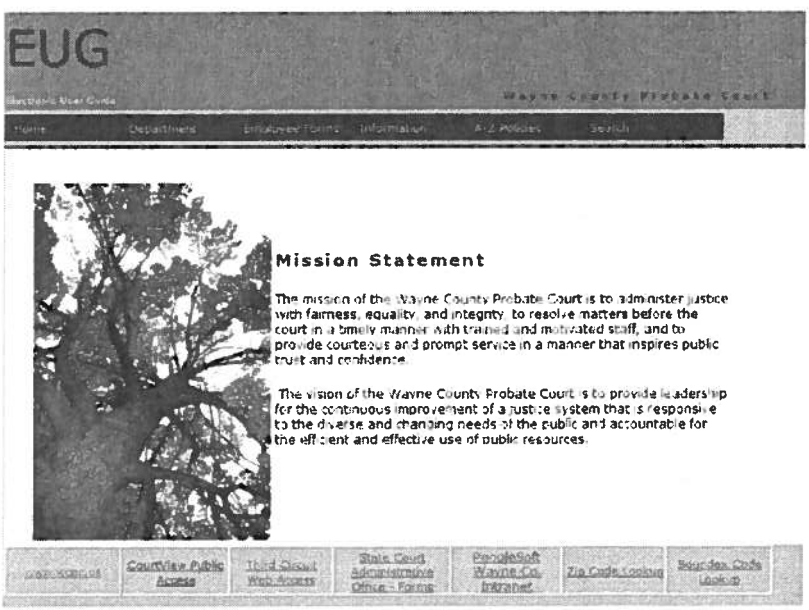
Technology in the Wayne County Probate Court

Milton L. Mack, Jr., Chief Judge
April K. Maycock, Probate Register/
Director of Information Services



Overview – WCPC

- Has over 37,000 active cases
- Annually processes over 14,000 new cases
  - Averaging over 270 new cases per week
- Annually schedules over 32,000 hearings
  - Averaging over 600 hearings a week
- 6 Probate Judges and a staff of 61

Overview - WCPC

- Statutory Court of Limited Jurisdiction
  - Decedent Estates
  - Guardianships – Adult & Minor
  - Conservatorships – Adult & Minor
  - Involuntary Mental Health Treatment/Developmentally Disabled
  - Trusts

Reduced Budget = Improved Service?

- Over the past decade the court's budget was reduced by over 30%
- Staffing was reduced by 40%

- Customer service improved
- Backlogs diminished
- Workflow became streamlined

IT Director in Top Management

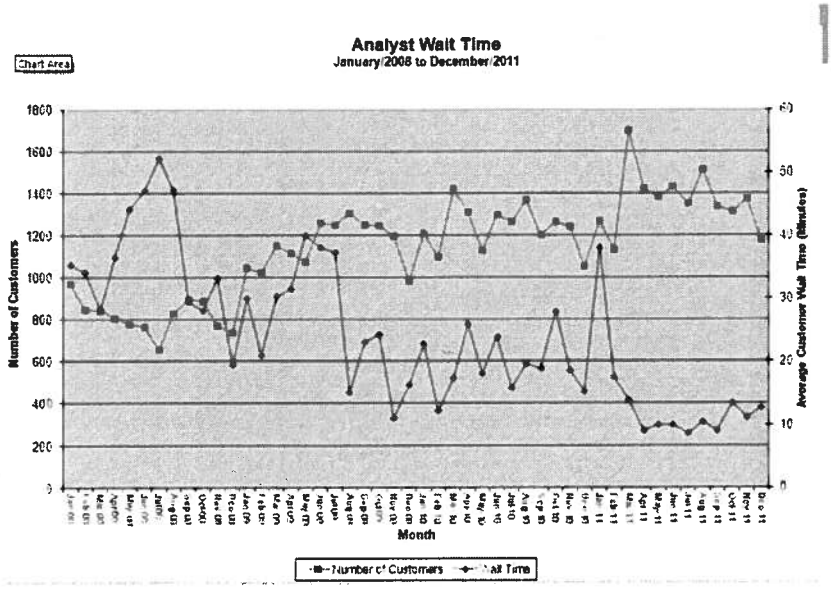
- In 2004, IT Director became "Chief Clerk" of Court
  - The Records Department reported to the IT Director
- In 2011, IT Director became the Probate Register
  - All departments now report to the Probate Register/IT Director
- Critical that a chief decision maker has IT background
  - Understands the business, understands the systems, knows what's possible
  - Translates business needs and practice into technological workflow

