

# ATTESTATION ENGAGEMENT

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District Court 21-3-01  
Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania  
For the Period  
January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2013

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October 2015



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General  
Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE  
AUDITOR GENERAL

### Independent Auditor's Report

The Honorable Eileen H. McNulty  
Secretary  
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue  
Harrisburg, PA 17128

We have examined the accompanying statement of receipts and disbursements (Statement) of District Court 21-3-01, Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania (District Court), for the period January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2013, pursuant to the requirements of Section 401(c) of *The Fiscal Code*, 72 P.S. § 401(c). The District Court's management is responsible for this Statement. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on this Statement based on our examination.

Our examination was conducted in accordance with attestation standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the standards applicable to attestation engagements contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States and, accordingly, included examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the Statement and performing such other procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances. We believe that our examination provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

We are mandated by Section 401(c) of *The Fiscal Code* to audit the accounts of each district court to determine whether all moneys collected on behalf of the Commonwealth have been correctly assessed, reported and promptly remitted. *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States include attestation engagements as a separate type of audit. An attestation engagement performed pursuant to *Government Auditing Standards* involves additional standards that exceed the standards provided by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Accordingly, this attestation engagement complies with both *Government Auditing Standards* and Section 401(c) of *The Fiscal Code*.

In our opinion, the Statement referred to above presents, in all material respects, the operations of the District Court as it pertains to receipts made on behalf of the Commonwealth for the period January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2013, in conformity with the criteria set forth in Note 1.

## Independent Auditor's Report (Continued)

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we are required to report all deficiencies that are considered to be significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal control; fraud and noncompliance with provisions of laws or regulations that have a material effect on the Statement; and any other instances that warrant the attention of those charged with governance; noncompliance with provisions of contracts or grant agreements, and abuse that has a material effect on the Statement. We are also required to obtain and report the views of responsible officials concerning the findings, conclusions, and recommendations, as well as any planned corrective actions. We performed our examination to express an opinion on whether the Statement is presented in accordance with the criteria described above and not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on internal control over reporting on the Statement or on compliance and other matters; accordingly, we express no such opinions.

Our consideration of internal control over reporting on the Statement was for the limited purpose of expressing an opinion on whether the Statement is presented in accordance with the criteria described above and was not designed to identify all deficiencies in internal control over reporting on the Statement that might be material weaknesses or significant deficiencies and therefore, material weaknesses or significant deficiencies may exist that were not identified. However, as described below, we identified certain deficiencies in internal control that we consider to be material weaknesses and significant deficiencies.

A *deficiency in internal control* exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct, misstatements on a timely basis. A *material weakness* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the Statement will not be prevented, or detected and corrected on a timely basis. We consider the deficiency listed below to be a material weakness.

- Escrow Monies Not Always Disbursed Timely - Recurring.

A *significant deficiency* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance. We consider the deficiency listed below to be a significant deficiency.

- Inadequate Arrest Warrant And DL-38 Procedures - Recurring.

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the Statement is free from material misstatement, we performed tests of the District Court's compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the determination of Statement amounts. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our engagement, and accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

Independent Auditor's Report (Continued)

We are concerned that the district court failed to correct previously reported findings regarding escrow monies not always disbursed timely and inadequate arrest warrant and DL-38 procedures. These significant deficiencies could result in uncollected fines and unpunished offenders and increase the risk for funds to be lost or misappropriated. The district court should strive to implement the recommendations and corrective actions noted in this report.

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue, the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, and the District Court and is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties.

We appreciate the courtesy extended by the District Court 21-3-01, Schuylkill County, to us during the course of our examination. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Michael B. Kashishian, CPA, CGAP, CFE, Director, Bureau of County Audits, at 717-787-1363.



