

News from the Judicial Operations Division: Fact Sheet

Last update: December 2015

The Judicial Operations division focuses on the daily operations of the court. The division provides support and guidance in the areas of trial court operations including alternative dispute resolution, caseload management, court reporters, court interpreters and general office support. Other key areas of the division include the jury commission, law library and children's waiting center. More about the individual functions of the division may be found here.

- In December 2015, the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts (AOIC) approved the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Court's proposed amendments to local rule 19.00, which governs the procedures of the Lake County Residential Real Estate Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Program. The amended rules are scheduled to go into effect on January 4th, 2016. The amendment is intended to increase successful participation in the Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Program by relaxing the entry requirements for homeowners and increasing the timelines for document exchange and review.
- In November, the law library completed implementing a formal classification system to its print collection. This will help library staff and visitors locate items more easily in the library. This project also helps library staff create additional space for titles that need shelves for newly received volumes.
- As of November, kiosks are now available for jurors to use when reporting for duty. Jurors will use the barcode included with the summons to check-in. This automated service allows for a more expedited check-in process.
- In October, the law librarian led a presentation at the Illinois Library Association Conference in Peoria with the Peoria County Law Librarian. The presentation was titled "How to Help Patrons Find Legal Information Online," and public librarians throughout the state were in attendance.
- Also in October, the law library's public catalog was made available online and searchable by the public. Attorneys and self-represented litigants can search the library's catalog of print and electronic materials at their convenience to see what titles are available for a specific subject. If the patron already knows the title and wants to see if the Law Library has that title in its collection, they can search for it using the online catalog. The online catalog may be found at the following web address: <http://19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us/services/Pages/LawLibrary.aspx>.
- The County Board signed a resolution declaring Juror Appreciation Week to commence the week of October 12th 2015. Jurors were provided coffee and light snacks while the judges welcomed and thanked the attending jurors.
- As of October 2015 Kids' Korner has provided a safe haven for over 47,000 children involved in the court system. Kids' Korner opened their doors in 1994 and is a very special way the Lake County Courthouse shows its concern for children and families.
- Judge Nancy Schuster Waites and the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Center held an arbitrator training on September 11th. Arbitration is a form of an ADR procedure used in court systems to reduce the number of cases on a trial call by promoting early case resolution. In Lake County, the Court mandates that all civil cases involving a dollar amount between \$10,001 and \$50,000 and Small Claims actions where a jury demand is filed be heard by a panel of arbitrators prior to the case being set for trial in front of a judge. The panel of arbitrators is made up of retired judges and local attorneys who have met specific criteria and who have been trained and certified to act as arbitrators in the Illinois courts. The 23 attorneys who completed this training were certified as court arbitrators and will commence their service as Lake County arbitrators in November 2015.
- Official court reporters Vernita Allen-Williams and Deborah Cohen-Rojas were sworn in by Circuit Judge Jorge Ortiz in Springfield as the new President and Secretary, respectively, of the Illinois Court Reporters Association (ILCRA) for a two year term that began on September 12, 2015.
- In the month of July, the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Family Section of the Consolidated Family Division decided to evaluate a new schedule for prove-ups. The original schedule had one judge hearing attorney prove-ups at 9:00 and pro se prove-ups at 10:30 Monday thru Wednesday and Friday. The new schedule has two judges each morning starting at 8:45 and concluding at 9:45. There will be ten attorney prove-ups scheduled Monday thru Wednesday; five scheduled on Thursday and fifteen scheduled Friday morning for both attorneys and pro se litigants. There will be one judge hearing pro se litigants prove-ups Monday thru Wednesday at 1:30 with five scheduled each day. All prove-ups are scheduled and checked-in to courtroom C-105A.

- The Family Division Judges in collaboration with the Lake County Bar Association's Family Law Committee hosted a Non-Attorney Family Law Mediation Training at the Lake County Courthouse in July. The training covered the Rules of Professional Conduct, How to Triage a Case, Common Topics, Questioning Techniques and Review of Forms used in the Family Volunteer Mediation Program. Although the training was intended for non-attorneys, practicing attorneys also attended.
- To assist Volunteer Mediators with finalizing Pro Se litigant's cases efficiently, the judges worked with Court Administration and JIS to create fillable forms. The judges identified forms used in the Family Division Volunteer Mediation Program, staff made the forms fillable and JIS installed the fillable forms on the computer in the main mediation room. To highlight the efficiency of fillable forms, eight forms are required to open a Divorce/Family case. The litigants' information is entered on the first form, and repetitive data automatically transferred to the remaining forms. The fillable forms eliminate shuffling through each individual form and manually documenting identical information. The fillable forms save time and are legible.
- In June 2015, Public Act 98-1132, which was passed by the Illinois State Legislature and signed into law in December of the previous year, went into effect. The new law increased juror pay to \$25 the first day of service and \$50 each day after. The jury commission has seen a cost increase of 165% since the new law went into effect. Cost saving measures are being applied in an effort to offset some of the increase.
- The law library began implementing a formal classification system to its print collection in March. This will help library staff and visitors locate items more easily in the library. This project also helps library staff create additional space for titles that need shelves for newly received volumes.
- In March the Criminal Division started Early Disposition Court (EDC). The purpose of EDC is to bring criminal cases to resolution with the fewest possible court appearances. The State's Attorney and assigned Judge review cases to decide if they are appropriate for EDC. A Criminal Division Judge hears cases considered suitable for EDC, every Friday morning.
- Dr. Seuss's Birthday was commemorated in March 2015 by distributing to each child visiting Kids' Korner a Dr. Seuss book in addition to a book from our "Give-A-Book" project. Kids' Korner served 162 children in the month of March.
- February 2015, Kids' Korner again celebrated Children's Dental Health Month. Toothbrushes, toothpaste, floss and brushing instruction sheets were distributed for the month of February to our families.
- With the administrative modification of the Family Division courtroom schedules, the Family Division Judges added an additional mediation room in the Family Division Volunteer Mediation Program. The new room is located outside of Courtroom 107 and opened the beginning of February. The extra room provides more space and time for Volunteer Mediators to assist Pro Se litigants. The four family courtrooms have monthly Pro Se mediation days on Monday or Tuesday and Case Management days Wednesday or Thursday. The room has a supply of required mediation forms and various court forms.
- Two official court reporters for the Nineteenth Circuit retired in 2015 – Paula Tack retired with 32 years of service and Stuart Klein with more than 21 years of service.