

Your connection to better case management

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AOPC Launches Advanced, Post- “Go-Live” CPCMS Training

After meeting in March with the Communication Committee of the Pennsylvania Association of Prothonotaries and Clerks of Courts to discuss post- “go-live” suggestions, AOPC’s Judicial Automation staff swiftly responded by making several procedural system changes and offering the first-ever, post- “go-live” training sessions for current users.

“Our relationship with the clerks’ Communications Committee has been invaluable in helping us identify areas where we can improve the system,” said Amy Ceraso, Director of Judicial Automation.

“They made suggestions and we responded with system fine-tuning and advanced topic workshops for CPCMS counties. The continuing education opportunities will enable Judicial Automation staff to provide new information about CPCMS and more in-depth training for the benefit of CPCMS users.”

The first series of workshops focused on the accounting aspect of the case management system. Four two-day accounting workshops were held at the AOPC offices in Mechanicsburg in May and June for county staff responsible for the fiscal components of CPCMS. Workshop facilitators Chris Patton, Barbara Holmes, Roxanne McCombs, Danny Bacon and Jeff Reich provided a training forum where approximately 50 representatives from county Clerks

of Courts and Probation Divisions in 29 counties were able to share their varying degrees of CPCMS experience.

“Continuing education opportunities provide new information about CPCMS and more in-depth training for the benefit of CPCMS users.”

*Amy Ceraso
Director of Judicial Automation
AOPC*

The workshops covered a broad range of accounting topics. General topics included check processing, handling escrow, how assessments are determined and applied on cases, cashier session management and cost center administration. More in-depth detail was given on monthly reconciliations, Master Account reporting, and accounting adjustments. Of these detailed topics, trainers stressed how important it was that specific tasks be performed in a timely manner and how to correct common errors.

The last topics of the workshop consisted of an update on current User Alerts, reports and audit preparation. Several reports were presented as useful management tools

in addition to reports that users should run weekly and monthly to prepare for an audit.

Some said that they found the additional training at the AOPC more beneficial than on-site training in their courthouses as it was easier to focus on learning about CPCMS without the workplace distractions. Others said it was helpful to view the “bigger picture.”

For more experienced users, the new information and insights to new processes were appreciated. Sharon Thomas, Fayette County Chief Deputy Clerk of Courts, said, “I really had a good experience at the Accounting Workshop in Mechanicsburg. I found everyone at the AOPC to be extremely helpful.

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CPCMS Not Just for Court Use: System Integration and Networking Benefits Many State Agencies

Who's using data from Judicial Automation? Perhaps a surprise to some, AOPC has expanded, and will continue to expand, the use of court data far beyond the personnel within Pennsylvania's 60 judicial districts through additional integration and sharing of court data. Court data from both the Magistrate District Justice System (MDJS) and CPCMS is now exchanged with several Commonwealth agencies including PennDOT, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, the Pennsylvania State Police, Department of Corrections and even non-criminal justice organizations like the Auditor General, the Department of Revenue and the Pennsylvania Sentencing Commission. Information exchanges also occur with several counties District Attorney's Offices.

Nick Melnick, MDJS Project Manager at AOPC, serves as the Unified Judicial System's (UJS) Pennsylvania Justice Network (JNET) representative for electronic data interchange with outside agencies. "AOPC is open to working with state agencies and counties involved with the courts in order to provide information to all users in an accurate and efficient way," Melnick said. He explained how MDJS and

CPCMS network or plan to network with various entities.

◆ PennDOT

Judicial Automation, through MDJS and CPCMS, provides dispositions for all Title 75-related offenses, allowing PennDOT to apply this information to Pennsylvania driving records. Most driver's license or DL-related forms associated with court actions are now, on a test basis, electronically submitted to PennDOT from the Courts of Common Pleas. The information provided includes traffic violations, drug charges, underage drinking, etc., and DL 38, 21 and 119 forms for dispositions, such as court requested suspension of a driver's license when a defendant has neglected to pay fines or costs or has neglected to appear in court. PennDOT and AOPC will continue working toward complete electronic submission of all DL-related forms.

AOPC also exchanges data with PennDOT as driver's license photos for the first time are made available through JNET to print on warrants issued from CPCMS for identification purposes.

◆ Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD)

In the Constable Education and Training Division, electronic notification of all constable certifications is made to CPCMS and MDJS so that courts are assured of using only certified constables. Certifications can be easily updated in an electronic format. CPCMS also works with the Crime Victims Compensation Board (CVCB), which channels funds to crime victims. Criminal complaint information is sent to PCCD with the police incident number and Offense Tracking Number allowing the CVCB to match

Common Pleas cases to victims for restitution claims.

