



Joseph J. DiPrimio, Esq.
Court Administrator

ORGANIZATION

The Office of the Court Administrator of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania was established by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court on April 1, 1996. Joseph J. DiPrimio, Esquire was appointed to that position in August 1996, and reports directly to the core leadership contingent of the First Judicial District — the Administrative Governing Board (AGB). In turn, the Chief Deputy Court Administrator, David C. Lawrence, reports to Mr. DiPrimio. The Court Administrator’s office is organized into large responsibility centers each headed by a Deputy Court Administrator or Director.



David C. Lawrence
Chief Deputy
Court Administrator

PURPOSE

As chief ministerial agent for the FJD, the Court Administrator is charged with implementing initiatives and programs responsive to the management needs of the AGB, while affirmatively proceeding as an executive with a vision toward the future.

Toward that end, the Court Administrator has adopted a strong leadership role that reflects a total quality management approach. In this instance, the Court Administrator facilitates periodic meetings between staff with like interests and functions to discuss solutions to problems and devise well-organized, innovative improvements to the District’s working environment and service delivery systems.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Given that the Administrator’s purview extends to programs and services spanning the Courts and Divisions of the District, and, following from the direct link to the AGB, this office has the highest level of responsibility among non-judicial leadership positions. The numerous

achievements attained here during the biennium will have far reaching, long term effects on the efficient administration of justice in the First Judicial District. The Office of the Court Administrator is responsible for all central services of the First Judicial District including data processing technology, telecommunications, human resources management, fiscal concerns, facilities management, and management analysis and evaluation services.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The 1996-1997 biennium featured dozens of accomplishments and new developments initiated through the auspices of the Court Administrator’s office. Some of these are spotlighted below.

Internet - In 1997, the First Judicial District announced that its Internet website was completed and online. Although currently consisting of static data describing District operations, site features are rich in information and dynamic in terms of navigation and linkage. Future avenues will lead to built-in website connectivity to selected court databases providing direct access for attorneys, governmental agencies *and* the public.

Technological Initiatives - The Data Processing/MIS Department is currently working on the following system upgrades and enhancements to the First Judicial District computing and communications environment:

- A pilot imaging project will provide online access through a web browser to Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) filings and divorce decrees.
- An email gateway to the City of Philadelphia is planned to allow court network users to exchange e-mail with City agencies with Internet e-mail to court employees.

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Relocations from leased office space to City owned office space save the Court, City and citizens of Philadelphia approximately \$290,000 annually.

- Internet access through the City of Philadelphia is being tested and should be available to authorized personnel in 1998.
- Human Resources will continue expansion of the "Remote Time and Attendance" reporting system.
- Implementation of the Adult Probation pilot case tracking project is expected along with expansion of the Pretrial online interview application.
- Leaders are developing an online archiving system for notes of testimony along with new systems for tracking Court Reporter and Interpreter assignments and notes of testimony.
- The Court network at 1801 Vine Street will undergo major improvements to push new Juvenile Probation case management initiatives.
- Bids are being reviewed to provide attorneys, government agencies and the public access to public civil records through an Internet Connectivity Project. Issues of security still remain but the First Judicial District will provide Internet access to its civil data through the Internet during 1998. Future trends in this area include electronic filing.

Streamlined Fiscal Operations:

Through computer technology, the Fiscal Unit has implemented several automated report processes which have allowed for streamlined operations, online budget management reports, and budget and expenditure modeling for court administration.

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In-House Training: The Human Resources Department has developed and presented a series of in-house training programs for the employees of the First Judicial District. Training will continue to be developed to provide new and innovative programs. The series included three important topics: 1) prevention of sexual harassment; 2) Windows and Word Perfect computer upgrades; and 3) Stress Management and other personal improvement courses. The aim is to enable District employees to reach their full potential as individuals and as contributing members of the FJD workforce. The eventual goal is to help employees to be the best informed, most courteous employees in the State Court System.

Space and Facilities Upgrades: In the past two years, major renovation projects included construction of the City Hall Civil Case Management Conference Center, the Dispute Resolution Center, the Bar Conference Center, and new offices for Court Data Processing, and the Court Fiscal Office. The Family Court building housing the Juvenile Branch operations underwent extensive refurbishment. Ongoing projects include new offices for Human Resources and a Municipal Court Senior Judges Complex.

