New York City Law Department where we explored the key legal victories achieved in collaboration through, and the more recent tension between, the principles of the First Amendment and the movement for LGBTQ equality.



For more information, visit: <http://ww2.nycourts.gov/ip/LGBTQ/index.shtml>



— From the desk of —

Jessica Simard

Statewide Jury Coordinator

Our Jury Support Office team proposes and implements operational, policy and technology measures to make each county pool of potential jurors as inclusive as possible, and the Commissioner of Jurors role as efficient as possible. Working in a highly regulated branch of state government requires us to work creatively within the boundaries set upon the courts and jury pools. In 2023, we have focused on promoting equal justice and inclusivity at the individual, team, and organizational level. A member of our team, a 30+ year veteran employee, stated how this year has been the most exciting and fulfilling in a long time. I whole-heartedly agree.

Post pandemic, we began a Statewide Juror Response Improvement project that has launched social media campaigns, new imaging and print materials, and enhancements in our technology applications. We introduced dashboards that measure best practice metrics as well as highlight areas of each community where we are least engaged with potential jurors. Strides were made in creating materials and content for Commissioners to use for community engagement and establishing partnerships with other community and court organizations. This year we also saw the addition of updated courses on Juror Inclusivity and Community Outreach and Engagement in our “The Jury” college education series.

With our Statewide Response Improvement Committee, we created a new motto this year: “Justice Starts at Jury. Jury starts with you.” While we can continue to make technology improvements to be sure we reach the maximum number of potential jurors and provide resources and training to the Commissioner of Jurors about inclusivity and engagement, the decision to participate as a juror always comes back to the individual. For your community, your peers, and yourself, jury service is the most direct way to be sure that justice is being carried out. I would argue that this is the simplest way for a community member to make a direct impact on ensuring justice.

The Jury Support Office looks forward in 2024 to channeling more resources into equal justice. Please make sure you fill out that questionnaire when it comes to your mailbox! Volunteer! Serve! Represent!

Jury Service

Through jury service, the citizens of this state directly participate in the operation of their government. The jury is the conscience of the community, and one of the key checks and balances that ensure our freedom and promote justice. Without jurors, the wheels of justice would grind to a halt. When someone serves on a jury, they're not only guaranteeing the rights of others to a fair trial but guaranteeing the same rights for themselves and their family. A jury that mirrors the diverse ethnic, social, economic, and political perspectives and values of the community is best equipped to sit in judgment of its fellow citizens and render a verdict that is fair and consistent with the law.

Language Access

New York State's diverse population, with over five million people speaking languages other than English in their homes, requires a robust language access program to serve court users. The court system, with 242 interpreters on staff and 1,800 per diem interpreters on standby, provides free interpreting services in over 200 languages. Last year, interpreters covered over 70,000 appearances in 133 languages and provided, in person or remotely, language access to approximately 330,000 court users.

The Office of Language Access (OLA) embraces new ideas and technologies to meet the increasing demand for services. For instance, two Translation Specialists have been hired to meet the need for document translation in Spanish and Chinese. A SharePoint site and request form has been created to facilitate translations for the courts. Language Line, a telephonic service, provides on-demand language access in non-courtroom settings to assist with general inquiries, instructions or forms. Language Line has been instrumental in reducing wait times for court users, especially when interpreters are actively interpreting in the courtroom. An American Sign Language Video Remote pilot program supports deaf court users. We provide bilingual orders of protection in Spanish, Arabic, Chinese and Russian. Since 2015, when the initiative began, 210,350 bi-lingual orders have been issued.

Bar Exam Reform

The questionnaire that prospective attorneys must complete had long required candidates for the bar to disclose all criminal justice system involvement, regardless of outcome or seriousness of the offense. One particular question—Question 26—tended to have a chilling effect on applicants due to the disproportionate rates of policing and prosecution experienced in communities of color.

In March, and after lengthy discussion and deliberation, the four Presiding Justices of the Appellate Division Departments altered Question 26 in an effort to strike an appropriate balance that would take into account disproportionate criminal justice encounters while ensuring the integrity of the legal profession. Under the new Question 26, bar applicants will not be required to disclose matters that were adjudicated in a juvenile delinquency proceeding in Family Court or through other equivalent noncriminal proceedings or citations, tickets, arrests and other encounters with law enforcement that did not result in formal criminal charges or an indictment, trial, conviction or guilty plea.



"We make it possible for individuals who have a matter before the New York State Courts to exercise their constitutional right to a jury trial. We have the opportunity to meet our neighbors and individuals that live and reside in our county, and really show them another side to our legal system, the side of our legal system that allows them, as citizens of the United States, to participate in our system of justice"

Dr. Betty Campbell
Westchester County Jury Commissioner



"When people come into the judicial system, they're very scared, they're confused. When they hear you speaking their own language, they know that they are going to be heard, and they are going to be able to tell their story, to ask for the remedies that they're expecting the court to provide for them."

Lourdes Cardona
Court Interpreter





The Bronx celebrated Woman's History Month with a luncheon and presentation of awards to (left to right) Vonnetta Turnbull, Wendy Silva, Jennifer Boyd, Bernice McNeil, Hon. Marsha Michael, Hayley Phillip, Denee Vadell, Shirley Mangan, and Hon. Llinet Rosado.

Judicial Committee on Women in the Courts

The Judicial Committee on Women in the Courts works to secure equal justice, equal treatment and equal opportunity in the courts. The Committee is chaired by the Honorable Betty Weinberg Ellerin, retired Presiding Justice of the Appellate Division, First Department, and a pioneer in breaking gender barriers.

Working within the UCS, the Committee addresses a variety of concerns of women litigants, attorneys and court employees. In recent years, it has acted on behalf of constituencies that range from domestic violence and human trafficking victims to immigrant women, and from sexually harassed employees to self-represented matrimonial litigants. The committee was instrumental in the creation of a statewide network of both human trafficking intervention courts and domestic violence courts.

Gender Fairness Committees

As part of the UCS's continuing commitment to gender equity, 24 local gender bias and gender fairness committees around the state address gender fairness issues, conduct public awareness and continuing legal education programs on workplace issues, and present cutting-edge programs on myriad topics. <https://www.nycourts.gov/LegacyPDFS/IP/womeninthecourts/Committee-List.pdf>

For instance, the Third and Fourth Judicial District Gender Fairness Committees (chaired by Justice Lisa Fisher of the Appellate Division, Third Department, and Justice Tatiana Coffinger, respectively) teamed up during Domestic Violence Month to present a riveting Continuing Legal Education program on cultural awareness in domestic violence matters. The program featured panels discussing the issue of cultural awareness—being attuned to differences in cultures that impact how victims and abusers perceive domestic violence and the “right/duty” to impose corporal “discipline.”

The Sixth Judicial District Committee chaired by Hon. Julie A. Campbell implemented a training on implicit bias as it relates to domestic violence. It also raised concerns over the dearth of childcare centers in the community.

In the Seventh Judicial District, the committee chaired by Judge Kristin L. Garland, Judge Teresa Johnson and attorney Laurie A. Michelman partnered with the University of Rochester's Susan B. Anthony Center and the Greater Rochester Association of Women Attorneys to present “Self, Family and Work: Women Navigating Criminal Law.”

In the Buffalo area, the Eighth Judicial District Gender Fairness Committee, co-chaired by Judges Betty Calvo-Torres, Stephanie Saunders, Sgt. Angie Davis Leveritte and Kristy Holland, recognized Women's History Month by presenting a lunch-and-learn titled, “How Far We've Come and How Far We've Yet to Go,” focusing on interpreters and IT careers within the courts. For Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the committee held a panel discussion centered on an Appellate Division, Fourth Department, ruling relating to why courts must consider domestic violence when deciding custody cases.

The Eighth Judicial District also engaged in several community outreach initiatives, including collecting toys for children of residents at Albion Correctional Facility, and assisting the Little Smiles of Western New York program, which helps deliver holiday joy to children in tough situations and worked to meet diaper needs in an “Every Bottom Covered” diaper collection initiative.



The Gender Fairness Committees of the Third and Fourth Judicial Districts presented a program exploring the ways in which cultural nuances affect perceptions of domestic violence. One of the presenters was Somaia Shariff Zada, a refugee from Afghanistan who worked as a court analyst in the Unified Court System. Somaia explained the oppression imposed by the Taliban and the total subjugation of women under that regime.



Judges Taneka Frost, Schenectady City Court; Sherri Brooks-Morton, Albany County Family Court and Christine Clark, Appellate Division, Third Department, on a panel at Albany Law School for a Woman's History Month program sponsored by the Third and Fourth Judicial Districts.

On Long Island, the Nassau County Women in the Courts Committee, chaired by Justices Lisa A. Cairo and Sharon M. J. Gianelli, presented a CLE, "More than Just Notorious: The Remarkable Ruth Bader Ginsburg." The committee is developing a mentor program to assist younger women in the legal community.

Suffolk County's Judicial Committee on Women in the Courts, led by Patricia Waite and Amy Hsu, held programs on "Artificial Intelligence and Deep Fake Pornography," "Handling Domestic Violence When a Complainant Isn't Cooperating" and "A Day in the Life of a Domestic Violence Survivor."

Committees throughout the state were exceptionally busy in 2023. For more information visit: <http://ww2.nycourts.gov/ip/womeninthecourts/index.shtml>



Court Reporter Denee Vadell wipes away tears as Hon. Margaret Martin introduces her before presenting an award during the 12th Judicial District Woman's History Month program at the Bronx Hall of Justice.





A Commitment to Families

Our court system has aptly been described as the emergency room for society's ills. Each and every day, people in trauma come to our courts for help, relief and sanctuary. We are committed to offering innovative and effective programs to help New York's families through what may be the most stressful, difficult and emotionally challenging experience of their lives.



Above: Court reporter Eileen Agnoletto shows children her stenotype machine during Take your Child to Work Day at Queens Supreme Civil Court. The children participated in a mock trial where they prosecuted, defended and judged the case of Goldilocks and the Three Bears.

Left: Saratoga Family Court Judge Amy Knussman presides over a National Adoption Day ceremony.



From the desk of
Hon. Jeffrey Sunshine

Statewide Coordinating Judge for Matrimonial Matters

In my role as the Statewide Coordinating Judge for Matrimonial Matters, I never have to ask myself why I come to work. I've always been captivated by the idea of marriage as a civic bond. Success—measured in terms of making a difference in this world—is reinforced in the everyday ways we serve families across New York State.

My mother, when I was a little boy growing up in Brooklyn, would sing to me that famous song, “Love and Marriage.” I can still hear her singing the lyrics: “Love and marriage, love and marriage, go together like a horse and carriage.” And here I am the Statewide Coordinating Judge for Matrimonial Matters—understanding that divorce often presents some of the most personal legal experiences many people face. I am passionate about the topic of matrimonial practice and law, which I practiced for a decade.

For the past quarter century, I've served on the bench first as a Family Court Judge and then in Supreme Court presiding over hundreds of divorce cases. Over the arc of that time, I've seen and felt so many of the personal nuances of our human experience. Presiding in matrimonial parts, we touch people's lives in ways that are unique in the judiciary simply because it usually takes more than a one-time contact with the Court to manage a case. It's the dissolution of a marriage, and it requires sustained effort to ensure people navigate through the process with the least amount of discomfort.

The people who come before us share some of the “rawest” aspects of their intimate experiences and reveal private aspects of their lives. A goal of mine is to ensure that the Courts allow them to emerge with their dignity intact and, perhaps, to maintain and sustain a renewed sense of family in a different form despite the end of the legal marital relationship.

Continually improving access to the process and to our Courts is integral to ensuring that parties can maintain their dignity. We need judges and attorneys from diverse backgrounds and experiences in every corner of our State, serving all our communities, to ensure fair access to justice. We constantly analyze policy ideas that support that aim. We have pilot efforts underway to establish uncontested joint divorces, and we have the framework from pilots to reform the uncontested divorce process and to study the handling of uncontested divorces. So, a primary priority of mine, now and in the future, is examining the ways we can better serve the public. I consider it a great honor and privilege to explore those ideas with my colleagues in the leadership of the Unified Court System.

A divorce is unique in that the impact lives on and constantly reapplies itself to a family's ongoing narrative. We in the Courts are deeply aware of the importance these cases have on families and individuals. In my experience, marriage invariably elicits deep emotions and conflicts upon its dissolution. I often say in my courtroom that people never say to me after proceedings, “That was a wonderful divorce.” Knowing that potential for deep impact we must work every day to make the Court as thoughtful and humane as possible to help litigants, both represented and self-represented, navigate the process.

As we continue to improve and strive for understanding and recognition of the pain of the process, I am forever hopeful that expansion and continuation of our effort will foster mediation as a viable alternative. My mother may have been hopeful that love and marriage would go together but when it does not, we owe it to all New Yorkers to provide an expeditious process to resolve disputes. So that while the nature of the family unit may change, the family can continue—both economically and emotionally—in a safe manner for all.



Court Officer Alecia Carentz swears in "a witness," her daughter, as part of Take your Child to Work Day at Queens Supreme Civil.

Youth and Emerging Adult Justice

The Legislature’s decision to raise the age of criminal responsibility ushered in a new paradigm that required fundamental restructuring of New York State’s juvenile and criminal justice systems. Our Office for Justice Initiatives provides ongoing training to judicial and non-judicial staff to address several legislative changes that impact the statutorily created Youth Parts, accessible magistrates and court operations.

Additionally, while most states set the age of criminal responsibility at 18, research shows the brain does not finish fully maturing until the mid-20s. The 18 to 25-year-old population—“emerging adults”—lack the risk avoidance and impulse control that help to curb criminal behavior in older adults, and emerging adults are incarcerated at double their representation in the adult populace.

In response, several jurisdictions in New York have launched programs in criminal courts specifically designed to address the emerging adult population of their local communities. While each of these programs operates differently to best meet the needs of the young people, each is focused on linking young people with opportunities for social and rehabilitative services, in lieu of traditional court responses such as monetary fines and incarceration. Emerging adult projects include: Brooklyn Young Adult Court; New York County Supreme Court Criminal Term Alternatives to Incarceration Emerging Adult Track; New Rochelle City Court Opportunity Youth Part; and Mount Vernon City Court Emerging Adult Justice Part.

In 2023, the court system announced that all Desk Appearance Tickets issued to emerging adults throughout the borough of Manhattan will be handled in the Midtown Community Court, one of the nation’s first community courts. Community Courts adjudicate low-level and quality-of-life offenses such as prostitution, shoplifting, vandalism and drug possession. They emphasize accountability, community responsibility and restitution by combining conventional punishments with alternative sanctions.



Hon. Alonzo Jacobs, Judge of the First District Court, Suffolk County, speaks to youngsters at the Office of Youth Services Annual 4Cs program at Nassau County Community College.



From the desk of

Hon. Richard Rivera

Statewide Coordinating Judge for Family Court Matters

It has now been five months since I was graced with the honor of serving as the inaugural Statewide Coordinating Judge for Family Court Matters.

It is hard work but exciting and important at the same time. Family Court has been a major part of my legal career, so it holds a high degree of importance to me. I know firsthand the work that our Family Court Judges, attorneys, non-judicial staff and others do, day in and day out, to meet the needs of the families in our communities.

It is my goal and plan to visit our family courts statewide, and to meet with the judges and stakeholders. My purpose is to ascertain what the local needs are and identify the services that are being provided with success. This will also allow me to advocate for increased resources; establish best practices; provide any necessary training for judges and staff and to develop the coordination of services wherever possible.

I want my colleagues to know that the office is here for them. I want them to understand that part of my responsibility is to be an intermediary of sorts, a collaborator. My objective is to help improve morale and working conditions, while ensuring that all litigants receive equal justice. I welcome any and all ideas for improving our Family Courts. As I travel the State, I am looking forward to meeting with my colleagues, hearing their concerns and accomplishments and visiting their courthouses.

I am confident that Chief Judge Rowan Wilson will prove with his actions what he has said, that Family Court is a priority. The creation of this position is certainly proof. As one of our colleagues pointed out, the last three words of the title — “Family Court Matters” says it all.





Matthew and Paula Chapin and their son Alexander at a National Adoption Day ceremony in Ballston Spa

Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children

The New York State Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children was established in 1988 to improve the lives and life chances of children involved with the New York courts. The Commission is chaired by the Hon. Karen K. Peters, former Presiding Justice of the Appellate Division, Third Department, and comprised of judges, lawyers, advocates, physicians, educators, and state and local officials.

