

# JUDICIARY TIMES

A Publication of the  New Jersey Courts

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## Hurricane Sandy

# Courts Across N.J. Continue Clean-Up, Recovery

### **Editors Note:**

*Hurricane Sandy forced the closure of the New Jersey Judiciary for three days and caused millions of dollars in damage to court buildings.*

*Two months after the storm, court staff - some of whom lost their own homes and possessions to Sandy - continued the difficult task of remediating facilities and finding alternative locations.*

*Stories and photos of how some of the vicinages fared during and after the hurricane follow and are continued throughout this issue of the Judiciary Times.*

## Bergen Probation Swamped by Sandy

**By Cheryl Cohen**

Administrative Specialist 3  
Bergen Vicinage

The Bergen Vicinage probation division is no stranger to hurricanes, having been displaced for nine weeks last year after Hurricane Irene flooded its building at 133 River St. in Hackensack.

This year, when reports warned of another hurricane, staff was prepared.

Computers and electrical components were removed from the floor and important items were placed on desktops or

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The Bergen Vicinage probation division building on River Street in Hackensack (left) sustained major damage when the Hackensack River overflowed its banks during Hurricane Sandy. The building has been condemned.



The Wyvern, (center) a boat owned by retired Middlesex Vicinage Superior Court Judge Douglas T. Hague, rests on a dock along the Arthur Kill in Perth Amboy. The vessel had been moored on Staten Island before Hurricane Sandy.

## Program That Allows Remote TRO Filings Marks Milestone

**By Mike Mathis**

Judiciary Times Editor

Hospitals and safe houses continue to join the New Jersey Judiciary's effort to help domestic violence victims apply for temporary restraining orders without going to a courthouse.

The Hospital to Court Safety Assistance Project and the Safe House to Court Safety Assistance Project began in November 2011 so that domestic violence victims can appear before a judge via videoconferencing if they are being treated in an emergency room or have sought refuge in a safe house.

The initiative, which was piloted in the Passaic Vicinage in partnership with St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center in Paterson, has expanded to include seven hospitals in Camden, Essex, Gloucester, Hudson, Middlesex, Passaic and Union counties and 12 safe houses in Atlantic, Bergen, Burlington, Camden, Essex, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Passaic, Salem and Union counties.

Efforts to enroll additional hospitals and safe houses into

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## Bergen Vicinage Probation Damaged During Hurricane Sandy

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were brought home.

The building was thoroughly sandbagged, and most of the fleet cars were relocated to the parking garage near the courthouse.

Despite these precautions, employees could not have anticipated the devastation of Hurricane Sandy or that they would never again enter their building.

On the evening of Oct. 29, the storm caused the Hackensack River to surge 13 feet and flood parts of Hackensack, including the probation building and the Bergen County Courthouse.

Although the probation building had been sandbagged, the force of the water drove a hole through the ground and tunneled under the building before breaking through the floor inside.

The force of the water was strong enough to form waves and overturn furniture, including a credenza, and three full-sized refrigerators.



An order-to-vacate sign was posted on the front door of the Bergen Vicinage probation division building in Hackensack after the structure was inundated with water from the Hackensack River during Hurricane Sandy.

“Water filled the building to four feet high and stayed inside for five hours until it drained out with the tide,” Chief Probation Officer John Fuhrman said.

The city condemned the building.

All of the computers, printers, photocopiers and phones were destroyed.

Every desk had been covered with water, which left a layer of sediment, and water remained in many desk and cabinet drawers.

Bullet-proof vests, chairs and furniture were contaminated. More than 1,300 files were soaked and deemed contaminated.

“It feels like the entire 108-year history of the agency has been washed away like a chalk drawing in the rain, but there is a light at the end of the tunnel, however long it is,” Fuhrman said.

“I was always proud that Bergen probation had its own building with 116 parking spaces. “We were there for 36 years, and our building is Bergen probation to generations of clients, law enforcement, lawyers and staff,” Fuhrman said.

