

**CLERK & COMPTROLLER
PALM BEACH COUNTY
CRIMINAL COURT SERVICES
COURT BONDS PROCESSING**



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**Division of Inspector General
Audit Services Unit**

June 6, 2013



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The Honorable Sharon R. Bock, Esq.
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We conducted an audit of the Criminal Court bonds processes.

Our objectives were to evaluate the overall effectiveness and efficiency of Criminal Court bond processes and related internal controls as well as verify compliance with pertinent laws, regulations, administrative orders and policies.

Our review was neither designed nor intended to be a detailed study of every process, procedure, transaction or system in each area. Accordingly, the observations and recommendations included in this report are not all-inclusive.

The review identified various control weaknesses and opportunities to strengthen the Criminal Court bond processes to help ensure compliance with Florida Statutes and Fifteenth Circuit Administrative Orders that govern bond processes. For example, research and reporting practices of unclaimed bonds required improvement. Bond closure and discharge practices for criminal cases closed in the prior Banner Court system required strengthening. Enhanced monitoring and processing of surety bonds would help ensure bond forfeitures were consistently handled properly. In total, the report contains six observations and fifteen recommendations.

We appreciated the cooperation of management and staff during the course of this review.

Respectfully submitted,

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Introduction

Background

The Clerk's Criminal Court Services handles various bonds including cash and paper (surety) bonds and in much smaller numbers, supersedeas cash and supersedeas surety bonds. Appearance bonds are used to guarantee the appearance of defendants at court ordered hearings, which may be posted as cash or surety bonds. Supersedeas bonds are posted to stay judgments of lower courts while appeal cases are established and heard.

The majority of the bonds recorded in the Clerk's Showcase court management system were transferred in from the prior Banner Courts system. In the Banner Courts system, "blanket" bonds were used in some cases – applying one bond to multiple charges for the same defendant. Showcase conforms to Florida Statute (FS 903.02(4)), which requires a separate bond for each charge. The conversion to Showcase required posting those "blanket" bonds multiple times to satisfy the requirement. Over 900 of the 33,902 bond deposits recorded in Showcase as of October 17, 2012 were multiples of existing bonds resulting from this conversion approach. Debit entries for these converted bonds also include multiple entries.

Bond processing is regulated by Florida Statutes and Administrative Orders of the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit. Surety bonds are presented to the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBSO) by licensed and registered bond agents, and are then forwarded by interoffice mail to the Clerk's Criminal Court bond clerks in the Main Courthouse. Clerks enter the surety bond information (e.g., bond power number, defendant's name, bond agency, and bond amount) into Showcase.

Cash bonds are presented to PBSO by defendants or other individuals willing to deposit cash to guarantee the defendant's appearance for hearings. PBSO deposits the cash in its bank and electronically transfers the money to the Clerk's bank account, with supporting bond documentation forwarded to the bond clerks. Clerks enter the cash bond information (bond number, defendant's name, depositor's name, and bond amount) into Showcase and prepare receipts for the deposits received from PBSO.

After data entry into Showcase, bond documentation is distributed to the appropriate criminal court for further processing as part of their normal duties involving case proceedings.

Criminal Court Services track the number of bonds entered into Showcase using the Management Operating System (MOS) weekly reports. On average, approximately 370 bonds are entered into the system weekly. Volume information for 2010 through 2012 reflected in the MOS reports is provided below.

Calendar Year	Total Bonds Entered	Average Weekly Bonds
2010	18,398	354
2011	21,608	408
2012	18,285	359

The Criminal Court bond processing functions are, in part, performed centrally in Circuit Criminal by three clerks with specific experience in bond processing. These clerks are supervised by a Circuit Criminal Courts supervisor who also has responsibility for eleven data entry clerk positions. Additional bond related activities resulting from case processing actions are performed by clerks in the Main Courthouse, branch courts, and the Clerk’s Gun Club office as part of their normal work processes.

Objectives, Scope and Methodology

The Clerk’s Audit Services Unit of the Division of Inspector General conducted an audit of criminal court bonds processing, including compliance with key statutory and regulatory requirements.

