



ANNUAL STATE OF THE COURT REPORT
CIRCUIT COURT FOR QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY
JULY 1, 2022 – JUNE 30, 2023

Queen Anne's County Circuit Court
200 North Commerce Street
Centreville, MD 21617
410-758-6411
Hon. Lynn Knight, Administrative Judge
Katherine Hager, Clerk of Court
Kara Pollak, Court Administrator

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I. Executive Summary:

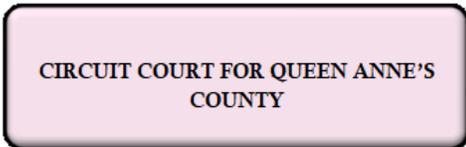
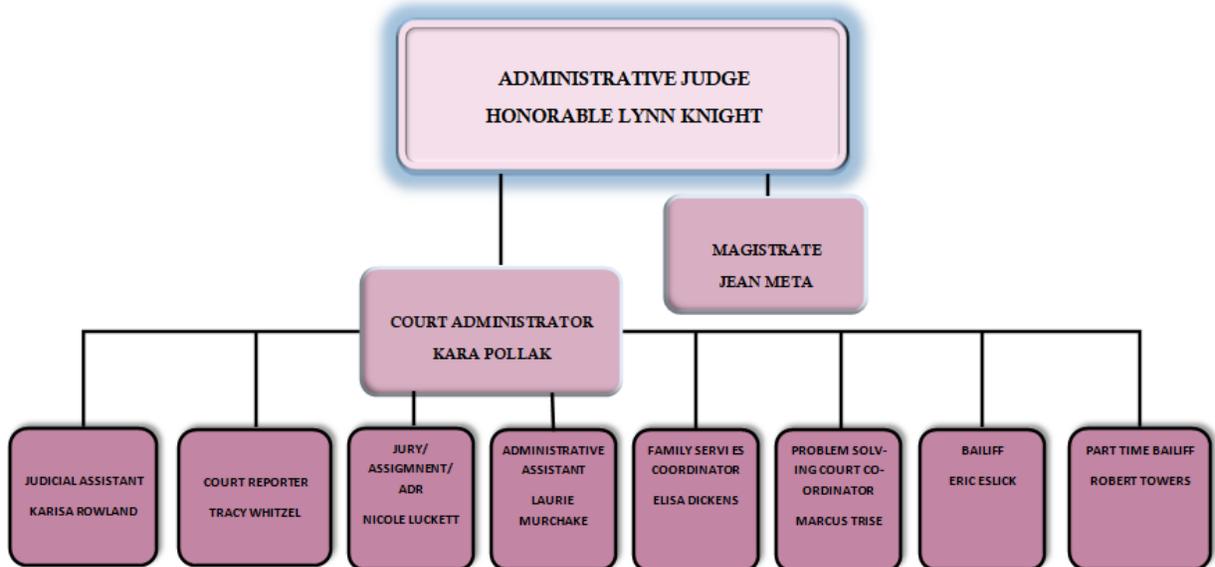
The Circuit Court for Queen Anne’s County, located in the county seat of Centreville, is a trial court of general jurisdiction that has one full-time judge and one magistrate. In addition, the Court uses Senior Judges that are subject to recall to assist with the trial docket. It is part of the Second Judicial Circuit to include Caroline, Cecil, Kent, and Talbot counties.



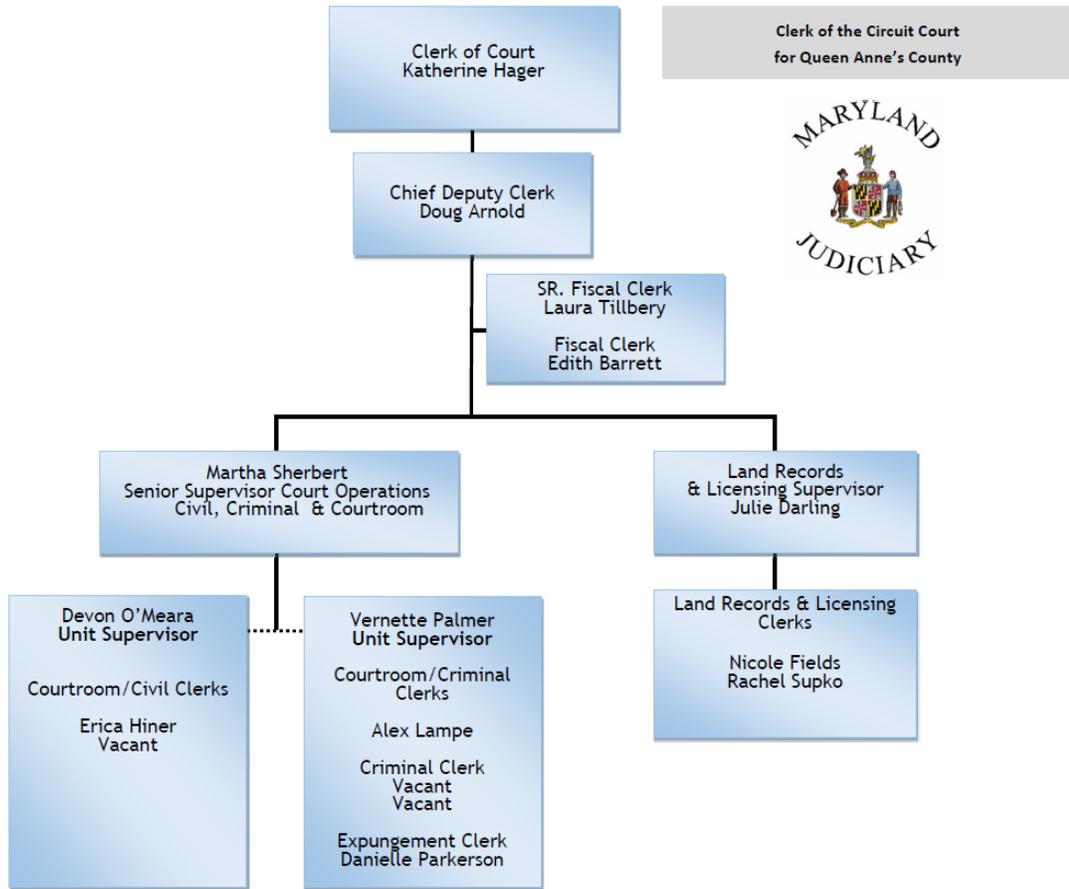
“Everyone should feel that they make a difference to the success of the organization. When that happens, people feel centered and that gives their work meaning” - W.G. Bennis