When the courthouse regained electricity eight days later, emergency plans called for probation to be

relocated to the jury room, with some teams utilizing the IT training room and the law library.

Consequently, the jury department moved to Assignment Judge Peter Doyne’s courtroom. The law library had to be closed to the public.

In the following weeks, probation staff shared a limited number of computers, phones and desks with each other and with courthouse staff.

They have managed to see clients and continue their work, adjusting to their situation while waiting to hear where they will go next.

“It is hard to believe the Probation Services Building has been victimized by two hurricanes within the past year,” said Assistant Chief Probation Officer Ron Nowakowski.

“The staff has handled this situation remarkably well considering their displacement, personal losses and limited resources. Their resilience and dedication to those they serve inspires us to find the best and quickest solution to make our division whole once again.”

Plans for a more long-term location to house the probation division have not been finalized, although management and county officials have been exploring several options.

In the courthouse, parts of the family and criminal divisions sustained some water damage, including the family division’s domestic violence office, part of the intake office, and Judge Mary Thurber’s courtroom. One of the criminal division’s two offices also was affected.

Employees were temporarily relocated to other parts of the courthouse while renovations are underway.

Trial Court Administrator Jon Goodman said he was proud of how Bergen employees worked together when so many employees have been displaced.

“Bergen Vicinage staff have faced this adversity with a composure and tenacity that is only outshined by their commitment to their work and their continual striving for excellence,” he said.

*Judiciary Times* is published by the Office of Communications and Community Relations, the Administrative Office of the Courts, for employees of the Judiciary, volunteers who work with the court system and the public.

The chief justice is Stuart Rabner. The acting administrative director of the courts is Judge Glenn A. Grant.

Please send short news articles, photos and suggestions to Mike Mathis, Editor, *Judiciary Times*, Office of Communications and Community Relations, PO Box 037, Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex, Trenton NJ 08625-0037 or by email at Mike.Mathis@judiciary.state.nj.us. Submissions are subject to editing, and not all can be published.

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## Ocean Vicinage Municipal Courts Endure Flooding, Relocations

By Lilia Lopez and Linda Schwartz  
Ocean Vicinage

The effects of Hurricane Sandy will be felt for some time to come in the Ocean Vicinage.

Many people, including some of our employees, suffered great losses as a result of this storm. Among them was Presiding Judge James Liguori, who lost all his personal belongings, car and motorcycle.

The municipal division developed a worst-case-scenario plan to relocate municipal courts off the barrier island to nearby courts without burdening the host courts.

After an assessment of the barrier island courts, it was found that the Mantoloking, Bay Head, Lavallette, Ship Bottom and Beach Haven municipal courts were flooded with about three to four feet of surge and sustained a great deal of damage, necessitating the relocation of these court operations.

The plan was then adjusted to relocate courts where damage was extensive to court offices and buildings.

On Nov. 2, Mantoloking Court Administrator Jennifer Eaton assessed the damage to her court with Mantoloking fireman Scott Hulse.

They removed necessary court records, supplies, tickets, financial records and other items from the second floor through mud and sand to the first floor to continue operations in the Brick Municipal Court.

Three days later, Ship Bottom Court Administrator Jennifer Ingenito and employee Karen Garcia were able to access the court offices and begin the clean up of damaged court records. The court office was relocated temporarily to Barnegat Township.

On Nov. 8, Linda Schwartz and Lilia Lopez gained access to the Bay Head Municipal court with employee Michelle Edgin to assess damage, remove salvageable computer equipment, identify damaged court records for restoration and remove damaged items.

Bay Head Court Administrator



Sand covers the floor of the Mantoloking Municipal Court. Mantoloking was one of the communities hardest hit by Hurricane Sandy.

Tracy McCrystal had an emergency kit prepared before she left for a trip to China. Court operations were moved to Point Pleasant Borough.

The next day, the vicinage helped Beach Haven Municipal Court

Administrator Carol Miller identify damaged court records for restoration and remove and dispose of damaged records from the office. The court was relocated to Harvey Cedars.