The objectives of this audit were to obtain an understanding of the bond processes, evaluate the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the processes, determine if existing internal controls adequately mitigate the risks, and verify compliance with pertinent Florida Statutes and Administrative Orders (AOs) of the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit as well as established policies.

More specifically, the scope included reviews of the following processes: bond entry into Showcase upon presentment from the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office (PBSO) and

reconciliation with funds deposited, bond agents and their licensure, bond discharge and offset of any unpaid fines and fees, bond forfeiture, and bond refunds. The scope excluded court bonds processed in Civil Court Services and Legal Records Services.

In order to meet these objectives, we conducted interviews, reviewed departmental processes, performed a risk assessment of the areas under review, evaluated the internal control environment, and conducted sample testing of internal controls and transactions. Testing performed covered the period from January 1, 2011 through October 29, 2012. We performed other procedures that were deemed necessary under the circumstances.

Management responses received and included in this audit report have not been subject to any verification or review procedures.

Conclusion

The Clerk's Audit Services Unit identified some operating and control weaknesses and opportunities to strengthen the Criminal Court bonds processes. These improvements are required to ensure ongoing compliance with Florida Statutes and Fifteenth Circuit Administrative Orders that govern bond processes.

Specifically, research and reporting practices of unclaimed bonds required improvement to ensure bond balances were accurately advertised and reported on the Clerk's website. For criminal cases closed in the prior Banner Court system, before conversion to the Showcase system in February 2012, bond closure and discharge practices required strengthening to ensure remaining open cash bonds were reviewed and discharged. Testing of surety bonds indicated that monitoring and processing practices required strengthening to ensure bond forfeitures were consistently handled properly. Certain Showcase court bond procedures require enhancement. Florida Statutes require bond agents to register with the Clerk's and Sheriff's offices before issuing bonds, necessitating further efforts by the Clerk's Office to verify and monitor the registrations of bond agents. Opportunities exist to enhance bond processing efficiencies within the supervisory approval process and coordination with the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBSO).

Review Team:

Alan Bray, Deputy Inspector General & Audit Manager
Michael Bodle, Senior Internal Auditor

Observations & Recommendations

The audit was neither designed nor intended to be a detailed study of every relevant system, procedure or transaction. Accordingly, the observations and recommendations presented in this report may not be all-inclusive of areas where improvement may be needed.

1. Unclaimed bond balance research and reporting required improvement.

Florida Statute 116.21 requires the Clerk's office to advertise unclaimed bonds annually in July if such funds have been held by the Clerk since January 1st of the preceding year. If no claim is made on or before September 1st following the advertisement in July, the balances are forfeited and deposited into the fine and forfeiture fund (per Florida Statute 142.01) maintained by the Clerk's office. The audit disclosed that 2.1% of the bond balances (44 of 2,079 listed) were inaccurately advertised in the Daily Business Review (DBR) and reported on the Clerk's website in July 2012.

The Circuit Criminal bond clerks use an Information Technology (IT) extraction of bond balance data to determine which bond balances should be included in the annual DBR advertisement. The extract dated May 18, 2012, representing the first year it was taken from Showcase, listed 3,182 bonds with unclaimed balances of \$703,587 that were believed to have met the criteria for advertising. The bond clerk review of this listing eliminated 1,103 items totaling \$218,031, largely due to applying bond balances to outstanding fees and to a lesser extent due to processing refunds requested during the review period.

We reviewed the remaining 2,079 unclaimed bonds totaling \$485,556, which were reported to Clerk Communications for DBR advertisement and included on the Clerk's public website. Our review identified 44 (2.1%) bond balances were incorrectly reported, as detailed below.

- Thirty three of the listings totaling \$28,969 were duplicates of other valid bond listings.

- Five listings totaling \$1,800 had zero unclaimed bond balances according to the docket history in Showcase, and should have been removed.
- Three listings totaling \$720 represented bonds for defendants who had outstanding fees totaling \$1,520 due on the related case or other cases. These bond balances should have been collected rather than included in the report.
- Three bond listings reported the balance available was zero. Our review of the related case files identified actual unclaimed bond balances of \$1,000, \$3,000 and \$1,000.

