

**STRATEGIC PLAN OF  
THE TRIAL COURTS**

**ADOPTED: DECEMBER 31, 1999**

**AMENDED: MARCH 15, 2002**

**To add Strategies 2.1(i), 2.3(e),  
2.3(f), and 2.3(g); and**

**To substitute Strategies 1.5(e) and  
4.5(g)**

**STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE TRIAL COURTS  
MISSION STATEMENT,  
GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES  
FIVE-YEAR PLAN (2000-2004)**

**Mission Statement:**

The mission of the trial courts of Louisiana is provide access to justice, to meet all responsibilities in a timely and expeditious manner, to provide equality, fairness and integrity in their proceedings, to maintain judicial independence and accountability, and to reach a fair and just result by adherence to the procedural and substantive law, thereby instilling trust and confidence in the public.

**Goal 1.0 To establish a more open and accessible system of justice.**

**Objectives:**

1.1 To conduct judicial proceedings that are public by law or custom openly.

**Strategies:**

**1.1(a) Rule Defining Openness.** The district courts, with assistance from the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court, should define by uniform rule those public proceedings that are not open to the public and should provide the rationale for both allowing and limiting public access. Each district court should instruct courtroom personnel and bailiffs of the rule and rationale for closed hearings so that they can properly inform the public of the reason for their exclusion from the courtroom. A notice should be posted outside each courtroom in which a closed proceeding is being conducted citing the rule and the rationale for limited public access to that particular proceeding.

**1.1(b) Rule Providing for Availability of Assistive Listening Devices and Other Tools for Enhancing Audibility.** Each district court should enact a rule providing for the availability of assistive listening devices and other tools for enhancing the audibility of proceedings. Each district court should further include a notice on all subpoenas that persons requiring enhanced audibility should inform the court of the kind of assistance needed prior to the proceeding. This will allow the court sufficient time to arrange for the use of proper assistive listening devices.

**1.1(c) Promulgation of Court Schedules.** Each district court should notify the public of court schedules through notices on bulletin boards, voice response telephone messaging, use of web sites, or other means.

1.2 To encourage responsible parties to make court facilities safe, accessible, and convenient.

**Strategies:**

**1.2(a) Courthouse Security Audits.** Each district court should commission the federal marshal's office or state or local law enforcement officials to conduct security audits and tests of courthouse facilities; and each court should communicate the results of such audits and tests to the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court and to appropriate local officials.

**1.2(b) Survey of Opinion on Security.** Each district court should conduct periodic surveys of the opinions of jurors, court personnel, lawyers, and litigants regarding court security; and each court should communicate the results of such surveys to the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court and to appropriate local officials.

**1.2(c) Emergency Procedures.** Each district court should develop and promulgate procedures for dealing with emergencies in the courtroom and judges' chambers, unless such procedures are already in place for the courthouse as a whole; and each court should regularly train its employees in the use of such procedures.

**1.2(d) Telephone Accuracy and Courtesy.** Each district court should train its employees to answer phones courteously and to provide accurate information.

**1.2(e) ADA Accessibility.** Each district court should commission an audit of ADA accessibility; and each court should communicate the results of the audit to the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court and to appropriate local officials. Based on the results of the audit, each court should develop and implement appropriate policies and procedures to ensure ADA accessibility.

**1.2(f) Survey of Opinion on Accessibility.** Each district court should conduct periodic surveys of the opinions of jurors, court personnel, lawyers, and litigants regarding accessibility; and each court should communicate the results of such surveys to the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court and to appropriate local officials.

1.3 To give all who appear before the court reasonable opportunities to participate effectively without undue hardship or inconvenience.

**Strategies:**

**1.3(a) Rules on Interpreters.** Each district court should conduct a study of the community in which it is located for the purpose of identifying the various languages spoken in that community as well as alternative methods of communication used by the hearing- or cognitively-impaired in the community. The court should then establish an interpreter pool made up of English-speaking

persons who are also proficient in those languages or alternative methods of communication and who are willing to serve as interpreters for the court. The court should also provide instruction to members of the interpreter pool on the proper protocol for simultaneous interpretation in the courtroom. The court should also provide instruction to interpreters on its policies and procedures regarding the use of interpreters. The court should also establish a fee policy for interpreters and a procedure for prompt payment.

