



**PREPARATION, TRAINING, PERSEVERANCE**

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## A Judge's Perspective: Judge Paul A. Hackner

As planning continues for the Anne Arundel County launch of the MDEC pilot, judges and staff alike have been taking part in lengthy preparations for the new case management system. Judge Paul A. Hackner, Administrative Judge for the Fifth Judicial Circuit (Anne Arundel, Carroll and Howard counties) has been deeply involved in the MDEC implementation process and, in addition, is a member of the Executive Steering Committee and has taken part in MDEC design sessions. Here, Judge Hackner offers his unique perspective on the process.



"When attending the MDEC design sessions, the enormity of this project really sinks in," Judge Hackner said. The design sessions focus on developing new programming to fix the gaps that have been identified as highest priority.

"I realize that the routine details we deal with automatically all day long must be translated into an electronic model. In the design sessions, we must go down to the very atom of logic that goes into what judges now do with the stroke of a pen in order to have that decision captured in the system."

Judge Hackner gave the example of sentencing. "Say I give a sentence of 'five years, suspend all but 90 days.' To put that into an electronic system, it has to be broken

down into its various basic parts and then put back together again in programming language. Everything we do has to be thought through at that level of complexity," he explained. "Though I spend hours in front a computer every week, I now find myself contemplating all the programming that must be done so that when I click a box on the screen it sets in place a whole series of actions that automatically

stem from that. It is truly awesome, and gives me a new appreciation for what my two sons, who are computer software designers, must do to create new programs."

Judge Hackner has a vested interest in taking time to serve on the implementation team. He notes that his present concern is to make MDEC ready for prime time, "because when we launch this system in Anne Arundel County, we pull the plug on our existing system.

"That is great motivation to get it right the first time."