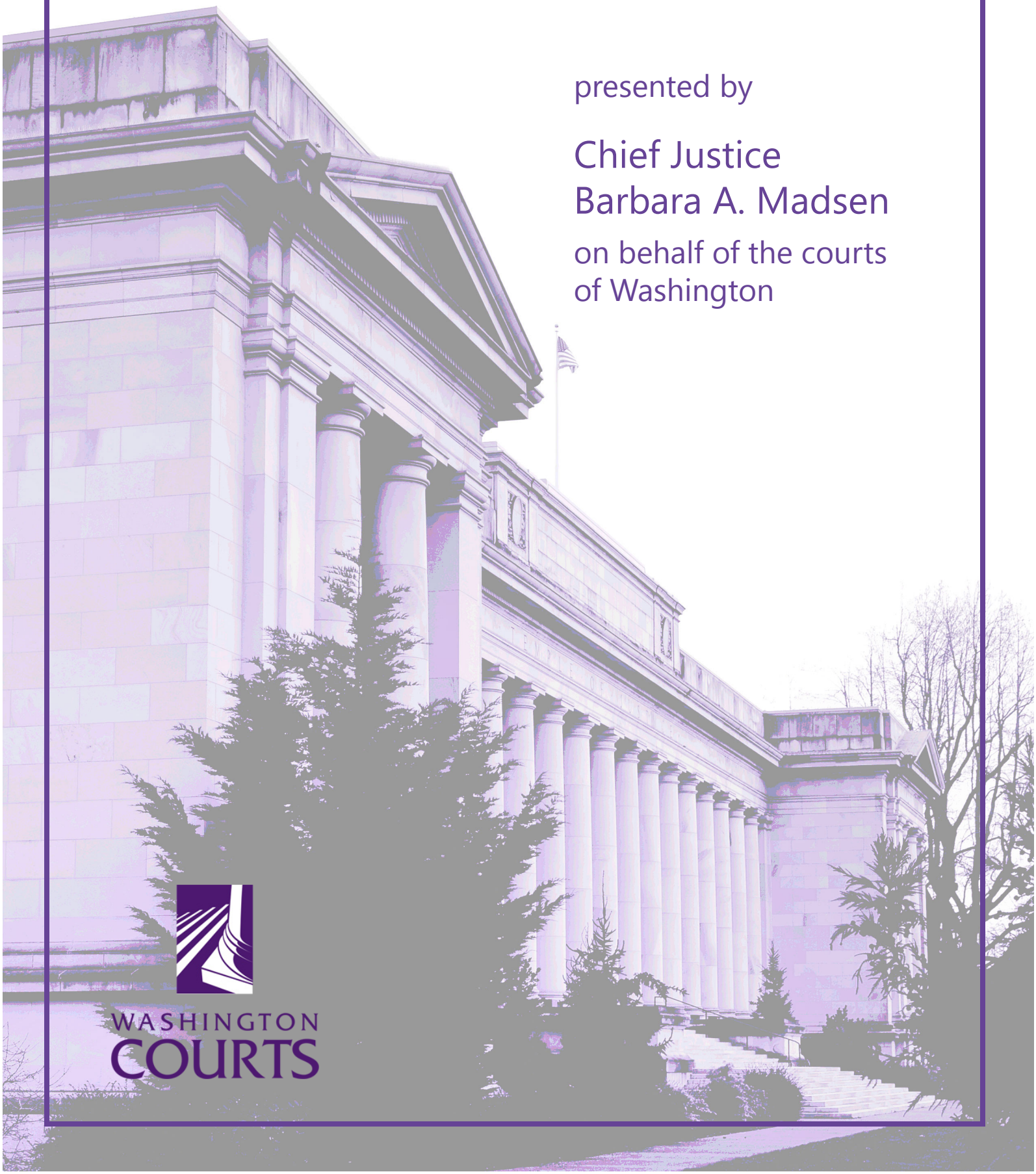
2014 State of the Judiciary

presented by

Chief Justice
Barbara A. Madsen

on behalf of the courts
of Washington



WASHINGTON
COURTS

State of the Judicary 2014

Greetings Governor Inslee, members of the Washington State Legislature, judges, elected officials and residents of Washington,

It has become a tradition for the Chief Justice to provide a written State of the Judiciary report at the start of the short session of the legislature and I do so now with appreciation for the opportunity to provide a brief look at how the courts of Washington fared in 2013, as well as the challenges coming in 2014.

What follows is a series of articles and interviews that highlight some activities and accomplishments of the judicial branch this past year. I believe this new approach to reporting on the state of our courts will be more informative and will put a human face on the issues affecting the courts and the people we serve.

The past year has been one of innovative steps forward in addressing intractable access-to-justice problems (see page 4), advancing the highly effective therapeutic courts model with new statewide resources and research (page 6), working to keep age-old public defense promises (page 8), advancing and leveraging technology to keep systems safe and help courts handle ever-growing caseloads (pages 10 & 11), reaching out to residents in old and new ways (page 15), building new frameworks for accessing court administrative records (page 17), honoring history with an eye on the future (page 18), looking at old organizational structures with a critical eye toward efficiency improvements (pages 20 & 21), performing vital work on public defense and civil legal aid systems (pages 22 and 24), and celebrating with families and children (page 26).

Along with these advances and activities, Washington courts continue to process millions of case filings and manage tens of thousands of hearings each year with staff resources that, in nearly all counties, have been significantly reduced. The Supreme Court, for example, is at its lowest staffing level in 30 years. The judicial needs estimates calculated by the Washington State Center for Court Research continue to show that many courts lack a sufficient number of judicial officers for their caseloads.

We are aware that budget and resource problems have confronted state and local jurisdictions since the deep recession hit our nation, but I would be remiss if I failed to report this as an ongoing and serious challenge for the courts, which perform a core function of government and which cannot close or turn away criminal, civil and appellate cases for lack of funding.

However, I am proud to report that Washington courts are doing everything they can in creative ways to manage their caseloads with fewer resources.

For instance, Lake Forest Park Municipal Court received an award for its innovative program in which a judge adjudicates traffic infractions entirely online, while Pierce County District Court launched a new program for online self-scheduling of traffic hearings which is expected to save the court thousands of phone calls and visits. Douglas County District and Superior courts are using video and scanning technology to manage the justice work of a widespread region (see page 14), and courts around Washington are taking steps like these to continue providing the highest quality justice they can with the reduced resources they have.

At the state level, the Administrative Office of the Courts has worked hard to leverage technology by providing more judicial education through interactive online classes, creating an online court interpreter directory and scheduling program, establishing a self-serve online security incident log for the courts, and much more.

Our challenges in 2014 include continuing to modernize and develop technology solutions and security to help the courts do their work; continuing to monitor public defense standards and improvements throughout the state; working to improve court interpreter resources for the courts; continuing to examine and address disproportionate minority contact with the justice system; and finding new ways to improve access to justice for all Washington residents.

As a final note, I'd like to remind lawmakers and residents of Washington that the courts of our state are always open and we invite you to visit your local courts to see your justice system in action, or learn how you can become one of the many volunteers who help the courts year-round.

Barbara Madsen

Chief Justice Barbara A. Madsen
Washington State Supreme Court

Table Of Contents

Limited License Legal Technician:

Inventing a new option for those who can't afford attorneys

In surveys on court resources, Washington judges and administrators consistently describe how their courts are straining to help a growing number of self-represented litigants who cannot afford to hire attorneys — including more middle class or formerly middle class persons — while their staff hours have been cut.

