

Bringing the Courtroom to the Palm of your Hands – Judge Francine Goldberg helps create CourtConnect Mobile App



On August 8, the Court officially announced the creation of CourtConnect, which is available for iOS and Android devices. “CourtConnect is bringing our courtrooms to the palm of your hands. Through this technology and innovation, we’re helping families navigate the legal system and conserve their resources, while providing easy access to important information about their cases. CourtConnect is the first app that gives Cuyahoga County families, instant, 24-7 access to their cases,” said Judge Goldberg.

Judge Goldberg is a 1982 Beachwood High School graduate and was inducted into the BHS Gallery of Success in 2009. She is a former Cuyahoga County assistant prosecuting attorney and director of the Ohio Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force, where she also developed an app to help parents, school administrators, and law enforcement officers fight online crimes.

Judge Goldberg saw technology as an area that would make the experience of navigating a Domestic Relations Court case more convenient and less stressful. She was motivated to develop CourtConnect because of two major issues in Domestic Relations Court – the high number of self-represented litigants and the inability for individuals to pay child support in the courtroom.

Judge Francine Goldberg is in the spotlight for initiating change in Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court by spearheading the development of CourtConnect – a free mobile app that provides the public with quick, easy, on-the-go access to court-related information.

“The Court has seen an increase in self-represented litigants – a trend which is expected to increase in the future,” Judge Goldberg said. Self-represented litigants receive assistance in the Court’s Help Center, which provides resources for parties who don’t have lawyers. However, Help Center staff are not permitted to give legal advice or strategy.

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“Approximately 60% of our cases involve at least one self-represented party,” Judge Goldberg added. The Help Center, officially launched in May 2017, consists of a full-time, licensed attorney and four help-center specialists who offer both walk-in and telephone assistance. It is equipped with four computers and printers. Help Center staff provides assistance to

self-represented litigants with divorce, dissolution, child custody, child support, and post-decree proceedings. As a result the number of delayed cases due to inaccurate or incomplete paperwork are reduced. To date, the Center has assisted 20,817 in-person visitors; and in 2018, averaged 27.6 phone calls per day.

“If I can buy a cup of coffee and pay for it with an iPad, why can’t judges enforce child support orders in the same fashion?” Judge Goldberg said. “I felt there was an easier way through technology for the court to do business that was quick, easy, and convenient for our families.”

CourtConnect levels the playing field. It provides self-represented litigants and lawyers intuitive, 24/7, on-the-go access to court-related information through mobile devices.

This cutting-edge technology is the first of its kind for a domestic relations court in Ohio, and possibly the first in the United States. “Hopefully our prototype will be used in other courts throughout Ohio and the country,” Judge Goldberg said. “I think this is a game changer. It provides self-represented litigants with a simple, easy method to obtain important information about the current status of their case and to make payments – whether child support or court costs. You just download the app and log in.”

There are two ways to login to CourtConnect: through an email address or with an e-file account. Both methods will allow users to flag cases, receive push notifications regarding court dates and docket updates, and learn what is happening with their cases in real time. An e-filing account also allows users to view docket images in real time.

“This is a new way for our Court to do business,” Judge Goldberg said. “This cutting-edge technology is interactive, innovative and user friendly. It is exciting for our Court to be in the forefront of this innovative electronic application. We want to reach a point where we are a paperless court. I hope that litigants and attorneys create e-file accounts, which will increase efficiencies and enhance transparency in our judicial system.”

This is the first version of CourtConnect. Judge Goldberg and her team welcomes feedback from everyone who uses it so they can build on the technology and make it better.

“CourtConnect puts the courtroom in the palm of your hands, providing attorneys, self-represented litigants, and families with instant access to navigate our complex legal system.”

For more information, visit <http://domestic.cuyahogacounty.us/>; or contact Ashley Monaco at 216.443.3157 or amonaco@cuyahogacounty.us.