◆ Pennsylvania State Police

As a result of the implementation of the statewide CPCMS system, AOPC is daily submitting disposition information,

“The AOPC is open to working with state agencies and counties involved with the courts to provide information in an accurate and efficient way.”

*Nick Melnick
MDJS Project Manager*

entered by the counties, directly to the Pennsylvania State Police Criminal History Repository electronically through JNET. Previously, counties transferred hard copies of disposition data to AOPC for key entry and eventual submission to the Repository, resulting in delays of disposition posting.

The statewide criminal warrant project is another innovative use of Judicial Automation's systems involving the State Police, JNET and the UJS Web Portal. MDJS and CPCMS warrant information is made available on the AOPC's web portal so that JNET users can easily access warrant information. The CPCMS project staff is also working with JNET and the State Police on a project to submit electronic warrant information to the State Police Commonwealth Law Enforcement Assistance Network (CLEAN) and National Crime Information Center (NCIC) for state and federal reporting.

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CPCMS Users Provide Sound Advice for Officials Pre- “Go-Live”

Adams County Court Administrator Mark D. Grim told an audience at the Annual PJ/PACM Conference that county staff should be prepared to “adapt, improvise and overcome” during CPCMS implementation.

Grim was part of a panel of six district court administrators at the association’s June conference in State College. The panel members provided a CPCMS automation update, while sharing their experiences with the system and giving advice regarding implementation and preparation. “With the right approach and preparation, the transition to the new statewide system can be a positive experience,” Grim said. “We embraced the transition period in our county as an opportunity to excel.”

Montgomery County Deputy District Court Administrator Denise S. Vicario echoed Grim’s advice. “Counties should approach migration of court data to CPCMS with an open mind. Change is good and teamwork in all county departments is a must for a smooth transition to CPCMS,” she said.

Each panelist stressed the importance of early planning and preparation. Robert Chuk, District Court Administrator of York County, stressed that cleaning up data before migration is critical. Because there have been so many new features since the initial roll-out, McKean County District Court Administrator Joanne Bly suggested the potential need for a “refresher course” in CPCMS training for the original counties.

Other panelists recommended that county officials receive the proper training and “iron out” business practices before CPCMS implementation. Grim suggested compiling a comprehensive business plan before transitioning to the new system, detailing who will be

responsible for which tasks, before and after the “go-live.”

Deputy District Court Administrator Rich DeFilippi of Beaver County, one of the first counties to implement CPCMS, said the new system was slow at first but that it has steadily improved. To save time at the docketing level, DeFilippi suggested that county officials make sure their police departments assign a charge grading on documents. “That saves time for others who have to go back and figure out the grade,” Defilippi said.

Michael Kehs, District Court Administrator of Montgomery County, said that it is important to develop a good working relationship with your clerk of courts. “The clerk’s office is usually the most affected by the CPCMS implementation,” he said. Kehs also suggested that county officials keep the following in mind when transitioning to the new system:

- Budget for overtime and ask the president judge to request overtime approval if other county officials are having trouble getting compensation

directly from the commissioners.

- Maintain appropriate staffing levels, especially in offices most affected by CPCMS implementation.
- Provide specialized training.
- Complete log-in forms in advance.

“Don’t expect too much too fast,” Kehs added. “We had 20 years to perfect our legacy system. When we implemented CPCMS, our goal was to move to the new system with as little impact as possible, focusing in on one particular area at a time, like docketing or calendaring, then moving on to master other aspects of the system,” Kehs said. “Come visit Montgomery County. We think we can assist with your implementation of CPCMS.”

The panel agreed that counties should allow six months to become familiar with CPCMS. The district court administrators said that counties encountering problems should contact the AOPC Help Desk operators, as they are always willing to provide assistance.

The Judicial Automation staff has been busy this year meeting with many organizations to help users better understand the benefits of CPCMS and MDJS. They have made presentations at the County Controller’s Association, a Regional Unit III meeting for president judges, current and new district court administrators and recently at the annual Clerks of Courts and Prothonotaries Association conference in State College. Most notable was a meeting with a delegation of Korean officials (*see photo above*) who visited Mechanicsburg in April to learn about criminal justice agency integration.



Sitting far left are Director of Judicial Automation Amy Ceraso, CPCMS Technical Manager Barbara Holmes and Senior Projects Director Ralph Hunsicker. Standing is meeting coordinator Mark Zimmerman of BearingPoint, a global business consulting firm.

