

Annual Report 2020

MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH



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Letter from the Chief Justice

Dear fellow Minnesotan:

There is no question that 2020 was a difficult year in the history of our state's courts and the broader justice system in Minnesota.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch had to overcome many challenges during a global public health crisis in order to carry out our mission to ensure access to justice. Through the commitment, innovative spirit, and tremendous work of our judicial officers, staff, and justice partners, we kept the doors to justice open during the pandemic and built a stronger, more resilient, and customer-focused court system.

Whether through online hearings or in socially-distanced courtrooms, the people of Minnesota had a place to turn to resolve their disputes and protect their rights. We found new ways of helping litigants and supporting court users to ensure that all Minnesotans could still access their justice system. We each learned how to work and collaborate in this new remote world, and how to stay connected even when working apart. Some of what we accomplished during a year of transformation and growth will change the course of how justice is accessed and delivered in our state.

Our achievements are a credit to every single member of the Judicial Branch, and we could not be more grateful for their remarkable service over the past year.

While much of our attention in 2020 was focused on our pandemic response, we never stopped working to improve how we deliver justice to the people of Minnesota. Even during this time of crisis, we implemented new innovations and advanced our core strategic priorities. This included:

- Launching a new Examiner Resource Application and My Minnesota Juror mobile app.
- Advancing our goal to expand online access to public district court case documents.
- Approving a pilot project to increase access to civil legal representation for those underserved in our judicial system.
- Developing new resources aimed at minimizing the impact of implicit bias on court proceedings.

While we have not yet overcome all of the challenges we face due to the pandemic, the state of the judiciary is strong in Minnesota. I am proud of the accomplishments our judicial officers and staff achieved in 2020, and their ongoing commitment to deliver on our Constitutional mission.

Sincerely,

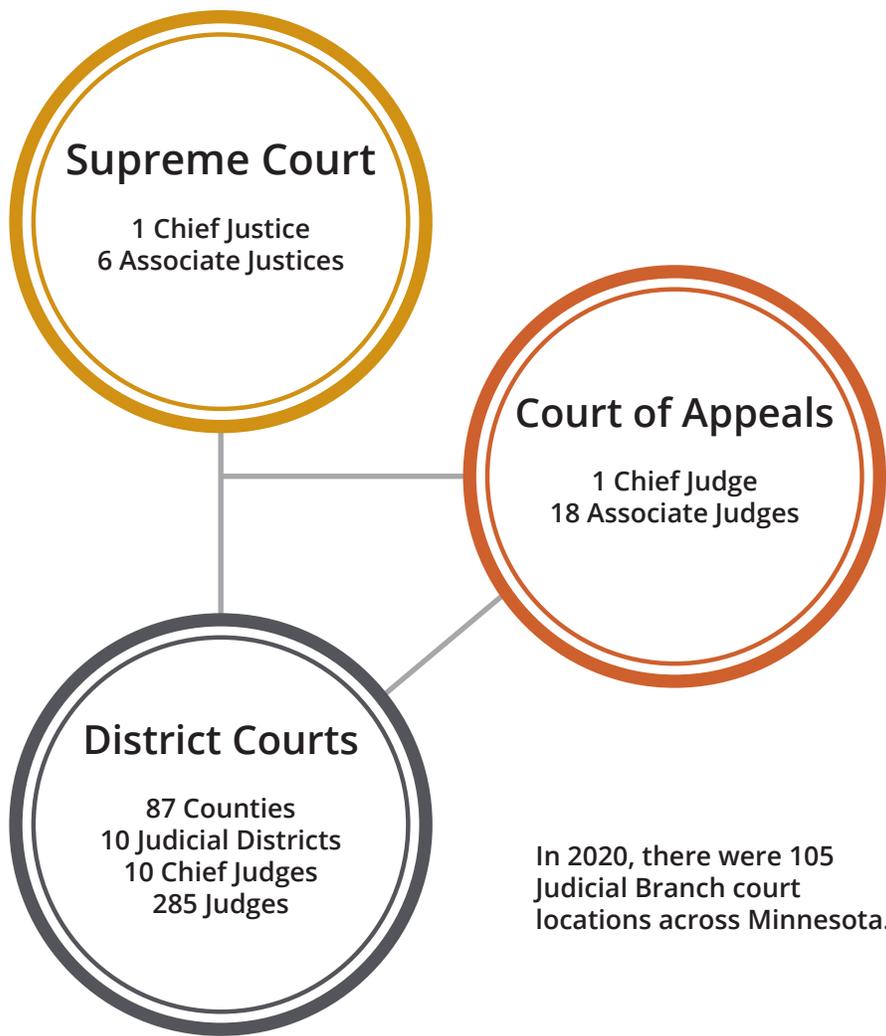
Lorie S. Gildea
Chief Justice
Minnesota Supreme Court



Minnesota Judicial Branch Mission: To provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.

THE MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH

The Courts



In 2020, there were 105 Judicial Branch court locations across Minnesota.

Administration



Central Administration to Judicial Branch:

- Executive Office
- Court Information
 - Intergovernmental Relations
 - Internal Audit
 - Legal Counsel
 - Strategic Planning & Projects
- Court Services
Finance
Human Resources & Development
Information Technology

Fiscal Year 20/21 Biennial Budget

District Courts	\$626,204,000
Court of Appeals	\$25,994,000
Supreme Court/State Court Administration	\$82,436,000
Total	\$734,634,000

Statewide Initiatives: Access to Justice

Removing Barriers to Narrow the Access to Justice Gap

Lack of representation by an attorney can create barriers for people who need support in resolving civil case disputes. In an effort to narrow the access to justice gap, the Minnesota Supreme Court approved a two-year pilot in 2020 that allows legal paraprofessionals to provide representation in some civil legal matters to Minnesotans who might not otherwise have access to it. To participate in the pilot, legal paraprofessionals must meet rigorous educational and ethical standards and work under the supervision of a licensed Minnesota attorney. Pilot participants are able to provide legal advice and represent a client in court in housing disputes, including eviction proceedings, and in certain family law cases dealing with child support, parenting time, paternity matters, and in informal family court proceedings. In addition to addressing the growing demand for legal representation for low- and moderate-income persons in civil legal matters, the pilot will also examine whether this new model of legal representation can reduce court congestion and delays in resolving housing and family law disputes.

New Help Topics Support Self-Represented Litigants

To help self-represented litigants better understand and navigate the court experience, the Minnesota Judicial Branch added new and revised Help Topics to its website. For example, the new “Going to Court” Help Topic covers practical tips for appearing in court, both in person and virtually. The revised “Representing Yourself in Court” Help Topic now features factors for people to consider when deciding whether to hire an attorney, as well as resources and help for self-representation. In addition, the Judicial

Branch significantly expanded the Appeals Help Topic. As new Help Topic pages are created and others are revised, the pages are being redesigned based on court customer feedback to include numerous definitions and Frequently Asked Questions.

Services Expanded for Self-Represented Litigants

The Minnesota Judicial Branch expanded its services in 2020 for Minnesotans who represent themselves in certain types of legal cases with three new interviews through its Guide & File program. Guide & File is a web-based electronic tool that allows court users to create and electronically submit court forms in certain types of cases. In response to one of the most commonly requested areas of support from self-represented litigants, a new Guide & File interview called, “Start a Divorce in MN,” helps people create all of the required forms to start a divorce. A new “Eviction Answer” interview helps tenants with residential leases respond to an eviction complaint with a formal answer, and allows the option of eFiling the document once complete. The “Request for Fee Waiver” interview allows individuals to request a fee waiver for all interviews supported by the Judicial Branch by filing it along with their court forms. Guide & File now provides eight question-and-answer online interviews, which also include: Conciliation Court, Evictions – Starting a Case and Creating an Answer, Affidavit for Service for Conciliation Court or Eviction, Order for Protection, and Harassment Restraining Order. Since its launch in 2018, nearly 24,000 interviews have been completed through Guide & File.

Self-Help Centers Serve Highest Volume of Court Customers in 2020

As the courts temporarily limited physical access

to court facilities due to the pandemic, the Minnesota Judicial Branch Statewide Self-Help Center and Self-Help Centers in the Second, Fourth and Tenth Judicial Districts never stopped working. These dedicated court professionals continued to assist people through the call center, email support, website content, and self-represented litigant workstations that were available by appointment. In 2020, call center staff answered more than 30,309 calls, the highest total since they began in 2007, and approximately 6,300 emails – a near 64% increase from 2019.

Reducing Barriers to Civil Legal Assistance

The Minnesota Judicial Council approved the formation of a new Civil Justice Subcommittee of the Committee for Equality and Justice (CEJ) in 2020. The goal of the Subcommittee is to increase the number of low-income and disadvantaged people receiving civil legal assistance, and to reduce barriers to access in district courts through collaborative projects of the Minnesota Judicial Branch and the Minnesota State Bar Association (MSBA). The 10-member Subcommittee, which includes five representatives from the Judicial Branch and five from the MSBA, will provide regular reports to the CEJ and the MSBA's Access to Justice Committee.

Language Access Plan Revised

The Language Access Plan serves as the statewide plan for ensuring meaningful and equal access to the courts for the increasing number of limited-English speaking persons and deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the state. In 2020, the Minnesota Judicial Branch revised the Plan to reflect the state's diverse population and language needs, detail how the courts are meeting language access needs, planned actions to improve services, and information about remote interpreting.

Remote Interpreting Skyrockets during Pandemic

With more than 100 languages spoken in the state's district courts each year, the Minnesota Judicial Branch is committed to expanding the use of technology to ensure interpreting services are available in district courts across the state. In early 2020, the Minnesota Judicial Council adopted a new goal to increase the use of remote interpreting events in each judicial district by 10% in one year. Once the pandemic struck Minnesota in mid-March, the use of remote interpreting skyrocketed in state district courts. More than 90% of interpreter events were conducted with the interpreter appearing remotely throughout much of 2020. The Judicial Branch is applying what it learned during the pandemic to sustain a high degree of remote interpreting in the state's district courts.

Revised Standards and Governance Ensure Timely Access to Experienced Interpreters

To ensure the state's district courts follow the current national standards and guidelines regarding court interpreters, the Supreme Court issued two orders in 2020 to eliminate outdated concepts and terminology, amend requirements for the use of interpreters, and add provisions to govern interpreters employed by the Minnesota Judicial Branch. The amendments replaced the phrase, "foreign language," with, "spoken language," allowed for electronic transmission of communication, distinguished the roster and certification requirements for spoken language interpreters from the requirements for Sign Language interpreters, and accurately reflected the current roster categories of Spoken Language, Certified Spoken Language, Sign Language, and Certified Sign Language. The amendments also made changes in how district courts identify and appoint the most qualified interpreter for court proceedings, including the use of scheduling specialists to fully optimize qualified interpreters available in Minnesota.

Statewide Initiatives: Effective Administration of Justice

Going Mobile: My MN Juror App

The growing use of smartphones and mobile applications has created an opportunity for the Minnesota Judicial Branch to better connect with individuals who are engaged with or interact with the courts. One example of this innovative work was the launch in 2020 of a mobile application focused on people who are summoned for jury duty. My MN Juror is designed to enhance the service experience of jurors by providing tools and resources right at their fingertips. My MN Juror, which uses Touch ID for logging into the application, provides a barcode to speed up the daily check-in process, directions to courthouses, access to the Jury Questionnaire, and a link to work service certificates that can be downloaded to a phone, sent via email, or printed. My MN Juror is available for download from all major app stores.

Improving Protection of Vulnerable Adults under Guardianship

A new tool launched by the Minnesota Judicial Branch in 2020 makes it easier for court-appointed guardians to submit Personal Well-Being reports and corresponding affidavits of service electronically to the court. MyMNGuardian (MMG) sends guardians automatic e-mail reminders and optional text reminders when a deadline to submit a report is approaching. When reports are submitted, court administration staff across the state use a standardized process to ensure better and more consistent protection for vulnerable adults under guardianship. A total of 14,069 Personal Well-Being reports were filed in MMG in 2020, and there were 31,429 active cases with court-appointed guardians in the portal.

New Templates Improve Timing of Child Protection Findings and Orders

In its goal to help secure permanent, safe living situations for children more quickly, the

Minnesota Judicial Branch advanced a major initiative in 2020 to improve the timeliness in issuing findings and orders in Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) and permanency cases. The Judicial Branch now provides 23 CHIPS order templates and 15 permanency order templates to help judges become more self-reliant in the preparation of findings and orders. Judges may also share the templates with county attorneys or others if they are directing those persons to draft orders.

Improving Psychological and Psychiatric Services in the Judicial System

The Minnesota Judicial Branch's Psych Services Judicial Workgroup, which was composed of judges, attorneys, psychological services examiners, directors, social services staff, court staff, and other public stakeholders, released a report that examined the dramatic increase in the volume and cost of mandated psychological and psychiatric exams in the judicial system. This report recommended actions to address these issues, including:

- Developing educational content for judicial officers, justice partners, examiners, and court staff on people living with mental illnesses and their impact on legal proceedings.
- Creating new Rule 20 order templates, and determining required elements for examiner reports in adult Rule 20 and civil commitment matters. Rule 20 of the Minnesota Rules of Criminal Procedure addresses mentally ill and cognitively-impaired defendants.
- Reviewing how examiner services were coordinated and provided during the pandemic to learn of any new successes or opportunities that can be incorporated into existing policies and protocols.

Streamlining Processes to Better Support Mental Health Evaluations

A new work management and payment system rolled out in March 2020 for the Statewide Psychological Examiner Services Program is streamlining how state district courts are partnering with psychological examiners to better meet the needs of those who may require mental health examinations in the judicial system. The Examiner Resource Application (ERA) allows counties and judicial districts to access real-time examination and case-related information, review and manage work assignment details and deadlines, track examiner assignments in progress, and project anticipated expenses and payments - all in one system. In addition, each judicial district has an identified ERA Coordinator who is responsible for assigning work requests to examiners, managing all examiner appointments for mandated psychological/psychiatric exams ordered by the district courts, ensuring that all examiner court appointments are compliant with roster and payment policies, and approving all examiner invoices for the counties in their districts. Since March 2020, 10,000 examiner appointments have been processed by ERA. Nearly 450 examiners, institutions, and court staff are actively working in the new system on a daily basis.

MGA Enhancement Improves User Experience and Access to Information

The application that provides Minnesota government agencies with online access to appropriate records and documents for cases in state district courts received an upgrade in 2020. The enhanced Minnesota Government Access (MGA) quickly connects users with the information they need through a new interface, an improved search display that provides more information on initial search results, and advanced search options and filters. Other enhancements include an updated case register of actions and access to more information, including interim conditions, restitution, some search warrant information,

reference numbers for citations and incident control numbers, and other agency numbers.

Improving the Online Pay Fines Experience

An average of 75,000 court customers visit the Pay Fines page on the Minnesota Judicial Branch website each month to pay a citation, find out how to contest a citation, or contact the Court Payment Center (CPC). As the second-most visited landing page on the website, the Pay Fines page is the “front door” to the state court system for many users, and a critical tool to help Minnesotans quickly and efficiently resolve their payable citations. A redesign of the Pay Fines web page in 2020, including a new Spanish-language version of the web page, resulted in a more user friendly, easier to understand, and simpler to navigate online experience for court customers. The CPC also added email support for court customers in 2020, and averages approximately 180 email inquiries per month.

New Court Rules Designed to Reduce Common Errors in Court Filings

To address some of the most common errors when it comes to public and non-public information in court filings, new Court Rules place a greater emphasis on filers removing restricted identifiers and other non-public information. Filers are required to follow a two-step process to both identify and designate non-public documents, and use a new universal cover sheet or eFiling code for identifying all non-public documents (with the exception of the cover sheet already used in juvenile protection cases). District court staff have the authority to reject documents when filers fail to separate public and non-public information. Other rule changes in this area include:

- Restricted access to court documents that contain non-public information. Filers will receive a notice from district court staff to re-file the document with the non-public information removed. If the filer doesn't re-file within three days, the document is

marked “stricken” and updated so that judges cannot view it or consider it as part of the court record. This does not apply to criminal, juvenile delinquency, or civil commitment cases, or to medical records in any type of case. Striking in juvenile protection cases is only authorized for restricted identifiers.

- Except in civil commitment cases, medical records are public unless the person who filed them designates them as non-public. District court staff are not authorized to reject or strike medical records.
- Paternity cases filed after January 1, 2021, are public from their inception. Paternity cases initiated before that date will only become public after a final adjudication of paternity.

Statewide Initiatives: Public Trust and Accountability

Reducing Implicit Bias in Court Proceedings

The Minnesota Judicial Council approved two new resources in 2020 to help judges minimize the impact of implicit bias on court proceedings. The new Implicit Bias Jury Instruction Guide is designed to educate jurors on what implicit/unconscious bias is and how it impacts their duties as a juror. The instructions also provide guidance on what steps jurors can take to address and manage their implicit/unconscious bias. A revised Implicit/Unconscious Bias Bench Card provides updated guidance to judges on recognizing and managing their own implicit/unconscious bias, along with other tips and resources. These new and updated materials were developed by the Diversity and Inclusion Education Subcommittee of the Committee for Equality and Justice.

