



Hon. Matthew J. Fader, Chair
Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Maryland

Matthew Barrett
*Chair, Conference of Circuit Court
Administrators*

Hon. Bibi M. Berry
Circuit Court for Montgomery County

Hon. Wayne A. Brooks
*District Court of Maryland
Howard County*

Hon. Yvette M. Bryant
*Chair, Standing Committee on Rules of
Practice and Procedure*

Hon. Debra J. Burch
Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Clerks

Hon. Yolanda L. Curtin
Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges

Hon. Heather S. DeWees
Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Clerks

Nancy Faulkner
Secretary, Deputy State Court Administrator

Maria Fields
*Administrative Clerk, District 8
Baltimore County*

Hon. Fred S. Hecker
Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges

Hon. Geoffrey G. Hengerer
*District Court of Maryland
Baltimore City*

Hon. James A. Kenney, III
Chair, Senior Judges Committee

Hon. Stacy A. Mayer
Circuit Court for Baltimore County

Hon. John P. Morrissey
Chief Judge, District Court of Maryland

Hon. Harris P. Murphy
Circuit Court for Kent County

Kara Pollak
*Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Court
Administrators*

Judy Rupp
State Court Administrator

Rebecca Sloane
*Administrative Clerk, District 3
Cecil County*

Hon. Shaèm C. P. Spencer
*District Court of Maryland
Anne Arundel County*

Roberta Warnken
Chief Clerk, District Court of Maryland

Hon. E. Greg Wells
Chief Judge, Appellate Court of Maryland

MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL

MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes
September 17, 2025

Judicial Council Members Present:

Hon. Matthew J. Fader, Chair
Matthew Barrett

Hon. Bibi M. Berry
Hon. Yvette M. Bryant

Hon. Debra J. Burch
Hon. Yolanda L. Curtin
Hon. Heather S. DeWees

Nancy Faulkner
Maria Fields

Hon. Fred S. Hecker

Hon. Geoffrey G. Hengerer

Hon. James A. Kenney III

Hon. Stacy A. Mayer

Hon. John P. Morrissey

Hon. Harris P. Murphy

Kara Pollak

Judy Rupp

Rebecca Sloane

Hon. Shaèm C.P. Spencer

Roberta Warnken

Others Present:

Melissa Canada

Cynthia Jurrius

Maureen Denihan

Efren Diaz

Walker Lipinski

Amanda Miller

Andrea Murphy

Hon. John S. Nugent

Sharon Reed

Chris Sharpes

Gillian Tonkin

Annamaria Walsh

Hon. Brett R. Wilson

Sean Wolcuff

1. Welcome – Hon. Matthew J. Fader

Chief Justice Fader called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. He recognized Constitution Day and Citizenship Day, as well as tomorrow's anniversary of the ratification of the Maryland Constitution.

2. Approval of the May 28, 2025 Meeting Minutes.

A motion was made to approve the May 28, 2025 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded and, after hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.

3. Executive Committee Updates

- **Hon. Fred S. Hecker, Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges:**

Judge Hecker briefed the Council on the Joint Meeting of the Conference of Circuit Judges and District Court Chief Judges that was held on September 15, 2025. The joint meeting included a presentation on legislative updates, a discussion of preparation efforts for the Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) Program, and a review of the proposed changes to Maryland Rule 16-104.

- **Hon. John P. Morrissey, District Court of Maryland:**

Chief Judge Morrissey provided updates on the opening of the Baltimore City District Court Courthouse (civil building) located at E. Fayette Street. A ribbon cutting ceremony is tentatively scheduled for October 29, 2025.

Following the tragic incident at the Baltimore City Eastside District Court Courthouse in January, Chief Judge Morrissey emphasized to the Council the critical importance of conducting courthouse security reviews and assessments.

Chief Judge Morrissey reviewed Governor Wes Moore's recent judicial appointments. District Court Judges Stacey Maria Cobb Smith and Donnaka Varner Lewis were elevated to the Circuit Court for Prince George's County. Melissa A. Pryce and Sherrie Waldrup were appointed to the District Court of Maryland, Prince George's County; and Donald Foster Walter, Jr. was appointed to the District Court of Maryland, Harford County.

- **Hon. Matthew J. Fader, Supreme Court of Maryland:**

Chief Justice Fader announced that, effective this past July, the Supreme Court of Maryland (SCM) moved the deadline for issuing opinions from August 31 to July 31.

Beginning with the September 2025 Term, the SCM will transition from wearing red robes, worn since 1972, to black robes for most oral arguments. Red robes will continue to be worn for ceremonial occasions.

