



# 2021 Annual Report

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS**

*OPEN TO ALL, TRUSTED BY ALL, JUSTICE FOR ALL*

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# MESSAGE FROM CHIEF JUDGE ANNA BLACKBURNE-RIGSBY



In 2021, the District of Columbia Courts, like other federal, state and local agencies, continued to make operational decisions based on the health and safety challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic. The Courts' Pandemic Working Group, established to coordinate our response to the pandemic, regularly monitored operational status levels in the District and surrounding jurisdictions to inform the Chief Judges' decision-making regarding court operations.

In May, the District of Columbia announced plans to lift the capacity and other restrictions required by the public health emergency given that COVID-19 health metrics continued to trend downward throughout the city. The District of Columbia Courts continued to assess operations to identify appropriate on-site functions to reinstate as well as remote activities to maintain or expand, while prioritizing health and safety concerns for the judiciary and court personnel, as well as the public. As a result, more on-site public counters were opened and hearings scheduled and held.

The DC Court of Appeals continued to review operations to identify ways to enhance access to justice for court users. Through collaboration with judicial and administrative leadership, as well as stakeholders, the Court expanded remote options for ease of case filings and information dissemination. Oral arguments were made available via videoconference and live streamed for the public. Appellate court documents were accessible online for users to search pertinent case information. Appellate mediations were conducted remotely. Self-represented litigants had the option to file more forms and documents electronically through case filing systems and via email, including case-initiating documents. The Court's Committee on Admissions launched a new online bar exam application system to streamline the application process, with examinations held remotely in February and July 2021 and virtual swearing-in ceremonies held for all applicants certified for admission to the DC Bar.

I am very appreciative of the judges and employees of the DC Courts who continued to work hard and remained committed to providing excellent customer service to court users during another year of the pandemic. Your dedication to public service exemplified the Courts' vision of *Open to All, Trusted by All, Justice for All*.

Chief Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby  
District of Columbia Court of Appeals



# MESSAGE FROM CHIEF JUDGE ANITA JOSEY-HERRING



Still facing challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2021 the DC Superior Court continued to implement contingency plans to ensure the provision of services to court users, while maintaining a safe workplace environment. With the District's May 2021 announcement to relax capacity and other restrictions given the declining levels of the COVID-19 health metrics, the Superior Court expanded on-site functions and enhanced remote activities.

Clerk's Offices continued to operate primarily remotely until all public offices were opened in July and provided court users with the option, where appropriate, of conducting on-site transactions. Jury trials, initially resumed in January for select Felony cases previously set for trial in which the defendant was detained, were expanded in September as the majority of criminal calendars resumed hearings under strict safety precautions that included masks, social distancing, thorough disinfection, and use of entire courtrooms as jury rooms. All mediations, probate and tax matters continued to operate completely remotely. The DC Courts Remote Hearing Sites, strategically located in all four quadrants, were available for use by persons without access to computers or WIFI in their homes.

The Superior Court remained committed to providing access to justice to the residents of the District of Columbia. With the dedication of the judges and court employees, as well as our justice system partners, I am extremely pleased with our performance and innovative practices.

Chief Judge Anita Josey-Herring  
Superior Court of the District of Columbia





# FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS



As we reached the end of the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the District of Columbia Courts remained steadfast to provide court users with excellent customer service, while maintaining a healthy and safe environment for our judiciary and employees, as well as stakeholders. This report highlights court operations and initiatives implemented in response to the pandemic, as well as accomplishments attributed to the Courts' 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, *Open to All, Trusted by All, Justice for All*.


In 2021, the Courts launched a "Reimagining the DC Courts" initiative to identify what innovative practices worked well during the pandemic, what challenges were encountered, and to explore alternate practices that could be implemented in a post-pandemic environment to enhance the administration of justice. This collaborative initiative solicited input from both internal and external stakeholders via surveys and focus groups and yielded practical information to be incorporated in a comprehensive plan outlining future court operations. The Courts plan to share its reimagined vision for court operations early next year.

The DC Courts look forward to continued collaboration among the judiciary, court personnel and our stakeholders to enhance and expand services to better assist the public in the post-pandemic environment. I am proud of our accomplishments and confident that more innovative and seamless practices will be implemented in the next calendar year.

Dr. Cheryl Bailey  
Acting Executive Officer

# GOVERNANCE OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS

The Joint Committee on Judicial Administration (Joint Committee) governs the District of Columbia Courts, as designated in the District of Columbia Court Reform and Criminal Procedure Act of 1970. The Joint Committee sets policy for the Courts and is responsible for administrative and financial activities, including capital projects to maintain safe and functional courthouse facilities; budget submissions; acquisition, spending and auditing; grant administration; general personnel policies; information management; statistical reporting; and performance monitoring. Five judges serve on the Joint Committee. The Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals serves as Chair; other members include the Chief Judge of the Superior Court and three other judicial members, one elected by the Court of Appeals and two elected by judges of the Superior Court. The Executive Officer, who is responsible for administrative management of the District of Columbia Courts, serves as Secretary to the Joint Committee.



*The Joint Committee governs the District of Columbia Courts, as designated in the District of Columbia Court Reform and Criminal Procedure Act of 1970.*

# ORGANIZATION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS

The District of Columbia Courts comprise the Judicial Branch of the District of Columbia Government. The Court of Appeals, an appellate court of last resort, is the highest court of the District of Columbia. The Superior Court is a trial court, and the Court System includes the administrative offices of the DC Courts. The DC Courts are a unified court system, which means that there is one level of trial court in which all cases are filed. Uniquely among state-level courts, the DC Courts' judges are nominated by the President of the United States and confirmed by the United States Senate. They serve 15-year terms and are eligible to be re-appointed.

Magistrate judges are appointed by the Chief Judge of the Superior Court with the approval of the Board of Judges. The DC Courts are financed by the Federal Government. The Courts' budget is submitted to the U.S. Office of Management and Budget for the President's recommendation and then forwarded to the United States Congress for final consideration.

The **Court of Appeals** is the District of Columbia's highest court. Unlike many states, DC does not have an intermediate appellate court, so the Court of Appeals hears all appeals from the Superior Court. The Court of Appeals also reviews decisions of DC Government agencies. Final judgments of the Court of Appeals are reviewable by the U.S. Supreme Court. The Court of Appeals manages the admission of attorneys to the DC Bar, which is the largest unified bar in the United States, with over 100,000 members. The Court handles attorney discipline through the Board on Professional Responsibility. In addition to the Chief Judge, eight associate judges serve on the Court of Appeals. Senior judges, who are retired, also serve the Court on a part-time basis. Most cases are heard in three-judge panels, and on rare occasions the entire court sits to hear a case (called an *en banc* hearing). The administrative functions and day-to-day operations are managed by the Clerk of the Court of Appeals.

The **Superior Court** is the trial court of general jurisdiction, which means that the Superior Court hears virtually all local legal matters, other than administrative adjudications. The Superior Court is comprised of divisions and offices that handle civil, criminal, domestic violence, family, probate and tax cases; juvenile pretrial and probation supervision; alternative dispute resolution services; and crime victims' compensation. In addition to the Chief Judge, 61 associate judges serve on the Superior Court. Senior judges serve on a part-time basis. Twenty-four magistrate judges also serve in Superior Court, hearing criminal arraignments and presentments; child welfare, child support and new juvenile cases; DC misdemeanor and traffic cases; small claims; temporary protection orders; and other cases.

The associate judges of the Superior Court rotate assignments in all divisions based on assignments made by the Chief Judge. The administrative functions and day-to-day operations are managed by the Clerk of the Superior Court.

The **Court System** provides services to both the Court of Appeals and the Superior Court. The Court System consists of a variety of administrative divisions that provide technical and support services, including contracting and procurement, legal counsel, capital projects, facilities management, budget and finance, human resources, training, strategic management, information technology and court reporting.



# 2021 PANDEMIC OPERATIONS

During 2021, the DC Courts continued to monitor and adjust to challenges posed by the global coronavirus pandemic. Health and safety concerns for court litigants, partner agencies, members of the public, and court personnel remained a top priority. The Courts' Pandemic Working Group continued to coordinate the Courts' response to the pandemic and to monitor the status of the pandemic in the District of Columbia and surrounding jurisdictions. The Joint Committee on Judicial Administration, the Courts' governing body, reaffirmed its emergency authority under the D.C. Code to amend court operations as needed. In fact, the Joint Committee ensured that the court remained operational to carry out the administration of justice while balancing the health and safety needs of litigants, court visitors, and personnel and the need to ensure access to justice for all.

The Courts worked diligently throughout 2021 to expand and enhance both onsite and remote operations:

The Court of Appeals operated remotely, with an expanded in-person presence.

- Opened the Public Office and Committee on Admissions in July, while continuing to serve the public by phone and email.
- Held more than 260 oral arguments via videoconference and live streamed them on YouTube (April 2020 - December 2021).
- Administered the Uniform Bar Exam remotely in February and July.
- Admitted more than 2,000 applicants to the Bar via examination and more than 2,400 via motion, more admissions than prior to the pandemic.
- Conducted 51 mediations.
- Considered more than 280 expedited appeals from orders denying motions for compassionate release from incarceration due to the pandemic (April 2020 - December 2021).
- Processed more than 3,400 motions filed in 2021.
- Completed more than 1,130 cases.

All public offices in Superior Court were opened by July.