Enhancing Public Access to Public Court Documents and Records

Efforts to transform how the Minnesota Judicial Branch provides online access to appropriate public documents in state district court cases continued in 2020. Minnesota Court Records Online (MCRO) will allow people to search for, retrieve, and purchase documents in certain case types without needing to visit a courthouse. MCRO will ultimately replace Minnesota Public Access (MPA) Remote, which currently provides the ability to view registers of action and other case information online, but requires people to physically visit a court facility to access and print documents. MPA Remote will remain available while MCRO is implemented through a three-phase process:

- Phase 1 (Currently Available): Access to certain public documents when searching by case number. Case types include Major and Minor Adult Criminal cases, Major and Minor Civil cases, Formal and Informal Probate, and Estate and Trust cases.

- Phase 2 (Winter 2021): Access to registers of actions, plus the ability to search for cases by party name, attorney name, and attorney bar number.
- Phase 3 (2022): Access to calendar and judgement searches, and will allow for document purchases online.

Children's Justice Initiative Celebrates 20th Anniversary

The Children's Justice Initiative (CJI), a nation-leading effort to produce better outcomes in the state's child protection system, celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2020. For two decades, the CJI has brought together all sides of Minnesota's child protection system to improve the lives of our state's most vulnerable children. In its first several years, the CJI developed teams in each county to improve oversight of child protection cases, bringing together judges, court administration, social services, Guardians ad Litem, attorneys for parents and children, county attorneys, and tribal representatives. Key achievements in recent years focused on creating experiential learning in emergency protective care hearings, and interdisciplinary trainings on how to better manage child protection cases. A three-year pilot project that concluded in 2020, which featured two judges presiding over all Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) cases across seven counties, demonstrated positive results for securing permanent, safe living situations for children more quickly. The Pilot may serve as a model for future CHIPS proceedings across the state. Since its founding in 2000, nearly every state in the nation has implemented a model similar to the CJI pioneered in Minnesota.

Statewide Initiatives: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is resolved in its commitment to ensuring all Minnesotans have fair and equal access to justice. To ensure public trust and confidence in the judicial system, Minnesotans must believe our courts provide fair, impartial resolution to their cases and disputes in a safe and dignified environment. It is even more important that our courts work as hard as they can, every day, to earn that trust.

Committee for Equality and Justice

The Committee for Equality and Justice (CEJ) works collaboratively across the Judicial Branch to advance efforts to eliminate bias from court operations, promote equal access to the court, and inspire a high level of trust and public confidence in the Judicial Branch. CEJ, which is an advisory committee to the Minnesota Judicial Council, is chaired by Minnesota Supreme Court Justice Margaret Chutich and Sixth Judicial District Judge Leslie Beiers. Its membership is reflective of the state's geographic and demographic diversity, and includes representation from judges, court staff, justice system partners, and the public we serve. CEJ is charged with:

- Recommending diversity and inclusion education programs and course materials for judges and Judicial Branch employees;
- Promoting diversity and inclusion in Judicial Branch employment, and in appointments to Judicial Branch committees and boards, to reflect the population we serve;
- Making recommendations for improvement in court processes, procedures, and policies as they relate to race, gender, ethnicity, age, disabilities, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, and any other status protected by law; and
- Assisting district Equal Justice committees in their work at the local level, and providing assistance in outreach efforts to the communities they serve.

In 2020, CEJ focused on core initiatives that included ensuring juries reflect the diversity of their communities, reducing probation revocation rates among racial and ethnic groups, and expanding community outreach to put into action lessons learned from listening sessions routinely held across the state. In addition, three subcommittees of CEJ accomplished key initiatives:

- The Access and Fairness Subcommittee, chaired by Judge Richelle Wahi (First Judicial District), published, "2020 Progress Report on the 1989 Gender Fairness Task Force Report." The new Report highlighted achievements since the 1989 Report was released and prioritized outstanding items for further action.
- The Diversity and Inclusion Education Subcommittee, co-chaired by Judge JaPaul Harris (Second Judicial District) and Judge Angela Willms (Fourth Judicial District), developed an Implicit Bias Jury Instruction Guide and revised the Implicit/Unconscious Bias Bench Card to help judges minimize the impact of implicit bias on court proceedings.
- The Community Outreach Subcommittee, co-chaired by Judge Tracy Smith (Minnesota Court of Appeals) and Kim Mammedaty (Hennepin County Attorney's Office), assisted district Equal Justice committees in their work. The Subcommittee also developed, "Tips for Going to Court in Minnesota," which judicial districts are sharing with court users to help them understand and be better prepared for their court proceedings.

Education and Training

The 2020 Annual Conference of Judges featured a keynote session, "Racial Equity, Community Trust and Public Safety – Understanding the Impact of Bias," by Dr. Phillip Atiba Goff from the Center for Policing Equity. In addition, other training sessions at the Conference included, "Breaking Poverty Barriers to Equal Justice," "Current Trends

in Substance Abuse,” “Remote Interpreting in Minnesota,” and “Understanding Mental Illness Disorders and Symptoms Impacting People in Court Proceedings.” The 2020 Court Business Conference featured a session on “Racial Equity is Court Business” that explored race and racial equity, examined institutional racism, and reviewed the history of courts and race. The Judicial Branch also continues to require “Why Diversity Matters” training for all staff, and offer training sessions and resources designed to build and maintain a more inclusive and respectful workplace.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Judicial Districts

Each judicial district has an Equal Justice Committee comprised of judges, staff, and justice and community partners. Each Committee undertakes its own strategic priorities, but there are similarities in their work regionally and statewide. In 2020, this included:

- Roundtable discussions with district judges on the Access & Fairness Survey results to reflect on existing practices and better meet community needs.
- Community listening sessions to hear directly from communities on their thoughts and concerns about the judicial system and their individual experience with the courts.
- Evaluating the 10-Year Review of Community Dialogues to address issues raised through those collaborative conversations.
- Using technology to increase remote interpreting across the state, and deploying designated technology rooms in local courthouses for people to participate in their remote hearings when their access to technology may be limited.
- Holding warrant resolution events.
- Developing recruitment initiatives and participating in events with high schools and colleges to share information on careers in the court system to help encourage more applicants and increase the diversity of the workforce.

For more information on the work of these committees, see the Judicial District pages in this Report.

INNOVATE. COLLABORATE. TRANSFORM. *Keeping the Doors to Justice Open in a Pandemic*

In response to the challenges posed by COVID-19, the Minnesota Judicial Branch took unprecedented steps to ensure access to justice, mitigate the risk of community spread of the virus, and safeguard the health and safety of our judicial officers, staff, and all who entered a courthouse during the pandemic.

Throughout most of 2020, the Judicial Branch modified its operations in response to the changing dynamics of the pandemic, and persevered through the disruption to keep the doors to justice open. Many of the technological advancements and operational changes that were put in place transformed how the courts operate, how people interact with the courts, and how justice is delivered in Minnesota.

None of this would have been possible without the commitment, resiliency, and resourcefulness of our judicial officers and staff. Together, we re-imagined and embraced new ways of operating to provide an accessible and efficient environment for all who rely on and serve the courts.

“There is nothing more important to the state of our judiciary than sustaining the public’s trust and confidence. The state of the judiciary in Minnesota is strong. We are steadfast in our commitment to ensure all Minnesotans have a place to resolve their disputes and protect their rights, and resilient in our work to build a stronger, innovative court system as we emerge from this public health crisis,” said Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea.

Five Key Drivers

To continue processing cases and providing access to services during the pandemic, the Judicial Branch relied on five key drivers:

1. Protect the health and safety of judges, staff, and court users.
2. Maintain access to court services.
3. Transition to virtual courtrooms.
4. Ensure the safe, gradual expansion of in-person court operations.
5. Collaborate with justice partners.

Responding to an Unprecedented Disruption

COVID-19 tested the state’s district and appellate courts in numerous and unprecedented ways. Responding to this disruption required thoughtful and deliberative planning, the ability to make quick and informed decisions, and the need to change direction continuously. To effectively plan for and respond to the changing nature of the pandemic, the Judicial Branch primarily relied on five groups:

- **Minnesota Judicial Council:** As the governing body for the Judicial Branch, the Judicial Council exercised its administrative policy-making authority to make decisions that ensured an accessible, fair, and timely system of justice statewide. With input from the Judicial Council, Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea issued orders that responded to the evolving status of the pandemic in our state – temporarily closing courthouses, shifting to remote work environments and virtual courtrooms, ensuring access to court services remotely, temporarily suspending court deadlines, and gradually resuming in-person trials, hearings, and proceedings as local conditions allowed.
- **COVID-19 Emergency Response Team:** Even before the first case of COVID-19 was diagnosed in Minnesota, this Team initiated the Continuity of Operations Plan and established a collaborative working relationships with public health experts.

Key work included the development and implementation of the COVID-19 Preparedness Plan, which was developed with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Minnesota Department of Health. The Plan included the health and safety parameters that every courthouse was required to implement in order to safely resume and expand in-person operations and services.

- **Pandemic Response Team:** Formed to share feedback and information between district court administration and state court administration, this Team quickly created and reviewed processes and materials to help the state's district courts adapt to new business needs.
- **Remote Hearing Workgroup:** As the pandemic's impact came into sharper focus, the Judicial Branch's priority quickly shifted to innovative solutions to create virtual courtrooms. This Workgroup helped determine technologies that would enable the state's district courts to conduct hearings remotely. The Workgroup ensured each courthouse had the best possible technology, the software needed to hold virtual hearings, and developed a web page, training materials, and resources to help all participants in a remote hearing adjust to the new reality.
- **The Other Side Workgroup:** This Workgroup developed short-term and transitional strategies to help the state's district courts continue to process as much casework as possible during the pandemic – initially via remote hearings, and eventually through a safe, gradual return to in-person hearings and jury trials. The Workgroup also tracked and monitored the impact of the pandemic on case backlog, provided recommendations to adjust court operations based on the status of virus transmission in the state, and planned for how the courts will apply lessons learned during the pandemic to its operations when the public health crisis subsides.

Overcoming Disruption through Innovation, Safety Protocols, and Communication

While the Judicial Branch took precautionary steps to limit in-person activities at courthouse, the courts helped Minnesotans access justice through

technology, telecommunications, and - when safe and appropriate - in-person hearings, trials, and services.

- **Remote Hearings:** More than 1800 Zoom licenses were issued to appellate courts, district courts, judicial officers and staff to enable virtual courtrooms, support remote work, and sustain essential customer support.
- **VoIP Implementation:** To accommodate the number of judges and staff who were working remotely due to the public health crisis, the Judicial Branch accelerated the implementation of the VoIP telephone system to ensure continuity of court operations and customer service.
- **Appellate Courts Go Virtual:** The appellate courts moved their oral arguments to a virtual platform. The Supreme Court livestreamed its virtual oral arguments and the Court of Appeals held its oral arguments using Zoom. All appellate court oral arguments are archived on the Judicial Branch website.
- **Public Technology Rooms:** Several courthouses in Minnesota created designated technology rooms to help people who lack access to technology or the Internet participate in their court proceeding.
- **Access to Support:** The Court Payment Center (CPC) continued to accept payments and answer customer questions about traffic tickets and citations, and took on the additional responsibility of providing remote hearing technical support to Minnesotans in five judicial districts. The Statewide Self-Help Center, which provides legal information to self-represented litigants, answered more than 30,309 calls, the highest total since they began in 2007, and approximately 6,300 emails – a near 64% increase from 2019.
- **Online Tools:** As the pandemic led more Minnesotans to conduct their essential business online, the courts, too, saw greater usage of its online tools. Guide & File features eight web-based interviews that help litigants complete and file court forms in certain case types. During April 2020 – May 2020, nearly 40% of all initial filings for divorce, harassment, restraining orders, and orders for protection were completed using Guide & File, compared to an average of 12% of filings from January 2020 – March 2020.

- **Suspension of Fees and Fines:** In an effort to give customers some relief during the pandemic the Judicial Branch temporarily suspended the failure-to-pay/late penalty noticing from March 2020 – November 2020. Additionally, upon request, court customers were given a 60-day payment extension instead of the normal, pre-pandemic 30-day extension.
- **Jury Trial Protocols:** The Judicial Branch suspended criminal and civil jury trials for a period of time to help mitigate the spread of the coronavirus. To safely resume this essential constitutional right, the Jury Management Resource Team developed recommendations to safely re-open court facilities and resume in-person court proceedings. The recommendations included health and safety protocols, guidelines for modifying courtrooms and common spaces, and requirements for signage, six-foot social-distancing, mandatory use of face coverings, and juror coordination to ensure limited and safe contact. This thorough planning helped the Judicial Branch prevent a major outbreak of virus transmission in any courthouse or court facility in Minnesota.
- **Measuring the Impact:** To help measure and monitor the impact of the pandemic on pending caseload, the Judicial Branch created an internal Pandemic Response Dashboard. It tracks all incoming cases, pending cases, case backlogs, jury trials, and completed work by each judicial district and statewide. The Dashboard was used by the Judicial Branch to inform and adapt strategies to address pending caseloads and case backlogs, as well as measure progress made as a result of those strategies.
- **Transparency:** The Judicial Branch created a dedicated COVID-19 web page to help the public stay informed on the evolving changes in court operations due to the pandemic. The page was translated into Spanish, Hmong, and Somali. In addition, specific webpages were created to help court users easily access key information on court operations and services, including resources on remote hearing participation, and protocols for re-opening court facilities and resuming jury trials.

Power of Partnership

Virtually every step the courts took during the

pandemic was in consultation with state and local justice partners. Court administrators and judges worked closely with county officials, local prosecutors, public defenders, and bar association members to address and overcome the challenges facing each county and courthouse. As this collaboration was happening at the local level, Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea and State Court Administrator Jeff Shorba held teleconference calls and virtual meetings with representatives from statewide justice organizations to share developments from the courts, respond to questions, and learn more about the challenges these organizations faced. This type of partnership during a time of crisis is indicative of the strong relationships in the state's justice community. Together, bench and bar adapted and adjusted to find creative and innovative solutions to preserve access to justice during the public health crisis.

Creating Positive Change

While nothing could have prepared the courts for the disruption caused by the pandemic, the Judicial Branch had already laid the groundwork for many of the initiatives that are contributing toward transformative change. This leading edge foundation allowed the courts to quickly adapt to remote operations, and ensure access to justice. Three examples include:

Remote Hearings

By the end of December 2020, more than 22,000 court hearings were taking place across the state each week -- 90% of which were conducted remotely. The increased convenience, flexibility, and efficiency of a virtual courtroom gave people more certainty in knowing when their hearings would take place, and allowed them to participate in a fraction of the time that it would take if they were required to be physically present in a courtroom.

Remote Interpreting

Remote interpreting was used in about 5% of interpreting events prior to the pandemic. During the pandemic, more than 90% of interpreter

events were conducted with the interpreter appearing remotely. Remote interpreting has provided many benefits for litigants, interpreters, and the courts. Court customers have access to the most highly qualified interpreter available, regardless of location. Interpreters are able to serve more people in court proceedings without having to travel to multiple locations, often in the same day. The courts can focus their resources more efficiently to better support the people we serve, as well as manage caseload and scheduling.

Remote Treatment Courts

Limited access to courthouses and stay-at-home orders had a significant impact on treatment courts. The commitment by judges and coordinators to maintain a personal connection with participants through phone, email, and virtual technology brought forward unexpected benefits. The ability to remain in regular contact and learn more about the lives of participants outside a courtroom helped participants stay on track and deepen understanding of their challenges, needs, and accomplishments. Some treatment courts found that participants were more open and willing to share while using remote technology than when they were physically present in a courtroom. In addition, more family and friends were able to participate and support their loved ones when they achieved the milestone of graduating from the program.

Tackling the Long-Term Challenges

While the courts were able to manage the workload in 2020 in such a way that there was virtually no new backlog in non-criminal cases, the same cannot be said for major criminal cases. The number of major criminal cases pending in the state's district courts has grown by 32% since the start of the pandemic.

Another area that has been dramatically impacted by the pandemic is evictions. The Governor's peacetime emergency declaration placed a moratorium on most residential evictions, which resulted in a dramatic drop in eviction case filings in 2020 and may lead to an influx of cases when

the eviction moratorium is lifted.

The Judicial Branch has undertaken an extensive planning process to address these challenges, and will again look to the resourcefulness of our judges and staff, as well as the strong partnership between the bench and bar. Through our shared commitment to ensure fair and equal access to justice, we are prepared for what lies on the other side of the pandemic.

Judicial Branch Receives Award for Pandemic Response

For its work to keep the doors to justice open during the pandemic, the Judicial Branch was recognized by Minnesota Lawyer with its 2020 Attorneys of the Year: Outstanding Service to the Profession Award.

The Award was presented to Supreme Court Justice Lorie S. Gildea, State Court Administrator Jeff Shorba, Deputy State Court Administrator Dawn Torgerson, and Clerk of the Appellate Courts AnnMarie O'Neill.

"Our best motivator was to keep our work going, and the best way to do that was to expand our remote hearing capacity," said Jeff Shorba, State Court Administrator. "We built up the technology and training, and are very close to the leading edge when it comes to what can be done remotely. We've learned that it creates some positive outcomes, and we're already thinking about how what we've built can continue to be used when we reach the other side of the pandemic."

COVID-19 TIMELINE

MARCH

- March 6:** 1st positive case in Minnesota.
- March 13:** Governor declares peacetime emergency.
- March 13:** MJB temporarily suspends low- and medium-priority cases.
- March 20:** MJB restricts in-person courthouse access; shifts to remote work; shifts to online, telephone, or email support; temporarily suspends payments and late penalties for payable citations.
- March 25:** Governor issues stay-at-home order.