In October, the SCM will consider proposed amendments to the Maryland Rules related to the implementation of the NextGen Uniform Bar Exam, a revised skills-

based version. The NextGen Bar Exam will be administered in Maryland beginning in July 2026.

The SCM will hold a special session in memory of Judge John F. McAuliffe on October 22, 2025.

- **Judy K. Rupp, Administrative Office of the Courts:**

State Court Administrator Rupp provided an update following the statewide Behavioral Summit. Workgroups are being formed to identify and address priority areas, including competency restoration, diversion strategies, and data integration.

Access to Justice developed a five-part video series for judges and magistrates, titled [Tips on How to Work with Court Interpreters](#). Additionally, in collaboration with Court Help Center staff, Access to Justice created the [Can We Help You?](#) guide for Maryland Judiciary court staff who work directly with members of the public. Both resources are available on CourtNet.

The Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO) is working to implement the new Title 17 Rules and has launched an application to support a statewide roster.

Research and Analysis is currently conducting a Judicial Needs Assessment and has partnered with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to implement a new methodology for the analysis. Additionally, data dashboards for court case assessment performance results are being developed.

The Internal Affairs audit team recently passed a peer review conducted by the Association of Local Government Auditors, which evaluated auditing practices from July 2022 through June 2025. The audit team is scheduled to complete 70 Judiciary audits in 2025. Additionally, Internal Affairs is implementing a data analytics program to enhance its audit methodology.

The Judiciary Human Resources and Operations Departments collaborated to procure a new vendor, DeleteMe, to provide enhanced web data removal services for judicial officers. State Court Administrator Rupp reminded members that requests for reimbursements for home security programs are due by September 30, 2025. She also announced that Benefits Open Enrollment will begin on October 14, 2025.

Following the March 25, 2025, federal executive order requiring electronic payments and transition of federal agencies to electronic liens filings, Nancy Faulkner, Deputy State Court Administrator, is now collaborating with the Comptroller's Office to support electronic filing of liens by the State.

Conferences, Summits, and Programs:

The Judicial College hosted a virtual expungement forum in August 2025 with over 200 participants. The College also held the multi-day Family Law University Program in September.

An AIDA Tech Talk is scheduled for September 24, 2025.

Juvenile and Family Services will host the 25th annual Child Abuse, Neglect, and Delinquency Options (CANDO) Judicial Conference on October 27-29, 2025.

This year's annual Faculty and Mentor Recognition Banquet will be held virtually on November 5, 2025.

Research and Analysis will host a Data Excellence Summit on October 30 and November 17, 2025. The Summit will provide a forum to promote the standardization and quality of Judiciary data.

4. Committee Updates

a. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Committee– *Hon. John S. Nugent*

Judge Nugent, Chair, along with staff members Maureen Denihan, Cynthia Jurrius, and Annamaria Walsh, presented on the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Committee.

Judge Nugent reviewed the Committee's 2025 Operational Plan, which aligns with the Judiciary's five-year Strategic Plan. In 2025, the Committee established and convened the Best Practices Workgroup, reviewed and published the annual ADR data report, began piloting and testing MDEC ADR Tab reports, and launched a statewide roster of ADR practitioners and a continuing education platform.

The [Alternative Dispute Resolution Data Summary Fiscal Year 2024](#) (ADR FY 2024 Data Summary) indicates an overall shift from predominantly remote to predominately in-person ADR sessions for both the District Court and circuit courts since FY 2022. ADR in circuit court domestic/family cases has remained primarily remote. Judge Nugent also reviewed outcomes for both remote and in-person ADR sessions in circuit court civil non-domestic and domestic/family cases. While outcomes for civil non-domestic cases show little variation between remote and in-person formats, domestic/family cases reflect more significant differences, with higher rates of no agreements in remote sessions.

Ms. Jurrius presented on the launch of the statewide ADR practitioners rosters and continuing education platform and on MACRO's current initiatives and areas of support.

Ms. Denihan provided an overview of the District Court ADR Office. The Office held

partnership meetings with mediation and legal service providers to discuss the mediation referral process and coordinate efforts to provide quality ADR programs to consumers. In addition, the office supports continuing education programs for rostered ADR practitioners. Ms. Denihan recognized Judge Stephan M. Moylan as the recipient of the ADR Award for Judicial Service, presented at this year's ADR Programs Recognition and Volunteer Appreciation and Continuing Education Event.

