

Fairfax County General District Court CY 2022 Equity Impact Plan



Leadership Sponsor: Susan Madsen, Clerk of Court and Judge Manuel Capsalis

Equity Lead(s): Darcie Dunn – Chief Deputy Clerk

Departmental Equity Guiding Statement: To provide an independent, accessible, responsive forum for the just resolution of disputes in order to preserve the rule of law and to protect all rights and liberties guaranteed by the United States and Virginia Constitutions.

Context: The Fairfax County General District Court holds court hearings for all traffic violations, minor criminal offenses known as misdemeanors, and civil cases such as landlord and tenant disputes, contract disputes and personal injury actions. By law, the court must apply rules of procedure and evidence to each case it hears. These procedures are applied uniformly, regardless of who is appearing before the court.

Issues and trends that are observed are mostly regarding fair and equal access to justice, as that is a core purpose and responsibility for the courts. We find that there is a great need for those who do not understand or communicate in English, and it continues to be a challenge. Everyone deserves the opportunity to understand the proceedings in court as well as interactions with Court staff before and after their hearings. Fairfax County General District Court continues to work hard to embrace local efforts that involve diversion practices as well, so individuals who need assistance from other agencies are provided the chance to do so. When a conviction occurs, it is important that we work with each individual involved in the case in order to satisfy any restitution or other debts that may be owed. Internally, to the extent possible, it is important for the court to be comprised of a diverse workforce that mirrors the community we are serving. This will go a long way to provide the appearance of doing justice for the public that is being served.

Long-term Outcome(s):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural and Recreational Opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> Health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Opportunity | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing and Neighborhood Livability |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Efficient and Effective Government | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifelong Education and Learning |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Empowerment and Support for Residents Facing Vulnerability | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobility and Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environment | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Safety and Security |

System-Level Infrastructure: The majority of our actions will involve technology of some kind, which will allow for more information to more people within the community that is easily and readily accessible to them. In order to advance those actions, it will require working with the Fairfax County's Court Department of Information Technology office to ensure that the technology is compatible with the County's network and meets the requirements for COTS applications. In addition, we will also need to coordinate with the Supreme Court of Virginia's Department of Judicial Information Technology Office to develop appropriate interfaces for external applications to access Court data. We also plan to keep our public website as up to date as possible in order to keep the public informed of what is needed and what to expect when coming to the Fairfax County General District Court.

FAIRFAX COUNTY GENERAL DISTRICT COURT CALENDAR YEAR 2022 EQUITY IMPACT PLAN

| Goals | One Fairfax Area of Focus | Actions | Stakeholders | Timeline | Resources and Supports | Responsible Parties | Performance Measures |
|--|---------------------------|--|---|-----------------------|---|--|--|
| 1. Expand and streamline mediation through Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) | #7 | 1a. ODR helps the public resolve disputes online rather than through traditional in-person hearings or mediation. Successfully initiated a pilot program with positive feedback from citizens. | Vendor & Court DIT | April 2021 – Dec 2022 | Vendor, Court DIT, GDC Judges, GDC Staff & FFX County Bar | Civil GDC Judges, GDC IT Proj. Mgr., Clerk of Court, FFX County Court DIT, Civil Division Sup. | # of days it takes to resolve civil small claims # of cases resolved before the court date # of cases resolved with a mediator |
| | | 1b. Currently working with the Dept of Procurement and Material Management to produce and distribute a request for proposals to convert the pilot into a long-term system. | Same as above | Same as above | Dept of Procurement and Material Management | Same as above | # of cases where a party opts out of ODR # of cases that were removed to Civil court |
| | | 1c. Long Term: Incorporate language translation capability and expand ODR to incorporate different case types. | Same as above | Undetermined | Same as above | Same as above | Same as above |
| 2. Translate court documents into several different languages | #7 | 2a. Collaborating with OES and other language services in order to translate court forms into other languages that will allow customers to more easily interact with the Court. | Court Division leads, OES & language services | Ongoing | Court Division leads, OES & language services | Court Division leads | # of customers able to get forms completed without assistance from Court clerks # of customers able to obtain information needed without the assistance of an interpreter |

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|--|---------------------------|--|---|--|--|--|---|
| 3. Improve customer service through digital technology | #7 | 3a. Digital signage will display division-specific information in multiple languages to minimize the amount of time customers spend waiting in line to speak with a clerk. Screens to be installed Mid- Feb., however computers are victim of shipping inventory shortages. | Vendor, Court DIT & GDC staff | 3-6 months depending on shipping delays | FFX County Court DIT & GDC IT Proj. Mgr. | FFX County Court DIT & GDC IT Proj. Mgr. | Digital video monitors present in all divisions (civil, criminal and traffic) that display division-specific information to the public # of languages in which information is provided on the displays Customers wait time in queues at counter |
| | | 3b. Train court staff to be system administrators. | Same as above | Same as above | Same as above | Same as above | |
| | | 3c. Develop a virtual tour of the courthouse that would enable the public to view the layout of the courthouse and know the location of each office prior to arriving for court. In discussions with Fairfax County PCP division to develop tool; will make tour available on Court website. | FFX County Court DIT, JDR, GDC & Circuit court judges | Currently tabled due to pandemic & competing priorities for IT resources | FFX County Court DIT & GDC IT Proj. Mgr. & FFX County PCP division | FFX County Court DIT & GDC IT Proj. Mgr. | Virtual tour created # of views of the virtual tour |
| 4. Create more diverse workforce | #7 | 4a. Attend job fairs at local high schools, colleges, and universities to increase awareness of criminal justice job opportunities. | High Schools, Colleges, Universities and GDC HR staff | Quarterly job fairs | Job brochures, Recruitment posters, and GDC HR staff | GDC Paralegal staff and GDC HR staff | Increase number of diverse job applicants and intern/mentoring opportunities |
| | | 4b. Attend intern fairs at local colleges and universities to increase awareness of intern and mentoring opportunities within the Court. | Same as above | Same as above | Same as above | Same as above | |

Director's Signature: 