



MINNESOTA  
JUDICIAL  
BRANCH



2004

# Annual Report

**Rising Caseloads**

**Increasing Efficiency**

**Innovative Strategies**

# Table of Contents

A Message from the Chief Justice	2
Serving the Public Despite Increasing Caseloads	3
Children's Justice	8
Access to Justice	11
Technology	13
Public Trust and Confidence	15
Facts and Figures	19
Supreme Court	20
Court of Appeals	22
District Courts	24

*On the cover:*

*The Minnesota Supreme Court took questions from Harding High School students following an oral argument at the school. The court travels to high schools twice a year to hear a real case in an effort to open the doors of the Judicial Branch to the public.*

# A Message From the Chief Justice

Minnesota's judges and court personnel strive to provide the public with a Judicial Branch that is accessible, fair, independent and well managed. Committed to the long-range vision the court articulated in 2001, we continue to focus our work on four strategic areas: children's justice, access to justice, technology and public trust and confidence. In 2004, we achieved many milestones in these areas, including:



*Kathleen A. Blatz,  
Chief Justice*

- Participation by all 87 counties in the Children's Justice Initiative, the country's first collaborative, statewide reform of the child protection system.
- Closing the gap in providing adequate representation for abused and neglected children through the statewide Guardian ad Litem program despite budget challenges and other resource constraints. In three years, this coverage has increased from less than 60 percent to 97 percent.
- Continuing the transformation of the Judicial Branch with the transfer of the First and Third judicial districts from county to state funding.
- Implementing the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS) in 12 additional counties, for a total of 15 counties statewide. MNCIS links court records and improves information sharing among courts and law enforcement agencies.
- Continuing to collect self-reported race data and examining whether and where bias exists for people of color in the justice system.

As in the past, we do not intend to rest on these accomplishments. In addition to addressing the four strategic priorities, the judiciary will continue to search for ways to improve services for the public and more effectively deal with the problems that bring people to court.

Our overriding responsibility and focus remains the constitutionally prescribed mission to resolve disputes brought to our courts. Despite the state budget challenges in 2004, Minnesota's judiciary handled more than 2 million cases that, as a whole, reflect the changes and challenges of our society. Minnesota's judges and court employees care deeply about these issues and work hard to administer justice fairly and efficiently.

All of these accomplishments and efforts build upon our strategic priorities for the future. We will continue to strive for a justice system that wisely uses resources and meets the highest standards of fairness and accountability.

# Serving the Public Despite Increasing Caseloads

On average, each Minnesota judge, along with court staff, handles approximately 8,000 cases a year. In its 2001 report, the Legislative Auditor's office found that Minnesota's trial judges have caseloads that are 49 percent greater than those in comparable states. To keep pace, the Judicial Branch continues to search for alternative solutions to resolve disputes efficiently and effectively in ways that better serve the public.

## Creating Specialized Courts for Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Problems

### Statewide

To increase public safety, improve life outcomes and save taxpayer dollars, some of Minnesota's district courts have established specialized drug courts. Using the coercive power of the courts with appropriate treatment and monitoring services, drug courts have been found to reduce recidivism and assist offenders in finding the help they need to achieve sobriety and to get their lives back on track.

To put the need for drug courts in perspective, methamphetamine alone was responsible for public costs in Minnesota of \$130 million in 2004. The courts, law enforcement, prosecution, corrections, the environment, treatment and child welfare were the public systems affected by these cost.

In 2004, 13 drug courts, including groundbreaking juvenile drug courts, were operating in Minnesota. They include adult programs in Hennepin, Ramsey, Dodge, Stearns, St. Louis, Wabasha and Blue Earth counties, and juvenile programs in Ramsey, Dodge, Dakota and Chisago counties. Ramsey County and Koochiching County also began operating the first DWI/Drug Courts in Minnesota, which are dedicated to changing the behavior of alcohol and drug dependent offenders arrested for DWI. Hennepin and Chisago counties are planning for juvenile programs, and Ramsey, Stearns, Dakota and Anoka counties are exploring a family dependency drug court model in child protection and termination of parental rights cases.

A state chemical health team was trained to support the expansion of drug courts and help develop alcohol and other drug policy. The team includes representatives from the courts, corrections, public safety and health departments, public defenders, county attorneys, state legislators and others.

---

### Case Filings (1995-2004)

Criminal – up 47%

Family – up 23%

Civil – up 16%

---

For the first time, Minnesota judges participated in a training program at Hazelden alcohol and drug rehabilitation centers in order to increase understanding of addiction and treatment.

### Ramsey County

In its third year, Ramsey County's Juvenile Substance Abuse Court's graduates have shown a recidivism rate of about one-fifth the levels of other juvenile criminal defendants. The court has also led to longer sobriety for graduates.

Ramsey County's Adult Substance Abuse Court continues its work started in October 2002. The court integrates chemical health services with the criminal justice system and uses best practices such as comprehensive assessment, gender-specific programming and skill-building programs. Once involved in the one- to two-year program, offenders must make regular court appearances, undergo substance abuse training and random urinalysis testing, abide by the law, find a job or work toward a high school diploma, and pay restitution and program fees.

### Hennepin County

Hennepin County received a \$300,000 award from the U.S. Department of Justice to enhance its current adult drug court with gender-specific treatment and special services for severe and chronically mentally ill participants.

### Dakota County

Dakota County juvenile drug court is unique in using a minimum of resources and employing an innovative "chemical dependency wraparound" (CD wrap) approach to transition young people from juvenile detention.

The CD wrap method brings together treatment providers, probation, family and school representatives to develop effective and consistent case plans for children that offer them the necessary services to succeed in their recovery. Its success is evident when looking at the reduction in chemical use of juveniles who have participated in the drug court compared to the reduction in chemical use of juveniles participating in supervised probation in-treatment programs in 2001. Eleven of the 22 juveniles who have participated in drug court currently show no chemical use, whereas only two of the 47 juveniles on supervised probation saw a reduction in chemical use. The drug court strategy also has been found to reduce out-of-home placements.