**1.3(b) Rules on Programmatic Participation.** Each district court should enact and promulgate rules or policies providing for effective programmatic participation in the processes of the court by non-English speaking persons and by persons with disabilities. Such rules should address, when appropriate, issues such as bilingual signage, bilingual materials, the availability of court documents in alternative formats for accommodating persons with sight disabilities, the use of interpreters, the use of TDDs and relay services, and the use of assistive listening devices.

1.4 To ensure that all judges and other trial court personnel are courteous and responsive to the public and accord respect to all with whom they come into contact.

**Strategies:**

**1.4(a) Civility and Professionalism Training.** The Louisiana District Judges Association, in association with the Louisiana Judicial College and other organizations, should continue to sponsor training in civility and professionalism for judges and court personnel.

**1.4(b) Code of Professionalism.** Each district court should display or otherwise make available to the public copies of the Supreme Court's Code of Professionalism, as both a pledge and reminder of the court's responsibilities to professionalism.

**1.4(c) Public Problem Resolution Process.** Each district court should establish a public problem resolution process in each court. The public problem resolution process should only address the problems that a member of the public is having with either the court as a whole or with a particular court employee. The process should not address the problems that a member of the public is having with a particular judge. Such problems should only be handled through the Judiciary Commission. The information obtained from such processes should be used by each district court not only to address specific user complaints but also to improve customer services and the user-friendliness of the court.

**1.4(d) Court Users' Assessment of Courtesy and Responsiveness.** Each district court should conduct periodic surveys of regular court users, including court employees, attorneys, probation officers, and jurors, to assess the users' perceptions of the courtesy and responsiveness of court personnel. On the basis of such information, each district court should develop, implement, and maintain ways to improve customer services and user-friendliness.

**1.4(e) Judicial Mentoring Program.** The Louisiana District Judges Association should continue to sponsor and support the Judicial Mentoring Program and should expand the program to provide greater attention to the issue of professionalism and user-friendliness.

**1.4(f) Judicial Training.** The Louisiana Judicial Council and all judicial associations should maintain and improve the availability and quality of continuing legal education and judicial training within the state.

**1.4(g) Judge-to-Judge Exchanges.** The Louisiana District Judges Association, with assistance from the Louisiana Judicial College and the Supreme Court, should develop more programs that would enable Louisiana judges to exchange ideas with judges from other states.

1.5 To encourage all responsible public bodies and public officers to make the costs of access to the trial court's proceedings and records -- whether measured in terms of money, time, or the procedures that must be followed -- reasonable, fair, and affordable.

**Strategies:**

**1.5(a) Inventory of Assistance Alternatives for the Financially Disadvantaged.** Each district court should encourage local bar associations to conduct a study or inventory of the assistance alternatives available for the financially disadvantaged and should encourage bar associations to develop and implement ways for helping financially disadvantaged litigants to access such assistance.

**1.5(b) Uniform Rule on In Forma Pauperis Filings.** The district courts, with input from the Louisiana Clerks of Court Association and with the assistance of the Louisiana District Judges Association, should enact or request the Supreme Court to enact a uniform rule supplementing statutory provisions relating to *In Forma Pauperis* filings.

**1.5(c) Civil Legal Assistance.** Each district court should work with the Access to Justice Committee of the Louisiana State Bar Association to continually improve the availability and quality of civil legal services for the financially disadvantaged. Each district court should consider the appropriateness of dedicating either residual class action suit funds or donated juror fees to legal services and pro bono programs.

**1.5(d) Indigent Defense.** Each district court and the Louisiana District Judges Association should work with district indigent defender boards and the Louisiana Indigent Defense Assistance Board (LIDAB) to continuously improve the availability and quality of indigent defender services in each district of the state.

**1.5 (e) Task Force on Pro Se Litigation.** The Louisiana District Judges Association should request the Judicial Council to appoint a Task Force on Pro Se Litigation to develop a "best practices guide", containing guidelines, including ethical guidelines, and good practices for

facilitating and managing pro se litigation in district courts. Upon completion, the "Guide" should be published and disseminated to all interested district judges.

**1.5(f) Victim Assistance.** Each district court, with assistance from the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court, should develop, implement and maintain effective ways to communicate court processes to victims of crime and to alleviate, to the extent possible, the burden of attending criminal court processes.

