

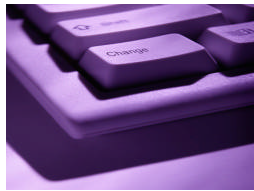
BENCHMARKS

JULY 2007

REPORT FROM OUR ISC CHAIR

BY INDIGENT SERVICES COMMITTEE CHAIR
CIRCUIT JUDGE DON T. SIRMONSINSIDE THIS
ISSUE

SPOTLIGHT ON THE	2
TECH TALK	2
FROM THE PERSONNEL DESK	3
BIRTHDAYS & HOLIDAYS	4



As chair
of the
Indigent
Services

Committee for the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit, I want to try to keep you informed of legislative changes which will impact the justice system. One such change is the creation of the new Regional Counsel position and the **Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel** which is based on the recently passed Senate Bill 1088 and signed into law as Chapter 2007-62, Laws of Florida, on May 24, 2007.

While it is contemplated that a majority of the conflict criminal cases, dependency cases, civil cases, and appeals will be handled by the newly created **Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel**, the new law continues to provide for private counsel to be appointed to a local registry of court-appointed counsel in the event that this office has a conflict. Our circuit registry is still viable; however, many of the attorneys have listed themselves as "Inactive" and have NOT signed the new JAC contract which means they are ineligible to take cases

effective July 1, 2007. Conflict attorneys can continue to serve on cases they were appointed PRIOR to July 1, 2007 under their existing contracts (pre July 2007 contracts).

Some changes you do need to be immediately aware of and pay close attention. The Legislature has enacted a flat rate schedule and you should review these rates. Also, the Indigent Services Committee and their functions will no longer exist beginning October 1, 2007. Instead, the Chief Judge of each circuit shall take over the role of accepting applications for those attorneys who are interested in being listed on a county's registry and for what case category. Chief Judge Hentz McClellan and I have not worked out the details concerning the process for this transition; however, I believe it will be easy for you, easy for him, and easy for each Clerk.

I mentioned the Clerk because under this new law, the Clerks will become responsible for maintaining the registry for their respective county and identifying the new court appointed attorney who is eligible for the next appointment in a particular case. I certainly do not have all the

answers to this transition. It will be a complicated one. What I do know is that I have worked with dedicated individuals since 2004 to ensure that our court system continues to have professional individuals available to the courts. First, I want to thank my colleagues on the committee, Public Defender Herman Laramore, and members of the private Bar, Mr. Waylon Graham and Mr. Ross McCloy, for their many, many hours that they have dedicated to this committee. This committee WORKED and worked hard!

Next, I want to thank court administrative staff who helped with our committee and the "unfunded mandate". These staff members include court reporters Becky Akins and Niki Jones, who reported every meeting and prepared transcripts as required by law. I must also applaud the talents of Administrative Secretary Darlene Barker who developed, ON HER OWN, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3...

FACTS ON THE
FOURTEENTH
CIRCUIT

- One of the largest geographic circuits in the state of Florida.
- Circuit stretches from the Emerald Coast of the Gulf of Mexico to the Alabama and Georgia state lines.
- 14th Circuit has county seats in the Central time zone as well as the Eastern time zone.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE CIRCUIT

BE PREPARED

Contributed By Joel Booth, Court Operations Manager

I know that the subject of emergency preparedness is one that we all tend to

ignore as long as possible! Remember, it is better to have an emergency plan in place and never have to use it rather than having an emergency arise and not have a plan in place to address it! Our state had a wake up call during the 2005 hurricane season and learned many life lessons that helped enhance our level of preparedness. However, it seems that our human nature allows us to succumb to complacency as the memories of that catastrophic hurricane season slowly fade away.

Let me take this opportunity to encourage each of you to update your family emergency plan. You can visit the Florida Division of Emergency Management's web page at

www.floridadisaster.org in order to create a personalized family plan. This web page also has a link to the State Emergency Response Team's website which will provide you with all of the latest disaster preparedness information in our state. This site is also a good resource for other pertinent emergency preparedness information.

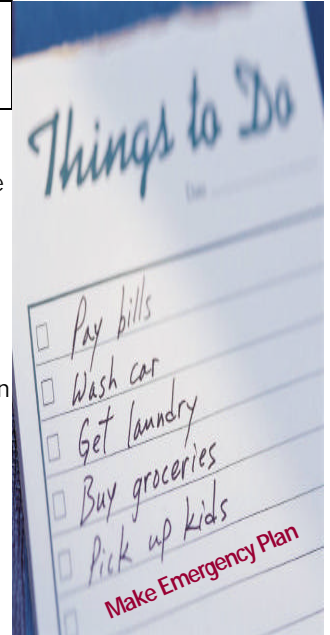
If you would like up to date information on the State Court's level of preparedness you may visit their Emergency Preparedness website at www.flcourts.org and click on the emergency preparedness

tab. Up to date information relating to our nation's preparedness and response to an influenza pandemic can be obtained by visiting the following website:

www.pandemicflu.gov.

I encourage you not to confine your thoughts to hurricanes when creating an emergency plan. Recent events remind us that disasters can come in all forms: floods, fires, tornadoes, blackouts, etc. Be proactive when establishing these plans and prepare for the worst!

If I can be of any assistance as it relates to emergency preparedness, please do not hesitate to give me a call.



TECH TALK

Contributed by Gary Hagan

Did you know that our website (<http://www.jud14.flcourts.org>) has approximately 400 pages of information? You can find Administrative Orders from 1990 to present, employment opportunities, Court Holidays, and many other items of interest. The website contains items such as forms to request transcripts and audio CD's, the Interpreter Request Form, and a Directory of Judges with the name of their Judicial Assistant and telephone numbers. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with the information available.