- The Criminal and Civil Divisions held matters both remotely and in-person.

- The Family Court held hearings and trials and operated the Marriage Bureau and Self-Help Center remotely and in-person.
- The Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division held all mediations remotely.
- The Probate Division operated entirely remotely, including its Self-Help Center.
- The Tax Division operated entirely remotely.
- The Child Care Center re-opened in April 2021 to support litigants participating in jury trials and expanded in July 2021 to accommodate other court users.
- The Crime Victims Compensation Program continued to accept and process applications remotely.

On January 15, 2021, the Criminal Division provided sixty-day notice of the intent to resume jury trials in Felony 2 cases previously set for trial in which the defendant was detained, after receiving authorization from the D.C. Department of Health to proceed with a limited number of jury trials in two courtrooms.

Criminal jury trials officially resumed in April 2021. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, jury trials were conducted under strict safety precautions that included masks, social distancing, thorough disinfection, and use of entire courtrooms as jury rooms. The Criminal Division formed a Trial Coordination Team to assist with logistical issues, including the scheduling of jury selection, trial, and deliberation, as well as the distribution of resources and the public's access to jury trials.

On May 10, 2021, the District of Columbia announced that capacity and other restrictions required by the public health emergency would be lifted on May 21, with additional restrictions to be lifted on June 11, given that COVID-19 health metrics continued to trend in the right direction throughout the city. In light of this, the Criminal Division immediately opened two additional jury trial courtrooms dedicated to detained cases with trial dates set on or after August 9, 2021 and a third additional courtroom with trial dates set on or after September 7, 2021. Additionally, the Domestic Violence Division opened virtual criminal courtrooms to address all detained and released cases on their scheduled date, and the Civil Division began in-person jury trials.



On July 12, 2021, all Superior Court Clerk's Offices were opened for in-person business. Clerk's Offices continued to offer remote options for court users, including e-filing, email, phone, and live chat.

On September 7, 2021, the majority of the criminal calendars resumed hearings in the Moultrie Courthouse, and the Domestic Violence Division resumed non-jury trials for released individuals.

On October 4, 2021, the Superior Court amended its standing order governing the misdemeanor community court calendars. Non-detained citation arraignments were ordered to proceed remotely, and all detained and non-detained cases were ordered to proceed remotely and in-person on their assigned community court calendar. Mental Health Court and Drug Court Admissions were resumed remotely.

On November 8, 2021, the Superior Court amended its standing order governing the felony calendars. The Court ordered all non-detained and detained cases to proceed on their assigned Felony Calendars, operating both remotely and in-person, in their designated courtroom. The opportunity for defendants on release in felony matters to appear remotely before the Court upon their request was extended. Defendants were able to orally consent to appear by telephone or videoconference in felony cases, including for arraignment, plea and sentencing. Additionally, the Mental Health Community Court and the Superior Court Drug Intervention Program (Drug Court) were ordered to proceed entirely remotely with parties appearing by video to the extent possible and, if unable to appear by video, by telephone.

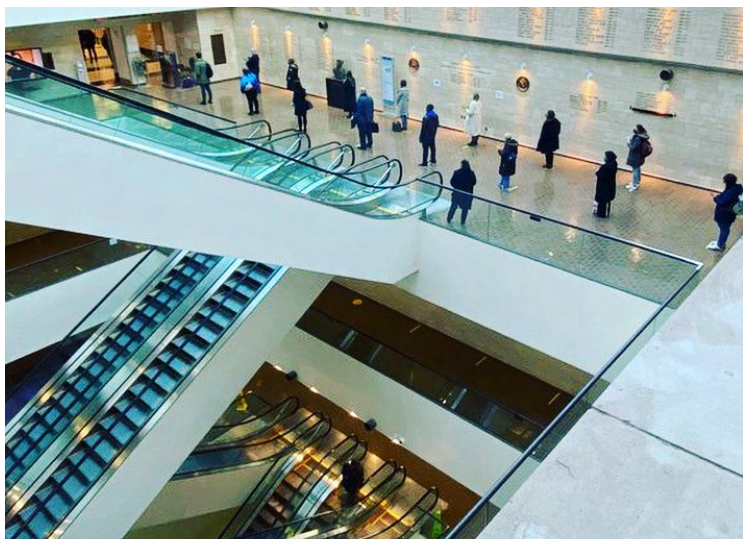
In December 2021, due to challenges presented by the Omicron variant of the coronavirus, the Courts issued orders to alter operations through February 10, 2022. This order continued Civil and Criminal jury trials, and reduced other in-person operations.

The DC Courts Remote Hearing Sites were available for use by persons without access to computers or WIFI in their homes. The remote sites are located at the Court's Balanced and Restorative Justice Centers in all four quadrants of the city as well as at the D.C. Government's Franklin D. Reeves Municipal Center. At these sites, persons can obtain court information and services online, participate in appellate mediation or oral arguments, or participate in trial court hearings and mediations remotely. In 2021, 151 appointments were held at the remote sites.

The Court of Appeals continued to hold oral arguments via videoconference and live streamed them on YouTube to provide public access. More than 260 video oral arguments were held during the pandemic (May 2020-December 2021). The Court of Appeals has over 1,500 YouTube subscribers; many arguments have been viewed hundreds of times. The court has recorded these arguments so that parties, attorneys, and the public can view them on the DCCA's YouTube page. The Uniform Bar Exam was held remotely in February and July 2021. Virtual swearing-in ceremonies were held for all applicants certified for admission to the DC Bar. In May 2021, the Committee on Admissions launched a new online bar exam application system to streamline the application process.

The Court Reporting Division started providing remote realtime to criminal court judges and offered the first remote CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) service to a litigant. CART services allow hearing-impaired litigants, attorneys, jurors, and witnesses to fully participate in court proceedings and mediations.

At the start of 2021, the Courts launched a "Reimagining the DC Courts" effort to re-imagine the Courts' operations in light of lessons learned during the pandemic. The Courts conducted surveys and focus groups with both internal and external stakeholders to gather information about what worked well during the pandemic, what challenges were encountered, and what could be implemented in a post-pandemic environment to enhance the administration of justice. The Courts plan to share its reimagined vision for court operations early next year.





# 2021 STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

The DC Courts' 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, entitled *Open to All, Trusted by All, Justice for All*, identifies five strategic goals which are essential to fulfilling our mission: Access to Justice for All, Fair and Timely Case Resolution, A Professional and Engaged Workforce, Resilient and Responsive Technology, and Effective Court Management and Administration. The judiciary and court personnel continued to work hard to implement over 35 strategies contained in the Plan.

For 2021, the Plan identified 4 strategies to be accomplished. Below is a brief update on each of these strategies and the key results achieved.

## Fair and Timely Case Resolution.

An updated Community Court program model and operational plan will be developed.

**Status:** The DC Superior Court's Mental Health Court evaluation was completed by the Strategic Management Division, assessing the court in terms of adherence to 10 essential elements of mental health courts.

## Resilient and Responsive Technology.

The public will be able to access an enhanced case information system online.

**Status:** The DC Court of Appeals piloted public access to court documents and implemented online payment of bar admission fees.

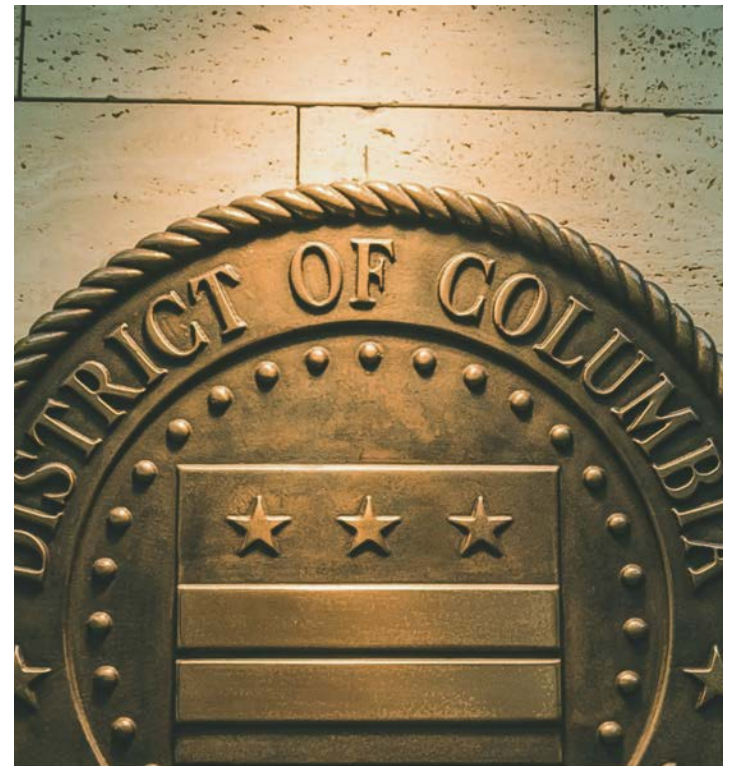
A new case management system for the Superior Court with an interface to the Court of Appeals will be implemented.

**Status:** A new DC Superior Court case management system was acquired in 2019 and is now scheduled to go live for Phase 1 (Civil, Probate, Multi-Door, Tax, and Auditor-Master cases) and for Phase 2 (Criminal, Family and Domestic Violence) in 2022.

## Effective Court Management & Administration.

Expanded information and community services will be available at court facilities.

