

The implementation of Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC) will change the way courts will conduct business in the future. This quarterly bulletin provides information about these changes and the work that lies ahead.

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Change Within Change

The Maryland Judiciary has recently undergone major changes in leadership. On July 5, 2013, Gov. Martin O'Malley appointed the Honorable Mary Ellen Barbera to lead Maryland's court system as the new chief judge of the Court of Appeals. One of Chief Judge Barbera's first acts was to appoint Pamela Harris as the new state court administrator.

How will these changes in leadership affect the Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC) project?

It's always best to go to the source, so we asked Chief Judge Barbera and State Court Administrator Pam Harris what changes might be made to MDEC, and just as importantly, what will remain the same?

Chief Judge Barbera:

The Judiciary has been preparing for our new case management system for several years. MDEC is an integral part of our plan for efficient and effective management of cases, and will continue to be a priority for the Judiciary.

One of our overarching goals is to provide equal, fair, and timely access to justice for all Marylanders, and MDEC helps meet that goal in several ways.



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Change Within Change (cont.)

Attorneys and self-represented litigants will have 24-hour access to file cases, and can file from their desk or home.

The Odyssey system will improve processes in all courts. Files can be easily accessed by multiple users within a courthouse, as well as between courts. The new system offers us a great opportunity to bring consistency across all levels of courts in how cases are coded and how events are defined. We will have richer data that will allow us to make more informed decisions regarding effective practices and use of resources.

As a judge on the Court of Appeals, I'm looking forward to the new system that will provide case management for appellate cases, and am pleased that the appellate courts will begin using the system when it is implemented in Anne Arundel County.

I am grateful to Chief Judge Bell for laying the groundwork for this important infrastructure. Being able to manage cases means justice can be delivered in a more timely and effective manner, which helps us better serve our fellow citizens, and, overall, contributes to the public's trust and confidence in the courts.

Pamela Harris:



I, too, am excited to be involved with the largest project the Maryland Judiciary has ever implemented. Perhaps the most significant change is that the Judiciary will be working from a single, integrated system rather than nine different and incompatible data systems. This not only will mean more consistency in data, but will result in efficiencies for Judicial Information Systems (JIS). Because the Odyssey software is built on modern technology platforms, it will be easier to report to and receive data from other agencies.

Echoing what Chief Judge Barbera has said, the effective management of cases through our courts is at the core of our jobs and truly defines our success.

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MDEC will:

- ⇒ Make files easily accessible by multiple users within a courthouse at the same time.
- ⇒ Make files easily accessible between one court and another.
- ⇒ Allow for more consistency in data since it will be one integrated system
- ⇒ Provide information essential to the efficient management of cases through our courts.

Change Within Change (cont.)

While we look forward to the enhanced data that will help us better understand how best to process cases efficiently, the most important feature of the case management system is that it allows us to focus on the individual and assure that in every case – for everyone involved – we have the ability to help litigants achieve a legal decision in a timely manner. That is what we are here to do.

“The most important feature of the case management system is that it allows us to focus on the individual and assure that in every case—for everyone involved—we have the ability to help litigants achieve a legal decision in a timely manner.”

Pamela Harris
State Court Administrator

Through this newsletter, in Justice Matters, and in many other forums, Judge Barbera and I hope to communicate with each of you regarding our progress with MDEC, and what it will mean for you. In keeping with that commitment to open communication, it is necessary to announce that the previously scheduled time period for the Anne Arundel County go-live will be delayed. Despite hard work and long hours on the part of all involved with MDEC, new challenges/considerations become apparent as we get further into the preparation and the complexities of a large IT project such as this unfold. Substantial development of new functionality within the existing Odyssey system is required to accommodate business practices unique to Maryland. This development and associated system configuration will take longer than originally scheduled.

Please read the article “MDEC Pilot Go-Live Date Changes” on [page 4](#) for further information about these challenges and our plans moving forward.

MDEC Pilot Go-Live Date Changes

The go-live date for the Anne Arundel County pilot has been moved to Fall 2014. This will allow the implementation team to better prepare the configuration of the system, adequately test the system and the new features that have been added to accommodate Maryland's case processing, and train staff in the use of the system.