MAY

- Stay-at-home order expires.
- Limited reopening of state district courts allowed.
- Launch internal Pandemic Dashboard to track caseload, hearings, and trials.

JULY

- Require face coverings in court facilities.
- Hold criminal jury trial pilot in six counties.
- Hold more than 16,000 hearings per week; 62% take place remotely.

SEPTEMBER

- In-person criminal jury trials resume in all 87 counties.
- Hold more than 20,000 hearings held per week; 68% take place remotely.
- Resume late notices, penalties, and failure to appear notices for payable citations.

DECEMBER

- Hold 24,000 hearings per week - more than 90% of pre-pandemic normal.
- 90% of hearings take place remotely.
- Reduce backlog in major criminal cases by 12% statewide.

FEBRUARY

Minnesota Judicial Branch (MJB) enacts Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and creates COVID-19 Emergency Response Team.

APRIL

- Shift to remote hearings for all case types, with limited exceptions.
- Initiate planning safe, gradual return to in-person hearings and trials.
- Launch COVID-19 information web page launched in four languages.
- Hold about 900 hearings per day.

JUNE

- Open at least one public service counter in each county.
- Create technology rooms in courthouses to help people who do not have access to technology participate in remote hearings.

AUGUST

Initiate effort to reduce criminal case backlog by 10% statewide by December 1, 2020.

NOVEMBER

Suspend most in-person courthouse activities through January 31, 2021 (and later suspended through June 13, 2021), due to a surge of virus transmission.

District Courts

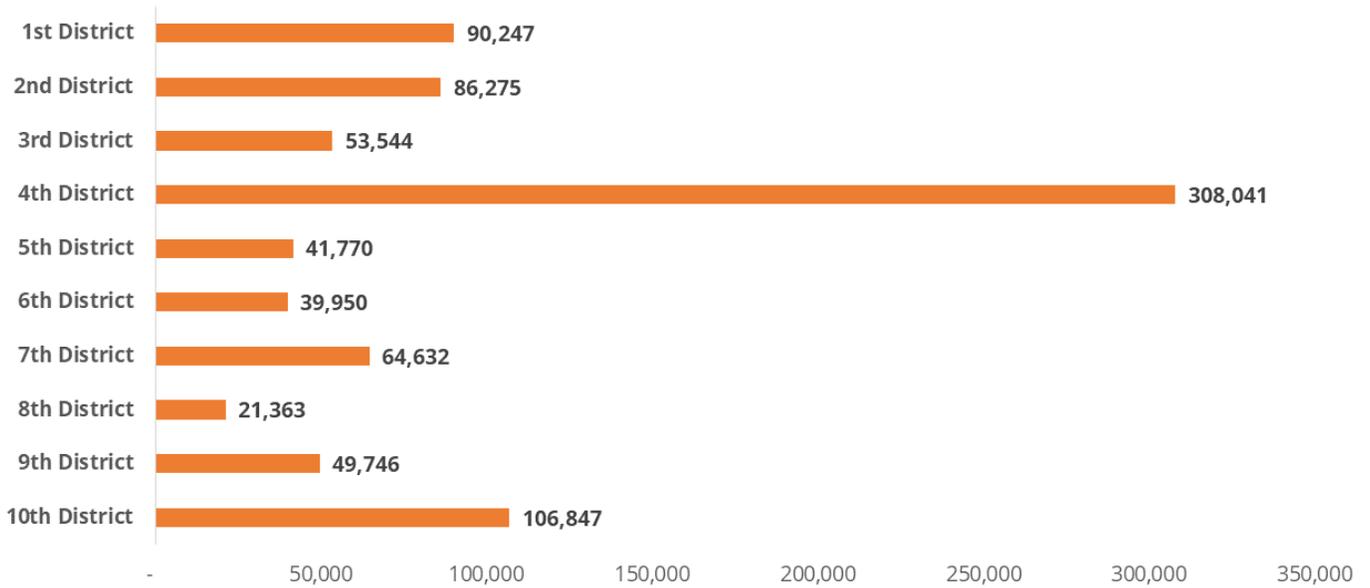


295 Judgeships, 10 Judicial Districts, 105 hearing facilities
Jurisdiction: Civil Actions, Criminal Cases, Family, Juvenile, Probate, Violations of City Ordinances
Appeals from: Conciliation Court*

Conciliation Division: Civil Disputes up to \$15,000

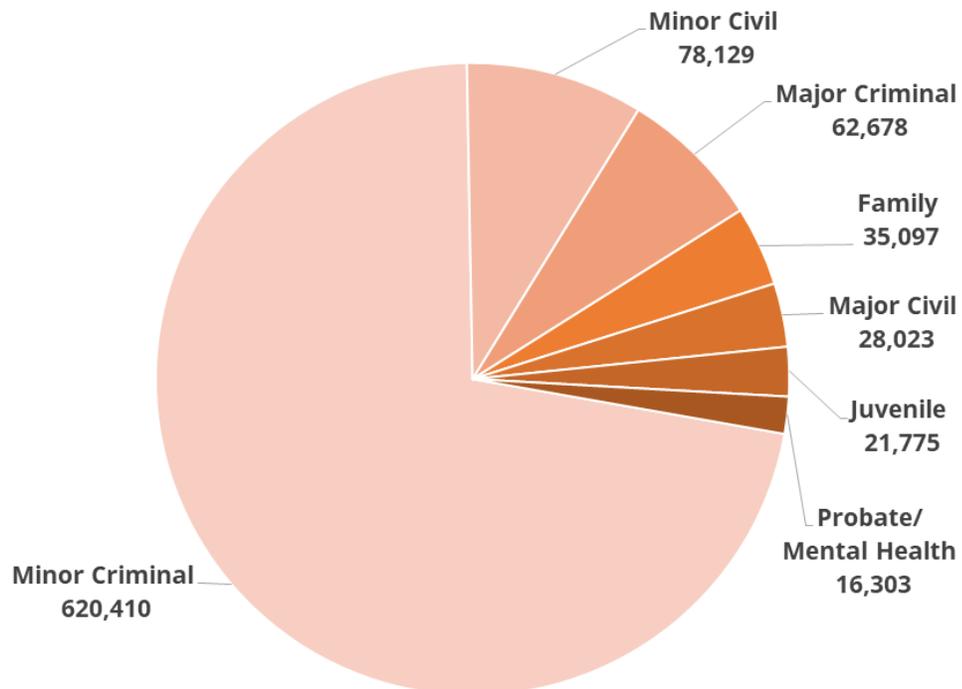
**Called trial de novo - actually a new trial, not just a review of the conciliation court*

2020 Statewide Case Filings by Judicial District

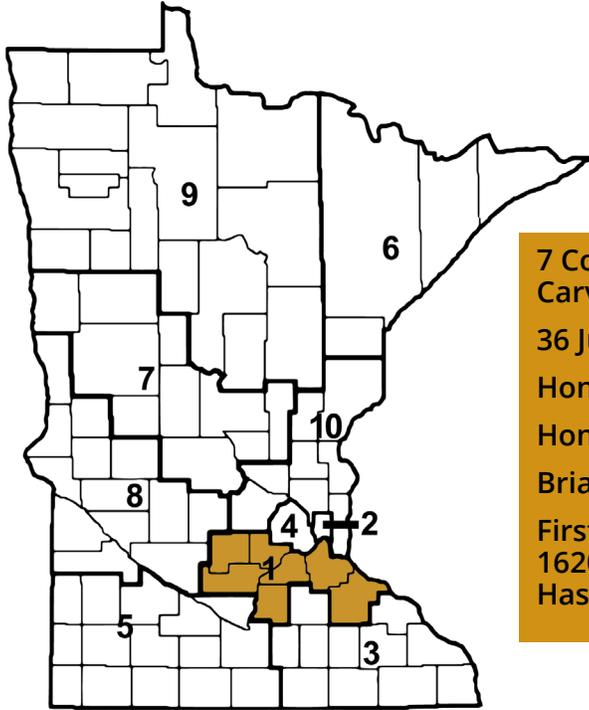


2020 Total Filings: 862,415

2020 Statewide Case Filings by Case Type



First Judicial District



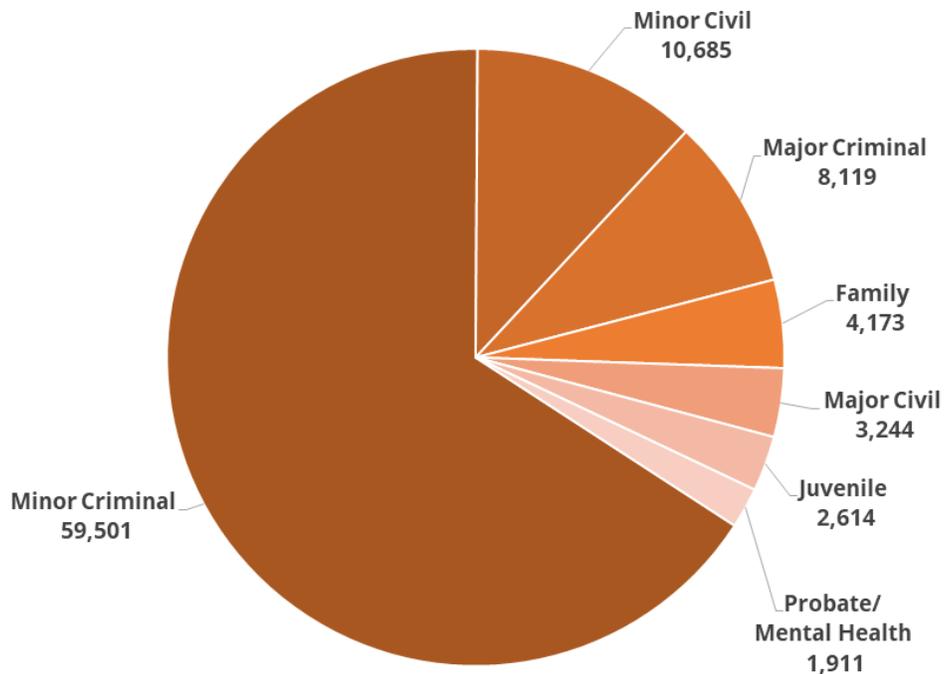
7 Counties:
Carver, Dakota, Goodhue, Le Sueur, McLeod, Scott, Sibley

36 Judgeships, 4 Child Support Magistrates

Hon. Kathryn D. Messerich, Chief Judge
Hon. David L. Knutson, Assistant Chief Judge
Brian Jones, District Administrator

First Judicial District Administration
1620 South Frontage Road, Suite 200
Hastings, MN 55033

2020 First Judicial District Case Filings
2020 Total Filings: 90,247



Minnesota Lawyer Recognizes Judge Richelle Wahí for Diversity and Inclusion

First Judicial District Judge Richelle Wahí was one of the recipients of the fourth annual Minnesota Lawyer Diversity & Inclusion Awards. The Awards honor those in the legal profession who go above and beyond in their efforts to demonstrate leadership in diversity initiatives and make a significant impact on diversity and inclusion in the legal community.

"I am honored and humbled to receive this award," Judge Wahí said. "Incised above the entrance to the United States Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C., is the phrase, 'Equal Justice Under Law.' But far too many of our diverse populations believe this fundamental legal tenet is more elusive today than ever. Disparities continue to exist that must be addressed through honest conversation, careful listening, increased education, self-reflection, and, most importantly, action. I am grateful to have helped advance efforts to eliminate bias from court operations and to promote equal access and justice in the courts. We can and must always do better. I will work diligently to ensure that we do."

Judge Wahí is active in many judicial committees, including the statewide Judicial Branch Committee for Equality and Justice and the statewide Early Case Management Committee. She is a frequent speaker in the justice community, and has written for several law-related publications. Judge Wahí has been recognized as a Minnesota Rising Star, and she also received a North Star Lawyer recognition for pro bono service.

Judge Wahí was appointed to the bench in Dakota County on Feb. 26, 2016, by Governor Mark Dayton. She was formerly a partner at Lindquist & Venum LLP, and a conciliation court referee in Dakota County. She also worked as an attorney at Moss & Barnett and Henson & Efron. Judge Wahí received her Bachelor of Arts, Magna Cum Laude, from the College of St. Catherine, and her Juris Doctorate, Cum Laude, from William Mitchell

College of Law.

Tanya Derby and State Guardian ad Litem Program Receive First Judicial District Amicus Curiae Award

The First Judicial District awarded its 10th annual Amicus Curiae Award to Tanya Derby and the State Guardian ad Litem Program. The Amicus Curiae Award, meaning, "Friend of the Court," is an annual recognition of persons who have provided exceptional service, leadership, or other contributions to assist the courts in the First Judicial District discharge their constitutional responsibility for the administration of justice.

Derby has worked on behalf of clients in juvenile, child protection, and criminal court with the First Judicial District Public Defender's Office. She advocated for clients' rights, first as a paralegal from 1995 to 2005, and then as an attorney from 2005 to 2020. Additionally, she volunteered on the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative - Eliminating Racial Disparities Committee from 2006 to 2020, and also as the children's attorney with the Family Dependency Treatment Court from 2010 to 2020.

First District Chief Judge Kathryn Messerich noted, "Ms. Derby generously volunteered her time, legal skills, and compassion while representing children in Family Dependency Treatment Court and other juvenile matters. Her advocacy insured that children's voices were always heard."

The State Guardian ad Litem Board was established by legislation in 2010 to administer a statewide, independent Guardian ad Litem Program to advocate for the best interest of children in juvenile and family courts. The Program Administrator, who reports to the Board, supervises program managers from the state's 10 judicial districts.

When a court is making decisions that will affect a child's future, the child needs an objective adult to provide independent information about the best interests of the child. While other parties in the

case are concerned about the child, the Guardian ad Litem is the only person in the case whose sole concern is the best interests of the child. They provide recommendations to the court regarding the short- and long-term best interests of the child based on interviews with and observations of the child and significant people in their lives, as well as a review social service, medical, school, psychological, and criminal records and reports.

"The First Judicial District is grateful for the guardians' dedication to the safety and well-being of children," said Chief Judge Messerich. "All of the First District judges know how valuable the guardians' input is and appreciate how they serve as the child's advocate in child protection and family law cases."

Equal Justice Committee Prioritizes Work, Connects with Community

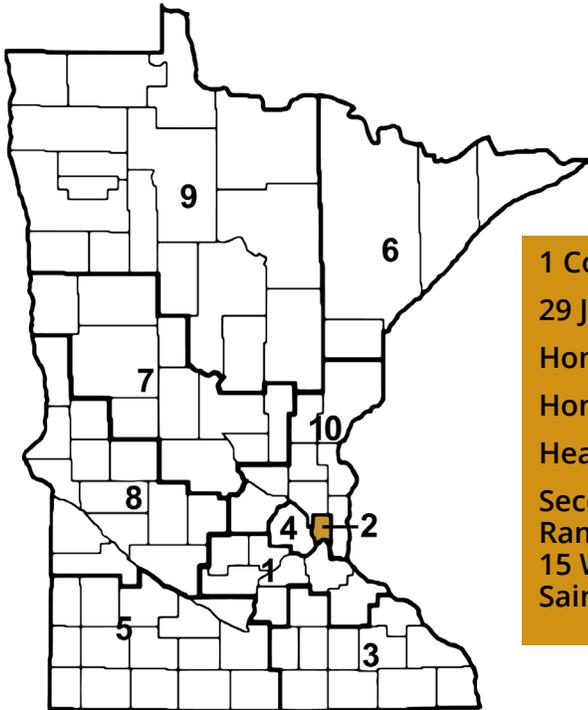
The Equal Justice Committee in the First Judicial District prioritized its work in 2020 in three areas: examine pretrial release and felony dispositions to determine whether there is any correlation regarding race and ethnicity; conduct a study on probation revocation rates and disproportionate revocation rates on minority populations; and address mental health issues in the courts. Other initiatives included:

- Presented "First Things First! Racial Equity Foundations" during an annual All Staff training event that was attended by more than 180 employees in the district.
- Provided opportunity for all staff to participate in and provide feedback in a redesign of "Why Diversity Matters" training.
- Held online community listening sessions with Dakota County Family Court to address pandemic case processing.
- Held Speaking of Court listening sessions in partnership with various Dakota County School Districts.
- Implemented, with assistance of the local bar, a pro bono late-term evaluative mediation program for low-income cases that are scheduled for trial.
- Dakota County Housing Court, with the

assistance of the local bar and justice partners, held online community listening sessions and provided handouts and materials for litigants facing eviction during the pandemic.

- Judge Richelle Wahli continued working with Henry Sibley Warrior Seminar Students on justice and the Minnesota Judicial Branch.
- Judge Jody Winters provided education to district court staff on Indian Child Welfare issues.
- Judge Martin Fallon presented "The Use (and Abuse) of Injunctive Relief in Trust Litigation" to the Minnesota State Bar Association Probate & Trust Section Conference.

