

COURT BULLETIN

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e-Filing Goes Live at Worcester District Court



E-filing first. Standing from left to right, Office Manager Mary Carpenter, Assistant Clerk Magistrate Michael Prosser, and Worcester District Court First Justice Paul LoConto look on as Case Coordinator Christine Bradley (seated) reviews and accepts the first electronically filed civil case at the court. The automated case creation process occurred in less than two minutes. Not pictured is e-filing team member Clerk Magistrate Thomas Noonan.

The new case filing system, known as eFileMA, enables filers, clerks, court staff, and judges to manage documents online. The system also lets court users file multiple documents at no extra cost and pay for filing fees by credit card online. The new system eliminates unnecessary courthouse trips, and will reduce a paper-intensive environment and workload for court staff.

Next steps. The initial pilot will continue with a small number of law firms in Worcester. The team will assess the results and then offer general e-filing to attorneys filing civil cases with the Worcester District Court. The remaining pilots at the Brighton Boston Municipal Court and Essex Probate and Family Court will quickly follow as next to go online. The SJC Clerks Office also went live with e-Filing last month. Two additional Appellate Court pilots will follow.

Court Officer Exam Draws Over 1,000



Saturday exam. More than 1,000 hopeful Court Officer candidates filled the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center last month to complete the 2½ hour exam for Court Officers, the first step in the mandated, multi-stage process towards becoming a Trial Court Security professional. The Trial Court hopes to hire approximately 90 additional court officers by the end of this fiscal year. Those who pass the exam will be notified before [Thanksgiving](#). Successful candidates will also need to complete a Physical Assessment Test (PAT), now under development, and a series of other steps in the selection process.

A Salute to Veterans Day...

Special Feature: Honored to Serve - Veterans in the Trial Court

Profiles in courage. In honor of Veterans Day, this piece features just a few of the hundreds of Trial Court judges and employees who have proudly served in the armed forces. While space limits us from writing about all of you, we would like to thank you all for your service to our country and the courts.

You might be surprised to learn how many people working alongside you have served our country. Their careers in the military often bring them to their work in the courts.

"The court system and the military are similar in that they are both highly complex, hierarchical organizations." observes Superior Court Judge Shannon Frison, who was drawn to serve in the military because it allowed her to pursue her legal career and be physically active. "Both the courts and the military can be quite insular. People on the outside often don't understand the protocol or the formalities of [how each system operates,](#)" she says.>>

Three New Veterans Treatment Courts Open



A proud day. *State Secretary of Veterans' Services Francisco Ureña congratulates Judge Kevin Gaffney at the opening of a new Veterans Treatment Court at the Fenton Judicial Center in Lawrence, one of three new District Court Veterans Treatment Court sessions to open in time for Veterans Day. Sessions also opened this month at District Courts in Holyoke and Framingham. These latest specialty court sessions join those held for veterans at the Dedham District Court, run by Judge Mary Hogan Sullivan since 2012, and at BMC Central with Judge Eleanor Sinnott, a Navy veteran.*

Judge Gaffney, a veteran who served a combined 23 years of active and reserve service with the Coast Guard and Army, presides over the new court session. Judge Laurie MacLeod presides over the Holyoke District Court veterans' session, while Air Force veteran Judge Michael Fabbri presides over the special session at the Framingham/Natick District Court.

Read local coverage in the [Lawrence Eagle-Tribune](#) and the [Springfield Republican](#).

How Veterans Treatment Courts work:

- District Court defendants are veterans who plead guilty to a misdemeanor or minor felony criminal charge and enter the court voluntarily; in the BMC defendants are pre-disposition.
- Instead of being sentenced to jail time, defendants agree to enter an intensive 18-month probation period.
- Defendants check-in weekly for 18 months with the same presiding judge.
- There is regular, random drug and alcohol testing.
- Participants must go to treatment depending on their situation, such as for substance abuse problems or mental health treatment.
- Homeless veterans receive help finding housing.
- Participants work with a mentor, who is also a veteran.

Veterans Treatment Courts: Background and sessions.

New York was the first state in the nation to open a veterans treatment court in 2008. In Massachusetts, the first veterans treatment court opened in Dedham in 2012 under the guidance of Judge Mary Hogan Sullivan, who also serves as the Director of Specialty Courts for the District Court Department.

Court	Presiding Judge	Session Day and Time
Middlesex County Veterans Treatment Court located at the Framingham/Natick District Court	Judge Michael Fabbri	Mondays at 2:30 p.m.
Norfolk County Veterans Treatment Court located at the Dedham District Court	Judge Mary Hogan Sullivan	Tuesdays at 2:30 p.m.
Western Massachusetts Veterans Treatment Court located at Holyoke District Court	Judge Laurie MacLeod	Wednesdays at 2:30 p.m.
Essex County Veterans Treatment Court located at Lawrence District Court	Judge Kevin Gaffney	Thursdays 2:30 p.m.
Suffolk County Veterans Treatment Court located at the Central Division of the Boston Municipal Court	Judge Eleanor Sinnott	Fridays at 10:00 a.m.