In IT projects of this magnitude, schedules often need to change once the real work of configuring the system begins. Priorities for new programming within the software often need to be redefined. This has been true for MDEC.

At this time, Tyler Technologies is working on the development required for the pilot. The need to develop those capabilities within the software meant that certain business processes could not be defined, nor could the system be configured to allow for conversion of data into the new system until that programming was completed.

Teams of subject matter experts from Anne Arundel County have also been devoting several days a week to working with business analysts from Court Operations, JIS, and Tyler Technologies on business process sprints. (See article on [page 5](#).) Meanwhile, work progresses in other areas mentioned in previous issues of

Moving Justice Forward, such as conversion of data into the new system; preparation of courtrooms and courthouses in terms of networking; data lines and equipment; preparation of electronic forms; and development of interfaces to allow for integration with agencies outside the Judiciary. To that list, add the creation of special reports, covered in an article in this issue on [page 6](#).

It is important to remember that in terms of available JIS resources, MDEC is only one, albeit the largest, of several major IT initiatives that are complementary and interdependent. Because implementation of the new back office system we call GEARS had to be done statewide all at once, without the benefit of a pilot, attention is also being focused on adjusting the system for effective daily use.

Meanwhile, JIS is also rolling out the Windows 7 software, necessary for the Odyssey product, as well as the new cash register systems. There are a lot of moving parts.

"By extending the go-live date by approximately six months, we feel that the pilot program will run more smoothly, and we will be able to prepare for a more efficient and effective roll-out to other jurisdictions," said State Court Administrator Pamela Harris.

"Change is not made without inconvenience, even from worse to better."

—Samuel Johnson
Writer, poet
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Business Process Sprints Update

The concept of business process sprints was introduced in *Moving Justice Forward*, Issue 3. Since that time, many person-hours on the part of subject matter experts, JIS and Court Operations staff, and Tyler Technologies personnel have been logged. Much progress has been made in mapping existing business processes to the way cases will be handled with the Odyssey software. The sprints will continue for the next few months.

MDEC is one of several major IT initiatives currently being implemented by the Judiciary. Many JIS staff as well as people from other parts of the Judiciary, including subject matter experts from the courts, are being called on to work on these various projects simultaneously.



All core case events (docket entries), service events, incoming and outgoing forms, and time standards that are required for each process are identified and documented. Case and service event codes are configured “on the spot” in Odyssey during the meeting.

The broad categories of case processing include: case initiation; scheduling; calendaring; financial; subsequent filings; courtroom processing; case closing and disposition; proposed orders; chambers processing; traffic



processing center work; differentiated case management; e-filing; peace and protective orders; bonds; appeals; and post-judgment.



Between sessions, team members follow up on issues identified during the sprints.

Examples of such action items include: additional configuration of codes in Odyssey, researching rules, addressing policy questions (e.g., when and how local forms will be used; document retention), and developing additional forms that will be needed.



These photos give a flavor of the hard work being done in these sessions.

New System – Easier Access to Data

By Andrew Ginder, Senior Researcher, Court Operations Department

One of the many advantages of MDEC is the availability of data that can be more easily studied, compared, and interpreted. This enhanced data will give court managers better tools to help them plan and distribute workload; it will also help leaders plan programs and allocate resources effectively.

MDEC's Odyssey software includes approximately 90 reports that are ready to go. Referred to as "canned" reports, these 90 reports will produce most of the information that is available in the 2,000-plus legacy reports that are currently in use. The reports serve a broad variety of purposes and functions including scheduling, case management, case time standards tracking, bonds/warrants, statistical measures, accounting and financial reports. There are also reports that assemble data that is transmitted from the courts to external justice partners such as law enforcement agencies.

In the new system, users will be able to select the data fields they wish to display, and sort the data in a variety of ways. In addition, users can run reports on demand or according to schedules (daily, monthly, annually, etc.), and can receive reports by email.

There are some reporting needs that are not currently covered by the "canned" reports. A tool called "Enterprise Custom Reports" (ECR) allows programmers at JIS to create new reports that include data fields that may be useful and/or unique to Maryland.