"We have many more middle class persons who have been caught up in the recession and are unable to pay their rent or mortgage or bills as they used to be able to do. They come to court, embarrassed and distraught, and the only thing I can tell them is that I cannot do anything," wrote one superior court judge in 2010.

Judges also describe negative outcomes for those attempting to represent themselves in court against attorneys.

In response to the growing need among litigants and the growing strain on state courts, the Washington Supreme Court in June of 2012 approved the Limited License Legal Technician (LLLT) Rule in which trained non-attorneys can help court users with less-complex legal needs such as filling out and filing the correct paperwork, answering questions and so on.

The LLLT Rule makes Washington's judicial branch the first legal system in the nation to join other professions in offering limited practice options — such as the physician assistant or nurse practitioner in the medical field. These options open doors to professional help for large numbers of people with unmet, simpler needs.

"If the law has become so complex that legal training is required just to fill out a form, where is the space for the little person needing something like a simple divorce? There's a huge need for simple legal advice and we're not meeting it," said Washington Supreme Court Chief Justice Barbara Madsen. "By opening the door to limited practice, the way other professions have, badly needed assistance becomes available quickly."

The rule created an LLLT Program to be hosted by the Washington State Bar Association. Throughout 2013 a special board appointed by the Supreme Court worked on the requirements and limitations of the new position including education, experience, testing, certification, oversight and discipline. The details are scheduled to be released in 2014.

The rule is the first of its kind in the nation and made news in legal circles across the country.

"The project offers significant opportunities to get a much better picture of whether non-lawyer practice is practical," wrote attorney and author Richard Zorza in his Access to Justice Blog. Zorza coordinates the national Self Represented Litigation Network and consults with the Harvard Law School Bellow-Sacks Project on the Future of Access to Civil Justice.

"The [Court's] Order carefully makes the argument for the project, effectively answering the many arguments against it. As such it stands as a clear statement of the need for, and potential advantages of, the approach that should have a significant impact nationally."

Seeds of necessity

Trends and issues that led to creation of the LLLT Rule included:

* **The groundbreaking 2003** Civil Legal Needs

Limited License Legal Technician, continued

Study released by the Washington Supreme Court Task Force on Civil Legal Justice. The study found 85 percent of the state's low-income population had serious civil legal problems involving basic needs such as housing, employment and family relations — more than 1 million urgent civil legal problems per year — but less than 15 percent of those were receiving any legal assistance. The study exposed unmet needs of a level that surprised even experienced legal aid practitioners.

* **Growth in the number** of self-represented ("pro se") litigants coming to Washington courts unprepared and struggling to manage their own legal issues, slowing down court processes and contributing to questionable justice outcomes.
* **The proliferation of** persons and online businesses engaging in the unauthorized practice of law, often advertising themselves as legal document preparers.
* **Growing utilization of** limited practice options in other professional fields, such as physician assistants and nurse practitioners in the medical field. These limited practice options were once controversial but are now seen as an important solution to providing health services for growing populations who can't afford care.
* **Development of small** steps toward non-attorney law-related services such as creation of courthouse facilitators and Limited Practice Officers. The programs met some needs but had serious limitations that kept them from truly filling the gaps.
* **Significant increases in** the cost of law school resulting in growing barriers for many interested in the legal profession, including those interested in helping underserved communities.

For Madsen, the LLLT rule was a necessary step similar to that taken by the medical profession. "We need gradations in the profession," she said. "There's a huge unmet need and we must be creative in order to make the justice system available to everyone."

When the program is established and operating, she hopes both Washington courts and the people who need them will be experiencing some relief.

"I hope this program will provide better access," she said. "I hope that people are going to be coming to the courthouse with adequate information, that progress can be made more quickly, and that judges will be able to make better decisions that allow people to move on with their lives."

"We have many more middle class persons who have been caught up in the recession and are unable to pay their rent or mortgage or bills as they used to be able to do. They come to court, embarrassed and distraught, and the only thing I can tell them is that I cannot do anything."

-- Superior Court Judge

Bringing therapeutic courts further into the mainstream

A judge, a prosecutor, a defense attorney, a case worker, a mentor and a defendant walk into a room…

No, it's not the beginning of a joke — it's the typical beginning of a therapeutic courts session, something unheard of not long ago in the adversarial system that is American justice. Since the nation's first drug court launched in 1989 (Washington's started in 1994), the therapeutic model has proven its effectiveness and potential, continuing to expand into more jurisdictions and more types of treatment courts such as mental health court, family drug court, veteran's court, teen court, and so on.

With 24 counties offering one or more type of therapeutic court, Washington courts have been active participants in the growth of this justice model. In 2013 that growth included a new statewide therapeutic courts coordinator, a new statewide drug court data collection project — both of these based at the Administrative Office of the Courts — and a new judicial workgroup to consolidate the current piecemeal legislative statutes on therapeutic courts.

Thurston County Superior Court Judge Carol Murphy, who presides over the court's Adult Drug Court, celebrates with graduates.

An online, statewide therapeutic courts directory will also get a needed update and consistent oversight.

"We've seen an explosion in these courts in the last five to 10 years," said Spokane County Superior Court Judge Harold Clarke, president of the Washington State Association of Drug Court Professionals.

"There is no question the efficacy is there," Clarke said. "In regular criminal cases, you're seeing people's lives unfold. You impose a sentence and they go to prison. You're not seeing the result you get with drug court. We're talking about restoring people to the community."

The therapeutic model began in Florida when justice officials became frustrated with the same faces and same drug-related cases appearing again and again. They concluded the system was not working for these types of offenders, whose criminal actions were driven by underlying addictions or mental health issues.

They decided to combine mandated drug treatment with the structure and authority of the court and judge, but only for offenders who accepted responsibility for their actions and wanted the opportunity to change their lives. Another primary component of the model was evidence-based practices — using research on outcomes to guide choice of participants and other practices so funding dollars are wisely spent and success is maximized.

Research has been important to Washington courts as they launch and build their therapeutic court programs.

For instance, the Island County Juvenile Drug Court turned 10 years old in 2010, so judges and administrators asked the Washington State Center for Court Research to conduct a study on outcomes to see what the data could tell them. The study compared a control group of juvenile offenders with drug issues who had NOT gone through the drug court with juveniles who had graduated.

Therapeutic Courts, continued

Researchers found 47 percent of the non-treated control group juveniles had future convictions, compared with only 20 percent of the drug court graduates. The data also showed that juveniles who began the drug court program but then dropped out had a higher recidivism rate than non-drug court participants.

This information led staff to institute a peer mentoring program in the court in hopes of reducing drop outs.

Having the data "was really beneficial for our planning," said Juvenile Drug Court Coordinator Zac Lively. "What do the numbers tell us about our program? It's not how we feel or think, but what the evidence tells us."

Losing the shoestring

Much of the activity surrounding therapeutic courts has a goal of placing these courts on firmer footing, particularly financially.

Data can help guide program choices but can also demonstrate to local, state and national budget writers that the model is worth keeping and funding. Legislation, court rules and staff support can do the same.