We noted that the current process only provided a brief window of time for clerks to review and verify unclaimed bond balances, from creation of the report by IT on May 18, 2012 until required publication in July 2012. Clerks were required to review electronic case files in Showcase and in some cases the predecessor Banner Courts files and/or hard copy case files. These efforts resulted in successfully identifying 1,103 bond entries that were not eligible for publication.

Circuit Criminal Services initiated a monthly report in September 2012 of bonds closed, which is provided to bond clerks for review before posting to the Clerk's public website. This practice should spread the research workload more equitably throughout the year. It also allows clerks to identify bond balances that can be applied to outstanding fees for the defendants to whom they apply, potentially further reducing the volume of unclaimed bonds to be researched during the annual advertisement process. Florida Statutes (FS 903.286) and AO 4.205 require withholding from bond balances sufficient funds to pay any court fees, costs, and penalties owed by the defendant on behalf of whom the bond was posted.

Recommendations:

- A. Proactively collect outstanding fees, costs, and penalties from bond balances when discharged rather than waiting until the annual review of unclaimed bond balances to do so.
- B. Ensure the accuracy of the unclaimed bond balances prior to publishing the annual listing in the Daily Business Review.
- C. Determine whether the bond balances on the three cases herein should have reported the actual balances (\$1,000, \$3,000 and \$1,000) when advertised in the DBR as unclaimed in July 2012. If so, recoup and re-advertise the bond balances to give the defendants and/or depositors the opportunity to reclaim the funds

Management Responses:

- A. Agree. For clarification, our case maintenance system vendor, CourtView, has confirmed that the multiple Ledger Debit records for the Cash Bonds were created because some Cash Bonds were linked to multiple charges. A Debit record was created for each Bond-Charge combination. CourtView has advised that this is a result of conversion and will not be a problem as part of Showcase functionality moving forward for those cases that are created and processed in Showcase. However, currently they are working on a fix to avoid this issue on any converted cases processed in the future.

CourtView is reviewing the cases and working to correct all the cases that were incorrectly debited to ensure that the financials are correct.

- As the Unclaimed Cash Bond Report for 2013 is vetted, any duplicate bonds, or deposit records will be sent to CourtView for a correction.
- Any duplicates that appear in the PeopleSoft records that were forfeited will be corrected by Accounting.
- CourtView to create a script to zero out the duplicate debit records and add a comment to the case in Showcase case management system.

Prior to the Showcase implementation, paid out of bond tasks were handled by the Central Circuit Criminal bond staff. Following the Showcase implementation, a new process was established that required clerks at each location/department to process any pay out of bonds in their respective areas. Fees and costs not paid out of bond at the time of the closing disposition can be attributed to the transition of tasks to the different locations. The new processing method created some challenges for staff that were not previously required to perform the task.

Target Completion Date: Completed

- B. Agree. We are currently reviewing the Unclaimed Cash Bond Report monthly to ensure the accuracy of the data well in advance of the advertisement date. Additionally, we plan to revisit the entire report well before the publication date. This review allows us to research and update cases, process any pay out of bonds and establish bond balances before the publishing deadline. The additional time to work on the report should assist in improving the overall accuracy.

Target Completion Date: Completed

- C. Agree. The three cases that were advertised with a "0" balances will be re-advertised with the correct balances in the July 2013 advertisement.

Target Completion Date: 7/31/13

2. Bond closure and discharge practices require improvement.

Cases closed in the prior Banner Court system required manual bond closure and discharge due to system limitations. In the current environment, the Showcase court system automatically closes bonds when the related cases are closed. The review disclosed that for cases closed previously in Banner Court that were transferred into Showcase during system conversion, some bonds remained open until refund requests were received from the payors. Bond closure and discharge practices required improvement to ensure compliance with Florida Statutes and the Fifteenth Circuit Administrative Orders.

The combination of the following two directives allows discharge of bonds without further specific order of the court.