Eugene A. DePasquale  
Auditor General

July 2, 2014

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DISTRICT COURT 21-3-01  
SCHUYLKILL COUNTY  
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2012 TO DECEMBER 31, 2013

Receipts:

Department of Transportation		
Title 75 Fines	\$	92,848
Motor Carrier Road Tax Fines		150
Overweight Fines		1,092
Commercial Driver Fines		2,000
Child Restraint Fines		625
Department of Revenue Court Costs		79,418
Crime Victims' Compensation Bureau Costs		14,914
Crime Commission Costs/Victim Witness Services Costs		10,668
Domestic Violence Costs		3,774
Department of Agriculture Fines		1,225
Emergency Medical Service Fines		25,977
CAT/MCARE Fund Surcharges		80,550
Judicial Computer System Fees		33,652
Access to Justice Fees		9,841
Criminal Justice Enhancement Account Fees		3,228
Judicial Computer Project Surcharges		14,728
Constable Service Surcharges		4,536
Miscellaneous State Fines and Costs		<u>20,272</u>
 Total receipts (Note 2)		 399,498
 Disbursements to Commonwealth (Note 3)		 <u>(399,498)</u>
 Balance due Commonwealth (District Court) per settled reports (Note 4)		 -
 Examination adjustments		 <u>-</u>
 Adjusted balance due Commonwealth (District Court) for the period January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2013	 \$	 <u><u>-</u></u>

Notes to the Statement of Receipts and Disbursements are an integral part of this report.

DISTRICT COURT 21-3-01  
SCHUYLKILL COUNTY  
NOTES TO THE STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2012 TO DECEMBER 31, 2013

1. Criteria

The Statement of Receipts and Disbursements provides a summary of receipts and disbursements by category. The categories and the amounts of fines, costs, fees, and surcharges assessed are based on Pennsylvania laws and regulations.

The Statement was prepared in accordance with reporting requirements prescribed by the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue. Under this method, only the Commonwealth portion of cash receipts and disbursements are presented, revenues are recognized when received, and expenditures are recognized when paid.

2. Receipts

Receipts are comprised of fines, costs, fees, and surcharges collected on behalf of the Commonwealth. These fines, costs, fees, and surcharges represent collections made on traffic, non-traffic, civil, and criminal cases filed with the District Court.

3. Disbursements

Total disbursements are comprised as follows:

District Court checks issued to:

Department of Revenue	\$ 399,498
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4. Balance Due Commonwealth (District Court) For The Period January 1, 2012 To December 31, 2013

This balance reflects the summary of monthly transmittal reports as settled by the Department of Revenue.

5. Magisterial District Judge Serving During Examination Period

David A. Plachko served at District Court 21-3-01 for the period January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2013.

DISTRICT COURT 21-3-01  
SCHUYLKILL COUNTY  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2012 TO DECEMBER 31, 2013

**Finding No. 1 - Escrow Monies Not Always Disbursed Timely - Recurring**

We cited the issue of escrow monies not always disbursed timely in our prior two examination reports, with the most recent for the period January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2011. Our current examination found that the office did not correct this issue.

Once again, our examination of the undisbursed funds report indicated that escrow funds collected from June 1, 2010 to May 30, 2013, totaling \$2,419.60, were not disbursed as of December 31, 2013.

The district court's bank account is essentially an escrow account on behalf of the Commonwealth and other participating parties. The court collects bail, security for motor vehicle trials, and other funds that must be held in escrow until disposition of the case. Once a case has been disposed, funds held in escrow should be transferred to the appropriate account or disbursed immediately.

This condition existed because the district court failed to review the undisbursed funds report on a monthly basis and take appropriate action as recommended in our prior two examination reports.

Good internal accounting controls require that funds be disbursed timely. The failure to follow this procedure could result in monies not being paid to whom they are due.

Without a good system of internal control over funds received by the office, the possibility of funds being lost or misappropriated increases significantly.

**Recommendation**

We strongly recommend that the district court review the undisbursed funds report on a monthly basis and take appropriate action and disburse funds to whom they are due.