**Status:** Planning remains underway for the Justice Resource Center in interim and final spaces, which will provide select social services at the courthouse through partnerships with city and community agencies. The interim facility opening has been delayed due to the pandemic and is now anticipated to open in 2022.



**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS

OPEN TO ALL  
TRUSTED BY ALL  
JUSTICE FOR ALL

2018 – 2022





# GOAL 1

## ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL

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The Courts have a responsibility to eliminate barriers to meaningful participation in the justice system and to accessing court services.

Such barriers may include a lack of legal representation, limited literacy or limited English language skills, limited financial resources, and physical or mental disability. In collaboration with justice and community partners, the Courts will work to ensure full access to the justice system and court services.



# ACCESS TO JUSTICE SERVICES FOR COURT PARTICIPANTS

## Court Services for Self-Represented Litigants.

Court participants often face challenges when engaging in the court process, including a lack of knowledge and information about the law and processes of the court, difficulties in preparing forms and pleadings, and lack of funds for an attorney. The DC Courts provide a myriad of programs and services aimed at reducing these barriers to access to justice, including the Family Self-Help Center, the Probate Self-Help Center, the Court Navigator Program, and the Remote Hearing Sites.

### FAMILY SELF HELP CENTER

- 4,897 served
- Type of assistance provided:
  - General legal information about D.C. family law matters such as divorce, custody, visitation, and child support
  - Information on legal rights and obligations
  - Descriptions of legal options
  - Assistance in completing forms

### PROBATE SELF HELP CENTER

- 1,551 served
- Type of assistance provided:
  - General legal information about probate matters and assistance with completing forms
- New virtual opportunities included live chat, email, videoconferencing services, breakout room options for meetings with small estate specialists, and forms assistance

### COURT NAVIGATOR PROGRAM & REMOTE HEARING SITES

- 151 appointments held at the remote hearing sites
- Type of assistance provided:
  - Scheduling at the remote hearing sites
  - Hands-on support with logging-in to remote hearings
  - General information about court processes
  - Connections to accommodations and language services

## Electronic Check-in to Minimize Wait Times.

The Domestic Violence Division implemented a remote check-in process that served as a “virtual hallway” for parties to check-in for trials remotely, begin a remote negotiation process, and proceed for trial in a virtual courtroom where they could share evidence and present witnesses.

## Expanded Electronic Filings.

Self-represented litigants were given the option to file more forms and documents electronically through case filing systems and via email, including case-initiating and emergency filing documents in the Court of Appeals (the email option is also available to attorneys and legal service providers), filings in small claims jury demands, civil protection orders, and crime victims applications.

## Electronic Payment Options.

Electronic payment options were expanded across court functions, including transcript requests of proceedings where the official record is the electronic recording, Marriage Bureau transactions, and Bar admissions fees.

## Public Document Access.

New options were introduced to make it easier for court users to access case documents amid the pandemic. The Court of Appeals initiated a pilot project for online public access to case documents while the Superior Court’s Civil Division implemented an online reservation system for court users to access and research cases in person.





## Racial Equity Initiative.

In February, the Standing Committee on Fairness and Access, an active court committee since the early 1990s, recommended the implementation of a Racial Equity Initiative. Approved by the Joint Committee in April, the Racial Equity Initiative introduced a four-pronged approach toward striving for racial equity and broader access to justice goals, to include:

- Expanding our education and training on racial equity
- Hiring a racial equity consultant to conduct an overall examination of our operations through a racial equity lens
- Gauging interest in establishing a coalition of outside stakeholders and agency partners to implement changes across the DC criminal and civil justice system as needed
- Establishing an Advisory Committee to promote and enhance a culture of racial equity within the Courts.

The DC Courts benefit from the parallel work of the National Center of State Courts' Blueprint (Blueprint) for Racial Justice and Resolution 1, by the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators, in July 2020, to: "intensify efforts to combat racial prejudice within the justice system, both explicit and implicit, and to recommit to examine what systemic change is needed to make equality under the law an enduring reality for all, so that justice is not only fair to all but also is recognized by all to be fair."

In August, the DC Courts procured the services of the National Center of State Courts as a racial equity consultant for their expertise and commitment to:

- Collect and analyze data, including case data, disaggregated by race, that will assist the DC Courts in identifying areas of racial inequity in judicial decision-making, in developing policy, considering Rule changes and facilitation of examination of court operations and processes in each Division or component of the DC Courts through a racial equity lens.
- Prepare and administer surveys of and outreach to the DC Courts' judicial and administrative staff, partner agencies, stakeholders, litigants, jurors, the public, and others, to identify needed changes in practices to promote racial equity.
- Facilitate the examination by the DC Courts of court operations and in the DC Courts' internal and external operations.
- Examine the DC Courts' existing selection practices for judges and employees with a goal to increase diversity and inclusion.
- Identify and recommend training programs to increase racial competencies for all judicial and administrative employees.

Once the racial equity consultant was chosen, the Joint Committee chartered a new Advisory Committee on Racial Equity convened by Judge Eric Washington of the DC Court of Appeals. The Advisory Committee on Racial Equity is comprised of 19 members, including judges and employees from every occupational category. The diversity and multi-disciplinary approach help to ensure a concerted focus on a more racially equitable court system for the District of Columbia.

In October, priority case types were identified by DC Courts leadership, to examine case management data together with court rules through a racial equity lens. This includes examination of priority case types in the DC Court of Appeals, Civil, Criminal, Domestic Violence and Family Court Operations Division.

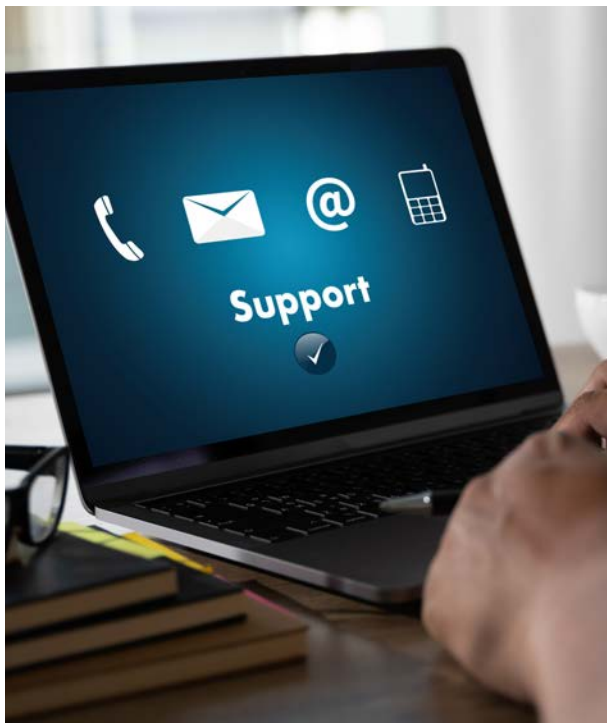




# SUPPORT SERVICES FOR COURT PARTICIPANTS

The Courts offer a variety of support services for court participants, ranging from language assistance to on-site child care, interactive electronic court forms, assistance for persons with disabilities, and the like.

- **1,093** customers were served in-person (July-December 2021) by the Information Office which provides general information about court operations
- **57,746** customers were provided general information about Family Court matters via the Family Court Call Center
- **12,016** interviews were initiated and 7,455 forms were generated through Forms Help Online in 2021. The program populates court forms using responses to a series of questions answered by court participants. A total of 35 forms are now available for matters in the Court of Appeals and Superior Court's Civil, Probate, Domestic Violence and Tax Divisions, as well as Family Court. The next phase of the initiative will include the development of 3 additional forms and is expected to be completed in 2022.



## Access for Persons with Disabilities.

To ensure participation in the justice system for persons with disabilities, including jurors, the DC Courts routinely accommodate court users and provide training on disability issues to new judges and to court staff. The Courts continued to remove barriers or provide programmatic access through accommodations such as scheduling or timing of events, appearance by telephone or computer, Assistive Listening Devices, wheelchairs, readers for blind persons, mobile devices in the courthouse, digital desk top and glass handheld magnifiers for court users with vision impairments, Braille, large print, navigation assistance, alternative security screening procedures, and service animals.

## Child Care Center.

In 2021, the Child Care Center received its license to operate in its new space within the Moultrie Courthouse and implemented health and safety procedures that are consistent with the guidance and recommendations of the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the DC Courts' epidemiologist and industrial hygienist. The Center re-opened in April 2021 to support litigants participating in jury trials and expanded in July 2021 to accommodate other court users.

## DC Probate Estate Working Group.

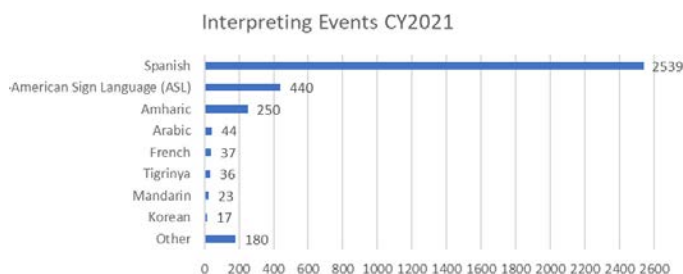
The Register of Wills and Probate judges participated in a partnership between the Council for Court Excellence and DC Access to Justice Commission (ATJ) to conduct an evaluation and identify barriers that self-represented litigants face in probate matters in the District. The group also examined best practices and innovations from other jurisdictions, and offered a set of recommendations to improve the processes of probate matters for all parties.