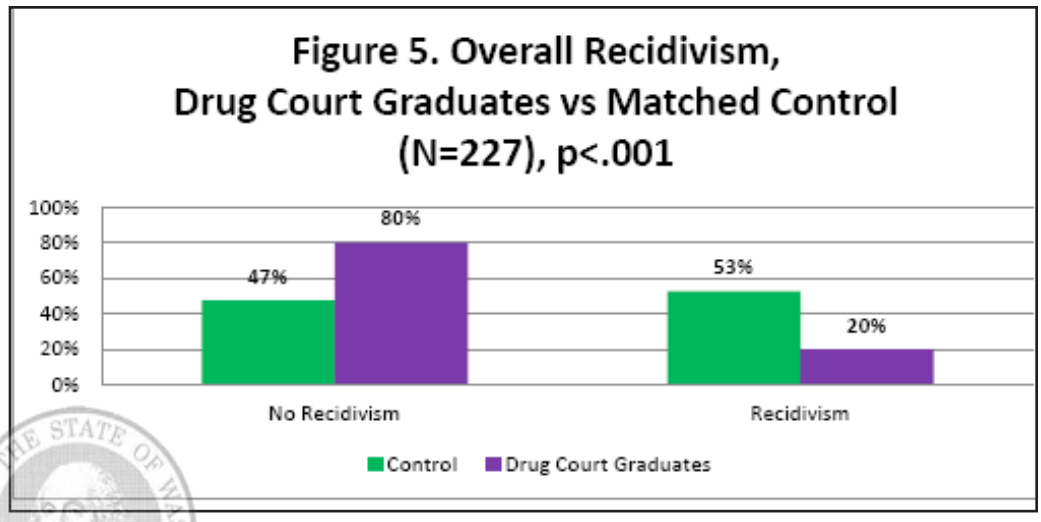
Funding is very much a challenge for many therapeutic courts in Washington, Clarke said.

"These are all local courts. The counties set these up," he said. "It's an incredible challenge. Local jurisdictions just don't have the dollars. Some of the courts have teetered on the edge and then get saved at the last minute."

"Every judge sits on the bench and sees a defendant who is there because of mental health issues," said Thurston County District Court Judge Brett Buckley, who heads the county's Veteran's Court. "Your jail, like most, is overcrowded. You hate to put that person in there. When they come out, you haven't changed anything. Jail isn't a disincentive for people committing assaults because of mental health issues."

Thurston County District Court Judge Brett Buckley, who presides over Thurston County's Veterans Court.

In his veteran's court, however, defendants are accepting responsibility and working hard at turning their lives around. "People are here telling me about their appointments and their medications and their stresses. Every judge has these issues, and these courts provide one answer."



One chart from a study of the Island County Juvenile Drug Court by the Washington State Center for Court Research shows overall recidivism for drug court graduates is significantly reduced compared to similar offenders who don't participate in drug court.

As 'Gideon' turned 50,

Washington courts took new steps toward effective representation for all

While the nation in 2013 was celebrating the 50th anniversary of the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision on public defense in 'Gideon v. Wainwright,' Washington's judicial branch was taking new strides forward in ensuring effective representation for all.

The unanimous 'Gideon' decision on March 18, 1963, held that any person charged with a crime has a right to an attorney whether or not he or she can afford one. Before the Gideon case, defense attorneys were generally provided only for death-penalty cases or cases considered "complex."

Clarence Gideon was a poor drifter in Florida charged with a minor burglary. The lower court refused his request for an attorney and he was sentenced to five years in prison. After his handwritten appeal was accepted by the U.S. Supreme Court and the 'Gideon' decision was issued, he was re-tried with the aid of an attorney and found not guilty.

In April of 2013, current and retired members of the Washington Supreme Court reenacted the oral arguments of the 'Gideon' case at the University of Washington School of Law. Before that reenactment, the Court had taken additional steps to improve Washington's public defense system:

- **On June 15, 2012,** the Washington Supreme Court adopted new standards for indigent ("public") defense services addressing attorney qualifications, use of interns, appeals, administrative costs and more, most of which became effective Sept. 1, 2012. Guidelines on limiting caseloads of public defense attorneys were to take effect in September 2013. The standards were authored by the Washington State Bar Association's Council on Public Defense.
- **In March 2013,** the Washington State Office of Public Defense (OPD) submitted a report to the Supreme Court reviewing implementation of the new standards and explaining many jurisdictions planned to adopt case-weighting standards in order to most accurately determine the appropriate caseload limits for public defense attorneys.
- **Based on that report,** the Supreme Court

Current and retired justices of the Washington Supreme Court and members of the state legal community reenacted the historic 1963 U.S. Supreme Court *'Gideon v. Wainwright'* oral arguments at UW School of Law on April 30, 2013. Here, attorney Jeffery Robinson portrays 'Gideon' attorney Abe Fortas in addressing the 1963 U.S. Supreme Court, portrayed by (left to right) retired Justice Gerry Alexander, current Justices Debra Stephens, Mary Fairhurst, Charles Johnson, Barbara Madsen, Sheryl Gordon McCloud, Susan Owens, Charles Wiggins and retired Justice Tom Chambers.

Public Defense, continued

adopted a new effective date for caseload standards —Jan. 1, 2015 — to give court leaders time to complete case-weighting studies. The Court also ordered the OPD to conduct a statewide attorney time study and to develop a model misdemeanor case-weighting policy.

Washington was ahead of 'Gideon'

Washington can be proud that as far back as 1854, territorial lawmakers established a right to counsel at public cost if a defendant was unable to hire an attorney. Improving public defense has been an active goal of Washington's judicial branch since long before the Gideon decision.

Most adults in our country know they have a right to an attorney if they are charged with a crime. Less understood is the difference between the mere presence of a defense attorney and the assistance of an attorney who has the time and training to effectively represent her or his clients.

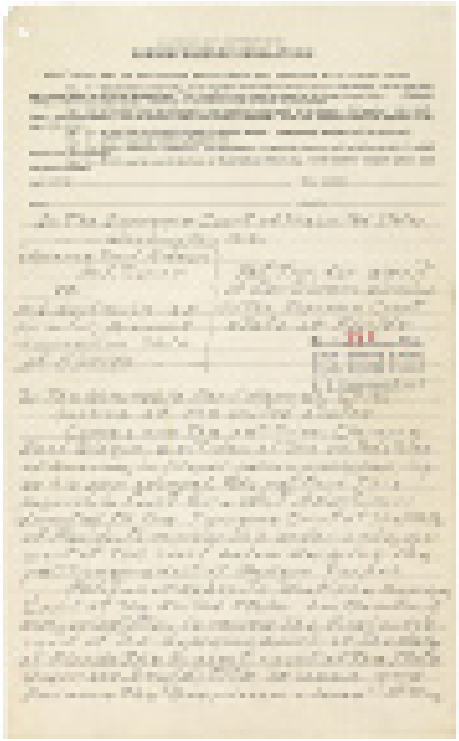
An attorney burdened with too many cases, or without the proper training for the type of case he or she is handling, or without guidelines and expectations on the management of cases may leave a client accused of a crime without adequate defense.

A conviction can mean loss of freedom, even loss of life. A conviction can mean a lifetime of consequences affecting the ability to get a job, housing, a loan, to keep custody of children, to volunteer, even to vote. Public trust in our justice system depends on people knowing they have been treated fairly and their rights have been protected.

Effective legal assistance is the core intent behind the right to an attorney, and effectiveness is the goal of the new public-defense standards adopted by the Court.

These new standards will involve additional work and cost for courts and jurisdictions, but the right to just treatment for all in a court of law is a core principle of our nation and our state. It must be protected.

