



***Superior Court of California,  
County of San Mateo***

***Strategic Plan***

***Robert D Foiles, Presiding Judge***

***2007-2013***

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## **Introduction**

Since 1998, the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo has been actively practicing strategic management. This means that all actions, processes and programs of the court are aligned with a set of strategic priorities developed through routine communication with the court's constituents. We are in constant communication with our constituents through online feedback, periodic surveys and continuous face-to-face discussions. Since 2002 our presiding judges have made visits to thirty-five law firms throughout the county. The current presiding judge held weekly breakfast meetings with the San Mateo County Bar Association. We periodically hold public forums with the residents of San Mateo County. We do all this so that we are always in a position to hear the comments and suggestions of those we serve and then manage the court accordingly.

The blueprint for this approach to court management is a six-year Strategic Plan supplemented with annual Operating Plans. The Strategic Plan lays out the goals and major initiatives that will guide the court's decision making. It also serves to link the court to the strategic agenda developed for California's courts by the Judicial Council.

## **Achieving Alignment**

The day-to-day practice of strategic management necessitates that the court align itself with the overall direction planned for California's courts by the Judicial Council. Therefore, we have aligned all of our strategies with the vision expressed by the six goals described in the strategic plan for the Judicial Branch, Justice in Focus, 2006-2012:

- Access, Fairness and Diversity
- Independence and Accountability
- Modernization of Management and Administration
- Quality of Justice and Service to the Public
- Education for Branchwide Professional Excellence
- Branchwide Infrastructure for Service Excellence

These goals provide a template from which all initiatives of the San Mateo Superior Court emanate.

## Our Outreach Process

Our connection to those we serve is continuous. We routinely seek feedback from the community in answer to the question “What are we doing well?” In 2006, a Community Outreach Committee, chaired by Judge Mark R. Forcum, led the current effort to gather information beyond the boundaries of the court. The other committee members include: Judge Elizabeth K. Lee, Judge Jack Grandsaert, Court Executive Officer John Fitton, Information Technology Director Tim Benton, Deputy Court Executive Officer Rodina Catalano, Executive Assistant Judy Lucier, Planning and Development Manager Jill Selvaggio and Information Technology Manager Rick Walery.

Additionally, the court participates in the National Center for State Courts CourTools system – designed to provide the court with performance measures to ensure that court productivity and services to the public are regularly evaluated for quality, strategic management response and continuous improvement. Included in the CourTools process are periodic surveys to evaluate public perceptions of court access and fairness (identified in this plan as the Access and Fairness Survey).

Ongoing efforts are made to keep the community involved. These include: updated brochures that are widely distributed, a Web site designed to enhance community outreach and additional community presentations. Also, we seek additional input through the use of a juror survey.

In the development of this strategic plan, our outreach process included the following:

- Outreach Committee met and formulated a process to reach the public by conducting **four** meetings within the county in the cities of:
  - South San Francisco
  - Half Moon Bay
  - Redwood City
  - Foster City

The meetings were held on January 22, 23, 24, 25, 2007. Judge Forcum also attended, on behalf of the whole committee, the Council of Cities meeting with representatives from each city totaling **forty** people on January 26, 2007.

- A jury letter was written and sent to **60,000** jurors starting in December, 2006 asking them to participate in an online survey. **One hundred** responses were submitted.

- **Five thousand** post cards announcing the online survey were distributed to all **five** court branches and **thirty** county public libraries.
- An advertisement announcing the public forums was published in seven local newspapers, including the *World Journal*, a major Chinese publication. These ads ran starting the first week of January 2007 and continued through January 19, 2007.
- A flyer was designed and sent to libraries, all court branches and all county departments announcing the public forums. **Three thousand** flyers were distributed.
- A telephone line was installed for people to call the court with comments.
- **Twenty-five** letters, signed by Judges Foiles, Forcum and Miram, were sent to police chiefs and other law enforcement agencies inviting them to a focus group on February 5, 2007.
- **One thousand** letters, signed by Judges Foiles, Forcum and Miram were sent to all members of the San Mateo County Bar Association and the minority bar associations inviting them to a focus group on February 7, 2007.
- **Twenty** letters signed by Judges Foiles, Forcum and Miram were sent to the business community inviting them to a focus group on February 8, 2007.
- **Twenty** letters signed by Judges Foiles, Forcum and Miram were sent to county department heads inviting them to a focus group on February 13, 2007.
- Letters signed by Judges Foiles, Forcum and Miram were sent to the private defender and the district attorney inviting them and their colleagues to a focus group on February 15, 2007. **Forty-five attorneys attended.**
- **One hundred** letters signed by Judges Foiles, Forcum and Miram were sent to all city mayors, city councils and the Service League advising them of the public forum schedule.
- **Forty** letters signed by Judges Foiles, Forcum and Miram were sent to all of the treatment providers advising them of the public forums.
- Judge Foiles, with Assistant Presiding Judge Stephen M. Hall, held **seven** Friday morning coffee meetings in January and February with all the

sections of the San Mateo County Bar Association. **Forty attorneys attended.**

- Judge Forcum and the court executive officer met in January with the five members of the Board of Supervisors to encourage their participation and that of their constituents in the public forums.
- Spanish, Tagalog, Mandarin and Cantonese interpreters attended the public forums to assist the participants and maximize communication for all involved.
- The court Web site advertised the community public forums and the survey.
- In mid-January, court staff individually handed out flyers to the public about the forums being held throughout the county.
- A press release went to **nineteen** local newspapers advising of the online survey and the public forums.
- The court executive officer wrote to all court employees prior to the public forums asking for their help in inviting the community to attend the public forums.
- **Six** court employee focus groups were held in late January and early February in the court's five courthouses to receive staff comments.
- Judge Forcum and Judge Foiles appeared on PenTV – a community access cable news show.
- Judge Forcum and Judge Lee spoke on the Chuck Finney radio program “Your Legal Rights”, station KALW.
- A working group of court employees was established to help set up the meetings, greet participants and record all comments of the attendees.