### St. Louis County

Starting in fiscal year 2004-2005, the St. Louis County Drug Court received three years of federal funding in the amount of \$450,000. This has allowed the program to move from a pilot to a full-functioning drug court. The first study of the two-year-old program, led by a University of Minnesota sociology professor and conducted in December 2004, determined that the program is doing what it set out to do: increase public



*Members of the community attended an open house celebrating the completion of renovations to the Clay County Courthouse in Moorhead, MN, including a new technologically advanced courtroom.*

safety; reduce illicit drug use by non-violent, drug-addicted offenders; restore participants to law-abiding productivity; and lessen the financial impact on society. One participant tried 13 different treatment programs before entering the St. Louis County Drug Court program. She has been sober for almost a year.

### Stearns County

Launched in July 2002, the Stearns County Drug Court has had 74 total participants and 20 graduates thus far. Representative of this group is the first graduate of the program who credits the Stearns County Drug Court with giving her the tools to deal with her drug abuse by treating her addiction rather than treating her as a criminal. She's been sober for more than two and a half years. In 2004, a three-year \$450,000 federal grant was awarded to provide support for this promising program.

### Dodge County

The Dodge County Drug Court, also called Dodge's Alternative To Addiction (D.A.T.A.), celebrated its one-year anniversary on June 17, 2004, in Mantorville. More than 100 friends, family members and invited guests filled the courtroom in support of 14 participants. One participant shared that he had 11 months of sobriety after using chemicals for 30 years and that after 30 years of being out of school, he is in the process of completing his GED. He said that the drug court team believed in him and taught him how to believe that he could accomplish what he set out to do.

A Mantorville couple addicted to methamphetamines are set to become two of the program's first four graduates in April following 18 months of sobriety. These defendants believe they would be dead or in prison and their children in foster care without drug court.

To date, the 23 drug court participants have a combined total of over 6,500 days of sobriety.

## Finding Alternatives for Those with Mental Health Problems

From 2002-2003, mentally ill defendants were responsible for millions of dollars in jail, court, probation, social services and hospital costs for Hennepin County. Approximately 50 percent of chronic offenders are mentally ill, brain damaged or developmentally disabled.

In response to this problem, Hennepin County's Community Court began operating a specialized calendar devoted to handling the cases of defendants with mental health issues.

Since its inception in May 2003, more than 300 persons charged with misdemeanors in Hennepin County have been screened for possible inclusion in the mental health court program. Referrals are made from jail staff, other judges and defense

---

Half of chronic offenders are mentally ill, brain damaged or developmentally disabled.

---

attorneys who observe defendant behaviors that lead them to believe there might be a mental health problem.

In response to a referral, a mental health screener from Hennepin County Children, Family and Adult Services interviews the defendant, conducts criminal and mental health system background checks and makes a recommendation to the court in the form of a case plan. For example, the case plan may require that the defendant remain on medication if it has been prescribed, stay employed or attend therapy sessions.

Once the case is resolved there are a number of follow-up court appearances to make sure that there is compliance. If there is a lack of compliance, appropriate sanctions are imposed. The coercive power of the Mental Health Court and closer supervision helps defendants avoid the revolving door of criminal justice.



*On May 19, John Kuderka from the Bureau of Mediation Services conducted training on Strategies for Settling Grievances. Sixteen court administrators and supervisors from the Fifth Judicial District attended the training in Windom, Minn.*

### **Implementing Early Case Management Strategies in Family Court Cases**

Among the most contentious and difficult problems dealt with in the judiciary are family court cases. In 2004, Hennepin County launched a new fast track system to assist parties resolve their disputes more quickly and with less acrimony and cost. Within seven days of the filing of a divorce case, a meeting is held among the parties, their lawyers and the judicial officer assigned to the case to plan the orderly conduct of the litigation. At the conference, initial property division and support allocations are made, child custody is temporarily resolved and deadlines are established. This process has reduced delays by over 30 percent. Based on the remarkable results in Hennepin County, the Supreme Court issued an order in 2004 authorizing pilots in other courts.

A key component of Hennepin County's aggressive family case management is the innovative Early Neutral Evaluation (ENE) program for promptly and confidentially resolving custody and visitation disputes. Soon after filing the case, litigants are paired with a mixed gender ENE team that determines how best to resolve the case in a manner that advances the children's best interests. The team then shares its views with the parties and attempts to broker a settlement. The ENE process has helped parties reach total custody and visitation settlements in approximately 65 percent of the cases, with another 20 percent achieving partial settlements.

The entire process is designed to be completed within seven weeks of the case filing and takes an average of six to eight hours of time. In contrast to this new program, traditional full custody studies require an average of 45 hours of labor, take a minimum of four months to complete, and result in settlements only 25 percent of the time. The ENE program works smarter. It cuts delay, cost and acrimony for the parties and, most importantly, improves the process for children by resolving custody issues as quickly as possible.

---

**Early Evaluation shortens delays, cuts costs, reduces acrimony and resolves custody issues faster.**

---

## Mediating Disputes for Families in Need

Stearns County District Court, along with the county's volunteer attorney program, continued the volunteer family mediation program to provide free mediation to low-income families who have disputes over parent-child visits or are seeking simplified divorces.

## Resolving Violations, Giving Back to the Community

Nearly 1,500 participants provided a total of 4,500 hours of community service, such as cleaning debris and litter, removing graffiti, weeding and other landscaping efforts, during a Hennepin County Court restorative justice event in September. Participants completed community service at 81 sites to resolve outstanding traffic charges and misdemeanor traffic warrants. The initiative enabled participants to make positive changes in their lives, restore the neighborhoods in which they live and fulfill their obligations to the criminal justice system.



*Nearly 1,500 participants attended the Hennepin County Court Restorative Justice Event 2004.*

## Helping Homeless Veterans

In August, Hennepin and Stearns County District Courts participated in Minnesota StandDown, an annual event that helps homeless veterans put their lives back on track. The courts provided veterans an opportunity to appear before a judge and, with the assistance of other justice agencies, fulfill their obligations to the criminal justice system. Veterans who participate are generally sentenced to minimal fines and community service, or their cases are dismissed.