Clarence Gideon was a poor drifter in Florida, accused of burglary in 1961, denied an attorney and sentenced to five years in prison. His hand-written appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court (below) was accepted and the Court's 1963 decision in his case established a right to an attorney in all criminal cases regardless of ability to pay.



Amping up security on statewide court information systems

The world of cyber criminals and cyber security is quickly growing more sophisticated, and Washington courts have not been immune to the whirlwind.

In February 2013, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) learned it had been the victim of a data breach of some older files on the agency's public web site through a vulnerability in an Adobe program. (Adobe announced the problem and provided a "patch," but AOC's data breach had already occurred). No court records were altered and no personal financial information, such as bank account numbers or credit card numbers, were maintained on the site. However, up to 160,000 social security numbers and 1 million driver license numbers may have potentially been accessed.

AOC verified that 94 social security numbers were accessed, and took immediate steps to notify the persons and provide them with paid credit monitoring and other information.

(More about the breach and AOC's steps to aid anyone who might have been affected can be found at http://www.courts.wa.gov/newsinfo/?fa=newsinfo.displayContent&theFile=dataBreach/home).

In response to this breach and information on evolving cyber security threats, new security measures to guard the Judicial Information System (JIS) have been and are continuing to be enacted.

"We regret that some changes and extra security steps can inconvenience our users," said state Court Administrator Callie Dietz, "but safeguarding our data from aggressive hackers is a never-ending process and is critical to protecting the people who use our courts and our systems."

Many internal IT changes or upgrades cannot be detailed for security sake, but some steps have included:

- Contracting with an IT security company for consultation regarding the newest cyber threats and best methods to secure systems.
- Hiring a new Court IT Security Officer.
- Changing password requirements.
- Adding security measures such as more aggressive time-outs, dual-authentication methods, and more.
- Requiring more advanced IT security training for all AOC and appellate court employees.
- Strengthening the log-on process for other systems used by judges and court staff.

"Hackers continue to evolve in their ability to penetrate IT defenses, and we must provide well-managed security protection for our systems and data," Dietz said. "We appreciate the patience of our customers and ask for your help in spreading the word to staff members and other affected users of the system."

"Hackers continue to evolve in their ability to penetrate IT defenses, and we must provide well-managed security protection for our systems and data."

Saying goodbye to the 1970's with a case management system for 21st century courts

In Lewis County Superior Court, staff members schedule hearings by making multiple entries into multiple systems, have to make duplicate entries during calendar preparation, and have no program for managing mandatory arbitration.

A few miles to the north in Thurston County Superior Court, "we spend the majority of our staff time manually scheduling, re-scheduling, sending notices, moving sessions, etc.," said then-Court Administrator Marti Maxwell. "A case management system has been the number one item on the court's wish list for a number of years."

That wish can soon be checked off – Lewis and Thurston county superior courts and county clerk offices have been chosen as pilot sites for a new statewide superior court case management system (SC-CMS) that will be available to all superior courts and county clerks' offices in the state.

A joint project of the superior court community, county clerks and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), the new case management system took huge strides forward in 2013 after three years of intense study and multiple decision-making points leading up to purchase of the system, which is called "Odyssey."

SC-CMS
SUPERIOR COURT
CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

At the end of 2013, Odyssey was actively being prepared for configuration to meet the needs of the courts and county clerk offices.

"We are so pleased to reach this point in the SC-CMS project after years of building to it," said Vonnie Diseth, Chief Information Officer for AOC. "Staff members at AOC, the superior courts and county clerk offices from around the state are working together and making amazing strides in ensuring the system will improve case management for courts across the state."

The SC-CMS project was launched in 2010 at the request of the superior court community, including judges, county clerks, and court administrators. The system will replace the 37-year-old SCOMIS system, which was designed primarily to store information, not manage it.

This photo was taken at AOC in 1984, seven years after the SCOMIS information system currently used by Washington's superior courts was implemented.

Activity over the past 15 months includes:

- **Late summer/fall 2012** — A Court User Workgroup (CUWG) was formed to provide subject matter expertise on court business processes as well as insight on potential impacts and opportunities associated with transition to the new system.
- **Spring 2013** — Legislators authorized funding for the SC-CMS project.
- **March** — Tyler Technologies was chosen to provide its Odyssey case management system to Washington superior courts. Odyssey has been implemented statewide in courts in Indiana, North Dakota, New Mexico, South Dakota and Oregon.
- **July 25** — The contract with Tyler was signed and executed. Through negotiation, a number of additional software modules were added to the project scope and the contract price was $800,000 lower than anticipated.
- **August** — The Project Steering Committee chose Thurston and Lewis counties as pilot sites.

Case Management System, continued

- **October** — Two extensive "fit" analyses were conducted to determine how the technology and business processes of the courts and county clerks' offices fit with the Odyssey system, and where configuration or process changes will be needed.

Why Odyssey?

A detailed list of requirements needed in a modern case management system was developed by judges, county clerks, court administrators, AOC managers and technical experts.

The new system was required to ensure judicial officers and court staff could direct and monitor court case progress, schedule case events, enforce court business rules, view case schedules, status and case party information, and communicate court schedules and orders.

It would also enable county clerks to efficiently maintain court records, report and view case dockets, schedules and case party information, manage clerk resources, streamline processes and enable public access.

In October, representatives from superior courts, county clerks' offices and AOC met with SC-CMS project leaders from Tyler for a "fit" analysis, to evaluate how courts' current technology and business processes fit with the new case management system, and to start identifying where configuration and adjustments will be needed.

One requirement for the chosen vendor was demonstrated success configuring and implementing a statewide court case management system.

Based in Texas, Tyler provides technology products solely for government offices and agencies, and the company has a division focused on courts. Its Odyssey Case Manager program for courts is used in 21 states.

Pilot site implementation is scheduled for February 2015 in Thurston and Lewis counties.

Between now and pilot implementation, teams of workers will be preparing and configuring Odyssey for Washington superior courts and county clerks' offices, and locating processes that need to change to fit the new system. The full roll-out of Odyssey to all superior courts and county clerk offices in the state is expected to take five years.

The high-level timeline (it will most likely need adjustment over the months and years) looks like this:

- **October 2013 – April 2018:** Design and development.
- **February – June 2015:** Pilot implementation in Thurston and Lewis counties.
- **September – December 2015:** Early adopter implementation in Yakima, Benton, Franklin, Klickitat, and Walla Walla counties.
- **March 2016 – January 2019:** Statewide rollout. The order in which the system is implemented statewide will be determined by the Project Steering Committee

"We are thrilled to be able to work with Tyler to make sure the program meets the needs of the courts," Parker said. "This will allow the county clerk and court administration to work in one program to better manage cases and workflow."

Maxwell said her court staff members are ready for the change.

"Our staff is especially enthusiastic and ready to welcome the changes in how they manage cases and scheduling," Maxwell said. "We believe that moving to a statewide integrated case management system means all of our superior courts can improve customer service and improve case processing."

In other news...

Streamlined content management coming to appellate courts

A new enterprise content management system has been chosen for implementation in the Washington Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals.

The system will streamline content management processes for the appellate courts. Currently, each of the courts utilizes a different document management system, none of which interfaces with the Appellate Courts Records and Data System (ACORDS) which manages appellate court case data.

The Judicial Information System Committee (JISC) approved the choice of ImageSoft, a Michigan company, to deploy a comprehensive Appellate Court Enterprise Content Management System (AC-ECMS). The project will transition the courts to a single, unified system.