As a result of this effort, the Outreach Committee held forums and focus groups with **twenty-two** groups of stakeholders including some **232** participants. The main public task of the committee was to listen to the community's needs and expectations. Focus group attendees were asked two simple questions:

- What is the San Mateo Superior Court doing well?
- Where are the opportunities for improvement?

In addition to this process, as noted above, the court implemented the CourTools system that provided survey research from court employees and court customers

regarding job satisfaction, access and fairness. The court also used this system to obtain statistics regarding clearance rates, the pending caseload and time to case resolution. The Access and Fairness Survey was conducted with court participants at all court locations in March and June of 2006. A total of **795** responses were received (a 25 percent response rate). The Court Employee Satisfaction Survey was conducted in February 2006 and again in February 2007 resulting in a total of **392** responses. The online feedback mechanism, continuously available for comments, generated **75** very detailed suggestions. These came largely from jurors, attorneys and traffic court users.

At various stages of the process, all of the judges were given the opportunity to discuss the strategic plan and provide their input. As the plan was being finalized, court administration began working with employees to design an operational plan that will be used to implement the proposed actions. Important seeds of communication continue to be sown during this community outreach process.

### *Strategic Planning Outreach Summary*

<b>Stakeholder Group</b>	<b>Input Process</b>	<b>Approximate Number of Participants</b>
<b>Board of Supervisors</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Attorneys (Bar, DA, PD)</b>	<b>Focus Groups, Meetings</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Court Staff</b>	<b>Focus Groups</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Court Staff</b>	<b>Employee Satisfaction Survey</b>	<b>392</b>
<b>Law Enforcement</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Department Heads</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Council of Cities</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Public</b>	<b>Focus Groups</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Public</b>	<b>Access and Fairness Survey</b>	<b>795</b>
<b>Public</b>	<b>Online Feedback Forum</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>TOTAL COMMUNITY INPUT- ALL SOURCES</b>		<b>1,494</b>

## **Accomplishments**

In the time since our 2000 Strategic Plan was developed, the San Mateo Superior Court has initiated several very innovative and effective programs as a result of the feedback received during the 2000 strategic planning process. Some of these San Mateo Superior Court programs have served as models for similar programs throughout California, as well as other states.

### **Youth Services**

The 2000 plan identified the need to make understandable information available to youth and their family members who were dealing with the juvenile justice system. It was identified in the 2000 plan that more alternatives to incarceration were needed. Help was needed for families who must support incarcerated youth. Improvements in the facility, treatment and use of time for youth serving time were also identified in the 2000 plan.

Our goal was to “make the judicial system more responsive to the special needs of abused, neglected and delinquent children.” While we continue to attend to this ongoing issue, we have seen some significant accomplishments. Specifically, we were able to successfully:

- Design, fund and build a new, state-of-the-art Youth Services Center in collaboration with the county, probation department and other partner agencies that incorporate recognized best practices and innovative programming to respond to many of the issues identified in the 2000 plan.
- Develop a unique, volunteer-driven Juvenile Mediation Program in partnership with other county agencies to provide services for children and families in dependency cases and to increase offender accountability and responsibility for victims and the community in juvenile delinquency cases.
- Implement the Gaining Independence and Reclaiming Lives Successfully (G.I.R.L.S.) program: A collaboration between the court, probation, mental health, the San Mateo County Human Services Agency, and substance abuse treatment providers, designed for girls who have significant substance abuse problems and other related at-risk behaviors.
- Initiate the Margaret J. Kemp Girls Camp: An innovative residential program for girls with the goal of providing them with the skills and tools they need to succeed upon return to the community.
- Develop and implement a collaborative partnership between the Juvenile Mediation Program, probation and community based non-profits to build

empathy and accountability in juvenile offenders through the Victim Impact Awareness (VIA) program.

- Develop an orientation program for incarcerated juveniles and involve other juveniles in the development of the program.
- Provide library access for incarcerated youth.
- Review and improve policies and procedures to address gender specific issues.
- Develop programs for incarcerated youth in the areas of education, training, alternative dispute resolution and counseling (anger management, peer counseling).
- Implement a community-wide collaborative effort to address juvenile hate crime.
- Coordinate relevant initiatives with the San Mateo County Health Department and San Mateo County Human Services Agency.
- Continue to give a high priority to the Juvenile Drug Court.