Technological Impact

- Administrative
  - Personnel
  - Training
  - Policies & Procedures
- Judicial
  - Case Management
  - Document Management
  - Document Storage

IT in Administration Functions

- Training – training plans & materials posted electronically
- Electronic User Guide (EUG) – created powerful intranet for employees
  - Court policies & procedures, employee handbook, collective bargaining agreements, forms, etc.
- www.wcpc.us – Wayne County Probate Court's website
  - Frequently asked questions, inventory calculator, public access
- Customer Service Applications – created custom apps to track customer wait times, services times, staff productivity



2012 Exiting Survey	
Onsite Surveys	66
Emailed Surveys	117

		Percentage Strongly Agree or Agree
1. My overall perception of the Wayne County Probate Court is very positive.		78%
2. I easily found the courthouse, courtroom, or office I needed		93%
3. The forms I needed were clear and easy to understand.		86%
4. I felt safe in the courthouse.		93%
5. The court makes reasonable efforts to remove physical and language barriers to service		80%
6. Court staff paid attention to my needs		82%
7. I was treated with courtesy and respect		88%
8. The court's website was useful.		90%
9. I was able to accomplish my court business in a reasonable amount of time.		73%
10. I know what to do next regarding my case.		91%
11. Despite the nearly 40% reduction in funding & staffing, I feel that the court has maintained an acceptable standard of service.		71%
12. Did you appear before a Judge on your most recent visit to the Wayne County Probate Court?	Yes	56.4
	No	43.6
13. The way my case was handled was fair. *		95%
14. The judge listened to my side of the story before he or she made a decision. *		92%
15. As a person, I was treated fairly. *		97%
16. What did you do at the court during your latest visit? (Check all that apply)		
	Start a case	20%
	Search court records, obtain documents, request file	33%
	File papers	42%
	Make a payment	17%
	Get information	11%
	attend a hearing or trial	50%

Wayne Coun[illegible]te Court

Detroit, Michigan

[illegible]

Mission Statement

The mission of the Wayne County Probate Court is to administer justice with fairness, equality, and integrity, to resolve matters before the court in a timely manner with fairness and motivated staff and to provide courteous and prompt service in a manner that inspires public trust and confidence.

The vision of the Wayne County Probate Court is to provide leadership for the continuous improvement of a justice system that is responsive to the diverse and changing needs of the public and accountable for the efficient and effective use of public resources.

Selected Performance Measures	2008	2009	2010	2011
Average wait to be seen by an Analyst (in minutes)	36	26	19	13
Average wait to be seen by Counter Clerk -to initiate a case (in minutes)	7	24	35	31
Average number of weeks until hearing date	5.6	5.6	5.4	5.7
Number of new filings and reopened cases processed by staff	15811	15556	14812	14074
Number of hearings scheduled	38554	36856	34444	32124
Number of active cases	40241	37094	36357	36227
Percentage of all contested civil matters adjudicated within 728 days	77.0%	74.2%	79.3%	82.8%
Percentage of contested estate, trust, and conservatorship proceedings adjudicated within 365 days	88.9%	91.2%	92.7%	92.0%
Percentage of mental commitment petitions adjudicated within 14 days	98.0%	95.4%	93.1%	98.0%
Clearance rates (the number of outgoing cases as a percentage of incoming cases)	95.2%	92.1%	97.8%	95.4%
Number of staff	81	68	63	63

Judges of Probate

Hon. [illegible], Chief Judge
Hon. [illegible]
Hon. [illegible]
Hon. [illegible]
Hon. Carole B. Walker
Hon. [illegible]
Hon. [illegible]
Hon. [illegible]