## Language Assistance.

A critical component of providing access to justice for all is ensuring language access for Limited English Proficient (LEP) and deaf/hard-of-hearing court users.

In 2021, the Courts provided interpreting services (in person, by WebEx videoconferencing, and by telephone), published information on the Courts' website in Spanish and Amharic regarding the Courts' operational status during the COVID-19 pandemic, developed informational videos in American Sign Language, displayed signage in both English and Spanish, and provided forms and information in multiple languages.

- Provided interpreters **4,619** times for **3,566** unique events
- **8** top languages served by interpreters – Spanish, American Sign Language, Amharic, Arabic, French, Tigrinya, Mandarin, and Korean.
- **32** designated bilingual (English-Spanish) positions maintained throughout the Courts.
- **518** documents such as judge's orders, handbooks, forms, notices, summonses, and tip sheets were translated into another language for court users.



## Amharic Court Interpreter Certification Exam.

The Court received a grant from the State Justice Institute to create an Amharic Court Interpreter Certification Examination, the first such examination for Amharic interpreters in the United States and the first court interpreter certification examination of any type to be administered by the DC Courts. The first Amharic Court Interpreter Certification Exam was administered in June 2021.

## Language Assistance on the DC Courts' Mobile App.

The Courts launched a mobile application that contains a language assistance feature, which provides LEP individuals quick access to pertinent information in Spanish, Amharic, Chinese, French, Korean, and Vietnamese. Through this feature, LEP individuals can request an interpreter, view cases scheduled in court that day, access a list of legal service providers, view general information, access the Courts' website, and provide feedback on their language access experience.

## Remote Accommodations.

In 2021, the Courts provided the first remote CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) to a litigant. CART services allow hard of hearing litigants, attorneys, jurors, and witnesses to fully participate in court proceedings and mediations.

## Court of Appeals Library.

In 2021, the DCCA Library undertook major efforts to modernize its Library resources and services. The DCCA Law Library launched two pages on the Courts' intranet to serve appellate judges and staff. The pages include a video tour of the library, links to the library's online card catalog and other online research tools, formatting guidelines, the librarian's monthly newsletters, and a Zoom link for online Reference Desk Hours with the law librarian. In addition, a new web-based searchable catalog displaying its collections, along with the collections of Superior Court's Law Library, was developed and provides direct links to e-books located on the Lexis Nexis digital library, as well as expanded HeinOnline (for legislative history research), electronic access to the Daily Washington Law Reporter and a public webpage. Moreover, the entire DCCA library collection was digitized with a link directly to the DCCA Lexis Digital Library. Lastly, the DCCA Library maintains the most comprehensive DC Legislative History collection, which was made available online in 2021.

## Superior Court Library.

During 2021, the Superior Court Library provided assistance to internal stakeholders but remained closed to the public. During this time, the Library executed a major project to evaluate and modernize its resources and services. The work included the implementation of a new web-based, searchable catalog that displays the collections of both the Superior Court and Court of Appeals Libraries and provides direct links to e-books located on the Lexis Nexis Digital Library. The Library also expanded the availability of electronic resources to include HeinOnline (for legislative history research), the Lexis Nexis Digital Library, Bluebook online, electronic access to the Daily Washington Law Reporter, and a public webpage that contains links to resources that may be helpful to self-represented court users.





# TARGETED SERVICES FOR COURT PARTICIPANTS

The Courts offer targeted services to individuals who may face barriers in accessing the judicial system, such as adults under guardianship, persons with mental health issues, juveniles, crime victims and victims of domestic violence.

## **Domestic Violence Intake Centers.**

Located at the Moultrie Courthouse and in Southeast D.C., the Courts' Domestic Violence Intake Centers served customers remotely and in-person. The Intake Centers collaborated with community partners to ensure 24/7 remote access to services through DC SAFE's response line. Over the last two years the Court has served over 10,000 victims most of which used the response line as an entry point. Between July 2021 and December 2021, the intake center served over 350 victims in person. In the Spring 2022, a newly renovated and relocated satellite intake center in Southeast DC is planned to open.

## **Mental Habilitation Advocates.**

The Mental Habilitation Advocate Program provides advocates for District residents with intellectual disabilities. Advocates review petitions and pleadings on behalf of the disabled person and ensure that constitutional rights of the individual are protected. Recruitment initiatives and training classes in 2021 yielded 3 new advocate applications and Continuing Education Credits for 29 current advocates who served on 43 cases.

## **Mental Health Initiatives.**

The DC Courts continued engagement with community behavioral health partners and its court-based Urgent Care Clinic to ensure that many court participants with mental health issues are identified, assessed, and linked with appropriate services.

- **189** court participants were served by the Urgent Care Clinic. The Clinic provides mental health and substance use assessments for individuals who exhibit symptoms of mental illness during court appearances.

## **Services for Crime Victims.**

Victims of violent crime received \$4,765,528 in compensation for financial losses related to the crime, in compliance with federal standards. The Court's Crime Victims Compensation Program (CVCP) received 2,032 claims for compensation. The Crime Victims Compensation Advisory Commission (CVCAC) brings together key organizations in the District's victim assistance network, including the U.S. Attorney's Office, DC Office of the Attorney General, Metropolitan Police Department, DC SAFE, mental health providers, and hospitals, among others, to provide a unified voice and a coordinated response for all crime victims. In 2021, the Commission focused on access to justice and the use of technology, including creating a more user-friendly version of the CVCP application and implementing a new telephone system to ensure customers could more easily reach a CVCP team member during regular business hours.





## Services for Juveniles.

The Family Court was awarded another five-year Court Improvement Program (CIP) grant covering the period 2022 through 2026. A substantial portion of grant funds will be devoted to improving legal representation for parents with children in the neglect system, including a multi-disciplinary representation program providing additional dedicated social work expertise to more fully support parents as they make efforts to comply with services.

To enhance public safety and address the needs of the District's youth under pre-trial or probation supervision, the Courts' Social Services Division continued to offer an array of pro-social innovative services in collaboration with local juvenile and criminal justice, child welfare, health, behavioral health and education stakeholders.

- **Balanced & Restorative Justice (BARJ) Centers.** The Courts' after school drop-in centers resumed on-site operations between June and December 2021. Juveniles under supervision participated in BARJ programming in-person and remotely. Programming included mentoring, tutoring, anger management groups, drug use & abuse education, life skills, arts & crafts, peer-to-peer groups, and discussions of current events in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia area.
- **Trunk or Treat.** The Social Services Division offered a safe and fun Halloween celebration for court-involved youth at all Balanced and Restorative Justice Centers.
- **Summer Safety Surge.** In collaboration with MPD, Department of Parks and Recreation and the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, the Social Services Division staffed the 2021 Summer Safety Surge, a special program aimed at reducing crime among adolescents throughout the city.





# COURT-BASED CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES

## Civil Legal Services.

Many individuals cannot afford an attorney to represent them in court. While the Court provides an attorney free of charge to individuals in criminal and certain family proceedings, there is no right to counsel for civil matters. The gap or difference between the civil legal needs of low-income Americans and the resources available to meet those needs has resulted in a growing population of self-represented litigants in the District. The Court partners with local legal services organizations to facilitate court-based projects that make free or low-cost legal services more readily accessible to court users. These organizations provide legal information, and in some instances legal representation, to litigants without attorneys in civil cases.

Due to the COVID-19 public health emergency and the switch to mostly remote court operations, these projects have continued to operate remotely throughout 2021. In some cases (but certainly not all) the volume of litigants seeking assistance was curtailed due to the existence of moratoria that limited or restricted case filings. As providers reimagine service delivery post-pandemic, we continue to refer to these programs remotely as “court-based” given their partnership and previous location at the Court. Throughout 2021, civil legal services providers have continued to expand upon innovative approaches to connect with court users, including coordinated entry points for individuals, new and expanded outreach efforts, and immediately assisting litigants during remote court hearings, as needed.

The following information provides details about the variety of civil legal assistance offered through court-based projects in 2021. The assistance provided involved a range of legal help – legal information, advice, brief service, limited representation, or full representation – provided at the time the litigant was at court or after that initial meeting at court. In some cases, a civil legal services organization might provide support through partnerships with volunteer pro bono attorneys. This data only includes legal matters in which a litigant connected to the legal services organization through a court-based project.

Accordingly, it only represents a subset of the important work DC civil legal services organizations perform every day in and outside of the court setting to support the legal needs of District residents.

## Appellate Mediation.

Through the **Pro Bono Program**, parties not represented by counsel may participate in mediation. Attorneys, with the informed consent of the client as to the objectives and scope of the representation, enter a limited appearance for the purpose of mediation.

## Consumer, Debt Collection, and Small Claims.

**The DC Bar Pro Bono Center** operates the Consumer Law Resource Center (CLRC), which provided legal information to 251 individuals remotely in 2021.

**Neighborhood Legal Services Program** operates the Small Claims Resource Center and assisted 381 individuals remotely in 2021.

**The DC Debt Collection Defense Hotline** is operated and staffed by the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia and Tzedek DC, in collaboration with Catholic Charities Legal Network, the DC Bar Pro Bono Center, Legal Counsel for the Elderly, and Neighborhood Legal Services Program. The hotline, which provides legal information, advice, and representation in consumer debt and related matters, received 145 calls in 2021. In conjunction with operating the hotline, and to facilitate connections to free legal services for unrepresented defendants, attorneys from the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia and Tzedek DC maintained a regular presence in the virtual courtroom during the call of the remote debt collection and subrogation calendar once debt collection actions resumed in the fall of 2021, after the end of the local moratorium.