## **Specialized Courts and Alternative Sentences**

Additionally, there was broad support for specialized courts such as a drug court and domestic violence court articulated by the community. There is a strong desire to see alternative sentences to incarceration for some non-violent offenses. Also, when incarceration is required, the time should be used productively, for example, drug treatment, literacy and other education. In these areas we have been able to:

- Ensure the viability of the Drug Court and Domestic Violence Court.
- Develop the Bridges Program. This innovative program is a partnership among the court, sheriff's department, San Mateo County Office of Education, probation and community addiction treatment providers. It is an alternative to incarceration in which individuals participate in a closely supervised day treatment program, combining intensive drug and alcohol counseling, vocational and educational components and cognitive skills training.
- Designate a task force, including such agencies as the sheriff's department and the Service League, to expand skill development programs for those in jail.
- Explore programs that allow criminal defendants to keep their jobs.

## **Sentencing Alternatives**

The San Mateo Superior Court and criminal justice partners have undertaken actions to relieve jail capacity issues. These include:

- Pathways Mental Health Court.
- Bridges Drug & Alcohol Day Treatment Program.
- Creation of one additional felony probation violation conference calendar every Friday morning to accelerate resolution of probation violation cases.
- Requesting the expansion of the sheriff's work program from 60 days to 90 days.
- Pre-trials at the close of every in-custody arraignment calendar to expedite resolution.
- Superior Court Review Program (pre-preliminary hearing pre-trial conference calendars for felonies) to expedite resolution of felonies.

- Thursday and Friday in-custody pre-trial calendars for misdemeanors in Redwood City to expedite resolution.
- Increasing the dollar value of a day's commitment to jail (for fine conversions to jail credits).
- Sentencing defendants:
  - Split sentencing combination of jail/sheriff's work program/sheriff's work furlough.
  - Modifying defendants jail sentences to drug & alcohol treatment programs.
- Utilization of the new sheriff's work furlough program.
- Creation of Drug Court.
- Creation of the First Chance Program.

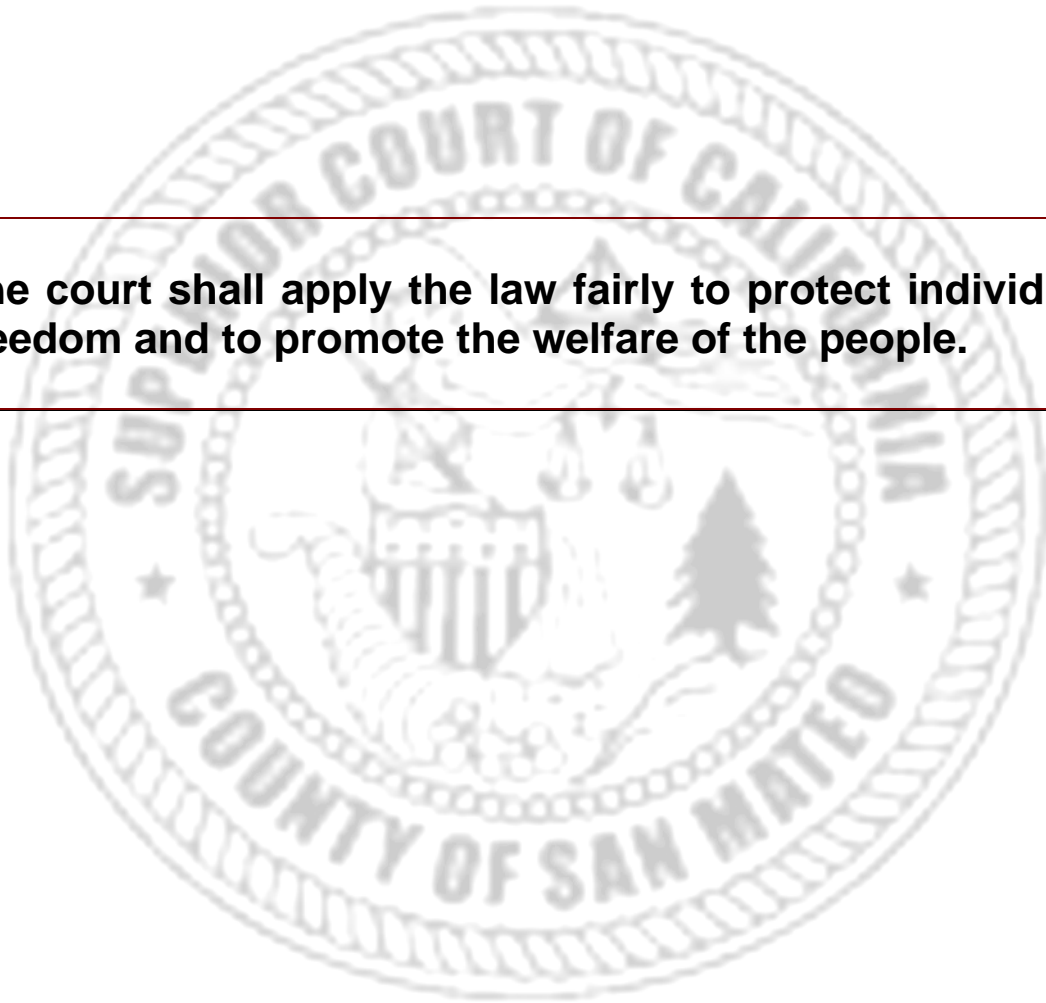
**Additional Innovations Instituted (since the 2000 Court Strategic Plan)**

- Full time probate judge – to accommodate increasing workload.
- Updating of probate rules with Bench/Bar Committee.
- Direct Family Law Calendars – to promote continuity.
- Updated Family Law Rules.
- Dedicated Domestic Violence Calendars – to enhance services for domestic violence victims.
- Creation of Domestic Violence Law Clinic with Bay Area Legal Aid.
- Creation of Open Access to view court records online.
- Online newsletters to the San Mateo County Bar Association and public on court Web site.
- Creation of EZLegalFile – a user-friendly, interactive program to help people access and complete their legal documents online.
- Creation of Self Help Centers in the northern and southern courthouses.

