

Circuit Court to Launch New Web Site

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After months of preparation, planning, navigation mapping and information gathering, the Circuit and Probate Courts' new Web sites will be launched by October 1, 2002. Litigants, attorneys, and the public at large will find information relative to court functions, operations, contacts, forms, policies, court and office hours, and much more. Enter www.oaklandcourts.org to arrive at the start page for the courts. You may then click on "Circuit Court" or "Probate Court" to access their respective Web sites.

The Web page has been formatted such that the left side will show the major navigation categories. Scroll down the left side of the page and you will see the following options: Home Page, About, Contacts, Calendar, Divisions, Forms, How Do I (which functions like a "Frequently Asked Questions" site), Information & Publications, Links, Maps, Volunteer Opportunities, Judges, Jury Service, Hints for Attorneys, and Programs and Services. I'll explain what you will find in some of these categories in a moment.

The right side of the page includes a "Spotlight" section. Here you will see information about changes in the law and new or changing court rules, introductions to newly elected or appointed judges, and the implementation of new programs or services. A "News & Events" section is also included on the right side of our page. We'll post such items as press releases and announcements here. This section will also be used to inform those who provide services to the court about changes in policies and procedures. You might think of this section as an electronic bulletin board.

Earlier I mentioned the left-hand navigation categories that are included on our Web site. Here is some of the information you will find when you click on these categories. The "About" section includes an overview of the courts, an organizational chart, general information relative to each of the courts' divisions, hours of operation, holiday closures, and a complete list of administrative orders and local court rules. The "Contacts" section provides U.S. Postal and e-mail addresses, and phone and fax numbers for the various offices within the courts.

Click on the "Divisions" icon under Circuit Court and you will find information about our three functional divisions – general jurisdiction, business, and family. Here you may access information on case jurisdiction, attorney fee schedules, and payment vouchers. We also provided an overview of each division and information about its specific programs. For example, you will find information

about the criminal assignment program, adult probation services, and the juvenile and adult [drug] treatment courts.

You will also find scheduling and docket information, such as specifics about the motion docket, adjournments, and motion and criminal call cancellations. We've also provided detailed information about the various business units within each division. Here's where you will look to find information about the jury and case management offices, juvenile intake, the psychological clinic, and Youth Assistance, to name but a few.

Nearly every court form imaginable is housed in the "Forms" section. Instructions for completing the forms are also provided. The forms are "print only" at this point, but we hope to accommodate the electronic submission of forms when we initiate electronic filing down the road. You will also note that we've provided instructions for such things as requesting videotapes of court proceedings and accommodations for those who have physical impairments.

I'm excited about the "Information & Publications" section. Here you will find newsletters, news articles, brochures, press releases, notices of employment opportunities, tour information, annual reports, and previous "On The Circuit" articles as published in *Laches*. Time and money is saved by maintaining this information online rather than in hard copy.

We want our Web site to be user friendly so we've deliberately included many "links" in strategic locations. In most sections you will find links to other areas within our Web site to accelerate your navigation. We also provided links to the federal courts, other state courts, law schools, associations and agencies, county offices and various reference sites, including Michigan law libraries.

Court staff were trained to update and maintain the information provided on our Web site. We won't have to rely on outside agencies to initiate changes. This will improve our ability to keep you updated on the latest developments affecting your practice here at the Probate and Circuit Courts. I hope that you find our Web site informative and helpful.

Until next month ...