# Children's Justice

Strong links exist between childhood maltreatment, juvenile delinquency and adult crime. In 2004, the Minnesota Judicial Branch, in partnership with the Department of Human Services, expanded its efforts to break the cycle by reforming the child protection system statewide.

## Achieving Results

---

**CJI is the nation's first statewide effort to reform the child protection system.**

---

By the end of 2004, all 87 Minnesota counties were participating in the country's first statewide effort to reform child protection. Launched in 2001 with 12 pilot counties, the Children's Justice Initiative (CJI) is improving child protection case processing and providing permanent homes for maltreated children through reunification with their birth family or placement with another family in a more timely manner.

Lead judges in all 87 Minnesota counties are allied with members from juvenile court, social services departments, county attorneys' and public defenders' offices, court administration, Guardian ad Litem programs, and others involved in child abuse and neglect cases.

In 2004, CJI accomplished improvements in Minnesota that are yielding measurable results for the first time, including:

- Decreased the average length of time children of all ages were in out-of-home placement by 13 percent, from 320 days in 2002 to 280 days in 2004.
- Decreased the average length of time children under eight years of age were in out-of-home placement by 14 percent, from 287 days in 2002 to 247 days in 2004.
- Increased the percent of cases for which one judge handled the case from filing through permanent disposition from 37 percent in 2002 to 44 percent in 2004.
- Decreased the average number of days between adjudication and the first in-court review hearing by 20 percent, from 88 days in 2002 to 70 days in 2004.

Other 2004 improvements include:

- Published a practice guide for use by local jurisdictions when reviewing their current processing of child protection cases in court and in implementing practice changes to facilitate better outcomes for children and families.
- Began the development and monitoring of core standards and measures for key outcomes in the court handling of child protection cases.
- Expanded the use of a structured pre-adjudication settlement process to facilitate early decisions about cases and early service delivery to children and families.

Developed innovative support services, made possible by a grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, that help prevent foster care placement and achieve early permanency for children. Some of these services are delivered to the parent and child in the home and include counseling or paraprofessional help with appropriate discipline and other household management issues that impact the parent's ability to provide basic care and safety for the child. Grant dollars also provide funds for relatives to provide supports, such as transportation, to the parent and child. "Shared," or "whole family," foster care, also funded by the grant, puts parents and children together in a foster home setting that provides safety for the children while the parents learn parenting skills from the "foster parent."

Published a Judges' Juvenile Court Benchbook that sets forth the elements of a high-quality judicial process at each stage of a child protection proceeding.

## Advocating for Children

Minnesota's Guardian ad Litem (GAL) program, which provides advocates who represent the best interests of abused and neglected children in court, continued to implement its multi-year improvement plan in 2004.

Following the transfer of the GAL system to state funding in fiscal year 2002, and thanks to the commitment of judges, court staff and the Legislature, Minnesota increased from 60 to 97 percent its GAL representation of abused and neglected children. Coverage is expected to reach 100 percent by the end of 2005, as resources and budget allow. The court continues to build a GAL system that is state-funded and supervised with consistent training and oversight; administered by the judicial district; and operated at the local level.

A Supreme Court "Listening Session on Children in the Minnesota Courts" was held in August to hear from individuals, groups and agencies dealing with children and family issues.

Participants were asked to share their ideas, observations and concerns on any topic relating to children in the courts.

In addition to written submissions, 33 speakers made brief presentations before a panel of 10 judicial branch representatives. The results will be compiled by staff, reviewed by the panel and conveyed to courts and other interested parties for use in planning future improvement strategies.



*Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz speaks at a Children's Justice Initiative (CJI) kickoff meeting in January 2004. Attendees included more than 100 representatives from the 60 remaining counties being phased in to the initiative at that time. Also present (seated from L to R at the table behind Chief Justice Blatz) were Judge Leonard Edwards, California Juvenile Court Judge and recent past president of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges; Judge Wally Senyk, CJI Project Chair and Seventh District Court Judge in Otter Tail County; and Kevin Goodno, Commissioner of Minnesota's Department of Human Services.*

---

**Minnesota now provides GAL service to 97% of abused and neglected children.**

---

---

The number of child support hearings has increased by 78% since 1998, with no increase in funding.

---

### **Improving the Child Support Program**

The expedited child support program, which became state-funded in 1999, continues to outperform the federal requirements for how quickly child support cases are moved through the system.

In 2004, an average of 97 percent of cases statewide were completed in six months or less (the federal requirement is 75 percent) and over 99 percent of cases were completed in one year or less (the federal requirement is 90 percent). This is particularly significant given that the number of child support hearings has increased by a remarkable 78 percent even though funding has not increased since 1998. To keep pace with the increased workload, best practices were developed which have promoted cost savings while still delivering quality and efficient services to the public.

# Access to Justice

In order to keep pace with caseload increases and other demands beyond the control of the judiciary, the Minnesota Judicial Branch continues to find ways to ensure access to, and the delivery of, justice to all Minnesotans.

## Continuing a Fundamental Transformation

The administration of the Minnesota Judicial Branch is undergoing a fundamental transformation as funding responsibility of the trial courts is shifted from the 87 counties to the state.

Court operations in all 55 counties located in the Fifth, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Judicial Districts transferred to state funding in 2000. In July 2001, the Guardian ad Litem and court interpreter programs became state-funded. In 2003, the Second and Fourth Judicial Districts made the transition. The First and Third Judicial Districts moved to state funding in July 2004, and the Sixth and Tenth Judicial Districts will follow on July 1, 2005.

This transition in funding is about much more than who writes the checks for the judiciary. It is also a fundamental transformation of the judiciary as an organization--moving from 87 county-funded and county-focused courts to one unified branch of state government.

As we undergo this transformation, the judicial branch is striving to achieve the goals of state funding:

- Equitable levels of judicial service across the state;
- Budgetary accountability as a result of the consolidation of policy-making and funding responsibility at one level of government--the state;
- Administrative unity; and
- Enhanced programmatic effectiveness and cost efficiency.