- Creation and continuing commitment to annual Community Law Nights, including the expansion of Community Law Night to South San Francisco.
- Creation of Complex Civil Litigation Court – the first of its kind for a mid-sized court in California.
- Expanded the Probate ADR program.
- Greatly increased the Family Law ADR program usage.
- Redesigned and automated the Judicial Arbitration program.
- Received recognition as having a Model State Court ADR Program by the American Bar Association.
- User friendly letter to jurors that accompanies a summons.
- Wireless remote access for jurors.
- Installation of computers in jury assembly room.
- Use of Web site to advise jurors of their status.
- Creation of juror thank you program; the presiding judge, assistant presiding judge or community outreach judge go the jury assembly room to personally thank and excuse jurors not being utilized.

## ***Mission Statement***

**The court shall apply the law fairly to protect individual freedom and to promote the welfare of the people.**



Complex Litigation Courthouse  
San Mateo, CA

## ***Vision Statement***

- **Access to all**
- **Justice for all**
- **Service for all with integrity, excellence and innovation**



Northern Branch  
South San Francisco, CA

## ***Core Values***

- **Independent Judiciary**
- **Equal Access to the Court for All**
- **Integrity**
- **Excellence**



Southern Branch – Hall of Justice  
Redwood City, CA

## ***Statewide Guiding Principles***

- **Meeting the needs of the public is our core function.**
- **Protecting the independence of the branch is crucial in a democracy.**
- **High quality is an expectation throughout the court.**
- **Accountability is a duty of public service.**

# Statewide Priority

## ACCESS, FAIRNESS, AND DIVERSITY

California's Judicial Branch must work to remove all barriers to access and fairness by being responsive to the state's cultural, racial, socioeconomic, linguistic, physical and age diversities. Branch efforts in this regard must include ensuring that the courts are free from both bias and the appearance of bias, meeting the needs of increasing numbers of self-represented litigants, remaining receptive to the needs of all branch constituents, ensuring that court procedures are fair and understandable, and providing culturally responsive programs and services.

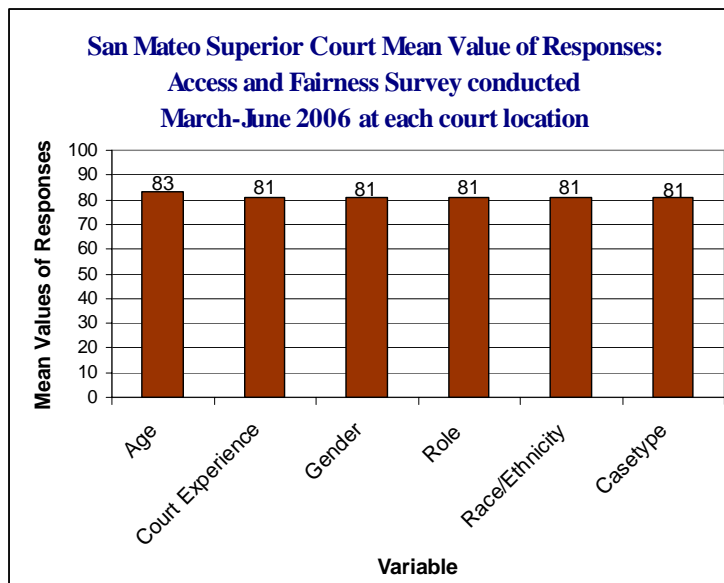
Overall, the goal is to treat everyone in a fair and just manner. All persons will have equal access to the courts and court proceedings and programs. Court procedures will be fair and understandable to court users. Members of the judicial branch community will strive to understand and be responsive to the needs of court users from diverse cultural backgrounds. The makeup of California's judicial branch will reflect the diversity of the state's residents.

### *San Mateo Superior Court Goals*

#### LONG RANGE ISSUE - ACCESS, NAVIGATION, FAIRNESS, AND DIVERSITY

##### How We're Doing

Respondents told us that in terms of access to the court and fairness of treatment (as the following chart shows) regardless of age, experience, gender, role, race or casetype, the court is serving them well.



**Issue Statement:**

Despite this good report, there are yet matters that can be handled better by the court to ensure that all residents have equal access to court resources and are treated fairly by court employees and processes. In particular, respondents told us that we can do a better job of helping users get their business done in a reasonable time, improve hours of court operation, create clearer forms and make more effective use of our Web site.

***Goal I: Enhance access/navigation for users of the court so that their business with the court is facilitated as much as possible.***

**Strategic Initiative 1.** Include technology improvements that will enhance and expand access to court information and resources, such as:

- Improving Web site access and navigation (different languages for all information).
- Expanding the EZLegalFile system.
- Providing more case-specific information online and in the courthouses (e.g., one location for all daily court calendars where people can locate their case).
- Providing kiosks for information in the branches.
- Implementing records imaging for online access to case files.
- Developing a section of the court's Web site to specifically target youth and questions they would have about their involvement with the court in their varied capacities, i.e., delinquency, dependency and family law.
- Expanding Web-based, interactive information on all six appropriate dispute resolution programs.

