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## **First Phase Completed for System to Provide On-Line Access to Pinellas Court Records**

CLEARWATER – On-line access to public records that are part of court files in Pinellas County is one-step closer with the launch of the first part of a \$6.4 million consolidated case management system that will be used by the Courts and offices of the State Attorney, Public Defender, Clerk and law enforcement (stakeholders).

Last week, clerks, Judges, Court staff and employees of the various offices began inputting and accessing Civil and Family Division information through the Odyssey Courts & Justice Solution system, which is replacing the outdated Pinellas Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS). The project began last year with the signing of a contract by Pinellas County with Tyler Technologies and will conclude next year with each of the Court's nine divisions using the new application.

The transition is being managed by the CJIS Policy Board of Directors, which includes Sixth Judicial Circuit Chief Judge Thomas McGrady, State Attorney Bernie McCabe, Public Defender Bob Dillinger, Clerk of Court Ken Burke, Sheriff Bob Gualtieri and other law enforcement agencies. Pinellas County's Business Technology Systems (BTS) will be responsible for managing and maintaining the state-of-the-art technology.

Project Manager Susan Jennings of BTS is directing a Core Project Team that is coordinating the transition.

Chief Judge McGrady, as chair of the CJIS Policy Board, said "The application moves us closer to a paper-on-demand court system, by getting all of our case records and files into a digital format. And once we've completed that and overcome the privacy issues, the attorneys, media and the general public will be able to go on-line to view the court's public records through public access provided by the Clerk of Court." Privacy issues involve the redaction of information such as home addresses, Social Security numbers, proprietary information, etc.

Burke's office already is providing login options on the CJIS Internet screen that present previously available information in a more readable format, provided by Odyssey.

Judge McGrady said all the stakeholders are "grateful to the Pinellas County Commissioners for having the progressive vision to see the need for this new program," to be known as Justice Consolidated Case Management System (CCMS).

CCMS saves taxpayer money because it is easier to use, is more adaptable to changing needs and requires less maintenance.

The system being replaced (CJIS) was developed for Pinellas courts more than 30 years ago by Pinellas BTS. In the mid-'90s, one study said Pinellas had the best system in the U.S. for the handling of court records. But as the courts changed, CJIS was expanded in piece-meal fashion, and updates and maintenance has become costly and un-wieldy. At one time, more than 25 technicians were assigned to updates and repairs.

While the live use of the Civil Division portion of CCMS is the first step, it is a significant sign of things to come. Other divisions will be added one as the records for those departments are converted. "The long-range result," McGrady said, "will be a system that allows the Clerk to efficiently manage the Court's records, require less handling of paper and give the public easier access to public documents."