

**MINUTES**  
**BENCH BAR COMMITTEE**  
Monday, May 4, 2026  
By C. Edward S. Mitchell, Chairman

**Attendance**

Participants were: Judge Linhardt, Judge Tira, and Judge Gardner, Brad Hillman, Jeana Longo, Tom Marshall, Ed Mitchell, Melody Protasio, Nicole Spring, Adrienne Stahl, and LLA Executive Director Michele Frey

Method: the meeting was conducted in person at the LLA Office.

**Old Business**

Staffing in the Public Defender's Office and the District Attorney's Office was discussed. The Public Defender's Office is now fully staffed. The District Attorney's Office remains understaffed.

The backlog in criminal cases continues. Attempts are being made to move cases more quickly. Waiver of formal arraignments will not be permitted. Attorneys and parties must appear in order to dispose of guilty pleas and assign cases to trial track or non-trial track. Status conferences are being held to force discussion with the goal of helping attorneys identify cases for earlier resolution. Trials are going well. The criminal court trials are constant throughout the year.

The implementation of overnight detention between 10:00 p.m. and 8:30 a.m. remains a work in progress. This program would have persons charged with crimes during nighttime hours held in detention until 8:30 the following morning at which time arraignments would be conducted.

The study concerning the feasibility of merging the adult probation office and juvenile probation office is continuing.

Motions court is now being scheduled two times per month, when possible.

**New Business**

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in court documents was discussed. Some courts are requiring certifications by attorneys that validity of all citations generated by AI have been verified. Lycoming County has no such rule. The PA Supreme Court has created an AI committee. There is no attorney client privilege for materials communicated with an AI producer.

The requirement that law firms be totally owned by attorneys was discussed. Management Services Organization's (MSO's) are being used by some large law firms. MSOs are attempting to change the rules on law firm ownership to permit them to be owned partially by non-lawyers. Possible amendments to PBA and ABA Rules of Professional Conduct 5.4 are being considered.

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court is issuing guidelines for treatment court.

In Family Court, there have been recent changes in support guidelines. There is also legislation introduced to create a presumption of joint (50/50) custody for minor children.

There was also a discussion of the costs of ADR and the impact of the necessity to pay those costs in connection with termination of ADRs. The costs for an average DUI ADR are \$2,225 to \$2,750.

There was also discussion about the delays in decisions for approval of applications for treatment court.

In anticipation of the meeting, letters were sent to all LLA Committee Chairpersons requesting any item they think should be discussed. No replies were received.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:55 p.m.

The next meeting will be August 3, 2026 at noon in the LLA Office.

Respectfully submitted,

C. Edward S. Mitchell  
Chairman