Did you know that Judges and staff have free access to Westlaw, Lexis-Nexis, and the Judicial Inquiry System?

Did you know that our Courtrooms are some of the most high tech in the country? You can familiarize yourself with the technology available in each of our courtrooms by visiting the Technology section of our website. **Did you know** that each of our courtrooms, jails, and several conference rooms have video conferencing capability?

Video conferencing provides substantial cost savings and benefits to our circuit, judges, staff and court participants.

Did you know that everyone will be updated to Microsoft Office 2007 within the next 2 months? This new version has many features, including the ability to create PDF documents, AND edit PDF documents. **Did you know** that our Network is in the process of being updated? That's Right! Over the next 3 months we will be increasing our bandwidth to each county.

This will provide faster file access, email, internet service, and our Court Reporters will have faster access to the Digital Recordings in the courtroom. **Did you know** that we have access to hundreds of online training classes? If you need an account please contact me. **Did you know** that if you have any technology issue, question, or request, you may contact us by phone or email? If you have any ideas for the website, or suggestions please call or email me.

For Technology Issues
Please contact
Gary Hagan at
850-747-5410 or by email
at:

haganq@jud14.flcourts.org

FROM THE PERSONNEL DESK

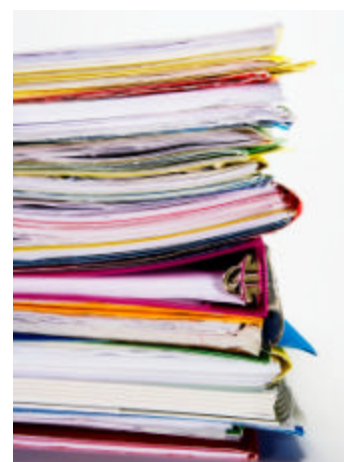
Contributed by Larry Lyons

The 2007 Open Enrollment for State Group Insurance Program Plan Year 2008 will take place from September 17, 2007 through October 19, 2007. Employee Benefit Statements will be mailed to your home address beginning September 4, 2007. The People First Service Center will use the most recent address on file

for mailing statements.

If you have had a change of address recently but have not completed a W-4 form indicating this change, now is an excellent time to do so. Court Administration Personnel Office can provide the forms, and process your completed form for you. Thanks to everyone's cooperation and assistance, our transition to the State Courts

Automated Attendance and Leave System appears to have been successful. We had a few glitches; however, the new system seems to have been well received, with positive feedback and recommendations from judges, judicial assistants, and staff. Please contact me should you have questions.



TEAM BUILDING A GREAT SUCCESS

In June the folks from the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) conducted three successful team-building sessions with court personnel in Marianna, and in Panama City. Plans are to have all Court Administration work units attend the team-building training session.

Staff who participated in the training were very excited

about the curriculum. The staff from EAP are in the process of developing an advanced Team Building session which many participants expressed interest in attending.

Remember, our EAP services also provide confidential programs dealing with personal difficulties, and are free to all employees and their eligible dependents.

To Contact the Employee Assistance Program for the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit, call 1-877-246-4679 or go to www.eap.fsu.edu

REPORT FROM OUR ISC CHAIR (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

... the database which maintained the registries for all six counties and captured information on every attorney and their information

concerning the case categories. The design and development of the database saved the state at least \$30,000 (we received bids from vendors, but

had no funds to execute the work). Finally, I would like to thank all of our conflict counsel who were willing to serve our judicial system. Many

of you went the extra mile to ensure that the cases assigned to you were resolved in a timely, efficient and professional manner. You also showed much

patience in dealing with administrative procedures. Despite setbacks, I truly believe we have provided the best conflict counsel services in the state due to your efforts.



Birthdays

JULY

- 1 Brenda Johnson
- 3 Susan Diltz
- 4 Judy Reese
- 16 Diane Pate
- 18 Cheryl Hammond
- 21 Joel Booth
- 21 Laurie Hughes

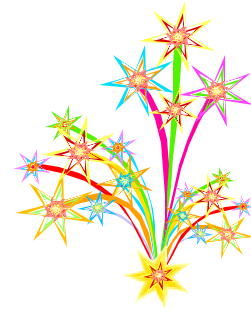
AUGUST

- 2 Terri Wengert
- 4 Don T. Sirmons
- 6 David C. Johnson
- 10 Frances Hall
- 11 Colby Peel
- 14 Sue Stanley
- 16 Peggy Black
- 18 Denise Hendrix
- 19 Debbie Burch
- 20 Thomas F. Welch
- 24 Jane Sherrill
- 27 Patricia Moore
- 27 Danuta Jacob

SEPTEMBER

- 1 Kevin Grover
- 1 Darlene Cutler
- 11 Hentz McClellan
- 24 Kimberly Gibson
- 29 Beverly McAllister

Holidays for the Quarter



Independence Day

July 04, 2007

Labor Day

September 03, 2007

Rosh Hashanah

September 13, 2007

CHIEF JUDGE: HONORABLE HENTZ McCLELLAN

COURT ADMINISTRATOR: JENNIFER DYER WELLS

Editor: Amber Baggett, Senior Court Program Specialist

Benchmarks is a quarterly newsletter published by and for the 14th Judicial Circuit and is intended to be a source of information regarding the courts. Rights are reserved to edit for clarity or brevity, or reject any material submitted due to space or other reasons.