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Odyssey, \$10 Million Case Management System, Goes Live in Pinellas County Courts

CLEARWATER – Flanked by other elected officials and Pinellas County technology experts, J. Thomas McGrady, chief judge of the Sixth Judicial Circuit, announced the implementation of a new \$10-million court case management system that is more user-friendly and efficient than the old one.

The new software system, known as Odyssey, replaces CJIS, the acronym for the Consolidated Justice Information System, a mainframe system dating to the 70s whose technology eventually became obsolete, McGrady said. Odyssey went live over the weekend of July 11-14.

With Odyssey, the major players in the court system – including the State Attorney, the Public Defender, the Sheriff, and the Clerk of Courts – will all be using the same system to create, use and manage court files, in an arrangement that will increase efficiency and save taxpayer dollars.

In time, the public and the media will be able to view images of documents on their computers, reducing the need for trips they now make to various courthouses to accomplish the same tasks. Some official records can already be viewed online, but this will eventually be true of all documents that are public record, McGrady said.

“This is step one,” McGrady told a group of journalists at the Pinellas County Justice Center on Monday, July 14. “It’s a big step toward a more open system.”

Pinellas Sheriff Bob Gualtieri praised Odyssey, saying it will help avoid the kind of mishap that occurred last year, when a misclassification of an inmate caused him to be housed with an accused murderer, who then proceeded to kill him.

“This Odyssey system will fix that,” Gualtieri said. “There’s a lot of examples where our internal processes will improve.”

“CJIS was like an old car you couldn’t find parts for anymore,” said Pinellas-Pasco State Attorney Bernie McCabe. Odyssey is a much more cost-efficient way to manage information, what with each constitutional officer using the same system, he said.

With Odyssey, different shareholders have different security levels, so that only those who are allowed to look at a particular document – one involving a juvenile defendant, for instance – will be able to do so, said Ken Burke, Clerk of the Circuit Court, whose office maintains all files. And there are some documents, such as those that are part of a family law case, or a probate matter, that will not be accessible via the web, Burke said.

Tom Bartel, a vice president with Tyler Technologies, which developed Odyssey, said the Texas-based company has clients in 20 other states, as well as in other counties in Florida. Whenever an improvement is made with the other clients' Odyssey products, Pinellas County will be able to benefit from those improvements, too.