Ms. Walsh provided an overview of the Appellate Court of Maryland (ACM) ADR Division. Referring to the ADR FY 2024 Data Summary, she highlighted an increase in ACM cases involving self-represented litigants, rising from 185 cases between January and April 2024 to 221 cases during the same period in 2025. Ms. Walsh noted that ADR services are typically offered only when both parties are represented by counsel. However, the office plans to pilot a program focused on child access cases in which both parties are self-represented. In this pilot, a senior judge and a staff mediator would conduct a prehearing conference with the parties to help facilitate an agreement. Ms. Walsh also informed members that an Access to Justice video series on the appeals process was developed and is expected to be posted online by the end of the year.

b. Major Projects Committee – *Hon. John P. Morrissey & State Court Administrator Judy K. Rupp*

Chief Judge Morrissey and State Court Administrator Rupp, co-chairs of the Major Projects Committee (MPC), presented the Committee's year-to-date accomplishments and outlined upcoming initiatives. Key accomplishments include the deployment of Case Search 2.0 in January 2025, the implementation of a revised MDEC Recertification process, the launch of the Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) pilot, and the formation of a Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) focus group. Upcoming initiatives include the release of Case Search 3.0, scheduled for January 2026, and the upgrade to Enterprise Justice (EJ) 2024. The MPC also continues its ongoing review of access and data requests.

Chief Judge Morrissey and State Court Administrator Rupp also shared key accomplishments and upcoming initiatives from the subcommittees and workgroups under the MPC.

The Data Governance Subcommittee, chaired by Research and Analysis Program Director Dr. Jamie Walter, completed several goals, including drafting a data dictionary, initiating a Judiciary-wide data glossary, completing the Data Warehouse Phase I build and governance, launching a redesigned public-facing dashboard, beginning the implementation of governance policies, and provided two three-day Power BI training sessions.

Upcoming initiatives include the full release of the pending cases dashboard, implementation of targeted data quality projects, evaluation of Microsoft Purview as a governance framework tool, and drafting a comprehensive data governance policy.

The MDEC Advisory Subcommittee, chaired by Chief Judge Morrissey, held quarterly meetings for court leadership to provide updates related to MDEC, and established a Teams site to store meeting presentations and recordings. The next meeting is scheduled for October 22, 2025, with quarterly meetings set to continue throughout 2026.

The Alternative Work Arrangements Feasibility Workgroup (AWAFW), chaired by Ms. Faulkner, drafted an updated AWAFW report. The final report will be presented to the MPC, and upon approval, will be submitted to Chief Justice Fader for review.

The Appeals Workgroup, chaired by Clerk Gregory Hilton, drafted an Appeals Manual and updated several QRGs, including *Building Appeal Record for ACM*, *Processing Writ of Certiorari*, and *Appeal Build to SCM*. The workgroup also revised the Cover Page (CC-102), to notify attorneys when the record is sent to the appropriate appellate court and added new forms to Odyssey. Although the workgroup is currently dormant, it remains a continuing workgroup of record to address any emerging issues, update QRGs as needed, and support appeals-related trainings.

The E-Copies Workgroup, chaired by Ms. Faulkner, explored short-term solutions for electronic copies of case documents. The Workgroup reviewed e-payment and online ordering options, selected and implemented the ShareFile solution, and collaborated with JIS to develop a QRG, an FAQ, and conducted two statewide trainings. The Workgroup remains ready to provide assistance or input on long-term solutions for e-copies.

The Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) Workgroup, chaired by Assistant State Court Administrator Lou Gieszl, conducted a statewide naming contest for the new ODR application and introduced ODR during the August Joint Conference of the Clerks of Court, Court Administrators, and Administrative Clerks. The Workgroup is in the process of developing marketing plans. Pilots are set to launch in the Fall of 2025 for non-incarcerable traffic cases, small claims, and parenting plans related to Title IV(D) child support matters. The Workgroup will develop training and hands-on support for the full statewide rollout. Additionally, it will continue to monitor ODR trends nationally and globally. State Court Administrator Rupp acknowledged Stacey Johnson for her significant contributions to the application's development.

The Redaction/AI Workgroup, chaired by Ms. Faulkner, implemented a statewide cannabis redaction and configured Tyler/CSI Intellidact software to assist with the redaction of identifying information of minor victims. The workgroup will continue to explore additional implementation options.