The system will serve as a central repository fully integrated with the Administrative Office of the Courts' (AOC's) existing systems and will harness high-speed document scanning, workflow management and electronic document retention. Another component will enable secure, legally compliant electronic signing of documents as part of the workflow, eliminating the need to print a document, sign and rescan it.

The project will be deployed incrementally with all phases expected to be completed in 2015.

With an eye toward creating greater efficiencies for all courts, AOC will also begin looking at business processes and a statewide case management system for all courts of limited jurisdiction in Spring of 2014.

Web tracking of security incidents

A web-based Court Security Incident Log was launched in 2013 by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) as a tool for courts to share details of threats and security incidents in easy-to-read formats and printable tables.

The self-reporting log was created to help courts deal with security issues in the wake of budget cuts affecting court security resources at the state and county level, and following a serious courthouse assault in Grays Harbor County Superior Court in 2012, a wave of bomb threats on courthouses in Washington and around the country, and other court security incidents.

Details of security incidents are input into information fields and two types of reports are automatically generated—a detailed log with narratives of each incident, and an Excel spreadsheet that informs users of the common types, times, locations and other details of security issues.

Washington State Law Library online: Easier, more interactive

The Washington State Law Library launched a redesigned Web site this summer that allows visitors to search the library's catalog, chat with law library staff members, submit reference questions, request documents, research online legal resources, take a photo tour and more. Visit the Web site at http://www.courts.wa.gov/library/?fa=library.home

Also redesigned are the Web sites of the Washington State Gender and Justice Commission and the Washington State Minority and Justice Commission. Find them at www.courts.wa.gov under "Boards and Commissions."

New and updated online bench guides for Washington judges

Several new benchbook resources were developed for state judicial officers in 2013:

- **The Sexual Offense Bench Guide,** a new benchbook developed and published by the Gender and Justice Commission in July, 2013.
- **Immigration Resource Guide** for Judges, July 2013, co-produced by the Minority and Justice and the Gender and Justice commissions.
- **DUI Benchbook**, significantly updated and revised from the 2004 edition, with grant help from the Washington Traffic Safety Commission.
- **Foreclosure Manual for Washington Judges**, published by Washington Appleseed, April 2013.
- **Traffic Stops in Washington**, a new guide for judges completed in May 2013.

'Rural' doesn't mean 'low-tech'

Douglas County District Court has one judge and courtrooms 75 miles apart in East Wenatchee and Bridgeport.

The adult jail is in Okanogan, 90 miles from East Wenatchee.

The juvenile detention is in Wenatchee.

Judge Judith McCauley is also a commissioner for Superior Court in Waterville, 25 miles away, where the prosecuting attorney is located.

Superior Court Judge John Hotchkiss holds a regular calendar for truancy and civil hearings in district court (East Wenatchee location).

To make all this work, the courts and county offices not only make use of technology, they approach it in a highly coordinated manner to get the maximum benefit out of their tech tools — primarily video conferencing and scanning.

"We do video court every day as needed," said Judge McCauley. The video connection allows conferences between East Wenatchee, Waterville, Bridgeport and Okanogan.

All four locations can be on the video at one time.

Douglas County District Court started using video conferencing for in-custody hearings in 1994, and the superior court followed suit in 2001. Adopting the technology was a joint effort of the district and superior courts, the county clerk, the county commissioners and the county auditor.

The decision to scan all court files was the next logical step; it allows ready access to files for district and superior court judges to hear cases regardless of which courtroom is used. "All our files are imaged and available to both courts, which allows court hearings to be paperless," McCauley said.

One site of the Douglas County District Court.

Since the files and video are available all the time, video is now used for any type of case. District court has regularly scheduled video court in Bridgeport for first appearances, protection orders, mitigation and contested hearings.

"The ability to do court in Bridgeport by video is a substantial cost saving and the people who appear by video enjoy the TV court as well as the convenience of court in their home town," said Douglas County District Court Administrator Marcella Presler.

For the clerk's office, scanning provides multiple users access to a file at the same time and improves work flow efficiency.

"Scanning has proved a real benefit in responding to public disclosure requests," Presler said. "No more lost or misplaced files."

Coordination among and between courts and county officials has made many of the strides possible. Chelan and Douglas County Clerks Kim Morrison and Juanita Koch have worked closely with the courts, and Chelan County District Court judges Alicia Nakata and Nancy Harmon have worked with the judges and staff of Douglas county courts on imaging projects.

"Douglas County has made wonderful strides in using technology to bridge the distances in a rural county," said Washington Supreme Court Chief Justice Barbara Madsen, who visited the county and courts in July at McCauley's invitation. "I was impressed by their innovative use of technology, and the coordination and cooperation they have developed which makes the technology that much more effective."

Bringing people to the courts and courts to the people

Going to court can be intimidating, even frightening, for the average person — something easy to forget for those who work in courts every day.

That fact prompted SeaTac Municipal Court Judge Elizabeth Bejarano and Court Administrator Paulette Revoir to establish a new Law Day celebration for their community, one they intend to keep growing year after year.

"It's a great way to reach out to the community, to demystify the courts," Bejarano said. "My goal in all this is just to educate the community and remind people of the important role our courts play in the community and to show that the court is not a scary place."

Law Day is celebrated by legal communities throughout the U.S.; the official Law Day is May 1, though many communities celebrate Law Week or Law Month. It was established in 1958 by President Dwight Eisenhower to honor the nation's commitment to the rule of law, then was codified into law by Congress the next year.

Snohomish County is another jurisdiction with a long-standing and extensive Law Day celebration that brings hundreds of students from local schools into court for demonstrations, mock trials, to meet judges and law enforcement officials, and more.

Because 2013 marks the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation signed by Abraham Lincoln, the 2013 Law Day theme was "Realizing the Dream: Equality for All." The theme provided many opportunities to show that the role courts play in guarding human rights "is still really relevant today," Bejarano said.

SeaTac Municipal Court's celebration included:

* Screenings of civil rights documentaries that are available (for very small fees) from PBS;
* Mock trials with local high school students;
* A human trafficking symposium;
* Speakers from the Washington Supreme Court, the US Attorney's office, the SeaTac Police Department, the state senate, a local refugee alliance and more;
* A presentation at a local senior center;
* An elementary school art contest focused on the theme of equality.

Above, the winning entry in a school art contest for SeaTac Municipal Court's Law Day celebration in May. Below, Judge Elizabeth Bejarano (far right) joins local high school students for a mock trial event during the celebration.

Something old, something new

Demystifying the courts and judicial branch of government was the goal of other outreach activities in 2013 -- one a years-long tradition and others taking advantage of new trends.

The state Supreme Court continued its tradition of taking the Court on the road around Washington to hear oral arguments in real cases at locations such as community colleges and universities. In addition to hearing cases before large audiences, the justices visit with students and community members, give classes or presentations, and hold open question-and-answer sessions with students and the public.

In 2013, the Court visited the University of Puget

Public Outreach, continued

Sound in Tacoma (see photos, right), and in 2014 are scheduled to visit communities and hear oral arguments in Everett, Clark College and possibly Gonzaga Law School.

The visits began in the mid-1980s when the Temple of Justice in Olympia was undergoing earthquake upgrades, and justices have continued the practice ever since.

"Walking into any courtroom is a scary experience," Associate Chief Justice Charles Johnson told the News Tribune in September before the UPS visit. "I'm comfortable there, but most citizens are intimidated. Being more public about what we do, who we are, how the system works — that instills confidence."