The Court Operations Department, in identifying the need for ECR report development, brought together subject matter experts from the various legacy systems to compare the reports from the legacy systems and Odyssey. We analyzed the data fields contained in each Odyssey canned report, along with sample output, and compared them to the one or more legacy reports with which they appeared to be aligned.

Next, we developed the ECR requirements and specifications to address each reporting gap. Presently a dedicated ECR team at JIS are programming the new reports. The reports will then be validated as part of the quality assurance testing of the system.



Users will be able to:

- ⇒ Select the data fields they wish to display
- ⇒ Sort data in a variety of ways
- ⇒ Run reports on-demand or according to schedules (daily, monthly, annually, etc.)
- ⇒ Receive and send reports by email.

L to R: ECR Reports Team—
Jim Adams, Austin Phaire,
Andrew Ginder, Anupama
Sinha, and Narsing Tegula.

Appellate Courts are Climbing to New Heights with the MDEC Implementation

By Joy Keller, Court Operations Analyst, Court Operations Department

The Court of Appeals and Court of Special Appeals, the highest courts in Maryland, are welcoming the implementation of MDEC and are pleased to be part of the pilot rollout along with the trial courts in Anne Arundel County. MDEC will give the Court of Appeals, for the first time, an automated case management system providing a wide range of benefits to appellate judges, clerks, attorneys and litigants:

Benefits for Appellate Judges:

Judges and law clerks can easily search through electronic documents to find information to assist in writing opinions.

Benefits for Attorneys and Litigants

The electronic filing aspect of MDEC will effectively “extend” the business hours to midnight of the deadline date for filings.

There will be access to real-time case history, which has not been available for appellate cases in the past.

Benefits for Court Managers:

Managers will be able to review lists of documents and filings, and distribute work with the push of a button.

Reports will be easier to produce and can be programmed to run automatically at set intervals.

The court can be notified of an appeal on the same day that the appeal is filed in the lower court. The record can be viewed electronically, saving time, paper, supplies and expenses.

When a case is appealed from a circuit court that is using MDEC to the Courts of Appeal, much of the paperwork in those cases will be transmitted electronically.

Cases will continue to be transmitted by paper from jurisdictions not yet using the MDEC system.



Bessie Decker, Chief Clerk with Chief Judge Barbera of the Court of Appeals.

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Appellate Courts are Climbing to New Heights with the MDEC Implementation (cont.)

Benefits for Clerks:

Because MDEC retains party and attorney information in the system, clerks will no longer have to reenter that information in each case.

“This is a huge step forward for the staff in the Clerk’s Office,” said Clerk of the Court of Appeals Bessie M. Decker. “We will be going from manually entering information in docket books to processing appeals electronically. It is an exciting time for the Court of Appeals, and we are looking forward to the changes and how it will enhance the appeal processes.” Clerk of the Court of Special Appeals, Gregory Hilton, echoed these sentiments, stating “this is a substantial change for us as well, and will greatly improve our efficiency and allow us to provide more dynamic customer service.”

The appellate courts will maintain a paper process for handling appeals from jurisdictions that have not yet implemented MDEC. As trial courts come on



to the system, appellate filings will be done electronically. Appellate judges and court managers are currently identifying what paper may still be required for appeals cases.

Chief Judge of the Court of Special Appeals, Peter B. Krauser, notes that the Court of Special Appeals has experienced a significant increase in the volume of filings over the past several years. “MDEC will help us to better define obstacles in our workflow and assist us in achieving efficiencies needed to deliver timely decisions,” Chief Judge Krauser said.

Pictured above: Gregory Hilton, Chief Clerk, and Chief Judge Krauser of the Court of Special Appeals.

The implementation team for the appellate courts comprises the leadership of the Court of Appeals and the Court of Special Appeals, and (pictured at right) Karen Lista, JIS; Joy Keller, Court Operations; and Barbara Nash, Tyler Technologies.



The MDEC case management system will mean big changes for the Courts of Appeal. Currently the Court of Appeals keeps manual docket books. Both appellate courts look forward to the enhanced efficiency to be gained with an electronic system.