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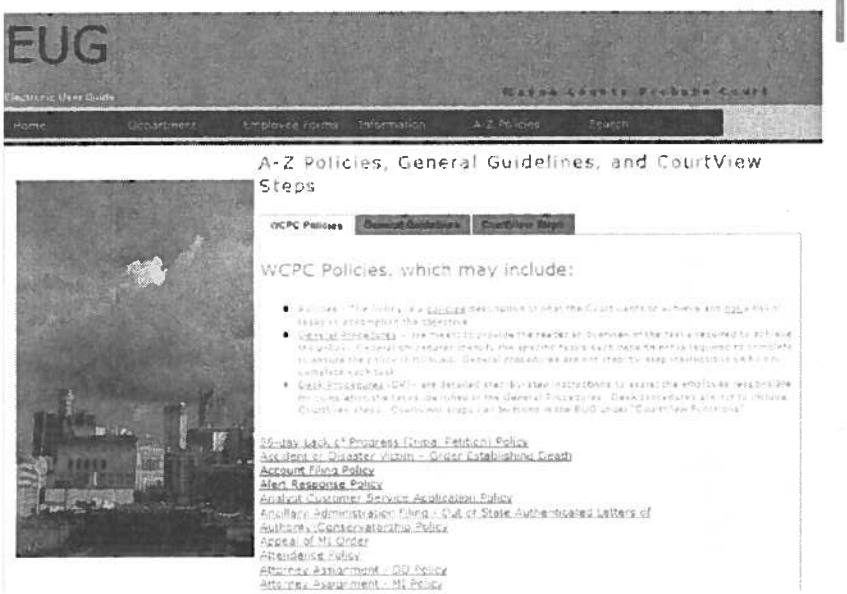


ACCEPTANCE OF APPOINTMENT

Docket Code	AOT
Add Docket Participant	Yes
Add Attorney	No
Recalc Dates	No
Update Party	Yes
Close Case	No
Level	2
Date Implemented/Revised	4/19/12

Criteria

1. Enter the file number in the Case Number field, i.e., 2012-772269*
2. Click the *Search* Button
3. Verify that the name on the document matches the name in CourtView.
4. Verify that the Judge of Record has completed the bottom portion "Filed, Examined and Approved." If this portion has not been signed and dated, do not proceed with entry. In this case, it was completed prior to the appointment to save time at the hearing. Send document to file.
5. If there is any issue with items 1 – 4, **DO NOT ENTER** the document into CourtView

Entry

1. Click *Parties*
   a. Open the party record of the person who signed the Acceptance of Appointment
   b. Verify their address and phone number, update if necessary. *Save*
   c. Verify that the party type has been updated to a fiduciary party type. If not updated, notify supervisor. **DO NOT UPDATE THE PARTY RECORD.** The fiduciary party types are:
      i. Plenary Guardian Estate
      ii. Plenary Guardian Person
      iii. Conservator
      iv. Guardian
      v. Partial Guardian Estate
      vi. Partial Guardian Person
      vii. Personal Representative
      viii. Special Fiduciary

IT in Judicial Functions

- Case Management System –
  - Understanding the system
  - Utilizing the system
  - Incorporated email with system – email attorney assignments, mental health orders
  - Quality Assurance Reports – every manager and employee is responsible for running Q/A reports to improve accuracy/timeliness
  - Workflow Evaluation – management constantly re-evaluates what we're doing and why. Modify processes to reduce staffing levels and redundancy.
  - Smart forms

Letters of Authority - Personal Representative

Select the role type to print on the form: Co- | Limited | Special | Successor

Override default date of expiration: Temporary 5/28/2013

Select the appropriate restrictions:

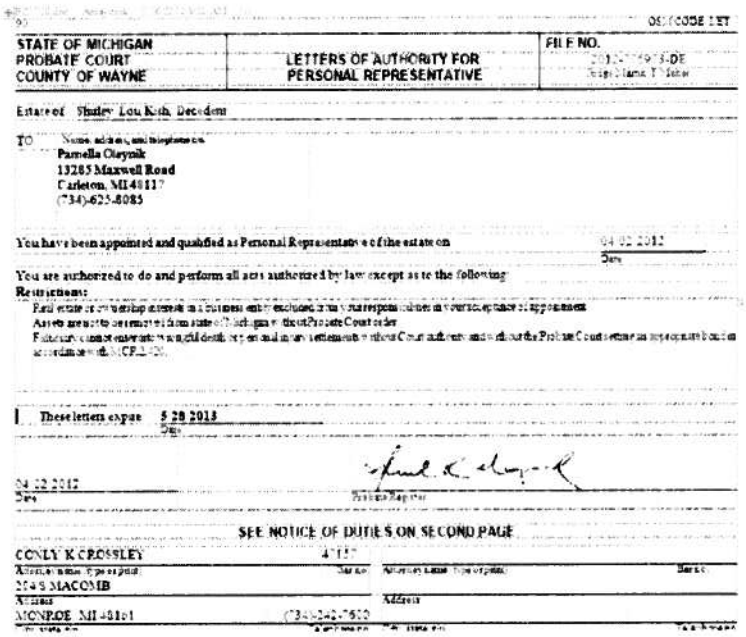
- [x] Real estate or ownership interests in a business entity excluded from your responsibilities in your acceptance of appointment.
- [x] Assets are not to be removed from state of Michigan without Probate Court order.
- [x] Fiduciary cannot enter into wrongful death or personal injury settlements without Court authority and without the Probate Court setting an appropriate bond in accordance with MCR 2.420.
- [ ] Real estate is not to be sold, purchased, mortgaged or otherwise alienated without prior Probate Court authority.

Restrictions/Limitations for Special order:

- [ ] Obtain medical records.
- [ ] To remove personal belongings from residence only.
- [ ] To enjoy the contents of a safe deposit box of the deceased but may NOT remove any of its contents without prior Probate Court authority.
- [ ] Marshall and preserve assets.
- [ ] Make funeral and burial arrangements.
- [ ] Gain access to the decedent's residence.
- [ ] (Personalty) Funds to be received may not be used without prior Probate Court authority. Funds are to be deposited in an account certificate of deposit, money market certificate, or a combination of these, in a bank, credit union, or savings and loan association insured by an instrumentality of the federal government which
- [ ] Appointment for the sole purpose of filing a Medicaid application and to direct payment to the following hospital/medical facility/healthcare organization:

  Enter hospital/facility name:

Additional Restrictions:



STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
COUNTY OF WAYNE

LETTERS OF AUTHORITY FOR PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE

FILE NO.

Estate of Shirley Lou Kish, Decedent

TO Name, address, and telephone no.
Pamella Olszynik
13285 Maxwell Road
Carleton, MI 48117
(734)625-8085

You have been appointed and qualified as Personal Representative of the estate on 04 02 2012
Date

You are authorized to do and perform all acts authorized by law except as to the following:
Restrictions:

These letters expire 5 28 2013
Date

04 02 2012
Date

SEE NOTICE OF DUTIES ON SECOND PAGE

CONLY K CROSSLEY
Attorney name (Type or print)
254 S MACOMB
Address
MONROE MI 48161

Document Management System (DMS) - Imaging

- Try to generate, store and send documents electronically whenever possible
- When paper is received, capture, route, manage & preserve as an image
- Integrated into Case Management System

CourtView (Production) - [Docket List]

File Modules Functions Reports Codes Identities Favorites Index Plug-Ins Tools Transmissions Help

Close
Open
Print

Search Criteria

Search Clear

2012-777269-CA Protected Individual Jerry; Christopher Open MJM

Docket Entry
Images All Dockets
Participant
Display Option Exclude Non Display Dockets
Begin Date
End Date
Sort Ascending Descending

1 Add Report
2 Parties
3 Events
4 Forms
5 Labels
6 Image Display
7 Image
8 View Documents
9 Tickets
10 Delete Report
11 File Tracking
12 Print Docket
1 Docket ID Display
2 System Notification

Search Results

Docket Date	Reference	Description	Amt Owed/ Amt Dom/Credit	Amount Due
5/15/2012		AOT Acceptance of Appointment (pc 571) Pamela Jerry (Conservator)		
5/15/2012		LETC Letters of Authority for Conservator (pc646)	12.00	
		Letters of Conservatorship (CA) - Adult (I)	12.00	
5/15/2012		TICCA Tickers On Letters Issued Date 05/15/2012 Alternative Date		
5/15/2012		EVT Hearing/Event Scheduled Event: CSRA Petition to Appoint Conservator Adult Date: 07/03/2012 Time: 3:00 am		
5/15/2012		LTR - Prepaid -Certified Fees - Letters of Authority Receipt 352803 Date. 05/15/2012	12.00	
5/15/2012		CSRA Petition for Conservator Appointment (Initial) Pamela Jerry (Petitioner) Receipt 352803 Date 05/15/2012	150.00	