## Expanding Court Interpreter Training

Last year, more than 19,000 court proceedings in Minnesota were conducted in languages other than English. In 2004, 2,500 Hmong immigrants settled in the Twin Cities. Court interpreter needs are being driven by the change in our state's population. One indicator is the number of non-English speaking students, which has grown 53 percent since 1997. Minneapolis has the largest Somali population in the country. In the last five years, Hennepin County, alone, has used interpreters in 145 languages. And this is not just a metropolitan area issue. For example, in Worthington, a city of 10,000 people, one out of every four court hearings is conducted in a language other than English.

Steps were taken in 2004 to expand our ability to serve the growing non-English speaking population. Minnesota's Court



*Dakota County District Court Judge Ed Lynch talks with parents and students about the Minnesota Judicial Branch at a forum for minority families hosted by Patrick Henry High School in Minneapolis.*

---

**More than 19,000 court proceedings were conducted in other languages in 2004.**

---

Interpreter Program offered a new Hmong certification examination, resulting in a new certified Hmong interpreter available to the courts. Minnesota also took the lead nationally in developing a pilot Somali certification examination.

In an effort to learn about concerns and ideas, the Court Interpreter Program held a focus group meeting with attendees representing diverse perspectives on court interpreting. The group will continue to meet to increase communication between the court and its stakeholders.

### **Planning for Limited English Proficiency**

Limited English proficiency (LEP) plans were federally mandated to assure that services are made available for non-English-speaking and hearing-impaired people in the courts. In 2004, LEP plans were developed to ensure equal access to court services, and a process was implemented for creating and reviewing these plans each year in each court. All courts have now finalized plans, and they are available on the Judicial Branch Web site at [www.courts.state.mn.us](http://www.courts.state.mn.us).

### **The Hennepin County Court Self-Help Center**

An increasing number of self-represented litigants are struggling to navigate the complexity of the courts. The Hennepin County District Court Self-Help Center has succeeded in increasing the satisfaction of litigants who represent themselves in court, improving court processes and saving resources, according to a recent program evaluation.

The program's eight staff members help 26,000 litigants each year with forms and procedures; screen all family law motions so judges can conduct more meaningful hearings; and provide assistance for non-English-speakers. In addition, volunteer attorneys help litigants prepare for hearings, comply with court orders, file motions and answer legal questions.

Somalis trying to navigate the criminal justice system in Hennepin County now have more help available. In 2004, Hennepin County District Court began providing the Somali Justice Advocacy Center with free space in the court's self-help center. Somali volunteers help people fill out forms, answer questions about legal representation and interpreters and educate immigrants about constitutional rights.



*Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz presents the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners with a plaque recognizing the county's dedication to the delivery of justice by providing exceptional and secure facilities to the citizens of the county, the judges and staff.*

# Technology

Through the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS) and other technological improvements, the Minnesota Judicial Branch is collecting and tracking more accurate, complete and timely data. These improvements will give judges better information to make decisions. MNCIS aims to enhance the integration of state and local criminal justice information systems to better protect public safety, track offenders, share information and aggregate data.

## Implementing MNCIS

The Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS) is linking court records across the state and significantly improving the collection, storage, tracking and sharing of court information.

MNCIS has been implemented in 15 counties so far, as well as in the probate and mental health divisions of Hennepin and Ramsey counties. Nearly one million cases have been converted to the new system. By the end of the next biennium, all 87 counties in the state will use the system to link court records.

Data also will be made available to the Judicial Branch's criminal justice partners, with court records refreshed in near real-time.

## Improving Customer Service

Carver County has taken the first step toward making e-filing of criminal complaints available to prosecutors, with implementation scheduled for early 2005. The addition of this component will speed the exchange of data, save staff time and improve the consistency and accuracy of data.

## Saving Time With Electronic Courtrooms

Each of the 10 Judicial Districts has at least one electronic or paperless courtroom. Two examples were implemented in 2004 in Fillmore and Ramsey counties.

### Fillmore County

Fillmore County District Court transformed its courtroom into an "e-courtroom" in order to improve efficiency in the way evidence is presented during a trial. The upgrade cost less than \$100,000 and was included in Fillmore County's courthouse renovation.

The new technology includes inputs for various types of audio equipment; the ability to use white noise so bench conferences cannot be overheard in the courtroom; monitors in the jury box and other courtroom locations so that trial participants can easily see evidence while attorneys use an electronic arrow to point or highlight; computer screens at the judge's bench that allow the judge to control all of the electronic equipment; and closed-circuit television connecting the courtroom to the



*Citizens tour the new "electronic courtroom" in the Fillmore County Courthouse. Research has shown that equipment like that utilized in this courtroom can help speed up a trial by as much as 25 percent.*

---

**One million cases have now been converted to the MNCIS system.**

---

court administrator's office to track courtroom progress and alert law enforcement officers in an emergency.

An annotation monitor also was installed at the witness' station that allows a witness to clarify testimony by pointing at the screen, and assisted hearing equipment has been made available to ensure quality presentation of materials and save time by cutting down repeated clarifications. As a result of this technology, trials have been shortened by approximately 25 percent.

### **Ramsey County**

Ramsey County District Court continues to be a leader in courtroom technology innovations. The Ramsey County Law Enforcement Center provides a paperless courtroom through document imaging and data sharing systems among justice agencies.

In addition, the traffic violations bureau has worked with the St. Paul Police Department to develop a new citation writer system for use in the City of St. Paul for parking, traffic and misdemeanor criminal violations. This allows for the electronic entry of tickets by the police department, improving the accuracy and efficiency of ticket entry by staff. A Web site is also being created for improved access to information and credit card payments via the Internet.

---

**E-courtrooms have  
shortened trials by 25%.**

---

### **Offering Court Calendars with Interactive Video (ITV)**

ITV is widely used in Minnesota's courts to reduce judge and other participant travel time and cost. Recently, the Eighth Judicial District installed ITV equipment in 12 counties of the district, and progress is being made to complete installation in the final and 13th county. Installation, management and use of the equipment has been a collaboration among the court system, the host counties and other agencies. One example of its use is in the child support hearing process. A magistrate from St. Cloud may hold child support hearings in Big Stone, Stevens, Traverse and Wilkin counties from the Stearns County ITV studio, saving travel time for the magistrate and offering monthly child support calendars in smaller counties with less volume.