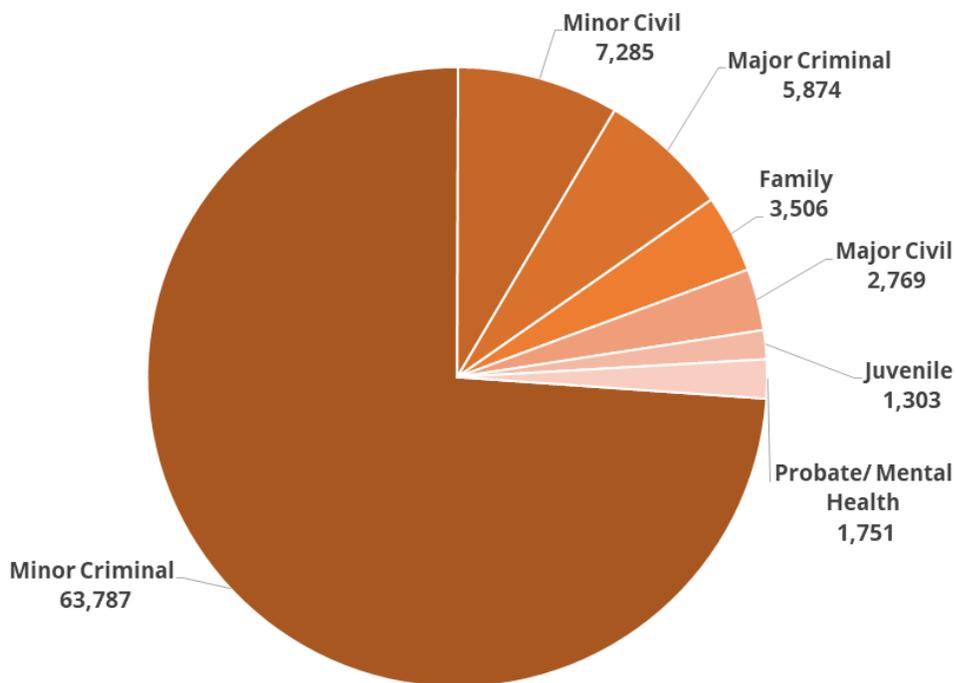
Second Judicial District



1 County: Ramsey
29 Judgeships, 5 Referees, 3 Child Support Magistrates
Hon. Leonardo Castro, Chief Judge
Hon. Sara Grewing, Assistant Chief Judge
Heather M. Kendall, District Administrator
Second Judicial District Administration
Ramsey County Courthouse
15 West Kellogg Boulevard
Saint Paul, MN 55102

2020 Second Judicial District Case Filings

2020 Total Filings: 86,275



Warrant Response Initiatives Launched

The Criminal Division of Ramsey County District Court in the Second Judicial District made significant adjustments in 2020 to support court appearances, while also reducing potential harm to the community and individuals, particularly in cases with active warrants.

A Walk-in Warrant Pilot was performed for the first two months of 2020. Defendants with active warrants appeared in person, court administration identified cases and sent them for judicial administrative review, and judicial officers reviewed warrants for potential recall and scheduled court appearances. The Pilot found that defendants appeared at their subsequent hearings in 83.3% of cases in which warrants were recalled using this process. This appearance rate is significantly higher than the overall appearance rate of 74%. The Pilot was determined to be successful, but was not continued due to the pandemic. The Court subsequently sought additional means to continue reducing reliance on warrants, and the following initiatives were developed:

- **Arrest and Release with Court Date warrants (ARC warrants):** A program was designed for judges to issue warrants that may be recalled/cleared with a court date. This now allows the Ramsey County Sheriff's Department to release individuals who have been arrested on a warrant with a notice to appear in court. It further allows Court Administration to clear warrants administratively and issue court dates if defendants appear in person at Court Administration. This program was initiated in partnership with justice agencies in Ramsey County.
- **Judicial Warrant Review:** Due to the pandemic, judges have been receiving an increased volume of warrant review requests. Justice partners, including prosecutors and defense attorneys, are now reviewing and making joint recommendations to clear warrants and schedule court dates.
- **Administrative Warrant Resolution:** This program is still in development, and is an expansion of the Pilot that will allow

individuals to present themselves to Court Administration in person, via phone, or through electronic communication on the Judicial Branch website. Court Administration will review and clear warrants that meet identified criteria, and schedule court dates. This program may include scheduling cases for remote hearings prior to clearance of related warrants.

Judicial Team Assignment Implemented

In response to the pandemic, judges assigned to the Criminal Division implemented a team approach to case assignment and caseflow management. They are now assigned to teams of three or four judges. Cases are assigned to each team as a unit, and any judge within each team may be assigned to future hearings in any of the team's cases.

The team approach allows flexibility in scheduling and calendar plan management, while also maintaining consistency for individual cases. This model also helps prioritize cases at the team level, and ensures that high-priority cases move toward trial or other resolution. It has led to greater collaboration amongst judges and improved resolution rates. Justice partners, including prosecutors and public defenders, also developed teams to improve time management and reduce hearing conflicts.

Ramsey County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council Improves System

The Ramsey County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council is a forum through which justice partners, including the Second Judicial District, collaborate to promote improvements in the criminal justice system. The Council implemented a number of initiatives and improvements in 2020:

Fines & Fees Project

A project was launched to reduce the cost of fines and fees imposed on individuals in the justice system related to probation, programming, and ancillary costs for being in custody, as well as judicially-imposed fines and fees.

Probation fees were significantly reduced or eliminated as part of the project, after an analysis was made of costs associated with collections processes, collection rates, and unpaid debt outstanding. Specifically, a write-off process was developed for debt, in alignment with Judicial Branch practices; costs were reduced for general probation fees; and costs were eliminated for low risk individuals in compliance with probation.

Costs for phone use at the Ramsey County Correctional Facility and the Law Enforcement Center were also eliminated or reduced. Contracts were renegotiated with providers, and any income derived from the phone system was eliminated or reduced. Defendants in custody in the Correctional Facility now pay at cost for the services.

Costs for utilizing commissary funds were also reduced for defendants in custody at the Ramsey County Correctional Facility. This allows family members to provide money for use by the inmate with a lower service charge for managing the funds. In addition, costs for items in commissary were reduced, and all income derived from commissary by the Correctional Facility was eliminated. All prices were audited to ensure pricing is consistent with market prices.

The project has also resulted in the current pretrial services vendor no longer charging clients fees for supervision services. Finally, Ramsey County Community Corrections reduced work release and other service fees by \$643,000 as part of the project. The project continues as additional fees and costs for defendants are analyzed.

Bail Project

A subcommittee of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council was formed to identify methods to reduce reliance on monetary bail and the number of individuals in pretrial custody, while simultaneously ensuring public safety and future court appearances. Ramsey County has been able to reduce the jail population by 50% as a result of the subcommittee's work.

Specific Pandemic Response

The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council members worked together in response to the pandemic, and several initiatives and administrative processes were identified and implemented:

- In response to an increase in electronic home monitoring for individuals sentenced to serve local time, Ramsey County supplemented costs for individuals and the facility to increase monitoring availability.
- Delegated release authority was provided to the pretrial service vendor and the Ramsey County Sheriff for release of individuals pending court process.
- Case resolution and diversion, and cases with mentally ill or cognitively-impaired decisions, were allowed to move forward administratively while efficient use of calendar/hearing time was ensured.
- Inmates in the Ramsey County Correctional Facility now receive one free 10-minute phone call each day during the pandemic.

Calendaring Practices Improved for Cases Involving Children

The Second Judicial District re-evaluated calendaring practices for cases involving children. Judges are now assigned specific dates that coincide with the schedules of justice partners, including social workers and the Ramsey County Attorney's Office. This creates flexibility in scheduling, providing all involved with more days per month for court proceedings. In the past, rescheduling could create a delay of two months or more.

The shift to remote hearings has also improved attendance rates, as participants are able to attend using their own devices off-site, or go to the courthouse to use one of Ramsey County District Court's designated tablets or viewing conference rooms. The re-evaluation involved stakeholder workgroups assembled for Child in Need of Protection or Services cases, Juvenile Delinquency cases, and Family cases, with each chaired by a judicial officer and attended by representatives of the justice partners for

each practice area, such as the Ramsey County Attorney's Office, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, and the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office. The workgroups assisted greatly in streamlining remote practices to continue hearing and processing cases, and avoiding any backlog.

Change Agent Network Drives Pandemic Work Approach

The Second Judicial District Change Agent Network conducted breakout groups remotely during the district's Annual State of the Courts event in 2020, where employees provided feedback regarding working through the pandemic, and suggestions for focus areas going forward. The discussions resulted in the successful implementation of Zoom throughout the district, the development of resources needed to work effectively from home, proper social-distancing in the Ramsey County Courthouse, and adjustments to practices to accommodate non-English speakers.

Judge George Stephenson Receives Awards

Second Judicial District Judge George Stephenson received two awards in recognition of his commitment to excellence and outstanding service to the community. The awards included The President's Award of the Minnesota District Judges Association and The Community Service Award of the Minnesota District Judges Foundation.

Equal Justice Committee Advances Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

As part of its goals to advance diversity, equity and inclusion, the Equal Justice Committee in the Second Judicial District formed three new groups in 2020:

- The Staff Equal Justice Committee will advance efforts to eliminate any bias from court operations, and make recommendations for improvement in court processes, decorum, procedures, and policies as they relate to race, gender, ethnicity, age, disabilities,

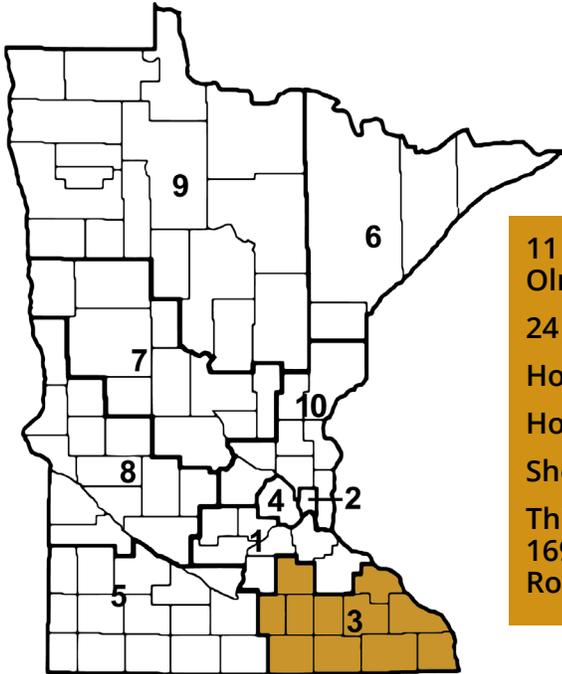
socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, and other statuses protected by law.

- The Pretrial Justice Committee will explore more meaningful pretrial service delivery that includes evidence-informed criminal justice programs, practices, and policies, and a new Pretrial Assessment Tool.
- The Landlord-Tenant Group will work toward improving the administration of housing court and meeting the needs of stakeholders based on input from people directly affected by the proceedings. The Group regularly meets with judges from the Second Judicial District, the Ramsey County Bar Association, local partners, government agencies, and the public.

Other initiatives included:

- To learn about the issues facing American Indian youth, 15 judges toured and shared a traditional meal with residents and staff of Ain Dah Yung's new 42-unit permanent supportive housing complex for American Indian youth transitioning into adulthood.
- Developed relationships with community organizations, such as Ujamaa Place, the Ramsey County Law Library, and Ramsey County service centers, to provide technology resources necessary to help people participate in or view a remote hearing.
- Partnered with Ramsey County on a print and social media campaign to reduce the failure to appear rate for outstanding warrants.
- Provided remote legal consultation support on housing matters through the Housing/Conciliation Self-Help Clinic housed in the Ramsey County Law Library.
- Judge Stephen L. Smith presented on Indian Child Welfare Act issues to the Ramsey County Bar Association Board of Directors.
- Judge JaPaul Harris presented, "What Does Justice Look Like? A Conversation about Race and the Courts," at the Minnesota Association for Court Management Fall Conference.

Third Judicial District



11 Counties: Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, Waseca, Winona

24 Judgeships, 1 Referee, 2 Child Support Magistrates

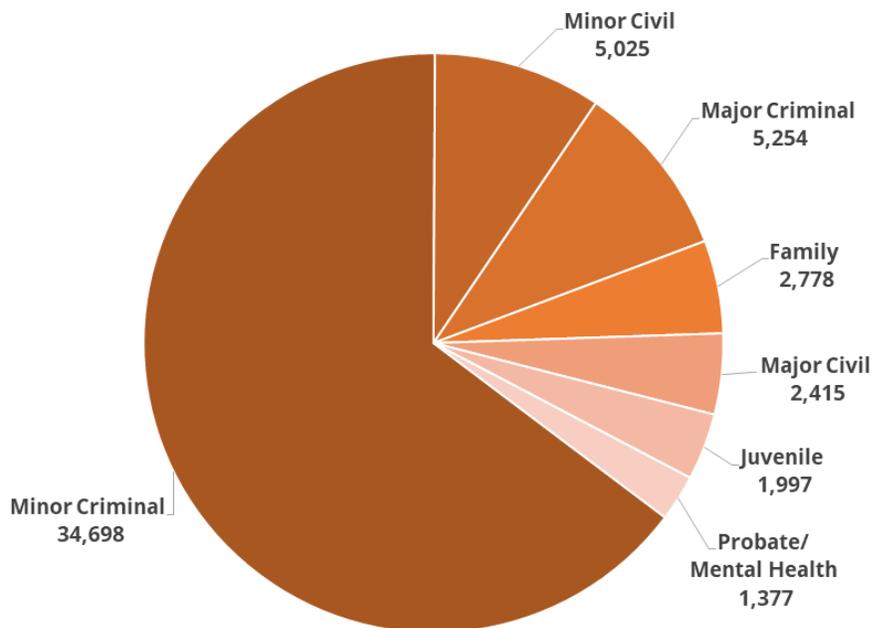
Hon. Jodi L. Williamson, Chief Judge

Hon. Joseph A. Buelteel, Assistant Chief Judge

Shelley Ellefson, District Administrator

Third Judicial District Administration
1696 Greenview Drive SW
Rochester, MN 55902

2020 Third Judicial District Case Filings
2020 Total Filings: 53,544



Works Continues on Districtwide Case Processing

Since October 2019, the Third Judicial District has been working toward fulfilling its Districtwide Case Processing vision of creating districtwide case category teams that process court administration work while sharing knowledge and resources across all county lines to enhance service and improve consistency to those we serve.

The effort includes core function teams in each courthouse that primarily provide customer service at the public counters and over the phone and perform all courtroom duties. Case processing teams process incoming files, including document acceptance, perform case initiation functions, and perform case updating functions for cases initiated in every county throughout the Third District. Districtwide Case Processing produces a consistent user service experience through the use of technology, cross-county and district collaborations, and implementation of uniform court business practices.

The Third District spent the last quarter of 2020 conducting an evaluation of the initiative, with the goal of determining what is working well and what areas require improvement.

Telephone System Upgraded

The Third Judicial District transitioned telephone systems for judges, staff in the District Office, and staff in all of its 11 courthouses to the state's Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) telephone system in June.

The transition to the new system has provided a great benefit to staff, who are now able to answer their work phones when working remotely, and to the public, as the 11 courts are able to provide backup telephone support to each other in a matter of seconds using the VOIP automated call distribution feature. The feature allows staff to see if incoming calls are intended for their

court or another they are assisting, so that they can answer the calls appropriately, eliminate confusion for callers, and provide more timely telephone customer service.

Law Clerk and Staff Workload Sharing Plans Developed

As a result of a hiring freeze in 2020 due to the pandemic, the Third Judicial District was unable to fill staff and law clerk vacancies. In an effort to share resources and equitably distribute workload among law clerks and staff throughout the district, the Third Judicial District developed a Law Clerk Sharing Plan and a Staff Workload Sharing Plan. These plans outline law clerk and staffing needs, as well as the locations and work units that would provide assistance to others. The plans were updated as clerk and staffing levels changed to ensure that judicial law clerk needs were met and to ensure that staff resources were equitably allocated throughout the district.

Third Judicial District Administrative Team and Court Operations Supervisors Receive State Court Administration Award

The Third Judicial District Administrative Team and Court Operations Supervisors received a State Court Administrator Award during the Minnesota Association for Court Management's virtual annual conference in September.

As the only Minnesota Judicial Branch-sponsored award for excellence, the State Court Administrator Award was created to honor individuals or teams who have made significant contributions toward court administration, and who have demonstrated commitment to creating, maintaining, and promoting the oneCourtMN culture.

The Administrative Team and Court Operations Supervisors were chosen for their vision and implementation on the Districtwide Case Processing Initiative. The initiative created districtwide case category teams that process court administration work while sharing

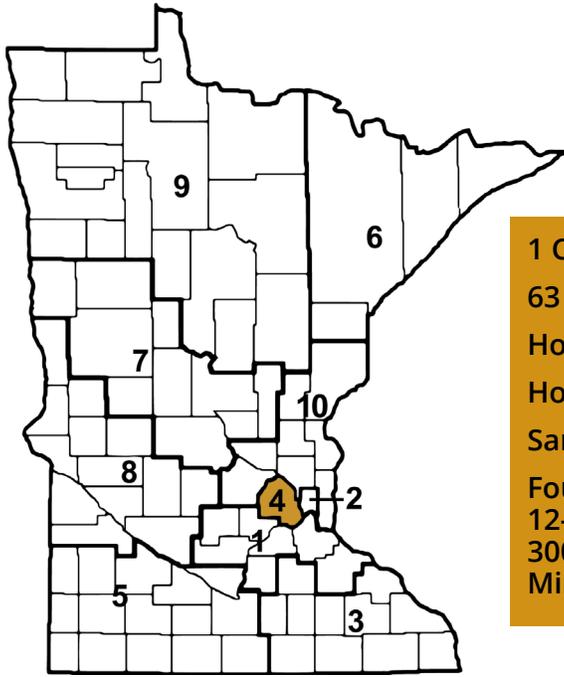
knowledge and resources across county lines within the Third Judicial District. The team included Deputy District Administrator Angie Hutchins, 11 current and former court administrators, and the District's court administrative manager. There were seven court operations supervisors who also received the award.