At its inception, the Commission concentrated its efforts on the youngest children before the courts—securing early intervention, establishing a statewide system of Children’s Centers in the Courts, improving court proceedings, promoting the healthy development of children in foster care and focusing on the needs of infants involved in child welfare proceedings. The Commission’s role has since expanded to include the needs of older children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, as well as implementing the New York State Court Improvement Project, a federally funded project to assess and improve foster care, termination of parental rights and adoption proceedings. This year, programmatic oversight of the Statewide Children’s Centers was added to the Commission’s portfolio.

Prior success of robust virtual events encouraged the Commission to continue producing high quality virtual programs, open to all court users, especially parents, attorneys, youth, advocates and professionals in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The Redlich Horwitz Foundation assisted the Commission with a generous grant to support family-centered practices, and the Commission presented programs that highlighted diversity, equity and inclusion in child welfare and juvenile justice matters. Through active engagement with the Partnership for Youth Justice—a collaborative strategy to improve outcomes for youth in the justice system—the Commission sponsored a training series. Those trainings focused on youth justice disparities, the impact of bias on youth and their families, trauma-responsive behaviors and engaging youth in community-based services, support and opportunities among other topics.

The Commission continued to leverage a federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention grant, specifically for reducing risk for girls in the juvenile justice system. Staff and leadership across the state were offered evidence-based, gender-responsive anti-bias training with the goal of improving outcomes for girls in the juvenile justice system statewide.

Also in 2023, the Third Judicial District, under the leadership of Administrative Judge Gerald W. Connolly and then Supervising Judge of the Family Courts Richard Rivera, opened a dedicated waiting area in the Albany County Family Court for older youth and teens—a cozy, safe and inviting space. The new waiting area was made possible with the support of grant funds provided by the Commission.



Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives Edwina G. Richardson opened the Better for Families Conference in Fairport, Monroe County.



Buffalo Children's Center

Family Treatment Courts

The court system operates 19 Family Treatment Courts, including the Nassau Family Treatment Court that launched in 2022 and the Rensselaer Family Treatment Court, which received an Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Presentation (OJJDP) grant in October 2022. The Office for Justice Initiatives is supporting and advising on the implementation of the UCS' OJJDP grant, which is designed to build child welfare/substance use disorder collaboratives within rural communities.

As part of the statewide grant, the Office for Justice Initiatives (OJI) designed and implemented a Child Welfare & Substance Use Disorder monthly virtual series for Family Court Judges and staff as well as Family Court practitioners. OJI is also advising on OJJDP grants for Albany, Nassau, Oneida, Schenectady, Suffolk, Rensselaer, Rockland and Ulster counties.

Children's Centers

To respond to the needs of children who accompany family members or caregivers coming to court, the New York State Unified Court System developed the nation's first statewide system of cheerful, welcoming Children's Centers. The Centers provide a safe, literacy-rich environment, and an opportunity for positive interventions in the lives of vulnerable children. In 2023, 26 Centers re-opened following mandated closures due to the COVID pandemic. A new site in New York City, the Hon. Betty Weinberg Ellerin Children's Center, renovated with funds provided by the New York County District Attorney's Office, opened in 2023. Three additional Centers are slated to re-open in early 2024.

Research shows that many of the children brought to court are five years of age or younger, poor and not receiving vital services—including health, educational and nutritional benefits—to which they and their families are entitled. Centers regularly facilitate connections between families and services such as Head Start, WIC, food stamps, literacy and other community services. The Children's Centers have truly turned a problem into a possibility, with positive outcomes for families.



Child Welfare Court Improvement Project

The Child Welfare Court Improvement Project (CWCIP) is a federally funded initiative that envisions a collaborative child welfare system that acts urgently to achieve timely, stable permanency, and is trauma informed and data driven. The CWCIP pursued its mission in 2023 through several initiatives:

Engaging People with Lived Child Welfare Experience Expertise

In 2023, the CWCIP launched a new work group called Engaging People with Lived Experience, and this work group is an advisory group to the CWCIP and child welfare stakeholders statewide. Several sub-committees have been formed under this new advisory group, and will meet regularly in 2024 and beyond to work on Special Months/Annual Programs; Addressing Harmful Language; and Family Preservation.

Hearing Quality

In 2023, the CWCIP held its first two cohorts of the Reasonable Efforts Judicial Academy (REJA) in partnership with the Judicial Institute, Capacity Building Center for Courts, and the American Bar Association, training over 45 Jurists. The Academy offered strategies for making findings and holding meaningful permanency hearings as well as proper inquiry and findings under the mandates of the Indian Child Welfare Act.

Quality Legal Representation Project

In support of the work and recommendations of the Chief Judge's Commission on Parental Representation, the Quality Legal Representation project works to raise awareness about Office of Indigent Legal Services Standards as they relate to immediate assignment and presumptive entitlement to counsel, as well as the benefits of adopting and implementing the model of interdisciplinary representation.

In Phase One, the CWCIP partnered with the Unified Court System, the Office of Indigent Legal Services, the Office of Children and Family Services, and attorneys for children to develop a virtual four-part training series about early access and interdisciplinary representation. In 2024, the CWCIP will be working with local counties across the state to support implementation of pre-petition and interdisciplinary representation in child welfare matters.





A Commitment to Society

Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson has made clear that in his “unorthodox” vision of the judicial system, the courts are not merely arbiters that decide which side is right and which side is wrong. Rather, he envisions a court system that, working in tandem with the other branches of government, seeks to solve problems, not just cases, with the aim of improving the lives of New Yorkers.



Above: Veteran's Mentor Coordinator Derek Brown and therapy dog Sierra at the opening of Orange County Veterans Court in Goshen.

Left: Multi bench Judge John Rowley speaks at the Tompkins County Family Treatment Court.



From the desk of
Hon. Toko Serita

Statewide Coordinating Judge for
Problem-Solving Courts

I am an Asian American woman who has been a problem-solving court judge for 15 of my 18 years on the bench, serving in misdemeanor drug, mental health and human trafficking intervention courts in Queens County. To the puzzlement of many, I did not seek a promotion to Supreme Court, the normal career path of many a criminal court judge, for one reason: It would have meant giving up my work with trafficking survivors and the other participants of the Queens Human Trafficking Intervention Court. I was unwilling to make that sacrifice. Although problem-solving court judges have been dismissed as nothing but “glorified social workers,” I take a different view of these jurists and these courts. Our system of justice must recognize, and respond to, the complex societal forces that bring people to our courts.

From day one, I sought to use my “power” as a judge and my mission as a servant of justice to right the many wrongs I’ve seen in the criminal justice system, particularly those inflicted against some of the most vulnerable, most exploited and least powerful among us: young women—many of them Black, Brown and Asian—forced into the commercial sex trade. I want to help those who view their situation as hopeless, and I also want to give back.

I was born in Sapporo, Japan and came to this country when I was five years old, the offspring of artists whose dream it was to paint in New York City and provide opportunity for their only child. I have lived the American Dream as an immigrant who was able to become a lawyer and judge—positions from which most women in my native country were excluded.

Being raised by two artists in such an environment perhaps enabled me to approach the law through a different, more creative lens, to think outside the box and to approach challenges with the acknowledgment that change and progress are constrained only by the limits of one’s imagination. It has allowed me to help create structural changes in the court system, and to witness the profound transformation over the years in the way that we view sex workers and trafficking survivors.

In my new role as Statewide Coordinating Judge for Problem-Solving Courts, I have the opportunity to bring my passion for justice to many others whose lives are in a tailspin due to drugs, mental illness, physical and psychological abuse. Now that’s what I call an awesome gig!



Hon. Paul Deep and Rome Family Treatment Court staff at a recent graduation.

Problem-Solving Courts

The New York State Unified Court System is a national leader in the development of specialized “problem-solving” courts that focus on treatment and accountability for individuals in the criminal justice system. Each of these courts features specially trained judges and staff, dedicated dockets, intensive judicial monitoring, and coordination with outside services and agencies.

Drug Treatment Courts

Drug Treatment Courts operate within courts that have jurisdiction over criminal or family matters. They were established to help individuals and communities break the destructive cycle of repeated drug abuse and arrest. These courts provide nonviolent drug offenders the opportunity to participate in rehabilitation programs as alternatives to incarceration. During the 1990s when the drug treatment court model was first implemented, Drug Treatment Courts were primarily funded by federal grants. Since then, however, the State has assumed greater responsibility for funding these courts.

Domestic Violence and Integrated Domestic Violence Courts

The court system has long been a national leader in the pursuit of effective approaches to intimate partner violence and now operates 38 Domestic Violence parts and 43 Integrated Domestic Violence parts.

Each year, the Office for Justice Initiatives (OJI) Division of Policy and Planning, together with the Grants and Contracts Unit, works closely with dozens of Domestic Violence and Integrated Domestic Violence Courts judges and court professionals to draft grant proposals that have secured millions of dollars in federal funding to support innovative programs and reforms designed to reduce intimate partner violence, strengthen victim services and promote offender accountability.

Currently, the court system maintains over 300 problem-solving courts, including:

93 Drug Treatment Courts

43 Integrated Domestic Violence Parts

42 Mental Health Courts

38 Domestic Violence Parts

36 Veterans Treatment Courts

28 Opioid Courts

22 Family Treatment Courts

15 Impaired Driving Courts

12 Human Trafficking Intervention Courts

6 Emerging Adult Courts

2 Juvenile Treatment Courts

DWI Courts

Driving while under the influence of drugs and alcohol poses serious dangers to drivers, their passengers and members of the public. The court system dedicates significant resources to support the Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) & Driving While Ability Impaired Parts, which ensure that individuals who drive while impaired are held accountable for their actions in a due process driven manner. The court system operates 14 DWI Treatment Courts and 34 DWI courts that are not treatment focused. Impaired driving due to marijuana legalization remains a concern. An Insurance Institute for Highway Safety study shows that in other states with legalized marijuana, fatal crashes rose by 4 percent while crashes with injuries rose 6 percent.

Human Trafficking Intervention Courts

The court system operates 12 Human Trafficking Intervention Courts committed to ensuring trauma-informed responses to justice-involved victims of sex trafficking. While there has been a decrease in the number of prostitution-related arrests across the state, the court system strives to identify justice-involved individuals at high risk of trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence. Research has shown that most justice-involved women have extensive histories of complex physical and sexual trauma, which may be connected to their criminal justice involvement.

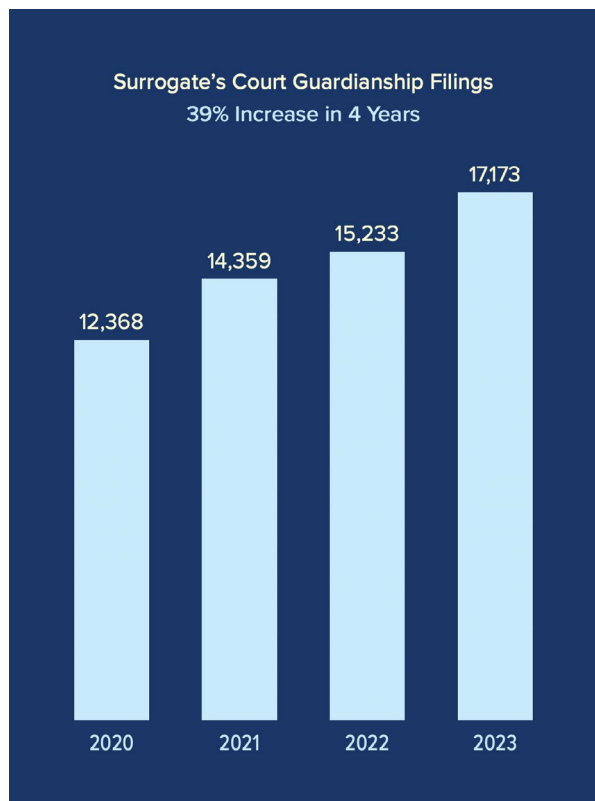
The New York Survivors of Trafficking Attaining Relief Together Act (START) allows trafficked individuals to file a motion with the court to vacate criminal convictions that result from having been a victim of sex or labor trafficking or compelled prostitution.

Elder Abuse Prevention

Elder abuse, which can take the form of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, neglect or financial exploitation, impacts older adults of all races, backgrounds and socio-economic groups. Financial abuse is particularly prevalent, with over \$36 billion annually estimated to be taken from older adults nationwide.

The Elder Justice Innovation project commenced in January 2022 after the court system was awarded a \$1 million grant from the federal government to modernize and reimagine guardianship proceedings in New York State. The three main goals of this grant are: modernizing data systems for easy reporting and analysis; creating training and educational materials for lay guardians; and revising guardianship forms and motion templates so that they are in plain language and in languages other than English.

For more information, visit: www.elderjustice.nycourts.gov



Judicial Task Force on Mental Illness

The State Judicial Task Force on Mental Illness is a landmark entity charged with implementing reforms to more effectively address the behavioral health issues of justice-involved individuals. In October, Chief Judge Wilson and Chief Administrative Judge Zayas announced a new leadership team led by Hon. Matthew D’Emic, Administrative Judge for Criminal Matters, Kings County Supreme Court, and Hon. Jacqueline Sisson, Canandaigua City Court judge and acting Ontario Family and County Court judge. The panel represents a diverse and deeply experienced group of judges, lawyers, mental health experts and others from around the State.

Mental Health Courts

Mental Health Courts seek to craft meaningful responses to the problems posed by defendants with mental illness in the criminal justice system. Addressing both the treatment needs of defendants with mental illness and the public safety concerns of communities, these specialized courts link defendants with mental illness to long-term treatment as an alternative to incarceration. The UCS now has Mental Health Courts statewide to address participants’ treatment and criminogenic needs while balancing the public safety concerns of the community. In 2023, the Westchester Misdemeanor Wellness Court launched in White Plains City Court.

Opioid Courts

Since the first opioid intervention court opened in Buffalo in 2017, more than two dozen similar courts have been established throughout the state. The Opioid Court model holds great promise by immediately connecting those at high risk of overdose to evidence-based treatment and intensive judicial supervision. It was developed as a pre-plea, voluntary model that would serve as a medical triage for any offender at high risk of overdose.

Veterans Treatment Courts

Veterans Treatment Courts (VTC), a hybrid of mental health courts and drug treatment courts, were established in recognition of the uniqueness of military culture and with the understanding that some justice-involved veterans develop mental health and substance use issues following military service. These courts work collaboratively with volunteer peer veteran mentors, veteran advocate organizations, community veteran service providers, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and others to ensure that veterans receive help for their unique needs so they can achieve healthy goals and lead productive post-military lives. Buffalo City Court created the first VTC in 2008. Now, there are 38 Veterans Treatment Courts in 26 counties. In 2023, a second Veterans Treatment Court opened in Dutchess County and a new VTC opened in Putnam County.



“The vast majority of our nation’s incarcerated individuals suffer from mental illness, have a substance use disorder or both. The prevalence of mental illness cannot be overstated, nor can its enormous impact on every aspect of our court system, including our criminal, civil and family courts. The mandate of the New York State Judicial Task Force on Mental Illness is crucial to our efforts to develop more humane, effective approaches in addressing the needs of justice-involved individuals, children and families affected by mental illness, trauma and substance abuse, by replacing carceral approaches in cases where those are both expensive and ineffective.”

Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson



“With the launch of the Westchester Misdemeanor Wellness Court, the Ninth Judicial District moves forward in search of innovative ways for communities and courts to collaborate in reducing recidivism while serving the treatment needs of justice-involved litigants living with serious mental illness”

Hon. Anne Minihan

Administrative Judge, 9th Judicial District



“So many of our veterans suffer from a substance abuse and/or mental health disorder. VTC judges and coordinators make sure they receive the treatment they need and deserve. Treatment courts are all about forming local, sustainable community collaboratives.”

Hon. Toko Serita



A year ago, a young man came before Schenectady City Judge Teneka Frost who seemed to be a good fit for the U-CAN mentoring program. He had no prior offenses, no known gang affiliation and seemingly wanted to turn his life around. The problem was, he didn't speak a word of English and unless a Spanish-speaking mentor could be found, the young man could not obtain the benefits of mentoring. Thankfully, a young attorney with a busy practice — Adriel Colón-Casiano of Albany — stepped forward and successfully guided the young man through a year of interim probation. Left to right: Judge Frost, Angel, Mr. Colón-Casiano.