**Goal 2.0 To meet all responsibilities to everyone affected by the court and its activities in a timely and expeditious manner.**

**Objectives:**

2.1 To encourage timely case management and processing.

**Strategies**

**2.1(a) Manual Case Management Systems.** Each district court should develop, implement and maintain, with guidance from the Supreme Court and assistance from the Louisiana District Judges Association, manual case management systems using checklists, docket masters, and other manual tools to track the timeliness of cases and to encourage general compliance with the aspirational time standards of the Supreme Court, the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ), the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA), the American Bar Association (ABA), and other bodies.

**2.1(b) Automated Case Management Information Systems.** Each district court should develop, implement, and maintain, with assistance from the Supreme Court, automated case management systems for the scheduling and tracking of cases, for managing continuances and other sources of case delay, and for encouraging general compliance with the aspirational time standards of the Supreme Court, the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ), the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA), the American Bar Association (ABA), and other bodies.

**2.1(c) Case Management Techniques.** Each district court should develop, implement, and maintain, with assistance from the Supreme Court and the Louisiana District Judges Association, effective case management techniques, such as time-certain scheduling, pre-trial conferences, readiness calls and conferences, differentiated case management, more effective control of discovery and other such tools for reducing delay and expediting case processing and for ensuring general compliance with the aspirational time standards of the Supreme Court, the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ), the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA), the American Bar Association (ABA), and other bodies.

**2.1(d) Certainty of Trial Dates.** Each district court should evaluate, through the case management systems and the other techniques indicating above, the frequency with which cases scheduled for trial are actually heard when scheduled. On the basis of such information, each district court should develop techniques for continuously improving the certainty of trial dates.

**2.1(e) Child Abuse and Neglect Cases.** Each district court should develop, implement, and maintain, with assistance from the Supreme Court and the Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, effective case management techniques for improving the timeliness and quality of child abuse and neglect adjudication in the state. Each district court should evaluate the utility and appropriateness of such techniques as time-certain scheduling, pre-trial conferences, readiness calls and conferences, differentiated case management, and other such tools for reducing delay and expediting case processing and for encouraging compliance with the Louisiana Children's Code and the standards of the Supreme Court's Louisiana Court Improvement Program and those contained in the Resource Guidelines of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

**2.1(f) Child Custody and Support Cases.** Each district court should develop, implement, and maintain, with assistance from the Supreme Court and the Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, effective case management techniques to continuously improve the timeliness and quality of the adjudication of child custody and support cases in the state.

**2.1(g) Punctual Commencement of Court Proceedings.** Each district court should develop, implement and maintain techniques for ensuring the punctual commencement of all court proceedings.

**2.1(h) Cases Under Advisement.** The Louisiana District Judges Association should work with the Supreme Court to analyze and discover ways to encourage and facilitate the prompt or timely rendition of judgments by district court judges.

**2.1 (i) Task Force on Case Management and Delay Reduction.** The Louisiana District Judges Association should request the Judicial Council to appoint a Task Force on Case Management and Delay Reduction to develop a "best practices guide" containing model policy statements and techniques for improving case management and delay reduction. Upon completion, the "Guide" should be published and disseminated by the Council to all interested judges.

2.2 To provide required reports and to respond to requests for information promptly.

**Strategies:**

**2.2(a) Reporting Response.** Each district court should develop, implement, and maintain a system of providing required reports and requests for information prior to any required deadlines and, generally, within one work week of a request for information or receipt of a notice of a required report.

2.3 To promptly implement changes in the law and procedure.

**Strategies:**

**2.3(a) Implementation of Changes of Law and Procedure.** Each district court should adopt a procedure for tracking all changes in law and legal procedure, for notifying all judges of said changes, and for implementing all changes uniformly and systematically.

**2.3(b) Implementation of ASFA.** The Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, with assistance from the Louisiana Court Improvement Program, should develop a comprehensive plan for assuring that all judges having juvenile jurisdiction are aware of the requirements of the Louisiana Children's Code with respect to the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act and are properly trained and motivated to meet such requirements.

**2.3(c) Restructuring FINS.** The Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and the Louisiana District Judges Association should assist the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court in his efforts to restructure the processes, systems of accountability and data collection procedures of the Family in Need of Services (FINS) offices of the state. Each court should take direct responsibility for its FINS Office and should take all steps to ensure that the services being provided by FINS are effective and efficient.