**Strategic Initiative 2.** Explore options for expanding the hours of court operation, including evening hours for the public's convenience.

**Strategic Initiative 3.** Improve signage/maps in all branches of the court.

**Strategic Initiative 4.** Expand the Self Help Center to include additional case types and staff.

***Goal II: Ensure that the court operates in all areas with fairness, recognizing the diversity of our community.***

**Strategic Initiative 5.** Conduct annual access and fairness public surveys at each branch, communicating the results to the judiciary and court management, with specific action steps to follow.

**Strategic Initiative 6.** Recognizing the diversity of our community, continue to foster an atmosphere of courtesy and respect for all persons in the courthouse.

- Develop court forms, to the extent practicable, in other languages.
- Develop Web-based court tools and programs in other languages.

**Goal III. Encourage and promote the creation of a bench that understands and reflects the diversity of the county's residents:**

**Strategic Initiative 7.** Work with the San Mateo County Bar Association and local minority bar associations to encourage lawyers in the county from diverse backgrounds to become members and participate in local bar association functions.

**Strategic Initiative 8.** Develop educational programs, in conjunction with the San Mateo County Bar Association and local minority bar associations, to promote a greater awareness of career opportunities for current students in the area of law.

**Strategic Initiative 9.** Provide and encourage continued judicial education for all bench officers in the area of understanding and eliminating courtroom bias.

## **LONG RANGE ISSUE – HELPING PEOPLE RESOLVE DISPUTES**

### **Issue Statement:**

Court customers should have opportunities to resolve disputes before filing a suit or going to trial. Likewise, upon finding a need to use the court system, they should find it easy to navigate. This means that long processing times, complicated forms, the use of legalese and hard to access services should be eliminated from the customer's experience.

**Goal: Continue the effort to increase the options for resolving disputes with minimum court involvement and improve efficiency and effectiveness when the court must become involved.**

**Strategic Initiative 1.** Continue current efforts to educate and encourage people to use mediation and arbitration to resolve disputes before filing court cases.

**Strategic Initiative 2.** Expand Web site capabilities for ease of use and links to dispute resolution alternatives, as well as provide more opportunities to conduct court business on the Web (e.g., responding to a traffic citation).

**Strategic Initiative 3.** Continue working to increase the voluntary use of alternative or appropriate dispute resolution (ADR) once cases have been filed.

**Strategic Initiative 4.** Increase the types of workshops in family law and other areas to best meet public needs.

**Strategic Initiative 5.** Expand outreach to raise public awareness of court services and programs.

**Strategic Initiative 6.** Expand Self Help Center and services to provide assistance to self-represented litigants in the areas of guardianships, civil harassment, landlord – tenant, conservatorships and other areas of law (in addition to the family law support services currently provided) deemed appropriate and needed to best meet the needs of the public.

## ***Statewide Priority***

### **INDEPENDENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

California's judicial branch is an independent, separate and co-equal branch of state government charged with preserving the rule of law, upholding Californians' constitutional rights and ensuring fair and impartial courts. In serving the people of California, the judicial branch must also exercise its constitutional authority and responsibility to plan for, direct, monitor and support the business of the branch and to account to the public for the branch's performance.

The goal of California's judiciary must be to maintain its status as an independent, separate, and equal branch of government. The independence of judicial decision making will be protected in order to preserve the rule of law and ensure the fair, impartial, and efficient delivery of justice. The judiciary will unify in its advocacy for resources and policies that support and protect independent and impartial judicial decision making in accordance with the constitution and the law. The branch will maintain the highest standards of accountability for its use of public resources, and adherence to its statutory and constitutional mandates.