II. Organizational Structure of the Court:

- CIRCUIT COURT FOR QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY



- CLERK OF COURT FOR QUEEN ANNE’S COUNTY



2023 June

III. Annual Goals and Objectives:

- Acknowledging that all members of the Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County employees, including the Clerk of Court offices and Sheriff's deputies feel that they make a difference to the overall success of our organization.
- Monitor case time standards to ensure all cases are disposed of timely.
- Maintain open communications with other agencies to promote good business practices.
- Continued participation in our Drug Court/CART program/Problem Solving Court along with maximizing the highest level of benefits for the participants of the community.
- Maintain a high level of customer satisfaction and access to justice.
- Provide citizens and staff members with a safe and secure environment.
- Always providing fair, efficient, and effective justice to all.

IV. Projects and Initiatives:

- **Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County Day**
On April 18, 2023, in correlation with Administrative Professional's Day, the Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County implemented our 1st Annual Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County Day. The entire building, including the Administration, Clerk's Office, and Sheriff's deputies celebrated together to build overall moral and to remember the importance of teamwork and supporting our fellow offices.
- **Yondr pouches**
In June of 2023, our courthouse incorporated the use of Yondr cellphone pouches to individuals attending open court proceedings. Prior to implementing the Yondr pouches, our Court experienced an increase in inappropriate cell phone usage inside the court and courtrooms/hearing rooms. This policy directs anyone entering the building, for open court proceedings, is required to place their cellphones in a Yondr pouch, which is then sealed. If for some reason the

phone is needed during court, the Sheriff deputies have release capabilities inside the courtroom for easy access. Since incorporating the Yondr pouches, the Court has seen great improvement relating to inappropriate cell phone usage.

- **Queen Anne’s County Crossover Youth Practice Model**

In May of 2023, after a timely development process, Magistrate Meta launched the Queen Anne’s County Crossover Youth Practice Model. This model addresses specific needs to Queen Anne’s County youth who are involved in both child welfare and delinquency cases; or duly involved youth. The program incorporates everyone involved including the Magistrate, the Department of Social Services, the Department of Juvenile Services, and the youth to be sure everyone is heard together at one time. This process also helps everyone understand their role while maintaining the success of the youth and to ensure there are no missed opportunities. The Magistrate, along with community state stakeholders, and the Child Welfare Commission meet quarterly to discuss means of improvement to maximize the benefits of the program.

- **Access to Justice Videos in the Clerk’s Office**

Communicating with our community continues to be a top priority. The Clerk of the Circuit Court for Queen Anne’s County installed 2 television monitors in the public areas of their Land Records and Judicial sections featuring closed captioned videos created by Access to Justice. The topics of the videos were selected based on the needs of visitors coming to the Clerk’s office and include “How to Apply for a Marriage License”, “Filing a Writ of Mandamus”, “Filing for Expungements”, “How to Find the Deed to your Property”, “How do I get a copy of my Criminal Case”, the Name Change video series, and others.

- **Business License Enhancements**

The Clerk of the Circuit Court for Queen Anne’s County continues to work on customer service enhancements for business license customers. On November 28, 2022, we updated the Business Licensing process regarding the issuance of new and renewal business licenses with the ability to accept on-line payments. For several years now, businesses have been able to apply for a business license on-line, however they had to print out the application and mail it in with their payment. This enhancement now allows for businesses to apply

for, submit, and pay for the license on-line. This is a time efficient and cost-effective measure for both the businesses and the Clerks in allowing for on-line application and payment for business licenses.