**2.3(d) Anticipating Needed Changes.** Each district court should consider ways to identify trends and to anticipate new conditions that might require or suggest a need for adjustments in the operations of the court.

**2.3 (e) Unpublished Appellate Opinions.** The Louisiana District Judges Association should advocate changes in appellate rules to allow for the publishing and citation of unpublished appellate opinions that are relevant to a proper understanding of the law and its procedures by district court judges.

**2.3 (f) Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA).** District judges having juvenile jurisdiction should support and facilitate efforts to establish local or regional CASA programs in their respective areas.

**2.3 (g) Truancy Assessment and Service Centers (TASCs).** District judges having juvenile jurisdiction should support and facilitate efforts to establish local or regional Truancy Assessment and Service Centers in their respective areas.



2.4 To enhance jury service.

**Strategies:**

**2.4(a) Public Service Announcements.** The Louisiana District Judges Association and the Louisiana Supreme Court should provide for the production and airing of public service announcements regarding the nature and importance of jury service.

**2.4(b) Modified Jury Service.** Each district court should study the feasibility of establishing modified jury service, such as one-day service, to accommodate those for whom more lengthy service would create a hardship.

**2.4(c) Videos and Other Instructional Material.** The Louisiana District Judges Association and the Louisiana Supreme Court should provide for the production and dissemination to the courts of videotaped programs to be used in connection with jury orientation.

**2.4(d) Ongoing Docket Information.** Each district court should develop a procedure for keeping jury pools continually informed of the progress of the docket while they are waiting to be called for jury selection. Jury pool members who are not selected for a trial should be informed of the value of their presence and willingness to serve.

**2.4(e) Sensitivity to Jury Morale.** District courts should conduct surveys and studies on issues that affect the comfort and morale of jury pools during the jury selection process and provide for changes in conditions and procedures whenever feasible to accommodate jury pools.

**Goal 3.0 To provide due process and equal protection of the law to all who have business before the court; and to demonstrate integrity in all procedures and decisions.**

**Objectives:**

3.1 To faithfully adhere to laws, procedural rules, and established policies.

**Strategies:**

**3.1(a) Attorney Focus Groups or Panels.** Each district court should consider organizing attorney focus groups to solicit feedback on the court's faithful adherence to laws, procedural rules, and established policies, especially with respect to review and decision-making on motions, the imposition of sanctions, the enforcement of policies on continuances, the enforcement of court orders, jury instructions, the process for appointment of counsel, the setting of bail, the award of costs and attorney fees, advisement of rights, proper boykinization, the quality of orders and judgments, and the extent of the notification of the right to appeal. Each district court should use the information and feedback from such focus groups or panels to make needed changes.

**3.1(b) Questionnaire on Fidelity to Law:** Each district court should consider circulating a questionnaire to court employees and attorneys measuring their opinions on the court's compliance with law and court rules. On the basis of such information, each district court should further examine its rules and procedures and, if necessary, should make necessary corrections.

3.2 To ensure that the jury venire is representative of the jurisdiction from which it is drawn.

**Strategies:**

**3.2(a) Inclusiveness of Jury Lists.** Each district court, with assistance from the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court, should consider using measures to compare the number and type of persons on the court's current juror list to the number and type of adults in the population as means of determining the inclusiveness of the jury list. If the jury list is found to be too narrow, the court should consider ordering other sources of information to be developed and used.

**3.2(b) Random Selection Procedures.** Each district court, with assistance from the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court, should ensure that the selection of prospective jurors from the jury lists is random. If such selection procedures are not truly random, the court should develop and implement ways to correct the problem.

3.3 To give individual attention to cases, deciding them without undue disparity among like cases and upon legally relevant factors.

**Strategies:**

**3.3(a) Attorney Focus Groups or Panels.** Each district court should consider using the attorney focus groups or panels recommended in Strategy 3.1(a) to also solicit feedback on the court's equality and fairness in the treatment of attorneys, litigants, and other users of the court. Each district court should use the information and feedback from such focus groups or panels to make needed changes.

