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Technology

OCA's Information Services Division (ISD) is instructed by the Legislature to directly provide staff and information technology equipment and services to the two high courts, the 14 intermediate appellate courts and six judicial branch state agencies – more than 1000 users. The division also provides staff to coordinate and facilitate the work of the Judicial Committee on Information Technology (JCIT).

E-FILING

Current E-Filing statistics:

- 710,000 users handling about 43,000 filings each day across all district, county, justice, and appellate courts.
- Mandatory for attorneys in all criminal, civil, family, and probate cases at the district/county level and above. Highly encouraged for all other filers.
- 190 JPs across 49 counties accept eFilings on a permissive basis. Six additional precincts are pending.

Over the next few months, eFile will push ECF5 into production with enhancements and will start requiring two-factor authentication for all users.

TECH REFRESH

FY24-25 computer refresh project is now underway with computers already arriving for new FTEs in the judicial branch. As OCA transitions to supporting the hardware of the Child Support Courts, their equipment is prioritized for refresh activities. During this refresh, OCA anticipates moving our userbase from Windows 10 to Windows 11.

Court Services

The Court Services Division includes the agency's court security, children's courts, specialty courts oversight, consulting, language access, judicial information, and research programs.

Court Consultant

- Assist in reviewing NODS data elements for case level data.
- Assist with final data elements for court level reporting.
- Assist counties with weighted caseload analysis.
- Provided presentations on PSRS, OCA Monthly Reporting, Attorney and Fees Reporting, NICS reporting, and any additional requirements for reporting.
- Ongoing projects include: grant project on no-consequence audit and training on CJIS and NICS Reporting; Business Court set-up.
- Assisted clerk offices with monthly reporting, including reviewing cases for accurate status and dispositions.

Projects:

Centers of Excellence

- Program is recommending JP 3 of Williamson County for nomination at the upcoming Judicial Council meeting.
- Active courts in the program:
 - County Court at Law: 1
 - Justice of the Peace: 4
 - Municipal Court: 2

Judicial Workload Study

- The Final JNAC Meeting was held on August 21st, 2023. Study ended September 29th, 2023.
- Report is being finalized.

CJIS and NICS Reporting Grant Project Launch

- On August 15th, 2023, Court Services launched a federally-funded grant project centered around improving mental health reporting into NICS and CJIS.

The project focuses on improving reporting processes to participating district and county clerks. The program will leverage support from DPS and provide direct technical assistance to clerks.

Protective Order Study

- On October 2nd, 2023, Court Services supported Kim Piechowiak in launching a study on the efficacy of protective orders in Texas. The study will engage multiple stakeholders and provide policy recommendations.

COURT SECURITY

The purpose of the Court Security Division is to support the establishment of court security committees through training and technical assistance; assist courts with conducting and reviewing security and emergency preparedness assessments and developing improvement plans; support the implementation of privacy protections for judges by facilitating the restriction of public access

Problem Solving Courts

The Children's Courts program is comprised of 73 operational courts - 30 child protection courts (CPCs) covering 148 predominantly rural counties and 43 child support courts (CSC) covering 233 predominantly rural counties. The Children's Courts Program Manager staffs the program serving as point-of-contact for the courts coordinating with OCA divisions in servicing court needs.

CHILDREN'S COURTS

The OCA received funding from the 88th Legislature to provide equipment to the CSC judges and staff effective 9/1/2023, taking over the responsibility from the Office of Attorney General.

Early Intervention Court Liaison Project (EICL)

The EICLs continued working to bridge gaps within the child welfare community and enhance communication amongst stakeholders. The EICLs presented at various local and statewide events and assisted in the planning of local events, events for youth in foster care, and conferences/trainings. From the program's inception in the Spring of 2022 through August 2023 the liaisons have received 966 referrals.

Departures and Arrivals:

CSC program – 1 associate judge retired. 1 associate judge won election to a District Court seat. 3 court coordinators retired. Replacements hired. Sadly, one CSC judge passed away in July 2023. His replacement has not yet been hired.

CPC program– 1 associate judge retired. New associate judge hired. 3 court coordinators departed service. 2 replacements hired. Efforts are underway to hire the third replacement.

SPECIALTY COURTS

At the conclusion of FY23, there were 211 registered Specialty Courts. The OCA received funding from the 88th Legislature for two positions dedicated solely for Specialty Courts. Efforts are underway to secure the positions in FY24.

In FY 2023, the SPSCC continued representing OCA and the State of Texas by attending and participating in specialty court-related meetings and conferences sponsored by a diverse body of stakeholders.

to the residential address of a judge or judge's spouse; and serve as a clearinghouse of information regarding judicial and court security best practices.

