

# **Division of Court Modernization**

## **Video Transcript**

The Division of Court Modernization, or DCM for short, was created in October 2023 by Chief Administrative Judge Zayas and First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge St. George with the expanded mandate to make courtrooms, jury rooms, conference rooms, and other court spaces more functional and more accessible to everyone working in or visiting the courthouses.

DCM has eclipsed many milestones in 2023. We will redouble our modernization efforts in the following five key areas in 2024.

### **1. Addressing the Fundamentals**

The ability for all stakeholders to hear each other in court proceedings is as essential as breathing air. Properly installed audio systems are the foundation of court modernization.

Family Courts, Housing Court, Surrogate's Court, and many city courts rely on FTR digital audio recording for official court records. It is our priority to upgrade courtrooms where transcribers are experiencing difficulty in producing quality transcripts.

The court leadership has made access to justice a top priority. We are very proud of the fact that 81% of the courtrooms in New York State are equipped with Assistive Listening Systems, And we are on course to reach, within two years, the 100% ADA compliance goal for people who are hard of hearing.

We cannot be more thrilled that the DCM Western Regional Office will be operational within the next two or three months. This will enable us to be in a better position to consistently support court modernization across the state.

### **2. Acoustics Is a Game Changer**

Poor acoustics, including echoing in the courtrooms, is common in many older courthouses. DCM embarked on an aggressive acoustic treatment project to improve acoustic quality and to maintain the aesthetics of the courtrooms.

Recently completed courtrooms are in Nassau, Kings, Bronx, and Oneida Counties, with active installation in Queens. Statewide expansion of the project has been planned for 2024. We have received overwhelmingly positive

feedback about this initiative.

### **3. Going High-End: D.A. Partnership**

Thanks to Judge Zayas and Judge Golia, in June 2023, Queens County Supreme Court Criminal Term unveiled the first large-scale completely modernized courthouse in New York State. The project was made possible by partnering with the Queens County District Attorney's Office. These courtrooms have state-of-the-art evidence presentation systems, videoconferencing systems, solutions for language access and people who are hard of hearing, as well as the capability for on-demand streaming.

*[Insert: CMI Queens Supreme Criminal Term Video - Judge Holder's 24-second statement]*

Inspired by the success in Queens, we recently completed the modernization of multiple criminal courtrooms in Kings, Westchester, and Orange Counties. Project planning is underway in Albany and Erie Counties, with on-going discussions in Onondaga and Broome Counties. We are very excited about the expansion of D.A. partnership across the state.

### **4. Bringing Other Courtrooms to the Next Level**

Hybrid court hearings have become a common practice in the post-covid era. New York City Civil Court is the first major court that equips every courtroom with a mobile videoconferencing cart. Some courts further improve the user experience by mounting multiple monitors and cameras in the courtrooms, as shown in Saratoga Family Court.

We have recently upgraded multiple Supreme Civil Courtrooms in New York County, the 5<sup>th</sup> District, Kings County, and Suffolk County to the latest standard. In 2024, we are looking forward to completing the on-going upgrades of all the courtrooms at the Court of Claims, and accelerating court modernization in Family Court and other court types.

### **5. Beyond the Courtrooms**

Easy-to-read, attractive, and informative digital signage is making life easier for court users, as illustrated by the recently completed projects in New York City Courts, Syracuse City Court, and the Hall of Justice in Monroe County. In addition, we are modernizing jury rooms, conference rooms, Help Centers, and other court spaces.

We have accomplished much in 2023, We will do even more in 2024. Thank you very much!