

## Programs and Services



The Ninth Judicial Circuit utilizes various court support programs, providing assistance and alternatives to the judiciary and to the general public. Court Administration's primary objective is to serve the Judges of the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court by providing various support programs necessary for the daily operation and management of non-judicial court functions. The following are court programs and services offered in the Circuit:

**A Place for Children** - - A Place for Children is an Orange County funded, on-site, quality child care facility for families with official court business. Serving over 2,400 children last year, this licensed drop-in child care center lets children be children, instead of spending long sessions in court listening to adult interactions. In 2002, A Place for Children began providing free child care for people who have been summoned for jury duty. Reservations are required for jurors' children. The program, which cares for children up to age 14, also serves as a link between available social services and the high-risk families who may need those services. Last year, one-third of the nearly 1,600 families who utilized the Center accepted over 1,400 referrals. A Place for Children began in June of 1998. The professionally staffed center is located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Orange County Courthouse and is open 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The Children's Home Society of Florida, a 100-year old non-profit social services agency, operates A Place for Children. For more information, call (407) 836-2108.

**An Afternoon in the Courthouse Seminar** - - This seminar's focus is to provide helpful hints for area attorneys as they practice before the Judges of the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court. The seminar provides insight into local judicial practices and procedures. It is designed to teach the "nuts and bolts" of how to successfully transact legal business at the courthouse for new attorneys. It is presented by the Young Lawyers Section of the Orange County Bar Association. The seminar is open to all attorneys, law clerks and legal assistants and is offered twice per year. The seminars are taught by a team of Judges, representing the various divisions of the Court. During the past four years, more than 1,200 attorneys, paralegals and law students have attended the Afternoon at the Courthouse sessions.

**Ask-A-Judge** - - This is an educational web page which was developed to increase the public's understanding of the challenges and responsibility of judging, while educating the public about the judiciary as an independent branch of government. Judges cannot answer questions about specific cases or give legal advice but can answer questions designed to improve the law, the legal system, and the administration of justice. Over 1,700 questions have been submitted to Ask-A-Judge since it was first available in late 1999. Questions are not answered in real time. Suitable questions and answers are posted on the Circuit's web page. To submit your question to Ask-A-Judge, simply log on to <http://www.ninja9.org/ask-a-judge.htm>.

**Attorney Ad Litem/Guardian Ad Litem Pilot Project** - - The Legal Aid Society of the

Orange County Bar Association, Barry University School of Law, the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court, and the Office of the State Courts Administrator entered into a contract to provide Attorney Ad Litem and Guardian Ad Litem representation to children as part of the Attorney Ad Litem/Guardian Ad Litem Pilot Project authorized by the Florida Legislature in 2000. This pilot project is in its third year and has assisted in resolving many long term and complex foster care cases, as well as assisting children involved in Dependency Court in receiving necessary services such as educational and medical assistance.

**Audio/Visual Services** - - The Ninth Judicial Circuit is committed to researching and employing the latest in audio/video technology. In recent years, the Court has implemented a Circuit-wide teleconferencing system with Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) capability, and a cutting edge digital centralized court reporting system. Furthermore, the Roger A. Barker Courtroom on the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Orange County Courthouse is one of the most technologically advanced and integrated courtrooms in the world. The Court is responsible for supporting the audio/video infrastructure in the courthouses, including video arraignments and initial appearances, video conferencing, remote depositions, centralized court reporting, media production support, presentation systems and Internet broadcast. For audio/video needs in Orange County, send an e-mail to [AVRequests@ocnjcc.org](mailto:AVRequests@ocnjcc.org) or call (407) 836-0522. In Osceola County, call (407) 343-2530 or email [ctiswd1@ocnjcc.org](mailto:ctiswd1@ocnjcc.org).

**Child Support Hearing Officers** - - To alleviate the caseload in the domestic relations division, the Ninth Judicial Circuit utilizes a hearing officer program. This office is responsible for resolving all Department of Revenue related child support enforcement cases - - often referred to as "Title IV-D." This includes establishment of support and welfare reimbursement obligations, and enforcement and modification of existing support orders. Approximately 15,000 cases were heard by the Hearing Officers in 2002 in Orange County. Hearing Officers also serve as "General Masters" to hear Baker Act petitions. A Baker Act hearing is a request for involuntary commitment of a mentally ill person. Approximately 640 Baker Act hearings were held in Orange County in 2002. In Orange County, call (407) 836-2287. In Osceola County, call (407) 343-3503.

**Children's Visitation Center for Families with Domestic Violence** - - In March 1999, a Children's Visitation Center for Families with Domestic Violence opened in Osceola County to allow children to have an ongoing relationship with both parents, while ensuring their safety and well-being. Both monitored exchanges and supervised visits are conducted. Monitored exchange allows parents to exchange children for the purpose of visitation, while safeguarding the physical and emotional well-being of all family members. Supervised visitation provides children with a chance to be with their mom or dad in a safe, secure and comfortable environment. To learn more, call (407) 343-2467.