Mentoring Programs

The United-Community Action Network (U-CAN) is a court-based mentoring program created by then-Cohoes City Court Judge Andra Ackerman in 2017. Through U-CAN, court-involved individuals who the court, district attorney, probation officer and defense counsel agree would benefit from a positive role model are paired with a volunteer mentor and required to meet with that mentor weekly for a year. U-CAN has expanded to City, County and Family Courts throughout the state.

In 2023, U-CAN held a virtual summit for courts and judges who operate or are interested in implementing the program in their communities. Currently, there are programs active or in progress in: Albany County Court; Albany County Family Court; Schenectady City Court; Schenectady County Family Court; Binghamton City Court; Syracuse City Court; Ithaca City Court; Erie County Court; and Buffalo City Court. Judges tailor their program to meet their distinct local needs.

Additionally, the New York City Family Court Mentoring Program, a partnership with the New York City Family Court, the New York State Mentoring Program, Lawyers for Children and The Legal Aid Society, assists young people who are aging out of foster care by matching them with dedicated mentors. Marsh McClennan and Willkie Farr & Gallagher provide support and mentors for this valuable program.

“I owe you the world. You gave me my beautiful son back. You make a big difference in this tough world, and I thank God for you daily!”

Letter to Albany County Judge Andra Ackerman from the mother of a U-CAN participant who successfully completed the program and is now a proud member of the United States Marine Corps.



Commercial Division

Since its creation in 1995, the Commercial Division of the New York State Supreme Court has transformed business litigation and made the State a preferred forum for complex business disputes. Renowned as one of the world’s most efficient venues for the resolution of commercial disputes and located in the world’s leading financial center, the Commercial Division is available to businesses of all sizes, both inside and outside the State of New York.

The Commercial Division comprises judges with commercial law expertise who are familiar with complex contracts, securities (including derivatives and other specialty instruments) and business organizations (including numerous international structures), and who have a sophisticated understanding of globalization, international trade and application of laws of foreign jurisdictions, when required. The Commercial Division embraces advanced courtroom technology for trials, provides for efficient resolution of discovery disputes, and offers accelerated adjudication.

Through the work of the Commercial Division Advisory Council—a committee of commercial practitioners, corporate in-house counsel and jurists devoted to the Division’s excellence—the Commercial Division has functioned as an incubator, becoming a recognized leader in court system innovation, and demonstrating an unparalleled creativity and flexibility in development of rules and practices.

The Advisory Council organized a virtual lunchtime lecture series during June 2023 for interns working with Commercial Division Justices and summer associates at law firms. The goal of the series was to educate our future lawyers about the Commercial Division and commercial practice, the wide variety of cases that come before the Commercial Division and the value of clerking, interning and litigating in the Commercial Division. In addition to numerous Commercial Division interns, summer associates at 81 major law firms throughout the United States attended the lecture series.

Because of the success of this lecture series in 2023, the Advisory Council has organized a similar lecture series during June 2024 which the Advisory Council is offering to interns, summer associates, lawyers and bar associations worldwide.



“We all know and understand that a well-functioning judicial system is one of the pillars of economic growth and prosperity. Business organizations are much more likely to locate, invest, and do business in jurisdictions where the courts are known for rendering decisions that are well-informed, predictable and just, and where the courts are known for managing commercial litigation in a timely, efficient and cost-effective manner.”

Heather Mulligan
President and CEO of The Business Council of New York State

The Advisory Council hosted a virtual program for law schools about the Commercial Division on November 16, 2023. The goals of this program were to discuss law clerk and law intern positions in the Commercial Division and to increase awareness of the Commercial Division in the academic community. Law school deans, career services and professional development officers, and judicial clerkship directors of the top 100 law schools in the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings were invited to attend this program and representatives of 78 of these law schools did so. The program was recorded, and the recording was sent to all the invitees for distribution to law school administrators, faculty, students and alumni.

In 2023, the Commercial Division adopted new procedural rules proposed by the Advisory Council on motions in limine; pre-marking of exhibits; identification of deposition testimony; and scheduling of witnesses.

For more information, visit: <http://ww2.nycourts.gov/courts/comdiv/index.shtml>



Justice Mark Montour meets with Haudenosaunee Dancers at the Native American Heritage Event. Left to right, Kehala Smith, Jordan Smith, Justice Montour, and Jordan Smith.

Indian Nation Courts

New York State ranks 10th nationally in terms of the size of its indigenous population, with nine different Indian nations residing in and exercising their sovereignty within our borders. Fortunately, New York’s court system has been a national leader in improving the administration of justice for tribal nations and that work has been done through the efforts of the Unified Court System Tribal Courts Committee.



“We’re here. We’re strong. We’re surviving. We’re striving not to lose our customs and traditions.”

Linda Wiedrick
Chief Clerk of Erie County
Surrogate’s Court and member of
the Mohawk community

Justice Mark Montour of the Appellate Division, Fourth Department, serves as state facilitator for the New York Federal, State and Tribal Courts and Indian Nations Justice Forum. He is the first Native American in New York State history to ever hold a state judicial position and first elevated to any of the Appellate Division departments. An Amici podcast interview with Justice Montour is posted on the UCS website. <https://soundcloud.com/user-716357085/promoting-diversity-in-the-courts-hon-mark-montour>

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

The court system maintains partnerships with several Indian nations and Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) Bureau of Native American Services to provide support for training and regular convenings to address ICWA systems issues, such as a statewide training series; support for development of a Tribal Family Court; and development of a statewide annual conference.

This year marked the fifth year of the conference, which showcased the nationally recognized Erie County Family ICWA Court, the only ICWA Court in New York State. A Reasonable Efforts Judicial Academy was held for two cohorts of Family Court Judges in 2023, focusing on certain findings in ICWA cases.

In November 2023, the court system developed and presented a live training called “Keeping Indian Families and Children Together,” which, simulating proper ICWA hearings, was broadcast across the state. The court system also holds semi-annual regional ICWA roundtables to build relationships and address ICWA issues through collaboration with local tribal nations and family courts.



Town of Hurley Justice Court

Town and Village Courts

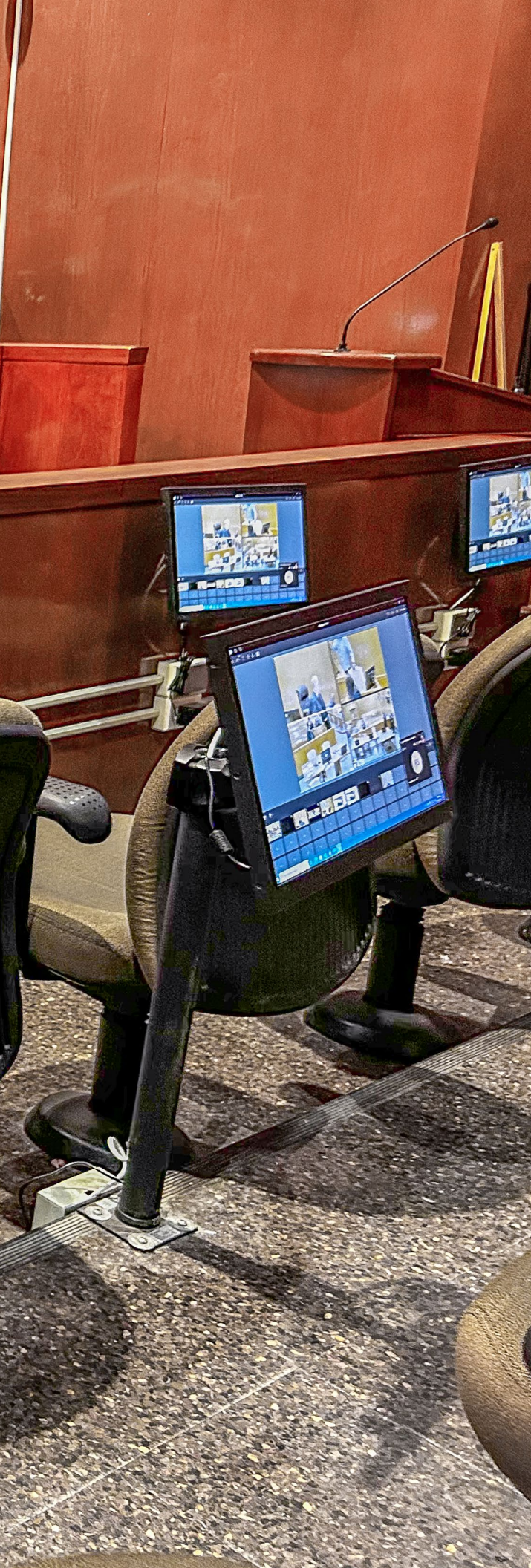
The Office of Justice Court Support (OJCS) provides legal, educational, financial and operational support to the 1,185 town and village courts in the 57 counties outside New York City. OJCS supports 1,801 justices and 1,707 court clerks, to ensure that these “courts closest to the people” are able to operate effectively.

In 2023, OJCS:

- Provided quality education and training to both judges and clerks live and virtually, through an online learning platform, and in-person, including the creation and implementation of 12 new judicial continuing education programs and six new court clerk continuing education programs.
- Provided, in coordination with the Office for Justice Initiatives as part of the Equal Justice in the Courts Initiative, access to all judges and clerks to the mandatory Implicit Bias Training “Bias Override Judging and Serving Fairly.”
- Conducted a five-day live-virtual training of over 30 newly elected or appointed town and village justices in April 2023 and 5-day in-person training in December 2023 of over 100 newly elected or appointed town and village justices. Presented 12 introductory courses in-person and online for over 115 newly hired court clerks.
- Provided telephone and email support, including nights and weekends, to assist with legal, operational and financial responsibilities within the courts.
- Continued to coordinate with the Deputy Chief Administrative Judge, various judicial districts and OCA Counsel’s Office on the implementation of Centralized Arraignment Parts (CAP) statewide. These CAP courts ensure counsel at first appearance for defendants arraigned in those parts. Currently, there are 30 CAP courts statewide and several more in the planning stages.
- Coordinated closely with stakeholder partners within the Unified Court System and Office of Court Administration as well as the Office of the State Comptroller, the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, the Department of Motor Vehicles, the New York State Magistrates Association and the New York State Association Magistrates Court Clerks.

The Office of Court Administration administers the Justice Court Assistance Program. Close to \$3 million was awarded to courts statewide in the 2023-24 funding cycle to assist them in purchasing of resources and equipment necessary to fulfill their critical role in our justice system.





A Commitment to Innovation & Progress

The court system is eager to embrace new technologies to maximize our ability to function fairly and efficiently while eliminating obstacles to civic participation and engagement.

Our Division of Technology and Court Research (DoTCR) provides information processing and technology services for the courts. DoTCR is critical to the establishment of the virtual model that permitted the court system to function and provide vital services to New Yorkers throughout the public health crisis.



Above: First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Norman St. George at the new Help Center in Queens County Family Court

Left: Modern technology was installed at Queens Criminal Court. Judge Michael Yavinsky is at the bench.



From the desk of
Christine Sisario
Director of Technology

I have had the honor and pleasure of working in public service for nearly 30 years, all focused on facilitating and improving justice with technology. I'd like to focus on one particular project that has been the most meaningful in my career because it has a very wide impact on protecting victims of violence in New York and beyond, while also highlighting the "invisible" benefits of technology as well as our working relationships with partner agencies.

Gun-related violence is a significant issue, and there are federal and state laws in place requiring the restriction of access to firearms for particular justice-related circumstances such as individuals with active orders of protection or mental-health adjudications. Accordingly, national databases, used to facilitate firearms background checks, contain these records that are provided by states, territories, federal and other agencies; and there are also state-level databases that are in place for use by law enforcement. The data must be complete, accurate and timely, as there are only three days allowed for research of a background check before a firearm can be purchased.

For many years, DoTCR has been working in close partnership with the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services and the NYS Police on the collection, identification and transmission of firearm-disqualifying data to our statewide law enforcement databases and to the FBI's national databases. The project started with grant funding in 2010, allowing us to greatly improve our case management data collection and automated identification of firearm-disqualifying records across appropriate court types, and to build a secure interface with the FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). Further, we added indicators for our judges and court staff to immediately know if particular dispositions or orders issued are firearm-prohibiting.

To date, New York State has sent over 2.5 million records to NICS, which are auto-calculated and immediately transmitted within minutes of the data collection. Based on the most recent statistics available from the FBI, New York has the highest count of prohibiting records in the NICS Indices for federally prohibiting active orders of protection (over 54,000 of the total nationwide 71,000 orders), as well as state-prohibiting active orders of protection (over 1 million of the total nationwide 2.8 million). These include the Extreme Risk Protection Orders, commonly known as "Red Flag" orders. Without access to this information immediately, the FBI and state law enforcement would need to conduct time-consuming research which could result in potentially dangerous outcomes.



Tech team at the Division of Technology and Court Research Data Services Unit in Manhattan.

DoTCR is involved in every facet of court operations. Among the Division's contributions in 2023:

- *Implemented a statewide case tracking module, allowing the courts to track detailed information about alleged incapacitated persons and persons in need of guardianship.*
- *Migrated civil court data systems into a single, statewide data collection and case management tool.*
- *Transitioned Family Court and Supreme and County Criminal Court off the mainframe to facilitate automated reporting.*
- *Developed a criminal research extract enabling research entities to more easily compile data.*
- *Expanded e-filing to nine additional Family Courts.*
- *Established a linking protocol to enable all parties involved in Family Courts to share documents via the New York State Courts Electronic Filing system.*
- *Expanded the interface to the Order of Protection registry to ensure law enforcement agencies can more easily track protective orders.*
- *Created and updated dashboards with critical summary and case-level information on such vital systems as extreme risk protection orders and eviction reports.*

Courtroom Technology

In June, the court system unveiled the Queens County Supreme Court–Criminal Term's new, integrative courtroom technology—now available in 24 courtrooms—making the Queens courthouse the largest courthouse to equip every courtroom with this advanced, user-centered technology.

The design and installation of this innovative courtroom technology is a collaborative effort of the court system's Court Modernization Initiative and the Office of the Queens County District Attorney, with the latter contributing \$1.675 million of its federal forfeiture funds to the purchase of evidence presentation equipment and other upgrades to 19 courtrooms. The Office of Court Administration provided funding for the upgrades to the remaining five courtrooms.

The project, first envisioned by Chief Administrative Judge Joseph A. Zayas during his tenure as the Queens County Supreme Court–Criminal Term's Administrative Judge, and by the former Queens County District Attorney, the late Richard Brown, was shepherded to completion by Administrative Judge Donna-Marie E. Golia and District Attorney Melinda Katz.

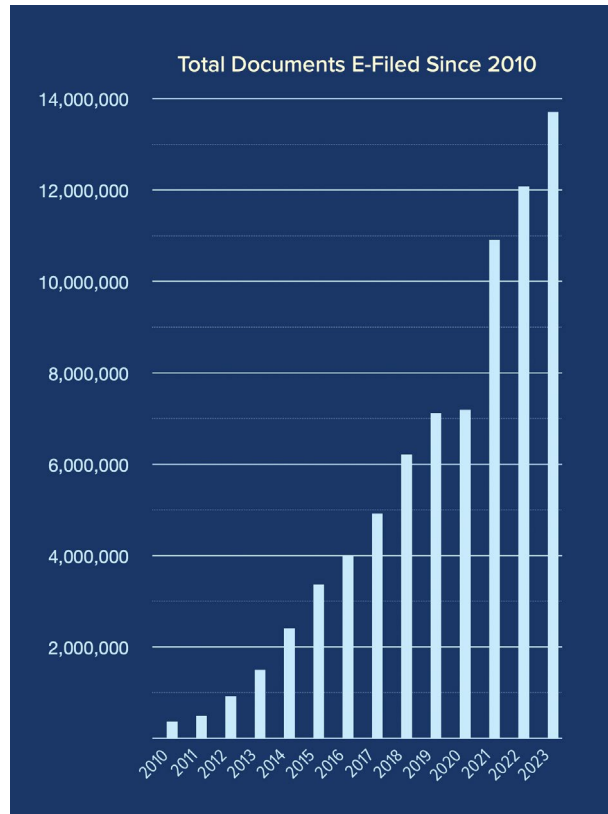
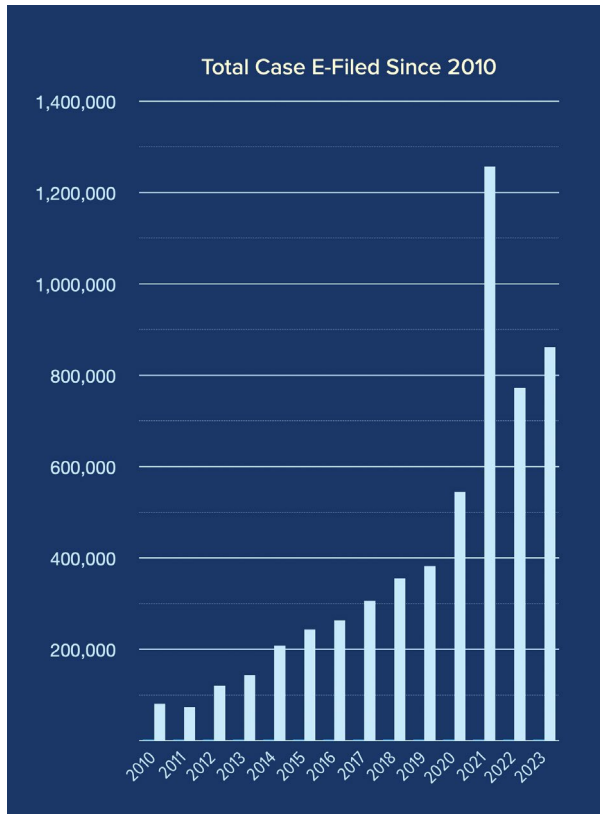


"When I first started working here, there were very few women. Right now we have a good mix. Now we see the younger generations, and there's more women getting into technology and careers in computers. So we have a very good, very diverse, very representative workforce here."