## Domestic Violence.

**Bread for the City** and the **Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia** advise and represent petitioners in civil protection order (CPO) proceedings referred through the **Domestic Violence Intake Center (DVIC)** at both the Moultrie Courthouse and a satellite site in Southeast DC. **The DC Volunteer Lawyers Project (DCVLP)** provides free legal services to low-income domestic violence victims through its Domestic Violence Protection Order court-based clinic. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, **DC SAFE** set up an electronic filing assistance referral system to connect petitioners with these legal service providers to get help filing petitions for CPOs and other related pleadings with the Court. It is worth noting that these providers often assist individuals identified through these court-based offices and the electronic filing referral system in related legal matters, such as child support and child custody.

Through these court-based offices and referral system, Bread for the City assisted petitioners with approximately 92 legal matters, the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia assisted petitioners with approximately 728 legal matters, and DCVLP assisted petitioners with approximately 422 legal matters. In a separate court-based project, **Rising for Justice** assisted 47 respondents.

## Family Court.

**DC Affordable Law Firm, DC Bar Pro Bono Center,** and the **Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia** jointly staff the **Family Law Assistance Network (FLAN)** to provide rapid response, limited scope legal services to low-income, unrepresented DC residents seeking legal assistance. In 2021, FLAN received a total of 811 referrals from litigants seeking assistance. Community members were directed to FLAN through referrals from judicial officers, via court orders advertising FLAN's services, the Family Court Self-Help Center, other legal service providers, community-based organizations, DC government agencies, and direct contact from community callers.

The Court also relies on several legal services organizations to accept guardian ad litem court appointments in domestic relations cases. **Children's Law Center** provided support in 224 of these matters through its own staff or volunteer pro bono attorneys in 2021, with 97 of those matters newly placed in 2021. DC Volunteer Lawyers Project provided support in 120 of these matters in 2021 through its own staff or volunteer pro bono attorneys.

Through its legal helpline, **DC Kincare Alliance** provided brief legal advice and information to 93 relative caregivers raising at-risk DC children in family law and related matters in 2021. (The DC Kincare Alliance also operates a weekly court walk-in legal clinic; however, this has been suspended during the pandemic).

## Parentage and Child Support.

**Bread for the City** and the **Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia** help staff a court-based office, the **Child Support Resource Center (CSRC)**, in the Parentage and Child Support Branch to help custodial and noncustodial parents in child support and paternity matters. While in-person services have been suspended due to the pandemic, Bread for the City and the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia have jointly staffed the Child Support Resource Center Hotline. A total of 129 individuals were assisted through this hotline in 2021.

A range of services is provided, including advice, brief services, and representation. Additionally, an estimated 161 self-represented litigants were provided non-legal assistance, such as help accessing the remote courtroom via WebEx through the CSRC Hotline.



## Landlord and Tenant.

**Bread for the City, DC Bar Pro Bono Center, the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia, Legal Counsel for the Elderly, Neighborhood Legal Services Program, and Rising for Justice** – jointly staff the remote **Landlord Tenant Legal Assistance Network (LTLAN)**.

In 2021, LTLAN helped 2,327 individuals, including 630 small landlords (through the Pro Bono Center's Landlord Tenant Resource Center only) and 1,697 tenants. Prior to the pandemic-related reduced court operations in March 2020, attorneys from Bread for the City, the DC Bar Pro Bono Center, the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia and Rising for Justice were situated at the courthouse to meet with and offer free legal assistance to low-income tenants on the same day as their hearing, providing free legal advice or counsel, brief services, limited representation, or full representation through their court-based offices. Those services were offered remotely due to the pandemic.

Civil legal services providers also came together in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide other forms of assistance to litigants in landlord and tenant matters. For example, civil legal services attorneys sat in on active court hearings to assist unrepresented litigants participating in those hearings, as needed. Providers also sent outreach letters to 2,284 tenants with open cases to provide information about their legal rights during the pandemic and how to access free legal assistance. While an eviction moratorium curtailed filings in the first part of 2021 somewhat, it began to be phased out beginning in October 2021.

## Tax and Foreclosure.

The **Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia** and **Legal Counsel for the Elderly** assist individuals in foreclosure cases who are at risk of losing their homes. Prior to the pandemic, legal services attorneys were physically present in and around the courtroom during the call of the weekly mortgage foreclosure calendars to conduct outreach and assist unrepresented litigants participating in those hearings, as needed. During the COVID-19 pandemic, most foreclosure cases were put on hold due to the District's foreclosure moratorium. Throughout all of 2021, only a limited number of mortgage foreclosure hearings continued to go forward. Attorneys from these organizations have maintained a regular presence in the virtual courtroom during the call of the limited, remote foreclosure calendar to facilitate connections to free legal services for unrepresented litigants.

In 2021, these providers connected with 34 individuals to provide legal information, advice, or representation in mortgage foreclosure matters through their virtual court-based Foreclosure Prevention Project. Legal Counsel for the Elderly assisted approximately 4 additional individuals with tax foreclosure matters through its tax foreclosure court-based project.

## Pro Bono Representation.

The DC Courts released the 2021 Capital Pro Bono Honor Roll, in partnership with the **DC Access to Justice Commission** and the **DC Bar Pro Bono Center**. The Honor Roll recognizes attorneys, who each contributed at least 50 hours of legal services for the good of the public. The 2021 Honor Roll included 4,572 attorneys, 2,595 of whom were recognized with high honors for providing 100 or more hours of service. The list of honored attorneys reflected 165 law firms and solo practices and numerous corporations, government agencies, law schools, associations, and nonprofit organizations.







## GOAL 2

# FAIR AND TIMELY CASE RESOLUTION

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The Courts are committed to resolving legal matters in a fair and timely manner while providing due process and equal protection of the law, giving individual attention to each case, and applying the law consistently in all cases.



# INNOVATIONS IN CASE MANAGEMENT

Confronted with the ongoing challenges of the pandemic and numerous judicial vacancies, the Courts have continued to innovate case management to preserve fair and timely case resolution. Various judicial practices have been instituted to help the Courts respond to the challenges and advance both fairness and efficiency.

## **Electronic Evidence Project.**

The Electronic Evidence Project has been implemented in the Criminal Division. After trial, prosecutors and defense attorneys submit their exhibits, which are catalogued and saved in a network drive. The exhibits are viewable through the case management system and can be transmitted electronically to the Court of Appeals.

## **Electronic Transactions.**

The Court of Appeals has implemented an electronic portal for the payment of bar admission fees and is currently seeking a vendor to enable electronic payment of case filing and miscellaneous fees. Superior Court's Tax Division now has an electronic system for transmitting refunds in collaboration with the Office of Tax and Revenue.

## **Jury Trials Resume.**

Jury trials resumed in 2021 after being halted due to the pandemic. A trial coordination team helped to preserve participant safety by developing protocols for mask wearing, social distancing, disinfection, and the use of courtroom facilities.

## **Mental Health Advocates.**

In Family Court, the DC Mental Habilitation Advocate Program provides advocates for court participants with intellectual disabilities. The program was supported in 2021 with new trainings for current and potential advocates. Recruitment outreach was also held at University of the District of Columbia, Volunteer Match, and on community service websites.

## **Online Access.**

Through its Business Process Workgroup, the Court of Appeals has examined case management practices and proposed innovations to promote efficiency. In 2021, public online access to appellate court documents was piloted. The Court of Appeals is also developing a voting module to accelerate the processing of motions and petitions that the court rehears a case.

## **Remote Hearings.**

The Courts continued to offer remote appellate and trial court proceedings across a full range of cases. These proceedings have provided enhanced access to litigants and attorneys as the Courts adapted to pandemic realities.

## **Safe Surrender.**

The Courts hosted several days of virtual Safe Surrender events in July 2021. These events provided an opportunity for defendants with outstanding misdemeanor warrants to surrender voluntarily by logging in from a computer, laptop, tablet, or cell phone. The Criminal Division collaborated with the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency, the Pretrial Services Agency, the United States Marshals Service, the Public Defender Service, the CJA Defense bar, the Metropolitan Police Department, the U.S. Office of Attorney General and the DC Office of Attorney General to host the events. A total of 3,421 misdemeanor bench warrants, fully one-third of the number pending, were quashed and over 3,000 cases were dismissed upon motion of the government after fulfilling notice obligations under the Victims' Rights Act.



# MEDIATION

The Courts use mediation in both appellate and trial court proceedings to help amicably and expeditiously resolve legal matters. In the wake of the pandemic, the Courts continued to offer mediation services remotely to preserve the safety of court participants and enhance access.

## **Court of Appeals.**

In the Court of Appeals, 51 mediations were conducted through the appellate mediation program in 2021. To support these mediation services, the program held for the first time, educational events during the October 2021 Mediation Week in collaboration with Superior Court's Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division. Guest speakers included David Larsen, Chair of the ABA Dispute Resolution Section and Co-Chair of the ABA Domestic Relations Online Dispute Resolution Taskforce, and Alan Weiner, Co-Chair of the ABA Domestic Relations Online Dispute Resolution Taskforce; the program also hosted and moderated two special panels: Opportunities in the Mediation Field, a session geared towards professionals seeking mediation opportunities, and Opportunities and Careers in Mediation, which was geared towards law students. Additional training sessions by Court of Appeals mediators and pro bono mediation counsel were offered to attorneys, mediators, and others interested in mediation. For the approximately 240 registrants, training topics included thinking fast and slow in mediation, mediator and attorney ethics, and game theory in appellate mediation.