### Five Vicinages Host Ceremonies for New Attorneys

Five vicinages held swearing in ceremonies for new attorneys in December.

The Middlesex Vicinage held its annual bar admission for new lawyers on Dec. 7 at the Middlesex County Court House in New Brunswick. Assignment Judge Travis L. Francis, retired Chief Justice James R. Zazzali, and Middlesex County Bar Association President Renee D. Anthony spoke.

The Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage held its ceremony on Dec. 10 at the Atlantic County Civil Courts Building in Atlantic City. Assignment Judge Julio L. Mendez presided. Representatives from the Atlantic and Cape May County Bar Associations gave remarks.

The Cumberland/Gloucester/Salem Vicinage held its ceremony on Dec. 10 in the Justice Complex in Woodbury. Assignment Judge Georgia M. Curio presided over the ceremony and retired Supreme Court Justice John E. Wallace

Jr. administered the oath and gave remarks. Representatives from the Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem bar associations also spoke.

The Morris/Sussex Vicinage held its swearing-in ceremony on Dec. 19 at the Morris County Courthouse in Morristown. Assignment Judge Thomas L. Weisenbeck presided.

The Burlington Vicinage conducted its ceremony on Dec. 14 in the Historic Olde Courthouse in Mount Holly. Assignment Judge Ronald E. Bookbinder presided. Superior Court Judge Evan H.C. Crook and Burlington County Bar Association President Janice Heinold gave remarks.

Participants also watched a video in which retired judges and senior attorneys described the rich history of the bench and bar in Burlington County.

The interviews included valuable advice to new lawyers.

## Sandy Caused Flooding, Closures in Middlesex Vicinage

By **Betty Agin**

Operations Division  
Middlesex Vicinage

The buildings and facilities of the Middlesex Vicinage escaped Hurricane Sandy without flooding or damage, quite lucky considering the magnitude of the storm.

Sandy caused the Raritan River to surge, flooding Route 18 and making New Brunswick inaccessible.

The city was declared in a state of emergency, and only authorized vehicles were permitted within the city limits for several days.

Fallen trees and downed wires made

travel in the area dangerous. Power outages lasted from a few days to more than a week.

Schools were closed for more than a week. Both the main and family courthouses were closed for an unprecedented entire week following the storm.

Travel by mass transit along the Northeast corridor was discontinued for days.

Perth Amboy sustained damage in the city and along the waterfront. Boats were beached on city streets and fallen trees downed electrical wires.

Despite the widespread damage, the probation building was unscathed.

The courthouses in New Brunswick reopened on Nov. 5. Colleagues shared stories of living in the cold and dark during the storm's aftermath. People compared tales of home and property damage and spoke of the plight of the communities along the shore.

Just days later, a northeaster blew in, dusting the area in snow and creating an odd sense of calm after so much tension.

Luckily, power had been restored to most Middlesex County communities, so residents could view the weather from the warmth of their homes.

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### *In Passaic Vicinage, a Tale of Two Storms*

By **June Zieder**

Ombudsman  
Passaic Vicinage

For the Passaic Vicinage, Hurricane Irene and Hurricane Sandy became parallel to the Charles Dickens novel *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Last year Hurricane Irene devastated Passaic County. High wind and flooding destroyed many homes and businesses. Court operations were

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## Damage Minimal in Morris/Sussex Vicinage

By **Janie Rodriguez**

Ombudsman  
Morris/Sussex Vicinage

Hurricane Sandy was unprecedented, but Morris/Sussex Vicinage suffered minimal damage.

A piece of the copper roof at the rear of the Morris County Courthouse blew off, necessitating quick repairs, and some water seeped into the fourth floor.

Otherwise, the facilities in Morristown, Dover, and Newton sustained no damage. Municipal courts in both counties experienced power outages, necessitating the use of generators, but sustained no damage.

The civil division intake area in the county administration building became the command center in Morristown because the municipal building did not lose power, mail was retrieved and processed, court matters were rescheduled by essential staff and payments were processed.

