



**NEW YORK STATE**  
**Unified Court System**

OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION

LAWRENCE K. MARKS  
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE

JOHN W. MCCONNELL, ESQ.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

NANCY J. BARRY, ESQ.  
CHIEF OF OPERATIONS

**MEMORANDUM**

July 31, 2020

To: Hon. George J. Silver  
Hon. Vito C. Caruso  
Administrative Judges

From: John W. McConnell   
Nancy Barry 

Re: Microsoft Teams

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It is our pleasure to announce the intention of the Unified Court System to transition to a new audiovisual platform for court meetings and proceedings – Microsoft Teams – in place of Skype for Business over the next several months. While Skype has been a mainstay of court operations over the last several years, Microsoft is retiring support in 2021 and requiring all Skype users to move to Teams. In addition, Teams has several features that are a substantial improvement over its predecessor, including:

- Capacity to stream simultaneously nine high-quality video feeds, with superior layout options, and significantly improved video quality overall. This number is expected to increase to 49 within the next month or two. This compares with the five smaller video feeds currently viewable on Skype. In addition, Teams will support meetings or proceedings attended remotely by thousands of viewers.
- Flexibility in presenting (“pinning”) video feeds, allowing enhanced screen usage for important court uses such as ASL (American Sign Language) interpreters and CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) reporting.
- Enhanced ability to share digital content – documents, videos, audioclips, and materials in a wide range of formats with viewers on the call. This will provide significant ease for evidence presentation in virtual proceedings.
- A “breakout room” feature, expected to debut in Fall 2020, which will allow users to conduct private side communications while the main proceeding continues. This functionality will allow parties and counsel to conduct private attorney/client conversations, or judges to conduct sidebar appearances, while conducting a virtual court proceeding.

- Miscellaneous additional features, such as alternate backgrounds for users; live captions; translation of messages and chats in over sixty languages; greater compatibility with third-party applications; and many others.<sup>1</sup>

The implementation of this new technology will take place in two stages as follows:

- Preparation Phase (August 1–September 30): The Teams desktop application will be installed on all state-issued computers; a combination of live online and recorded training resources will be made available statewide; Teams will be available for use (albeit with only limited centralized support) for internal UCS conferencing, as well as for court hearings involving ASL interpretation and CART reporting; one or more courts will apply the technology for remote proceedings in limited pre-approved pilot projects; each judicial district will develop a plan for a broader staged rollout in conjunction with the Division of Technology and Court Research. During this period, Skype will continue to be the preferred method of conducting remote court proceedings (other than in courts conducting pilot projects).
- General deployment (October 1 – November 25): Over this eight-week period, Teams will be broadly deployed, in stages, in accordance with the plans of each judicial district. Training and tech support will be robust and ongoing. Skype for Business will continue to be available for use during this period, but will be phased out entirely by December 31, 2020.

This project will be overseen by the OCA Division of Technology and Court Research and the OCA Courtroom Modernization Initiative Team. Questions about it may be directed to Christine Sisario, Director of Technology ([csisario@nycourts.gov](mailto:csisario@nycourts.gov)) and Sheng Guo, CMI Program Manager ([sguo@nycourts.gov](mailto:sguo@nycourts.gov)), or may be emailed to [TeamsMigration@nycourts.gov](mailto:TeamsMigration@nycourts.gov). Sheng and Christine will be reaching out to provide you with more information on this initiative in the near future.

Please distribute this memorandum as you deem appropriate.

As always, thank you for your assistance and support. Please stay well.

c: DCAJ Chiefs of Staff  
District Executives  
NYC Chief Clerks  
Christine Sisario  
Sheng Guo  
County Clerks

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed information about Teams can be found online at <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>.