The Court Security Division:

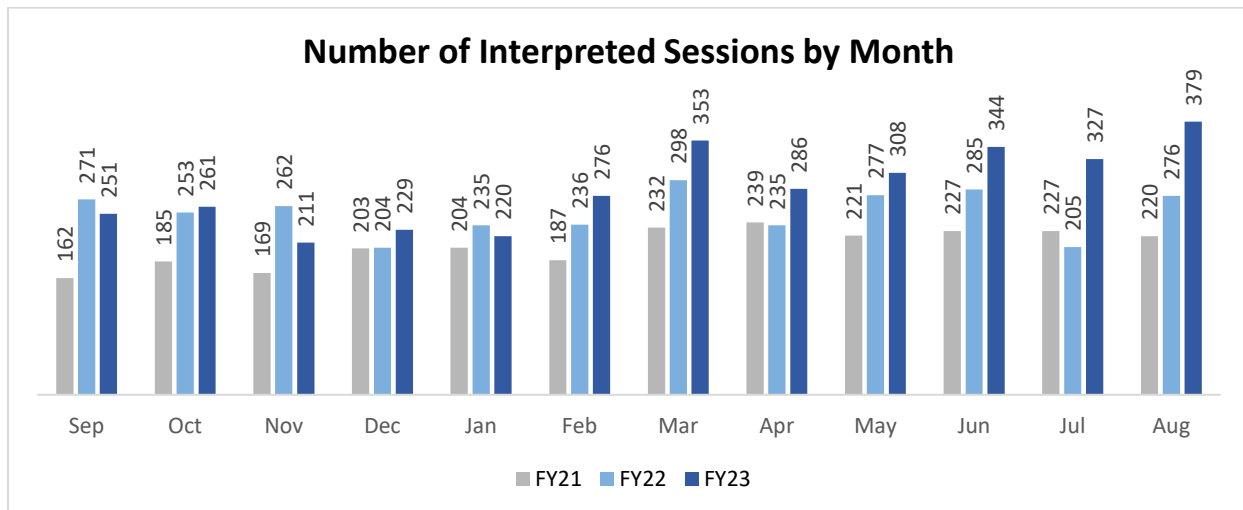
The Division assists courts in facilitating assessments and recommending best practices to enhance their courthouse and residential security environment.

- Conducted 143 courthouse assessments to date addressing urban and rural counties. Some of the assessments were in the following counties: Brewster, Wilbarger, Tarrant, Uvalde, and Starr.
- Processed over 1,700 judicial officers’ requests to date to redact personal information from public view.
- Administratively reported judicial threats to DPS for appropriate investigative follow-up.
- Participated in judicial and staff training conferences.
 - Regional Judicial Conferences
 - Staff and court support presentations throughout the State
- Conducted court safety training and presentations on courthouse violence, de-escalation, and pre-attack indicators. Presentations took place in the following locations: Dimmit, Wise, Fort Bend, and Tarrant counties. Multiple training evolutions are scheduled for FY 24.
- Reporting of judicial threats and inappropriate communication via www.iWatchtx.com, a DPS managed, reporting system designed to capture suspicious activities or behaviors indicative of criminal, or terroristic related threats towards the judiciary or courthouses.

LANGUAGE ACCESS

OCA’s licensed court interpreters provide interpreting services via telephone and videoconference through the Texas Court Remote Interpreter Service (TCRIS). These services are available to our Texas Courts in all case types, for short, non-contested hearings that involve limited or no evidence. The Language Access Program staff also provides translation services as well as training and support to other interpreters who are contracted to interpret in magistration proceedings under Operation Lone Star.

From June 1, 2023, through September 30, 2023, TCRIS staff provided interpreting services in 1,424 hearings in 84 counties. The chart below shows the consistent demand for OCA’s Remote Interpreter Services.