**Civil Traffic Infractions Hearing Officer Program** - - The purpose of the Civil Traffic Infractions Hearing Officer Program is to divert less serious civil traffic infractions away from the more formal traffic courts. The Traffic Hearing Officers have the power to accept

pleas from defendants, hear and rule upon motions, decide whether a defendant has committed an infraction and adjudicate or withhold adjudication in the same manner as a County Court Judge. In Orange County, call (407) 836-2334. In Osceola County, call (407) 343-2400.

**Collection Court** - - Collection Court is designed to collect unpaid fines and costs that are imposed in the criminal justice system. Collection Courts in Orange and Osceola Counties collect fines and costs in felony and misdemeanor cases, public defender liens, court appointed attorney liens, restitution, county ordinance infractions, municipal ordinance infractions, civil traffic infractions and parking fees. Collection Court reflects the Judges' commitment to the public to see that those who can pay, will pay.

**Community Relations/Public Information** - - The Ninth Judicial Circuit is committed to educating and enhancing the public's perception and understanding of the Court's role and responsibilities in the community. A comprehensive Public Information Program that both enhances public trust and confidence and provides the community with an opportunity to learn more about the workings of the judicial branch of government is actively underway in the Circuit. Programs such as Inside the Courts, Speakers Bureau, Town Halls, comprehensive court tours and court publications contribute to encouraging the public's trust and confidence in the Courts. The Court's quarterly news magazine, the *Sound Block*, highlights the work of the Judiciary and staff and provides the community with information on innovations in court management, case processing and community outreach. Other publications, such as the Year in Review, Court brochures and the Court Coloring Book afford the public with a comprehensive understanding of the Court's role in the community. For more information, call (407) 836-2047.

**Court Appointed Attorney Program** - - This program addresses procedures for the appointment of attorneys and payment of attorney's fees and costs for indigent defendants in felony, misdemeanor, traffic and juvenile delinquency cases and for indigent parties in juvenile dependency cases. The appointment of attorneys in these cases, except for juvenile dependency cases, is made when the Public Defender has a conflict of interest in representing an indigent defendant. For information about this program in Orange County, call (407) 836-2366. In Osceola County, call (407) 343-2418.

**Court Care Center for Divorcing Families** - - The mission of this Orange County program is to decrease conflict and promote emotional stability among divorcing parents for the benefit of their children and themselves. The Court Care Center is located on the 5th floor (Room 530) of the Orange County Courthouse. Domestic Judges order high-conflict divorcing parents and/or individuals to the Center for a "needs assessment" that generally renders a referral to either a court-based program, such as Focus on the Children, individual crisis counseling through the Crisis Intervention Unit, or a community resource. The goal is to reduce the emotional distress of litigating parents seeking emotional help and to improve coping skills and day-to-day functioning. For additional information, call (407) 836-0553.

**Courthouse Self-Help Center** - - This self-help center provides enhanced court services for the community and is a comfortable environment to work, conduct legal research and to obtain court information. The public can also obtain domestic relations court forms for a nominal fee, complete them and have them notarized without leaving the Center. Also available for use are computers with Internet access, phones and a fax machine. Administrative Orders and Local Rules are also available. The center, which is staffed by Court Administration and the Clerk of Court, is open to all visitors to the downtown Orlando courthouse and is located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor (Room 365). Forms and notary services are available to all visitors to the Courthouse from 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. In 2002, the Self-Help Center assisted almost 40,000 people received services from the Center. The Court has added a page to its web site, titled "Court Resource Center." The "virtual" center offers many of the same services on-line as does the "physical" Court Resource Center. In 2002, the Self-Help Center assisted almost 40,000 people received services from the Center. Please visit the Virtual Court Resource Center at <http://Ninja9.org/courtadmin/courtresourcecenter/courtresourcecenter.htm>.

**Court Interpreting Services** - - The Ninth Judicial Circuit faces the challenge of meeting the rapidly increasing ethnic and linguistic diversity that Central Florida continues to experience. The Court has responded to the challenge of providing equal access to the courts for linguistic minorities through hiring qualified interpreters, offering orientation workshops for interpreters of all languages, recruiting qualified freelance interpreters and assessing interpreter practices. Court Interpreters provide neutral interpreting and translation services for the Court. Courts are required to use interpreters in criminal cases for all defendants and witnesses who do not speak or understand English. This program allows a non-English speaking person to participate meaningfully in the judicial process and enlightens defendants as to the full nature and consequences of charges filed against them. Interpreter services are reserved for the Court and are not for public hire. Interpreters are assigned to cover all circuit and county criminal matters, traffic, initial appearances, domestic violence injunctions and juvenile court. Orange and Osceola Counties utilize staff interpreters for Spanish interpreting. On-call contractual interpreters are used whenever necessary for commonly requested languages or exotic languages. In 2002, interpreters covered almost 9,200 cases in 32 languages from Albanian to Vietnamese. Other than Spanish, the languages used most frequently were Creole, American Sign Language and Russian. To learn more, call (407) 836-2399 in Orange County or (407) 343-2415 in Osceola County.

**Court Reporting Services** - - The Court Reporting Services Department is responsible for the official record of all court proceedings in the Ninth Circuit. The department is divided into two divisions; Automated and Official.

