



NEWS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

**Hon. Joseph A. Zayas
Chief Administrative Judge**

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New Statewide Coordinating Judge for Problem-Solving Courts Named

NEW YORK—With the court system’s intensified focus on more collaborative, less conventional justice approaches in reducing recidivism, enhancing public safety and improving case outcomes, Chief Administrative Judge Zayas and First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Norman St. George are pleased to announce the appointment of Rensselaer County Court Judge and Acting Rensselaer County Supreme Court Justice Debra J. Young as Statewide Coordinating Judge for Problem-Solving Courts. In this role and with the guidance and support of Deputy Chief Administrative Judges Edwina G. Richardson, James P. Murphy and Adam Silvera, Judge Young will oversee the operation and expansion of New York’s Community, Drug, Mental Health, Veterans and other specialty courts. She succeeds Hon. Toko Serita, who has returned full-time to the Queens Criminal Court bench.

“By looking to the broad range of societal issues that underlie criminal behavior, problem-solving courts promise to provide lasting and meaningful resolutions for the many thousands of difficult cases that each year make their way to our courts,” said Judges Zayas and St. George. “Judge Young brings the high level of experience, knowledge, and tenacity needed to lead this charge as we work to build on the progress of New York’s statewide network of specialty courts, refining practices and developing initiatives to best serve the justice needs of our urban, suburban and rural communities.”

There are 340-plus problem-solving courts operating statewide. Through intensive judicial monitoring, coordination with outside services, treatment where appropriate, and increased communication with stakeholders, these specialty courts address substance use disorders, mental illness, and legal and other issues that bring people into the court system. These courts result in better case management —and more positive outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

Spurred by the success of New York’s specialty courts—and the Chief Judge’s clarion call to further adapt and expand the problem-solving court model in rebuilding lives and making our communities safer—Judge Young will oversee systemwide efforts to improve operations, develop and implement best practices, and create and enhance programs, including securing program funding, to advance problem-solving court initiatives across the State.

“I very much look forward to working with the judicial leadership, our problem-solving court judges and staff, and the court system’s justice partners to ensure that New York’s specialty courts receive all the guidance, support and resources they need to help justice-involved individuals reach their full potential,” said Judge Young

Judge Young will step into her new role immediately. Prior to her appointment, she had been serving as the Third Judicial District’s Coordinating Judge for Problem-Solving Courts and was instrumental in the success of the Rensselaer County Recovery Court, obtaining substantial grant funding to enhance its operations and contribute to the community’s efforts to address the ongoing opioid crisis.

In tribute to Judge Serita, Judges Zayas and St. George added, “We are thankful to Judge Serita for her many contributions to New York’s problem-solving courts in her capacity as Statewide Coordinating Judge since 2022, and are pleased that the Queens Criminal Court bench will continue to benefit from her judicial expertise and experience.”



Hon. Debra J. Young

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