## **Multi-Door.**

The Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division at Superior Court continued to offer mediation services in a full range of civil cases. In 2021, mediations were held in 2,142 cases encompassing civil action, landlord and tenant, small claim, probate, and tax matters.

## **Permanency Mediation Program.**

The Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division, the Family Court, the Court Improvement Project,

the Child and Family Services Agency, and the Office of the Attorney General collaborated to provide mediation in cases in which the government recommends a goal change from reunification to adoption. The program enables all parties to express their positions, empowers parents to engage in permanency planning, and helps resolve conflicts.





# PROBLEM SOLVING COURTS

Problem-solving courts are central to fair and efficient resolution of cases. These courts hold criminal defendants accountable while providing resources for overcoming causes of criminal behavior, improving quality of life in the community, and administering justice.

**Community Courts** apply a problem-solving approach to criminal justice by collaborating with local organizations to help offenders obtain needed services and give back through community service. In 2021, approximately 530 defendants successfully completed community service through the diversion program.

Serving nonviolent, substance-abusing defendants, the Drug Court employs intensive substance abuse treatment, drug testing, community supervision, graduated sanctions, and accountability to reduce recidivism. 32 court participants successfully completed the program in 2021.

**Family Treatment Court** is a viable treatment option for families in the District of Columbia dealing with substance use disorders. The Family Court received a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Program to increase the well-being of, improve permanency outcomes for, and enhance the safety of children who are in an out-of-home placement or at risk of being placed in an out-of-home placement as a result of parental substance abuse. Under the grant, the program aims to increase program capacity; expand the array of supportive recovery services to families; establish a comprehensive incentives and therapeutic responses program component; and provide transportation assistance to participants for court-related services. In addition, this past year the Family Court applied grant funding from the Court Improvement Project to purchase laptops for participants so that they could participate remotely in hearings, meetings, and other case-related events. Further, a virtual commencement ceremony honoring 5 graduates was held in December 2021.

**The Mental Health Community Court** serves court participants challenged by mental illness and helps them access community resources and treatment. In 2021, 56 court participants completed the diversion program.

Serving the special needs of court-involved youth who are victims of or at risk for commercial sexual exploitation, the Juvenile HOPE Court ("Here Opportunities Prepare you for Excellence") enables participants to set individualized goals and receive access to specialized services. In 2021, 32 youth participated in the problem-solving court and 24 youth completed their services. The Social Services Division also hosted the first-ever virtual conference on specialty courts for about 125 attendees, with a focus on commercial sexual exploitation of children.







## GOAL 3

# PROFESSIONAL AND ENGAGED WORKFORCE

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The DC Courts will ensure a professional, engaged workforce that consistently achieves excellence and is agile to meet the demands of a changing environment. The Courts will continue to invest in education, training, and other development opportunities to enhance the knowledge and skills of its workforce. To advance our long-standing commitment to being a great place to work, the Courts strive to create a flexible and high-performing work environment where all personnel are positively engaged.



# DC COURTS WORKFORCE

The DC Courts are committed to being a workplace of choice by employing a diverse, highly qualified, and talented workforce. The Courts moved to remote operations in March 2020 and have continued in this state in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for most operations in 2021. Despite the necessity to modify operations for the safety and well-being of Court staff and the public, the Courts have remained agile to support the public, the judiciary and workforce consistent with the Courts' strategic goals.

During the year, the Human Resources Division successfully processed 173 new hires and 114 promotions including the hiring of the Civil Deputy Director position.

## DC Courts' Diverse Workforce

65%	72%
Female	Minorities





# FLEXIBLE WORK ENVIRONMENT

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, DC Courts expanded telework through the Flexplace Program by authorizing more telework days per pay period and more categories of eligible employees. During 2021 over 1,000 employees teleworked from remote work sites to ensure continuing operations throughout the Courts. Employees expressed appreciation for the flexibility and empathy shown, as their health and safety were being held in high regard.

During the protracted pandemic period, the Courts relied heavily on virtual learning models which have provided employees and judges the flexibility to attend training. One of the methods the Courts' Center for Education and Training (CET) has employed is a self-paced teaching model through the learning management system. This self-paced virtual learning option has received favorable response from employees, especially those working remotely. In addition to offering courses through the virtual environment, CET offered several classes designed to support judges and employees in working remotely.

“

*The transition to remote work was hectic but was done with care and consideration.*  
- Employee







# VALUES BASED WORKPLACE

*The DC Courts will promote a values-based workplace focused on high ethical standards and professionalism.*

The Courts continued to stress the importance of alignment with the Strategic Plan's organizational values of accountability, excellence, fairness, integrity, respect, and transparency. The training and organizational development initiative, Living Our Values, continued to build and to integrate the values and employee behaviors into the day-to-day operations and culture of the Courts. The goal of the DC Courts' values is to create a culture that excels in public service, while enhancing professionalism and strengthening organizational performance.

DC Courts' employees have a strong commitment to living the values. Recent pulse check surveys indicate that at least nine out of 10 employees have awareness and knowledge of the values and are committed to living the values in the workplace.

## DC Courts' Employees Live the Values

94%	92%	91%
Awareness of the Values	Knowledge of the Values	Commitment to the Values

The Values Leadership Council continued to thrive at a divisional level. Most Divisions continued to support and provide effective leadership in this initiative including action plans, Values Teams and Values Pulse Checks.

“

*I think that the pandemic has forced us to be more transparent with one another. Our communication had to get better to function, and it's continued to improve as we move forward.*

*- Employee*







# TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Training and education programs continued to be offered throughout the extended pandemic year in response to business needs and to ensure access to justice for the community at large. The Center for Education and Training's (CET) efforts have added to the overall progressive nature of the Courts to incorporate, in a positive way, the generational differences that are in every professional work environment. Human Resources and CET continued to collaborate to develop more learning opportunities through structured classes, virtual and remote access, and mini groupings of certificate classes.

Addressing the strategic goal of increased access for all, CET has offered employees many classes in customer service, developing empathy for court customers, dealing with difficult or stressed customers, and understanding cultural differences and diversity, assisting those who are not proficient English speakers and addressing the challenges associated with mental health in the courthouse. In support of remote operations, CET also offered targeted training in Adapting to a Telework Environment, Microsoft Teams, Creating Podcasts, Resiliency, Engaging Employees through Empathy, Managing in a Virtual Environment, and Virtual Meeting Best Practices.

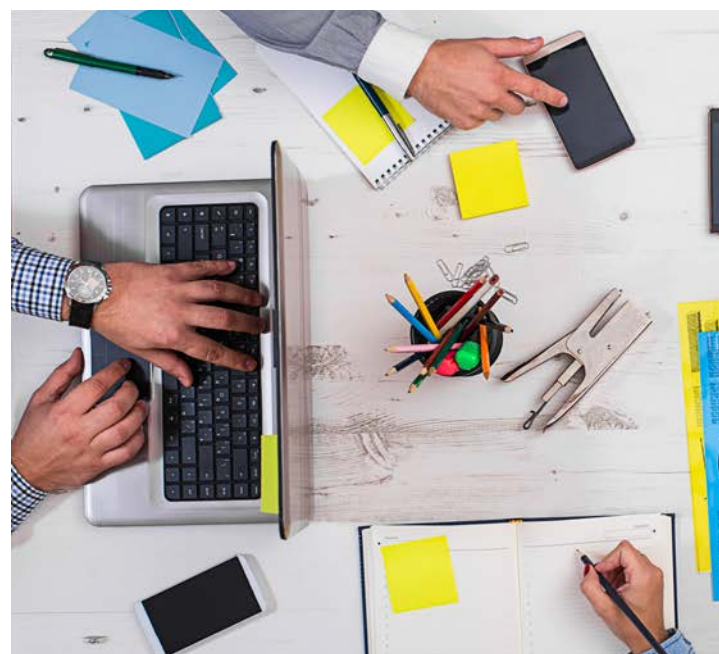
## Training by CET

234	8,858	14,305
Employee Classes Offered	Employee Training Hours	Total hours of professional development for employees and judicial officers

CET created the first ever virtual New Employee Orientation to onboard new employees hired during the pandemic so that the acclimation process could continue uninterrupted. Also, CET facilitated virtual Performance Management Overview Presentations for new DC Courts employees onboarding in 2021.

In addition,

- CET continued to offer many classes in its mandatory new employee classes incorporating Implicit Bias and Procedural Fairness, Language Access, and Sexual Harassment into its core classes.
- CET implemented Performance Management Training for Division Directors and Deputy Directors.
- CET produced additional training videos in conjunction with other divisions on workplace conduct and implicit bias to assist in our cadre of remote learning.
- Thirteen new supervisors completed the Quick Start program for new supervisors in June 2021.
- CET launched the Management Training Program (MTP) class in September 2021 with 22 participants.



Procedural Justice, Fairness, Implicit Bias and Sexual Harassment classes have continued to be offered after completing mandatory training for the entire employee staff population (95% attended) in 2017. They are now offered at regular intervals at the Courts, to new and seasoned employees, and judges alike, and have been incorporated into the new judge training for the incoming Associate Judges and Magistrate Judges.