**3.3(b) Equality and Fairness in Sentencing and Bail Decisions.** The Louisiana District Judges Association should actively participate in the structuring and conduct of a major study by the Judicial Council of the Supreme Court on the equality and fairness of sentencing and bail decisions in district courts. The results of the study should be used by all district courts to make whatever changes are needed to correct any problems that may exist. If, on the other hand, the study shows that the standards of equality and fairness are generally met by district courts, the Louisiana District Judges Association, with assistance from the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court, should develop a strategy for effectively communicating this finding to the general public, especially those segments of the population that have complained about the inequality and unfairness of our courts with respect to sentencing and bail.

**3.3(c) Appellate/District Court Review Panels.** The Louisiana District Court Judges Association and the Louisiana Conference of Courts of Appeal should jointly establish one or more standing appellate/district court review panels, staffed perhaps by the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme court or by assigned staff from the appellate and district courts, to analyze and discuss the outcomes of appeals in terms of affirmance and reversal patterns as a means of uncovering where problems may exist and where trial court performance can and should be improved. The results of such discussions should be communicated by staff to each district judge in the state.

3.4 To ensure that the decisions of the court address clearly the issues presented to it and, where appropriate, to specify how compliance can be achieved.

**Strategies:**

**3.4(a) Clarity and Interpretation of Judgments and Sentences.** Each district court should consider using measures to analyze court records each year to determine how well the court performs in communicating the terms and conditions of criminal sentences and to determine the clarity of injunctive or declaratory orders or judgments in civil cases. The court should consider using the results of such an analysis to determine the clarity of judgments and sentences and, if necessary to make improvements thereto.

**3.4(b) Attorney Focus Groups or Panels.** Each district court should use the attorney focus groups or panels recommended in Strategy 3.1(a) and 3.3(a) to also solicit attorney feedback on the clarity of orders and judgments in criminal and civil cases. Each district court should use the information and feedback from such focus groups or panels to make needed changes.

3.5 To ensure that appropriate responsibility is taken for the enforcement of court orders.

**Strategies:**

**3.5(a) Clarity and Interpretation of Judgments and Sentences.** Each district court should use questionnaires or other measures to determine the level of compliance with court orders relating to fines, court costs, restitution, and other orders relating to probationers, as well as those orders and judgments relating to child support, the enforcement of civil judgments, and the enforcement of case processing rules. The court should use the results of the analysis to determine the level of compliance with its orders and, if necessary, to make improvements thereto.

**3.5(b) Attorney Focus Groups or Panels.** Each district court should use the attorney focus groups or panels recommended in Strategy 3.1(a), 3.3(a) and 3.4(b) to also solicit attorney feedback on the level of compliance with the court's orders and judgments in criminal, civil, domestic and other cases. Each district court should use the information and feedback from such focus groups or panels to make needed changes.

- 3.6 To ensure that all court records of relevant court decisions and actions are accurate and preserved properly.

**Strategies:**

**3.6(a) Standing Committee on District Court Records.** The Louisiana District Judges Association should establish, with the Louisiana Clerks of Court Association and the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court, a Standing Committee on Court Records to identify ways to standardize and ensure the accuracy of court information, especially minute entries, and to identify effective ways to store, retrieve, and preserve such information not only for effective and efficient filing purposes but also for efficient and effective case management.

**Goal 4.0 To maintain judicial independence, while observing the principle of comity in its governmental relations and accountability to the public.**

**Objectives:**

- 4.1 To maintain the constitutional independence of the judiciary while observing the principle of cooperation with other branches of government.

**Strategies:**

**4.1(a) Conference on Judicial/Legislative Relations.** The Louisiana District Judges Association, in association with the Supreme Court, the Louisiana Conference of Courts of Appeal, the Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and the Louisiana City and Parish Court Judges Association, should work with the Supreme Court to encourage the leadership of the legislature to sponsor with the judiciary a conference for judges and legislators on the working relationship that ought to exist between the judiciary and the legislature on such matters as the judicial impact of legislation, judicial advocacy on matters relating to the administration of justice, procurement, and other matters of mutual concern.

**4.1(b) Executive/Legislative Branch Coordination.** The district judges and the Louisiana District Judges Association and the Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges should continue to communicate, coordinate, and cooperate with the legislative and executive branches on all matters relating to judicial resource needs.

- 4.2 To seek, use and account for public resources in a responsible manner.