- FS 903.11 states that the court shall order the bond canceled (discharged) if the case is resolved by: an adjudication of guilt or innocence, an acquittal, or a withholding of an adjudication of guilt.
- Fifteen Circuit Administrative Order (AO) 4.205 orders that the Clerk shall within ten business days discharge the bond (either cash or surety) in any case where:
 - a qualifying event listed in FS 903.31 has occurred,
 - a nolle prosequi has been filed by the State Attorney's Office,
 - a "no file" has been filed by the State Attorney's Office, or
 - a dismissal of charges has been entered by the court.

We limited our testing to cases that were closed prior to transfer into Showcase. We extracted all cash bonds reported in Showcase as open as of October 29, 2012, which totaled 2,414 bonds. We identified 131 open cash bonds identified as issued in 2011. Testing disclosed that 12 of 36 bonds were not closed even though elements of the criteria defined in Florida Statute and Fifteenth Circuit AO (stated above) were met. In two of these cases, fees owed on the cases were sent to a collections agency and additional late fees were incurred. Further, two of the cases included court event forms that provided court instructions to apply the bonds to the fees, but these actions were not taken.

We further extracted all cash bonds reported in Showcase as issued in 2009 and 2010, which totaled 146 bonds. We tested 24 of the 146 bonds and determined that 17 of 24

bonds were not closed even though the criteria stated above (per FS and AO) were met. In some of these cases, fees owed were sent to a collections agency that could have been paid out of the bond had it been properly closed.

We discussed these test results with Circuit Criminal Services management and the need to more thoroughly research the open bonds in Showcase, identify the bonds that should be closed, and implement the appropriate corrective action. Management stated that they had requested an extract from IT of all criminal cases that have been closed in Showcase but for which bonds remained open.

Recommendations:

- A. Ensure that bonds are discharged within ten business days according to AO 4.205 without waiting for further court order or other actions before doing so.
- B. Enhance training and awareness for clerks processing criminal cases to improve compliance with court directed orders to apply bonds to pending fines and fees.
- C. Obtain from IT the listing of all closed criminal cases with open bonds and take action to close and apply any bond balances as appropriate.

Management Responses:

- A. Agree. In Showcase, the bond is automatically discharged when the case is disposed or closed. This functionality was not available in the Banner system. While the issue has been resolved with the new case management system, we may continue see cases that were converted from Banner to Showcase that require manual discharge of the bond. We have taken a proactive approach to this matter by utilizing the Cash Bond Discharge report and the Closed/Disposed Cases with Open Bonds report as a means to verify this issue as well as ensure the system is functioning as expected.

Target Completion Date: Completed

- B. Agree. We are instituting a training plan that includes having a representative from each area/branch review the bond process with those clerks who currently possess a specialty in handling bonds at the Central office. This will create a subject matter expert for bonds processing in each location.

Target Completion Date: 7/31/13

C. Agree. A one-time Closed/Disposed Cases with Open Bonds report was requested from IT listing all converted cases for all court types that are disposed/closed with an open bond. This report should provide the data necessary to clean up any converted cases. There are a total of 903 cases that we are currently reviewing and processing bonds as needed. We have also requested a weekly report with the same parameters that will be utilized as an audit tool after we have completed the cleanup of the initial report. We currently are running a monthly cash bond discharge report which allows us to close bonds and process any pay out of bonds as needed. The one-time clean up should be completed by June 30, 2013.

Target Completion Date: 6/30/13

3. Bond forfeiture processes and handling required strengthening.

Florida Statutes define processing and timeliness requirements for handling the forfeiture of cash and surety bonds, which were previously provided by or on behalf of defendants. The primary objectives of the court are to ensure that proper communication is provided to bond depositors prior to forfeiting their right for reimbursement and that any related fines and fees are paid from the bond amounts prior to any refund payments. Our review identified various observations and opportunities for improvement to ensure bond forfeitures were processed in accordance with Florida Statutes (FS) and established procedures. Testing of surety bonds indicated that monitoring and processing practices required strengthening to ensure bond forfeitures were consistently handled in accordance with legal and procedural requirements.