The finance division processed fines, filing fees, bail, and child support payments totaling \$27,925 in Sussex County and \$10,420 in Morris County.

Probation officers were available to ensure that probationers reported as required, especially those from specialized caseloads such as mental health, domestic violence and sex offender as well as drug court

participants.

"We recognize the exceptional partnership that we experienced during Hurricane Sandy in working with county administration and the sheriff's offices in both counties," said Phyllis Hornstra, operations division manager. "The camaraderie demonstrated is much appreciated, and we can't do without it."



Furniture, appliances and other belongings are piled at curbside in front of the Brigantine home of a Judiciary employee who works in the Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage.

# Monmouth Vicinage Weathers Devastation of Hurricane Sandy

**By Janet Slocum**  
Administrative Specialist 4  
Monmouth Vicinage

Monmouth County was designated by federal programs as one of eight counties hardest hit by Hurricane Sandy.

Coastal communities experienced significant devastation. Correspondence from the county Office of Emergency Management indicates that more than 10,000 homes were affected and more than 3,000 were left uninhabitable.

Many shore area businesses were destroyed.

While remaining somber and compassionate toward the individuals affected by the storm, the Monmouth Vicinage continues to focus on the positive.

After the storm, several critical functions were initially performed in the courtroom at the Monmouth County Correctional Facility.

Within a few days, the Tinton Falls Municipal Court opened its doors so the vicinage could expand operations.

The next business day, 70 vicinage employees reported to the Tinton Falls Municipal Court. This included finance division staff to process payments and maintain internal controls, the IT team to provide technology support, human resources staff for payroll and personnel issues, and employees to complete data entry, operate sound recording equipment, address phone inquiries, direct litigants arriving at the facility, and process filings and orders to show cause.

Network problems arose, and some operations were later moved to the Mechanic Street probation office after power was restored.

The vicinage also provided assistance to more than 15 vicinage employees who were affected by the storm.

An anonymous contribution drive to furnish basic necessities was coordinated by human resources division personnel.

From a list of requested items, donations were made by approximately

50 staff members. Clothing, snacks, toiletries and baby and pet supplies were among the items that were collected and delivered to the affected employees.

The Monmouth Vicinage will not forget the satisfaction of banding together as a family to demonstrate our commitment to the community.

## A Tale of Two Storms in Passaic Vicinage

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relocated to Passaic County Technical Institute.

Unlike Hurricane Irene, the winds, flooding and electrical outages that impacted much of New Jersey from Hurricane Sandy had little impact on the Passaic Vicinage.

The main courthouse complex never lost electricity and was fully functional. The probation building and parking garage were without power for two business days.

The probation division's critical functions were shifted to the courthouse. The power outage in the garage was addressed by a shuttle service to the upper floors.

Many of the municipal courts throughout the county were operational by Oct. 31. Phone service was restored to the last court by Nov. 13.

Although both of the storms affected the Passaic Vicinage in different ways, they did not affect the spirit and determination of the staff to serve the public.

It was as Charles Dickens wrote in a *Tale of Two Cities*, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

### Helping Sandy Victims

The National Center for State Courts is seeking contributions to a joint assistance fund for New Jersey and New York court employees and their families who lost homes and belongings in Hurricane Sandy. Donations will directly assist court employees and will be distributed equally in both states. For more information, visit [ncsc.org/courtassistancefund](http://ncsc.org/courtassistancefund).

## How Other Vicinages Fared After Superstorm

### Burlington

In Burlington Vicinage, a tree toppled struck the historic Olde Courthouse, causing minor damage.

Downed trees caused power outages that impacted several areas of court operations. The power surges and outages that caused the communication issues also impacted all elevators in the complex. Each elevator had to be reset manually.

Four judges conducted first appearances, bail reviews, juvenile detention hearings, and emergent civil commitment procedures onsite and telephonically.