## Strategies:

**4.2(a) Proper Staffing.** The Louisiana District Judges Association, working with local governments and the Judicial Budgetary Control Board, should ensure that all district judges have a sufficient number of highly qualified staff, including secretaries, law clerks, and court reporters, to support and facilitate judicial adjudicative and administrative functions.

**4.2(b) Legal Resources.** The Louisiana District Judges Association, working with local governments and the Judicial Budgetary Control Board, should ensure that all district judges and their support staffs have sufficient access to published and automated legal resources to facilitate judicial adjudicative and administrative functions.

**4.2(c) Judicial Expense Funds.** The Louisiana District Judges Association should develop, with assistance from the Supreme Court, general guidelines for managing judicial expense funds, especially the propriety of certain expenditures and the use of fair procurement procedures.

**4.2(d) Judicial Accounting and Financial Control.** The managers of the various district judicial expense funds should periodically meet with the accounting and auditing personnel of the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court and the clerks of the courts of appeal to develop common approaches to accounting and financial controls.

**4.2(e) Judicial Budget and Performance Accountability.** The Louisiana District Judges Association and all district judges should continue to develop, maintain, and expand the Judicial Budget and Performance Accountability Program as a means of improving aspects of trial court performance.

**4.2(f) Performance Audits.** The Louisiana District Judges Association and all district judges should cooperate with and provide assistance to the performance audits commissioned by the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court as part of the Judicial Budget and Performance Accountability Program.

**4.2(g) Restructuring of District Court System.** The Louisiana District Judges Association should participate actively in initiatives that may be undertaken by the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court, perhaps under the aegis the Judicial Council, to examine and explore ways to control the number of new judgeships either by consolidating existing judicial districts, or by using well-trained hearing officers in lieu of new judgeships, or by restructuring courts of limited jurisdiction to reduce some of the load on district courts.

**4.2(h) Restructuring Court Financing.** The Louisiana District Judges Association and the Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges should participate actively in the Governor's initiative to examine and, possibly restructure, the system of financing the judicial branch of state government. All district courts should become proactive in efforts to reduce or control the costs of civil filing fees and criminal court costs that are not related to court functions.

4.3 To use fair employment practices.

**Strategies:**

**4.3(a) Human Resource Policies.** All district courts should develop, promulgate, and enforce fair employment policies as required by law and by good human resource management practices.

4.4 To inform the community of the court's structure, function, and programs.

**Strategies:**

**4.4(a) Public Outreach and Community Relations.** The Louisiana District Judges Association and each district court should develop, in association with the Community Relations Department of the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court effective, inexpensive ways to inform the community of each district court's structure, function, and programs

4.5 To recognize new conditions or emerging events and to adjust court operations as necessary.

**Strategies:**

**4.5(a) Complex Litigation.** The Louisiana District Judges Association, with assistance from the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court, should develop and implement an effective system for handling complex litigation that might otherwise unduly burden district courts throughout the state.

**4.5(b) Uniform Family Courts.** The Louisiana District Judges Association and the Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges should consider the development of a system of uniform family courts throughout the state.

**4.5(c) Specialized Courts or Specialized Divisions Within Courts.** The Louisiana District Judges Association should take the lead in exploring the costs, benefits, limitations, and methods of creating more specialized courts or specialized divisions within courts to handle certain types of cases, e.g. drug cases, dependency cases, complex litigation, etc.

**4.5(d) Court Technology.** The Louisiana District Judges Association and the Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, with assistance from the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court, should develop a master plan for the development of court technology in district courts, including the four juvenile courts of the state. The master plan should identify needed technologies, analyze the costs and benefits of alternative technologies, identify and analyze barriers to the use of such technologies, and make recommendations for overcoming barriers and implementing, over time, each new technology.

**4.5(e) Uniform District Court Rules.** The Louisiana District Judges Association and the Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges should endorse and support efforts to develop some uniform district rules.

**4.5(f) Comprehensive Continuum of Children's Services.** The Louisiana District Judges Association and the Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges should expand their efforts to support the Children's Cabinet goal of developing and implementing a comprehensive continuum of children's services in Louisiana.

**4.5 (g) Juvenile Justice Commission.** The Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges should, with assistance from the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court, support and facilitate the goals, mission, and process of the Juvenile Justice Commission established pursuant to HCR 94 of the Regular Legislative Session of 2000.

