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Superior Court to be First to Convert to Electronic Filing

At a briefing last month and in recent interviews with Bar News, the NH e-Court Project team provided details of the design and implementation including a revised timeline and launch sequence.

Peter Caradonna, the e-Court project consultant, said that the superior court will be the first court level to convert to nearly paperless operation, with a projected launch of a pilot project in August 2013.


The project sequence calls for testing and rollout at all the superior court sites through 2013; the District Division of the Circuit Court comes next in 2014; then Family and Probate divisions in 2015; and the Supreme Court rollout completes the project in 2016.

A high-level program plan, similar to a master plan for city planning, will be released soon. "By articulating major aspects of the program, the e-Court Master Plan will communicate key program information across all stakeholder audiences," said Caradonna. Later, individual detailed plans will elaborate on specific information for sub-systems, phases, or tasks. The Master Plan will lay out key decisions made by the Supreme Court. The project team solicited input on these key issues at a November public forum.

- Transaction fees will be charged for e-filing. There will be exceptions for indigents and fees will not be charged to government entities such as the police. In other jurisdictions, such fees range from \$3 to \$12 with \$5 being the median, Caradonna said.
- Use of e-Court services will be mandatory. Participation will be voluntary during a trial period. There will be broad access to e-filing capability for all citizens through the online systems and the availability of computer kiosks at courthouses.
- The Court will tightly control the vendors providing equipment and services. Some systems, such as the IRS e-filing for tax returns, allow multiple vendors to offer filing and other services. The Judicial Branch decided it will be the system owner, with vendors providing services to it.
- Cloud storage will be used. The e-Court project would be too limited if case files were maintained in servers physically located in specific courthouses. Although changes in laws may be required, secure storage "in the cloud" will be used.
- Implementation will be by court levels rather than case types. E-Court systems can initially be implemented more rapidly by types of cases, but the Court believes it will be more efficient to implement an entire court rather than piecemeal.
- "Ingesting" or adding active paper cases into the electronic system will depend on the type and duration of cases. For example, motor vehicle cases, typically very short-lived, will not be "ingested" while family law and document-intensive civil cases will be.

Caradonna encourages anyone with an interest in the project to visit the NH e-Court Project website, easily linked from the home page of the [Judicial Branch website](#). Project documents and presentations are posted, and comments on a blog are encouraged. A recent check of the blog before *Bar News* presstime showed 21 comments, some detailed and thoughtful, with responses from the project team.

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