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Evaluative Services Projects: In the past few years Senior Staff Advisors to the Court Administrator's Office helped effectuate organizational improvements such as:

- electronic budget preparation and submission;
- technology needs assessment and equipment acquisition;
- online time and attendance system;
- the review and restructure of the civil fee system;
- electronic imaging of appropriate court records;
- development and implementation of the Philadelphia Courts Internet site;
- the creation of *The Courterly*, the FJD's first district-wide newsletter; and
- publication, for the first time in the history of the District, a comprehensive report describing all the constituent Courts and Divisions of the First Judicial District — the Special 1996-1997 Biennial Report in which this text appears.

In addition, the advisors have been or are otherwise presently involved with evaluative projects at Traffic Court; with the Court Reporters/Interpreters; with the Juvenile Branch of Family Court; evaluating the need for a new electronic criminal case management program and jury management system; expanding the Court's Internet connectivity to include live interaction with the civil database and, in cooperation with the Prothonotary, future electronic filing with electronic commerce.

DEPARTMENTS

Data Processing And Technology: With the support and encouragement of judicial leaders, administrators of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania have adopted an aggressive approach to providing improved technological management and operational tools to the judiciary, adminis-

tration and staff — with broad access by other governmental agencies, private organizations and the public. The strategy is framed by the structured integration of the mainframe platforms with desktop PC's operating over a wide area network with Internet communications capability. While the primary focus is to provide technology and communications within the First Judicial District, the leadership is mindful that the District is an integral part of larger judicial and governmental communities; and, therefore, must maintain communications with state and federal agencies as well as private, judicial, legal and educational groups.

Managed by George Hutton, the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania Data Processing/MIS Department includes a staff of approximately 50 supervisors, programmers, systems experts supervisors, technicians and clerical employees. Data Processing/MIS operates three main computer centers driving Court automation. An IBM ES9000 located in the Criminal Justice Center supports the Civil Division of Municipal Court, the Criminal operations of Common Pleas and Municipal Courts, Adult Probation and Parole, the Juvenile Branch of Family Division, Jury Selection, and Orphans Court. An IBM ES9000 running the software application "PARENTS" is an important component of the very successful Child Support collections programs and other activities at the Domestic Relations Branch of the Family Division of Common Pleas Court at 34 South 11th Street. Finally, an IBM RISC System/6000 operating the "BANNER for Courts" software package bolsters continually improving case management systems and inventory programs of the Civil Division of Common Pleas Court at City Hall.

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Additionally, the First Judicial District is completing installation and upgrades to the networked personal computer system. Network installation began in an effort to provide office automation hardware and software to judicial chambers, courtrooms and administrative offices. Hardware and software standards are reviewed and revised twice a year to keep current with the ever changing demands for additional desktop processing power. The network currently has 50 servers and approximately 2,400 personal computers distributed over 13 locations. All sites are linked over T1 circuits through CityNet, the City of Philadelphia's high speed wide area network.

The FJD Internet site and operation is managed by Internet Administrator Donald A. Varley Jr. who is responsible for maintaining and advancing the technical infrastructure behind the First Judicial District's Internet environment. In conjunction with Court leaders, he works with a variety of constantly changing leading edge technologies. While monitoring technical changes and advances in the Internet environment, stewardship of the site requires ongoing design of elements to enhance navigation, boost traffic and enrich content. The Internet Administrator collaborates with the MIS department regarding Internet configuration issues.



Wanamaker Building

Fiscal Administration: The Court Budget and Fiscal Office, formerly overseen by William Bell, is responsible for First Judicial District budget preparation, submission and management. Also, fiscal administration conducts all aspects of payment processing for certain contractual services including compensation for transcription services of more than 100 court reporters, interpreter services, and payment of millions of dollars to hundreds of Court appointed private attorneys providing legal counsel to thousands indigent defendants per year. In this manner, employees of the Fiscal Office bolster these services that are basic foundations for Access to Justice. In addition, the Fiscal Unit is responsible for management of financial grants for all divisions of the First Judicial District — except Child Support — including structuring accounts and assuring the proper accounting of grant

transactions. Finally, during the biennium, the Fiscal Unit processed the First Judicial District payroll including all record keeping and check distribution to a considerable population of more than 2,300 employees.