V. Operations

- **Odyssey Calendar** - In March of 2023, we redesigned the appearance of our Odyssey court calendaring system by reducing the number of sessions, combining necessary sessions, and enhancing session titles. This modification allows for an easier to read calendaring system that is less confusing and reduces the possibility for errors.
- **Family Law Self Help Clinic** – Our self-help center promotes legal access to individuals of the public by local qualified attorneys who provide limited representation to those who cannot afford legal counsel.
- **Mobile CourtSmart Unit** – In May of 2023, the Circuit Court for Queen Anne’s County purchased a mobile CourtSmart recording system that allows us to record audio court proceedings off-site in the event of an emergency. After the effects of the COVID pandemic, it was critical for this Court to have a mobile system to maintain necessary court proceeding without delay.
- *Upcoming:* **Regional Trust Clerk** – Included in our FY25 Family Service Grant Application is the request to add a Contractual Regional Trust Clerk position who will provide services to the Second Judicial Circuit, excluding Cecil County.
- **Problem Solving Court** – The Problem-Solving Court (PSC) was approved as a new program for our courthouse in June of 2022. A PSC coordinator was hired in September of 2022 with PSC hearings beginning in December of 2022. The program took off with two participants and is showing continued growth as the program now has eight participants. The program consists of five phases, over a

two-year timespan with our highest participant already reaching phase three. We are very excited to have this new program for qualified members of the community to assist in continued treatment.



Pictured from left to right: Marcus Trise - Problem-Solving Court Coordinator, Leigh Dillon, Esq. - Assistant State's Attorney, Honorable Lynn Knight, County Administrative Judge, and Nicole Pallia, Esq. Office of the Public Defender.

VI. Facilities

- *Upcoming:* **Holding Cell Addition** – We will be removing one of our private conference room concrete walls which is adjacent to a section of our holding cells. This project will provide a safe private conference area for incarcerated persons to communicate with counsel while maintaining the safety of the courthouse.

VII. Legislative

Nothing to report currently.

VIII. External Relationships

ANNUAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION DAY BOOKMARK ART CONTEST

On May 3, 2023, the Courthouse hosted a tour for the Queen Anne’s County students that were winners of the 17th Annual Conflict Resolution Day bookmark art contest. The students, their parents, and teachers were treated to a behind-the-scenes look at courthouse operations, including question and answer sessions with Hon. Lynn Knight, Magistrate Meta, Clerk of the Court, Katherine Hager, courthouse staff, and Security.



Pictured from left to right: Magistrate Jean Meta, Honorable Lynn Knight, bookmark contest winners, Clerk of Court Katherine Hager.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WOMEN JUDGES

THE POWER OF WOMEN

IN HONOR OF
INTERNATIONAL
DAY OF
WOMEN
JUDGES



Please join us in a discussion on women taking the lead and making a difference.

This is an opportunity in sharing your experiences, how to overcome obstacles, and pursue your dreams.

We will hear from women trailblazers in law about what it takes to be a great leader and the importance of staying resilient. We will also hear from the young women wrestlers about competing in a male-dominated sport and the importance of developing a strong strategic compass.

Venue:

Friday, March 10, 2023
3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Circuit Court of
Queen Anne's County
200 N. Commerce St.
Centreville, MD 21617

RSVP:

Friday, March 3, 2023
Elisa Dickens,
Family Services Coordinator
(410) 758-1773 ext. 5128
elisa.dickens@mdcourts.gov

In March of 2023, in conjunction with International Day of Woman Judges, the Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County welcomed the Queen Anne's County High School Lady Lions, the first all-girls high school wrestling team in the state of Maryland. Discussions included overcoming obstacles, facing challenges, and remaining resilient while focusing on pursuing life goals. The Lady Lions shared their feelings and ways they cope with difficult situations in a predominately male sport.

MOCK TRIALS

2023 celebrated the 40th anniversary of High School Mock Trials and the Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County, along with the Clerk of Court, were honored to host two Mock Trials this year.

The first mock trial was the Maryland State Semi-Final trial presented by MYLaw: Maryland Youth and the Law, between James M. Bennett High School, representing Circuit 1 and North Point High School, representing Circuit 7 on March 14, 2023. North Point High School defeated James M. Bennett High School and continued to finish 2nd in the State Finals to Richard Montgomery High School, Montgomery County.

The second mock trial was held on April 26, 2023, for 8th grade homeschool students from Caroline County and Queen Anne's County. To add some excitement, both events were held in our beautiful Historic Courthouse and the students portrayed the plaintiff, prosecution, defense, and bailiff positions while being scored by fellow students acting as jurors and the Honorable Lynn Knight for the state competition. Both events gave the students a better understanding of the law, court procedures, decorum, and public speaking.

QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE TRAINING

With the help of the Queen Anne's County Sheriff's Office, Administrative Office of the Courts, and the Office of Security Administration the Circuit Court received necessary training in the event there was an active shooter in the building and the steps that should be taken for the overall safety of everyone.

QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES

Queen Anne's County Emergency Services conducted a stop-the-bleed and Narcan administration to interested court staff members.

IV. Other Concerns

Nothing to report.