Based on limited sampling of bond balances outstanding, we identified 50 bond deposits from the Bond Registry table within Showcase with balances that were reflected as surety bonds. Such deposits are not processed unless actual payment is made to the Clerk for the value of the surety bond. We performed detailed testing of 21 of the 50 bonds to evaluate forfeiture processing and timeliness, which disclosed the following observations.

- FS 903.26 requires the Clerk to issue a notice of bond forfeiture within five days of the date of the court's decision. While notices were issued timely in all 21 cases reviewed, the notices lacked the signature and certification stamp of the Clerk's designee in 12 cases. The designee's name was typed on the notice in 10 of 12 cases though one had the typed name of the judge in the case rather than the clerk.

- FS 903.27 requires succeeding actions to be taken after a notice of surety bond forfeiture is issued. Specifically, if the value of the forfeited surety bond is not paid within 60 days, the Clerk is to issue a judgment against the surety for the amount of the bond forfeited as well as notify the Department of Financial Services and the surety company's home office within 10 days of its issuance. Overall, 12 of the 21 cases reviewed had or should have had judgments issued.
 - In 4 of 10 cases with judgments issued, the Clerk issued the judgments later than 60 days after the date of the notice of forfeiture (ranging from four to twelve days late).
 - In the two remaining cases, the Clerk failed to issue judgments though the forfeitures were satisfied by payment from the bond agencies after 60 days (three and seven days late).

- FS 903.27 further states that if the judgment against the surety remains unpaid for 35 days, the Clerk is to issue a certificate of non-satisfaction of judgment.
 - In 3 of 10 cases in which the forfeitures remained unpaid more than 35 days after the date of the judgment, the Clerk did not issue a certificate of non-satisfaction of judgment although the surety ultimately paid the forfeiture amounts late (4 to 21 days late).
 - In 1 of 10 cases, the certificate of non-satisfaction was issued four days beyond the 35-day requirement.

- FS 903.27 also states that the Clerk will immediately prepare and record a satisfaction of judgment when the judgment has been satisfied by the bond agent or record the order to vacate the judgment when entered by the court. Circuit Criminal bond clerks prepare satisfactions of judgment though both types of resolutions are identically worded. There were ten cases in which satisfaction of judgments were issued.
 - In 2 of 10 cases, judgments were issued but later vacated by court order. The Clerk erroneously recorded on the satisfactions of judgment that the value of the bond had been paid by the surety. In one of these two cases, the bond agent filed a motion after the fact to vacate the judgment and request remission of the amount paid, though there is no evidence that the value of the surety was actually paid to the Clerk's office.

Our testing of the 21 cases indicated that the satisfactions of judgment issued by the Circuit Criminal bond clerks consistently referred to FS 938.27(5) as the relevant authority. This statute

covers collection of costs of prosecution when authorized on any conviction. We believe the correct statute that covers motions to set aside judgments is FS 903.27.

Additional testing identified two other instances in which the clerk also indicated on a satisfaction of judgment that payment was received from the surety agency; instead, the bond forfeitures were vacated by the court.

- In one case, a satisfaction of judgment was issued on February 20, 2012, indicating that \$5,000 was received as satisfaction of the judgment. We found no cash receipt docketed in the case. Instead, an order was signed by the judge on February 17, 2012 vacating the judgment and discharging the surety.
- In the second case, a satisfaction indicated that \$350 was received but we found no receipt docketed. A Court Event Form (CEF) in the case file stated "SB # 3600109110B - Judgment is vacated"; the number written on the CEF is the power number for the bond involved. The bond agent in this case requested remission as if the amount had been paid.

Recommendations:

- A. Ensure that clerks timely and fully comply with all steps in the forfeiture process as specified in Florida Statutes.
- B. Emphasize importance of training throughout the bond forfeiture, judgment, and satisfaction processes.
- C. Revise the satisfaction of judgment template by requiring clerks to clearly designate whether the judgment is being satisfied by payment or by an order of the court setting aside the judgment and to ensure the correct Florida Statute is cited as authority for issuance of the satisfaction.