**Management's Response**

No formal response was offered at this time.

**Auditor's Conclusion**

This is a recurring finding. It is imperative that the district court take all steps necessary to comply with our recommendations. During our next examination, we will determine if the office complied with our recommendations.

DISTRICT COURT 21-3-01  
SCHUYLKILL COUNTY  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2012 TO DECEMBER 31, 2013

**Finding No. 2 - Inadequate Arrest Warrant And DL-38 Procedures - Recurring**

We cited the district court for inadequate arrest warrant and DL-38 procedures in the prior two examination reports, with the most recent for the period January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2011. Our current examination found that the office did not correct this issue.

Warrants and Requests For Suspension Of Operating Privileges (DL-38s) are used to enforce the collection of monies on traffic and non-traffic cases in which defendants failed to make payments when required. A Warrant of Arrest (AOPC 417) is used to authorize an official to arrest a defendant, to collect fines and costs from the defendant after a disposition, or to collect collateral for a trial. If the defendant does not respond within ten days to a citation or summons, a Warrant of Arrest may be issued. A Request for Suspension of Driving Privileges for Failure to Respond to a Citation or Summons or Pay Fines and Costs Imposed (AOPC 638A) is used to notify the defendant in writing that his/her license will be suspended if he/she fails to respond to the traffic citation or summons. A DL-38 cannot be issued for a parking violation.

During our testing of warrant procedures, we noted that warrant procedures established by the *Magisterial District Judge Automated Office Clerical Procedures Manual* (Manual) were not always followed. The Magisterial District Judge did not consistently issue warrants when required. We tested 20 instances in which a warrant was required to be issued. Our testing disclosed that 12 were not issued timely and 3 were not issued at all. The time of issuance ranged from 84 days to 401 days.

In addition, of 14 warrants required to be returned or recalled, 6 were not returned or recalled, and 2 were not returned timely. The time of issuance to the time of return ranged from 221 days to 361 days.

Furthermore, we tested 11 instances in which a DL-38 was required to be issued. Our testing disclosed that 9 were not issued timely and 2 were not issued at all. The time of issuance ranged from 87 days to 397 days.

The Manual establishes the uniform written internal control policies and procedures for all district courts.

**Warrant Issuance Procedures:** The Manual states that on October 1, 1998, new warrant procedures took effect for summary cases. Amendments were made to Pa.R.Crim.P. Rules 430, 431, 454, 455, 456, 460, 461, and 462. To comply with the new changes, the Notice of Impending Warrant (AOPC A418) was created with the purpose of informing the defendant that failure to pay the amount due or to appear for a Payment Determination Hearing will result in the issuance of an arrest warrant. The defendant is also informed that his/her response must be made within ten days of the date of the notice.

DISTRICT COURT 21-3-01  
SCHUYLKILL COUNTY  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2012 TO DECEMBER 31, 2013

**Finding No. 2 - Inadequate Arrest Warrant And DL-38 Procedures - Recurring (Continued)**

According to Pa.R.Crim.P. Rule 430, a Notice of Impending Warrant may be issued in a post-disposition summary case for any of the following reasons:

- A guilty disposition is recorded and no payment is made or a time payment schedule is not created.
- A guilty disposition is recorded and a previously deposited collateral payment, when applied, does not pay the case balance in full.
- A guilty disposition is recorded and the defendant defaults on a time payment schedule.

According to Pa.R.Crim.P. 430, a warrant SHALL be issued in a summary case for any of the following reasons (a Notice of Impending Warrant is not necessary for the following):

- The defendant has failed to respond to a citation or summons that was served either personally or by certified mail, return receipt requested.
- The citation or summons is returned undeliverable.
- The Magisterial District Judge has reasonable grounds to believe that the defendant will not obey a summons.