CET is responsible for providing the Court of Appeals Judges, the Superior Court Associate Judges, and the Magistrate Judges with training programs and conferences that keep them current on case law, societal trends, technological advances, and a myriad of complicated issues that must be understood to make good judicial decisions. During 2021, CET sponsored judicial trainings in topics such as diversity, equity, and inclusion, policing as a public good, wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic, medical information about the COVID vaccine, compassionate release cases, how to promote racial equity in the workplace, evidence, and retirement considerations.

- 130 judicial officers in the Court of Appeals and Superior Court (including Senior Judges and Magistrate Judges) completed 5,447 hours of continuing judicial education.
- Three major virtual conferences were held: the Courtwide Employee Conference, the DCCA Bench & DC Bar Conference “Virtual Reality-How COVID-19 Has Reshaped the Legal Profession”, and the Spring Judicial and Senior Managers Conference, “The Quest for Equity and Fairness: A Look at the Courts, Police Practices and History”.
- A Supreme Court Review and update was held in January 2021 with renowned attorneys and law professors, and sessions with the Council for Court Excellence on Returning Citizens and a joint learning session with the DC Bar on diversity were also held.
- Approximately fifty judicial officers are currently participating in the District of Columbia Superior Court Judicial Coaching Program. New training and refresher training will be offered again to add new judges to the cadre of coaches as well as new judges who are currently or will be taking the bench.

The E-Team, consisting of the Executive Officer, Deputy Executive Officer, Clerk of the Court of Appeals and Clerk of the Superior Court, hosted several roundtables for new employees during the year, as well as a myriad of town halls opened to all employees. Both series are hosted to address work-related issues and concerns, and to offer suggestions. This is an excellent opportunity for employees to stay informed and have personal interaction with the Courts’ Executive leadership.

Although the DC Courts did not host any on-site visitors during the year due to the pandemic, three virtual programs with area law schools were conducted with a total of 65 visitors. Campus virtual tours were also provided for all new employees as part of their orientation program.

### **Racial Equity Initiative.**

In February, the Joint Committee on Judicial Administration (Joint Committee) approved an addition to the DC Court’s fair employment policies, “to promote a culture of diversity, inclusion and racial equity.” In May, the Joint Committee approved an Employee Dispute Resolution (EDR) Plan that demonstrated commitment to a workplace that is free from discrimination and harassment. In summary, the EDR Plan strives to remove barriers and level power disparities, define wrongful conduct, provide three flexible options for resolving conflict, clarifies confidentiality, and extends 180-day reporting period in certain instances. The workforce participated in a mandatory webinar training and signature acknowledgement that commenced in September.





## GOAL 4

# RESILIENT AND RESPONSIVE TECHNOLOGY

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The Courts will continue to enhance information technology capabilities to provide the highest level of service to the public and state-of-the-art technology tools to its workforce. The Courts will develop, manage, and maintain an information technology infrastructure and services that are effective, efficient, and resilient in supporting the Courts' mission. The Plan focuses on providing exceptional customer service by expanding access to court information and services, enhancing technology capabilities, and ensuring optimal security for court data and information assets.



# INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEM ENHANCEMENTS

## **Electronic Case Filing.**

The Court of Appeals and Superior Court divisions continued to use electronic platforms for the exchange of court-related documents. The Court of Appeals accepts the Appellate E-Filing System in C-Track, its case management system. The Court of Appeals continued to accept filings initiating cases as well as emergency filings by email, with positive feedback from the legal community. In the Superior Court, all case types in Family Court are initiated using a variety of methods, including: box.com, CaseFileXpress, or, for mental health emergencies, through email and initiation in CourtView by its Central Intake Center. Box.com is used to securely exchange confidential documents with agency partners and the public. In the Civil Division, box.com software is used so that parties can transmit exhibits to the court for remote evidentiary hearings and non-jury trials.

## **Electronic Payments.**

The Court of Appeals implemented an electronic portal to accept payments for bar admissions fees from individuals sitting for the bar examination. In addition, the Court Reporting Division implemented phase I of a two-phased process of accepting credit cards for transcript requests of proceedings where the official record is the electronic recording.

## **Mobile Application.**

The DC Courts launched its Mobile App available on Apple and Android platforms. The Mobile App provides a format that enables court users to access and navigate information on the DC Courts' website.

## **Appellate Case Management System Update.**

In 2021, with its existing case management system nearing the end of its useful life, the Court of Appeals launched a project to develop requirements for its next system. The project includes identifying new ways of doing business and serving the community that next-generation software will support.







# ENHANCED ACCESS TO INFORMATION

## **Electronic Evidence.**

The Electronic Evidence project was implemented in the Criminal Division to store digital copies of exhibits. At the end of a trial prosecutors and defense attorneys submit their exhibits to the Clerk's Office. The exhibits are catalogued and saved in a network drive. The exhibits are viewable through the case management system and can be transmitted to the Court of Appeals when required using Box.com.

## **Electronic Filings.**

The Superior Court partnered with the electronic filing vendor, File & ServeXpress, to further expand the case types available for electronic filing, which now includes small claims jury demands in the Civil Division.

## **Electronic Notifications.**

The Court of Appeals continued to transmit orders and other court documents electronically through the e-filing system, a mandatory process for attorneys licensed in DC and optional for litigants without lawyers or attorneys not licensed in DC (e.g. in the USAO). The court emails documents to users who have provided the court with an email address and who are not able to utilize the e-filing system.

## **Historic Records Digitization.**

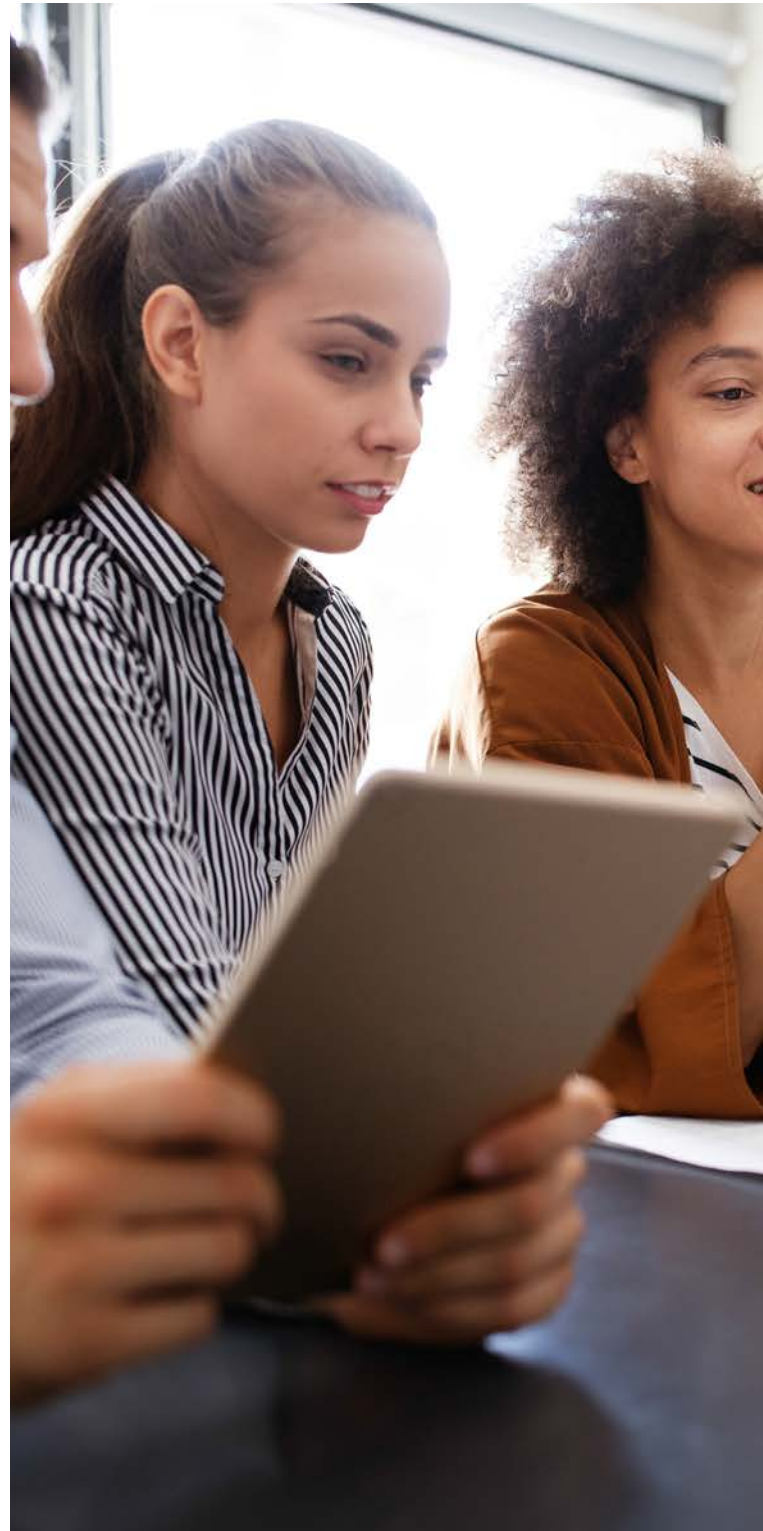
The Court of Appeals and Superior Court's Criminal, Family Court Operations, Probate and Tax Divisions have digitized their historic records.