One emergent application for a 72-hour waiver of marriage license was granted, allowing a member of the military to be married just before his unit deployed.

### Essex

When Hurricane Sandy came ashore on Oct. 29, it knocked out nearly 100 percent of the power supplying Newark's residents, including the Essex Vicinage facilities.

The immediate impact of the power surges and outages was the strain they placed on vicinage CourtSmart equipment and a loss of temperature control needed for IT equipment and servers.

The following day, numerous inspections of the facilities revealed severe damage to the new Veterans Courthouse roof, requiring it to be replaced immediately.

On Oct. 31, roof repairs and debris removal were underway when a crane supplying goods to the roof upended.

The safety of employees and the restoration of restoring normal facility operating conditions remained a top priority while the precarious position of the crane's 100-foot boom and the threat of falling debris from the damaged roof continued to be monitored for the rest of the week.

When normal operations resumed on Nov. 1, the Veterans Courthouse, the

*Continued on page 7*

## New Jersey Celebrates Adoption Day With Ceremonies, Parties

*Editors Note: National Adoption Day is an annual event in which courts and communities in all 50 states come together to finalize thousands of adoptions of children and to celebrate families who adopt.*

*The observance also is held to raise awareness of the thousands of children in foster care who are waiting to be adopted.*

*This year, nearly 4,500 children in foster care across the country were expected to be adopted during the celebration, according to the National Adoption Day Coalition.*

### Camden

The Camden Vicinage celebrated National Adoption Day on Nov. 16 with the adoption of 38 children. Presiding Family Judge Charles W. Dortch Jr. welcomed the families and others to the event.

“Adoption Day is a wonderful day for the families, children, and the court. It is a happy day that celebrates family,” said Dortch. “Our vicinage is always happy to participate in such a joyous day.”

The adoption hearings were heard by Dortch and Judges Angelo DiCamillo, Edward J. McBride Jr., Deborah Silverman Katz, and Frederick J. Schuck.

There were smiles and tears of joy from families and others in the courtrooms when children were formally joined with their permanent families.

At the end of the hearings, each child received a certificate of adoption and a stuffed teddy bear.

Family division staff members assisted during the event and escorted families to the courtrooms for the hearings.

The event was a collaborated effort of the Camden Vicinage, Camden County Surrogate’s Office, the New Jersey Division of Child Protection & Permanency (DCP&P) and the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Camden County, Inc.

The families enjoyed a lunch provided by the Camden County Surrogate’s Office followed by a dessert reception that was hosted by the family division



Camden Vicinage Judge Charles W. Dortch Jr. speaks at Adoption Day festivities in Camden. The adoptions of 38 children were finalized.

staff at the Camden County Hall of Justice.

The jury assembly room was transformed into a colorful reception area for the children and their families. Children watched a movie and received pajamas, coloring books, and reading books from CASA. DCP&P provided desserts and books.

### Middlesex

The Middlesex Vicinage celebrated National Adoption Day on Nov. 15 at the Middlesex County Courthouse in New Brunswick.

Attorney James P. Nolan, Jr., chair of the Middlesex County Bar Foundation’s National Adoption Day Committee, welcomed the families from Edison, Parlin, Cliffwood Beach, Jamesburg, Highland Park, Piscataway and Somerset.

The festivities began with an opening ceremony in Assignment Judge Travis L. Francis’ courtroom.

Judge Francis gave opening remarks with Middlesex County Surrogate Kevin J. Hoagland.

Hoagland said the county processes between 175 and 200 adoptions each year.

Ten families were formed or expanded as adoption procedures for 10 children were finalized.

Judge Robert Figarotta presided over the legal proceedings, which unfolded as a reception honoring the families and

recognizing National Adoption Day took place just outside the courtroom.

The Middlesex County Bar Foundation donated breakfast, toys and coloring books that were offered to the families during the reception.

Information on adoption was available for those interested in learning more about the adoption process.

Middlesex Vicinage established its annual adoption celebration in 2007.