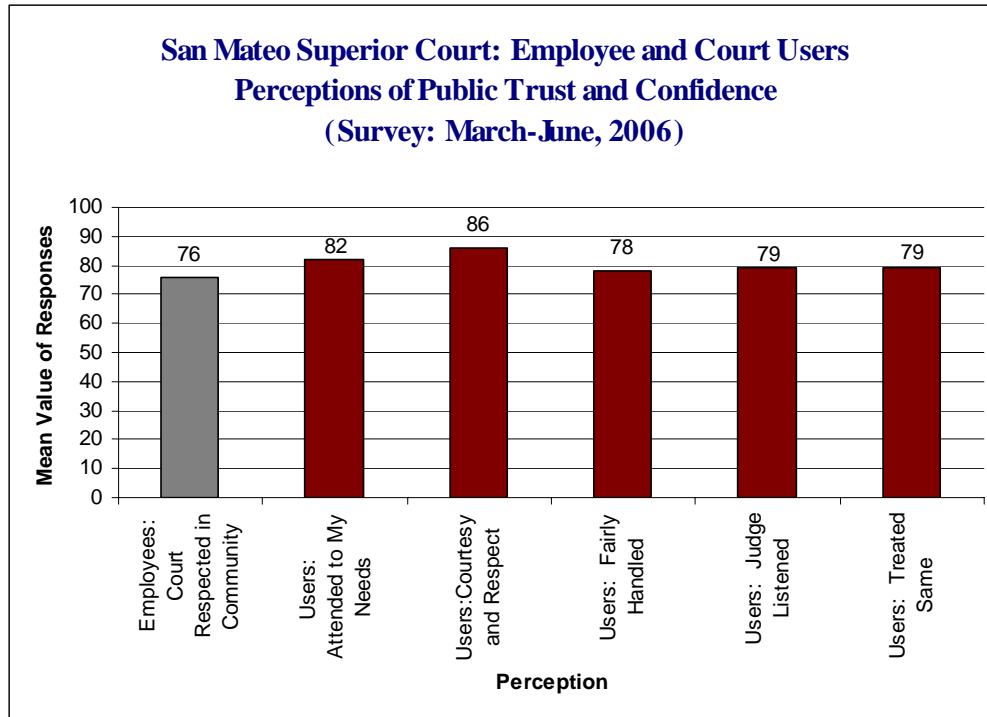
### ***San Mateo Superior Court Goal***

#### **LONG RANGE ISSUE - COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS FOR JUSTICE**

##### **Issue Statement:**

This court has a thirty-year history of working effectively with justice system partners. This has led to a current environment characterized by high levels of

trust among participants. Building on this trust to further improve the operation of San Mateo County's justice system should be a high priority for the future. There is still much more to be done in streamlining the system to better serve the interests of justice.



**Goal I: Continue working effectively with justice system partners to ensure a streamlined system of dispute resolution for the residents of San Mateo County.**

**Strategic Initiative 1.** Work with the sheriff and other justice system agencies to minimize the effects of court outcomes on jail capacity issues to the extent practical and permissible in the achievement of justice.

**Strategic Initiative 2.** Work with the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors and city officials throughout the county to improve awareness of the work of the court and provide appropriate information about the court for these officials to share with their constituents who may need to use the court.

**Goal II: Continue to build support for the court by adopting an ongoing collaborative process with community agencies and other groups.**

**Strategic Initiative 3.** Continue to expand and enhance productive partnerships with other county and community agencies, e.g., probation, health and human services agencies, and the Department of Child Support Services.

**Strategic Initiative 4.** Increase information sharing among justice system and civic partners.

## ***Statewide Priority***

### **MODERNIZATION OF MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION**

Some of the pressures affecting the branch are increased competition for limited state resources, expanding workloads, greater number of cases resulting in backlogs, increased case complexity, and the courts' need to respond to information requirements of many entities. The branch also faces the difficult work of unifying and consolidating the judicial administration policies, practices and systems that are more efficiently coordinated on a statewide basis, while preserving and facilitating the ability of courts to develop and maintain efficient local practices. The effective administration of justice requires deliberate attention to recruiting, developing and retaining high-quality staff at all levels, as well as to developing and implementing appropriate accountability and compliance measures. The judicial branch must also implement and sustain innovative practices and ensure that court environments are safe and secure.

The goal for all California courts is that justice will be administered by a highly qualified judicial and executive leadership team in a fair, timely, efficient, and effective manner by using modern management practices that implement and sustain innovative ideas and effective practices.

## ***San Mateo Superior Court Goal***

### **LONG RANGE ISSUE–COMMUNICATION: INTERNAL/EXTERNAL**

#### **Issue Statement:**

The community wanted more communication between the courts and the public in 2000 and still does. All communications should be improved in the following areas: use less "legalese", improve diversity and courtesy in the court, provide more interpreters, and improved communication with other agencies such as police, probation, social service providers and schools. Effective internal communication is the generator of effective external communication. Staff must have appropriate information about all functions of the court that is current and accurate. Communication within and across divisions is essential, as is effective communication between the bench and court staff.

***Goal I: Continue to strengthen communication about the court and its processes to provide for greater community understanding, appreciation and higher quality service.***

**Strategic Initiative 1.** Continue to increase the public's understanding and appreciation of the court's purposes and processes through frequent and routine interaction between judges, court staff and the public.

**Strategic Initiative 2.** Improve the availability and quality of interactive voice response systems (in jury, traffic and other areas, as needed).

**Strategic Initiative 3.** Create clearer written checklists and forms for the public that use less "legalese".

**Strategic Initiative 4.** Increase usage of the Web site, including CourtNews, as a tool to communicate with the public and the San Mateo County Bar Association.

**Strategic Initiative 5.** Continue to foster an atmosphere of courtesy and respect for all persons in the courthouse, users and employees alike through staff training and mentoring.

***Goal II: Expand communication among court staff and court partners.***

**Strategic Initiative 6.** Build support for the court by adopting an ongoing collaborative process with community agencies and other groups.

**Strategic Initiative 7.** Continue to enhance effective channels of communication in the court at all levels, between divisions and with partner agencies.

**Strategic Initiative 8.** Continue court executive officer's quarterly staff meetings at all branches, employee newsletters and other projects that open the lines of communication among court staff.

***Goal III: Continue to explore and expand the usage of all technology systems and applications that enhance court access, public service, communication and education, productivity of court employees and support services for the judiciary and other agencies.***

**Strategic Initiative 9.** Initiate development of a court Information Technology Strategic Plan to effectively serve the court for the next six years.