Vishnu Priya Nocella – Technical Manager, Division of Technology and Court Research

E-Filing

Nearly six million cases have been e-filed in the quarter century since the UCS began implementing “NYSCEF,” the New York Courts Electronic Filing System, and more than 72 million documents have been e-filed. E-filing grew dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic, with more cases e-filed in the last four years (3.4 million) than in the prior 20 years (2.4 million). Over half of the 72.7 million documents uploaded since the inception of NYSCEF have been filed in the last four years.



Currently, e-filing is in use in: Supreme Court, Civil Term, in 61 of New York’s 62 counties (all but Allegany County); Surrogate’s Court in all 62 counties; all four departments of the Appellate Division; the Court of Claims; New York City Civil Court (currently for no-fault claims, with plans underway to expand to additional case types); Housing Court throughout New York City, the Harlem Community Justice Center, and Red Hook Justice Center.

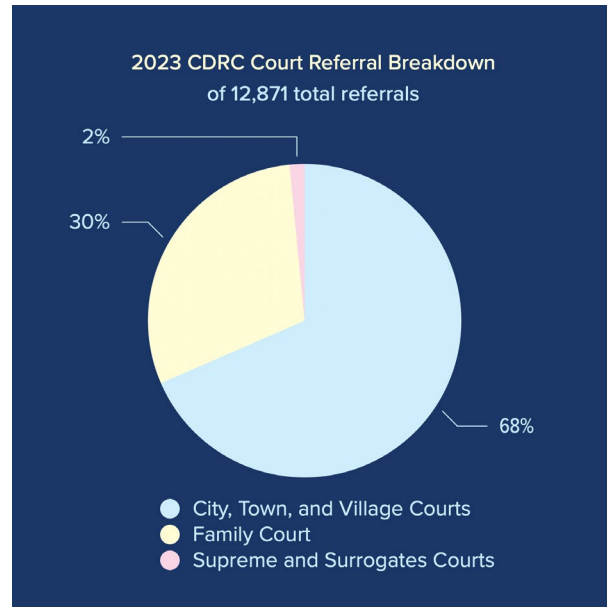
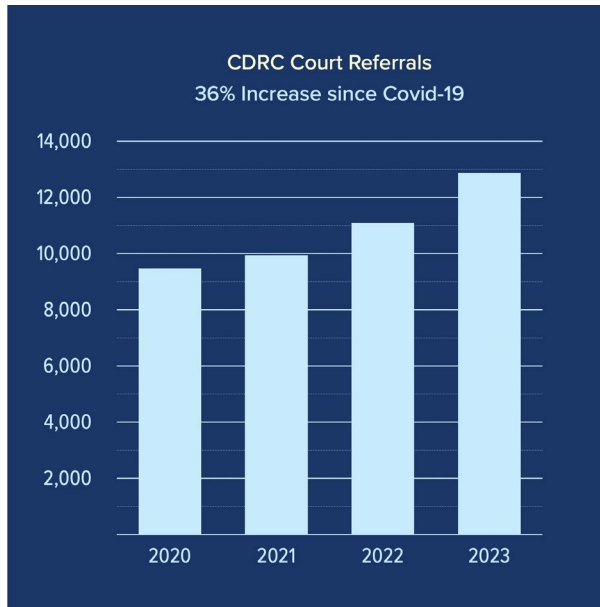
The Family Court pilot program initially introduced consensual e-filing in family courts in New York and Richmond Counties within NYC, and in Fulton, Saratoga and Suffolk counties outside of NYC. The pilot has expanded to Chemung, Genesee, Niagara, Queens and Wyoming county family courts. Further expansion is planned for the remaining Family Courts within NYC (Bronx, Kings) by mid-year 2024 and will continue to roll-out throughout the state through 2024.

There has been a significant increase in the utilization of the “Virtual Evidence Courtroom” platform, which allows participants in a conference, hearing or trial to send evidence to the court remotely. It is currently utilized in 230 Supreme Civil parts. A newer stand-alone version, (available for those courts not yet authorized to e-file), enables electronic submission of evidence including video/audio files.

In those courts where NYSCEF is not available, the Electronic Document Delivery System, EDDS, is widely used. EDDS, developed in response to the pandemic to transmit digitized documents to courts around the state, is available and utilized in approximately 340 individual courts. Since May 2020, over 3.1 million documents have been transmitted through EDDS. Additionally, Town and Village Courts have commenced a pilot program, in a limited number of courts, which uses EDDS for the delivery of documents and then utilizes NYSCEF to maintain the official court record.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) offers litigants the opportunity to resolve their disputes using mediation, arbitration, neutral evaluation, restorative justice, summary jury trials, special masters and settlement conferences. The court system aims to ensure that appropriate civil cases are referred to ADR at the earliest practicable opportunity to resolve disputes without the stress and costs of extensive litigation. ADR can enhance the quality of justice and free up resources to allow courts to focus on matters requiring more intense judicial intervention.



Each county in New York State offers ADR options in its courts and communities. In 2023, judicial and non-judicial court staff, along with over 1,000 mediators and neutral evaluators who serve on NYS UCS trial court rosters, have provided more than 100,000 settlement conferences, mediations, and arbitrations. Community Dispute Resolution Centers (CDRC) provided services in over 21,000 cases and served more than 53,000 New Yorkers last year. Nearly 13,000 of CDRC cases were referred from courts, a 36% increase since 2020.

The Statewide ADR Office partners with the NYS Judicial Institute, judicial leaders, regional and local ADR staff, bar groups, dispute resolution associations, CDRCs, federal court ADR program directors, law schools, legal services providers and other stakeholders to train judicial and non-judicial court staff and prospective mediators and arbitrators. High-quality, interactive training is an integral component of quality mediation practice.

In 2023, over 289 neutrals took court-sponsored anti-bias training, and over 515 mediators took court-sponsored intimate partner violence screening training, pursuant to two Administrative Orders of the Chief Administrative Judge that took effect in January. The trainings are designed to promote safe and appropriate mediation practice, to raise awareness of bias and its

impact, reduce the prospect of bias, acquire tools to manage bias and promote inclusivity in ADR.

In 2023, the Statewide ADR Office sponsored over 30 different trainings. Over 150 trainees took court-sponsored, 24-hour-initial and 16-hour-advanced mediation training approved under Part 146 of the Rules of the Chief Administrator. CDRC-focused events included 15 different continuing education and initial mediation trainings that reached over 280 neutrals. Over 50 new arbitrators were trained and approved to arbitrate as part of the Attorney-Client Fee Dispute Resolution Program.

To recruit mediators from underrepresented communities and to address the gap between mediation training and experience, the Statewide ADR Office partnered with the EAC (Empower, Assist, Care) Network and the Civil Court of the City of New York to create a new, first-of-its-kind specialized apprenticeship program. Participants completed a one-week classroom component and observed and co-mediated cases with experienced mediators.

The ADR Office is committed to working with court and community partners to recruit and retain new mediators from underrepresented communities to strengthen the delivery of comprehensive justice.



Students from the High School for Law, Advocacy and Community Justice visited the Appellate Division, First Department, where they argued a fictional stop-and-frisk case. Justice Peter Moulton explains the architectural features of the courtroom.

Commission to Reimagine the Future of New York’s Courts

The Commission to Reimagine the Future of New York’s Courts was established in 2020, three months into the pandemic, to examine the enhanced use of technology and online platforms, among other innovations, and make recommendations to improve the delivery and quality of justice services, facilitate access to justice and better equip the New York State Unified Court System to keep pace with society’s rapidly evolving changes. It is chaired by former New York State Bar Association President Hank Greenberg of Greenberg Traurig.



“We all want to get to the same place—an efficient, effective, user-friendly court system that embraces change and is prepared for future contingencies.”

Supreme Court Justice Craig Doran

In 2023, an offshoot of the Commission, the Pandemic Practices Working Group, was created to examine the court system’s response to Covid-19, consider post-pandemic procedures and determine the policies that should be retained in the event that court operations are again interrupted due to an unforeseeable event. The Working Group, led by Supreme Court Justice Craig J. Doran, issued a report, after a series of well-attended public hearings in 2022, calling for the expansion of remote proceedings, enhancement of the court system’s technological capacity and an increase in court staffing. The full report is available at https://www.nycourts.gov/LegacyPDFS/press/pdfs/PR23_03.pdf.



New York Courts' Response to the Pandemic Report
www.nycourts.gov/LegacyPDFS/press/PD23_03.pdf

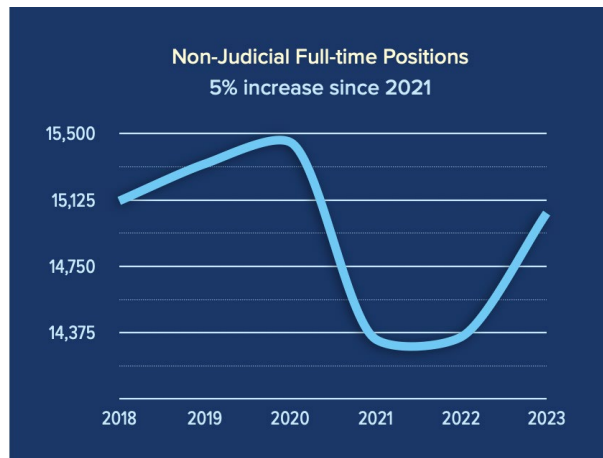
In March, Acting Chief Judge Anthony Cannataro and Acting Chief Administrative Judge Tamiko Amaker announced the establishment of a blue-ribbon team of experts tasked with building on pandemic-related innovations to improve the administration of justice.

Rebuilding the Workforce

COVID-19 took a toll on the court system’s workforce, and we remain well below pre-pandemic levels even after adding 700 full-time equivalent positions over the past year. At the end of 2023, the non-judicial workforce amounted to 15,100 full-time equivalent positions, about 600 below pre-pandemic levels. Additionally, the ranks of court officers are depleted, especially upstate. In 2024, the court system anticipates adding four court officer academy classes.

Sufficient staffing is crucial to providing the core operations necessary to operate equitably, efficaciously, safely and expeditiously, and the court system is actively reaching out to the community and young people and informing them of the myriad opportunities that they may have never imagined were available in the courts.

In 2023, we released a 10-minute recruitment video in which we showcase our diverse workforce and the potential job opportunities for those interested in law enforcement, IT, interpreting, court reporting and other fields. The film—*Careers in the Courts: Make a Difference*—is available at <https://youtu.be/014q4wevgnc>. It will be used at job fairs and other events.



Trial Court Support

Trial Court Support (TCS) provides expertise and guidance regarding trial court operations.

The office assists Administrative Judges, District Executives, court managers and others with identifying and resolving operational issues; implementing new legislation and court policies; refining and standardizing court procedures; recommending best practices; conducting local, regional and statewide training; and developing instructional materials and court forms. The goal is to establish best practices and standardization through collaboration and feedback and to modernize our approach to court operations.

In 2023, TCS launched two major resources for trial court staff. First, the TCS online help desk was launched in August, streamlining the process for trial court staff to obtain assistance with operational issues. Since August, TCS has responded to nearly 250 help desk inquiries.

Second, the TCS SharePoint site was launched in September, providing online training and a repository of resources containing key information on trial court procedures and best practices.



The idea is to restate the procedural information that the court disseminates to the public in terms that they can easily understand. That's not always easy to do. However, if you can convey that information to someone without a legal background in a way that they can easily understand without the aid of convoluted instruction sheets or someone to explain it to them, essentially interpret it for them point by point, then you've used plain language effectively.

Bill Perritt - Chief Management Analyst, Office of Trial Court Support



From the desk of

Sheng Guo

Director, Division of Court Modernization

The Division of Court Modernization (DCM)'s mandate is to make court spaces more functional and accessible, thus ensuring the full participation of all stakeholders in the justice process and enriching their experience via human-centered design and innovative technology. I cannot be more thrilled that DCM will play an important role in promoting and expanding equal justice for all, under the leadership of Judges Wilson, Zayas, and St. George.

The ability for all the stakeholders to hear each other in court proceedings is as essential as breathing air. The lack of sufficient sound reinforcement, the increasingly large hard-of-hearing population, compounded by the poor acoustics in many of the older courthouses, have inflicted pains in all those who work, do business in, and visit, the courthouses. The ongoing projects in acoustics treatment, audio system upgrade, and assistive listening system installation have helped to eliminate frustrations and delay, provide accommodations to people with special needs, including those who do not speak English, thus making the courts more efficient and user-friendly.

The Division is expanding our hybrid courtroom implementation with advanced evidence presentation systems and videoconferencing systems. Partnering with the Queens County District Attorney's Office, Queens County Supreme Court Criminal Term became the first major court in New York State that fully modernized all its courtrooms. Similar partnerships have been or are being established in Kings, Westchester, Orange, Albany and Erie counties. Those high-end courtrooms in criminal courts, along with the ones being piloted in the Civil and Family courts, allow full participation of the justice process by those unable to appear in the courtroom in person, due to physical/mental health, inclement weather, work/family/travel constraints, or other hardships.

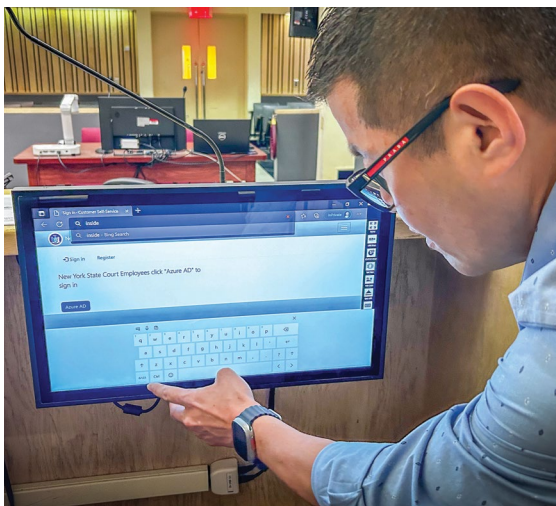
In addition, we will continue to install easy-to-read and informative digital signage in the courthouses, and upgrade the DIY Help Centers, starting in Family Court and Housing Court, where we serve a disproportionate share of low-income litigants.



Lobby of Queens Supreme with new digital signage



Eric Sweet, Senior PC Analyst in the 5th Judicial District, showcases cutting-edge technology in the Oneida County Ceremonial Courtroom, Utica.



Michael Cheung, Senior Technical Manager, demonstrates touch screen annotation functionality at the witness stand during a professional training session held at Queens Supreme Criminal Court.

Court Modernization

The court system's Courtroom Modernization Initiative (CMI) Team was formed in 2019 with the goal of providing basic audio capacity to 1,540 courtrooms. Over the past few years, CMI has played an increasingly important role in supporting in-person, hybrid and virtual court operations.

As part of the concerted efforts in delivering efficient, accessible and quality justice services to New Yorkers, Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson, Chief Administrative Judge Joseph A. Zayas and First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Norman St. George are committed to the next level of court modernization with targeted, practical solutions for every courtroom, jury room and courthouse public space in New York State. DCM's expanded mandate is to make court spaces more functional and accessible, thus ensuring the full participation of all stakeholders in the justice process and enriching their experience via human-centered design and innovative technology.