ALSO IN 2013, new outreach tools launched by the Administrative Office of the Courts included Twitter, Facebook and YouTube presences.

Twitter will be used to share breaking news and other court information of immediate impact; Facebook will be used to help inform readers on court issues and events and share links to court resources; YouTube will provide video footage of court events and educational opportunities.

For instance, the jury orientation video, "Make a Difference: Jury Duty in Washington," is now available on the Washington Courts YouTube page for any teachers, members of the public or others to view at any time.

"Social media is no longer a fad," said AOC Communications Manager Wendy Ferrell. "It is used by millions of people and studies show a growing number get a large percentage of their news from social media rather than traditional outlets. Using these tools allows us to get our news out to this growing audience."

During travelling court sessions, justices spend a full day meeting with students. Above, Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud speaks to a history class at UPS; below, Justice Charles Wiggins breaks for lunch with students and faculty members.

Justices and a moderator answer questions from students and community members in the college auditorium.

One the second day of a community visit, justices hear two or three cases in an auditorium open to students and community members.

Community members ask questions between oral arguments.

New rule clarifies access to court administrative records

Though Washington courts have been providing many administrative records upon request for many years, the state Supreme Court gave the process an official framework in October 2013 by passing General Court Rule (GR) 31.1: Access to Administrative Records.

Courts and the public will now have a clearer set of definitions, processes and expectations regarding access to court administrative records — not to be confused with court case records which have long been open, with some limitations for such cases as those involving mental illness and adoption proceedings.

The Board for Judicial Administration (BJA) is taking the lead on implementation of the new rule with an oversight group and three committees that will spend the next year or more developing a plan that will include best practices, a model public records policy, model procedures, templates for requests and responses, training recommendations and more.

GR 31.1 will become effective when the BJA and Supreme Court approve a final implementation plan.

"Washington courts have long been on the forefront of operating openly, and this will be another significant step in enhancing public confidence in our justice system," said Supreme Court Chief Justice Barbara Madsen. "The BJA is excited to take on this important work and provide help to the courts as our branch continues moving forward with its commitment to openness."

Why this rule?

In 2010, the BJA addressed what was considered to be a gap in existing state law regarding judicial branch administrative records.

Following a 2009 state Supreme Court decision verifying court administrative records were not specifically addressed by the Public Records Act (RCW 42.56), the BJA created a workgroup to study the issue. Both the workgroup and the BJA determined court administrative records were best dealt with by court rule.

The new rule defines administrative records and addresses such documents and topics as financial records; chamber records; requests involving harassment, intimidation and security threats; records of visiting judges; documents on employees' personal electronic devices; deliberative process documents; timeframes for responding; fees for copying, and more.

For the full text of the rule, visit http://www.courts.wa.gov/court_rules/?fa=court_rules.adopted

The implementation oversight group and its four committees began meeting in early fall to develop, review and revise implementation plans that will go the Supreme Court for final approval.

"We recognize this is another requirement on courts that are already overworked and under-staffed," Madsen said, "but openness of government, including the judicial branch, has been a core principle in Washington since it became a state. With this step, we are continuing to keep the promise that the courts belong to the people."

"Openness of government, including the judicial branch, has been a core principle in Washington since it became a state. With this step, we are continuing to keep the promise that the courts belong to the people."

How do you celebrate the birth of a Temple?

Guests were walking on temporary wooden floors through a large building that barely had walls, but January 15, 1913 found 358 couples making the "grand march" through the under-construction Temple of Justice for the inaugural ball of newly elected Governor Ernest Lister.

Eventually more than 1,500 people attended the ball in the Temple that night. Shortly afterward, Supreme Court justices began holding court in the building, surrounded by laborers and construction activities until 1920.

The centennial of Washington's Temple of Justice was commemorated with an Honored Guests reception on Jan. 16, 2013, during Governor Jay Inslee's inaugural ball, then with a celebration in the Temple the afternoon of Jan. 18, 2013.

The centennial was also marked with creation of a new Web site dedicated to the history of the building and its inhabitants at www.templecentennial.wa.gov. The Web site features historic details and photos as well as video tours by such hosts as Justice Charlie Wiggins and retired Justice Gerry Alexander.

Additional celebrations throughout 2013 included special events commemorating the many years the state Attorney General's office resided in the Temple, commemorating the historic architecture of the building and of justice buildings throughout the world, and

Following statehood in 1889, the Supreme Court met in various Olympia buildings such as Tacoma Hall (below left) its first home in 1890. In 1911, state lawmakers announced a competition to find architects to design a group of capitol buildings starting with a Temple of Justice. New York architects Walter Wilder and Harry White won the contract. They broke ground in 1912 and the Temple became habitable in 1913. In 2013 the Supreme Court celebrated a century of both tradition and progress.

Temple Centennial, continued

commemorating the past and present employees of the Temple.

All events were funded through ticket sales and sponsorships, with no taxpayer funds used.

Smaller events also commemorated the centennial, including the first-ever Mock Trial in the Supreme Court by students from the YMCA Youth & Government program in May. A mock trial component will now be added each year to the Youth Legislature program that runs each spring at the Capitol Campus.

Chief Justice Barbara Madsen, above, welcomes visitors to the Temple of Justice centennial celebration on January 18, 2013. Below, five former and current state attorneys general gather May 15 to commemorate the era the AG office was housed in the Temple. Left to right, Slade Gorton, Ken Eikenberry, Chris Gregoire, Rob McKenna and Bob Ferguson.

The first justices of the Washington State Supreme Court, 1890

Washington State Supreme Court justices on Jan. 15, 2013, left to right, Justices Steven González, Debra Stephens, Mary Fairhurst, Associate Chief Justice Charles Johnson, Chief Justice Barbara Madsen, Susan Owens, James Johnson, Charles Wiggins and Sheryl Gordon McCloud.

Administering the judicial branch: A case for review

"The structure of the Board for Judicial Administration must enable the judiciary to speak with one voice without squelching dissent or pretending unanimity." – JEA Report, 1999

In mid-2012, members of the Board for Judicial Administration began a conversation about whether it was time again to consider the structure and processes of the Board — are they still serving the needs of the state judiciary in these political and economic times?

Many Board members believe discussion is warranted regarding the most effective structure for the BJA, one that will help it fully carry out its mission to serve as a strong and effective governing body for the state's judiciary.

In the meantime, the Board is reviewing the many committees, sub-committees, commissions, workgroups and other entities established throughout each court level to work on issues that affect the courts.

Like all good conversations that produce thoughtful and important questions, the vibrancy of the BJA will be an ongoing discussion so the Board can continue to successfully execute its mission to be the voice of the judiciary in its right to govern its own operations.

The BJA was founded in 1981 by Justice Robert Brachtenbach, a former legislator, to bring together the voices of the judiciary to speak to trends and issues affecting the judicial branch.

In 1999, the Justice, Efficiency and Accountability (JEA) Commission took a hard look at the governance of Washington's judiciary and recommended an overhaul of the BJA's mission, membership, goals and practices.

A stronger, more cohesive leadership and governance role was needed from the Board in order for the judiciary to successfully take charge of its agenda and its messages to other branches of government, according to the Commission.

Essentially, the BJA needed to evolve from an advisory body to a governing one that creates policy and carries it forward into court rule and legislation.

That restructuring and refocusing helped lead to important improvements for the courts and, more importantly, greater recognition by other branches of the authority of the judiciary to speak for and direct itself.