Celebrating Success...

The Court Bulletin highlights success stories happening throughout the court system. Please send us your examples of local successes.

Trial Court Celebrates Excellence Award Winners



SJC Chief Justice Ralph Gants, Trial Court Chief Justice Paula Carey, Court

Administrator Harry Spence, SJC Facilities Director John Bello, and Regional Facilities Manager Matthew Sepe celebrated with the Facilities Management Fenton Center Repair and Renovation Team members: Pedro Andrade, James Cawley, Angela Coutinho, Richard Croswell, Glen Deane, Norman Eldredge, Anthony Imperial, Ivan Jusino, Michael Lane, James Leonard, John McDonald, Alex Mendez, Vincent Moretti, Joseph O'Donoghue, Nelson Santos, Mark Wong, and Steven Zalewski. This team of individuals from the Fenton Judicial Center, Ruane Judicial Center, Haverhill District Court, and the Lowell District and Superior Courts worked after hours and on weekends to renovate the basement level office areas of the Fenton Judicial Center after a pipe burst there on the night of Super Bowl Sunday 2015. [See more event photos>>](#)

Innovation and passion. The Trial Court held its annual Excellence Awards at the Adams Courthouse on [November 17](#). This year's 80 individual and team award recipients represented a cross section of outstanding work across the court system. The Trial Court has held this special ceremony since 1987.

"Each of the 2015 award winners has demonstrated excellence in a variety of important ways," said Trial Court Chief Justice Paula Carey. "Their leadership and creativity serves as an inspiration to all of us working each day to achieve our mission of justice with dignity and speed."

[2015 Excellence Award Program](#)

Major Milestone Achieved: MassCourts Implementation Completed

Monday, [November 9th](#) marked the official completion for the Trial Court's transition to the uniform case management MassCourts system with the conversion of the Central Division of the Boston Municipal Court. This conversion substantially completes the implementation of MassCourts across the Trial Court, including Probation Services.

"An implementation of this scope would not have been possible without the combined efforts of a dedicated group of IT staff, backed by extensive support from managers and employees in every Trial Court Department. Together everyone has worked with dedication and commitment to implement this common case management system throughout our organization," said Court Administrator Harry Spence.

The MassCourts system now routinely processes over one million court-entered transactions each business day.

"The effort to implement MassCourts across the Commonwealth is the result of years of sustained work across the entire court system," said the Judiciary's Chief Information Officer Craig Burlingame, who also thanked the Fiscal Department's efforts in particular for supporting the financial functions that are available in the MassCourts application. "The Fiscal Department undertook training for cashiers and bookkeepers in every court location, and has provided telephone support on financial features for court personnel from the beginning of the MassCourts rollout," said Mr. Burlingame.

Next steps. Now that the MassCourts statewide implementation is complete, Judicial Information Services anticipates many additional features and interfaces will be built upon the foundation that's been established. Significant among the features being worked on are: electronic filing for civil and criminal

cases, new interfaces for the Department of Revenue, and for *mittimus* and *habeas corpus* transactions with custodial institutions.

Focus Groups Discuss Self-Represented Court Users



Focusing on service: More than 30 Trial Court employees from across the Commonwealth volunteered to participate in two focus groups held at the Worcester Law Library with (in center, from left) Court Administrator Harry Spence, Trial Court Chief Justice Paula Carey, and Access to Justice Special Advisor Judge Dina Fein. Read more, see photos and a list of [focus group participants](#)>>

Office of Community Corrections Holds Open Houses



An open door. Probation officers and court personnel learn about the community-based and educational services offered for probationers at the Suffolk County Community Corrections Center in Boston.

The Massachusetts Probation Service's Office of Community Corrections (OCC) recently held open houses in Boston and Brockton. The centers facilitate enhanced supervision for high-risk probationers, parolees, and pre-release offenders through a combination of services, including cognitive behavioral treatment for criminality and substance use disorder, education, job development and life skills training. The centers also provide accountability measures such as day reporting, drug and alcohol screening, electronic monitoring, and community service.

Trial Court Chief Justice Paula Carey, Court Administrator Harry Spence, and Commissioner of Probation Edward Dolan attended both events, along with court staff and criminal justice partners from Suffolk, Middlesex, Plymouth, and Bristol Counties. Center staff were on hand to provide tours of the facilities and explain the latest programs and practices they use to help clients become productive and healthy members of the community.

By the numbers. Community Corrections Centers (CCCs) are making a measurable difference: A recent internal study showed an average recidivism rate of 35.5% for 13,681 criminal offenders placed at CCCs from 2008-2011. The OCC study defined a recidivist as someone arraigned for a new offense within a year of beginning enhanced supervision at the CCC. By comparison, in 2009 the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS) validation study reported recidivism of 58.9% for high risk and 69.2% for very-high risk males using a similar recidivism standard. Further, in 2011 the Pew Center reported a national average recidivism rate of 43.3% for prisoners released in 2004 and tracked for three years.