# ***Statewide Priority***

## **QUALITY OF JUSTICE AND SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC**

Increasingly, court users and the public look to the courts to do more than resolve legal matters and dispose of cases—they expect courts to offer programs and services that will help to resolve underlying problems. In addition, the judicial branch faces numerous emerging trends, including new, complex legal and ethical issues that may impact its ability to deliver quality justice and service. Employing community outreach and other means to increase the public’s basic understanding of the courts and the judicial branch must remain a high priority.

The overall goal of the judicial branch is to deliver the highest quality of justice and service to the public. In order to remain responsive to the varying needs of diverse court users, the judicial branch will work with branch constituencies to better ascertain court user needs and priorities. The branch will also employ community outreach to provide information about the judicial branch to the public, and effect programs and strategies to ensure that court procedures and processes are fair and understandable.

### ***San Mateo Superior Court Goals***

#### **LONG RANGE ISSUE - JURY DUTY**

##### **Issue Statement:**

There continues to be some dissatisfaction with jury duty. Although there have been major improvements since the 2000 plan, the public would like more information about how the process works, more efficient use of the jurors' time and more support for jury service, for example, improved summons information, increased compensation (which would require a change in legislation) and better amenities.

***Goal: Continue efforts to improve the understanding and experience of prospective and selected jurors, while enhancing communication and improving services for jurors.***

**Strategic Initiative 1.** Communicate effectively with prospective jurors through clear, concise notices and use of all available media such as the creation of an educational video (used as a streaming video for the Web site) about the jury process and improving the interactive voice response system.

**Strategic Initiative 2.** Provide additional support for those serving on jury duty including, improving the summons information and making it more “user friendly”.

**Strategic Initiative 3.** Incorporate juror feedback into a program of continuous improvement.

**Strategic Initiative 4.** Continue the judicial appreciation program – where judges send letters to jurors after trial and where judges personally thank jurors upon dismissal from the waiting room.

**Strategic Initiative 5.** Continue to work to improve the overall experience of jurors, including supporting state legislation to increase compensation and improve amenities.

## **LONG RANGE ISSUE – SERVICE TO FAMILIES**

### **Issue Statement:**

Although the court has made major progress in this area since 2000, community members ask that we continue to make the family law and juvenile law arenas more user-friendly by devoting more resources to helping families handle issues that they face in court. For example, more family law facilitators and information for lay-persons about the law will help. Continued efforts to consolidate family-related issues are also necessary.

***Goal: Address family matters in a more coordinated, comprehensive and user-friendly way.***

**Strategic Initiative 1.** Recognize the scope of the sensitive/volatile issues for families created by court decisions and processes and that these have far-reaching implications. Therefore, continue to develop resources and programs to help families deal with issues they face in the court setting by expanding materials, assistance and self-help access available to this population.

**Strategic Initiative 2.** Reduce barriers to family members who are supporting relatives involved in the judicial system by providing appropriate referrals and services to them.

**Strategic Initiative 3.** Provide more information and resources for fathers involved in family disputes.

## **LONG RANGE ISSUE – PUBLIC EDUCATION**

### **Issue Statement:**

The community continues to express a desire for increased education about the courts. For example, people would like increased interaction between the schools

and the courts, including formal training of young people about the court system. Adults would like more information about the judges and the workings of the justice system. Outside agencies also want a better understanding of court operations.

***Goal: Educate the public about the judicial system.***

**Strategic Initiative 1.** Help community members understand how the judicial system works by expanding opportunities to educate youth and the public on the court system and its processes through programs such as: Community Law Night; Court in the Schools Day (expanded to include junior colleges); use of student volunteers through JusticeCorps; Community College Judicial Studies programs - Associate of Arts and certificate pilot programs; excellent, informative videos about the court system; a formal internship program for law students; and expansion of a mini-program where people can visit the court, talk with judges and learn about the court system.

**Strategic Initiative 2.** Provide programs for community members not currently involved in the judicial system, such as, a television show on the jury process, rebroadcast on a regular basis, courthouse tours, and use of the court Web site to educate the public about the court system and legal processes.

**Strategic Initiative 3.** Provide programs for community members who are involved in the judicial system, such as, videos and other materials to explain legal processes and terminology in specific areas of family, juvenile, criminal and civil law. Coordinate with other agencies to integrate available resources, and regular educational forums on court topics of interest to the public, for example: divorce, custody, small claims, and how to represent yourself in court.

## ***Statewide Priority***

### **EDUCATION FOR BRANCHWIDE PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE**

Professional excellence is the standard and expectation for all judicial officers and court personnel throughout California's judicial branch. The judicial branch must provide ongoing professional development, education and training to address many concerns. Maintaining branchwide professional excellence will promote public trust and confidence in the judicial branch.

For all California courts high-quality education and professional development will be provided to enhance the ability of all individuals serving in the judicial branch to achieve high standards of professionalism, ethics, and performance. Judicial branch personnel will have access to the resources and training necessary to

meet the diverse needs of the public and to enhance trust and confidence in the court.

## *San Mateo Superior Court Goals*

### **LONG RANGE ISSUE - STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE ETHIC**

#### **Issue Statement:**

A knowledgeable, empathetic staff is the key to overall court effectiveness. It is fundamentally important to ensure that all court employees have the knowledge, skill and ability to serve court users with courtesy, respect and professionalism. Achieving this level of service should be a high priority for improving equality and fairness of treatment.