County Staff Discovers Benefits of Public Web Docket Sheets

The number of hits on the public web docket sheets – an AOPC website providing court case information to court staff, criminal justice agencies, prosecutors, defense attorneys, the media and the public – has skyrocketed since the beginning of the year. The Judicial Automation staff believes the increase is, in part, a result of the efforts of several county officials who are encouraging the use of public web docket sheets as a way to save staff time by reducing the need to handle requests for case information at public computer terminals in courthouses.

In June, for example, Berks County District Court Administrator Dale Derr held a public demonstration of the AOPC’s public web portal for approximately 20 judicial employees, reporters and the public. “This is a great feature and a convenience that comes along with the implementation of CPCMS,” Derr said. “You will no longer have to visit the courthouse to access basic information about a case. This feature is anticipated to reduce traffic through our Clerk of Courts office and save valuable staff time.”

Denise Aylward, AOPC Systems Analyst and instructor at the Berks County public web portal demonstration, said judicial personnel and attorneys are also discovering the benefits of access to public web docket sheets through the Internet.

“For attorneys, the public web portal can significantly reduce the time spent in searching for criminal case information,” Aylward said. “The public web portal site, <http://ujportal.pacourts.us>, also benefits attorneys who practice across county lines by providing local county rules related to civil motions practice.”

[Public web docket sheets are] “a great feature and a convenience that come along with the implementation of CPCMS.”

*Dale Derr
District Court Administrator*

turn off pop-up blockers, Aylward added.

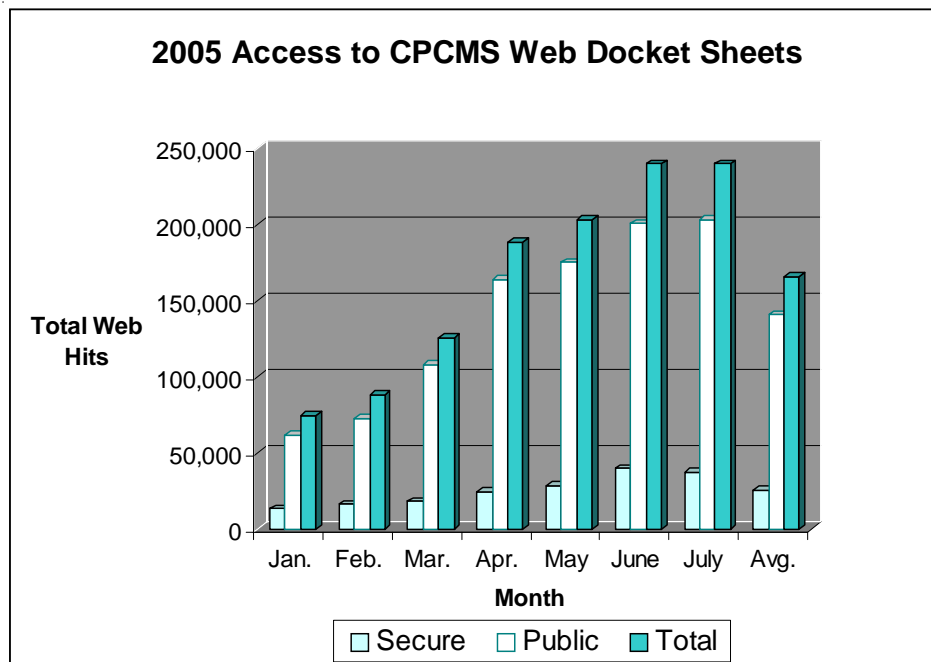
Users can select either the Court of Common Pleas or Appellate Court web docket sheets to conduct case searches. Searches can be conducted

by docket number and/or other criteria such as defendant’s last name, docket type, case category or county. Search results will be faster and more accurate when users provide additional search criteria.

The chart at left indicates the increase in use of both the public and secure web docket sheets. Secure web docket sheets include more

detailed case information and can be accessed only by users authorized by each county’s court, and by law enforcement through the Pennsylvania’s secure criminal justice network, JNET.

Note: Through October the total hits on both Secure and Public Web Docket Sheets reached two million.



Aylward said that the public web portal is easy to use and provides near real-time court information. She recommends that new users begin with the link to “Public Web Docket Sheets Quick Reference Guide” on the UJS Portal. This guide provides step-by-step instructions on how to access public web docket sheets. The site requires Adobe Acrobat for printing the docket sheet. For best results, use Internet Explorer 6.0 and

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CPCMS Training

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The training class was excellent.” Trainers emphasized that all counties should contact the Help Desk for any questions or problems with CPCMS so that those issues can be appropriately tracked and resolved.