The Shielding, Sealing, and Confidentiality of Court Records within the Maryland Rules Workgroup, chaired by Ms. Faulkner, evaluated the Transparency and Access Workgroup's report and created a consolidated terms list. Breakout groups will be

formed to address streamlined terms to ensure consistency in the Maryland Rules and recommendations will be made for updates to those Rules.

c. Special Projects Committee – *Hon. Matthew J. Fader*

Chief Justice Fader presented an update on the Special Projects Committee, which oversees five sub-workgroups: the Security Subcommittee, the Artificial Intelligence Workgroup, the Judicial Transparency and Access Workgroup, the Strategic Plan and Development Workgroup, and the Transcript Task Force. These workgroups make recommendations to the Special Projects Committee concerning issues that do not fall within the scope of other Judicial Council committees or span the scope of multiple Judicial Council committees.

The Artificial Intelligence Workgroup provides recommendations regarding the Judiciary's response to the emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI). Over the past year, the Workgroup reports that it has completed key initiatives, including the development and distribution of a Judiciary-wide survey on AI, the creation of an AI FAQs resource for Judiciary employees, and participated in discussions on a potential AI Evidence Clinic Pilot Program.

Additionally, while monitoring technology advancements nationally, the Workgroup has continued its collaboration with the Rules Committee and the Judicial College to ensure that the Judiciary is responsive to new generative AI developments by considering rule revisions (immediately or short-term) and/or implementing judiciary-wide technology training.

The Judicial Transparency and Access Workgroup provides recommendations for improving public access to court records. Ongoing initiatives include proposed rule amendments that expand remote public access to non-confidential records in civil (non-family) cases and remote access for State-supported legal service groups to be used when determining if an individual qualifies for legal assistance. The workgroup reports that it continues to analyze and make recommendations on the potential usefulness of improving access to deidentified expungement data.

Judge Brett R. Wilson, Chair of the Security Subcommittee, gave an update on the subcommittee and its three workgroups: The Facility Security Review Workgroup, The Security Liaison Workgroup, and The Security Policy Review Workgroup. The Subcommittee is tasked with reporting quarterly summaries of threat assessments, ongoing review and improvement of security policies, and preparing an annual report that includes an analysis of the Judiciary's current security status, proposals for legislative funding requests, and changes to security policies. This year's report will be submitted by October 31, 2025.

Judge Wilson reported that over the past year, the Subcommittee has provided a memo in support of security improvements in Allegany County, facilitated a

statewide reassessment of Tier 1 security items, provided guidance to the ADR Committee on mediation confidentiality, and conducted a statewide survey on courthouse screening practices. Moving forward, the Subcommittee will provide continued support for ongoing security training and education for Judiciary staff and review barriers to implementing universal screening protocols.

Judge Wilson also provided updates for each of the three workgroups:

The Facility Security Review Workgroup

The workgroup is continuing to develop a process for routine security status reviews of judicial facilities statewide.

The Security Liaison Workgroup

The workgroup will submit a report surveying courtroom security statewide (as required by Senate Bill 621) to Chief Justice Fader by September 30, 2025.

The Security Policy Review Workgroup

The workgroup has updated the judicial safety and security resources page on CourtNet and added a webpage on CourtNet and the Customer Service Portal for submitting threat notifications to the Judicial Threat Management Center.

The Special Projects Committee also oversees the Strategic Plan and Development Workgroup, which was formed to create a strategic vision that engages members of the Maryland Judiciary, its justice partners, and the public to identify initiatives aligned with the Judiciary's mission and vision. Phases I, II, and III of the Strategic Plan were completed between October 2023 and March 2025. The last phase, Phase IV -- Operationalize, is currently underway. This phase will automate the notification, collection, and update the process for maintaining the Operational Plan. Additionally, this phase will deliver an annual lifecycle for identifying and monitoring key initiatives. The Strategic Plan and updates regarding the Plan can be found on CourtNet.

Finally, Chief Justice Fader provided an update from the Transcript Task Force. The Task Force completed the implementation of a pilot program that funds appeal transcripts for indigent individuals involved in child-access domestic relations cases. The pilot program has been approved for FY2026 and is anticipated to continue for three years while long-term solutions are being evaluated. The Task Force continues to explore options for expanding transcript access with a comprehensive statewide digital audio/video recording system as the official trial record. The Task Force has collaborated with JIS on an RFP for such a system and will make a recommendation after analyzing the results.

Judge Yolanda L. Curtin inquired whether the Transcript Task Force could explore the expansion of the audio/video recording system for use in exceptions filings in circuit courts. Chief Justice Fader confirmed that the potential system could be used for exceptions as well as other potential broader uses.

5. For the Good of the Order

No additional matters were raised by the members, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:32 a.m.