DCM projects focus on audio and acoustics, accessibility, evidence presentation, videoconferencing, streaming and digital signage, among other areas—such as the recently completed installation of the latest integrative technology in each of Queens County Supreme Court's Criminal Term's 24 courtrooms, a collaboration of the CMI team and the Queens County District Attorney, which provided funding for the project. DCM currently operates in New York City and the Capital Region, with a new office opening soon in Rochester to provide much-needed support for court modernization in the western region of the state.





A Commitment to Training

Professional training of our judges and non-judicial staff is crucial to maintaining a cutting-edge court system that responds to the needs of New Yorkers. Our judges and court officers undergo intensive mandatory training, and our non-judicial employees are regularly provided with opportunities to further develop their skills. Training is vital not only in ensuring top-level service, but in providing employees with opportunities for professional growth and advancement. That helps us attract—and retain—a committed, engaged and knowledgeable workforce.



122 new judges are welcomed by court leaders to the Judicial Institute, where they underwent a week-long seminar.



From the desk of

Hon. Kathie Davidson

Dean of the New York State Judicial Institute

A century ago, Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis, in his dissent in New York State Ice Co. v. Liebmann, famously coined the term “laboratories of democracy” to explain how a “single courageous state” can create and test laws and policies. Decades later, Justice William Brennan, dissenting in Michigan v. Mosley, built on Brandeis’ theme, directly calling on the state courts to exercise their independent jurisdiction and grasp their “power to impose higher standards” than the bedrock guarantees of the Bill of Rights. New York has historically done just that.

Consistent with judicial luminaries such as former Chief Judge Benjamin N. Cardozo and current Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson, New York judges have long viewed their role as more than settling disputes and applying a fixed set of facts to applicable laws. Rather, they ponder the long-term impact of their decisions and how those rulings advance the cause of equal justice for all.

Two decades ago, in May 2003, New York created the New York State Judicial Institute. Conceived by then-Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye as a judicial think tank – a laboratory, to borrow Brandeis’ term — the Judicial Institute encourages judges, academics, and others to think beyond the confines of a single issue or case and consider the impact on society.

Judges across the nation are facing unprecedented and dangerous attacks on their independence. In addition, reports of decreased public confidence in the judiciary have increased, requiring a rethinking of how the court system serves the community. Courts, like the citizens they serve, are adjusting to the whirlwind development and exponential growth of technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning that will challenge our understanding of individual rights and responsibilities in ways we have yet to imagine. We cannot and will not fall behind. As Chief Judge Wilson reminds us regularly, cutting-edge judicial education can — must — assist in enhancing the public’s confidence in the court system.



Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson at the New York State Judicial Institute's 2023 summer seminar

New York State Judicial Institute

Established in 2003 under Judiciary Law § 219-a, the nationally recognized New York State Judicial Institute (JI), a statewide, year-round center for judicial education, training and research, was created to enhance the quality of New York State's courts and ensure that the State's Judiciary sets the standard for decisional and operational excellence across the country.

To accomplish this mission, the Judicial Institute conducts programs ranging from legal updates to practical and interactive education on how to effectively address the myriad issues that occur when conducting jury trials. The Judicial Institute also has meaningful collaborations with academic institutions, associations, and agencies and educates and trains UCS judges, quasi-judicial personnel, and attorneys on the legal, ethical, administrative, technological and social developments that impact their daily work.

One of the main objectives of the Judicial Institute's programming is to provide jurists with the necessary knowledge, skills and expertise to resolve the disputes before them. For example, the New Judges Seminar, which is generally offered during the first two weeks in January every year, emphasizes the teaching of skills unique to judging and includes substantive and procedural law education designed to help newly elected and appointed judges make the transition from practicing attorney to judge. In addition, the Judicial Institute has been proactive in planning and implementing educational programs relating to the enactment of new legislation.

The Judicial Institute's "think-tank" atmosphere provides a forum where the state's judges and justices may convene to identify and explore broader issues facing the legal system. The Judicial Institute uses an interdisciplinary approach and partners with bar associations, other justice agencies, academic institutions and the public to address issues facing New York's citizens.

One of the Judicial Institute's main priorities is to ensure that New York's jurists are trained on current and emerging topics which impact (or may in the future affect) their work on the bench. As current and emerging legal and technology issues have come to the fore, over the last few years, the Judicial Institute has developed and presented programs that address, among other topics, cyber security, algorithmic bias in Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, the impact of AI on privacy laws, legal and ethical issues concerning electronic information and Generative AI (GAI), evidentiary issues in the digital age and digital assets and smart contracts.

For 2024, the JI is developing educational programs that will address some of the most pressing issues facing the courts and society, including updated Child Victims Act programming, a Juvenile Justice Symposium, and enhanced anti-bias programming that explores a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of how bias regarding cultures and ethnicities, people of color and marginalized communities in our nation presents itself in the courtroom and everyday life. These anti-bias programs will also address how to disrupt these biases.



Presiding Justice Hector D. LaSalle of the Appellate Division, Second Department, speaks at NYS Bar Association event.



First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Norman St. George lectures at the Judicial Institute

Continuing Legal Education Board

New York State's Continuing Legal Education program, which was implemented through the collaborative efforts of the bench and the bar, seeks to enhance the New York Bar's proud tradition of professionalism in serving clients and the public. The CLE Board consists of 16 members of the bench and bar, accredits providers of courses, programs, and other educational activities, determines the number of credit hours for which continuing legal education credit will be given for particular courses or programs and examines course materials and the qualifications of continuing legal education instructors.

In 2023, a new category of CLE credit—Cybersecurity, Privacy and Data Protection—was added, and attorneys are now required to complete one hour in that topic as part of their biennial CLE requirement.

New York State Legal Education Opportunity Program (LEO)

Sponsored by the Judicial Institute, the New York State Legal Education Opportunity Program, or "LEO," is an intensive six-week summer program, taught by law school professors, that assists college graduates from educationally or economically disadvantaged backgrounds in acquiring the fundamental and practical skills necessary to succeed in law school.

LEO students not only receive classroom instruction on first-year core courses in law school, including legal research and writing, but are also given the opportunity to visit courts in session and meet and interact with lawyers and judges. The program also promotes diversity in the legal profession by improving the probability of law school success for students who come from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in the legal field.

Judicial Campaign Ethics Center

The Judicial Campaign Ethics Center (JCEC) serves as a central resource on campaign ethics for judicial candidates each year.

In 2023, the JCEC provided campaign ethics training to 180 judicial candidates and received approximately 687 ethics inquiries from judicial candidates. Many of those inquiries were from judicial candidates seeking guidance on ethics rules pertaining to calculating the candidate's window period, attending political fundraising events, the ethical propriety of proposed campaign promotional literature and the permissible uses of unexpended campaign funds. For more information, visit: <http://ww2.nycourts.gov/ip/jcec>





A Commitment to Community Engagement

The Unified Court System is committed to transparency both in its administrative and judicial roles. With few exceptions, our courtroom doors are open, and the public is welcome to see us in action. The decisions of our judges are a matter of public record, and we routinely alert the public through social media within minutes of a decision being handed down from the Court of Appeals. Our press releases—scores of them each year—reveal major personnel changes, new initiatives and programs and provide the public with vital information on their court system. Our podcast program, Amici, and its “Diversity Dialogue” segment, featuring interviews with members of the court family from all backgrounds and perspectives, is posted on national platforms such as SoundCloud and iTunes. We routinely conduct direct outreach in an ongoing effort to engage with members of the public.



Students from Creative Art Works and their mentors put finishing touches on four murals at Queens Family Court.



Court employees and their children participate in Take Your Child to Work Day at Queens Supreme Civil Court

Communications

In October 2023, Chief Administrative Judge Zayas announced a fundamental restructuring of the Unified Court System’s communications operations, designed to ensure that all New Yorkers are aware of the courts’ efforts, commitment and programming to ensure equal justice and access to justice for all. The reorganization comes as a crucial part of the new judicial leadership team’s program to establish and strengthen ties between the courts and the populations they serve, through greater transparency, civics education and greater publicity of the many ways, large and small, in which the judicial and non-judicial personnel within the court system work to improve the lives of New Yorkers.

The newly formed Communications Department is headed by Al Baker, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist with three decades of experience, including working for the *New York Daily News*, *Newsday* and the *New York Times*. Most recently, Mr. Baker served as the executive director of media relations in the New York Police Department’s Office of Public Information.

The Communications Department led by Mr. Baker includes four strategic new divisions for delivering the judiciary’s message across a wide range of communications platforms—the offices of Public Information, Public Affairs, Web Administration, and Multimedia Production. Working together, these divisions will cultivate public awareness of the work of the courts in a newly integrated communications office.

We are mindful not only of the need to engage the public, but also the need to engage our own staff. Team-building events and special occasions, such as Bring Your Child to Work Day, are encouraged.



“A vital part of our plan is to better educate the public about the role of courts, and the work our judges and employees do every day that is far beyond what is required of them, so that the public learns about the courts not just when someone released pretrial is arrested for a new crime, but also when a judge spends her weekends coaching public school students, or runs a summer program for youth of color at her own cost, or when court officers go to a prison on the weekend to play basketball with incarcerated individuals and educate them about life after prison.”

Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson



Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson spoke of the need for civics education during his first Law Day address.

Civics

“The Framers knew that the consequence of constitutional ignorance, in being guided by passion rather than reason, was armed mobs.” Chief Judge Wilson

In his first Law Day address, Chief Judge Wilson referred to “civics” as “the cornerstone of our democracy,” and bemoaned its steady erosion to the point where 60 percent of Americans could not pass the citizenship test given to individuals seeking U.S. citizenship, and half the country cannot name the three branches of government.

The Chief Judge cited evidence that citizen participation in local government meetings, political parties and even the PTA has fallen by half since 1965, that social trust today is a third of what it was in 1972, that only 10 percent of class time is devoted to social studies and, consequently, only about a quarter of U.S. students have achieved grade-level proficiency in the subject. He said the solution, while not easy, is obvious: civic education.

Under Chief Judge Wilson’s leadership, the court system is actively engaged in promoting civic education about the Judicial Branch, and it does that in part by encouraging teachers and students to visit our courts and encouraging our judges and staff to become ambassadors for democracy and our state and federal constitutions.

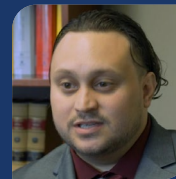
For example, in November students and teachers from Lawrence High School toured Nassau County Supreme Court where Judge Rhonda Erin Fischer, Deputy Chief Clerk Vivienne Corbett, and Court Assistants Christy Law and Marisa Powell addressed the students, providing them information about the court’s functions and operations. The visitors also viewed a video showcasing the different types of court system career opportunities and observed trial proceedings in Justice Francis Ricigliano’s courtroom. Additionally, they visited the court’s Central Jury area, where Principal Jury Analyst Donna Christensen spoke to the students, discussing the significant role of jurors and explaining how jurors are selected.

Further, although most of our appellate court proceedings are now live cast, the court system is encouraging the Appellate Divisions to hold court on occasion in various localities. For instance, in November, the Court of Appeals, which is based in Albany, heard arguments in Buffalo for three days.

Also, in late 2023 UCS created a new position of Statewide Civic Engagement Coordinator within the Department of Communications. The Coordinator will be tasked with promoting connections between courts and the community by enhancing public understanding of the roles and operations of the courts within New York State.



Students and teachers from Lawrence High School visited Nassau County Supreme Court, where they met with judges, observed a trial and discussed the essential role of jurors in our system of justice.



“You gotta have people skills. You’ve gotta know how to talk to people. You need to have patience with people because this is their lives; it’s not yours. You’re just here to help them and guide them. If I was on the other side, I would want someone to help me the way I help you.”

George Sanchez
Clerk, Albany County Family Court



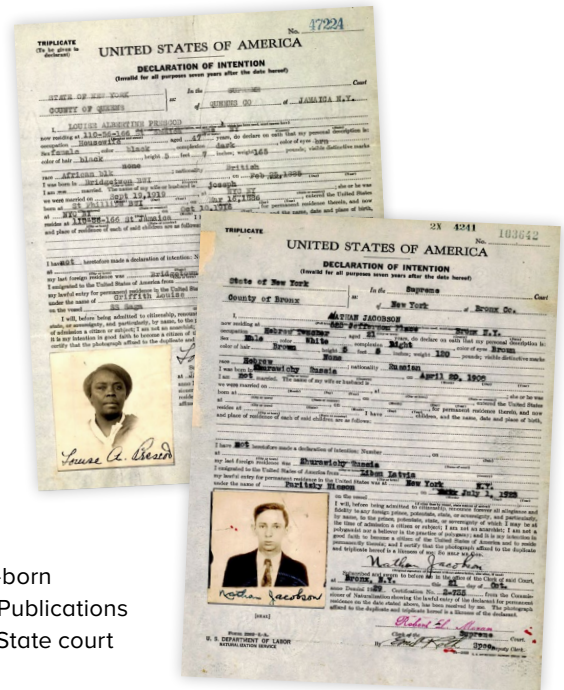
Queens County First Deputy Clerk Raymond M. Weaver and County Clerk Audrey I. Pheffer, examine original naturalization records. Historical naturalization records from Queens and the Bronx are now available online at www.NYnaturalizations.com

Historical Naturalization Records

In June, the court system launched www.NYnaturalizations.com, which provides access to naturalization records dating from 1795 to 1952 maintained by the County Clerk’s offices in Queens and the Bronx.

Naturalization records typically contain the Declaration of Intention, Petition for Naturalization, Certificate of Naturalization and Oath of Allegiance, along with additional supporting information. These records have both personal and legal value. They are depictions of individuals who emigrated from their homes—setting sail for a new home with the hope of a better life—containing details such as the immigrant’s age, height, weight, eye color, occupation, distinguishable markings and even photographs. Additionally, these records are used by researchers, historians and genealogists for lineage purposes and by the public in instances where someone wishes to declare dual citizenship in their ancestral country.

This online archive, comprising well over 250,000 historical records documenting the legal process of immigration to the U.S. by foreign-born citizens, was made possible by funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission and the expert guidance of the New York State court system’s Division of Technology.



Extreme Risk Protection Order Data

In addition to keeping the citizenry up to date on our operations, we strive to make the data we collect readily available. For instance, in 2023 the court system launched an online dashboard that provides information on the number of Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) applications filed—among other relevant data—since the August 2019 implementation of New York’s “red flag” law, designed to prevent gun crimes by temporarily restricting persons considered dangerous to themselves or others from access to any firearm.

eTrack

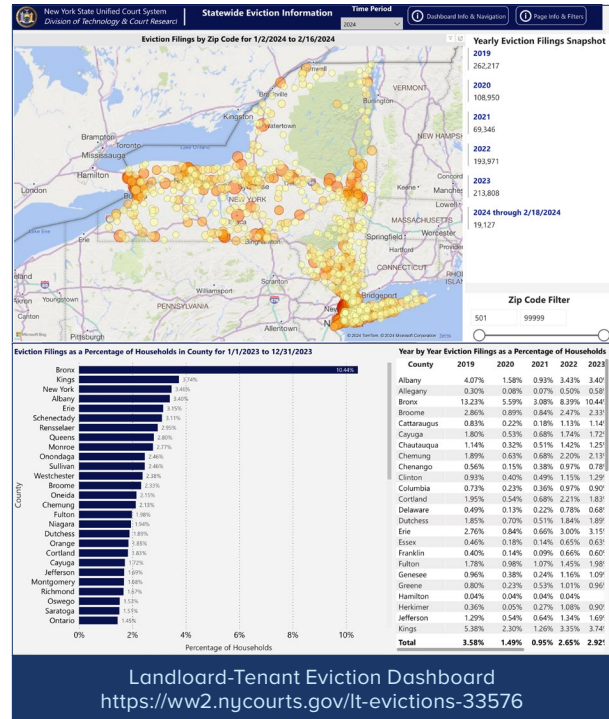
The court system’s free case information service provides information on future appearance dates for cases in Criminal and Family Courts. Individuals may also view information on both active and disposed cases in Civil Supreme and local Civil Courts. By signing up for the eTrack case tracking service, individuals can receive email updates and appearance reminders for Civil Supreme and local civil court cases.

800-Court-NY

As the Court System’s public information line, 800-Court-NY responds to an average of 100,000 calls each year. From updating the status of weather-related closures of court facilities and other emergency plans, to aiding callers with specific questions, 800-Court-NY typically assists hundreds of callers each day, using a virtual call center and specially trained staff from locations throughout the state. For callers who do not speak English, interpreter assistance is also available.