Equal Justice Committee Focuses on Strengthening Education and Community Partnerships

The Equal Justice Committee in the Third Judicial District focused its efforts in 2020 on enhancing education opportunities for judges and staff, as well as strengthening community partnerships. Initiatives included:

- Approved a Bias Discrimination Complaint Form and Procedure.
- Created a notice to all parties for their first hearings to determine the need for interpreters and provide them with contact information to make necessary arrangements. The notice is provided in English, Spanish, and Somali, which are the predominant languages in the communities of the Third District.
- Launched an Eviction Prevention Clinic in four counties, with plans to expand the clinic to additional counties in 2021.
- Started a book club discussion group. The first book discussed was, "So You Want to Talk About Race," by Jemma Oleo.
- Judge Karen Duncan, Chair of the Equal Justice Committee, participated in three town hall discussions on race that were organized by Better Together of Steele County.
- Participated in a Courageous Conversations community session, where implicit and explicit bias, micro-aggressions, and other racial topics were discussed.
- Continued to participate in Workforce Development's Pathways to Prosperity program to share information on careers in the Judicial Branch.
- Invited community groups to join and participate in Equal Justice Committee meetings.

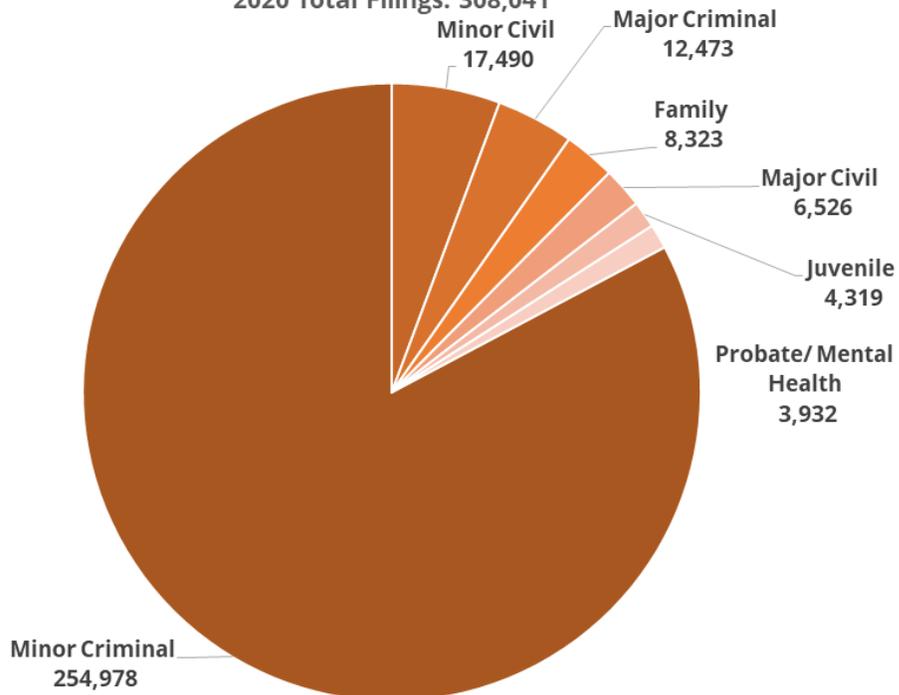
Fourth Judicial District



1 County: Hennepin
63 Judgeships, 13 Referees, 5 Child Support Magistrates
Hon. Toddrick S. Barnette, Chief Judge
Hon. Kerry W. Meyer, Assistant Chief Judge
Sarah Lindahl-Pfieffer, District Administrator
Fourth Judicial District Administration
12-C Government Center
300 South Sixth Street
Minneapolis, MN 55487

2020 Fourth Judicial District Case Filings

2020 Total Filings: 308,041



Public Defender Eligibility Application Made Available Online

In 2020, the Fourth Judicial District adapted to the move to remote hearings by altering the existing in-person Public Defender eligibility application into a web-based application.

The existing PD eligibility application had been in place for 10 years, and required court users to complete the form at a public service kiosk at any Fourth District courthouse. The kiosks generated about 20,000 applications each year.

With a drastic reduction to in-person courthouse traffic in 2020, Fourth District staff worked with State Court Administration to adapt the kiosk-based application to a web-based version. Public defender applicants can now complete the application using their own devices. Additionally, completing the applications in advance of first appearances allows for more time-efficient eligibility review by the Public Defender's Office.

The Honorable Toddrick S. Barnette Elected as Fourth Judicial District Chief Judge

The Honorable Toddrick S. Barnette was elected in May 2020 as chief judge of Minnesota's Fourth Judicial District by his fellow district court judges. He is the first person of color to serve as chief judge, and began his two-year term on July 1, 2020.

Chief Judge Barnette has served the Fourth Judicial District since February 2006, and served as Assistant Chief Judge of the District for the four years prior to becoming Chief Judge. He worked as a Senior Attorney at both the Office of the Hennepin County Public Defender and the Office of the Hennepin County Attorney prior to his appointment to the bench. Chief Judge Barnette earned his juris doctorate degree from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1992, and his bachelor's degree from George Washington University in 1988.

"I'm honored to serve as Chief Judge and have

Judge Kerry Meyer as the Assistant Chief Judge," said Chief Judge Barnette. "We want to continue to work with my colleagues to provide access to justice, while seeking more innovative and effective ways to serve the public and ensure public trust in our courts."

Probate/Mental Health Division Quickly Goes Remote

The Probate/Mental Health Division of the Fourth District adapted quickly to orders from Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea in March that directed all court proceedings be held by Interactive Television (ITV) or phone as soon as practical due to the pandemic. In just two days, thanks to the extensive work of court staff collaborating with a wide variety of justice partners, ITV commitment hearings replaced in-person hearings that had been taking place prior to the pandemic. The number of commitment cases heard has increased during the pandemic, but none have had delays or have needed additional court personnel resources.

Conciliation Court Moves

In September 2020, a long-awaited project to move Conciliation Court staff from their location in Minneapolis City Hall to the Hennepin County Government Center began. The project, which will be completed in April 2021, fulfills a goal to bring Conciliation Court staff and services behind weapons screening, along with significant improvements to courtrooms and floor space. Staff are now located on the same floor as other Civil Division staff, with a dedicated courtroom on the 14th floor of the Hennepin County Government Center.

Equal Justice Committee Advances Racial Equity Commitment

The Fourth Judicial District continued to advance its existing Racial Equity Commitment, while also focusing on creating a more holistic, integrated, and sustainable Diversity, Equity & Inclusion strategy in 2020. The Equal Justice Committee,

along with the presiding judges of each court division, are divided into work groups to make real changes on identified disparities.

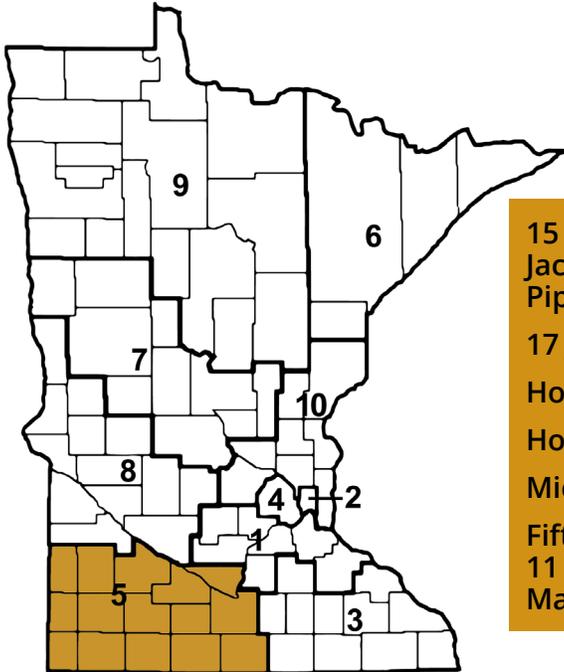
There are also three additional groups integral to advancing the Racial Equity Commitment: the Racial Equity Strategic Leadership Team, the Access Inclusion Diversity Equity Program, and the Core Government Alliance on Race Equity Team.

Other initiatives included:

- Established the Youth Justice Council, a collaborative effort among Hennepin County juvenile justice system stakeholders and community members committed to creating an equitable, fair, and effective juvenile justice system. The Council's mission is to improve and reform the juvenile justice system by eliminating the unnecessary use of secure detention; eliminating disparities based on race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability; and providing resources to effective community-based and culturally-appropriate services for youth and their families.
- Formed the Treatment Courts Equal Justice Committee. The Committee examines the referral and triage process for treatment courts through the lens of racial equity, dissecting the entire process from the time individuals are first referred to treatment court until they graduate or end their time in treatment court.
- Launched a full-time Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Team, composed of two diversity equity and inclusion staff, devoted to advancing justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion across the Fourth District.
- Launched a districtwide newsletter, "4th Dimension," to enhance organizational connectivity, including, and especially surrounding, racial equity-related issues.
- Created a race equity training program for middle management/supervisors. An Executive Track for District leadership is currently in development.
- Provided more than a dozen opportunities for staff to engage in learning, sharing, and understanding diversity, equity, and inclusion,

- with a focus on cultural and community perspectives and court tools and resources.
- Held brainstorming sessions with staff in each court division on areas of potential racial disparities in their divisions. This work led to a half-day virtual training mandated for all judges to review the data, discuss areas of concern, and identify actionable steps to reduce disparities.
- Hosted a listening session for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) employees following the death of George Floyd.
- Judge Tanya Bransford participated in the KMOJ program, "Voices," regarding the former Racial Bias Task Force.
- Judge Juan Hoyos visited the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota to partner with the Native American community outside of Minnesota.
- Worked on a Community Dialogue with St. Thomas Law School, which held weekly sessions to discuss bias in the criminal justice system with its faculty and students.
- Partnered with Tubman Family Services to create a remote hearing access portal for community members to use to participate in remote hearings when their access to required technology may be limited.
- Conducted a pilot with Village Arms, a non-profit organization dedicated to aiding and assisting African American youth and families that have had contact with the child protection system, to use active efforts to keep families together.

Fifth Judicial District



15 Counties: Blue Earth, Brown, Cottonwood, Faribault, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Martin, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock, Watonwan

17 Judgeships, 2 Child Support Magistrates

Hon. Michelle A. Dietrich, Chief Judge

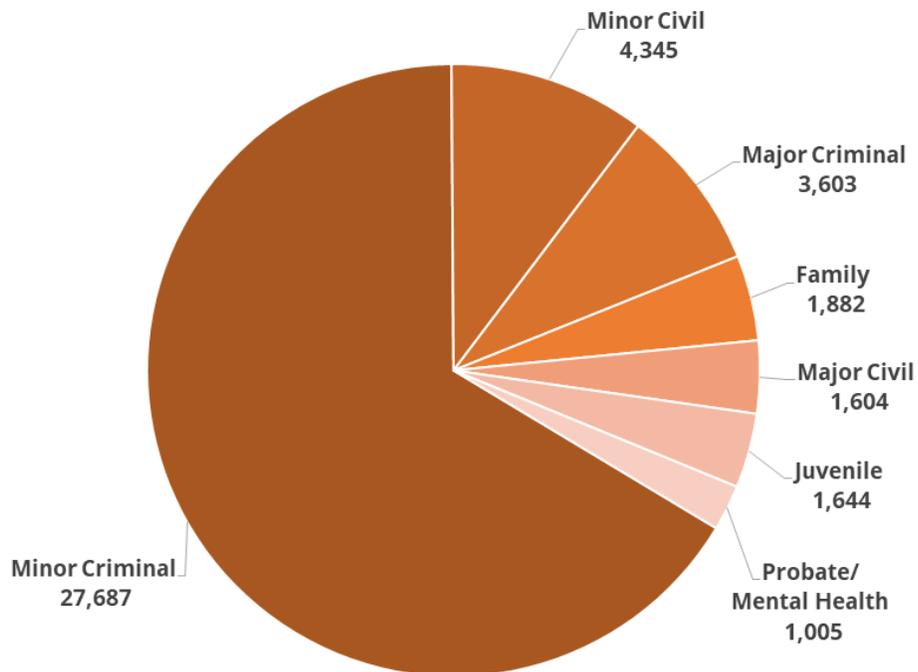
Hon. Gregory J. Anderson, Assistant Chief Judge

Michael J. Kelley, District Administrator

Fifth Judicial District Administration
11 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 205
Mankato, MN 56001

2020 Fifth Judicial District Case Filings

2020 Total Filings: 41,770



Task Manager Implemented

The Fifth Judicial District successfully completed the rollout of Task Manager, an electronic tool to drive more consistent case processing practices across the district. Implementation started on January 9, 2020 in Blue Earth and Watonwan counties, and concluded on February 21, 2020 in Cottonwood and Murray counties. Countless hours of preparation and discussion preceded the rollout, with input received from court staff, leadership, and judges, and a partnership with State Court Administration. Task Manager helps improve access to justice and meets a core priority of the Judicial Branch to modify access and service delivery levels in the context of technology developments, demographics, business process changes, and limited state resources.

Fifth District Achieves Highest Major Criminal Case Clearance Rate during Pandemic

The Major Criminal case clearance rate in the Fifth District was 72% at the end of August 2020; the highest clearance rate of any judicial district at the time. The Other Side Workgroup set case disposition targets for each judicial district as they resumed case hearings and in-person trial activity. Each district was to increase its clearance rate for Major Criminal cases by 10% from August 31, 2020 to December 1, 2020. By December 1, the Fifth District's Major Criminal case clearance rate had increased to 82%; still the highest amongst all districts. The District was able to achieve its high clearance rates through extraordinary levels of collaboration with business partners,

Self-Help Workshops Go Virtual

The temporary closure of court facilities and the necessity of social distancing due to the pandemic required in-person self-help workshops to be replaced by remote meeting technology in administering legal assistance in 2020. The technology allowed the Fifth District to continue to provide unbundled legal information and

review of legal documents for parties that are self-represented. The new process for legal assistance has boosted attendance because no travel time is involved, as litigants can participate by phone, laptop, or desktop computer. Also, staff attorneys providing assistance are able to attend from their offices, homes or other locations, and thus are not impacted if a session is canceled at the last minute. The remote meetings have received positive feedback, and align with a strategic priority of the Judicial Branch to provide resources to improve accessibility to the courts for self-represented litigants and vulnerable adults.

Lobby Calendar Displays Installed

The Fifth District began installing lobby calendar displays in several courthouses in 2020. The initiative will reduce customer wait times at counters for those looking to confirm courtroom locations and/or hearing times. The project was initiated in response to feedback from the recent Access & Fairness Survey, and aligns with the Judicial Branch's strategic goals to provide effective administration of justice and high-quality, consistent, and convenient customer experience.

Equal Justice Committee Expands Community Outreach

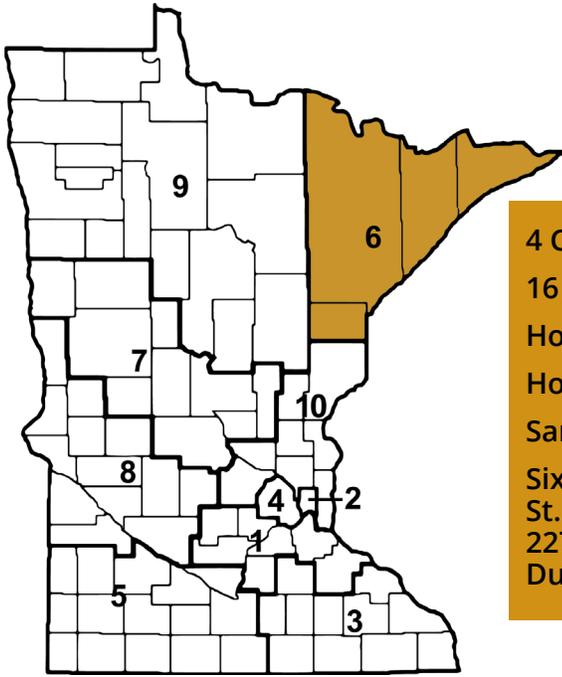
The Fifth District Equal Justice Committee applied lessons learned from the pandemic to find innovative solutions through the use of technology in 2020. Initiatives included:

- Examined ways to expand and sustain remote interpreting services to better serve a diverse population.
- Initiated plans to host more virtual Community Dialogue sessions in area communities.
- Worked with the Tapestry Project to learn more about diverse cultures in area communities and the issues they face, provide information on the judicial system and resources, and contribute to a strong foundation for a connected and inclusive community.
- Initiated efforts to enhance outreach with schools, and assessed how to use technology to engage parents and students in opportunities

to learn about the courts.

