



### **An Overview of Ohio's Use of CourTools**

The Supreme Court of Ohio, the state's court of last resort, is responsible for the administration of Ohio's judicial branch of government. Through its rule-making authority, the Supreme Court has promulgated a set of rules of superintendence which seek to establish a common framework for, among other things, ensuring the efficient and effective management of cases within the state's trial and appellate courts.

Ohio has a non-unified court system. Our judicial system is funded chiefly through local court budgets provided by counties and municipalities. For trial courts, the state contributes to local court budgets only by way paying a share of judge salaries. Among the intermediate appellate courts, the state pays all of the judges' and staffs' salaries. Virtually all other ordinary operating expenses, in both trial and appellate courts, are funded by local authorities. That funding structure is reflective of the long-standing historical tradition in Ohio that local governmental units enjoy a large degree of independence. The overall nature of how the Supreme Court has chosen to exercise its statewide superintendence authority generally adheres to that principle as well. Accordingly, when we seek to effect change at the local court level, we do so largely by fostering collaborative relationships with local court leadership. Through education, training, and consulting services we work to help courts help themselves.

The Case Management Section of the Supreme Court—the same business unit that is responsible for the routine collection and maintenance of caseload statistics—is also charged with providing case management services to the local courts. Those services range from quick troubleshooting to formal training sessions to expansive and in-depth assessments of courts' caseflow management-related practices and procedures. Underlying those activities are rules governing certain aspects of caseflow management including case processing time standards.

In our traditional caseflow management training courses, the Supreme Court educates courts on CourTools and how they can be implemented. In addition, periodically the Supreme Court works with local courts to perform what is effectively a one-off implementation of CourTools, often in connection with a formal caseflow management assessment. Those implementations are achieved in whatever manner is practical at that time for that particular court. Sometimes only the caseflow management-related measures are applied (Measures 2, 3, 4, and 5). Frequently, the surveys are implemented (Measures 1 and 9). The implementation might be performed using a random sampling of case files or through some form of extractions of data from the courts' case management systems.

The current state of Ohio' use of CourTools is highly variable. No standardized implementation frameworks have been developed. Instead, the Supreme Court partners with local courts as needed to deploy the measures in various customized ways. Some local courts have undertaken programs to independently implement CourTools but those activities have been sporadic. With that being said, there is an increasing awareness of the value of performance measurement generally, and CourTools specifically. The Supreme Court has also made efforts to work with the software vendors who provide case management systems to Ohio's courts by developing what is in essence a starting point set of reporting requirements. For a variety of reasons, not the least of which involve funding, those efforts have been difficult to sustain.

An example of an extensive implementation of CourTools performed during a comprehensive caseflow-management review of a large urban domestic relations court is attached.