Additional workshop topics discussed over lunch included a CPCMS update with Ralph Hunsicker, Senior Projects Director, and a presentation on PennDOT’s new electronic filing of DL forms. Attendees were even able to tour the Help Desk area – to match faces to voices of the friendly assistants for CPCMS issues.

The AOPC offered additional advanced training sessions, as well as periodic regional training sessions throughout the state for continuing education for CPCMS users, beginning with a series of four two-day training sessions in Mechanicsburg this September. The workshop topics to be covered are “Advanced Offenses, Dispositions and Sentencing,” “Batch Processing,” “Appeals Tracking,” “Event/Next Event” and “Keyboard Functionality Shortcuts.”

Immediate action for CPCMS users has been taken in other areas to fine-tune CPCMS procedures in addition to establishing the advanced, post- “go-live” training. AOPC encourages users to bring concerns to the attention of Judicial Automation through the use of the Help Desk.

Congratulations!

As of November 14, there were 61 counties live on CPCMS.

Complete Common Pleas Court integration is in sight.

Not Just for Courts

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The Pennsylvania State Police plans to equip police cars with laptop computers in the future, enabling officers to electronically file citations into MDJS directly from their vehicles without having to file a paper copy.

◆ Department of Corrections

The state Department of Corrections (DOC) keeps an inventory of inmates and their locations. CPCMS receives this information to assist county staff in scheduling trials and hearings. DOC has access to CPCMS secure web docket sheets to verify court information regarding inmates. CPCMS is currently testing a system with JNET to report county prison inmate locations to all CPCMS users as it is reported to JNET. In the future, it is hoped that all papers relating to incarceration will be transmitted from the courts to prisons and sheriffs electronically, aiding officials in the transportation of prisoners.

◆ District Attorney’s Offices

District Attorney’s offices using the Prosecutorial Management System (PMS) from Corrections Development International/Digital Solutions Incorporated have the capability of receiving Common Pleas case information upon filing of the case in CPCMS. Also, the UJS Portal offers DALink, which allows District Attorneys to create Bills of Information (list of charges) from live CPCMS offense information. This significantly reduces the need for data entry in the Clerks of Courts offices. Currently in the testing stages is an electronic exchange of information filed from both PMS and DALink in CPCMS as another method to reduce data entry.

◆ County Document Management Systems

Counties using Infocon’s document management system can receive Common Pleas docket entry data from CPCMS directly into the system, allowing them to easily match court documents to CPCMS docket entries.

◆ Auditor General

Through the MDJS and CPCMS, AOPC electronically provides the state Auditor General with accounting information and reports upon its request, significantly reducing the time needed to conduct audits of county court offices.

◆ Department of Revenue

Electronic summaries and details of all collections are provided by MDJS and CPCMS so that the state Department of Revenue can track monies received and disburse all Commonwealth funds.

◆ Pennsylvania Sentencing Commission

The AOPC staff is currently working to provide an interface between CPCMS and the web-based sentencing guidelines application on JNET, known as the Sentencing Guidelines Software (SGS). MDJS and CPCMS case information can be accessed by SGS to assist in the creating of guideline scores in SGS, so that district attorney’s offices, public defenders and probation and parole officers can view the possible outcomes of sentencing in researching plea bargain options. Upon confirmation of the sentencing information in SGS, sentencing guideline information is returned to CPCMS to update screen and case information.

In the future, Melnick said, the MDJS and CPCMS systems will be even more integrated to unify criminal processing with many agencies in the state and beyond.

Who's saying what about CPCMS?

“We’re using CPCMS 100 percent in our county. It’s a bit of extra work, but it seems to be worth it. Come see us if you need help!”

*Melissa Fultz
District Court Administrator
Mifflin County*

“We’re very excited about CPCMS and where we can go from here. Our job is still the same, but the system is much more efficient. We’re not 100 percent happy so far, but we’re getting there.”

*Barbara Gibbs
Clerk of Courts
Washington County*

“At this point, we’re still learning. We haven’t seen all the benefits yet.”

*Charlotte Kratzer
District Court Administrator
Snyder & Union Counties*

“It feels very much like we never had anything but CPCMS.”

*Tami Silvis
Deputy District Court Administrator
Westmoreland County*

“I enjoy coming to work again.”

*Cheryl Sipe
Cost Collection Manager
Clerk of Courts
Cumberland County*

“CPCMS will save a lot of time for us because we will be able to access files from the computers in our offices and in the court.”

*Brandy Yasenchak
District Court Administrator
Northumberland County*

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