New York Courts Emergency Alert Portal

Since the court system transitioned the New York Courts Emergency Alert Portal to provide timely alerts on delays or facility closings, more than 24,000 individuals have subscribed to the service. Through this free service, users can receive prompt alerts as a text, email or phone call—or all three—when a court facility in a county or region of interest is closed or proceedings are delayed. For many years, the court system used a Twitter account to disseminate emergency alerts, but users were unable to personalize their account and consequently every user received every alert, even if the facility at issue was hundreds of miles away. Now, users only receive alerts for areas of interest to them, and they receive those alerts in a format they choose. Sign up at <https://www.nycourts.gov/notice/emergency-alerts.shtml>



Landlord-Tenant Eviction Dashboard

The Division of Technology & Court Research created the Statewide Landlord Tenant Eviction Dashboard to help answer questions about the volume and trends of landlord tenant eviction filings in the State. U.S. Census information about the geographic locations of the people involved in these filings is also available.

The Dashboard summarizes case-level data into dynamic tables and graphs, containing information on landlord tenant eviction cases from January 2019 to present and is refreshed weekly. These data include city, district, and town and village courts statewide. The dashboard is available at <https://ww2.nycourts.gov/lt-evictions-33576>.

The court system encourages creative solutions to landlord-tenant disputes. For example, Suffolk County District Court currently operates “Diversion Rooms” in three of its busiest Landlord-Tenant courts. The Diversion Rooms are one-stop locations for landlords and tenants seeking legal representation, rental assistance and housing programs, or other services. The parties are given an opportunity to meet with the representatives in the Diversion Room before their cases are called again and are either continued or adjourned as necessary.





A Commitment to Safety and Security

The safety and security of our visitors, judges and staff is paramount. When people visit our courts, they are often under great stress, and the anger, frustration or fear they bring to the courthouse has the potential to result in an outburst. We understand that, and our court officers are trained to recognize situations that may get out of hand before they get out of hand, to prevent incidents rather than simply respond after the fact—and to do so in a way that shows compassion and understanding.



Above: Eighty seven new court officers are sworn in at a graduation in Albany, including Officers Taylor Tyo (left) and Jaidan Downs, who enjoyed the moment with their children.

Left: First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Norman St. George administered the oath of office to 250 Court Officer recruits, the largest-ever graduating class, during a ceremony in Brooklyn.



From the desk of

Michael Magliano

Chief of the Department of Public Safety

Although a safe and secure environment for the delivery of justice is of paramount importance for the Department of Public Safety, equally important is ensuring that all individuals interacting with the New York State court system are met with a respectful and helpful environment.

To accomplish these goals, the uniformed personnel of this Department undergo vast amounts of training initially, followed by regular training cycles, to maintain top level skills and system knowledge to help protect and guide court users in their quest for justice. In summary, the Department of Public Safety's main goal and charge is to ensure that everyone has unfettered access to their day in court.

Why does it matter so much? It matters because we are the first face that the public sees and encounters in our courts. Look, no one really wants to come to court. Usually, they're in court because they have to be. It's up to us to not only keep them safe, but to make them feel comfortable in a secure environment. We want to show the public that we're human, just like them, and greet them with a smile, a "Good morning!" a "How can I assist you?" A smile can go a long, long way in breaking down barriers.

I've been doing this for 40 years and could have retired a long time ago. But I love to serve, I love to serve the communities, and I feel that we make a positive impact in the community. We are trying new initiatives such as community outreach. We want to get out into the communities before the communities come to us. Last year alone, we participated in about 70 different community endeavors where we go out in public and tell the public who and what we are.

For example, in August young people between the ages of 14 and 20 attended a summer "Explorers" program where they learned about careers in law enforcement, received instruction in first aid and crime scene investigation and experienced such adventures as rock rappelling, rifle shooting and mountain biking. Multiple law enforcement agencies—including the New York Court Officers—participated in the program. The young people found it exciting, and we found it rejuvenating.



Court Officer Graduation

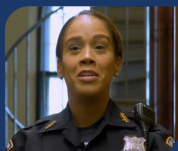


Judges, Court Officers, and personnel were joined by 250 Court Officer trainees in remembering Captain William Harry Thompson and Sergeants Thomas Jurgens and Mitchel Wallace who died on 9/11.



“When people come to court, they may have some hardcore problems and just need to get through the day. And that’s where we come in as court officers. We’re there to help.”

Sgt. Bernice Torres



“We deal with people at their most vulnerable state. If you treat people with a little bit of compassion, a little bit of humility, it can affect everybody in the courtroom.”

Court Officer Jennifer Pacheco

The Department of Public Safety

The Department of Public Safety is the law enforcement side of Judicial Branch of government. As such, this operation is tasked with maintaining a safe, secure and professional environment for the Judiciary, employees and the public for the delivery of equal justice across New York State.

To accomplish its goals the Department of Public Safety consists of multiple units/operations that collectively help us reach our goals, including:

- **New York State Court Officer Academy.** Responsible for all training of uniformed personnel from day one in the system and through an individual’s entire career with the Courts. Ongoing training for court officers consists not only of New York State mandated training requirements, but also specifically developed training designed to meet goals and initiatives developed within UCS.
- **Applicant Verification Unit/Court Officer Processing Unit.** Screens qualifying applicants for the uniformed officer positions in preparation for an initial Academy training program.
- **Special Response Team.** A dedicated unit of highly skilled and trained uniformed personnel who respond and assist with high priority and high-profile matters within the court system.
- **Judicial Threat Assessment Unit.** This unit dedicated to investigating judicial threats and inappropriate communications directed at judicial personnel and court staff.

Grants and Contracts



Community Dispute Resolution staff at the annual meeting of CDRC partner agencies

The Office of Grants and Contracts is responsible for managing external funding awarded to the court system and for UCS's funding of a broad array of services.

The Office develops and submits grant proposals on behalf of courts and OCA units and supports the implementation of grant-funded initiatives. The office currently manages 73 active multi-year grants.

During 2023, 18 federal grant proposals were submitted, and 13 were awarded. In addition to grants from the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services, the two largest federal sources, grants were also awarded by the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee for training of judicial personnel on issues of impaired and distracted driving, and the National Center for State Courts for eviction diversion programming. The Office manages intergovernmental agreements with state and local partners that supports innovative projects including a pilot alternative to incarceration program in Manhattan Supreme Court, technology and infrastructure upgrades implemented by our Division of Court Modernization and participation in the National Criminal History Improvement Program by our Division of Technology.

Procurement and contracting services support the Office of Court Administration's purchasing of a broad array of commodities, human and legal services, and technical services. The Office develops requests for bids, requests for proposals, preferred source and single/sole source procurements; coordinates with OCA counsel's office to ensure legal review; and shepherds contracts through the review and approval by the New York State Attorney General and State Comptroller.

The Office is responsible for the fiscal stewardship of over 300 human and legal service contracts, including contracts with the Center for Justice Innovation, Judiciary Civil Legal Services providers, Attorney for the Child programs, Community Dispute Resolution Centers, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) programs and substance abuse, mental health and domestic violence services in our specialty courts. The Office manages the UCS's annual award of \$3 million in Justice Court Assistance Program grants to municipalities to allow Town and Village Courts to purchase equipment, enhance facilities and address security concerns.

Fiscal Overview

The UCS operates on a fiscal year that runs from April 1 through March 31, with funding supplied through the State Budget and approved by the Legislature and Governor. The Judiciary annually seeks funding through a Judiciary Budget that, after approval by the Court of Appeals and a certification of need by the Chief Judge, is transmitted to the Governor for submission to the Legislature in accordance with Article VII, Section 1, of the State Constitution. Appropriations of \$3.4 billion were approved by the Legislature for the State Judiciary for the fiscal year 2024.

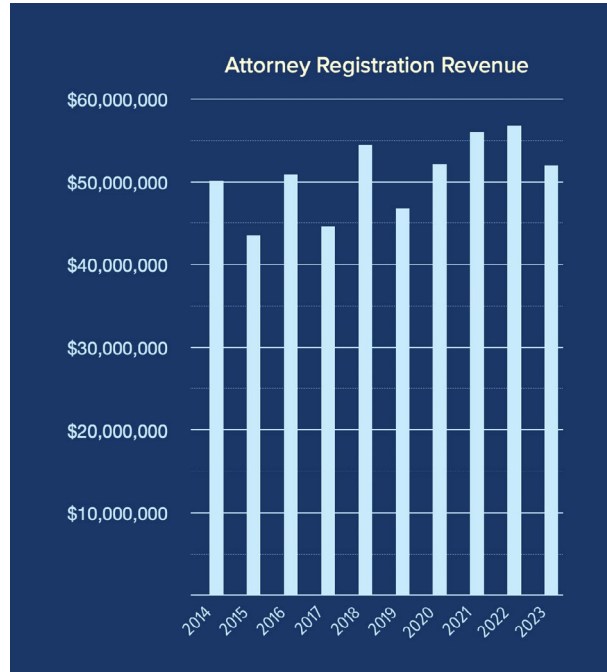


Criminal History Search Revenues

In 2023, the Criminal History Search Unit collected \$472,306,135 for criminal history search records.

A portion of court system-collected revenue includes fees for services provided by UCS' Criminal History Search Unit, which, since 2003, has sold criminal history public records that include felony and misdemeanor convictions from all 62 counties. By law, the Office of Court Administration is solely responsible for the sale of these records produced by a search of its electronic database, charging a \$95 fee per name and date of birth searched. The revenue generated from each search request is allocated as follows:

- \$65 to the Indigen Legal Services Fund
- \$16 to the Office of Court Administration's Judiciary Data Processing Offset Fund
- \$9 to the Legal Services Assistance Fund
- \$5 to the General Fund



Attorney Registration Revenues

In 2023, the UCS collected \$51,933,275 in attorney registration.

Every attorney admitted to practice law in New York must file a biennial registration form. Attorneys actively practicing law in New York State or elsewhere must, upon registering, pay a \$375 fee, allocated as follows:

- \$240 to the Attorney Licensing Fund to cover the cost of the Appellate Division attorney admission and disciplinary programs
- \$60 to the Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection, to support programs providing restitution to clients of dishonest attorneys
- \$50 to the Indigent Legal Services Fund to cover fees of lawyers serving on 18-b panels representing indigent criminal defendants
- \$25 to the Legal Services Assistance Fund

Facilities

New York State Court facilities are provided, maintained and operated by the cities and counties they serve. It is an arrangement that requires coordination and cooperation between different agencies and branches of government.

Since 1987, when the Court Facilities Act was passed in response to a pervasive sense that facilities were increasingly inadequate, the UCS has provided financial assistance and guidance to local governments to help them meet their facility-related responsibilities. Over the years, amendments to the Act have enhanced the State's role and increased financial assistance to localities.

During the height of the pandemic, the court facility-related resources were shifted heavily in favor of daily cleaning operations in order to maintain safe, hygienic courthouse environments. As the pandemic began to fade, local governments have started to return their focus to capital projects involving the renovation, expansion, or replacement of their court facilities.

New York City

- In **Brooklyn**, the new Civil and Housing Court facility is currently in construction phase. The project has a targeted completion date of January 2026.
- Other major capital projects within New York City involve the **60 Centre Street** courthouse and construction of a new **Staten Island Family Court** facility. Advancement of these projects was dependent on finalizing a series of new funding agreements between the City, the Court System and the Dormitory Authority.
- The **60 Centre Street** project is still in the planning phase. The City has planned for large scale capital projects to occur at this site prior to the building wide upgrade. These include roofing, façade and subbasement water projects. The Department of Design and Construction is currently in the surveying phase.
- The **Staten Island Family Court** project is a multi-phase/multi-building project which will provide a new Court facility as well as a reorganization and consolidation of other court operations in nearby facilities. The project has hired consultants and is currently finalizing swing space design. It is expected that all staff will be relocated by early 2025, with main project work beginning late 2025-early 2026.

Outside of New York City

- **Greene County** has completed the capital project design for a new addition/annex for the County's historic courthouse. The project is proceeding with contract awards and is scheduled for January 2025 completion.
- The **City of Middletown** completed designs for a new City Court facility which will convert a former Federal courthouse into a much-needed new City Court facility. The project went to bid but project estimates came in over budget. The project is pending while the City tries to identify additional funding support.
- **Dutchess County** is in the early stages of a five-year plan, multi-phase infrastructure project that will entail renovations in the Family Court courthouse to accommodate the project's phasing and relocation needs. Construction and bid documents were completed and sent out in 2023. The received bids came back higher than expected. The County is currently seeking approval for additional funding.
- The **Nassau County** Family/Matrimonial courthouse project, which will result in a state-of-the-art facility to house both Family Court and Supreme Court matrimonial matters, is on target for November 2024 completion.
- The **City of Albany** is undergoing a multi-phased approach to consolidate City Court facilities into an expanded and modernized single facility. Albany is in the process of retaining a consultant to evaluate and study options to redevelop or relocate the City's court facilities.

Measures Enacted into Law in 2023



Members of the Albany Payroll Office pose for a photo at the Empire State Plaza.

The Office of Counsel is the principal representative of the Unified Court System in the legislative process. In this role, it is responsible for developing the Judiciary's legislative program and for providing the legislative and executive branches with analyses and recommendations concerning legislative measures that may have an impact on the courts and their administrative operations. It also serves a liaison function with bar association committees, judicial associations and other groups, public and private, with respect to changes in court-related statutory law and staffs the Chief Administrative Judge's advisory committees on civil practice, criminal law and procedure, family law, estates and trusts, matrimonial practice, and the local courts.

During the 2023 legislative session, Counsel's Office, with the assistance of the Chief Administrative Judge's advisory committees, prepared and submitted 75 new measures for legislative consideration. Ultimately, four were enacted into law, plus the Judiciary Budget bill.

Measures Enacted into Law in 2023

- **Chapter 51-BUDGET** (Senate 4001B/Assembly 3001B). Enacts the 2023-24 Judiciary Budget. Effective 4/1/23.
- **OCA #11-FAMILY-Chapter 691** (Senate 7444-Brisport/Assembly 6544-Hevesi). Relates to the sealing and expungement of records in persons in need of supervision cases in Family Court. Effective. 3/7/24.
- **OCA #13-STRUCTURE & OPERATIONS-Chapter 1** (Senate 1521-Hoylman-Sigal/Assembly A1003-Lavine). Relates to terms and conditions of employment of certain non-judicial officers and employees of the Unified Court System; repealer. Effective. 1/27/23 (See Table)
- **OCA #34-FAMILY-Chapter 402** (Senate 7535-Brisport/Assembly 6545-Davila). Relates to expiration dates of orders of protection and the duration of temporary orders of protection in juvenile delinquency cases. Effective. 9/15/23.
- **OCA #39-FAMILY-Chapter 813** (Senate 7171-Brisport/Assembly 7706-Davila). Relates to juvenile delinquency charges of violations in the Family Court. Effective. 12/29/21.



Presiding Justice Gerald Whalen of the Appellate Division, Fourth Department

Court Structure and Caseload Activity

The Unified Court System is comprised of 11 separate trial courts, an Appellate Division with four regional departments, an Appellate Term that hears appeals from certain trial courts in certain regions of the state, and the Court of Appeals — the highest court in the State.

Appellate Courts

The Court of Appeals is the state’s court of last resort. It consists of the Chief Judge and six Associate Judges appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, to 14-year terms. The court’s caseload activity is reported in TABLE 1.