**Court Reporting Services (Automated)** - - The Automated Court Reporters provide a cost-effective electronic recording system for three felony divisions, all traffic courts, misdemeanor courts, collection court, mental health/guardianship hearings, felony and misdemeanor depositions, initial appearances, child support

hearings, probate and juvenile court. The Automated Court Reporters also cover the satellite courts of Ocoee, Apopka and Winter Park. Automated Court Reporters also record and videotape depositions of sensitive witnesses or witnesses under 16 years old and mental health hearings. Transcripts are produced at no cost to indigent defendants who obtain a signed court order. Privately ordered transcripts (non-court ordered) can be purchased through this office. Purchase rates are available through the Automated Court Reporters. To contact this division in Orange County, call (407) 836-2270. In Osceola County, call (407) 343-2482.

**Court Reporting Services (Official)** - - The Official Court Reporters are responsible for verbatim reporting, either stenographically or using voice-recognition, for felony divisions of the Ninth Judicial Circuit, utilizing computer-aided transcription systems. The OCR Department is comprised of five certified Realtime Court Reporters who stenographically report court proceedings and nine nationally-certified verbatim reporters. Realtime translation offers instantaneous translation of court proceedings to the Judge's desktop or laptop computers, as well as to hearing-impaired individuals. This enables the Judge and/or attorneys to view the proceeding as it is being reported by the reporter. When a request is authorized by the Judge, the Official Court Reporters can also provide daily copy transcripts when needed. The reporter is charged with ensuring that an accurate record of the proceedings is obtained for appellate purposes and ensuring that each speaking participant is identified and accurately heard. A signed court order is required for an indigent defendant to receive transcripts at no cost. All others must purchase transcripts at a per-page rate set by Administrative Order. To reach this division in Orange County, call (407) 836-2280. In Osceola County, call (407) 343-2476.

**Courtroom 23 (The Roger A. Barker Courtroom)** - - The Roger A. Barker Courtroom, located on the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Orange County Courthouse, is a high-tech courtroom that seamlessly integrates the latest in courtroom technology and has become one of the most technologically advanced and integrated courtrooms in the world. The courtroom includes the following key technologies: evidence presentation system; voice-activated video conferencing; Internet and remote broadcast; digital court reporting; realtime court reporting; and computer legal research.

**Dependency Case Coordination Program** - - Under Court Administration, a position was created to provide administrative, operational and clerical assistance to the Juvenile Dependency Judge. The coordinator assists with communication between all parties involved in a dependency case to resolve problems and avoid additional hearings. For more about this program, call (407) 836-9560 in Orange County or Osceola County, call (407) 343-2531.

**DIAL 911** - - The Domestic Intervention Assistance Link (DIAL) program allows high-risk victims of domestic violence to obtain cellular phones at no charge to call 911. The program is a collaborative effort between the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court, Voicestream and

the Orange County Sheriff's Office. Upon applying for an injunction, a petitioner is given an opportunity to motion the Court for a cellular phone to use for two weeks. The Judge decides at a return hearing as to whether to enter another order extending the use of the phone for 60 days. For information about this service, call (407) 836-0428.

**Dispute Resolution Services (Mediation)** - - Mediation is a process by which a neutral person, the mediator, meets with parties in a dispute to encourage discussion and resolution. Mediation programs have helped control the need for additional Judges and provide parties with an efficient and satisfying alternative to the traditional judicial process. By reaching a settlement during mediation, parties avoid the uncertainty of a trial. The practice of mediation is an important part of conflict resolution in a wide range of disputes in the court system. The Circuit has a number of mediation programs in place, using both volunteer and professional mediators. Court cases involving juvenile restitution, county civil, juvenile dependency, criminal restitution, traffic restitution and domestic relations are referred by Judges to certified mediators to attempt settlement prior to trial. For information concerning Orange County's Dispute Resolution Services, call (407) 836-2004 for civil, (407) 836-2105 for family, (407) 836-2296 for dependency and (407) 836-2256 for restitution. For information concerning mediation in Osceola County, call (407) 343-2451.

**County Mediation:** Involves all county civil cases including small claims and landlord/ tenant actions. Small claims are sent to mediation at the time of the pre-trial. The remainder of county civil cases are referred by the Judge. In 2002, approximately 2,800 cases were mediated in Orange County and reached full or partial agreement.

**Family Mediation:** Consists of mediation of issues in family cases including pre- and post-judgment modifications, divorces, paternity, visitation, parental rights, temporary matters and child support issues. In 2002, 2,619 cases were referred to mediation in Orange County. Of that, 1, 358 reached full or partial agreement.

**Juvenile Dependency:** Consists of cases in which there are accusations of child abuse, neglect or abandonment. The parents, attorneys, Guardian Ad Litem, and the Department of Children and Family Services discuss case plans for reunification or termination of parental rights. In Orange County in 2002, 49 cases were referred to mediation. Of that 32 were mediated and 24 settled.

**Juvenile Restitution:** Consists of mediation between the victim and juvenile defendant to develop a payment for damages after a finding or admission of guilt. In 2002, 257 cases were received for mediation in Orange County.

**Small Claims Arbitration:** Involves a voluntary program for litigants in small claims cases as an alternative to judicial action. Parties choose to go before a panel of three arbitrators to have their case heard. This process is binding on all parties.

