



Full Court Press



Newsletter of the District of Columbia Courts

February 2014

February update from the DC Courts Executive Team: Values, Flexplace, COLA and Employee Viewpoint Survey

We have kicked off the year with two important initiatives underway. We believe that these initiatives demonstrate our organizational effort to continue enhancing our Great Place to Work culture and the difference that employee feedback has made.

Living Our Values

One of the cornerstones of our Strategic Plan, and an element that we think will truly make a difference, is our court values: Accountability, Excellence, Fairness, Integrity, Respect and Transparency. In order to achieve the objective of exempli-

fying court values, we have been planning and will soon launch an initiative to integrate the values and behaviors into the culture and day-to-day operations of the Courts. We will be sponsoring a group of volunteers responsible for implementing the values at the Division level, and will also be holding focus group discussions. Please stay tuned for more information in the upcoming weeks. You will be invited to share your thoughts on how we are doing in living our values and what will support us in living consistently with our values.

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What Do Courtroom Clerks Do? A Look at Courtroom Clerks in the Criminal Division

By Helena Moore, Courtroom Clerk, Criminal Division

Courtroom clerks are one of the essential components of the administration of justice. In fact, clerks are both highly visible and uniquely responsible for multiple converging interests in any given moment. It is said to require those who do it to be 2-parts manager extraordinaire and 1-part freelance magician with bounty hunter capabilities.

The job itself is far more demanding and complex than most realize. Some have lik-

ened it to trying to corral the mythical hydra – a creature with multiple, propagating heads. Managing a dynamic courtroom can prove to be mentally taxing and emotionally draining so much so that words cannot adequately describe the rigor or the rewards. To truly understand all that it entails and what is required, you must be immersed in it.

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Two New Magistrate Judges Join the Superior Court

Renee Raymond and Sean Staples have been appointed as magistrate judges, joining the DC Superior Court in January. They have begun their assignments in the Domestic Violence Unit (Magistrate Judge Raymond) and the Family Court (Magistrate Judge Staples).



Magistrate Judge Raymond with DC Superior Court Chief Judge Lee Satterfield

Magistrate Judge Raymond is a native of Los Angeles. She graduated with honors from Yale University and received her JD at New York University Law School. She has been with the DC Public Defender Service for over 20 years, serving as a training director and more recently as a supervising attorney. Magistrate Judge Raymond is also an adjunct professor at the American University Washington College of Law.

Magistrate Judge Staples received his undergraduate degree from Syracuse University and was a legislative assistant and

assistant press secretary to Congressman Hamilton Fish (R-NY). He graduated *magna cum laude* from The Catholic University of America Columbus School of Law and then clerked for Judge Robert Morin in the DC Superior Court. Magistrate Judge Staples comes to the court from the Children's Law Center (CLC), where he served as the *Guardian Ad Litem* Project Director, managing over half of CLC's 80 person staff. Prior to joining CLC, Magistrate Judge Staples was a clinical professor in the criminal division of the DC Law Students in Court program, teaching criminal trial practice and procedure and supervising law students in the representation of adults and juveniles in DC Superior Court. He previously worked as an assistant public defender in Fairfax, VA and as a sole practitioner.



Magistrate Judge Staples is sworn in by DC Superior Court Chief Judge Lee Satterfield.

Employee Self Service *Empowering Engaged Employees*

In a continued effort to provide *HR @ Your Fingertips* and to meet our strategic goal of leveraging "state of the art technology to streamline HR service processes, improve employee access to information, and enable the delivery of effective, efficient, and innovative HR practices," the Human Resources Division is pleased to introduce the **Employee Self Service (ESS) feature of the** new Human Resources Information System (HRIS). The new feature will be available to you in the summer of 2015.

ESS is an innovative and user-friendly feature of the HRIS that you can use to:



- Self-manage Time and Attendance,
- Have greater access to personnel information,
- Self-enroll or make changes to benefits plans.

Even more exciting is the fact that ESS will be secure, web-based and online. YOU can access it anywhere at any time, giving YOU greater flexibility in managing YOUR day-to-day personnel matters.



HR will be with you every step of the way, guiding you through the entire process. We will offer a full array of training to staff, timekeepers, certifiers and supervisors. And, of course, the HRIS

project team will be available to assist you with any questions or concerns.

HR is very excited about the implementation of the new HRIS and all the ESS features and advancements it has to offer DC Courts employees.

More information and updates will be provided as we get closer to a summer 2015 implementation.