The Board's primary missions include strategic planning for the judiciary, continually reviewing core missions and best practices of the courts, assessing the adequacy of judicial branch resources, developing long-range funding strategies for the branch, directing research on issues affecting the courts, and speaking for the judicial branch.

As the branch strategically plans for the future, an evaluation of the BJA's structure and processes is once again warranted. It's beneficial from time to time to look at existing structures and consider whether they continue to meet changing needs in a changing environment.

BJA leaders look forward to continuing that conversation and continuing to work toward a healthy and robust judiciary that can serve the people of Washington.

"Our dilemma is that we hate change and love it at the same time; what we really want is for things to remain the same but get better."
-- Sydney J. Harris

The Administrative Office of the Courts, reconfigured

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) launched a reorganization in October 2013 after more than a year of planning and analysis on how AOC could better serve the courts and operate more efficiently from within.

The services provided by AOC have not changed. However, new configurations within the agency "regroup" responsibilities for better communication, coordination and customer service.

Instead of functioning within traditional management models, the agency developed a teamwork approach incorporating feedback and suggestions from customers.

There are four divisions at AOC with sections that focus on core functions of the judicial branch:

- The Administrative Division, headed by State Court Administrator Callie Dietz;
- The Judicial Services Division, headed by former judge Dirk Marler;
- The Information Services Division, headed by Chief Information Officer Vonnie Diseth; and
- The Management Services Division, headed by Chief Financial Officer Ramsey Radwan.

What changed?

New offices and units have been created from existing staff members doing similar work, but with a new focus; some offices have been expanded; some staff members and units have been shifted into different divisions to improve communication and collaboration.

Some of these changes include:

◊ **The new Office of Court Innovation** houses programs focusing on the future, such as the Washington State Center for Court Research, the Minority and Justice Commission, the Gender and Justice Commission, and more;

◊ **The Office of Trial Court Services and Judicial Education** will support court associations, development of best practices, customer services and judicial education;

◊ **The Office of Court Business and Technology Integration** will utilize expertise in court business practice and processes to drive technology changes;

◊ **The new Office of IT Security** will oversee security updates to systems and applications, and keep watch for new and emerging cyber threats;

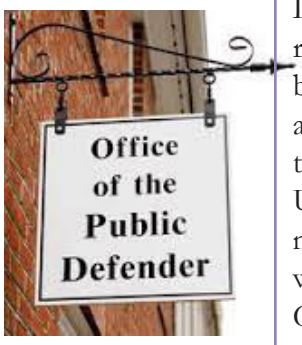
◊ **The Office of Guardianship and Elder Services** will expand to assist courts in identifying needs for elderly persons coming to court.

These are just some highlights of many changes within AOC which took effect in October. The goal is to foster a relationship of self-directed teams which can find the best solutions to issues affecting courts and the judicial branch.

The Administrative Office of the Courts is located in Olympia. For more information, visit www.courts.wa.gov.

Office of Public Defense:
Striving to keep Gideon's promise

By Joanne Moore
Director, Office of Public Defense



The Washington State Office of Public Defense (OPD) is an independent judicial branch agency created by the Legislature in 1996 to help implement the right to counsel guaranteed to every person by our Constitution and laws. As our state and nation celebrated the anniversary of the landmark 'Gideon' decision by the U.S. Supreme Court (see page 8), OPD marked new milestones in 2013, assisting with implementation of the state Supreme Court's new standards for public defense and expanding client services in two specialized areas of public defense.

To conduct this statewide time study — the first of its kind in Washington — OPD recruited volunteer public defense attorneys working in 14 different district and municipal courts.

Bringing Data to Public Defense Misdemeanor Practice

The Supreme Court's momentous adoption of indigent defense standards in 2012 has made waves in the public defense world, addressing some long-standing statewide practices. OPD issued a report on the implementation of these standards in 2013, finding that one major aspect of the new standards was proving difficult to administer — the new limits for public defense caseloads, in particular the caseload standards for misdemeanor cases.

Designed to ensure that attorneys have enough time to provide effective assistance to each client, the misdemeanor caseload limits permit jurisdictions to adopt case weighting standards that would count some matters as more than or less than a full case. However, OPD found that although some local jurisdictions had adopted case weighting standards, there was a paucity of data to support the different jurisdictions' approaches.

After considering the report, the Supreme Court ordered OPD to conduct a time study to provide guidance on appropriate case weighting protocols.

To conduct this statewide time study — the first of its kind in Washington — OPD recruited volunteer public defense attorneys working in 14 different district and municipal courts. OPD provided these attorneys with a web-based, mobile-friendly system for tracking the time they spent on misdemeanor public defense cases.

OPD's volunteers submitted data for more than 2,700 misdemeanor cases over a 20 week period.

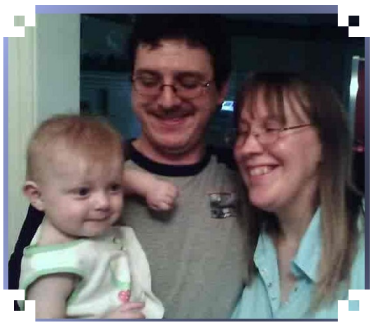
This wealth of data, along with existing time records from additional attorneys, will allow OPD to objectively determine the appropriate amount of time spent on each type of misdemeanor case, giving rise to a model case weighting standard. OPD is currently in the process of analyzing the time study data and will publish the model case weighting policy in early 2014.

OPD's model case weighting standard will help jurisdictions determine how to size public defense caseloads appropriately, ensuring that no indigent client is provided a lawyer too overburdened to give clients the help they need.

Office of Public Defense, continued

Keeping Families Together

In addition to its mission of improving public defense practice statewide, OPD is responsible for administering the Parents Representation Program which provides attorneys to parents who are at risk of losing their children due to allegations of parental unfitness. This protects their right to counsel.



Mr. and Mrs. Donier temporarily lost custody of their baby girl when she was two months old and spent the next 14 months working with attorneys, the courts, social workers, therapists and parent instructors.

The program's attorneys work with parents to not only defend them in court, but to help make sure that they get the services they need to correct parenting problems and be reunited with their children.

Since its inception, independent evaluators have found the Parents Representation Program has made great strides in improving outcomes for parents and speeding up courtroom processes for children. Recognizing this success, the 2013 Legislature authorized the program's expansion to six additional counties – King, Whatcom, Whitman, Columbia, Garfield and Asotin. OPD has begun working with courts in those counties to ensure a smooth transition when OPD-contracted attorneys begin representing parents there beginning July 1, 2014.

Today the Donier family has been reunited, have a new daughter and volunteer with state and local child welfare programs as speakers and committee members.

On that date, the program will cover 85 percent of the state.

The Parents Representation Program will continue to provide assistance and oversight to all of the program's contractors; its dedicated managing attorneys will continue to work every day to raise the bar in parents' representation practice and help support Washington families.

Moving Civil Commitments Forward

Yet another aspect of OPD's mission is administering the statewide representation of detainees subject to civil commitment as sexually violent predators.

This program, transferred to OPD in 2012, made significant strides toward more efficient resolution of civil commitment cases in 2013. The program's contract attorneys reduced large backlogs of civil commitment cases by conducting 27 trials in 2013, more than half of which had been filed before 2011; a few had been on hold for nearly a decade.