# Public Trust and Confidence

While most Minnesotans have confidence in the Minnesota Judicial Branch, the court system is concerned about the timeliness and cost of bringing cases to court and the judiciary's treatment of persons of color<sup>1</sup>. The court remains committed to working on these issues and educating citizens about the system and its challenges.

In 2004, Judicial Branch outreach programs included special events, judge visits to schools and civic groups, and thousands of student and adult visitors to the district courthouses across the state and the Minnesota Judicial Center in St. Paul to observe court and meet with judges

## Studying Racial Disparities

In an effort to identify where and how bias may occur in the judicial system, self-reported race data continues to be collected in district court statewide, including the racial composition of juries.

## Surveying Customer Satisfaction

Hennepin County District Court was the first urban court in the nation to define its performance measures and report them to the public. The court has applied the Malcolm Baldrige improvement strategies, which include promoting staff and judicial collaboration, identifying court user needs and redesigning court process.

In 2004, a report by the Trial Court Research and Improvement Consortium<sup>2</sup> concluded that the Hennepin County District Court self-help center provides a mature and effective service to litigants and is a useful model to the whole country.

The Conference of Chief Judges is developing performance measures for statewide application. Minnesota is expected to be one of the first state court systems in the country to adopt, with minor modification, court performance measures recommended by the National Center for State Courts.

## Keeping in Touch with the Community

Hennepin County's Community Court connects the community and the judiciary. Initially dealing only with misdemeanors, gross misdemeanors and property felonies from the Minneapolis Police Department's Third Precinct in south Minneapolis,



*St. Louis County District Court Judge Gary Pagliaccetti answers questions of grade school-age students at an open house celebrating Law Day.*

---

**Minnesota will be one of the first states to adopt national court performance standards.**

---

<sup>1</sup> Anderson, Niebuhr & Associates, Inc., 1999 *Minnesota Supreme Court Public Opinion of the Courts Study*, at 2

<sup>2</sup> Trial Court Research and Improvement Consortium, *Report on the Self Help Centers of the Fourth Judicial District Court of the State of Minnesota*, at 1 (2004)



Community Court has been expanded to include misdemeanors and gross misdemeanors from all of Minneapolis and property felonies from downtown. The court focuses on early settlement, restitution and sentencing alternatives such as ordering offenders to work squads. The county attorney, public defender and city attorney have designated personnel who are thoroughly knowledgeable about the system, offenders and the community. Community members are encouraged to attend, and court business and negotiations all take place in the courtroom to further open the process to the community.

The Second Judicial District has a similar community court which successfully focuses on liveability crimes in Ramsey County.

Grants received from the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Corrections fund the Kandiyohi County and the Yellow Medicine County Juvenile Circle Sentencing Program. The program recruits volunteers from the communities to work with juvenile offenders who have been referred to the program by the court after a guilty plea has been entered. The coordinator meets regularly with local prosecutors, defense attorneys, probation officers, court personnel, judges, and volunteers to coordinate efforts to best meet the goals of the program, as well as the needs of offenders, victims and communities.

Wright County District Court Judge Stephen M. Halsey launched a new 30-minute public affairs program with Quad Cities Community Television to provide residents of the Tenth Judicial District, including the cities of Anoka, Ramsey, Andover and Champlin, with in-depth discussion of the courts, including issues related to child protection, family law, chemical dependency, racial fairness, technology and access to justice.

---

**Ninth District judges are working with their tribal counterparts to share information and reduce conflicts.**

---

## **Reaching Out to Communities of Color**

The Court's Public Trust and Confidence Committee facilitated a program in May with members of the Asian community at Patrick Henry High School in north Minneapolis. In an effort to bridge the cultural gap, students and their families met with Minnesota judges and representatives from throughout the criminal justice system to discuss the impact of criminal justice issues on communities of color.

In an effort to enhance local relationships, Ninth District judges initiated contacts with their counterparts in the tribal courts, with the focus on sharing information, easing cross-jurisdictional conflict and opening lines of communication in order to address areas of mutual concern and interest.

The Tenth Judicial District appointed a race bias elimination team and conducted diversity training for court employees. Forms are also available for court customers to express any concerns regarding race and their court experience.

## Preparing Jurors for Service

The Sixth Judicial District created the slogan “It’s not fair, if you’re not there” as part of a program to improve juror diversity. The slogan has been so well received that the American Bar Association is planning to use it to educate the public about jury service nationwide.

A new juror orientation video and a juror handbook were produced for statewide use. The handbook includes rules, description of processes and a glossary for users.

## Highlighting Innovations

For the past five years, Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz has visited judicial districts to learn from the experiences of judges, court staff and stakeholders. These “court innovations tours” allow her to recognize court staff, increase public awareness of the judiciary’s challenges and highlight local court innovations. Tours include community events, meetings with local criminal justice partners and briefings describing new local justice initiatives. In 2004, the Chief Justice visited Minnesota’s Second Judicial District with Associate Justice Helen Meyer and the Sixth Judicial District with Associate Justice Sam Hanson.

## Mentoring the Next Generation

### Traveling Oral Arguments

In an effort to teach Minnesotans about the courts, the Supreme Court continued its tradition of holding oral arguments in schools across the state. Twice a year, the Court hears its oral arguments in schools and then opens the program to questions from students in attendance and watching via cable television. Attorneys from local bar associations volunteer to review case briefs and prepare students for oral arguments.

The Court visited Harding High School in Saint Paul in the spring and Cloquet High School in the fall of 2004. Nearly 3,600 students participated in the visits.

### Legal Expo

Nearly 700 Minnesota students and their teachers learned about the justice system from judges during the annual Legal Expo in Brooklyn Center. The presentations included information about juvenile crime and the juvenile justice system, the role of judges and the structure of the Judicial Branch. Students also participated in a “You Be the Judge” activity in which they ruled on mock cases.