HRIS Project Team
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Daniel Lee, HRIS Project Manager
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Employee Self Service is an innovative and user-friendly feature of the HRIS that you can use to: Self-manage Time and Attendance; have greater access to personnel information,; and self-enroll or make changes to benefits plans.



DisabilityFLEX: Flexible Disability Insurance Coverage

To family and loved ones, you're invincible, invulnerable, larger than life. And why shouldn't they think that? You've always been there for them. You work hard every day to support your home and your lifestyle. But what if you suffer a non-work related injury or illness and can't bring in the money needed to support yourself or your family?

Take heart: the roof you sleep under, the car you drive, the lifestyle you've built, may be protected with DisabilityFlex insurance.

DisabilityFLEX is a non-occupational short term disability plan which pays a weekly benefit amount if you cannot work

because of a disabling illness or injury. It is designed to help protect an employee's paycheck for a short period of time (up to 2 years) if he or she becomes sick or injured outside of the workplace. It's a flexible, voluntary coverage

DisabilityFLEX is a non-occupational Short Term Disability plan which pays a weekly benefit amount if you cannot work because of a disabling illness or injury.

that helps empower employees to tailor disability insurance to their unique needs.

Income Protection Their Way

DisabilityFLEX is all about choice. Employees can select two options from each of the following:

- When coverage begins. Commencement options include 15 or 30 days.
- How long coverage lasts. Duration options include 13, 26, or 104 weeks.

Employees can then choose from the options that meet their needs. In addition, they can choose how much they receive – a weekly flat dollar amount (\$200-\$1000), up to 50% of their earnings.

Simple and Straightforward

Good News! Coverage from DisabilityFLEX removes the need for medical underwriting. In addition, there are no offsets for the other income benefits, which means the coverage amount selected is the exact amount received.

More information will be coming your way in the spring.

What Do Courtroom Clerks Do? A Look at Courtroom Clerks in the Criminal Division

Continued from front cover

The Criminal Division at the Superior Court handles a high number of cases. Managing these cases effectively requires using separate calendars, which include: Felony I, Felony II, Misdemeanor and Traffic. Each calendar is unique unto itself. Although clerks must have a solid base of organizational, administrative and communication skills in order to manage daily tasks, each calendar type will require a good measure of adaptability to the specific legalities, courtroom procedures and judicial preferences in order to successfully direct daily operations.

I sat down with Svetlana Polonchuk, a 3-year courtroom veteran, to get her perspective on this highly visible yet somewhat enigmatic courthouse position. The Criminal Division clerk staff comes from a wide range of backgrounds. Svetlana was initially attracted to the position shortly after graduating from college. With a degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Maryland, College Park, the job was a logical option that would allow her time to plot a potential career path in her field of choice.

HM: Can you describe a typical day as a courtroom clerk?

SP: *I begin each day with quiet time before the courtroom is opened to the public. It's the calm before the storm. This is when I work to plan and prepare for the day. With an average daily caseload of 45 or more, it's critical that I'm properly prepared to make things run as smoothly as possible. I review the history of each case to be familiar with it. I get possible locations for attorneys because they're often hard to find. I check for outstanding warrants and completion of diversion*

conditions. I prep for any arraignments to be given. Bond statuses for any detained defendants have to be verified. After all that is done, the equipment has to be checked to make sure it's working properly. The audio recording system has to be initiated for tagging [indexing] cases as they're called. I field calls from Quality Assurance Branch staff, law clerks, chambers staff, the Marshal Service and Pre-Trial Ser-

"Next time you see a courtroom clerk, smile and let them know how much you appreciate their services."

VICES Agency staff. This all happens before 9:00am!

The courtroom doors must be opened by 9:00am and then I am swamped with checking in lawyers, defendants and directing anyone who is lost. At 9:30, the judge usually comes to the bench and the day shifts into another gear. From there on, it's literally a matter of maintaining law and order among all the 'moving parts.' This involves tracking who is speaking and what is being said while simultaneously continuing to answer phone calls, promptly attending to the judge's requests, correctly preparing orders and paperwork in real time, updating bench warrants and drug test results, setting dates on the court's calendar and directing attorneys and their clients when their case is done. For me, timing is everything!



Svetlana Polonchuk

HM: What do you wish the public knew about the service you provide?

