

NOTICE TO THE BAR


LANDLORD/TENANT – CONTINUATION AND POTENTIAL EXPANSION OF OPTIONAL AFTERNOON CALENDARS; CONCLUSION OF FORMAL PILOT PROGRAM

This notice announces the successful completion of the pilot program for afternoon calendars for landlord/tenant matters, as authorized by the Supreme Court for initial implementation in Somerset County. As set forth in the May 8, 2019 notice to the bar, the Court authorized exploration of landlord/tenant calendars extending after 4:30 p.m. as one method of facilitating access to and participation in court proceedings, especially for persons who face obstacles to appearing during standard court hours. The experience in Somerset will inform expansion of the optional afternoon scheduling model as customized by additional vicinages.

As part of the pilot implementation in Somerset County, we asked participants (tenants, landlords, and attorneys) to submit brief surveys regarding their experiences, including their views on the afternoon as compared to the morning calendar. The information shared demonstrated that some court users – especially self-represented tenants – preferred the afternoon option, which supported them in working during the day rather than missing work to appear in court. Other participants recommended revisions to the timing of the calendar and/or to the types of cases scheduled after 4:30 p.m. Based on this input, Somerset County will be refining its afternoon program (as will be announced by Assignment Judge Ciccone in a separate notice to the bar).

The takeaways from the Somerset County pilot show that there can be a benefit to adding afternoon calendars (in addition to regular morning sessions) for landlord/tenant matters. On this basis, we are concluding the formal pilot program while encouraging other vicinages to consider reviewing and possibly adding an afternoon calendar for landlord/tenant hearings. For counties that choose to pursue this option, Assignment Judges will determine with input from stakeholders the frequency of afternoon calendars, starting and ending times, and procedures for requesting inclusion on morning or afternoon calendars and for rescheduling between multiple calendar options.

Questions on this notice may be directed to Assistant Director for Civil Practice Taironda Phoenix at (609) 815-2900 x54900 or Taironda.Phoenix@njcourts.gov.



Hon. Glenn A. Grant, J.A.D.

Dated: February 28, 2020