## **Realtime Communications.**

Official Court Reporters started providing remote realtime to criminal court judges. The Court Reporting Division also provided the first remote Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) service to a litigant.

## **Secure Portals.**

The public can access trial-level case information and select documents, as well as make payments via the newly launched NIC ePay portal in Superior Court.





# INFORMATION SECURITY

## **Disaster Recovery.**

The Courts' IT Division implemented Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP) High Availability to replace the old DHCP server to maintain network and business continuity during any disaster scenario.

## **Security Protocols and FISMA Compliance.**

The Courts' IT Division developed new Data Security and Identity & Access Management (IAM) processes and procured an IAM solution. Twelve critical Federal Information Security Modernization Act (FISMA) projects were identified and completed to enhance governance. The IT Division implemented new cloud-based email security gateways allowing the Courts to ensure a more robust transmission of secure email to and from all users. The IT Division also launched an integrated security awareness training application and incorporated the training into the new hire orientation training.







## GOAL 5

# EFFECTIVE COURT MANAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATION

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Effective management and operation of the justice system for the District of Columbia requires a team of knowledgeable professionals with a common mission and shared resources, collaborating to achieve results that best serve the public. The Courts are committed to fiscal accountability with respect to all Courts' resources. Confidence in the judicial system necessitates that each case management function – trial and appellate – understands the individual responsibilities and unique role of the other while leveraging opportunities for shared approaches to administrative functions.

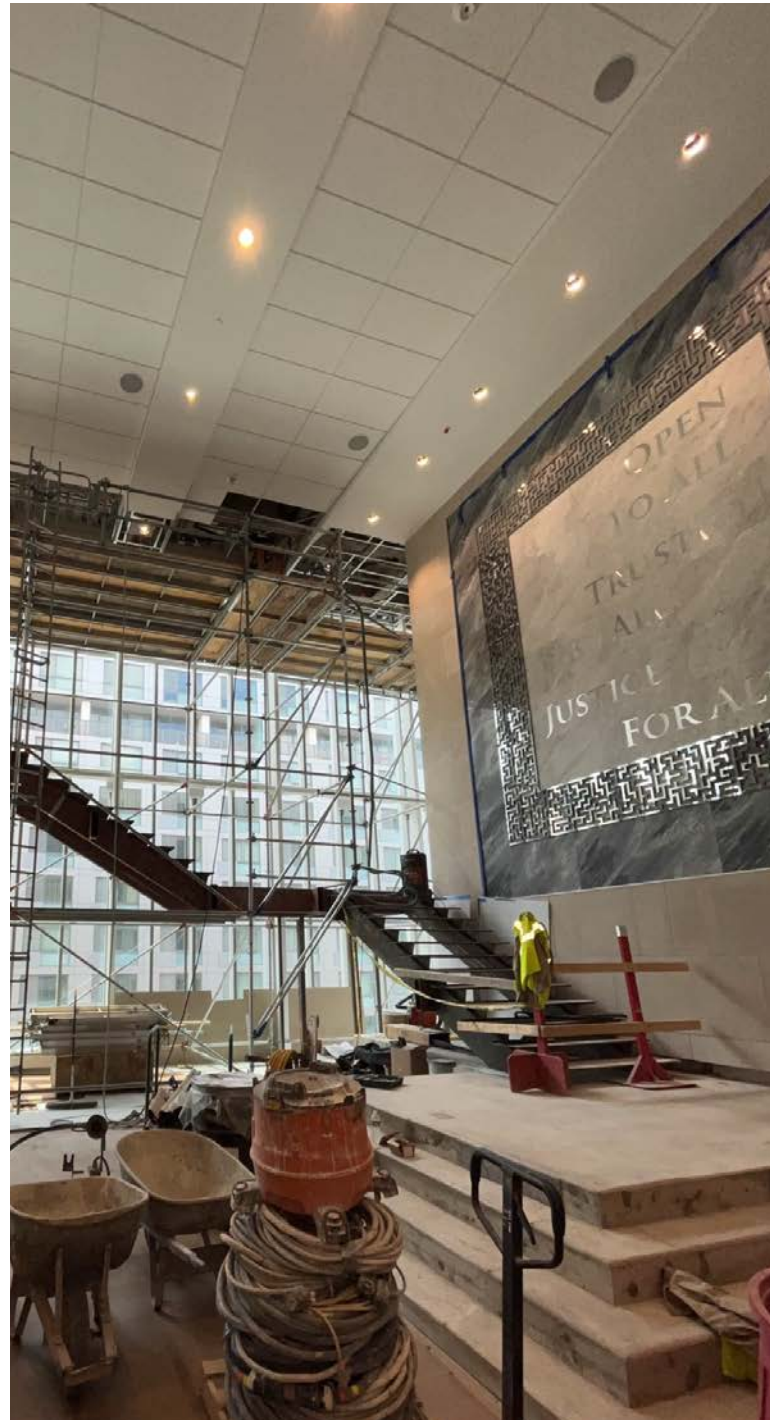




# ENHANCING COURT FACILITIES

## Courthouse Construction.

The Courts completed renovations of courtrooms on the third floor of the H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse, which included modernizing courtrooms originally built in the 1970's, as well as upgrading technology, sight lines, layout and lighting. Construction continued on the C Street Addition to the Moultrie Courthouse in which several milestones were reached, such as the installation of the structural steel to support the addition and the installation of the prominent glass façade. The previously installed green roof was finalized with the installation of selected plants and solar panels for greater energy efficiency. The final interior and exterior construction is underway and a specially designed inlaid marble wall sculpture was completed and installed.





# COURTS IN THE COMMUNITY

## **Adoption Day.**

The DC Superior Court and the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) hosted the 34th Annual Adoption Day with a virtual ceremony. The ceremony celebrated the joys of adoption and encouraged area residents to consider adopting or fostering a child in the District's welfare system. Forty-five children were adopted by 33 families. NBC4 anchor Barbara Harrison, who has presided over every adoption ceremony since the District's first in 1987, interviewed the families and shared their stories with the audience.

## **Bar Admission.**

The Court of Appeals certified 6,084 applicants for admission to the bar during the pandemic (April 1, 2020 - August 31, 2021); administered 3 remote bar exams in FY 2021; and implemented a new online system for application to practice law in DC, including online payment. The Director of Admissions presented information on the bar exam and character and fitness requirements to students at several local law schools.

## **Committee on Public Education and Judicial Independence.**

The Committee on Public Education and Judicial Independence was one of several new committees created in October 2020 by Chief Judge Anita Josey-Herring. With its mission to forge greater connection with the community at large and educate the public about DC Superior Court and its services, with an emphasis on judicial independence, of particular importance has been developing a relationship with DC teenagers so that they can learn about and understand the role of the court. The Committee has sponsored Law Day related activities, participated in community events such as the H Street Festival, and engaged local and international visitors seeking information about the DC Superior Court judicial processes. Plans are underway to partner with DC Public Schools (DCPS) to connect court staff and judges with middle school students to teach about the Court's purpose and the role of judges.



## **Mediation Program.**

The Court of Appeals' Mediation Program launched an internship program and is working with multiple DC law schools.

## **Committee on Pro Bono and Affordable Counsel.**

Chief Judge Anita Josey-Herring created the Committee on Pro Bono and Affordable Counsel (Committee) effective January 1, 2021, to focus on the needs of litigants who could not afford representation. Chaired by judicial officers, the Committee initially focused its efforts on researching specific pro bono and affordable counsel needs at the Court, why those needs existed, and how courts in other major metropolitan cities address similar needs. That work showed that legal services organizations in the District were well aware of the areas of need at the Court, but that gaps existed due to lack of funding and/or volunteers. As a result, the Committee worked to build relationships with legal services organizations and evaluate the role the Committee and the court could and should take to address the gaps and support the tremendous work of legal services organizations and existing pro bono attorneys.



# STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The **Civil Division** partnered with Housing Counseling Services, Inc., which provides a representative at all landlord and tenant hearings to work with tenants applying for rental assistance funds. The Division has also actively partnered with the National Center for State Courts to conduct an analysis of the high-volume civil caseloads of Landlord and Tenant, Debt Collection and Mortgage Foreclosure to determine ways to increase access to court services, ensure procedural due process, increase efficiency in court operations, and ensure that processes and procedures promote racial equity. In addition, the Civil Division continued its strategic partnerships with members of the bar and legal service providers to address strategic areas in the Landlord and Tenant, Mortgage Foreclosure and Small Claims and Conciliation branches.

The **Social Services Division** expanded its array of community partnerships to include: Men Can Stop Rape - MCSR; Office of Neighborhood Engagement Services - ONES; SBP Consulting Corporation, which provides national training and certification level 1 and 2 Therapeutic Aggression Control Techniques (TACT).

The **Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division** collaborated with AARP Legal Counsel for the Elderly Network for Victim Recovery, Office of the Attorney General and Mayor's Services Liaison Office for the ATTEND mediation program.

The **Register of Wills and Probate judges** participated in a partnership between the Council for Court Excellence and DC Access to Justice Commission (ATJ) to conduct an evaluation and produce a report that identified barriers that pro se parties face in participating in probate matters in the District. The evaluation also examined best practices and innovations from other jurisdictions, and offered a set of recommendations to improve probate matters for all parties and enhance access to justice for pro se proceedings.