SP: *Although it may look as though clerks aren't doing much sitting next to the judge, that is far from the truth. The clerk is the heart of the courtroom and the backup repository of knowledge for the judge. Without the clerk, the courtroom could not function efficiently. The position requires you to focus on multiple matters simultaneously while being held to rigorous quality standards. A good clerk can appear to do all of these things seamlessly but the job requires a great deal of mental focus. Clerks are often unsung heroes in the judicial process.*

Svetlana admits that, like many things, this job has its share of challenges and rewards. The biggest challenge for her is maintaining a positive attitude despite the intense daily stress level. However, no good deed goes unrewarded. If the self satisfaction that she feels after surviving a hard days' work is the cake, then the certainty of never having to take work home with her is all frosting.

Continues on page 6

Closing of the Appeals Coordinator's Office: A Trip Down Memory Lane

By Anita A. Alexander, Identity Consolidation Supervisor



From left to right: Melissa Gardiner, Shanda Fulwood, Anita Alexander, Tiffani Wiggins and Janquale Lawrence.

The Appeals Coordinator's Office of the Superior Court's Special Operations Division served as the liaison between the Superior Court and the Court of Appeals for more than 30 years. Staff processed thousands of appeals, and ordered, processed and certified thousands of transcripts, orders and mandates.

Last year, an initiative to transfer the appeal process to the individual divisions was implemented. The staff and I conducted training for this transition, and our Special Operations Division Director, Herbert Rouson, worked closely with us throughout the entire process to facilitate a smooth transition. The office was officially closed on September 30, 2013.



The cake to celebrate the many years of service.

As we look ahead to the new changes, I think back and cherished memories come to mind. Shanda Fulwood, Melissa Gardiner, Janquale Lawrence and Tiffani Wiggins were the last deputy clerks.

Knowledgeable about the needs of both courts, they

diligently researched, processed and compiled case documents for the "appeal record" using jacket and CourtView documents and exhibits. Previous staff researched and or-

dered transcripts, prepared transcript vouchers from motions for judicial review and for the Court Reporting and Recording Division.

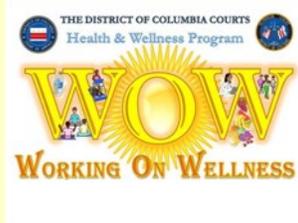
As the appeals officer for almost 25 years, I reviewed Court of Appeals orders and mandates, developed system guidelines and procedures, conducted training for judicial staff and reengineered work processes to streamline operations. I remember that because of a two-year work backlog, my first initiative was to order pre-drilled two-hole punched photocopier paper. This eliminated using a two-hole punch for thousands of pages!

Mildred Smith, the former assistant appeals officer for almost 16 years, reported statistical data, responded to complex customer inquiries, developed an exhibits procedure along with other undertakings. She had such a welcoming personality and provided excellent customer service.

Staff efforts were acknowledged. To cherish our time together and celebrate the years of service, we had a party as the office closed. The staff was treated to a fun filled afternoon "game party" with prizes, cake with their names, old fashioned candy basket, fruit and more. They came to work and found the office decorated with balloons, party banners and special signs recognizing them as the "ACO Super Stars." They received certificates, cloth flowers and other treats as a thank you for their committed service to the court and the residents of the District of Columbia.



The author!



FEBRUARY IS HEART AWARENESS MONTH

February has been designated as Heart Awareness Month. The American Heart Association recommends that heart attack prevention begin by age 20. This means assessing your risk factors and working to keep them low. For those over 40, or those with multiple risk factors, it's important to calculate the risk of developing cardiovascular disease in the next ten years. Many first-ever heart attacks or strokes are fatal or disabling, so prevention is critical. The sooner you begin comprehensive risk reduction, the longer and stronger your heart will beat.

Lifestyle Changes

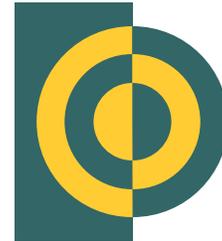
Your lifestyle is not only your best defense against heart disease and stroke, it's also your responsibility. If you smoke, quit. Choose good nutrition; reduce blood cholesterol; lower blood pressure; be physically active every day; manage diabetes; aim for a healthy weight; reduce stress and limit alcohol.

For additional information go to:

www.heart.org

For questions, contact WOW at 879-1850

There is absolutely more to the courtroom clerk than meets the eye. It is no coincidence that the clerk's position is directly next to the judge. While the judge has the duty to fairly and impartially adjudicate the matters of the day, the clerk is ultimately responsible for creating and maintaining an accurate and error-free record of each case heard by the court. To accomplish this, many people, agencies, parties and information must be precisely managed and timed. The clerk bears the responsibility of being the hub of the courtroom – the one through whom most all of the information flows, whether it is good, bad or otherwise. So, the next time you see a courtroom clerk, smile and let them know how much you appreciate their services.