Management Responses:

- A. Agree. Procedures were written instructing that reports used for the forfeiture processing are generated at 9:00 AM on a daily basis, and that all Judgments and/or Clerk Certificates are processed immediately after the reports are verified for accuracy. Any stay received from legal counsel will be documented on the case.
Target Completion Date: 06/30/13
- B. Agreed. See Training plan outlined in Management Response #2.B.
Target Completion Date: 7/31/13

C. Agree. The satisfaction of judgment is generated and recorded when a payment has been received. When an order vacates the judgment, the clerk must have the order recorded. Separate procedures have been created for the satisfaction process: one which addresses when a payment of forfeiture is made, and the other on processing the order when received. Our satisfaction of judgment word merge document in Showcase has been corrected to accurately reflect the appropriate Florida Statute 903.27.

Target Completion Date: Completed

4. Written policies and procedures require enhancement.

The court bonds processes have various policies and procedures to guide the Clerk's employees. Certain procedures require enhancement to further support employees. Best practices in internal controls indicate that written procedures help ensure accuracy and consistency in the quality of work.

For example, bond procedures training guides in the new Showcase environment had been created and managed by Court Operations management. The guides did not assign roles and responsibilities, and did not identify who was responsible for creating, reviewing, approving and updating the procedures.

Recommendation:

A. Update procedures for the gaps highlighted above to ensure staff and Clerk management maintain sufficient awareness and skills to comply with related laws and regulations as well as internal Clerk policies.

Management Response:

A. Agree. Circuit Criminal is in the process of creating departmental procedure that expands upon the Showcase Guides to provide step-by-step instructions at the departmental level, which specifically outline the processing in our office (e.g., staging areas, assigned duties).

We are also in the process of relocating all Banner procedures into a separate file to avoid any confusion on the part of the clerks or others. A new procedure form has been created that includes the date the procedure written, the author, name and date if edited, and the name of the approver.

Target Completion Date: 6/30/13

5. Bond agent registrations are not verified and tracked by the Clerk's Office.

Florida Statutes require bond agents to register with the Clerk's and Sheriff's offices before issuing bonds. The Clerk's Office did not have a practice in place of verifying that bond agents were currently registered when bonds were presented or recording the necessary monitoring information in a usable format.

Florida Statute 648.42 requires that bond agents: register with the Clerk and Sheriff's offices before issuing bail bonds, renew their registrations every two years (no later than April 1 of every odd-numbered year), and file a certified copy of their renewed power of attorney. Florida Statute 648.25 defines a bond agent as an individual or a person, not the agency granting a power of attorney to issue bonds on its behalf.

In Palm Beach County, bond agents present their power of attorney and Florida license (issued by the Department of Financial Services) to the Circuit Civil intake clerks. The powers of attorney are registered by the clerks. Documentation is forwarded to Clerk's Recording staff as official records. Bond agents present certified copies of the recorded power of attorney to the Sheriff's office to document their authorization to write surety bonds in Palm Beach County.

Showcase has a bond agent table but the name and address of the bond agency for which the issuing bond agent works is captured. The bond agent's name is not recorded or verified against a list of registered bond agents. The Clerk's office relies on the Sheriff's office to validate that the issuing bond agent is properly and timely registered.

The Florida Court Clerks & Comptrollers (FCCC) has established best practices that suggest Clerk's offices should verify agent registrations are current (not rely upon Sheriff's offices) and establish a database system to track active agents.

As of October 19, 2012 year to date, a total of 12,571 surety bonds were issued. Our review of registrations for six issuing agents identified one licensed agent whose power of attorney registration with the Clerk's office had expired on April 1, 2011. This agent issued five bonds in 2012 in Palm Beach County. The agent's license with the Florida State Department of Financial Services is valid until June 30, 2014.