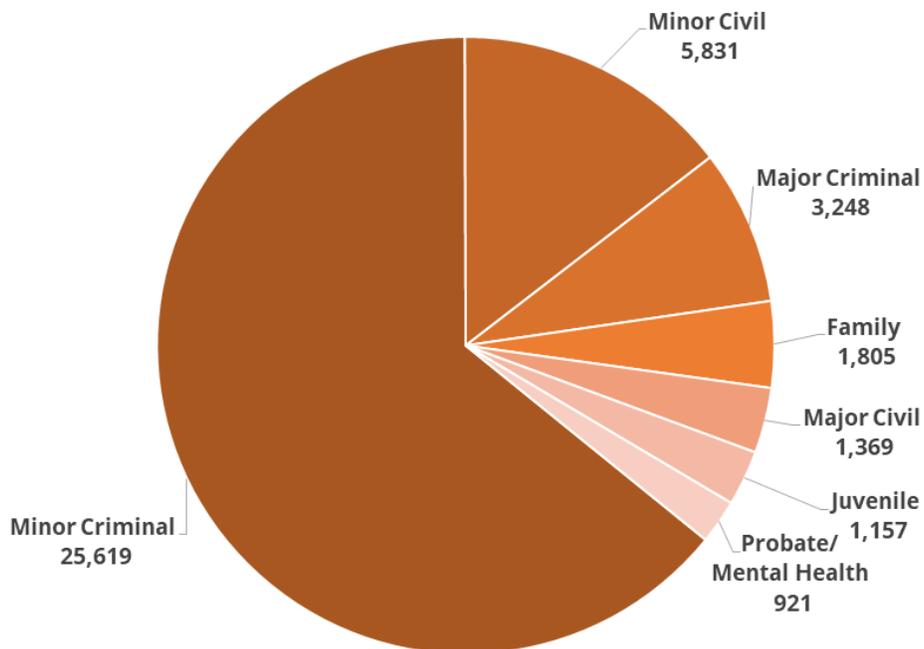
- Initiated efforts to engage with students from Minnesota State Mankato, which has the largest law enforcement program in the state.
- Hosted a successful Community Dialogue in St. Peter that featured information-sharing and reflective listening among judges, county attorneys, social services agencies, teachers, and community members.
- In addition, Fifth District Judge Robert Docherty attended a school Community Dialogue to discuss truancy during the pandemic due to the lack of access to technology and “dead zones” for Internet connections.

Sixth Judicial District



4 Counties: Carlton, Cook, Lake, St. Louis
16 Judgeships, 1 Referee, 2 Child Support Magistrates
Hon. Michael J. Cuzzo, Chief Judge
Hon. Leslie E. Beiers, Assistant Chief Judge
Sara Taylor, District Administrator
Sixth Judicial District Administration
St. Louis County Courthouse
227 West First Street, Suite 302
Duluth, MN 55802

2020 Sixth Judicial District Case Filings
2020 Total Filings: 39,950



Veterans Treatment Court Receives 2020 St. Louis County Public Health Achievement Award

The Veterans Treatment Court team was recognized for its work to improve community health with the 2020 St. Louis County Public Health Achievement Award. The award, presented by the St. Louis County Board of Commissioners and the Public Health and Human Services Department, recognizes and honors community organizations, businesses or residents who demonstrate a commitment to improving the health of individuals, families, and communities in St. Louis County

- Participated in a book discussion and participated in a complimentary movie screening for the book “Just Mercy.”
- Worked with the Sixth District Treatment Courts to hold a day-long diversity and inclusion training that focused on cultural competency for drug court participants.
- Sponsored a local theatre performance of “The Meeting” which features a hypothetical meeting between Malcolm X and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Hosted a virtual mock trial day for local students.

St. Louis County Housing Court Participates in Legal Paraprofessional Pilot

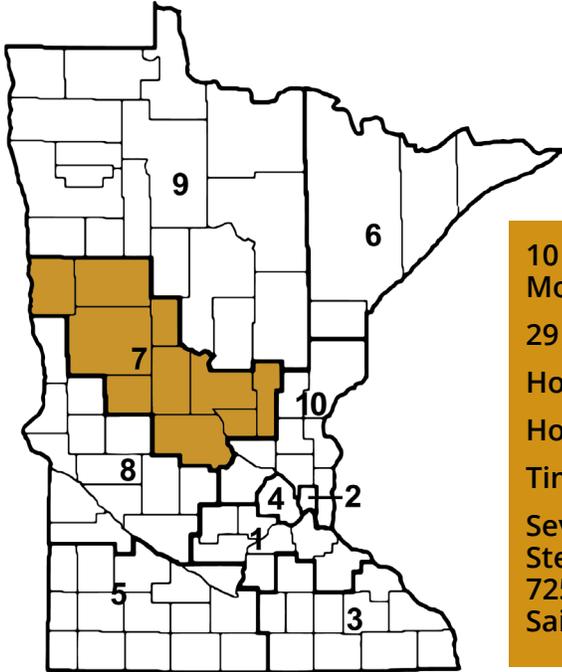
The St. Louis County housing court was selected to serve as one of the pilot locations for the Legal Paraprofessionals Pilot Program. The Pilot allows legal paraprofessionals to provide legal advice and represent a client in court in housing disputes and in certain family law cases dealing with child support, parenting time, paternity matters, and in informal family court proceedings.

Equal Justice Committee Enhances Community Partnerships

The Equal Justice Committee in the Sixth Judicial District focused its work in 2020 on enhancing partnership with community organizations. Initiatives included:

- Partnered with the organizer of the Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial in Duluth to participate in events commemorating the 100th anniversary of the only known instance of lynching in Minnesota. Many of the events were rescheduled for 2021 due to the pandemic. The Sixth Judicial District remains committed to participating in these events, which are designed to bring the community together to foster racial justice and promote healing and reconciliation.
- Partnered with Black Men Serving Excellence, a group from the University of Minnesota Duluth, to hold a virtual “Conversation with the Courts” community dialogue session.

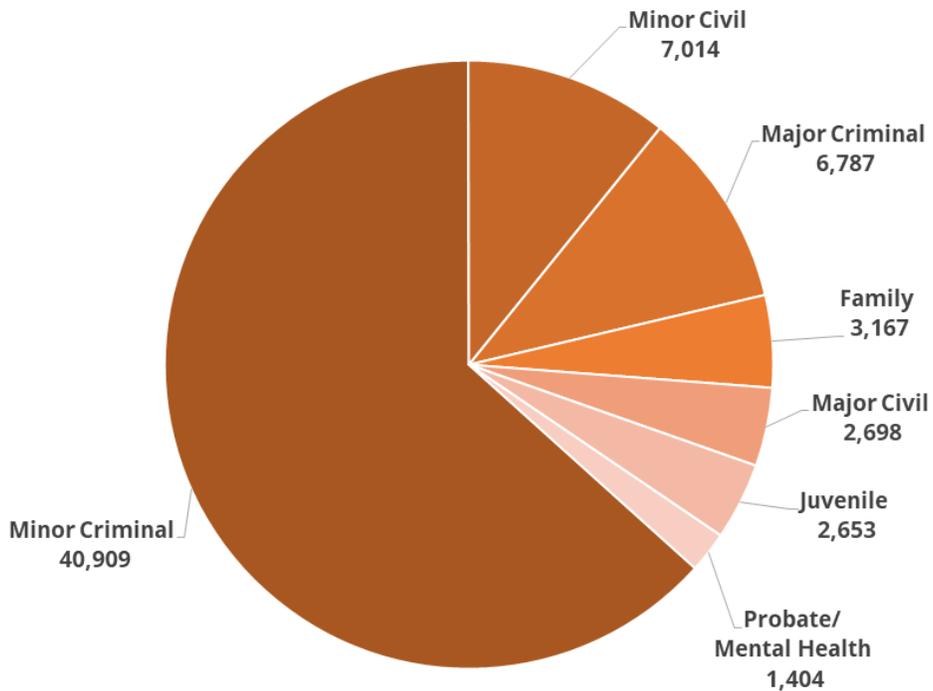
Seventh Judicial District



10 Counties: Becker, Benton, Clay, Douglas, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Otter Tail, Stearns, Todd, Wadena
29 Judgeships, 3 Child Support Magistrates
Hon. Jay D. Carlson, Chief Judge
Hon. Sarah E. Hennesy, Assistant Chief Judge
Timothy Ostby, District Administrator
Seventh Judicial District Administration
Stearns County Courthouse
725 Courthouse Square #406
Saint Cloud, MN 56303

2020 Seventh Judicial District Case Filings

2020 Total Filings: 64,632



Susan Solheim Appointed as 1st Referee in Seventh Judicial District

Susan Solheim was appointed in January 2020 as the first referee in the Seventh Judicial District. Referee Solheim's multi-county assignment covers Clay, Becker and Otter Tail Counties. In Clay County, Referee Solheim focuses on family law, harassment and domestic abuse restraining orders, guardianship/conservatorships, civil commitments, implied consents, landlord/tenant disputes, and consumer credit actions. In Otter Tail and Becker Counties, her caseloads are focused on small claims proceedings, probate matters, child support enforcement, and guardianships/conservatorships.

"The Referee position is both rewarding and challenging. I am thankful for this opportunity to be working with such an outstanding group of judges, staff and counsel," said Referee Solheim.

7th District Implements First Fully Remote Team

The Seventh Judicial implemented a Document Acceptance Team (DAT), which is the district's first fully remote team. The team, comprised of six court operations associates and a supervisor, accept between 14,000 to 16,000 case filings each month. Establishing the DAT and centralizing the work significantly improved the same day acceptance rate of filings. Currently, the team has a 100% acceptance rate for filings within 24 hours of being filed, allowing filings to move quickly and improving customer service.

Mille Lacs County Drug Court

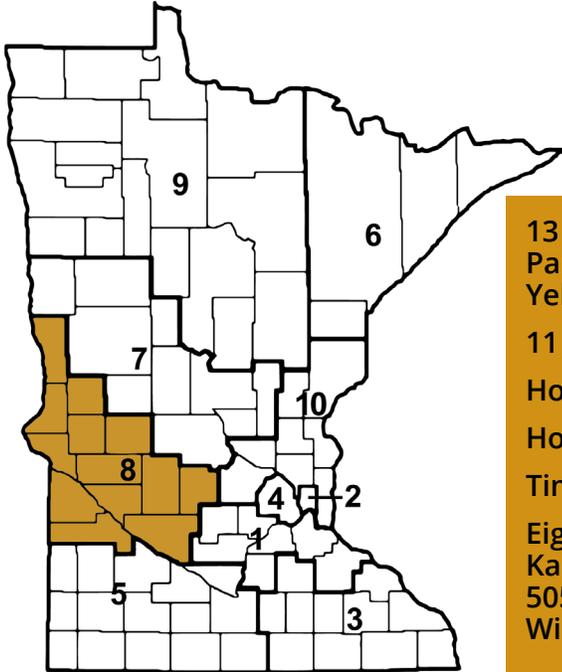
The Mille Lacs Drug Court was approved by the Judicial Council and authorized to begin operations in 2020. The program was awarded a four-year federal implementation grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The pandemic unfortunately delayed the start of the program, which will launch in 2021 when in-person court hearings are again permitted.

Equal Justice Committee Focuses on Community Collaboration

The Equal Justice Committee in the Seventh Judicial District prioritized its work on community collaboration and connecting people accused or convicted of low level criminal offenses with services and resources they need outside of the judicial system. Initiatives included:

- Established a process to avoid holding suspects with no permanent address in custody when arrested for low level criminal offenses and to connect them with community resources and services on the day of their hearing. Court administration in Stearns County reserved a day each month to hear these types of cases. Law enforcement are able to book and release individuals after providing them with notice of the court date. On the date of these hearings, public defenders and representatives from a Community Action Team (service providers, local law enforcement, social workers, non-profit mental health professionals, and the St. Cloud Veterans Affairs, and CentraCare health care workers) are present to provide individuals with information to local resources and access to services.
- Participated in a "Demystifying the Path to the Bench in the 7th Judicial District" event to encourage women and people from underrepresented communities to apply for job openings in the Judicial Branch. Judge Jeffrey Bryan from Minnesota Court of Appeals led the event, which was supported by state affinity bar organizations, representatives from the office of Governor Walz, and members of the Minnesota Judicial Selection Committee. Approximately 50 participants received an overview of the justice system, including the judicial appointment process, and participated in small group sessions with individual judges.
- Reviewed how IFPs are processed, including significant delays that cause issues for legal aid and litigants, to identify areas of improvement.
- Held a community dialogue with the Hispanic and Latino communities in Todd County.
- Expanded outreach to community organizations to identify and address needs related to the goals of the Equal Justice Committee.

Eighth Judicial District



13 Counties: Big Stone, Chippewa, Grant, Kandiyohi, Lac Qui Parle, Meeker, Pope, Renville, Stevens, Swift, Traverse, Wilkin, Yellow Medicine

11 Judgeships, 2 Child Support Magistrates

Hon. Dwayne N. Knutsen, Chief Judge

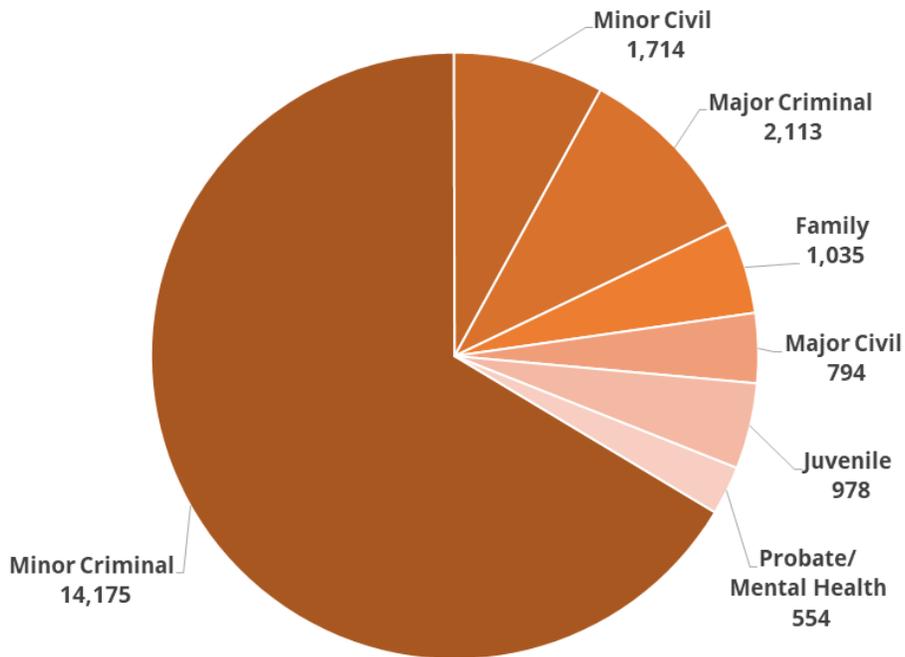
Hon. Stephanie L. Beckman, Assistant Chief Judge

Timothy Ostby, District Administrator

Eighth Judicial District Administration
Kandiyohi County Courthouse
505 Becker Avenue SW, Suite 107
Willmar, MN 56201

2020 Eighth Judicial District Case Filings

2020 Total Filings: 21,363



CHIPS Pilot Achieves Positive Outcomes

The Eighth District completed a three-year judicial specialization Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) pilot in December 2020, and chose to continue the work in 2021 due to the positive results highlighted by the pilot.

The CHIPS pilot began in January of 2018 with the Honorable Jennifer K. Fischer conducting all CHIPS cases for five counties: Kandiyohi, Meeker, Renville, Swift and Yellow Medicine. In January 2020, the pilot expanded to include two additional counties and one more CHIPS judge, the Honorable Laurence Stratton. Judge Stratton was assigned to the southern four counties of Chippewa, Lac Qui Parle, Renville and Yellow Medicine. Judge Fischer retained the central three counties of Kandiyohi, Meeker and Swift. Judge Rodney C. Hanson assumed this assignment as of January 2021.

Throughout the course of the three-year period, the State Court Administration Research and Evaluation unit monitored the pilot’s progress towards its goals, conducted an agency survey, and provide progress reports to the team. Judge Fischer created fillable order following hearing templates, which are now available for use across the Minnesota Judicial Branch. A final pilot evaluation is planned for early 2021, but the initial

results revealed improvements with length of time to permanency, timely filing of permanency petitions, orders issued timely following hearing, parent representation at Emergency Protective Care hearings, and children representation at admit/deny hearings.

Judicial Master Calendar

2020 marked the Eighth District’s seventh year of providing judicial master calendar assistance to the Seventh District. This collaborative relationship started because the Seventh District was underjudged according to the judicial weighted caseload need, and the Eighth District was slightly over their need. The use of virtual remote hearing technology in 2020 lessened the amount of travel time for judges, providing them with the ability to more coverage remotely while supporting Stearns and Clay Counties.

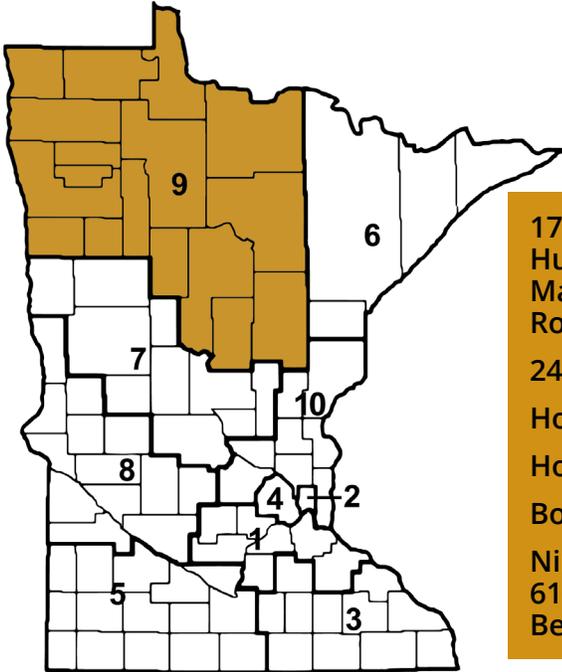
Equal Justice Committee Focuses on Implicit Bias and Community Connections

The Equal Justice Committee in the Eighth Judicial District focused its work in 2020 on enhancing connections to high schools and colleges to engage with students from diverse backgrounds on the role of the courts and the career opportunities that exist in the judicial system. Initiatives included:

- Examined virtual Community Dialogues to further engage with community groups working on diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Reconnected with colleges to host “Lunch & Learns” to share information about careers in the judicial system.
- Presented the Minnesota Judicial Branch’s response to COVID-19 to the Willmar Rotary Club and discussed the need for continued access to court operations and services.
- Participated in a Ramp Up event with 30 students at Willmar High School to help increase the diversity of students preparing for college while sharing information on the role of the courts various careers in the Judicial Branch.
- Presented "Minnesota Courts: Promoting Equal Access and Exciting Careers in the Judicial Branch" to Ridgewater College students.

