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Vicinages Launch Criminal Justice Reform Pilots *Camden, Morris/Sussex, Passaic Serving As Test Sites for Statewide Initiative*

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The Camden Vicinage hosted its criminal justice reform kickoff meeting at Camden County College in Blackwood on March 4 to discuss the new bail reform and speedy trial law going into effect Jan. 1, 2017 and its implementation in Camden County.

A criminal justice reform pilot program is scheduled to begin in the Camden Vicinage in July following rollouts in the Passaic and Morris/Sussex Vicinages.

“This major reform effort in how criminal cases are handled from the outset directly involves all components of the criminal justice system, not just the Judiciary,” said Assignment Judge Deborah Silverman Katz

This new law represents one of the most dramatic changes to the criminal justice system in decades.

By Jan. 1, 2017, the state will shift from a system in which a defendant’s pretrial release is dependent upon their ability to pay monetary bail to a more objective one in which a defendant’s pretrial release is dependent upon their risk of failing to appear for court and the danger that they pose to the community.

The new law also will change how quickly incarcerated defendants are tried and how released defendants are monitored pretrial.

Judge Silverman Katz and Trial Court Administrator Carole A. Cummings welcomed more than 270 participants to the daylong event. Attendees included judges, Superior Court and municipal court staff, and other criminal justice stakeholders in state, county and local government, law enforcement and corrections, and the community.

“All of you will have the opportunity to learn about the changes to the bail reform laws, and all of you will see how your specific roles in the criminal justice system are vitally important to ensure the realization of these changes,” said Judge Silverman Katz as she stated the purpose of the day’s program. “The success of these reforms depends upon your understanding of them and your participation in the process.”

Chief Justice Stuart Rabner, who appeared by video, and Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts, delivered opening remarks.

Speakers included Criminal Presiding Judge Edward J. McBride Jr., who provided a comprehensive overview of criminal justice reform; Jennifer M. Perez, director of Trial Court Services, and Jack M. McCarthy III, director of Information Technology, who spoke on the Judiciary’s work to automate key components of the criminal justice process to increase efficiency and the development of an objective and reliable risk assessment tool; Municipal

Presiding Judge Robert T. Zane III, who explained how the risk



Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts, addresses stakeholders at the criminal justice reform kickoff in the Camden Vicinage at Camden County College in Blackwood in March as Assignment Judge Deborah Silverman Katz listens. Excerpts of Judge Grants remarks can be found at youtube.com/njcourts.

assessment tool will be utilized and changes to the Municipal Court process; and Camden County Prosecutor Mary Eva Colallilo and Public Defender Harold Katz, who gave their perspectives on criminal justice reform.

“The large turnout at the event is a credit to everyone who helped plan it and to all of our law enforcement, municipal, and community partners who attended and share our commitment to successfully implement criminal justice reform in Camden County,” said Judge McBride.

Katz said, “I was very happy to have played a role in the criminal justice reform kickoff event on March 4, 2016. The promise of bail reform is a fairer, more equitable criminal justice system. I look forward to a continued partnership with the Judiciary as we implement these important changes in Camden County.”

Stemming from recommendations made by the Joint Committee on Criminal Justice, a special committee of the Supreme Court established and chaired by Chief Justice Stuart Rabner to examine bail and speedy trial reform, the new system of pretrial release will be fairer to criminal defendants and will also serve to improve public safety.

Under the current bail system, poor defendants who pose little risk of flight or danger to the community sometimes remain in jail simply because they cannot afford to pay even a small amount of bail.

Meanwhile, defendants with money are able to post bail and secure their release even if they are dangerous or pose a significant flight risk.

Under the new law, when a defendant is arrested on a complaint-warrant, the judge will use an objective, validated risk assessment tool or Public Safety Assessment (PSA) to help determine

the appropriate form of pretrial release. Defendants who are released pretrial will be monitored by pretrial services staff.

Judges also will be permitted upon motion of the prosecutor to keep a defendant detained pretrial without bail if they pose a significant flight risk, or a serious risk of danger to the community or witnesses.

Incarcerated defendants will be subject to the law's speedy trial provisions, which set limits on the amount of time a defendant can remain detained pretrial.

The municipal court will no longer set bail for cases that have been charged on a complaint-warrant because those defendants must be detained and transported to jail so that pretrial services staff can complete the PSA and make a release recommendation to the judge.

The release decision must be made within 48 hours of arrest.

County stakeholders, including Freeholder Director Louis Cappelli Jr., Administrator Ross G. Angilella and Warden David Owens shared their points of view on criminal justice reform.

Angilella said, "Camden County was delighted to be invited to participate in the Camden Vicinage Criminal Justice Reform Kickoff event on March 4, 2016. The event was very well produced, from start to finish, making it valuable to all of the stakeholders. Even though we have been engaged in this effort, there was much new information to be learned. The staff and judicial presentations were very enlightening, and Judge Zane's videos were a terrific addition.

"We support and appreciate all of the efforts of the Camden Vicinage in criminal justice reform. Kudos and thank you to the assignment judge and the trial court administrator, and all of the staff, for producing an effective and informative event."

*Criminal justice reform begins statewide on Jan. 1,
2017*

The meeting concluded with a panel discussion moderated by Judge McBride to address remaining questions.

Panelists included Vance Hagins, chief of the Judiciary's new Pre-trial Services Unit; Tricia Murphy-Moore, assistant criminal division manager; Dana Petrone, assistant prosecutor; Alba Rivera, criminal division manager; Marcia Soast, acting first assistant public defender; and Mary Wiesemann, municipal division manager.

At the end of the event, Judge Silverman Katz thanked those who attended and contributed.

"All of the speakers today presented a variety of perspectives, but each and every one of them stand with us as we undertake this historic change," said Judge Silverman Katz.

I hope that as you leave here today, you're better armed with the information necessary to know and implement the required changes. The criminal justice reforms...will change the system as we know it. We will shift to an evidence-based, data-driven system, and it will be a successful one."