It should be noted that by the time a surety is received by the Clerk's office, it has been accepted by the Sheriff's office and the defendant has been released on the strength of the surety bond. As a result, the Clerk's office must accept the surety as presented. By initiating a database of currently registered bond agents and checking agents who issue sureties against that database, the Clerk's office could coordinate with the Sheriff's office to prevent agents not currently registered from issuing multiple sureties.

Recommendations:

- A. Maintain a database of registered bond agents as recommended by FCCC best practices. Consider utilizing Showcase to record the individual agent information instead of the agency data.
- B. Establish a process to verify that agents who issue bonds are authorized to do so by verifying that their registrations are current.
- C. Establish process to notify the Sheriff's office when a presented surety bond has been issued by an agent not currently registered in Palm Beach County so that appropriate actions can be taken.

Management Responses:

- A. Agree in part and disagree in part. Though we agree that maintaining a database of registered bond agents would be helpful, the FCCC has not initiated any action to implement this suggestion as the Best Practices Guide suggests. However, a spreadsheet of registered bond agents was developed in March 2013 and is maintained by the Circuit Civil department and placed on a common drive. Bond data entry clerks are required to review the spreadsheet prior to entering the bondsman data into Showcase. With regards to Showcase, the system has a field "Contact" in the Bond Agent table that allows for a name to be entered. The field only allows one name per agency. Accordingly, functionally recommended does not exist.

Target Completion Date: Completed

B. Agree. The Circuit Civil department recently created the bond registration listing that is stored on the "S" drive. The list will be reviewed by the criminal data entry clerks with bond specialty prior to entering a bond in the case management system to confirm that the agent is registered in Palm Beach County.

Target Completion Date: Completed

C. Agree. Upon review of the listing of registered bond agents created by Circuit Civil, the data entry with bond specialty shall notify the supervisor of any bonds presented by the Sheriff's Office of those bondsmen who are not registered. If bond agent is not registered, the Clerk shall notify the jail by e-mail of the bond agent's registration status. Bond will still be processed in the case management system as per Florida Statute 903.16., which states "The Clerk shall accept money or bonds remitted by the sheriff." This process was incorporated into the "Entering Surety Bonds" procedure.

Target Completion Date: Completed

6. Efficiency opportunities exist while approving and processing bonds.

Opportunities exist to enhance bond processing efficiencies within the supervisory approval process and coordination with the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBSO).

The following efficiency opportunities were noted.

- Showcase requires the Bond Unit clerk to obtain supervisor approval if the bond refund exceeds \$75. After the clerk initiates the bond refund in Showcase, the supervisor must enter the refund reason and approval at the clerk's workstation. An automated queue is not available to enable the supervisor to approve pending refunds when time permits at their own work station. We observed the process on one day and noted that the supervisor was called to the clerk's work station seven times to approve each refund. We noted the pending/backlog workload report indicated that bond refund backlogs existed in 23 of 52 weeks in calendar year 2011, peaking at 52 pending refunds during the week of July 22, 2011.
- As many as ten sheets of additional paperwork are transmitted with bonds by PBSO, which are not used in any manner and are discarded by the Clerk's Bond Unit. The extra paperwork is stapled to the each individual bond, requiring the clerk to review the documents to assess their relevance and to discard unrequired documents.

Recommendations:

- A. Determine whether supervisory approval of bonds can be simplified by designing an automated queue within Showcase or grouping the transactions together if manual processing is required.
- B. Determine the bond documentation requirements and coordinate efforts with PBSO to limit submissions of paperwork to only what is needed to record the bond activity.

Management Responses:

- A. According our vendor, CourtView, the functionality does not exist at this time and cannot be modified to an automated process due to the cashiering of pay out of bonds. The \$75 limit is a setting that could be adjusted, but that would affect all cashier transactions in Showcase. The system cannot differentiate a payment of bond refund from any other overage on the Cashier Screen. Also, increasing the \$75 limit would not significantly impact productivity as the bond refund amounts vary from hundreds to thousands of dollars.

Target Completion Date: Completed

- B. Management met with PBSO and advised of them that there was no need to submit the additional documentation to our office. Management has no further control regarding this matter.

Target Completion Date: Completed