**4.5(h) Adult Alternative Sanctions.** The Louisiana District Judges Association should, with assistance from the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court, develop a plan that would identify effective adult alternative sanctions and make recommendations for their establishment and use.

**Goal 5.0 To instill public trust and confidence in the public.**

**Objectives:**

5.1 To ensure that the trial court and the justice it renders are accessible and are perceived by the public to be accessible.

**Strategies:**

See Strategies 1.2(a) through 1.5(f).

5.2 To ensure that the trial court functions fairly, impartially, and expeditiously, and is perceived by the public to be so.

**Strategies:**

See Strategies 2.1(a) through 3.6(a).

5.3 To ensure that the trial court is independent, cooperative with other components of government, and accountable, and is perceived by the public to be so.

**Strategies:**

See Strategies: 4.1(a) through 4.5(h).

## **POTENTIAL EXTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE ABILITY OF THE TRIAL COURTS TO IMPLEMENT THEIR STRATEGIC PLAN**

There are several external factors that may affect the ability of the district courts to implement this strategic plan. Among these factors are:

**1. Lack of Direct Staff.** Of the 47 courts which may be classified as district or trial courts (40 judicial courts; the Orleans Parish Civil District Court; the Orleans Parish Criminal District Court; the Orleans Parish Juvenile Court; the Caddo Parish Juvenile Court; the East Baton Rouge Juvenile Court; the Jefferson Parish Juvenile Court; and the East Baton Rouge Parish Family Court), only 24 have judicial administrators. Of the 216 judges serving these courts, 163 have law clerks; and, while virtually all of these judges and commissioners have a secretary, in many areas, the secretary also serves as a receptionist and court reporter. This lack of direct staffing may affect the ability of some of the district courts to implement some of these strategies, especially strategies: 1.2(b); 1.2(f); 1.4(d); 1.5(f); 2.3(d); 2.4(e); 3.1(b); 3.3(a); 3.4(a); and 3.5(a).

**2. Reliance on Other Elected Offices.** Because of the lack of direct staffing, most district courts are forced to rely on other elected offices and officials to perform essential court functions. Thus, in 46 of the 47 courts, the district courts must rely on the elected Parish Clerk of Court to provide services relating to court filing and records management, docketing and public notice, case tracking and management, notice and other document generation, the collection and fiscal management of some court funds, the keeping of minute entries, the maintenance of a representative jury pool, and many other functions. Almost all of the 47 courts must rely on the sheriff or some other arm of law enforcement to provide bailiff services, service of process, some revenue collection, and correctional services. All of the 47 courts rely heavily on local government for their facilities and for most of their operating funding. Most are dependent on the district attorneys for moving criminal cases and for the distribution of the criminal court funds among the various eligible users. This reliance on other elected officials for the performance of many court functions may affect the ability of some courts to implement some of these strategies, especially the following: 1.1(b); 1.1(c); 1.2(a); 1.2(d); 1.3(b); 1.5(e); 1.5(f); 2.1(a); 2.1(b); 2.1(c); 2.1(d); 2.1(e); 2.4(b); 2.4(d); 3.2(a); 3.2(b); 3.6(a); and 4.5(d).

**3. Reliance on Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court.** As can be seen within the Strategic Plan, many of the strategies adopted in the plan rely on the assistance of the Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court for their implementation. Depending on the responsibilities of the Judicial Administrator with respect to the implementation of the Strategic Plans for the Supreme Court and the Courts of Appeal, the district courts' reliance on the Judicial Administrator could be a potential barrier. The Plan's reliance on the Judicial Administrator may affect the timely implementation of several strategies, especially the following: 1.1(a); 1.5(e); 1.5(f); 3.2(a); 3.2(b); 3.6(a); 4.1(a); 4.2(c); 4.4(a); 4.5(a); 4.5(d); 4.5(g); and 4.5(h).