**Peer Mediation:** Involves a partnership between the schools and the Court which provides training and liaisons for peer mediation programs in the schools. Mediation is conducted in the individual schools by student mediators.

**Criminal and Traffic Restitution:** Involves misdemeanor, felony and traffic cases in which the victim is seeking restitution. After restitution is ordered by the Judge, the victim and offender attempt to reach an agreement as to the total amount owed and the payment amount.

**Parenting Coordination:** Program provides services to indigent and low income pro se litigants with family court cases involving highly disputed custody and visitation issues. The goal of the Parenting Coordination Program is to successfully intervene in highly disputed custody and visitation cases in order for parents to learn to resolve parenting disputes outside the court system as promptly as possible.

**Drug Courts** - - The Ninth Judicial Circuit recognizes the effectiveness of drug court, both for adults and juveniles. The Ninth Judicial Circuit currently operates drug courts for adult and juvenile offenders.

**Adult Drug Court:** This is a diversionary and post-plea program created to address the issue of effectively managing nonviolent felony drug offenders. The program provides for the identification, evaluation, case management and placement of substance abusing offenders into treatment. The Drug Court Judge reviews progress reports and conducts status hearings biweekly on each participant. Incidents of noncompliance are reported immediately to the Drug Court Judge, so that immediate action may be taken and appropriate consequences imposed. The Drug Court Programs have maintained a seventy percent (70%) successful completion rate since they became operational in 2000. In Orange County, call (407) 836-0501. In Osceola County, call (407) 343-2431.

**Delinquency Drug Court:** Juvenile Drug Court is a special docket to which selected delinquency cases are referred for handling by a designated Judge when the behavior is exacerbated by substance abuse. The Juvenile Drug Court Judge maintains close oversight of each case involved. This program represents a court initiative which established interagency cooperation focused on developing a judicial-led treatment based program for substance-abusing offenders. Treatment consists of a four phase outpatient model, which includes an aftercare component. Case management is also an integral part of the program. Case management personnel make regular school and home visit as well as random urinalysis tests on all defendants. The Juvenile Delinquency Drug Court Program was officially recognized and honored as a "Mentor Court" by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Drug Courts Program Office. For Delinquency Drug Court in Orange County, call (407) 836-8968. In Osceola County, call (407) 343-2531.

**Delinquency Reentry Drug Court:** The reentry drug court program identifies youth who are going to be (or have been) committed to a Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) commitment facility and facilitates his/her placement in the program as a condition of release. The youth are closely monitored by treatment and DJJ staff and are required to attend biweekly status hearings before the designated Judge to assess his/her progress. Weekly random urinalysis testing on all defendants is also a component of the program. The reentry drug court was established through a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Drug Court Program Office. For more information, call (407) 836-8968.

**Dependency Drug Court:** The Ninth Judicial Circuit Court launched its Dependency Drug Court program in Orange and Osceola Counties. Its goal is the reunification of the family. Dependency Drug Court serves as one approach to addressing the problem of drug use by one or both of the children's parents through monitoring progress and compliance. In Orange County, the telephone number is (407) 245-1628 and in Osceola County, the telephone number is (407) 343-2531.

**Drug Testing Laboratory:** The development of the Osceola County Drug Testing Laboratory was created and initiated in conjunction with the Osceola County Drug Court as part of the comprehensive drug of abuse (d.o.a.) urine testing system. The laboratory conducts d.o.a. urine qualitative screening analysis and ethyl alcohol qualitative analysis for the Drug Court program. Currently, it is projected that the Drug Testing Laboratory will service multiple county agencies, such as County Probation, Pretrial Release and Work Release. The Drug Testing Laboratory provides professional urine drug testing services using random drug screening and will reduce the fiscal cost to the clients and the county agencies that mandate drug testing as part of their business function and responsibility for public safety. In Osceola County, call (407) 943-3054.

**Domestic Violence Unit** - - Orange County Court Administration has five staff members who assist the Judiciary and the parties in civil domestic violence cases. This assistance includes coordinating court proceedings and scheduling, providing statute updates to the Judiciary, monitoring compliance with the Batterers' Intervention Program and preparing proposed Rule to Show Cause Orders when a party fails to attend, calculating child support guidelines, preparing and mailing Income Deduction Orders, preparing all proposed Injunction Orders (both Temporary and Final), preparing the dockets according to case type, coordinate and schedule injunction cases wherein one or both parties require a court interpreter and maintain the interpreting equipment, conducting criminal and civil checks on both parties, general case management as requested or needed, conducts training to the state attorney staff regarding injunctions, conducts training to corrections staff to insure that injunctions requested after court business hours are effectively and properly processed, providing necessary information, statutes, orders, etc. for the emergency duty Judge handling after hours injunctions, and providing information to parties regarding other

court services such as mediation, crisis counseling and the Family Ties visitation program, as well as other relevant community resources. Additionally, the supervisor of this unit actively participates on the local domestic violence task force, is a member of the Fatality Review Team for the County, acts as a liaison with law enforcement, corrections, state attorney, victim advocates and providers for services to victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. For additional information, call (407) 836-0579.

