



# Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### *Bucks, Cumberland, Westmoreland* **Three Counties Chosen As Pilots for Criminal Case System**

**HARRISBURG, April 23, 2002** — Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Stephen A. Zappala announced today that Bucks, Westmoreland and Cumberland counties will serve as test sites for an automated case processing system being developed for all of the state's criminal trial courts.

The pilot tests are a critical phase in the development and implementation of the new case management system. Trial courts in the three pilot counties, working with Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts' staff, will test all facets of the automated system being developed for the Commonwealth's 67 counties. Among the things to be tested are training developed for the counties' trial court staff and judges; data conversion; and the tracking of fines, fees and costs. Installation and testing of the new system in the select counties will take place during a three-month pilot period, beginning in July 2003, but preparatory work already is underway.

The Common Pleas Criminal Court Case Management System (CPCMS) is being developed to provide an automated and integrated statewide network of scheduling, docket entries, forms and financial accounting functions at the trial court level. Current, disparate county criminal court automation systems across Pennsylvania are unable to instantly share information on dockets, warrants and defendants. The new criminal case management system will allow case information to move more expeditiously and consistently through the criminal courts.

When fully implemented, users of the system will be able to process cases more effectively in each county and they will be able to share data and case files about those cases within the Judicial Branch of state government, whether with minor courts, other trial courts, or appellate courts. When linked with the Commonwealth's Justice Network (or J-NET), the CPCMS will also provide data from criminal courts to Executive Branch agencies such as the Pennsylvania State Police, Department of Corrections, Board of Probation and Parole, and vice versa.

"Full automation of the trial courts meets the need and desire of those who depend on Pennsylvania's judiciary for effective case processing," Chief Justice Zappala said. "It will provide the means to maximize efficiency and productivity while allowing cases to move expeditiously, fairly and consistently through our state court system.

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“Technological development is no longer a luxury, but a necessity,” the chief justice added. “As architects of our electronic future, it continues to be both exhilarating and challenging as we move from the fragmented back roads of trial case management to a communications superhighway.”

The CPCMS is part of the long-term Judicial Computer Project which has:

- successfully automated Pennsylvania’s more than 550 minor courts,
- developed a first-ever case management system for all three of the state’s appellate courts,
- implemented a successful state judiciary web site (the second – by a week— in the nation),
- brought desk top computing capability to all judicial branch staff and jurists.

“The Common Pleas Criminal Court Case Management System is envisioned to be the first segment in this last major phase of the Judicial Computer Project,” Court Administrator of Pennsylvania Zygmunt A. Pines said. “Ultimately, the Judicial Computer Project is anticipated to include automation of the civil and orphans’ court divisions of the Common Pleas courts in each of Pennsylvania’s 60 judicial districts in addition to this criminal court automation and our past successful efforts.”

Each of the three pilot counties was chosen based on criteria that included size, location, technical resources and participation in the ongoing planning process. The pilot will begin in Cumberland County, about one month prior to moving to Westmoreland and Bucks counties.

Pilot testing represents the third of four phases of development of the new criminal case management system and follows months of research, planning and development. The final phase, implementation or rollout of the new criminal case management system, is scheduled to begin in October 2003 and to last through December 2004.

As part of the first phase of work, system design sessions were held over several months last year among county court judges and staff, lawyers and others who are assisting the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts and its vendor partners in developing the system. The second or construction phase, which entails coding and software testing, is now underway.

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*(Attachment: Pennsylvania Judicial Computer Project Chronology of Major Events)*