**4. Reliance on Louisiana District Judges Association and the Louisiana Association of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.** The Trial Court Strategic Plan also relies very heavily on the ability of the Louisiana District Judges Association and the Louisiana Association of Juvenile and Family Court Judges to develop, implement, and maintain many of the Plan's strategies. The Louisiana District Judges Association currently has no paid staff; the Louisiana Association of Juvenile and Family Court Judges contracts on a part-time basis with one person to mail notices and to track legislation in Baton Rouge. For the most part, these Associations rely on their judicial members to develop and implement actions on behalf of the Association and its member courts and judges. Such actions are very difficult to organize and sustain, given the nature of the judicial function and the limitations placed on judges with respect to fund-raising and the availability of time. For these reasons, the timely implementation of some strategies may be negatively affected, particularly: 1.4(a); 1.4(e); 1.4(g); 1.5(b); 1.5(d); 1.5(e); 2.1(h); 2.3(b); 2.4(a); 2.4(c); 3.3(b); 3.3(c); 3.6(a); 4.1(a); 4.2(c); 4.2(g); 4.2(h); 4.4(a); 4.5(a); 4.5(b); 4.5(c); 4.5(d); 4.5(e); 4.5(f); and 4.5(h).

## PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The following list of objectives and performance indicators shall be incorporated into the Judicial Appropriations Bill:

<b>Objective 1.2</b>	<b>To encourage responsible parties to make court facilities safe, accessible, and convenient</b>	
<b>Indicators:</b>		<b>2001</b>
	% of surveyed district court chief judges indicating that their courts needed significant improvements in security	61.4%
<b>Objective 1.3</b>	<b>To give all who appear before the court reasonable opportunities to participate effectively without undue hardship or inconvenience</b>	
<b>Indicators:</b>		<b>2001</b>
	% of surveyed district court chief judges indicating actions to improve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	86.4%
<b>Objective 1.4</b>	<b>To ensure that all judges and other trial court personnel are courteous and responsive to the public and accord respect to all with whom they come into contact</b>	
<b>Indicators:</b>		<b>2001</b>
	% of surveyed district court chief judges indicating that their courts had taken steps within the last two years to ensure the courtesy and responsiveness of their court personnel	95.5%
<b>Objective 1.5</b>	<b>To encourage all responsible public bodies and public officers to make the costs of access to the trial court's proceedings and records -- whether measured in terms of money, time, or the procedures that must be followed -- reasonable, fair, and affordable</b>	
<b>Indicators:</b>		<b>1998</b>
	% of surveyed court users indicating going to court costs too much	83%

**Objective 2.1 To encourage timely case management and processing**

<b>Indicators:</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
Number of Parishes Reporting Criminal Disposition Data to CMIS	50	61
% of Parishes Reporting Criminal Disposition Data to CMIS	78.1%	95.3%
% of surveyed district court chief judges indicating that their courts had taken steps within the last two years to reduce delays and improve the timeliness of case processing		93.2%

**Objective 2.4 To enhance jury service**

<b>Indicators:</b>	<b>2001</b>
% of surveyed district court chief judges indicating that their courts had taken steps within the last two years to make jury service more convenient or effective	70.5%

**Objective 3.2 To ensure that the jury venire is representative of jurisdiction from which it is drawn**

<b>Indicators:</b>	<b>2001</b>
% of surveyed district court chief judges indicating the use of sources other than just voter registration rolls to select the jury pool	52.3%

**Objective 4.1 To maintain the constitutional independence of the judiciary while observing the principle of cooperation with other branches of government**

<b>Indicators:</b>	<b>1999</b>
% of surveyed district court judges believing improved coordination/communication with the other branches of government is an issue the judiciary should address within the next five years	68.0%

**Objective 4.2            To seek, use and account for public resources in a responsible manner**

<b>Indicators:</b>	<b>1999</b>
Number of district court judges lacking full-time law clerks	54
% of district court judges lacking full-time law clerks	24.8%

**Objective 4.4            To inform the community of the court's structure, function, and programs**

<b>Indicators:</b>	<b>2001</b>
% of surveyed district court chief judges indicating that their courts regularly provide public education and public outreach services	63.6%

**Objective 4.5            To recognize new conditions or emerging events and to adjust court operations as necessary**

<b>Indicators:</b>	<b>1999</b>
% of surveyed district court judges indicating that better court technology is an issue that the judiciary should address in the next five years	91.4%
% of surveyed district court judges indicating that computer literacy training for judges is an issue that the judiciary should address in the next five years	87.7%
% of surveyed district court judges indicating that uniform trial court rules is an issue that the judiciary should address in the next five years	58.8%
% of surveyed district court judges indicating that expansion of alternative sanctions and treatment services for juvenile courts is an issue that the judiciary should address in the next five years	76.0%