### Law Day

Many efforts statewide recognized Law Day 2004. Law Day events included:

- The Dakota County law library coordinated book displays on equality with the Dakota County public libraries and collaborated with the local bar association to hold a

---

Chief Justice Blatz, Associate Justices Helen Meyer and Sam Hanson visited the Second and Sixth Judicial Districts.

---



*Ramsey County District Court Judge Gary Bastian speaks with students over lunch at Harding High School during a visit by the Minnesota Supreme Court.*



*Minnesota Court of Appeals Judge Wilhelmina Wright speaks to students during the annual Legal Expo program in Brooklyn Park.*

---

**New, easy-to-understand forms and help manual aid on guardianship and conservatorship.**

---

continuing legal education course about *Brown v. Board of Education*.

- ➔ The Goodhue County law library conducted a *Brown v. Board of Education* poster contest for high school students.
- ➔ Court administration in Kanabec County conducted a mock trial for local third-grade students.
- ➔ McLeod County local radio station KDUZ broadcast from the courthouse and conducted interviews with Court Administrator Bob Schmidt and representatives from court services.
- ➔ Roseau County Judge Donna Dixon and the court administrator's office hosted more than 200 local students in grades 2-4 who toured the courthouse and took part in a mock trial.
- ➔ The Duluth courts, Bar Association and volunteer attorney program sponsored a student art competition in honor of the anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.
- ➔ The Hibbing Courthouse hosted more than 80 kindergarten students who toured the building and jail and asked questions of Judge Mark Starr.
- ➔ The district court in Virginia presented a mock trial, with Cinderella as the plaintiff, for 120 fifth-grade students.

## **Dispensing with Legalese**

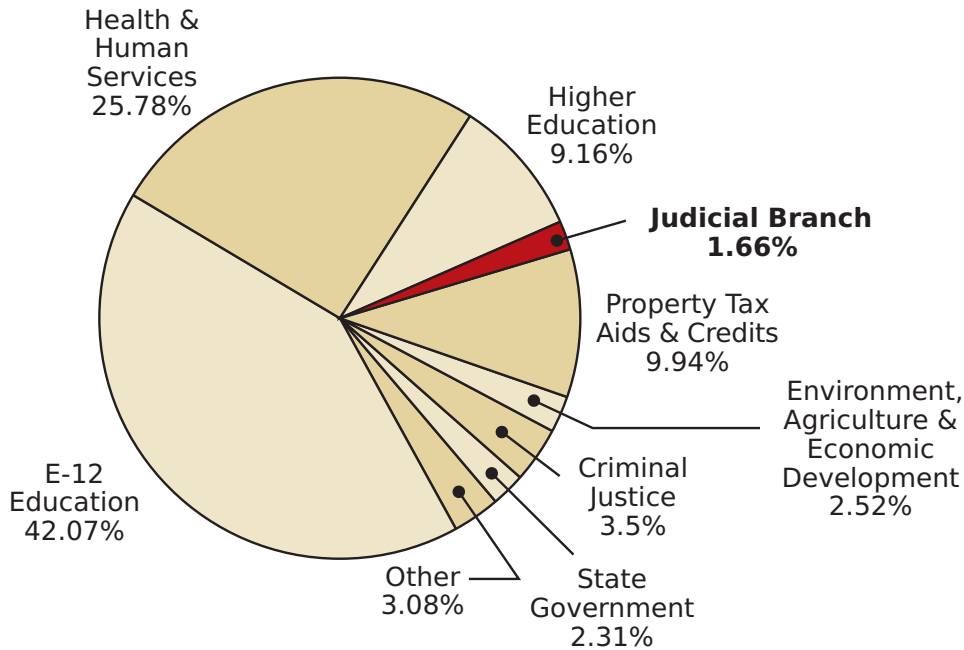
Additional efforts to address public trust and confidence in the judiciary included publication of new forms in plain language and an easy-to-understand manual for the public on the guardianship and conservatorship page of the Judicial Branch Web site, at [www.courts.state.mn.us](http://www.courts.state.mn.us).

## **Increasing Restitution for Victims**

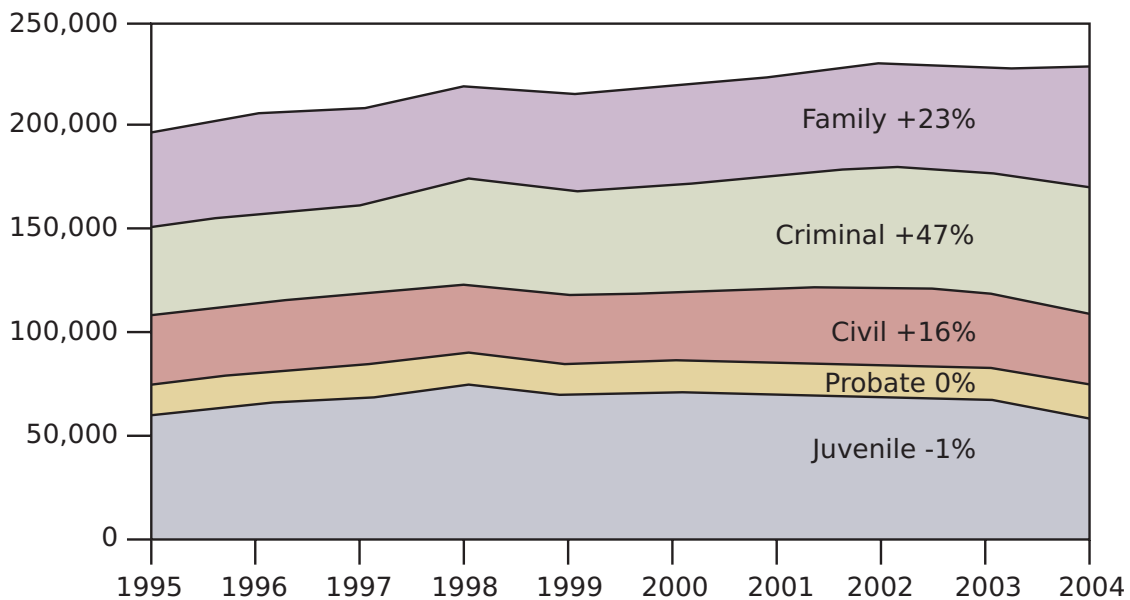
Dakota County District Court established a centralized department that monitors and collects fines, fees and restitution collection for gross misdemeanor and felony crimes. In addition to increasing accountability, it resulted in crime victims receiving their court-ordered restitution sooner. Revenue recapture, the seizure of tax refunds or rebates when a taxpayer owes the government court-imposed fines, fees, assessments, child support or tax obligations, continued to be a good collection tool for the courts. In 2004, for example, Dakota County District Court collected \$840,000 from tax returns.