Human Resources Management: Management of personnel resources within the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania is the responsibility of the Human Resources Department directed by Matthew F.

Lewandowski. This unit maintains personnel records and employment histories for employees of the District. In addition to their responsibility for the proper administration of personnel transactions — from recruiting, testing and hiring to separation — the unit is dutiful in the uniform application of official personnel regulations and policies within the FJD.

A very important aspect of the work conducted by Human Resources is employee training and education. The programs coordinated here provide a variety of training options including in-service programs and training conducted by the City of Philadelphia, as well as educational programs offered through colleges and universities and professional associations. Additionally, the Human Resources Unit coordinates the employee performance appraisal system and administers the compensation and benefit program for District employees.

Concerning labor relations, HR management and staff serve to advise administrators throughout the FJD regarding personnel activities. They also oversee the grievance process and work to ensure compliance with appropriate federal, state and local employment laws and regulations including the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Human Resources Department has maintained a position at the forefront of compliance efforts serving to broaden accessibility.

In an effort to streamline personnel operations throughout the District and its many locations, the Human Resources Unit along with Data Processing/MIS began implementing ABRA, an online time and attendance system. This system permits time and attendance recording at remote locations in the District and

provides for real time updating of the central personnel database. Once implementation of the system is complete, information will be immediately available to District administrators.

In compliance with Federal Laws, and, as one component of a diverse educational effort, the District Human Resources Department has developed a Sexual Harassment Prevention Program. Completion of this program is mandatory for every full and part-time, permanent and temporary employee. To date over 2,000 employees have benefitted from this course. The Sexual Harassment Prevention training program was developed at two levels. The first, for the education of Managers and Supervisors includes a review of the laws and procedural information regarding the responsibilities placed upon managers when sexual harassment is alleged. The second level, directed to all staff, clearly sets forth the criteria for identifying sexual harassment and the internal procedures available for the registration of a complaint. New employees are scheduled for Sexual Harassment Prevention Training within a month of their starting date.

Concerning technological advances, the Human Resources Department, in conjunction with the office of Managed Information Systems, conducted “Training for Trainers” sessions. The newly recruited instructors subsequently conducted other sessions and will provide a continuing resource for the future as the District continues to “roll out” participation in the use of Word Perfect 6.1 for Windows District-wide. This program has been very successful from several standpoints. First, individuals who were selected to be trainers are qualified volunteers whose selection was based in part on their knowledge and availability. In addition, peer training allowed the trainees to ask their own colleagues questions in a

friendly setting. Peer trainers were, in most cases, familiar with the demands placed on the trainee and the nature of the students' work — enabling them to gear the courses to meet specific needs.

Other initiatives include: Stress Management courses attended by 1,000 court employees at both supervisory and staff levels; English usage and grammar classes presented for a group of 20 employees as a test project; and in the interest of safety, members of the maintenance department and messenger staff received training in Back Injury Prevention.

General Administrative Support: Under the direction of Edward Rementer, the Administrative Services unit provides a variety of services throughout the First Judicial District. One of the primary areas of concentration for Administrative Services is maintenance and facility management. With many court locations throughout central Philadelphia, coordination of maintenance, renovation and construction projects, and cleaning services is a complicated task.

Administrative Services also provides planning, requisition processing, and liaison services with City Communications Department for the telecommunications requirements of the Court. In addition to the installation and maintenance of telephone equipment, Administrative Services coordinated installation of a comprehensive Automated Voice Response (AVR) system for the district. The AVR features a greeting and information section (English and Spanish), a call director, and a dial-out system to judges and administrators for emergency court information.

Under Administrative Services, professional offset printing and publishing services are channeled through the Court Print Shop. The Microfilm Unit provides complete filming, developing and computerized access for court records.

Management Analysis and Program Evaluation: The Court Administrator's Office supports the operations of the First Judicial District by providing a core staff of Senior Staff Advisors with specific program expertise who are responsible for management analysis functions and program evaluation activities. This staff coordinates projects to evaluate and improve the organizational design and operational process of all Court functions.



View of City Hall tower looking northeast.



