



## **Michael B. Forte, Chief Judge, Rhode Island Family Court**

Judge Forte was appointed Chief of the Rhode Island Family Court in 2016 by Governor Gina Raimondo. Before that he served as a Family Court Associate Justice for nearly 30 years.

Since becoming Chief, Judge Forte has initiated several programs designed to transform Family Court into a treatment-focused, rehabilitative court aimed at families as a whole including the establishment of a Women’s Services Department, the “Safe and Secure Baby Program” meant to identify, closely monitor and provide services for at risk babies who come into the care of the court, the “Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement” (*APPLA*) calendar which assesses case plans and provides readiness services to assist youths coming of age experience a safe transition out of state care, the “Voluntary Extension of Care” (*VEC*) calendar which allows children who are aging out of foster care at age 18, to continue to receive care and placement services until age 21, an enhanced mental health care clinic designed to provide juveniles coming into the court system with early access to evaluation and treatment, and an expanded mediation department serving both domestic relations litigants and child welfare litigants.

More recently, Chief Judge Forte has piloted Family Court through the restrictions imposed by the health crises in a safe and efficient manner while maximizing the public’s continued access to justice using remote technology, virtual hearings and other remarkable innovations including the establishment of a “Virtual Clerk’s Office”—much of which will remain in some form post-pandemic.