# Facts and Figures

## Where the 2004-05 Biennium General Fund Dollar Goes



## Statewide Major Case Filings 1995-2004



# Supreme Court

Seven justices make up the Minnesota Supreme Court, the state’s court of last resort. The Court hears appeals from the Minnesota Court of Appeals, the Workers’ Compensation Court of Appeals and the Tax Court. Justices hear attorney and judge discipline matters and all first-degree murder conviction appeals from the district courts. Supreme Court Justices also oversee the administration of the Judicial Branch by serving as liaisons to the state’s 10 judicial districts, and to various boards and task forces that set policy and study justice system issues.

## Supreme Court Justices

### Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz

1998 - Present  
(Associate Justice 1996 – 1998)

### Associate Justice Alan Page

1993 – Present

### Associate Justice Paul Anderson

1994 – Present

### Associate Justice James Gilbert

1998 – August 2004

### Associate Justice Russell Anderson

1998 – Present

### Associate Justice Helen Meyer

2002 – Present

### Associate Justice Sam Hanson

2002 – Present

### Associate Justice G. Barry Anderson

October 2004 – Present

## Supreme Court Dispositions

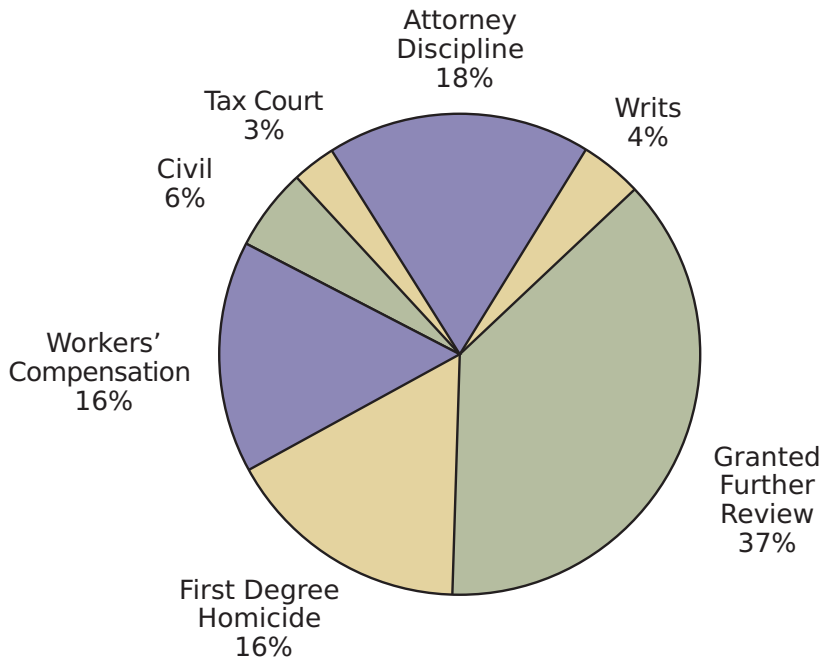
Disposition	2003	2004
Petition For Review Denied	530	597
Affirmed	73	68
Reversed	53	54
Mixed	38	10
Dismissed	24	32
Other	59	54
<b>Total Dispositions</b>	<b>777</b>	<b>815</b>



*Standing (l-r): Associate Justice Sam Hanson, Associate Justice Russell Anderson, Associate Justice Helen Meyer, Associate Justice G. Barry Anderson*

*Sitting (l-r): Associate Justice Alan Page, Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz, Associate Justice Paul Anderson*

## Supreme Court Filings 2004



## 2003 Supreme Court Filings

Workers' Compensation	34
Civil	13
Tax Court	5
Attorney Discipline	34
Writs	7
Granted Further Review	76
First Degree Homicide	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>205</b>

## 2004 Supreme Court Filings

Workers' Compensation	37
Civil	13
Tax Court	7
Attorney Discipline	42
Writs	9
Granted Further Review	87
First Degree Homicide	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>233</b>



*Members of the Minnesota Supreme Court, Hennepin County District Bench and others in the legal community participated in a reenactment on Peavey Plaza of the Brown v. Board of Education trial in August 2004.*

# Court of Appeals



*Standing (l-r): Judge Wilhelmina M. Wright, Judge David Minge, Judge Jill Flaskamp Halbrooks, Judge Bruce D. Willis, Judge James C. Harten, Judge Gordon W. Shumaker, Judge Terri J. Stoneburner, Judge Natalie E. Hudson, Christopher Dietzen*

*Sitting (l-r): Judge Roger M. Klaphake, Judge Thomas J. Kalitowski, Judge Harriet Lansing, Chief Judge Edward Toussaint, Judge R.A. "Jim" Randall, Judge Robert H. Schumacher, Judge Randolph W. Peterson*

The Minnesota Court of Appeals hears appeals from the state's district courts and other state agencies. The Court's 16 judges work in rotating three-judge panels and hear cases in St. Paul and across greater Minnesota. The Court strives to provide Minnesotans with impartial, clear and timely appellate decisions made according to law.

The Court remains a national model of efficient case processing and delay reduction. It has also become one of the more diverse appellate courts in the country, with nearly one-third of its judges being women and three judges of color.