Next up: Worcester Juvenile Open House. The Worcester Juvenile Resource Center, an OCC program for Juvenile Probation and the Department of Youth Services, will hold a ribbon cutting and open house at its new location on 70 James Street in Worcester on [Monday, December 7](#) from 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. All are welcome.

Now Online...

Center of Excellence for Specialty Courts Launches Website

The Center of Excellence, a partnership of the Massachusetts Trial Court, UMass Medical School, the Department of Public Health, and the Department of Mental Health, recently launched its new website, www.macoe.org.

"We've created this new site to be a vital, go-to resource for judges, probation officers, clinicians, attorneys, drug court participants and their families, and the public," said Trial Court Chief Justice Paula M. Carey. "We expect that interest in the Center will only grow as more specialty courts become available to those who urgently need access to the types of specialized intensive probation and treatment programs."



Visit the new Center of Excellence for [Specialty Courts website>>](#)

Advance Sheets Go Digital: What You Need to Know

What's changing? Advance sheets of the Massachusetts Reports and the Massachusetts Appeals Court have moved from paper to an online "eBook" format. LexisNexis has set up on demand webinars for users to answer questions. Additional details about the transition will be posted on the Trial Court's Intranet homepage ([TrialCourtWeb](#) - available only from court computers) as they become available.

Why is this happening? The Reporter of Decisions has contracted with LexisNexis to provide you with online, searchable versions of advance sheets, which will make it easier to access decisions from any location, including outside of the court system. You'll be able to download the advance sheets and read them later with or without access to the Internet. If you prefer to read advance sheets online without downloading the materials in an eBook format, select "Read in your browser" when you click onto the new website.

Who does this affect? Online accounts for court users have been established for advance sheets, including: judges, clerks, registers, judicial case managers, recorders, title examiners, assistants, and others selected by their departmental administrative offices.

For more details, see [Executive Office Transmittal 15-22>>](#)

On the Hill...

The Committee Hearing Process, Part 2: When a Bill Gets a Favorable Report

As a follow up to last month's feature on how bills go to a legislative committee and the hearing process, we look at the next step...

When a bill gets a "favorable report," it means that the committee reviewing the bill recommends that the Legislature consider the potential new law in one of three ways:

1. "as-is"
2. with certain changes; or
3. as a completely new draft

The Readings. All bills go through three readings. After a bill has its first reading, it may get referred to another committee for further review. For example, if a bill concerns finances or potential spending, it will be referred to either the House or Senate Committee on Ways and Means, depending on whether the bill originated in the House or Senate.

At its second reading, legislators can debate the bill, and propose amendments or changes.

The debate process gives lawmakers a chance to listen to arguments for and against a proposed bill.

After a thorough review, the bill heads back to the House or Senate floor for a third reading.

At its third reading, the bill is again the focus of debate and amendments in the House or Senate. Once the debate ends, a vote is taken on whether to pass the bill to be "engrossed," or typed in special script on parchment paper by the Engrossing Division.

Upon a favorable vote by the House or Senate, the bill advances to the other legislative branch.

Next month, we'll cover what happens to the bill once it is engrossed.

The Courts & The Community...

Brockton Trial Court Thanks Volunteer Mabelene Bennett



The Plymouth Juvenile Court's Chief Probation Officer Joel West (left) and Probation Officer James Quinn take a moment to thank Trial Court volunteer Mabelene Bennett before the National Night Out event at Brockton's Rox Stadium this summer.

"Ms. Bennett has been a fixture at our courthouse and in the Brockton community for many years," says CPO West. "As a volunteer greeter, she's helped countless people when they first come through our doors. She sets the tone for their court visit by treating everyone with respect and kindness."

National Magna Carta Exhibit Visits the Adams Courthouse

The American Bar Association and the Law Library of Congress have created a traveling exhibit to raise awareness about *Magna Carta* and its enduring relevance to democratic ideals around the world.

The exhibit provides education about the 800-year old *Magna Carta*, its history, and influence on modern society. It also features the numerous legal research services and resources available through the Law Library of Congress.

The exhibit will be at the John Adams Courthouse in the Great Hall from [November 19th](#) to [January 8th](#).

For more information about the exhibit, visit the [American Bar Association's website](#).

Your news. Your Court Bulletin.

What's on your mind? Do you have a newsworthy topic or question you'd like to see answered?

Want to share a photo from an event at your courthouse with your Trial Court colleagues from around the Commonwealth? Write us anytime: execofc@jud.state.ma.us.

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Coming up in December:

The Trial Court Celebrates Adoption Day

Evidence-Based Tools: New Risk Assessments