OFFICE OF THE CLERK

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS

FOR THE FIRST CIRCUIT

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CLERK

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October 1, 2012

Dear First Circuit District Court and Appellate CJA Panel Members:

This letter is to advise you of some upcoming changes to the voucher payment process under the Criminal Justice Act. The Administrative Office of the United States Courts (the "AO") is developing a new electronic voucher processing system known as "eCJA VPS." This system will allow attorneys to electronically prepare and submit their CJA 20 and 30 vouchers and the CJA 21s, 31s, and 24s of other service providers. Court staff and judges will thereafter electronically review and approve these eCJA vouchers for processing and payment. The First Circuit Court of Appeals and the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts have agreed to participate as pilot courts to test this new system.

Once the pilot begins, attorneys will be able to record their time electronically under the categories used on the CJA 20 and 30 vouchers. Counsel will also be able to electronically record and submit their expenses, supporting documents (e.g., receipts), and any requisite excess compensation memos.[1] The system will automatically compute the payment due based on the dates of service, thereby reducing possible mathematical errors. Court staff will electronically review the voucher and panel attorneys will receive notice both when a voucher has been finally approved for payment and when payment is issued.

The new eCJA-VPS system is expected to reduce errors and expedite the time required to prepare, review, and approve CJA vouchers. After eCJA-VPS is initially implemented, CJA counsel and providers will continue to be paid with paper checks from Washington, D.C. In 2014, a new AO financial system will enable Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) payments and electronic 1099 reporting to all CJA providers.

The circuit intends to include appeals from all five district courts (DMA, DME, DNH, DPR, and DRI) in the pilot. Even if you are not a member of the First Circuit's appellate CJA panel, it will be necessary for you to become familiar with the appellate aspects of eCJA because most district court counsel continue to represent their clients during the opening stage of an appeal.

The exact date for the start of the eCJA-VPS pilot project is still uncertain. We anticipate that sometime after January 1, 2013, remote training in eCJA will be available to CJA panel attorneys via webinars and user guides. Because the District of Massachusetts is also participating

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[1] Other service providers also will be able to complete their CJA 21s and 31s electronically.

in the pilot, this district will also provide training for its CJA panel attorneys.[2] We estimate that the conversion to eCJA VPS will begin in late January-early February. Once attorneys complete the requisite training, login and password information will be provided to enable them to submit their CJA vouchers electronically. Vouchers that are submitted before the conversion to eCJA begins will continue to be processed in paper. We will keep you apprised of the relevant dates as information becomes available, so please continue to monitor the First Circuit's "CJA Panel Announcements" for these important notices.

The First Circuit is looking forward to working with you in this pilot. We hope that you will join in assisting with the implementation and final development of this new and exciting electronic CJA vouchering program. If you have any questions, please feel free to call or email Donna Barchard at 617-748-9061, Donna_Barchard_@ca1.uscourts.gov; or Linda Neary at 617-748-9103, Linda_Neary@ca1.uscourts.gov. Thank you.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Margaret Carter, Clerk

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[2]   If you are also a member of the District of Massachusetts' CJA panel, we urge you to participate in that district's eCJA-VPS training.