

## **BAR PANELING**

Bar paneling is a dispute resolution process in which a matter is scheduled or referred to a panel of two or more experienced and neutral attorneys who hear the case and provide a non-binding recommendation for its resolution, including settlement range. Cases are bar paneled in some counties in the Law Division, Civil Part and/or in the Chancery Division, General Equity and Probate Parts. Pursuant to civil best practices, except in individual judge-managed Track IV cases, in the Law Division, Civil Part the court may mandate only one settlement event, which includes bar paneling, in a case.

Bar paneling proceedings are confidential, non-binding, and are usually held in court facilities. In all counties where bar paneling is done, the attorney panelists serve *pro bono*. In many of the counties, bar paneling is conducted frequently with the assistance of the county bar association and occurs usually on the trial date.

Given the results of bar paneling efforts in New Jersey thus far, it appears that bar paneling programs need some modification in order to be more effective. For bar paneling to be successful at least two critical concerns must be met. First, it is important for the attorneys to bring clients and insurance company representatives to the bar paneling, so that they may participate. Second, it is equally important that the attorneys serving as panelists possess a certain degree of expertise in the particular area of law.