**Facilities Support Services** - - Court Administration works closely with the various agencies responsible for the courthouse facilities by assisting and advising on issues regarding building repair, growth and improvement needs. This includes copiers, air conditioning, custodial, video equipment, telephones, elevators, etc. In Orange County, an individual is assigned to monitor and carry out the requests to ensure that every facility problem is logged and resolved.

**Family Court Services** - - The primary function of the Family Court Services Department is to provide non-legal assistance to pro se parties (unrepresented by an attorney) who have filed for a divorce or a name change and to case manage those particular cases. The Department also provides information on mandatory parenting courses and acts as a liaison between social services and the Court. In Orange County, Family Court Services has been operational since February of 1995 and the intake unit in Osceola County opened in May of 1996. For 2002, over 60 percent of all divorce filings in Orange County were pro se and were managed by the Family Court Services Department. Almost 4,000 initial pro se filings were handled by the Department in Orange County and almost 6,400 court files were reviewed. To learn more, call (407) 836-6054 in Orange County. In Osceola County, call (407) 343-2474.

**Family Ties** - - The concept for the Family Ties Program grew out of the judiciary's concern over the murders of children whose families were embroiled in custody disputes. Family Ties is a Court operated visitation/monitored exchange center which allows parent-child contact in a friendly environment with assurance for the child's safety. Family Ties opened in September of 1997. Since the inception of the Family Ties Program, 357 families (616 children) have received services. Family Ties provides supervised visits for children in troubled families. The program allows the children to spend time with their non-custodial parents in a pleasant, safe atmosphere. For families needing assistance with the exchange of children for visitation, Family Ties provides monitored exchange services to move the children safely from one parent to the other. Participation in Family Ties requires a court order. For information, call (407) 836-0426.

**Fast Track Program** - - Since 1993, a differential case management system has been implemented in the Orange County Circuit Criminal Division. Cases referred to this system are known as Fast Track cases. Typically, Fast Track cases fall into one of these categories: drug cases, theft, forgery, fraud, worthless checks, burglary or other crimes against property. The goal is to complete these cases within 45-55 days of arraignment.

**Fiscal Services** - - This Department is responsible for all fiscal activities for the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court, including budgeting, revenue analysis, court statistics, purchasing, and travel. This involves evaluating revenues and monitoring expenditures from diverse funding sources, including Orange County, Osceola County and the State of Florida. In Orange County, call (407) 836-2261 and in Osceola County, call (407) 343-2440.

**Guardian Ad Litem Program** - - In Osceola County, the Guardian Ad Litem Program recruits, trains and supervises volunteers from the community who are Court-appointed to speak on behalf of abused, neglected and abandoned children involved in the Court system. The volunteers conduct an investigation of the case to which they are appointed, report their findings and recommendations to the Court, and monitor the case to ensure that the Court's orders are followed. The volunteer's role is to advocate for the best interest of the child that he/she is appointed to represent. (407) 343-2454.

**Guardianship Training** - - The Ninth Judicial Circuit supports two guardianship training courses. In Orange County, training is held at the University of Central Florida, Downtown Academic Center, Room #110, 36 West Pine Street, Orlando. For course information, call (407) 207-4920. In Osceola County, the Osceola County Council on Aging provides training at the Office of Public Guardian, 1099 Shady Lane, Kissimmee. For course information, call (407) 846-8532.

**High-Profile Case Tracking** - - The Court's web site includes a high-profile case tracking feature. The page offers up-to-date information on all cases that have potential media interest. Internet users can access the Court's "Live" Broadcasts link to court proceedings of interest from the high-profile case tracking page. The media can receive instantaneous case information without having to call courthouse staff. As a result both staff and the media save valuable time and effort. The page is located at the following address: <http://www.ninja9.org/courtadmin/publicinformation/caseinfo/caseinfo.htm>.

**Human Resources Department** - - This Department has the responsibility for personnel administration including employment, classification and pay, employee benefits, employee relations, employee records, and employee training and development. In addition, Human Resources supervises the Court's Volunteer Management Program. Human Resources is also responsible for the Circuit's compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and for the intake and investigation of discrimination complaints filed under the Circuit's Civil Rights Complaint Procedure. For Human Resources in Orange County, call (407) 836-2261 and in Osceola County, call (407) 343-2418.

**Inside the Courts** - - A free program designed to educate the public on the workings of the judicial branch of government and to encourage the public's trust and confidence in the court system. The program is offered several times a year in Orange and Osceola Counties and is taught by a team of Judges and court personnel. The program is unique in that it allows citizens the opportunity to meet Judges of the Ninth Judicial Circuit in a less formal and less intimidating context and is one of the ways the Ninth Circuit is taking a

leadership role in educating the public. Participants who complete this four-part program receive certificates recognizing that achievement. Individuals who register will be notified of the next session when offered. Past Inside the Courts programs air regularly on Orange TV (Government Access station). The program began in 1998 and almost 900 people have completed the sessions. To register, call (407) 836-2380.

**Internships** - - The Ninth Circuit provides internship opportunities for several law students each year. Usually the students are in their second or third year of law school and will intern with an individual Judge or group of Judges for one semester or summer. The interns closely interact with the Judges. They also observe court proceedings and perform legal research as directed by the Judge. Call (407) 836-2233.

