

The Supreme Court of Ohio

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DIVISION
65 SOUTH FRONT STREET, COLUMBUS, OH 43215-3431

CHIEF JUSTICE
MAUREEN O'CONNOR

DIRECTOR
ROBERT D. STUART

JUSTICES
TERRENCE O'DONNELL
SHARON L. KENNEDY
JUDITH L. FRENCH
WILLIAM M. O'NEILL
PATRICK F. FISCHER
R. PATRICK DEWINE

TELEPHONE 614.387.9434
FACSIMILE 614.387.9609
www.supremecourt.ohio.gov

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As courts continue to implement and rely upon electronic data systems, there is a growing need to establish a set of standard codes to facilitate electronic reporting, the exchange of court information, and automated workflow processes.

The term "Standards" does not mean mandated rules – instead, it is intended to mean targets of commonality that courts and vendors can move toward over time. These standards are intended to provide common data structures that will allow for meaningful data exchange, while still permitting customization to meet local needs. The development and implementation of data standards is expected to assist all courts in current and future case management system deployments, and facilitate more efficient data exchange, process flow, training, and system updates.

As a stark example of the current lack of standardization, consider how the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) is managed across court Case Management Systems (CMS). Although there is one common ORC for the state, there are many ways that courts are currently formatting their ORC codes (e.g. dots, dashes, brackets, capital letters, lowercase letters, etc.) The ORC codes and descriptions across court CMSs in the state vary significantly. As a result, developing electronic data exchange systems and aggregating data for reporting is extremely complex and costly. Establishing a set of standard codes and descriptions that every court CMS uses would facilitate the development of electronic data exchange and reporting systems that can work with any CMS while being far less costly and complex.

To develop these standards, the Commission on Technology and the Courts and Supreme Court of Ohio staff have created a CMS standards work group to explore a standards-based approach by establishing and prioritizing a list of target areas for standards development and developing a process for standards creation and adoption.

The immediate goals of the work group include understanding how to ensure local court involvement, determining the best way to partner with the CMS vendor community, and providing effective communication to all courts and stakeholders.

In the longer term, the work group will recommend target areas for standards development, recommend master code sets that allow for local customization, and implement a process for standards development, approval, and governance.

We would like to engage your association in the standards conversation by making a presentation at your upcoming meeting or conference. To schedule your presentation, please contact megan.real@sc.ohio.gov or call (614) 387-9434. You can review the work group's current documents at www.ohiocourts.gov/standardsWG, and if you have any questions about the work group or standards initiative, please contact me at robert.stuart@sc.ohio.gov or (614) 387-9619. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Robert Stuart
Director, Information Technology Division