**Warrant Return Procedures:** The Manual states that the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) recommends that those in possession of arrest warrants should be notified to return warrants that have not been served. For summary traffic and non-traffic cases, outstanding warrants should be returned to the Magisterial District Judge's office within 60 days of issuance. Returned warrants can either be recorded in the Magisterial District Judge System (MDJS) as unserved, if the defendant is unable to be located; or they can be recalled for reissue, if the server has not exhausted all means of finding the defendant.

**DL-38 Procedures:** The Manual states that once a citation is given to the defendant or a summons is issued, the defendant has ten days to respond. If on the eleventh day, the defendant has not responded, 75 Pa.C.S.A. §1533 requires that the defendant be notified that he/she has fifteen days from the date of notice to respond to the citation/summons before his/her license is suspended. In accordance with Section 1533 of the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code, the defendant has 15 days to respond to the defendant's copy of the DL-38. If the defendant does not respond by the fifteenth day, the Magisterial District Judge's office shall notify the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation by issuing the appropriate License Suspension Request (AOPC 638B,D,E).

DISTRICT COURT 21-3-01  
SCHUYLKILL COUNTY  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2012 TO DECEMBER 31, 2013

**Finding No. 2 - Inadequate Arrest Warrant And DL-38 Procedures - Recurring (Continued)**

In addition, 75 Pa.C.S.A. §1533 also requires a post-disposition DL-38 (AOPC 638B/E) be issued if the defendant neglects to pay fines and costs imposed at the time of disposition, or fails to make a scheduled time payment.

The failure to follow warrant and DL-38 procedures could result in uncollected fines and unpunished offenders. Additionally, the risk is increased for funds to be lost or misappropriated.

This condition existed because the district court failed to review the tickler reports for warrants and DL-38s daily as recommended in our two prior examination reports. Adherence to the uniform internal control policies and procedures, as set forth in the Manual, would have ensured that there were adequate internal controls over warrants and DL-38s.

Recommendations

We strongly recommend that the district court review the tickler reports for warrants and DL-38s daily and take appropriate action as recommended by the Manual. We further recommend that the court review warrant control reports and notify police or other officials to return warrants that are unserved for 60 days for summary traffic and non-traffic cases as recommended by the Manual.

Management's Response

No formal response was offered at this time.

Auditor's Conclusion

This is a recurring finding. It is imperative that the district court take all steps necessary to comply with our recommendations. During our next examination, we will determine if the office complied with our recommendations.

DISTRICT COURT 21-3-01  
SCHUYLKILLCOUNTY  
SUMMARY OF PRIOR EXAMINATION RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2012 TO DECEMBER 31, 2013

Summary Of Prior Examination Recommendations

During our prior examination, we recommended:

- That the office review the undisbursed funds report on a monthly basis and take appropriate action and disburse funds to who they are due.
- That the office review the tickler reports for warrants and DL-38s daily and take appropriate action as recommended by the Manual.
- That the office establish and implement a procedure whereby outstanding checks are reviewed monthly to determine if there are any long outstanding checks.

During our current examination, we noted that the office complied with our third bulleted recommendation. However, the office did not comply with our first and second bulleted recommendations. Please see the current year findings for additional information.

DISTRICT COURT 21-3-01  
SCHUYLKILL COUNTY  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2012 TO DECEMBER 31, 2013

This report was initially distributed to:

The Honorable Eileen H. McNulty  
Secretary  
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue

The Honorable Thomas B. Darr  
Court Administrator of Pennsylvania  
Supreme Court of Pennsylvania  
Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts

The Honorable David A. Plachko	Magisterial District Judge
The Honorable Frank J. Staudenmeier	Chairperson of the Board of Commissioners
The Honorable Christy Joy	Controller
Ms. Lois A. Wallauer	District Court Administrator

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at [www.PaAuditor.gov](http://www.PaAuditor.gov) Media questions about the report can be directed to the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 229 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: [news@PaAuditor.gov](mailto:news@PaAuditor.gov)