	Pre-Pilot	Pilot
Length of Time to Permanency (Permanency established within 18 months of out-of-home placement)	91%	98%
Timeliness of Permanency Petition (Permanency petition filed with 335 days of removal of the child)	68%	88%
Timely Issuance of Orders		
Orders issued within 5 days of a hearing	47%	95%
Scheduling Orders issued within 15 days of an admit/deny hearing	49%	99%
Parent Representation at EPC hearings	60%	90%
Children Representation at Admit/Deny hearings	70%	86%

Ninth Judicial District



17 Counties: Aitkin, Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, Kittson, Koochiching, Lake of the Woods, Mahnommen, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, Roseau

24 Judgeships, 2 Child Support Magistrates

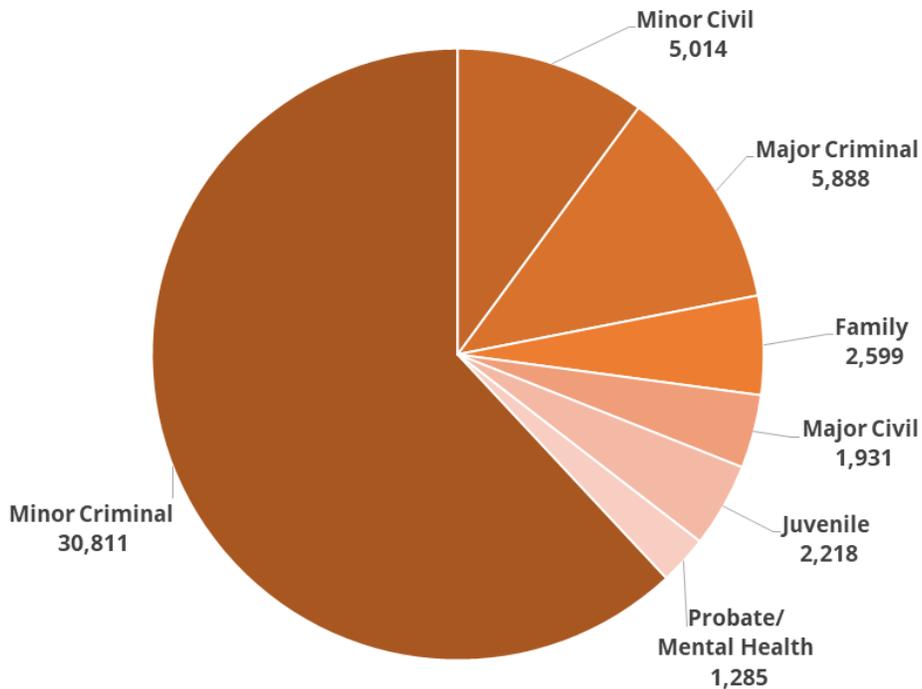
Hon. Tamara L. Yon, Chief Judge

Hon. Jana M. Austad, Assistant Chief Judge

Bob Sommerville, District Administrator

Ninth Judicial District Administration
616 America Avenue NW #250
Bemidji, MN 56601

2020 Ninth Judicial District Case Filings
2020 Total Filings: 49,746



Centralized Calendar and New Referees Help Judges Address Case Backlog

The Ninth Judicial District created a centralized calendaring system for all 17 Counties and hired two temporary referees and staff to handle all district Orders for Protection, Harassment Restraining Orders, Commitment, Probate, Conciliation and non-contested hearings. This allowed district court judges to focus on addressing case backlog and continue to improve on case backlog dispositions.

Centralizing Accounts Receivable to Ensure Financial Accuracy

To ensure financial processes are handled correctly, the Ninth Judicial District created a team that handles all the reviews of the Accounts Receivable reports and updates the cases as needed. There are two units in the district that have staff designated to complete this important work for the entire district and ensure constant compliance with the policy.

Retirements and Appointments

Two judges in the Ninth Judicial District retired in 2020: Judge Paul Benshoof in Beltrami County and Judge Chad Leduc in Koochiching County. The Ninth Judicial District welcomed three judges in 2020:

Judge Corey Harbott in Marshall County, Judge Jeanine Brand in Beltrami County, and Judge Jerrod Shermoen in Koochiching County.

Equal Justice Committee Focuses on Community Connections

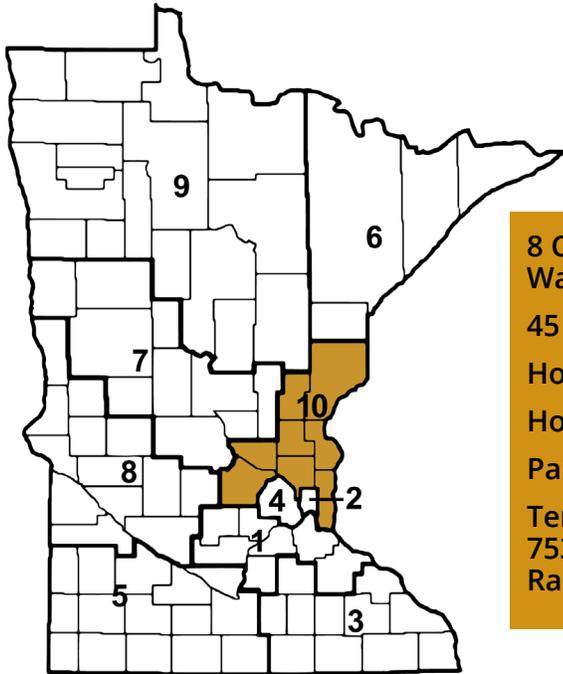
The Equal Justice Committee in the Ninth Judicial District welcomed new members to its committee in 2020, and focused a majority of its work on county-specific initiatives. Initiatives included:

- Itasca County received a grant from the Bush Foundation to use a family-centered approach to explore why probation is revoked for certain persons. Itasca County is collaborating with the

Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe on a two-year pilot program, which also includes representation from community members, health and human services, child protection services, and mental health services.

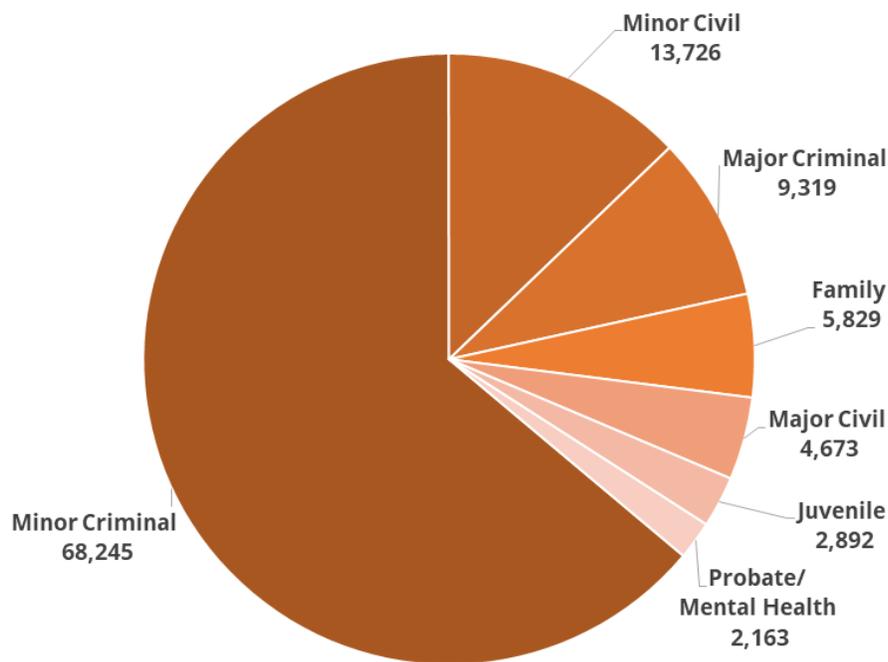
- Judge Annie Claesson-Huseby hosted a virtual tour of the Beltrami County Judicial Center with a local elementary school, which was followed by a presentation on the Judicial Branch and question and answer period with the students.
- Judge Claesson-Huseby participated in a community event hosted by Supreme Court Justice Paul Thissen at the Northwest Indian Community Development Center.
- Itasca County is collaborating with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe to provide kiosks in tribal communities to improve access to hearings and address internet connectivity issues experienced in rural areas.
- Judge Eric Schieferdecker is working with the White Earth Tribal Court to develop a joint jurisdiction treatment court.

Tenth Judicial District



8 Counties: Anoka, Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Pine, Sherburne, Washington, Wright
45 Judgeships, 4 Child Support Magistrates
Hon. Stoney L. Hiljus, Chief Judge
Hon. Elizabeth H. Strand, Assistant Chief Judge
Paul Patterson, District Administrator
Tenth Judicial District Administration
7533 Sunwood Drive NW, Suite 306
Ramsey, MN 55303

2020 Tenth Judicial District Case Filings
2020 Total Filings: 106,847



Task Manager

The Tenth Judicial District implemented the Task Manager application, which is designed to support a paperless environment for court administration and judges by providing the tools and technology to electronically route, edit, sign and file documents. This process began in April 2019 and was fully implemented by August 2020. Task Manager provides more consistency across the Tenth Judicial District, better supports the ability for staff to work across county lines, and creates more efficient case processing.

PICK (Pine, Isanti, Chisago and Kanabec) Unification Efforts

The PICK judges, court administrators and Senior Judge John McBride worked on a new unified calendar and case management plan for Pine, Isanti, Chisago and Kanabec counties. These counties, the smallest by population in the Tenth Judicial District, will benefit by leveraging their combined resources to provide more efficient, consistent services throughout these counties. In addition to a unified calendar and case management plan, these counties have centralized financial duties, centralized their telephone support system by implementing a voice over internet protocol (VoIP) system, and by holding twice-monthly meetings to further unify court administration processes.

New Wright County Courthouse

Wright County proudly opened their new 155,000 square foot Justice Center in October 2020. The design includes future space for growth, based on 25 year projections. The Wright County bench and the Wright County commissioners began working on this project in 2012 to effectively address inadequate court space, the inability to use technology in the previous courthouse, and the need to address significant safety concerns.

The new Justice Center includes nine courtrooms equipped with state of the art technology, including evidence presentation systems. The

large jury assembly room provides a great deal of natural light and comfortable seating options for jurors. Another welcome improvement is the addition of a public cafeteria that can be used by both employees and members of the public.

Tenth District Judges and Staff Recognized in 2020

Judge Krista Martin received the Tammi A. Frederickson Judicial Service Award for her accomplishments as a mentor judge and faculty member, a formal and informal mentor, service on Judicial Council, her role in establishing the Early Neutral Evaluation program in the PICK (Pine, Isanti, Chisago, Kanabec) counties, and as Chair of the Other Side Work Committee. Judge Douglas Meslow said, "Judge Martin blends wisdom, humor, and compassion to make things better in the Judicial Branch as a whole, and in the lives of judges and court staff who are lucky to have her as a colleague and a friend."

Judge Mary Yunker received a Special Recognition Award for her accomplishments chairing the Minnesota District Judges Foundation Program and Education Committee for 15 years, presenting the Criminal Law Review at the Minnesota District Judges Association Fall Judges Conference for 15 years, and preparing checklists for use by judges in their everyday work.

Sheldon Clark, Deputy District Administrator, received the Champion of Change Award for fostering collaboration to promote innovation by embracing opportunities to utilize technology and other resources to increase efficiencies and productivity in the work place. Sheldon has been instrumental in finding and implementing critically needed technological and process changes in a few short months that would normally have taken years.

Marianne Setala, Court Operations Manager, received the Pandemic Hero Award. The award recognizes a person who has excelled and shown vigilant dedication to the court during the pandemic and who has demonstrated exceptional

service, leading the transition, skilled resumption planning, and supportive and patient with the teams they lead. Marianne worked tirelessly to find creative solutions to address remote and hybrid court calendaring, as well as solutions to address the case backlog in Anoka County.

Tracy Gullerud, Deputy District Administrator, received the inaugural State Court Administrator's Award for her significant contributions toward court administration excellence and commitment to achieving the oneCourtMN vision. Tracy continues to find creative solutions to working smarter, while maximizing the resources and talent available.

Equal Justice Committee Expands the Conversation on Diversity & Inclusion

The Equal Justice Committee in the Tenth Judicial District initiated new efforts to ensure that the committee's broad representation of community stakeholders, justice partners and judges could continue to advance its priorities during the pandemic and beyond.

- Initiated a workgroup, comprised of judges and human resources team members, to establish goals on diversity and inclusion, expand this conversation districtwide, and develop a diversity and inclusion training program.
- Launched a mentorship/internship program to work with bar associations and other groups to increase diversity in the local legal community.
- Examined districtwide hiring practices as a means to create a more diverse workforce.
- Explored training and other opportunities to build understand of the importance of diversity and inclusion, and help identify biases that we may not be aware of.
- Worked with a cultural competency coach to help bridge the cultural education gap and hosted an event in Pine County that was open to all judges and staff in the Tenth District.
- Conducted outreach to high schools to gain feedback on the courts from a youth perspective.
- Began developing a larger diversity and inclusion training program for the Tenth District that will be coordinated through Human Resources division. Two Human Resources

staff completed an Introduction to Racism Course, and five members of the team viewed and participated in a discussion on the book "Uncomfortable Conversations with Black Man" by Emmanuel Acho.

- Participated in a "Demystifying the Path to the Bench in the 10th Judicial District" event to encourage women and people from underrepresented communities to apply for judicial openings.
- Participated in a Graduation to Gavel event with the Infinity Project.
- Examined housing court eviction issues between landlords and tenants and assessed the development of resources to help those who represent themselves in these proceedings.
- Anoka County continued to develop a Housing Clinic, which will play a key role in addressing the potential influx of eviction cases that may result when the moratorium on evictions during the peacetime emergency gets lifted.

Chief Judge Edward Cleary
 Judge:
 2011 - October 2013
 Chief Judge:
 November 2013 - April 2020

Chief Judge Susan Segal
 Judge:
 2019 - April 2020
 Chief Judge:
 May 2020 - present

Judge Renee L. Worke
 2005 - present

Judge Kevin G. Ross
 2006 - present

Judge Francis J. Connolly
 2008 - present

Judge Matthew E. Johnson
 Judge:
 2008 - Nov. 2010;
 Nov. 2013 - present

Chief Judge:
 Nov. 2010 - Oct. 2013

Judge Michelle A. Larkin
 2008 - present

Judge Louise Dovre Bjorkman
 2008 - present

Judge Carol Hooten
 2012 - present

Judge Denise D. Reilly
 2014 - present

Judge Peter M. Reyes, Jr.
 2014 - present

Judge Lucinda E. Jesson
 2016 - present

Judge Tracy M. Smith
 2016 - present

Judge Diane B. Bratvold
 2016 - present

Judge James B. Florey
 2017 - present

Judge Jeanne M. Cochran
 2018 - present

Judge Randall J. Slieter
 2018 - present

Judge Jeffrey Bryan
 2019 - present

Judge Jennifer L. Frisch
 2020 - present

Judge Theodora Gaitas
 2020 - present

Court of Appeals

19 Members, Three-Judge Panels

Appeals from:

District court decisions (except first-degree murder convictions), administrative agency decisions (except Tax Court & Workers' Compensation Court), decisions of local governments

Original Actions:

Writs of mandamus or prohibition, which order a trial judge or public official to perform or not perform a certain act.

2020 Court of Appeals Case Information

Case Type	Cases Filed	Dispositions
General Civil	371	360
Criminal	591	804
Administrative Rule	11	7
Economic Security	70	63
Writs - Certiorari	64	53
Habeas/Certified Questions	18	13
Commitment	31	34
Family	183	191
Juvenile Delinquency	17	16
Juvenile Protection	81	65
Implied Consent	12	17
Discretionary Review/Writs	78	81
Probate	24	31
Unlawful Detainer/Eviction	7	15
Total	1,558	1,750

Court of Appeals in 2020

The Minnesota Court of Appeals provides impartial, thorough and timely review of final decisions of the district courts and certiorari review of decisions of state agencies and local governments. The opinions issued by the Court of Appeals are the final decisions in approximately 94% of cases filed, with Supreme Court review granted in the remaining six percent of cases.

The Court of Appeals is composed of 19 judges who hear cases in three-judge panels at the Minnesota Judicial Center in St. Paul and at various locations around the state. The Court resolved 1,750 cases in 2020, compared to just over 1,550 new cases filed. The court filed opinions in 1,205 cases, issued about 1,700 orders, heard oral arguments in over 500 cases, and considered more than 770 additional cases at nonoral conferences. The Court addressed a number of cases involving issues of first impression and public importance in 2020, filing published, precedential opinions in 80 cases. 163 appeals were referred to the Court's Family Law Appellate Mediation Program in 2020. 33% of the cases mediated were resolved by agreement of the parties, reducing overall costs and delays for many families.