And under OPD's administration, the program saved $1.2 million in 2013 compared to the previous system of civil commitment public defense. Moreover, OPD provided and will continue to provide specialized training for the program's 23 contract attorneys to ensure ever-improving representation in these complex, high-stakes cases.

Although alleged sexually violent predators may be some of the least liked defendants in the state, OPD's mission recognizes that the rights of all are safe only when they are extended to the unpopular. As such, OPD has continued striving to implement the promise of 'Gideon' on its 50th birthday and beyond.

"OPD's mission recognizes that the rights of all are safe only when they are extended to the unpopular."

Civil legal aid is a vital part of "Justice For All"

Ten days before the forced sale of her home, "Susan," an elderly disabled, homebound widow was without hope and attempted suicide. Luckily she was found by neighbors who referred her to the Northwest Justice Project (NJP).

The problem was that Susan's home was only in her partner's name, having been purchased during their unmarried relationship. For this reason the lender and trustee had refused to negotiate with her. NJP filed an emergency lawsuit to stop the sale.

Through the local volunteer lawyer's program, a volunteer attorney was found to probate the will and have the home transferred into Susan's name, after which she successfully qualified for a loan modification.

Today Susan lives securely in her home.

A core principle of our judicial branch is that litigants with important interests at stake in civil judicial proceedings should have meaningful access to counsel. Nearly 1.2 million Washington residents live at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty level, and more than 2 million live at or below 200 percent.

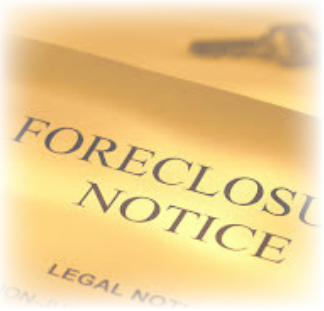
Every day, in every legislative district, low-income people like Susan struggle with legal problems that threaten their housing, family safety, economic security and access to critical public and private services. And every day they lose important personal and property rights simply because they cannot get the legal help they need.

Our state-funded civil legal aid system is designed to provide information, advice and legal representation for people to help them timely understand their legal rights and responsibilities, make informed decisions and provide legal representation for those unable to afford private legal help.

The hub of the system is the Northwest Justice Project (NJP), a statewide non-profit law firm that operates a centralized intake, brief service and referral system, maintains 17 small local legal aid offices, and hosts a web-based self-help resources center (www.washingtonlawhelp.org) and YouTube channel. Wrapped around the NJP hub are 16 local bar-sponsored programs that serve more than 12,500 clients and deliver more than 33,000 hours of volunteer attorney services each year through community-based clinics, courthouse-based housing justice projects and direct representation in cases like Susan's.

Finally, the system includes four small providers of legal aid services to distinct client groups whose members have unique needs requiring specialized expertise. Together, these programs provide critically needed civil legal services that benefit more than 30,000 low-income Washingtonians each year.

In 2003, the Supreme Court's Task Force on Equal Justice Funding published its landmark Civil Legal Needs Study. This study documented that more than 75 percent



By Jim Bamberger
Director, Office of Civil Legal Aid

Every day, in every legislative district, low-income people lose important personal and property rights simply because they cannot get the legal help they need.

Civil Legal Aid, continued

of low-income households face a profound civil legal problem each year.

For these people, timely access to civil legal aid can mean the difference between family safety and continued abuse, a place to live and homelessness, productive work and unemployment, access to necessary health care services and costly institutionalization, and access to necessary subsistence support and destitution.

Recognizing that many circumstances have changed since that data was collected, the Supreme Court is leading an effort to update and expand on information obtained in the initial study. The results of this update will be received in early 2015 and will help guide state-funded legal aid providers and our broader justice system to develop new and ever more effective means of identifying and helping low-income Washingtonians address their most pressing legal problems.

"Tanya" and her young daughter had finally escaped from a dangerous domestic violence situation. Tanya was terrified when her husband, who was also being investigated by Child Protective Services for allegedly raping another child, obtained a court order giving him custody of their daughter. She turned to NJP attorneys who obtained an emergency order keeping the girl with her mother and allowing mother and daughter to find safety in a different town. The court granted the child's father supervised visits only. Tanya and her daughter are now safely building a new life together.

In the meantime, it is important to observe that the state-funded civil legal aid system has experienced dramatic cuts in the post-2009 period – ironically during a time when more and more people needed legal help with ever more complex problems. Budget cuts and static funding in the face of increasing costs have reduced NJP's statewide footprint to 86 OCLA-funded attorneys; down 20.5 FTE's (20%) since 2009.

Hearing-impaired since birth, "Lewis" does not have a strong grasp of written English. He failed to understand complex instructions from the Social Security Administration because an ASL interpreter was not provided to him. Living in a van and facing a $64,000 overpayment, Lewis needed legal help. A volunteer attorney with the OCLA-supported Law Advocates of Whatcom County helped Lewis prepare for an administrative hearing and obtain a complete waiver of the overpayment. Lewis can now move forward with his life without the cloud of a heavy debt burden.

The capacity of the state-funded legal aid system to meet the day-to-day problems of the low-income population is now veneer thin.

Single-attorney legal aid offices serve low income communities on the Olympic Peninsula, on the coast and in Eastern Washington. Imagine – one lawyer for the entire low-income population of Jefferson and Clallam Counties! Client service has fallen as a consequence, down from more than 14,700 cases in 2009 to little more than 9,200 in 2013. Critical telecommunications infrastructure that holds the system together is failing and must be replaced before it fails altogether.

Susan, Tanya and Lewis were lucky. They got help from an overtaxed and under-resourced legal aid system and secured a just outcome in their cases. But for so many others across the state, justice remains wanting.

There is much work to do.

"If justice is not equal for all, it's not justice."
-- Justice Tom Chambers, 1943-2013

Finding family:

Celebrating foster adoptions to raise awareness that children are waiting

Six children were adopted into new familites during Cowlitz County Superior Court's National Adoption Day celebration in November, 2013.

An adoption hearing is the end of one family story and the beginning of a new one for a foster child and his or her adoptive parents.

These hearings are not open to the public with the exception of a few days in November when courts and communities across Washington and the U.S. celebrate National Adoption Day. Adopting parents and court officials agree to open hearings for these events, inviting the public and media in to celebrate the beginnings of new families.

In the ninth annual statewide celebration of National Adoption Day, more than 165 foster children were adopted during hearings and celebrations in 22 Washington courts and community halls, most happening between Nov. 15 and 23.

Celebrating counties included Asotin/Garfield (celebrating jointly), Benton/Franklin, Chelan/Douglas, Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pierce, Snohomish, Spokane, Skagit, Thurston, Whatcom and Yakima.

The goal of National Adoption Day is to raise awareness of the many thousands of foster children waiting to be adopted into new families. In the fall of 2013, more than 8,300 Washington children lived in foster care and more than 1,600 were legally free to join new families.

"It would be difficult to over-emphasize how important adoption is to children who are no longer with their birth parents," said King County Superior Court Judge Dean Lum, Chairman of the Washington State National Adoption Day Steering Committee, who was himself an adopted child. "A loving parent or parents and a place to call home provide that foundation every child needs to help them grow and develop with confidence."

Washington's statewide celebration was launched in 2005 by the state Supreme Court Commission on Children in Foster Care and is co-sponsored by the Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration, the Administrative Office of the Courts, the Superior Court Judges' Association, and by WARM 106.9's Teddy Bear Patrol program.

Since 2005, more than 1,200 foster children have been adopted during these celebrations.