Vista Viewer - Document #667/0/29

File Edit View Goto Tools Help

1 of 5

352803R

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
WAYNE COUNTY

Petition for Conservator Appointment
- Conservatorship for an Adult

FILE NO. 2012-777269-CA
Judge: Milton L Mack Jr
Courtroom 1219

In the matter of Christopher Jerry, Protected Individual

2012-776263-GA

Hearing: Not Required Required — Scheduled 7/3/12 @ 9:00am

Appointed to study:

Special: Required

Emergency: Granted Petitioner Sole Party

G.A.L. ATTY.G.A.L. Appointed: Required Appointed Waived Initials Time Bar Mtg

Publication Notice Service: Required By: Court Attorney Petitioner N/A

To: Yes No
Ward signed by GAL
Presumptive Heirs
Nonresident Guardian
Attorney General
Human Administration
Social Security
DHS
Other

Filed
Filed
Filed
Filed
Filed
Filed
Filed
Filed

Benefits

- Instant access to documents
- Increased speed of transactions
- Increased customer service
- Improved data analysis opportunity
- Increased employee productivity (less time waiting for files)
- Accessible by more than one person, simultaneously
- Increase preservation and storage of document - backed up
- Ease of use
- Ease of sharing/distribution – email, route, etc.
- More efficient for system to sort, and distribute
- Reduction of errors
- Reduction of "lost" documents
- Easier to secure documents

Considerations

- Needs to support or enhance business practice, not make it more cumbersome
- Investment recouped through greater efficiency, fewer staffing needs
- Technical infrastructure must be able to support ongoing needs
- Staff must be properly trained to use the system
- Proper backup of the database and images must be maintained

Verification

- Need method to verify that image is properly captured, readable, and stored in system

- In WCPC
  - When scanning, user verifies image
  - User is responsible for running a "Missing Image" report to verify that all documents scanned successfully stored/indexed into system

Security

- Determine who should have access to what
- Verify DMS can be configurable to allow for such access

- In WCPC, document security ensures that:
  - The public can not view images
  - Only certain staff can view confidential records
  - Only certain staff can view sealed records

Costs of a New DMS

- Design, development, software
- Hardware - storage, upgrades
- Proper migration to the new system
- Recurring maintenance
- Staff training
- Organization restructure, staff may be reassigned and retrained
- New management, administrative and/or process controls

Archiving & Records Destruction

- In 2008, WCPC considered contracting with a vendor to image the estimated 20 million pieces of paper at our offsite storage location that predates the current imaging system
  - Preliminary estimates exceeded $2 million
  - Would save funding unit/court $130,000 annually in offsite storage costs
  - Would save the court in personnel costs – staff driving offsite to locate & retrieve files
  - Improve customer service – no waiting a week for a file
  - Resolve current issue – no more space at offsite location
- No funding was provided by the local funding unit

Archiving & Records Destruction Method

- Very labor intensive

1. Report of which cases are eligible for destruction (per records retention rules)
2. Locate file
3. Prep paper - remove staples, etc.
4. Count pages in file
5. Enter and scan as one image into system as an archived entry (ARC)
6. Review image for readability
7. Verify image page count matches paper page count
8. Verify that all eligible cases contain an ARC
9. Verify that all ARC entries contain an image
10. Send images to microfilm vendor to convert to microfilm
11. Destroy records

Archiving & Records Destruction Plan B

- Since the existing network infrastructure could support imaging, the court would archive, image and destroy records on an ongoing basis as part of its Records Department
- Imaged just over 15,000 cases, before funding was cut again
- The project was suspended

Physical Archive Prevention Plan C

- STOP the continual addition of papers required to be stored.
- Archive upon filing.

Decrease Dependence on Paper

- Initiate E-Filing
- Utilize electronic workflow to route and process documents internally
- Allow electronic access to court records by attorneys or public
- Allow electronic retention of court records (receive, scan, verify, destroy)
- Do not print orders that were generated and stored electronically

Current Barriers

- Funding
- Authorizing legislation
- Court Rules changes
- Supreme Court Order authorizing fees collection
  - Limited as to what fees the Court can collect
- Modification to record retention statute

Questions…