The ***Full Court Press***
is published by the
District of
Columbia Courts

Inquiries should be submitted to
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February Update from the DC Courts Executive Team (continued from front cover)

Flexplace

We announced a pilot project to evaluate whether a flexplace alternative may be feasible for the Courts.

An initial Planning Working Group has been assembled and as the project continues to move forward, we anticipate greater involvement from the Divisions in its planning and execution.

We have spoken before about the challenges that telework poses in our context. One of the central challenges is the nature of our work, which requires intensive contact with the public. Yet we are committed to exploring the flexplace option and conducting an evaluation to see whether such option might be feasible for us. The pilot project will launch in the spring and continue for approximately six months. The evaluation of the project will follow thereafter.



From left to right: Court of Appeals Clerk Julio Castillo; Executive Officer Anne Wicks; Deputy Executive Officer Cheryl Bailey; and Superior Court Clerk Duane Delaney.

flexibility options are available to our employees. The Courts currently allow for several work-flexibility formats—including compressed and flexible schedules—on a case-by-case basis and in consideration of business needs. To explore these options, please discuss arrangements with your manager and work with

the Human Resources Division to apply and obtain approval.

COLA and Employee Viewpoint Survey

We are also pleased to announce that a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) pay increase went into effect in January. The COLA, a 1% increase to the existing Court pay schedule, is consistent with the COLA increase provided to Federal employees.

We also wish to thank everyone who provided feedback through the Employee Viewpoint Survey. The feedback you provide is incredibly important and we look forward to seeing the results and continue thinking of initiatives to enhance our Great Place to Work.

As always, thank you for everything you do and please be on the lookout for an invite to our next brown-bag lunch in the spring.

DC Courts Executive Team

*Anne B. Wicks, Executive Officer
Cheryl Bailey, Deputy Executive Officer
Julio Castillo, Clerk of the Court of Appeals
Duane Delaney, Clerk of the Superior Court*

ACCOUNTABILITY
We take responsibility for our conduct and are answerable for our performance.

EXCELLENCE
We provide the highest quality of service in everything we do.

FAIRNESS
We are impartial in our actions, decisions and treatment of others.

INTEGRITY
We demonstrate the highest standards of ethical behavior.

RESPECT
We treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and understanding.

TRANSPARENCY
We are open in our processes and communicate our actions and decisions clearly.

When we think of flexplace or telework, there are several points that are worth highlighting and repeating to make sure that we all have the right expectations. Flexplace in our context, even as a pilot project, does not mean a primarily remote or home-based workforce. Employees under flexplace arrangements will still be required to be at the office most days. We should also note that flexplace represents a slightly different way of doing business, but you—and more importantly, the public—should not see any disruptions in our core functions and operations.

Another point that bears emphasizing is that other



Rave Reviews

Vic Simon, Katrina Stallworth, George Barbour, Stefanie Lis
Criminal Division, Courtroom Clerks



Vic Simon

Rave Review from a Practicing Attorney

This is to let you know about my deep gratitude for the courtroom clerks at the Superior Court. Recently, while already in the courthouse, I learned about a family emergency. I needed to get out and head to the hospital as quickly as possible. I walked over to the courtroom where I had hearings scheduled. It was before 9:00 AM.



Katrina Stallworth

I caught Mr. Vic Simon as he was going through the door and informed him

about the family emergency. He responded swiftly, walking me over to speak with Ms. Katrina Stallworth in the courtroom. I had several hearings in that courtroom that day and Ms. Stallworth obtained dates from me to reschedule all the hearings.

Ms. Stallworth then went beyond the call of duty. She called the two other courtrooms where I had hearings scheduled. She passed me the phone and I spoke with Mr. George Barbour, who took dates from me. Ms. Stallworth then called the other courtroom clerk. I spoke with Ms. Stefanie Lis, who provided some information I was looking for and then took alternate dates. I was out in no time at all and at the hospital's trauma unit in no time at all.



Stefanie Lis

This series of competent and caring acts by Ms. Stallworth and the other courtroom clerks made me remember an incident a couple of years ago when yet another courtroom clerk took superb initiative that made things work.

The level of competence of the courtroom clerks at the Superior Court is nothing short of first rate. I've witnessed their commitment and care in my years of practice here.



George Barbour