The program was co-hosted by the Middlesex Vicinage, DCP&P, the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders, the Middlesex County Bar Association and the Middlesex County Surrogate’s Office.

### Monmouth

The seventh annual Monmouth Vicinage Adoption Day Program was held on Dec. 7. The adoptions of 21 children by 18 families were finalized during the vicinage celebration.

As adoptive parents arrived, they received corsages and boutonnières provided by DCP&P.

The program opened with welcoming remarks from Assignment Judge Lawrence M. Lawson.

He described the adoptive families as shining examples for everyone and encouraged the audience to help promote adoption.

“Let us join together as a community to raise our voices for the children,” Lawson said. “Our actions close to home will inspire others and create a sweeping momentum.”

Guest speaker Lisa Von Pier delivered a touching address that brought tears to many eyes.

Von Pier is the director of the Division of Family and Community

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### Did You Know?

Webcasts of Supreme Court oral arguments are streamed on the Judiciary website, [njcourts.com/webcast](http://njcourts.com/webcast). The site includes the schedule for each day’s arguments and the appellate opinion for each case as well as the oral argument schedule for the current court year.

## Hundreds of Children Find Forever Homes on Adoption Day

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Partnerships at DCP&P and is a former Monmouth Vicinage employee.

She began by asking all the children in the room to stand and had parents hold their babies up high.

Von Pier then called for a round of applause for the children and said, "You touch our hearts and build our families."

An adoptive parent of two boys, Von Pier stated that the challenges are overshadowed by the great blessings that children bring to lives. Lawson finalized the adoption of her first son in 2003.

After the program, adoption proceedings took place in courtrooms for children ranging in age from one month to 13 years.

Presiding over the adoptions were Family Division Judges John R. Tassini, Teresa Kondrup Coyle, Paul X. Escandon, Dennis R. O'Brien, Leslie-Ann M. Justus, and Terence P. Flynn, who is retired and on recall in the Children in Court Unit.

Information about the adoption process was available, and a representative from the Monmouth County Department of Children and Families was on hand to answer questions.

### Milestone for TRO Program

*Continued from page 1*

the programs are continuing.

"We're hopeful that hospitals and safe houses in every county in New Jersey will participate in this program," said Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts.

"We want to provide an additional layer of protection to individuals who may have been victims of domestic violence," Judge Grant said.

The programs were funded through the federal Violence Against Women Act, which is administered by the New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice.

New Jersey's Prevention of Domestic Violence Act permits all victims of domestic violence to obtain a restraining order to protect them from

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Two girls get acquainted after an Adoption Day ceremony in Monmouth Vicinage. The adoptions of 21 children by 18 families were finalized during the event in Freehold..

## How Other Vicinages Fared After Hurricane Sandy

*Continued from page 5*

Historic Courthouse and the Hall of Records court staff were diverted to an alternate entrance until repairs to the facilities were completed.

Throughout the remainder of the week, only a limited number of staff were displaced. Jury staff was temporarily relocated from offices on the first floor because of the location of the damaged crane, and several judges were temporarily relocated from their courtrooms and chambers due to water damage.

Despite these setbacks, Essex was able to restore operations and open the doors for business within a few days.

### Hudson

Hurricane Sandy devastated parts of Hudson County, causing millions of dollars in damages to Hudson County facilities and destroying many county vehicles.

Hudson Vicinage was closed from Oct. 29 through Nov. 5. The Administration Building and Brennan Courthouse were spared but lost power for five days. An emergency generator was used to power some lights, elevators and the court's server.

Central Judicial Processing was held at the Hudson County Jail and was staffed by a Jersey City Municipal Court judge and clerk. Other matters were handled by municipal courts, if possible, and emergent duty judges assigned to each division.

### Union

Union Vicinage sustained no major damage from Hurricane Sandy. The probation office in Plainfield was without power for a week and employees worked temporarily from offices in Elizabeth.

The volume of incoming mail decreased because of power problems at the Elizabeth post office and flooding at the regional United States Postal Service hub in Kearny, but mail volume was returned to normal within two weeks.

