

## THE NEW YORK UNIFIED STATE COURT SYSTEM EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE

In February 2016, Chief Judge Janet DiFiore, New York State Appeals Court, the highest-ranking judge in the state court system, announced the launch of an Excellence Initiative designed to “improve all aspects of our system and services towards achieving operational and decisional excellence.”

Initially, the Initiative focused on a detailed evaluation of current court processes with the dual goals of identifying what is working well and what needs improvement. Particular attention was given to backlogs and ways in which case management processes could be administered to more effectively solve those problems. The Initiative is also dedicated to promoting and empowering court leaders and providing them with the tools and resources necessary to realize greater efficiencies and process improvements.

According to Chief Judge DiFiore, “Everything we do, and every way we do it, is on the table for consideration, and – where we find appropriate opportunities for positive change – we will not hesitate to reallocate our considerable capital – both human and financial – to achieve our goals.” Each judicial district throughout the state and the five boroughs of New York City – Queens, Bronx, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Staten Island – have been engaged in an annual set of priorities.

The prevailing theme of the Initiative is that “justice delayed is justice denied.” Based on performance data, the New York State Courts are performing better as a whole – managing cases more efficiently and reducing case delays and backlogs. The focus on those issues will remain relentless, according to Chief Judge DiFiore and the judicial and nonjudicial leaders for the courts.

The New York State Unified Court System serves a nearly 20 million residents, 40% whom live in New York City. In