**Judicial Ride-Along Program** - - The Ninth Judicial Circuit offers local legislators an opportunity to participate in the Circuit's Judicial Ride-Along Program. The purpose of the Judicial Ride-Along Program is to impress upon our legislators the critical and indispensable role of the courts in the justice system. It is an opportunity for legislators to learn first-hand about the courts. The program is intended to provide them with "a day in the life of a trial judge" and is designed to give legislators a personal understanding of the daily duties and responsibilities of the trial court judge in relation to the volume, complexity, variety and difficulty of cases heard in the state's trial courts. It is a program that encourages legislators to observe the judicial process and to discuss matters of mutual concern. (407) 836-2047.

**Jury Services** - - The Jury Management Program of the Ninth Judicial Circuit was initiated in October of 1990, in response to an administrative order of the Florida Supreme Court to efficiently manage the time and fiscal resources dedicated to the management of jurors. Through automation and effective management, jurors are utilized more fully resulting in less inconvenience to citizens because fewer people are now summoned for jury service. Jurors can submit an excuse or request a postponement by sending an e-mail via our Internet web page. The jury staff is responsible for tracking the number of jurors brought in and works to minimize that number by using past statistical information. In the past, the list of prospective jurors was drawn from the voter registration list. Today, prospective jurors are drawn from those who possess either a Florida driver's license or identification card issued by the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. Jurors are required to serve one day or the length of one trial. Compensation of jurors is at the rate of \$15.00 per day for the first three days of service for jurors who are not compensated by their employers for jury duty, are unemployed, or who are self-employed. All jurors are paid \$30.00 per day for the fourth and subsequent days. Prospective jurors report to the jury assembly room before being assigned to a specific case.

In Orange County, pagers were purchased to alert those jurors out on smoking breaks that they were needed. This has greatly enhanced the speed in which staff can send a panel to a Judge. Storage lockers were also installed so jurors can lock their personal effects while at lunch. Hook-ups for laptops and cable TV are also available. Free child care is offered for jurors' children through *A Place for Children* (reservations are required). The

newest addition to the jury room is the Cyber Café. The Café consists twenty-two computers which allow jurors to browse the Internet or simply play computer games. In 2002, 115,000 Orange County citizens were summoned for jury duty.

In Osceola County, the Jury Assembly Room is equipped with many amenities to make jury service more comfortable. There are vending machines and pay phones as well as complimentary coffee and tea service. Reading material, televisions, board games, and a secure smoking area are also available. Osceola's Jury Assembly Room also has a Cyber Café for jurors to enjoy. In 2002, 60,000 citizens of Osceola County were summoned for jury duty.

For additional information about Jury Services in Orange County, call (407) 836-2206. In Osceola County, call (407) 343-2423.

**Media Relations/Workshops** - - It is the Ninth Judicial Circuit's goal to ensure that the media and general public are accommodated to the best of the Court's abilities while ensuring the right of the litigant to a fair and orderly trial and ensuring the operational integrity of the Courts. When possible, information pertaining to high profile cases will be posted on the Court's web site (High Profile Cases). Also, whenever possible, judicial orders, juror instructions and other relevant documents will be made available to the media in a timely basis either in hard copy or posted on the Internet. The Ninth Judicial Circuit Court hosts media workshops regularly. The purpose of the workshops is to provide media representatives with a better understanding of the court system, address issues of concern to the media and provide the media with an opportunity to meet the Chief Judge. In addition, information is provided daily to the news media about specific cases, new projects and innovations in the judicial system. For more information, call (407) 836-2047.

**Mental Health Court** - - Mental Health Court is a diversionary program which focuses upon individuals arrested for non-violent misdemeanor offenses who are mentally ill or mentally retarded, and the need for appropriate treatment in an environment conducive to wellness and not punishment, as well as the continuing necessity to insure the protection of the public. The program began in Orange County in October 1999 and in Osceola County in May 2000. The Mental Health Court Judge is responsible for administering mental health court and coordinating the role of the judiciary with the functions of the various agencies and providers. In Osceola County, call (407) 343-2411.

**Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program** - - The Neighborhood Restorative Justice Program is a diversionary program primarily for first time misdemeanor juvenile offenders. Restorative justice is a way of dealing with crime which empowers the victims and community to have a key role in the justice process, while diverting less serious crime away from the Juvenile Court System. This forces juveniles to take responsibility for the crime committed, repair the harm the crime caused to both the victim and community, as well as build on the juvenile's assets and strengths in order to make the juvenile a more productive citizen of the community. In order to be eligible, the juvenile must first admit guilt to the

charges and accept responsibility for the harm caused. A Neighborhood Accountability Conference consists of a Neighborhood Accountability Board comprised of trained volunteers from the community, the victim, offender, offender's parent(s) or guardian(s) and any other community member affected by the crime. All parties discuss and develop appropriate sanctions to repair the harm caused by the crime. These sanctions may include, but are not limited to, a written apology, essay, community service or restitution. The juvenile is assigned a curfew, school attendance is mandatory, and the juvenile must not receive any referrals, suspensions or expulsions. If all sanctions are completed within a given time frame, the original charge is dismissed. If not, the case is returned to the State's Attorney for prosecution. Apopka was the initial location, which includes Zellwood and Plymouth communities. Since its inception, it has grown to include three other communities - - Eatonville, Ocoee/Winter Garden and Maitland. For more information, call (407) 836-9553.