### Did You Know?

The Judiciary uses Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to communicate the work of the courts to the public and court staff. The Judiciary uses RSS feeds and SMS text alerts to inform users about court news, closings and Supreme Court decisions.

To sign up for these services, go to [njcourts.com](http://njcourts.com) and look for the icons on the right side.

## Access and Fairness Initiative is Focus of Meeting With Sheriffs

By Mike Mathis and Nancy Manuele

Administrative Office of the Courts

Representatives of the New Jersey Judiciary and the New Jersey Sheriff's Association met Oct. 11 to discuss the association's role in the Judiciary's Access and Fairness initiative.

The meeting at Monmouth University, was held to promote the court's commitment to work with governmental entities to promote equal access to the courts and fair treatment of the public.

Sheriff's officers are the first people the public encounters at a courthouse. They screen the public for weapons and drugs, provide security in courtrooms and escort prisoners between jail and courtrooms.

"The public does not know the difference between county employees and state employees and often think we work for the same organization," said Judge Glenn A. Grant acting administrative director of the courts. "In reality, they do not care who works for whom, as long as they are treated respectfully and are able to conduct their court business."

The Access and Fairness Initiative builds upon the Judiciary's many accomplishments in recognizing and responding to challenges through the development of programs and services that improve the courthouse and courtroom experience.

Judge Grant told the sheriffs that they could be included in local meetings facilitated by members of the Supreme Court Committee on Access and Fairness because they are part of the public's experience when visiting courthouses. The committee is developing a statewide campaign for Judiciary employees to maintain and enhance access and fairness for court users.

The Judiciary also has included sheriff's officers in the Access and Fairness Survey Project that will be launched next year. The survey will measure how the public feels about New Jersey's courthouses,

One of the questions on the survey will ask people if they were treated with courtesy and respect from a uniformed officer. The Judiciary will involve the sheriffs in trainings and will invite them to join local and county-based access and fairness committees, Grant said.

"Your dedication to public service is essential," Grant said. "The sheriff's departments are critical to the operation of our courthouses and help to provide security and maintain decorum in our court buildings."

"Judge Grant was most informative and presented a very clear vision of how the committee is developing ways

in which our sheriffs' offices and the Judiciary can work together to continue to provide both a fair and accessible courthouse experience for the public, while ensuring the public's safety and security," said Staci Santucci, the association's deputy executive director and a committee member.

"The members of the Sheriffs' Association of New Jersey are dedicated and committed to continuing to partner with the Judiciary, and we look forward to continuing to serve on the committee," she said.

## TRO Program Marks Anniversary

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further harm if someone is hurting them.

Without leaving the hospital or safe house, a victim can obtain a restraining order during court hours, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. A social worker or nurse will begin the process and make the initial contact with the court.

When a victim files for a restraining order from the hospital or safe house during court hours, a court professional conducts the initial interview and assists the victim to complete the application for a restraining order using a phone and over a closed encrypted video conferencing system. An interpreter is provided if needed.

After the application is complete, the victim appears before a judge or hearing officer over the video network. This is when the victim can discuss the situation with the judge or hearing officer.

The judge or hearing officer makes a decision regarding the application for a temporary restraining order. If the order is granted, court staff faxes a temporary restraining order to the hospital or safe house for the victim's signature.

After the hearing, the judge or hearing officer provides the victim with additional information about the court process and other available resources. The hearing officer then sets a date for the victim to appear in court to obtain a final restraining order.

Participating agencies have responded positively to the programs.

"Saint Peter's is committed to the protection of all women who suffer from physical abuse in the home," said Ronald C. Rak, president and CEO of Saint Peter's Healthcare System. "This program serves that lofty goal and we are eager to play our part."



## Mission Statement of the New Jersey Courts

*We are an independent branch of government constitutionally entrusted with the fair and just resolution of disputes in order to preserve the rule of law and to protect the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution and laws of the United States and this State.*