Total new filings in 2020 were lower than 2019 and other recent years, in large part due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The court's processing of cases was not delayed by the pandemic, except for delays in oral arguments during the first few months. With the transition to virtual platforms for conducting oral arguments, even this delay was quickly remedied. The court did, however, grant many more briefing extensions to affected attorneys and litigants. Because the Court resolved more cases in 2020 than were filed, the Court is well-positioned to handle the likely upcoming increase in appeals as the district courts are able to hold more trials and other pandemic-related measures are lifted.

New Chief Judge and Two Appointees to Succeed Retiring Judges

In May 2020, Judge Susan Segal was appointed as chief judge of the Court of Appeals, succeeding Judge Edward J. Cleary who retired from a distinguished career after serving as chief judge for six and one-half years. Judges Jennifer L. Frisch and Theodora Gaitas joined the court, succeeding Judge Edward J. Cleary and Judge John R. Rodenberg, who also retired this last year. Judges Frisch and Gaitas were district court judges and began their service on the court during the pandemic, with Judge Frisch joining the court just days after the stay-at-home order went into effect in March 2020. Judges Cleary and Rodenberg have both accepted appointments as senior judges. The appointment of Chief Judge Segal and Judges Frisch and Gaitas continues the court's tradition of a diverse bench of judges representing a wide variety of district court, public service and private practice experience.

Court of Appeals Equality and Justice Committee Formed

The court established a standing Equality and Justice Committee in 2020, co-chaired by Judges Peter M. Reyes, Jr., and Jeffrey M. Bryan. The committee will focus its initial efforts on expanding training opportunities for Court of Appeals personnel in elimination of bias and topics highlighting diverse experiences in the law, as well as working to increase representative diversity among Court of Appeals law clerks and the attorneys who appear before the court.

Court Transitioned to Remote Oral Arguments During Pandemic

In April 2020, the court began holding oral arguments remotely in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For each remote oral argument, the court offers attorneys a practice session ahead of time to describe what to expect at oral argument and to test equipment and internet connections. Throughout 2020, the court continuously improved its procedures for remote

oral arguments in response to feedback from attorneys and other oral argument participants. Since September 2020, the court has posted the links to remote oral arguments on the court's website to ensure the public can easily join and observe oral arguments in lieu of attending in person. Audio recordings of the court's oral arguments are also posted on mncourts.gov, dating back to January 2019. In addition, the court has developed health and safety protocols, including minor modifications in its courtrooms, in anticipation of being able to return to in-person oral arguments when it becomes safe to do so.

Repeal of Publication Section of Court of Appeals Statute

Effective in August 2020, the published opinion section of the court of appeals governing statute was repealed. Following a collaborative process, the Court of Appeals recommended, and the Supreme Court promulgated, amendments to the Minnesota Rules of Civil Appellate Procedure to replace the repealed section. The amendments set out criteria for determining whether an opinion should be designated by the court as precedential or nonprecedential, and they provide parties an opportunity to include an explanation in their briefs why an opinion should or should not be designated as precedential.

Supreme Court

7 members, En Banc

Appeals from:

Court of Appeals decisions, Trial court decisions if Supreme Court decides to bypass the Court of Appeals, Tax Court decisions, Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals decisions, Review of all first-degree murder convictions

Original Actions:

Election Disputes; Professional Regulation

Chief Justice
Lorie S. Gildea
Associate Justice
2006 - June 2010
Chief Justice
July 2010 - present

Associate Justice
G. Barry Anderson
2004 - present

Associate Justice
David L. Lillehaug
2013 - July 2020

Associate Justice
Natalie E. Hudson
2015 - present

Associate Justice
Margaret H. Chutich
2016 - present

Associate Justice
Anne K. McKeig
2016 - present

Associate Justice
Paul C. Thissen
July 2018 - present

Associate Justice
Gordon L. Moore, III
August 2020 - present

2020 Supreme Court Case Information

Direct Appeals & Original Actions

Workers' Compensation	14
Tax Court	5
Professional Regulation	45
First Degree Murder	12
Writs/Miscellaneous	19
Total Direct Appeals / Original Actions	95

Petitions for Further/Accelerated Review (PFR/PAR)

Filed (PFR/PAR)	595
Review Denied	524
Granted Further/Accelerated Review	72
Other (Remand, Dismiss)	10

Opinions/Disposition Orders

Affirmed	60
Affirmed in Part	15
Reverse/Remand	20
Other (Discipline, dismiss, other disposition)	53
Total	148

David L. Lillehaug Resigns from the Minnesota Supreme Court

Supreme Court Associate Justice David L. Lillehaug resigned from the state’s highest Court on July 31, 2020. Justice Lillehaug joined the Minnesota Supreme Court on June 3, 2013.

While on the Court, Justice Lillehaug served as liaison to the advisory committees on the Rules of Criminal Procedure and the Rules of Evidence. He also served as liaison to the Client Security Board and the Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board, which required him to handle issues regarding attorney ethics and discipline on behalf of the Court. Justice Lillehaug also served as Supreme Court liaison to the tribal courts in Minnesota.

Prior to his appointment to the Court, Justice Lillehaug was an officer and shareholder at Fredrikson & Byron, P.A.; United States Attorney for the District of Minnesota; and Issues Aide and Executive Assistant to the Honorable Walter Mondale. He received his Bachelor’s degree with honors from Augustana College, and his law degree with honors from Harvard Law School. Following law school, Lillehaug clerked for the Honorable Harry MacLaughlin of the United States District Court for the District of Minnesota.

Gordon L. Moore Appointed to the Minnesota Supreme Court

On May 15, 2020, Governor Tim Walz announced the appointment of Gordon L. Moore to fill the vacancy left upon the resignation of Justice David L. Lillehaug. Associate Justice Moore joined the Court on August 3, 2020.

Upon the announcement of his appointment, Justice Moore said, “During my career as a lawyer, county attorney, and district court judge, I have continuously strived to pursue justice while maintaining the highest ethical standards the legal profession requires. Assuredly, I will continue doing my utmost to ensure the Minnesota judiciary continues its proud tradition of providing impartial justice for all.”

Prior to his appointment to the Supreme Court, Justice Moore served as a district court judge in Nobles County, chambered in Worthington, in the Fifth Judicial District. Before his appointment to the district court, Justice Moore was an associate attorney at Von Holtum, Malters & Shepherd in Worthington, and served as Special Assistant Attorney and Assistant Attorney General in the Minnesota Attorney General’s Office.



Demographic Data

In January 2016, the Lawyer Registration Office began collecting race/ethnicity information in addition to gender data from attorneys during the lawyer registration process. The following data was reported in 2020.

Active - ALL

	Active Total	Active Admitted 0 to 10 yrs	Active Admitted 11 to 20 yrs	Active Admitted 21 to 30 yrs	Active Admitted 31 to 40 yrs	Active Admitted 41+ yrs
Asian/Pacific Islander	751	383	235	112	18	3
Black/African American	588	242	165	109	57	15
Hispanic/Latino	332	167	88	55	17	5
Native American/ Alaskan	111	37	29	32	12	1
White/ Caucasian	20,031	5,451	5,266	4,096	3,301	1,917
Multiple	314	170	89	38	11	6
Choose Not to Answer	3,364	1,101	979	643	446	195
Unknown	570	534	16	10	4	6
Total	26,061	8,085	6,867	5,095	3,866	2,148

Inactive - ALL

	Inactive Totals	Inactive Adm 0 to 10 yrs	Inactive Adm 11 to 20 yrs	Inactive Adm 21 to 30 yrs	Inactive Adm 31 to 40 yrs	Inactive Adm 41+ yrs
Asian/Pacific Islander	145	41	62	34	7	1
Black/African American	84	18	25	32	6	3
Hispanic/Latino	45	8	21	8	7	1
Native American/ Alaskan	8	1	1	6	0	0
White/ Caucasian	3,036	366	901	860	678	231
Multiple	51	13	26	7	5	0
Choose Not to Answer	474	72	150	136	80	36
Unknown	2	0	1	0	1	0
Total	3,845	519	1,187	1,083	784	272

Demographic Data

In January 2016, the Lawyer Registration Office began collecting race/ethnicity information in addition to gender data from attorneys during the lawyer registration process. The following data was reported in 2020.

Male Active

	Male Active Totals	Male Active Adm 0 to 10 yrs	Male Active Adm 11 to 20 yrs	Male Active Adm 21 to 30 yrs	Male Active Adm 31 to 40 yrs	Male Active Adm 41+ yrs
Asian/Pacific Islander	335	161	108	54	10	2
Black/African American	307	108	90	67	32	10
Hispanic/Latino	158	77	38	25	14	4
Native American/ Alaskan	61	24	15	13	8	1
White/ Caucasian	11,807	2,862	2,665	2,338	2,265	1,677
Multiple	156	77	49	20	4	6
Choose Not to Answer	828	239	195	167	145	82
Unknown	16	1	5	4	2	4
Total	13,668	3,549	3,165	2,688	2,480	1,786

Male Inactive

	Male Inactive Totals	Male Inactive Adm 0 to 10 yrs	Male Inactive Adm 11 to 20 yrs	Male Inactive Adm 21 to 30 yrs	Male Inactive Adm 31 to 40 yrs	Male Inactive Adm 41+ yrs
Asian/Pacific Islander	66	22	24	16	3	1
Black/African American	31	7	8	12	2	2
Hispanic/Latino	23	6	8	6	2	1
Native American/ Alaskan	4	1	0	3	0	0
White/ Caucasian	1,465	177	379	375	357	177
Multiple	22	2	15	4	1	0
Choose Not to Answer	104	19	24	25	19	17
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1,715	234	458	441	384	198

Demographic Data

In January 2016, the Lawyer Registration Office began collecting race/ethnicity information in addition to gender data from attorneys during the lawyer registration process. The following data was reported in 2020.

Female Active

	Female Active Totals	Female Active Adm 0 to 10 yrs	Female Active Adm 11 to 20 yrs	Female Active Adm 21 to 30 yrs	Female Active Adm 31 to 40 yrs	Female Active Adm 41+ yrs
Asian/Pacific Islander	415	222	127	57	8	1
Black/African American	280	134	75	42	24	5
Hispanic/Latino	173	89	50	30	3	1
Native American/ Alaskan	48	13	13	19	3	0
White/ Caucasian	8,153	2,553	2,586	1,750	1,027	237
Multiple	157	93	39	18	7	0
Choose Not to Answer	493	196	168	81	41	7
Unknown	9	3	4	2	0	0
Total	9,728	3,303	3,062	1,999	1,113	251

Female Inactive

	Female Inactive Totals	Female Inactive Adm 0 to 10 yrs	Female Inactive Adm 11 to 20 yrs	Female Inactive Adm 21 to 30 yrs	Female Inactive Adm 31 to 40 yrs	Female Inactive Adm 41+ yrs
Asian/Pacific Islander	78	19	37	18	4	0
Black/African American	52	11	16	20	4	1
Hispanic/Latino	21	2	12	2	5	0
Native American/ Alaskan	4	0	1	3	0	0
White/ Caucasian	1,555	188	515	481	317	54
Multiple	27	10	11	3	3	0
Choose Not to Answer	83	16	19	28	16	4
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1,820	246	611	555	349	59

Demographic Data

In January 2016, the Lawyer Registration Office began collecting race/ethnicity information in addition to gender data from attorneys during the lawyer registration process. The following data was reported in 2020.

Choose Not to Answer Gender Active

	Active Totals	Active Adm 0 to 10 yrs	Active Adm 11 to 20 yrs	Active Adm 21 to 30 yrs	Active Adm 31 to 40 yrs	Active Adm 41+ yrs
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	0	0	1	0	0
Black/African American	1	0	0	0	1	0
Hispanic/Latino	1	1	0	0	0	0
Native American/ Alaskan	2	0	1	0	1	0
White/ Caucasian	71	36	15	8	9	3
Multiple	1	0	1	0	0	0
Choose Not to Answer	2,043	666	616	395	260	106
Unknown	545	530	7	4	2	2
Total	2,665	1,233	640	408	273	111

Choose Not to Answer Gender Inactive

	Inactive Totals	Inactive Adm 0 to 10 yrs	Inactive Adm 11 to 20 yrs	Inactive Adm 21 to 30 yrs	Inactive Adm 31 to 40 yrs	Inactive Adm 41+ yrs
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	0	1	0	0	0
Black/African American	1	0	1	0	0	0
Hispanic/Latino	1	0	1	0	0	0
Native American/ Alaskan	0	0	0	0	0	0
White/ Caucasian	16	1	7	4	4	0
Multiple	2	1	0	0	1	0
Choose Not to Answer	287	37	107	83	45	15
Unknown	2	0	1	0	1	0
Total	310	39	118	87	51	15

Retired

	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Black/ African American	Hispanic/ Latino	Native American/ Alaskan	White/ Caucasian	Multiple	Choose Not to Answer	Unknown
Total	3	11	3	1	1081	7	239	2599

Appellate Clerk's Office

Appellate E-filing

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the appellate courts leveraged electronic filing tools to continue court operations and provide access to justice in a largely remote work environment. Appellate e-filing consistently accounted for at least 93% of all appellate filing submissions, the largest utilization of the system since it launched in 2016. The appellate courts also heavily relied on the C-Track system, which provides appellate court personnel and judicial officers with on-demand access to evidence and exhibits via a web-based application, eliminating the end user's need for specialized viewing equipment and software.

Commitment Appeal Panels (CAP)

Commitment Appeal Panels are three-judge panels that conduct hearings when a civilly-committed patient petitions for release from a state security hospital or requests a less restrictive placement. There are three Commitment Appeal Panels in Minnesota. District court judges from the First, Second, and Tenth

judicial districts serve as chief judges of these panels. Appellate Court Clerk's Office personnel are responsible for docketing all CAP filings, conducting pre-hearing conferences, assigning three-judge panels, and scheduling the hearings.

Emergency Management Analyst Key to Pandemic Response

Recognizing the need to better prepare Minnesota's court system for local and statewide emergencies and possible courthouse closures, the Minnesota Judicial Branch hired its first statewide Emergency Management Coordinator, a position that reports to the Clerk of the Appellate Courts, in 2018.

Over the last two years, the emergency management analyst has led efforts to ensure the Judicial Branch is prepared for emergencies and able to restore core court services as quickly as possible after a disaster or catastrophic event. This work proved invaluable during 2020, as the Judicial Branch effectively responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and ensured a safe environment for court personnel and visitors at courthouses impacted by civil unrest.

Year	Number of CAP Cases Initiated
2009	54
2010	62
2011	98
2012	87
2013	106
2014	108
2015	185
2016	200
2017	193
2018	176
2019	196
2020	202

State Law Library



The Minnesota State Law Library, which is located on the ground floor of the Minnesota Judicial Center in St. Paul, provides legal information to the courts, attorneys, self-represented litigants, and the general public on a statewide basis. The Library supports the legal research needs of the appellate and district courts, and serves as the archive for the Minnesota Judicial Branch.

Typically, the library assists patrons in person at the courthouse, over the phone, via chat and email, and at five St. Paul Public Libraries. Due to COVID-19, the library moved to mostly remote service for the majority of 2020. Despite that, Library staff answered more than 9,400 questions in 2020, a 14% increase in the number of questions received in 2019. Additionally, as many public libraries were closed last year, the law library mailed 617 packets of court forms to people who did not have access to a computer and/or printer.

The Library's collection includes state and federal laws, legal treatises, practice materials, and self-help materials. In addition, patrons can use public computers, current awareness materials, and

online legal research resources such as Westlaw. The State Law Library also provides access to trial court and appellate court documents from its public terminals.

Through a collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Corrections, the State Law Library also provides legal resources to inmates of the state prisons. The Law Library Service to Prisoners librarians take requests from inmates at each of the eight primary correctional facilities in Minnesota. In person prison visits were suspended in March and librarians received questions via mail and phone, using the resources of the State Law Library. In 2020, the Library answered more than 27,000 questions from 2153 inmates (26% of the prison population). The program expenses are funded by inmate canteen and phone service fees, and are not paid for by Minnesota taxpayers.

In addition, the State Law Library provides assistance and advice to county law libraries located throughout the state. It provides training to county law library staff and regularly answers questions about collection development, budget issues, and staffing.

Appellate Self-Help Clinics

The Minnesota State Law Library hosts Self-Help Clinics to provide free assistance to individuals seeking to file an appeal with the Minnesota Court of Appeals or the Minnesota Supreme Court. The Appeals Self-Help Clinic is held monthly, and offers self-represented litigants an opportunity to have a brief meeting, at no cost, with a volunteer attorney to better understand the rules and procedures of Minnesota's appellate courts. Almost a quarter of all appeals in Minnesota involve a party who is not represented by an attorney. Volunteer attorneys are coordinated through the Appellate Practice Section of the Minnesota State Bar Association. In 2020, the

Minnesota Judicial Branch

Clinic assisted 125 people.

The State Law Library also offers a twice-monthly clinic to assist people appealing a denial of unemployment benefits to the Court of Appeals. More than 80 percent of this type of case involves a party who is unrepresented. There were 71 unemployment appeals filed in 2020, and the clinic assisted 38 people. The clinic's volunteer attorneys are primarily members of the Labor and Employment Law Section of the Minnesota State Bar Association.



**MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL
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2020 Annual Report to the Community

Produced by the State Court Administrator's Office

July 2021