Table 1: Caseload Activity in Court of Appeals - 2023							
Applications Decided [CPL 460.20(3)(b)]							1,167
Records on Appeal Filed							129
Oral Arguments (Includes Submissions)							95
Appeals Decided							93
Motions Decided							861
Judicial Conduct Determinations Reviewed							1
Dispositions of Appeals Decided in the Court of Appeals by Basis of Jurisdiction							
BASIS OF JURISDICTION	AFFIRMED	REVERSED	MODIFIED	DISMISSED	OTHER*	TOTAL	
All Cases:							
Dissents in Appellate Division	7	5	0	0	0	12	
Permission of Court of Appeals or Judge thereof	24	23	2	1	0	50	
Permission of Appellate Division or Justice thereof	3	11	1	0	0	15	
Constitutional Question	2	0	1	0	0	3	
Stipulation for Judgment Absolute	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Other	0	1	1	1	10	13	
Total	36	40	5	2	10	93	
Civil Cases:							
Dissents in Appellate Division	7	5	0	0	0	12	
Permission of Court of Appeals	11	9	1	0	0	21	
Permission of Appellate Division	2	5	1	0	0	8	
Constitutional Question	2	0	1	0	0	3	
Stipulation for Judgment Absolute	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Other	0	1	1	1	10	13	
Total	22	20	4	1	10	57	
Criminal Cases:							
Permission of Court of Appeals Judge	13	14	1	1	0	29	
Permission of Appellate Division Justice	1	6	0	0	0	7	
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total	14	20	1	1	0	36	

*Includes anomalies which did not result in an affirmation, reversal, modification or dismissal (e.g., judicial suspensions, acceptance of a case for review pursuant to Court Rule 500.27)

Below the Court of Appeals is the Appellate Division of State Supreme Court, a mid-level appellate court. The Presiding Justice and Associate Justices of the Appellate Division in each Judicial Department are designated by the Governor from among Justices elected to the Supreme Court. The Presiding Justices serve for the duration of the term for which they were elected to Supreme Court; the Associate Justices may serve terms of five years or of indeterminate length, depending on the seats they are appointed to fill. The Appellate Division's caseload activity is listed in TABLE 2.

	FIRST DEPT		SECOND DEPT		THIRD DEPT		FOURTH DEPT		TOTAL
	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	
Records on Appeal Filed	1,555	963	2,468	400	718	280	564	396	7,344
Disposed of before argument or submission (e.g., dismissed, withdrawn, settled):	2,295	375	3,751	257	1,181	148	0	0	8,007
Disposed of after argument or submission:									
Affirmed	844	348	1,343	296	450	214	334	309	4,138
Reversed	218	24	557	30	71	20	72	30	1,022
Modified	240	87	246	43	86	30	84	33	849
Dismissed	180	11	329	3	81	6	140	10	760
Other	16	7	61	38	8	1	11	17	159
Total Dispositions	3,793	852	6,287	667	1,877	419	641	399	14,935
Oral Arguments*		1,186		1,692		392		621	3,891
Motions Decided*		4,717		6,085		4,405		6,429	21,636
Admissions to the Bar		2,775		2,666		3,260		284	8,985
Attorney Disciplinary Proceedings Decided		51		109		313		40	513

*Not broken down by civil or criminal.

Appellate Terms of the Supreme Court in the First and Second Judicial Departments hear appeals from civil and criminal cases originating in New York City's Civil and Criminal Courts. In the Second Department, the Appellate Terms also hear appeals from civil and criminal cases originating in District, City, and town and village Justice Courts. Justices are selected by the Chief Administrative Judge upon approval of the Presiding Justice of the appropriate Appellate Division. The Appellate Terms' caseload activity is listed in TABLE 3.

	FIRST DEPT			SECOND DEPT			TOTAL
	Civil	Criminal	Total	Civil	Criminal	Total	
Records on Appeal Filed	66	104	170	911	438	1,349	1,519
Disposed of before argument or submission (e.g., dismissed, withdrawn, settled)	-	12	12	529	200	729	741
Disposed of after argument or submission:							
Affirmed	39	80	119	74	49	123	242
Reversed	12	7	19	48	32	80	99
Modified	5	10	15	20	7	27	42
Dismissed	19	2	21	14	1	15	36
Other	-	-	-	11	-	11	11
Total Dispositions	75	111	186	696	289	985	1,171
Oral Arguments*			129			175	304
Motions Decided*			1,793			3,629	5,422

*Not broken down by civil or criminal.

Trial Courts

In 2023, 2,472,802 cases were filed statewide in the trial courts. Criminal cases accounted for 32.5%. Civil cases accounted for 41.5%. Twenty percent of the cases were in Family Court and 6% were in Surrogate’s Court. TABLE 4 shows total filings in the trial courts over a five-year period. FIGURE A shows the percentage of filings by case type.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Criminal					
Supreme and County Courts Criminal ^a	39,324	19,059	29,670	29,681	35,057
Criminal Court of the City of NY ^b	325,680	173,368	203,511	224,915	290,227
City & District Courts Outside NYC ^b	613,414	399,168	431,444	435,175	475,882
Criminal Total	978,418	591,595	664,625	689,771	801,166
Civil					
Supreme Court Civil ^c	452,910	307,203	349,635	320,644	326,461
Civil Court of the City of NY ^d	541,067	325,912	333,003	380,555	406,756
City & District Courts Outside NYC ^d	191,198	117,685	124,037	140,648	148,439
County Courts Civil ^c	85,726	86,938	96,837	98,242	82,398
Court of Claims	1,801	1,590	1,577	1,258	3,057
Small Claims Assessment Review Program	42,029	102,571	91,426	47,960	63,670
Civil Total	1,314,731	941,899	996,515	989,307	1,030,781
<i>Family^e</i>	586,630	344,196	385,085	469,523	490,432
<i>Surrogate’s</i>	141,237	118,284	139,429	146,396	150,423
Total	3,021,016	1,995,974	2,185,654	2,294,997	2,472,802

*This reflects data entry as of 2/13/24.

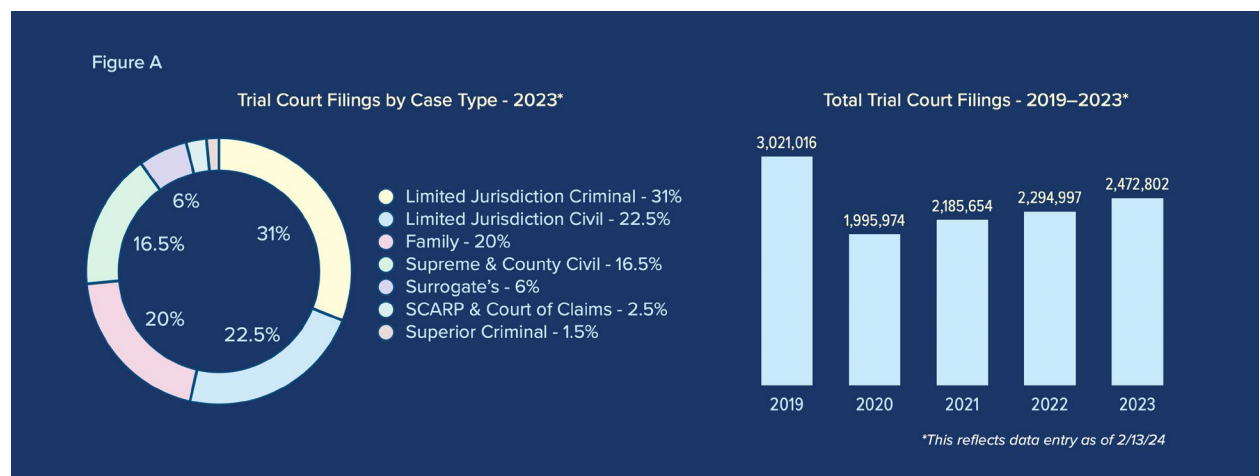
^aIn October 2023, supreme & county criminal data categorization changed from felonies to superior accusatory instruments (all Indictments & SCI’s) and misdemeanors to local accusatory instruments (felony youth complaints, integrated domestic violence, & other unindicted cases in supreme & county criminal). Prior to the change, felony youth complaints were not included in reporting.

^bIncludes arrests, uniform traffic & parking tickets that require the court’s involvement, and NYC summons cases.

^cIncludes new cases, ex parte applications and uncontested matrimonial cases.

^dIncludes civil, housing, small claims, and commercial claims.

^eIncludes Permanency Planning Hearings held.



The Supreme Court

The Supreme Court generally handles cases outside the authority of the lower courts such as civil matters beyond the monetary limits of the lower courts' jurisdiction; divorce, separation and annulment proceedings; equity suits, such as mortgage foreclosures and injunctions; and criminal prosecutions of felonies. During 2023, there were 326,461 civil filings in Supreme Court, including 167,382 new cases, 120,561 ex parte applications and 38,518 uncontested matrimonial cases. A total of 330,469 matters reached disposition. The Supreme Court's caseload activity is listed in TABLE 5. FIGURE B shows the percentage of filings by case type and FIGURE C shows the breakdown of cases by manner of disposition.

Location	FILINGS		DISPOSITIONS				
	New Cases	Note of Issue	Total	Pre-Note	Note of Issue	Settlements	Verdicts
Total State	167,382	36,935	165,101	130,871	34,230	33,632	1,322
NYC	80,443	17,264	73,297	57,305	15,992	13,764	795
Bronx	15,989	3,442	14,257	11,176	3,081	3,868	113
Kings	25,618	5,630	25,225	19,834	5,391	4,497	123
New York	16,164	3,511	14,762	11,968	2,794	2,269	91
Queens	19,451	3,965	15,779	11,727	4,052	2,236	399
Richmond	3,221	716	3,274	2,600	674	894	69
ONYC	86,939	19,671	91,804	73,566	18,238	19,868	527
Albany	3,187	320	3,161	2,803	358	91	7
Allegany	209	25	201	187	14	12	0
Broome	1,262	219	1,346	1,162	184	70	1
Cattaraugus	363	52	344	305	39	66	1
Cayuga	377	50	373	335	38	20	1
Chautauqua	610	46	645	602	43	92	1
Chemung	364	80	356	268	88	12	0
Chenango	223	42	211	174	37	22	1
Clinton	341	29	309	286	23	11	1
Columbia	409	58	432	369	63	30	0
Cortland	151	13	123	116	7	1	0
Delaware	175	41	212	169	43	26	0
Dutchess	2,516	682	2,608	1,990	618	537	16
Erie	6,968	935	7,274	6,531	743	1,740	33
Essex	207	25	183	170	13	9	0
Franklin	272	44	308	266	42	4	0
Fulton	314	50	359	302	57	37	2
Genesee	220	35	252	229	23	19	0
Greene	323	66	353	274	79	16	1
Herkimer	329	34	369	345	24	30	0
Jefferson	598	116	519	438	81	17	1
Lewis	87	10	101	86	15	17	0
Livingston	263	28	242	216	26	22	0
Madison	275	43	231	190	41	7	0
Monroe	4,388	569	3,818	3,396	422	227	12
Montgomery	233	39	246	214	32	35	2
Nassau	15,975	5,810	17,415	12,091	5,324	4,276	140
Niagara	1,194	219	1,322	1,035	287	160	4
Oneida	1,624	319	1,505	1,199	306	75	5
Onondaga	2,655	649	2,638	2,157	481	212	14
Ontario	716	105	621	531	90	37	1
Orange	3,188	656	3,285	2,644	641	869	11
Orleans	216	6	219	206	13	14	0
Oswego	532	14	567	552	15	24	0

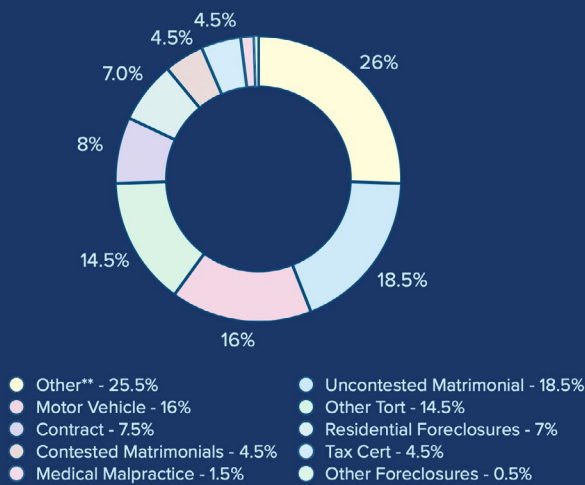
*This reflects data entry as of 2/13/24.

Table 5: Supreme Civil Cases - 2023*

Location	FILINGS		DISPOSITIONS				
	New Cases	Note of Issue	Total	Pre-Note	Note of Issue	Settlements	Verdicts
Total State	167,382	36,935	165,101	130,871	34,230	33,632	1,322
Otsego	282	66	314	243	71	21	3
Putnam	662	172	628	473	155	17	7
Rensselaer	1,073	118	1,040	921	119	49	2
Rockland	3,099	597	4,024	3,232	792	825	12
St. Lawrence	411	121	402	304	98	35	1
Saratoga	1,132	260	1,228	980	248	111	4
Schenectady	838	152	1,018	832	186	90	6
Schoharie	151	28	176	156	20	2	0
Schuyler	72	15	54	42	12	1	0
Seneca	152	14	158	141	17	5	0
Steuben	409	65	398	335	63	30	0
Suffolk	15,766	3,004	16,559	14,146	2,413	7,539	104
Sullivan	727	133	863	724	139	55	7
Tioga	199	32	181	155	26	13	1
Tompkins	272	56	322	259	63	6	1
Ulster	1,262	419	1,408	897	511	195	16
Warren	395	77	410	352	58	9	2
Washington	516	40	516	476	40	9	1
Wayne	340	77	357	307	50	26	3
Westchester	8,102	2,770	9,242	6,415	2,827	1,935	102
Wyoming	216	13	257	247	10	50	0
Yates	99	13	101	91	10	8	0

*This reflects data entry as of 2/13/24.

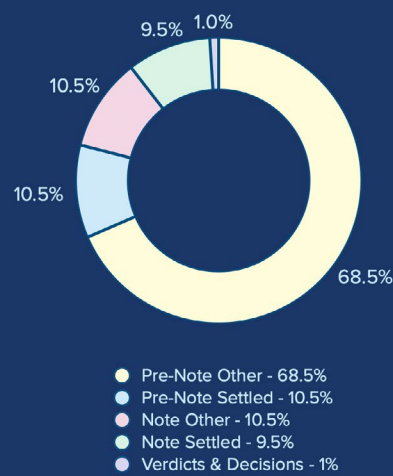
**Figure B
Supreme Court Filings by Case Type - 2023***



*This reflects data entry as of 2/13/24

**Other mostly consists of Real Property, Mental Hygiene, and Special Proceedings.

**Figure C
Supreme Court Disposition by Disposition Type - 2023***



*This reflects data entry as of 2/13/24

County Courts

County Courts, located in each county outside New York City, handle criminal prosecutions of felonies and misdemeanors committed within the county, although in practice most minor offenses are handled by lower courts. County Courts also have limited jurisdiction over civil lawsuits involving claims up to \$25,000. County Courts in the Third and Fourth Departments, while primarily trial courts, also hear appeals from cases originating in the City Courts and Town and Village Justice Courts. The statistical data for the County Courts' superior accusatory instrument caseload, which consist of indictments and superior court information (SCI) cases, are reported in combination with the criminal caseload data for Supreme Court in TABLE 6.

Location	FILINGS			DISPOSITIONS						
	Total	Indictments	SCI's	Total	Guilty Pleas	Convictions	Acquittals	Nonjury Verdicts	Dismissals	Other
Total State	29,835	21,424	8,411	33,493	27,235	754	215	158	3,080	2,051
NYC	12,151	10,924	1,227	14,443	10,722	340	95	33	2,137	1,116
New York	2,585	2,501	84	2,859	2,021	44	27	4	606	157
Bronx	3,344	3,211	133	3,822	2,874	74	31	10	569	264
Kings	3,508	2,940	568	4,726	3,281	132	26	6	742	539
Queens	2,321	1,966	355	2,486	2,086	80	11	11	190	108
Richmond	393	306	87	550	460	10	0	2	30	48
ONYC	17,684	10,500	7,184	19,050	16,513	414	120	125	943	935
Albany	541	297	244	525	463	31	3	1	17	10
Allegany	83	42	41	136	72	0	0	0	18	46
Broome	405	266	139	373	316	15	6	1	23	12
Cattaraugus	233	174	59	220	196	2	1	0	15	6
Cayuga	306	188	118	298	282	6	0	1	2	7
Chautauqua	233	109	124	295	236	3	2	0	37	17
Chemung	265	248	17	338	278	6	3	9	17	25
Chenango	132	119	13	124	119	0	0	0	4	1
Clinton	174	108	66	169	145	7	5	2	2	8
Columbia	88	38	50	182	147	4	6	0	19	6
Cortland	125	70	55	122	91	5	1	0	10	15
Delaware	94	60	34	62	61	0	0	0	0	1
Dutchess	277	98	179	314	282	10	1	0	16	5
Erie	1,273	662	611	1,485	1,316	19	9	13	93	35
Essex	59	30	29	92	76	1	0	0	2	13
Franklin	185	125	60	146	131	1	0	0	5	9
Fulton	131	30	101	126	121	2	0	0	3	0
Genesee	250	146	104	254	233	4	0	1	6	10
Greene	107	53	54	97	90	1	0	0	3	3
Hamilton	7	2	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	0
Herkimer	91	26	65	111	97	1	0	0	2	11
Jefferson	377	187	190	411	393	5	0	1	8	4
Lewis	103	26	77	134	126	1	0	0	2	5
Livingston	148	111	37	172	154	5	0	2	4	7
Madison	146	57	89	137	133	3	0	0	1	0
Monroe	1,163	966	197	1,314	990	73	29	43	105	74
Montgomery	155	87	68	140	133	2	0	0	3	2
Nassau	1,620	702	918	1,764	1,468	35	9	3	119	130
Niagara	463	294	169	528	413	7	1	0	22	85

*This reflects data entry as of 2/13/24.