## Court of Appeals Judges

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Chief Judge Edward Toussaint, Jr.</b><br>1995 – Present | <b>Judge Gordon Shumaker</b><br>1998 – Present          |
| <b>Judge Harriet Lansing</b><br>1983 – Present             | <b>Judge G. Barry Anderson</b><br>1998 – Oct. 2004      |
| <b>Judge R. A. "Jim" Randall</b><br>1984 – Present         | <b>Judge Jill Flaskamp Halbrooks</b><br>1998 – Present  |
| <b>Judge Thomas Kalitowski</b><br>1987 – Present           | <b>Judge Terri Stoneburner</b><br>2000 – Present        |
| <b>Judge Robert Schumacher</b><br>1987 – Present           | <b>Judge David Minge</b><br>2002 – Present              |
| <b>Judge Roger Klaphake</b><br>1989 – Present              | <b>Judge Natalie Hudson</b><br>2002 – Present           |
| <b>Judge Randolph Peterson</b><br>1990 – Present           | <b>Judge Wilhelmina Wright</b><br>2002 – Present        |
| <b>Judge James Harten</b><br>1992 – Present                | <b>Judge Christopher Dietzen</b><br>Dec. 2004 – Present |
| <b>Judge Bruce Willis</b><br>1995 – Present                |   |

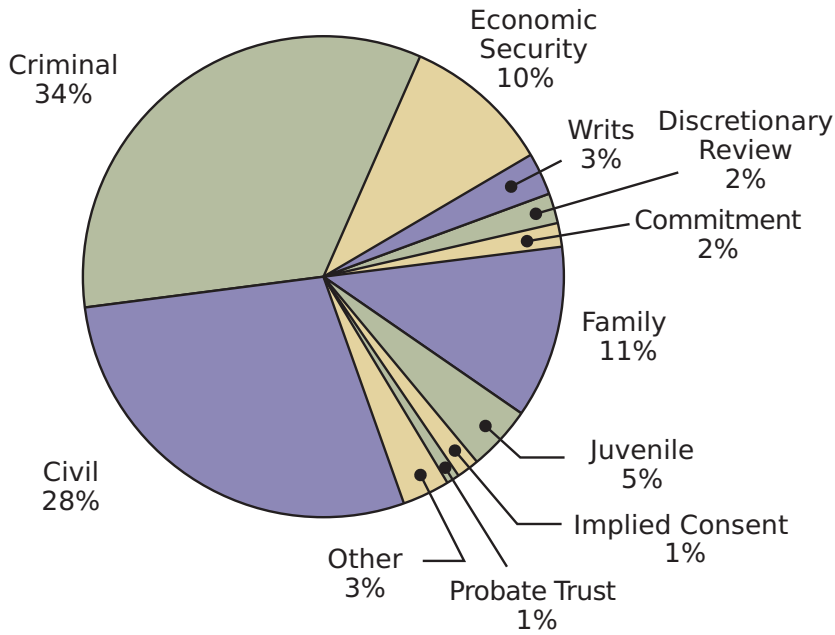
## Court of Appeals Dispositions

Disposition	2003	2004
Affirmed	1045	1050
Modified	28	24
Reversed	286	229
Mixed	165	183
Dismissed	549	561
Other	113	74
<b>Total Dispositions</b>	<b>2186</b>	<b>2121</b>



*After being sworn in, Minnesota Court of Appeals Judge Christopher Dietzen puts on his robe while surrounded by his family. Judge Dietzen was sworn in during a ceremony at the Landmark Center in December 2004.*

## Court of Appeals Case Filings 2004



*Minnesota Court of Appeals Judge David Minge swears in a member of the YMCA Youth in Government (YIG) "Kellogg House." Judge Minge participated in the YIG program as a high school student.*

### 2003 Court of Appeals Court Filings

Civil	670
Criminal	723
Economic Security	250
Writs	52
Disc. Review	44
Commitment	18
Family	299
Juvenile	118
Implied Consent	41
Probate Trust	40
Other	91
<b>Total</b>	<b>2346</b>

### 2004 Court of Appeals Court Filings

Civil	660
Criminal	789
Economic Security	237
Writs	71
Disc. Review	37
Commitment	39
Family	262
Juvenile	111
Implied Consent	26
Probate Trust	23
Other	75
<b>Total</b>	<b>2330</b>



## District Courts

The more than 2 million cases per year that are filed in Minnesota's Judicial Branch begin in the state's district courts. The 276 district court judges, divided amongst 10 judicial districts, handle a wide variety of case types.

### District Court Judges Who Left the Bench in 2004

- Stearns County District Court Judge Richard J. Ahles
- Washington County District Court Judge Mary E. Carlson
- Wright County District Court Judge Bruce R. Douglas
- Hennepin County District Court Judge Harvey C. Ginsberg
- Dakota County District Court Judge Duane R. Harves
- Dakota County District Court Judge Thomas R. Lacy
- Anoka County District Court Judge Lynn C. Olson
- St. Louis County District Court Judge Carol M. Person
- Polk County District Court Judge Richard C. Taylor

### New Judges in 2004

- Stearns County District Court Judge Kris Davick-Halfen
- St. Louis County District Court Judge Shaun R. Floerke
- Scott County District Court Judge Diane M. Hanson
- Dakota County District Court Judge David L. Knutson
- Dakota County District Court Judge Michael J. Mayer
- Dakota County District Court Judge Kathryn Davis Messerich
- Ramsey County District Court Judge Elena L. Ostby
- McLeod County District Court Judge Michael R. Savre
- St. Louis County District Court Judge Mark M. Starr
- Sherburne County District Court Judge Mary A. Yunker



*Governor Tim Pawlenty (R), Sixth Judicial District Court Judge Shaun Floerke (C) and his family pose for a photo in the Governor's Reception Room following the announcement of Judge Floerke's appointment to the St. Louis County District Court bench.*

# 2004 District Court Chief Judges



Judge John Smith



Judge David Sullivan



Judge Vicki Landwehr



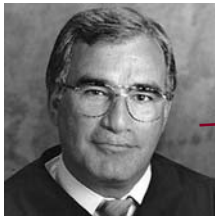
Judge Gary Schurrer



Judge Steven Drange



Judge Lucy Wieland



Judge Norbert Smith



Judge Gregg Johnson



Judge Renee Worke



Judge Richard Spicer