**NINJA** - - The Ninth Judicial Circuit's Internet web site (i.e., NINJA) is a comprehensive web site which provides a wealth of information. NINJA is designed for and targeted at a broad-based audience. NINJA has been selected as the number one "Best Overall" Court web site in the world, and the number one "Best Public Access Site," which was announced at the 7<sup>th</sup> Court Technology Conference -2001, sponsored by the National Center for State Courts. Information on the Court's web site includes administrative orders, judicial biographies, courthouse maps, court publications, department descriptions, e-mail contacts, job listings, legal glossary, press releases, statistics, telephone and office directories, live courtroom broadcasts, initial appearance broadcasts, and web site applications that can be shared by the entire state of Florida. In 2002, the Court's web site experienced over six million hits, or almost 20,000 hits per weekday. The Court's web site is developed, maintained, and housed by the Ninth Judicial Circuit.

**Ninth In a Nutshell from the JAs** - - The Ninth Judicial Circuit Court Judicial Assistants hold seminars designed to forge an information link between the law offices and the judicial offices in the Circuit. The seminars are a cooperative effort between the Orange County Bar Association and the Judicial Assistants. The seminars are entitled, "www.judicial assistants connecting to <http://www.paralegals/legalassistants.com>." Following presentations by the Judicial Assistants, participants received a tour of the high-tech Roger A. Barker Courtroom and they receive a procedural manual providing information on judicial assignments, phone numbers, location of courtrooms and other helpful hints.

**Pay Up (Orange)** - - Pay Up is a program operated by the Orange County Juvenile Division of the Ninth Judicial Circuit made possible through a partnership grant from the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. It is a coordinated community effort between the Courts, the Department of Juvenile Justice, Goodwill Industries, and Orange County Corrections. Pay Up holds young people accountable for their court ordered restitution, court fines, and community service. Pay Up is a comprehensive approach to addressing juvenile restitution while at the same time providing valuable lessons and skills for juvenile offenders, ages 8-18 years of age, both male and female. The Pay Up program also assists juvenile offenders in obtaining employment in the community. The L.E.A.R.N. (Learning, Ethics,

Accountability, and Responsibility, Now) component of the program enables youth to earn minimum wage, which is paid directly to the victim through the clerk's office. Court ordered youth participating at L.E.A.R.N. pull weeds, pick up trash, cut grass, and clean signs under the supervision of correction officers from Orange County Corrections on a Department of Transportation Youth Work project contract. Impressively, Pay Up has collected almost \$550,000 in restitution, Crime Compensation Trust Fund, attorney fees, and other fines and fees. In Orange County, call (407) 836-8972.

**Public Guardianship Program** - - A Public Guardianship Program that serves to provide guardianship to those elderly persons who are in need of a guardian and who cannot pay for the services of a professional is now in place in Osceola County. Contact (407) 846-8532.

**Public Information Booth** - - The Public Information Booth, located in the rotunda of the Orange County Courthouse, began operation in December of 1998. It is staffed by volunteers who are recruited and are managed by Court Administration. The Volunteer Coordinator is a volunteer. The volunteers provide valuable and quality service to the Court, the county and to the public.

**Realtime Court Reporting** - - The Ninth Judicial Circuit Court has actively pursued the implementation of realtime court reporting. The Circuit has four official court reporters who are realtime certified. Realtime court reporting allows the court reporter's strokes on the stenographic writer to automatically be translated into words as they are typed. Extensions to the realtime program on the reporter's computer allow the Judge, attorneys and other parties to review the transcript as it is being typed. The Roger A. Barker Courtroom on the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Orange County Courthouse is equipped with network connections to facilitate the use of realtime.

**Speakers Bureau** - - As part of the Ninth Judicial Circuit's community outreach efforts, a Speakers Bureau was established. The Bureau's goal is to educate and enhance the public's perception and understanding of the Court's role and responsibilities in the community. It is a forum for Judges and members of the community to exchange views about common concerns. Members of the judiciary and Court Administration staff are available to speak to a variety of groups, schools, and community groups on topics of interest related to the judicial system. The Courts have a major influence on society and daily life and the judiciary can provide insight into how civil and criminal cases proceed through the court system and how conflicts are resolved. The following are a few examples of topics Judges can speak about: Alternative Dispute Resolution, landlord/tenant issues, small claims, court technology, family law, juvenile justice system, jury service, civil justice system and criminal courts. For information or to request a speaker for your next event, call (407) 836-0471.

**Staff Attorney Department** - - The duties of the Circuit's staff attorneys are as diverse as the trial court's jurisdiction. In addition to researching legal issues and preparing memoranda for judicial review on pretrial and trial issues that arise in all divisions of the Court, staff attorneys also assist Judges with matters such as county to circuit and administrative appeals, extraordinary writs and postconviction motions. Further, staff attorneys often work with the Judges and Court Administration on administrative projects.