Table 6: Supreme Criminal & County Court - Superior Accusatory Instruments (Indictments and SCI's) 2023*

Location	FILINGS			DISPOSITIONS						
	Total	Indictments	SCI's	Total	Guilty Pleas	Convictions	Acquittals	Nonjury Verdicts	Dismissals	Other
Total State	29,835	21,424	8,411	33,493	27,235	754	215	158	3,080	2,051
Oneida	544	353	191	597	540	10	3	1	27	16
Onondaga	897	601	296	943	775	29	5	4	87	43
Ontario	287	104	183	330	282	6	4	4	17	17
Orange	526	368	158	488	460	9	0	0	4	15
Orleans	76	50	26	81	69	1	1	0	6	4
Oswego	265	136	129	314	295	4	0	0	8	7
Otsego	81	65	16	68	47	3	1	0	3	14
Putnam	47	20	27	69	58	1	0	0	10	0
Rensselaer	232	162	70	256	231	10	4	1	2	8
Rockland	205	110	95	313	267	2	4	9	9	22
St. Lawrence	259	189	70	218	199	9	2	0	3	5
Saratoga	273	67	206	280	274	4	0	0	0	2
Schenectady	317	165	152	306	253	12	3	3	23	12
Schoharie	31	23	8	33	30	1	0	0	0	2
Schuyler	101	69	32	93	82	0	0	6	2	3
Seneca	101	35	66	118	106	2	0	0	5	5
Steuben	403	366	37	501	347	4	5	4	59	82
Suffolk	1,398	1,076	322	1,593	1,463	21	4	4	49	52
Sullivan	132	58	74	133	125	2	0	0	3	3
Tioga	128	86	42	92	84	1	1	4	0	2
Tompkins	176	81	95	160	150	1	0	0	0	9
Ulster	301	196	105	314	276	9	2	1	18	8
Warren	141	56	85	157	149	2	0	0	2	4
Washington	163	124	39	161	146	1	0	0	9	5
Wayne	175	119	56	161	142	6	1	1	6	5
Westchester	921	289	632	905	841	14	3	1	23	23
Wyoming	199	161	38	219	195	1	1	5	5	12
Yates	71	50	21	73	60	0	0	0	5	8

*This reflects data entry as of 2/13/24.

Court of Claims

The Court of Claims is a statewide court with exclusive authority over lawsuits involving monetary claims against the State of New York or certain other state-related entities such as the New York State Thruway, the City University of New York and the New York State Power Authority (claims for the appropriation of real property only). The Court hears cases at nine locations around the state. During 2023, 3,057 claims were filed, of which approximately 1,588 were Adult Survivors Act filings. A total of 1,930 claims were decided.

Surrogate's Court

The Surrogate's Court, located in every county of the state, hears cases involving the affairs of the deceased, including the validity of wills and the administration of estates. These courts are also authorized to handle adoption and guardianships. See TABLE 7 for filings and dispositions by case type.

Case Type	TOTAL STATE		NYC		OUTSIDE NYC	
	Filings	Dispositions**	Filings	Dispositions**	Filings	Dispositions**
Total	150,423	116,809	37,571	36,206	112,852	80,603
Probate	41,248	41,333	11,280	10,371	29,968	30,962
Administration	20,386	23,145	8,375	9,275	12,011	13,870
Voluntary Admin.	30,122	30,122	9,188	9,188	20,934	20,934
Accounting	30,277	4,254	2,844	1,540	27,433	2,714
Inter Vivos Trust	1,720	1,204	148	231	1,572	973
Miscellaneous	8,711	7,298	2,712	3,390	5,999	3,908
Guardianship	17,173	7,981	2,853	2,066	14,320	5,915
Adoption	779	1,463	171	145	608	1,318
Estate Tax	7	9	0	0	7	9

*This reflects data entry as of 1/30/24.

**Includes orders and decrees signed.

The Family Court, located in each county outside New York City and citywide in the City, hears matters involving children and families, including adoption, guardianship, foster care approval and review, juvenile delinquency, family violence, child abuse and neglect, custody and visitation, and child support. See TABLE 8 for a breakdown of Family Court filings and dispositions. This table also contains filings and dispositions for the State's Integrated Domestic Violence (IDV) Courts.

Type of Petition	TOTAL STATE		NYC		OUTSIDE NYC	
	Filings	Dispositions	Filings	Dispositions	Filings	Dispositions
Total	490,432	490,726	140,010	139,188	350,422	351,538
Termination of Parental Rights	2,484	2,686	589	538	1,895	2,148
Surrender of Child	1,546	1,632	267	239	1,279	1,393
Child Protective (Neglect & Abuse)	27,238	28,848	7,787	8,588	19,451	20,260
Juvenile Delinquency	10,332	9,873	4,007	3,778	6,325	6,095
Designated Felony	391	274	236	122	155	152
Persons in Need of Supervision	1,038	1,042	206	205	832	837
Adoption	2,282	2,423	695	763	1,587	1,660
Adoption Certification	123	152	30	40	93	112
Guardianship	19,349	19,386	7,919	7,317	11,430	12,069
Custody/Visitation	152,545	153,550	37,984	38,189	114,561	115,361
Foster Care Review	174	138	115	83	59	55
Foster Care Placement	340	324	190	175	150	149
Family Offense	67,735	65,729	24,170	23,144	43,565	42,585
Paternity	15,123	14,926	5,388	4,957	9,735	9,969
Support	154,337	154,230	35,973	36,489	118,364	117,741
Uniform Interstate Family Support Act	5,076	5,213	2,068	2,197	3,008	3,016
Other	1,773	1,754	100	78	1,673	1,676
Permanency Planning Hearings Held	28,546	28,546	12,286	12,286	16,260	16,260

*This reflects data entry as of 2/13/23.

Civil Court of the City of New York

The Civil Court of the City of New York has jurisdiction over civil cases involving amounts up to \$50,000. It includes small claims and commercial claims parts for the informal resolution of matters involving amounts up to \$10,000, and a housing part presided over by judges designated by the Chief Administrator for landlord-tenant proceedings. New York City Civil Court Judges are elected to 10-year terms; housing judges are appointed to five-year terms. TABLE 9 shows the breakdown of filings and dispositions by case type and county.

Location	CIVIL ACTIONS		HOUSING		SMALL CLAIMS		COMMERCIAL CLAIMS	
	Filing ^a	Dispositions ^b	Filing ^a	Dispositions ^b	Filing	Dispositions	Filing	Dispositions
New York City	242,127	650,305	149,064	238,494	12,727	15,291	2,838	3,205
New York	33,901	58,235	29,091	48,894	2,821	3,628	603	658
Bronx	38,257	114,555	54,739	85,857	2,139	1,817	314	366
Kings	57,448	298,545	37,697	58,919	3,885	4,596	536	687
Queens	48,043	148,681	24,445	40,187	3,228	4,489	903	922
Richmond	64,478	30,289	3,092	4,637	654	761	482	572

*This reflects data entry as of 2/13/24.

^a Includes both answered and unanswered cases.

^b Includes courtroom dispositions and default judgments. Pursuant to administrative orders, 490,207 civil action cases and 121,394 housing non-payment cases were administratively dismissed in 2023.

Criminal Court of the City of New York

The Criminal Court of the City of New York handles misdemeanors and violations. New York City Criminal Court Judges also conduct felony arraignments and other preliminary (pre-indictment) felony proceedings. They are appointed by the mayor to 10-year terms. During 2023, 75% of the arrests were misdemeanors, with 22.5% of all cases reaching disposition by plea. Another 67% were dismissed; 9% were sent to the grand jury; 1.5% were disposed of by other means. TABLE 10 shows filings and dispositions by county for arrest cases, summons cases (cases in which an appearance ticket, returnable in court, is issued to the defendant), and uniform traffic and parking tickets that require the court's involvement.

Location	ARREST CASES		SUMMONS CASES		TRAFFIC & PARKING TICKETS	
	Filings	Dispositions	Filings**	Dispositions	Filings	Dispositions
New York City	153,874	152,122	103,278	93,919	33,075	32,901
New York	36,117	36,743	22,456	19,223	1,944	2,237
Bronx	27,759	28,731	20,627	19,705	4,617	4,287
Kings	46,170	44,890	38,806	33,470	15,158	14,213
Queens	36,318	34,590	16,871	17,170	8,397	9,306
Richmond	7,510	7,168	4,518	4,351	2,959	2,858

*This reflects data entry as of 2/13/24.

** Includes both answered and unanswered cases.

City Courts Outside New York City

City Courts Outside New York City arraign felonies and handle misdemeanor and lesser offenses, as well as civil lawsuits involving claims up to \$15,000. City Courts also have small claims parts for the informal disposition of matters involving claims up to \$5,000 and/or housing parts to handle landlord-tenant matters and housing violations.

District Courts

District Courts, located in Nassau County and the five western towns of Suffolk County, arraign felonies and handle misdemeanors and lesser offenses as well as civil lawsuits involving claims up to \$15,000.

In 2023, there were a total of 624,321 filings and 624,654 dispositions in the City and District Courts FIGURE D shows filings by case type; TABLE 11 contains a breakdown of filings by location and case type.

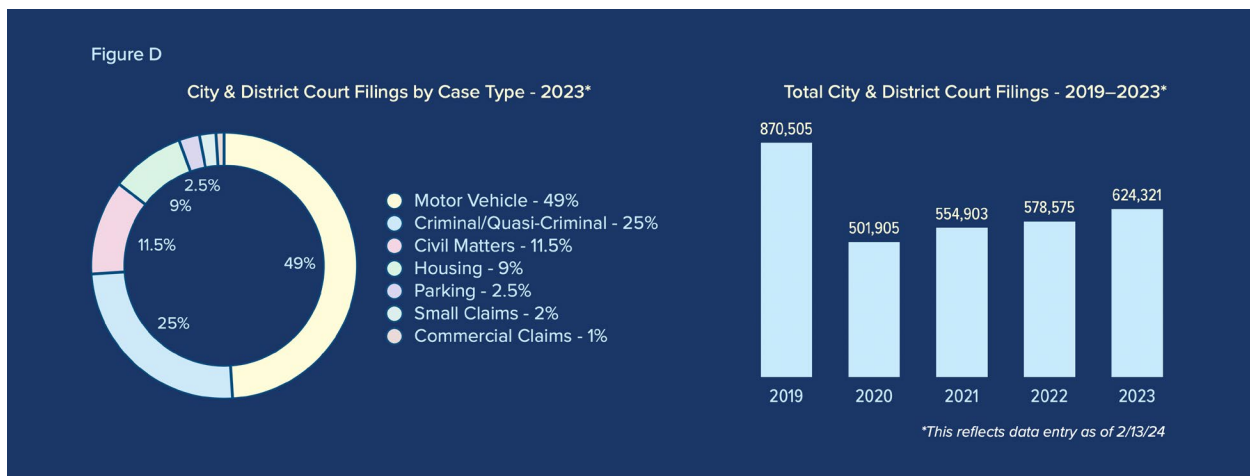
Table 11: City and District Courts: Filings by Case Type - 2023*							Total Filings: 624,321
Location	Criminal	MV	Parking	Civil	Small Claims	L&T	Commercial
Total	155,300	305,849	14,733	73,464	14,232	55,992	4,751
Albany	4,151	15,352	64	1,823	508	2,783	91
Amsterdam	1,002	2,273	47	384	72	234	3
Auburn	1,315	1,868	146	259	110	465	35
Batavia	755	1,584	10	159	70	164	28
Beacon	267	1,221	113	117	47	99	17
Binghamton	2,659	3,694	17	573	237	961	39
Buffalo	7,807	4,458	18	2,802	1,261	9,201	497
Canandaigua	271	3,107	13	272	69	114	14
Cohoes	686	1,968	4	180	60	493	12
Corning	521	846	5	119	37	76	4
Cortland	1,186	2,242	1	116	92	256	58
Dunkirk	695	915	26	119	45	90	23
Elmira	1,362	1,444	3	342	120	553	17
Fulton	854	1,613		125	54	186	34
Geneva	396	1,059	52	79	39	125	3
Glen Cove	458	3,365	3,832	6	34	137	8
Glens Falls	706	967	116	391	61	154	14
Gloversville	702	1,057	15	379	56	297	2
Hornell	402	1,264		102	36	88	3
Hudson	472	1,062	15	130	48	64	48
Ithaca	1,230	1,069	2	60	112	133	12
Jamestown	3,282	3,638	571	296	113	367	31
Johnstown	308	627		164	37	71	16
Kingston	1,166	3,034	11	326	141	254	31
Lackawanna	837	6,212	94	240	158	237	54
Little Falls	211	511	2	124	96	35	25
Lockport	1,110	1,672	38	558	238	252	48
Long Beach	1,504	1,520	3,579	88	53	88	1
Mechanicville	513	1,063	3	122	49	86	10
Middletown	2,596	7,149	482	479	207	351	43
Mount Vernon	1,936	5,960	57	234	163	1,562	15
New Rochelle	1,615	5,890	73	1,110	186	1,159	21
Newburgh	2,325	3,541	26	370	157	750	19
Niagara Falls	2,520	8,159	89	698	194	997	31
North Tonawanda	1,085	9,397	9	252	92	157	41
Norwich	519	851	5	96	44	82	45
Ogdensburg	551	447	1	98	96	84	106
Olean	918	1,234	9	123	53	186	15
Oneida	883	2,029	43	110	35	114	13
Oneonta	628	1,014	4	94	53	45	31

*This reflects data entry as of 2/13/24.

Table 11: City and District Courts: Filings by Case Type - 2023* Total Filings: 624,321

Location	Criminal	MV	Parking	Civil	Small Claims	L&T	Commercial
Total	155,300	305,849	14,733	73,464	14,232	55,992	4,751
Oswego	1,557	2,809	1	215	103	170	14
Peekskill	1,337	4,170	31	145	122	169	14
Plattsburgh	761	1,721	6	157	82	172	43
Port Jervis	764	1,791	3	113	39	126	8
Poughkeepsie	1,334	2,505	1,169	442	256	1,094	29
Rensselaer	229	903	4	201	48	131	27
Rochester	5,586	3,113	27	1,531	1,234	5,700	322
Rome	2,168	7,614	41	534	103	553	32
Rye	341	4,200	14	11	61	15	29
Salamanca	537	1,112	3	64	44	85	
Saratoga Springs	1,139	3,316	673	291	149	397	46
Schenectady	2,798	6,867	193	1,148	292	1,788	38
Sherrill	25	122	1	31	21	5	8
Syracuse	7,386	12,846	11	1,946	612	3,344	100
Tonawanda	544	3,325	64	295	130	86	56
Troy	1,608	5,685	8	1,036	194	1,567	16
Utica	3,412	6,015	3	1,213	284	1,199	156
Watertown	1,341	2,633	2	413	117	460	33
Watervliet	616	2,698	2	161	65	288	4
White Plains	2,457	10,203	2,147	206	250	504	60
Yonkers	4,510	13,494	84	809	432	3,636	135
Nassau District	24,273	36,212	157	13,882	1,980	4,383	1,154
Suffolk District	38,173	56,119	494	34,501	2,281	6,570	869

*This reflects data entry as of 2/13/24.



Town and Village Justice Courts

Town and Village Justice Courts handle misdemeanors and lesser offenses as well as civil lawsuits involving claims up to \$3,000 (including small claims cases). While most of cases handled by these courts are minor traffic offenses, drunk-driving cases and zoning violations, town and village Justices also arraign felonies and handle misdemeanors. There are 1,184 Justice Courts and 1,740 Town and Village Justices.



Presiding Justice Elizabeth A. Garry of the Appellate Division, Third Department, celebrates Pride Month in Cooperstown



Hon. Rowan D. Wilson is sworn in as Chief Judge by Governor Kathy Hochul at the Court of Appeals on September 12, 2023.

Acknowledgments

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