

Appendix A – PROBATE COURT SYSTEM OVERVIEW

The general function of the Shelby County Probate Court is to hear and resolve legal matters such as: Wills and Estates, Adoptions, Guardianships and Conservatorships, Mental Health Involuntary Commitment cases, Eminent Domain/Land Condemnation cases, Change of Name and Legitimation of Children. Additionally the Probate Judge serves as the Chief Election Officer in county elections, as well as other duties. Pursuant to Alabama Constitution local amendment, the Shelby County Probate Judge is required to be a licensed attorney.

Shelby County's Probate Court, Judicial Division, has judicial responsibility for many different types of cases. In addition, the Probate Judge is responsible for conducting elections and serves as the Chief Election Official of the county. There are currently five employees, including the chief clerk, mental health coordinator and three court clerks in the Judicial Division. State law requires that inventories and annual returns as well as surety bonds be processed by probate courts to ensure that administrators of estates and guardians of incapacitated adults and minors account for the receipts and expenditures of the estate for which they have been assigned. As the administrator of an estate, one is required by law to file a complete inventory of the estate within 60 days of appointment and to make an annual return to the probate court each year until the case is dismissed. As the conservator of the property of an adult or minor, one is required by law to file an inventory within 90 days and make an accounting to the probate court every three years until the Conservator and bonding agency are discharged. A new case management system should allow for the efficient processing of inventories, accountings and surety bonds by the Probate Court, including reminders, notifications, and calculations.

There are several other types of cases handled by the Probate Court that must be accommodated by a new case management system, including but not limited to:

- Administrations
- Probate of Wills
- Conservatorships and Guardianships of adults and minors
- Name Changes (the ability to search by both old and new names)
- Legitimations
- Condemnations
- Tax Deeds
- Adoptions
- Involuntary Commitments
- Elections

Petition filings and subsequent actions are entered into the system when the attorney or petitioner files a petition and pays the associated fees. Entries made in the system serve as official record, in accordance with guidelines set by state law. The system should auto generate case numbers and automatically associate certain fees upon filing. Document creation of certain preloaded forms is required. These forms should be populated with data previously entered in the case and should be able to be changed by the user. The system should include a docketing system for managing the court calendar. Tracking of certain documents (i.e. bonds, claims, inventory, service of process, and parties) should be included along with reports. An accounting system to handle court fees and trust fees, including partial payments, must be included. All filed documents are scanned in the

system and made a part of the permanent record. All data from prior systems and new data created by document imaging and other means must be incorporated into the new case management system.

The Court reports financial and case information and data on daily, monthly, and yearly basis as required by the State Auditor and Shelby County Finance Department. The Court reports financial data to the County and State as required by law and local practice. Although not presently offered, it is anticipated that electronic filing of case documents including credit card and online payment of court fees will soon be authorized by the Alabama Supreme Court and the capability to do so is required.

Web access to case information by attorneys, parties and the public, with various security authorization levels is not currently offered by the Court but the capability is required.

The Court seeks a web-based electronic case management system that will interface with all of the agencies that serve the Court and that the Court serves and will provide a host of modern technologies to enhance the Court's efficiency.

The current Case Management Configuration is as follows:

- Microsoft SQL Server 2008 (SP3) – Standard 10.0.5500.0 (Intel X86)
- Microsoft Server 2003 R2 – Enterprise (clustered)
- Database and images are stored on a HP LeftHand SAN
- The current production database is ~ 1.5GB in size
- Document image server is a VMWare 5.1 virtual machine
 - Microsoft Server 2008 R2 (64-bit)
 - The current image share contains ~ 126,600 images totaling ~ 16GB in size