



# Expansion of technology in state courts

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By [Eric Brewer](#)

State courts across the nation are reporting similar trends of increased integration of technology. Courthouse news websites are overwhelmingly posting about the growing use of tech in accessibility initiatives, e-filing, and the continuation of remote hearings.

[A pilot project in New Hampshire](#) provides the public with free remote access to Westlaw, an online legal database. Unlimited use of Westlaw is available in person through public libraries in Derry, Portsmouth, and Littleton, and at the New Hampshire Law Library in the Supreme Court in Concord. Westlaw can also be accessed at home, although with restrictions, through a link on the law library website. The pilot project seeks to improve access to reliable legal resources and research for those who cannot afford a lawyer.

Technology is also being used to expand accessibility in Michigan. The new “[MI-Resolve Family System](#)” helps families settle domestic relations matters that would otherwise have to be filed in a circuit court. MI-Resolve is a 24/7 text-based conversation space that allows families to “create new parenting time agreements, revise current agreements, or create a parenting time plan to make up missed time with the help of a trained mediator.” Chief Justice Elizabeth T. Clement had this to say about the new program:

*“Instead of having to take time out of their busy schedules to travel to court or the nearest CDRP center, families now have the option of resolving parenting time disputes online. The MI-Resolve Family System turns what can feel like a daunting process for many families into a much more convenient and streamlined way of navigating an important issue.”*

The MI-Resolve Family System is administered by each of the Michigan Supreme Court’s 16 Community Dispute Resolution Programs (CDRP). If a case is found suitable for the MI-Resolve Family System, CDRP staff will refer the involved parties to a private portal where they will work with a trained mediator to reach an agreement.

In addition to expanding accessibility, technology is enhancing virtual judicial processes. [Arkansas made e-filing available in all state circuit courts](#) in March 2023. The electronic filing

system enables court documents to be stored online in a timely, cost-effective manner. Wisconsin reported that a recent software update [upgraded the electronic exhibits system](#). Uploaded exhibit materials will now only appear in the court record if they were offered during the trial, allowing for more accurate court records and streamlined remote proceedings. This is an important development because of the continuing role of virtual hearings: [Idaho](#), [Iowa](#), [Vermont](#), and [Wisconsin](#) have all released news reports in 2023 concerning the continuation of remote proceedings.

How is your court improving access through technology? Share your experiences with us. For more information, contact [Knowledge@ncsc.org](mailto:Knowledge@ncsc.org) or call 800-616-6164. Follow the National Center for State Courts on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#).