**Technology Services** - - The Department of Technology Services provides expertise and comprehensive support for the Court's 37 servers and 500 PCs in six courthouses, spread across two counties. Responsibilities include software and hardware installations and support, web site design/publication/support, training, programming in numerous computer languages, digital court reporting infrastructure, intranet hardware and software support, advanced networking applications, as well as research and planning for future technology. The Audio/Video section is also part of Technology Services. For the Orange County Computer Department, call (407) 836-6010. In Osceola County, call (407) 343-2487.

**Teen Court** - - Teen Court is a diversionary program for first-time juvenile offenders who are tried and sentenced by their peers. Teen Court's purpose is to divert less serious cases away from the more formal Juvenile Court. Teen Court is based upon the premise that youthful offenders will more readily accept responsibility for their actions when judged and sentenced by their peers. The program is run by teenage volunteers who perform the roles of prosecuting and defense attorneys, deputies, clerk and jury. The Judge is the only adult participant in the proceedings. In order to be eligible for Teen Court, participants must admit guilt to the misdemeanor charges. The jury determines an appropriate sentence, which may include community service, one day boot camp, jail tour, drug testing, road crew trash detail, abiding by a curfew, serving on a Teen Court jury, making restitution, writing a report, or making an apology. All clients must make restitution. If the sentence is completed, the original charge is dismissed. If not, the case is turned over to Juvenile Court. Judges and attorneys volunteer their time to preside over the proceedings. Orange County's Teen Court now offers free anger management classes for the defendant and parenting classes for the parents. The Orange County Teen Court is the largest Teen Court in the state, both in number of cases and number of volunteers. Orange County Teen Court handled 1276 criminal cases last year and has 60-80 teen volunteers every Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Further, the teen volunteers earn one-half high school credit for volunteering 75 hours in one school year and qualify for the Thomas S. Kirk Teen Court Scholarship. For Orange County, call (407) 836-9517 and for Osceola County, call (407) 343-2465.

**Tours** - - Court Administration provides organized tours of the Orange County Courthouse to schools, community organizations and the general public. A written tour guide is available that welcomes everyone to the courthouse and gives a floor-by-floor directory of the facility. To schedule a tour of the Orange County Courthouse, call (407) 836-2380. The Court now offers comprehensive tours of the Orange County Courthouse, via its web site (NINJA). Tour stops include the rotunda, the jury assembly room, courtrooms, judicial

chambers, the judicial conference room, and the computer room. The highlight of the tour is a stop at the Court's high-tech courtroom. To take a virtual tour, simply visit NINJA and select Virtual Tours on the home page. With mouse in hand, a virtual courthouse visitor can now traverse the 1,000,000 square foot complex from a remote location without ever leaving his or her desk.

**Town Hall** - - Town Hall meetings are an opportunity for members of the community to meet with the Judges of the Circuit. While the Judges do not discuss pending cases, it is a chance to learn how residents view the Courts and it is chance for the Judges to educate an audience about the role of the Judge. The Judicial Town Hall is a permanent channel for community input into the Courts. The Court recently held a Town Hall with the African American community. A Town Hall was also held for the Hispanic community. Both events were touted as huge successes. Town Halls are one part of the Court's continuing community outreach efforts. For more information, call (407) 836-2047.

**Truancy Court (Orange)** - - In 2001, the Ninth Judicial Circuit, in cooperation with the Orange County Youth and Family Services Division and the Orange County Public Schools, established a Truancy Court to provide a forum to hear and rule on Truancy Petitions filed against minor children alleged to be truant at school. A general master hears and makes recommendations to the Court on sanctions for truants. The program is funded through a grant from the United States Department of Justice and administered by the Orange County Youth and Family Services Division. The program provides the participants and their families with services, intervention, and case management. For the school year 2001-2002, 125 cases were opened and serviced through the program with a 73 percent success rate.

**Victim Assistance Program** - - The Victim Assistance Program commenced operation in Osceola County in January 1995. It is funded by the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). The program serves as a liaison between the judicial system and victims and works with other agencies within the community to ensure victim's rights. The program offers a number of services including assistance in filing injunctions for protection, crisis counseling, information and referral and assistance in filing victim compensation claims. To learn more, call (407) 343-2463.

**Volunteer Program** - - The Ninth Judicial Circuit's Volunteer Program is committed to promoting community awareness of, and involvement in, the judicial system. Volunteers provide valuable and quality service free of charge to the Court, to the counties and to the public. The Court acknowledges the value of community support and its role in an effective and fair judicial system. There are many volunteer opportunities in the Circuit. Examples include: Volunteering in the Courthouse or Juvenile information booths, conducting tours of the courthouse, Teen Court in Orange and Osceola Counties and the Guardian Ad Litem Program in Osceola County. For Orange County, call (407) 836-4782. For Osceola County, call (407) 343-2413.

**Witness Management** - - The Witness Management Department coordinates the activities of witnesses scheduled to appear in court. The Department assists witnesses and victims, in both traffic and criminal matters, through the system by advising on case status and providing instructions when a trial is set, saving many people needless trips and inconvenience. For Orange County, call (407) 836-2045. For Osceola County, call (407) 343-2422.