#### ***Goal I: Provide ongoing skills training to staff and leadership training for lead workers, supervisors and management.***

**Strategic Initiative 1.** Conduct quarterly expanded leadership meetings for executive team, managers, supervisors and leads.

**Strategic Initiative 2.** Schedule regular branch information sessions with the court executive officer focusing on the need for continuous improvement.

**Strategic Initiative 3.** Develop employees through a structured series of skills training programs and access for all judicial branch personnel to essential, relevant education.

**Strategic Initiative 4.** Conduct court employee satisfaction surveys annually, communicating the results to court management with specific action steps to follow.

#### ***Goal II: Develop court mentoring and succession planning for current court employees.***

**Strategic Initiative 5.** Create mentoring and succession planning programs designed to plan for future court personnel needs and help current employees receive the support they need to better understand the court organization, develop their careers and effectively prepare for higher level positions.

## ***Statewide Priority***

### **BRANCHWIDE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE**

For the judicial branch to fulfill its mission and purpose, it must have a sound infrastructure that supports and meets its needs and ensures business continuity. Specifically, the judicial branch must meet the challenge of providing the necessary technological, human resources, fiscal and facilities infrastructure.

In California, the judicial branch will enhance the quality of justice by providing an administrative, technological, and physical infrastructure that supports and meets the needs of the public, the branch, and its justice system and community partners, and that ensures business continuity.

### ***San Mateo Superior Court Goals***

#### **LONG RANGE ISSUE – FACILITIES**

##### **Issue Statement:**

The court is engaged in a process with county government and the Administrative Office of the Courts to find an appropriate plan and schedule for transferring certain court facilities from the county to the state. Simultaneously, the court's numerous facilities must be maintained and remodeled as necessary to meet the changing needs of the court's constituents.

***Goal: Actively work with the state and county decision makers to ensure that the residents of San Mateo County have an appropriate physical infrastructure for conducting the court's business, maintained in up-to-date, functional, accessible and comfortable facilities.***

**Strategic Initiative 1.** Create a process that ensures the timely and efficient transfer of court facilities from the county to the state of California in a manner that honors both the needs of the court and county relationships.

**Strategic Initiative 2.** Improve signage in the five court facilities to help court users conduct their business.

**Strategic Initiative 3.** Ensure that court facilities meet the needs of the court.

## ***Priority Actions***

Every effective strategic planning process identifies certain actions that an organization can take to improve operations while pursuing its vision. These actions may cross organizational boundaries, resulting in no improvement, unless the organization identifies them as priorities. These actions can result in significant, reasonably immediate, visible results. Although the plan tends to concentrate on the longer term, priority actions can bring short term results to the achievement of strategy.

1. The presiding judge and assistant presiding judge should attend City Council meetings throughout San Mateo County to communicate court accomplishments and inform the communities about court process and procedure.
2. Improve interactive voice system for jurors.
3. Create E Filing capability for criminal matters.
4. Provide multilingual signage in all court locations.
5. Improve the court's Web site and all communication to become more institutionally multilingual for people using different languages.
6. Conduct Access and Fairness surveys of court customers at least once per year.
7. Create an interesting, relevant streaming video for the court's Web site that will better inform jurors about their civic obligations and specific requirements of jury service.
8. Expand the capacity of the existing Bridges and Pathways programs for more participants.
9. Continue working with justice system partners to find additional solutions to detention capacity problems in San Mateo County.
10. Expand Self Help Center and services to provide assistance to self-represented litigants in the areas of law (in addition to the family law support services

currently provided) deemed appropriate and needed to best meet the needs of the public.

11. Modify the civil writ process so litigants can expect to proceed with evidence on the day of their hearing.
12. Post calendar updates regularly on the first floor calendar boards at the Hall of Justice in Redwood City.
13. Expand the court's efforts in publicizing the numerous court programs and ADR services available to assist attorneys, litigants, families, ancillary related parties and victims of juvenile crime.
  - a. Additionally, the court will consider the possibility of an ADR/Court "kiosk" located at the clerk's offices that will link users with court services and information. The court will also look at developing a one-page information sheet for all litigants in all legal arenas that will raise awareness of the availability of ADR.
  - b. The court will explore modifying the existing online listing of real estate mediators on the ADR section on the court's Web site to include real estate specialties, for example: construction defect, partition actions, transactions, and disclosure.
14. The court and Probate Bar members will work collaboratively to meet the new requirements regarding probate investigators and the probate division.
15. Consider placing minute orders on Open Access and revise local rules regarding *ex parte* notice – specifically, detailing what is expected in giving notice.
16. Re-evaluate the scope of judicial officers' roles at family law status conferences. Additionally, explore instituting the use of pro bono settlement officers.
17. Ensure that the process of ordering reporter transcripts is efficient and uniform. Additionally, the court reporters will look at the possibility of ordering transcripts online.

18. Work with the San Mateo County Bar Association and local minority bar associations to encourage lawyers in the county from diverse backgrounds to become members and participate in local bar association functions.
19. Develop educational programs, in conjunction with the San Mateo County Bar Association and local minority bar associations, to promote a greater awareness of career opportunities for current students in the area of law.
20. Provide and encourage continued judicial education for all bench officers in the area of understanding and eliminating courtroom bias.
21. Create mentoring and succession planning programs designed to plan for future court personnel needs and help current employees receive the support they need to better understand the court organization, develop their careers and effectively prepare for higher level positions.