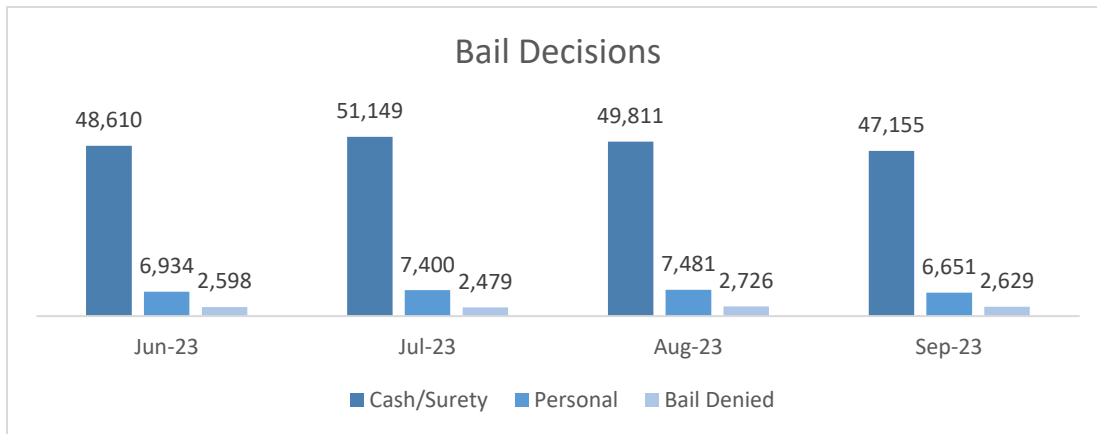


In addition, the staff provided document translation services for The Court of Appeals – 5th District, the Comal County Courts at Law and the Texas College of Probate Judges.

PRETRIAL AND BAIL

Pretrial became part of the Research and Court Services Division in March 2022. OCA was tasked with implementing bail reform as a result of Senate Bill 6 from the 2nd called Special Session of the 87th Legislature.

The [Public Safety Report System](#) has been operational since April 1, 2022, as required by Senate Bill 6 of the 87th Legislature, 2nd called Special Session. There are currently 6,946 active users and 237 counties that have completed magistrations in the system. From June 1 through September 30, 2023, a total of 185,597 bail forms were completed. Bail decisions are detailed in the chart below. Multiple offenses may be included on one bail form.



Multiple updates of the system have been released. Upcoming enhancements include improved report performance and system functionality as requested by users.

The Pretrial and Bail Section continues to provide technical assistance to users through our website, the pretrial inbox at bail@txcourts.gov, Q&A sessions, conference attendance, the PSRS help center, and the vendor's technical support at support@automon.com.

Pursuant to Section 9, Article 17.071, four counties have provided charitable bail reports to OCA this year. One organization, The Bail Project, was responsible for all the bails posted in Harris, Hays, and Travis counties. The Bail Project ceased posting bail after July. Texas Organizing Project is responsible for the bails in Bexar County. These four counties submitted reports indicating bail bonds were made for 56 offenders from June through September 2023.

JUDICIAL INFORMATION

OCA's Judicial Information program collects and maintains information from courts at all levels, analyzes court data, produces reports, and provides data support to various internal and external entities.

Reports Produced

- [Appointments and Fees](#)
- [Hate Crimes](#)
- [Performance Measures](#)
- [Pandemic Backlog Data](#)

Data Requests and Analysis

- Hundreds of queries for statistics and other information for internal and external stakeholders.
- Regular updates and analyses for evaluating and monitoring pandemic-related backlog.
- Data analyses and recommendations for legislative matters.

- Two analyses for new district and county courts at law.
- Data support for weighted caseload study.
- Two proposals for transfer of cases among the Courts of Appeals for Supreme Court's [docket equalization program](#).
- Data inquiries related to CPCMS data.

Presentations

- Caseload trends and backlog: 4
- Trial Court Reporting: 1
- New Reporting Requirements: 1
- PSRS & Bail: 1

Meetings and Trainings

- Executive Forum for Criminal Justice Planners
- National Center for State Courts (NCSC) Data Specialists Roundtable Meeting and Data/IT Summit
- NCSC Data Specialists quarterly meetings
- NCSC National Open Data Standards pilot states quarterly meeting
- Case Level Data Criminal Case Stakeholder Meeting
- CMS Vendor Roundtable Meeting
- Court Level reporting meetings with top 6 counties
- Judicial Needs Assessment Committee (JNAC) final meeting for weighted caseload study

Other Projects

- Case Level Data
- Weighted Caseload Study
- Bail data analyses
- DIR Open Database Portal
- Children’s Courts Annual Judge Evaluations
- CPCMS Data Analysis

Judicial Directory

- Annual update of judges, court staff, and court information

Enterprise Planning & Regulatory Services



JBCC

The Judicial Branch Certification Commission (JBCC) provides oversight of the certification, registration, and licensing of court reporters and court reporting firms, guardians and guardianship programs, process servers, and licensed court interpreters. The JBCC also registers all guardianships statewide, provides training, and provides criminal histories to the courts for the proposed guardians.

The Judicial Branch Certification Commission (JBCC) was established by the Texas Legislature during the 83rd Regular Session. The nine-member commission is appointed by the Supreme Court of Texas. The core responsibility of the JBCC is the oversight of the certification, registration, and licensing of approximately **6,215** court reporters and court reporting firms, guardians and guardianship programs and guardianship registrations, and licensed court interpreters. Hon. Sid Harle, Chair.

- FY2023, 988 new certifications and renewed 2,212 certifications were processed by the licensing team.
- FY2023, 117 complaints were received by our compliance team for investigation.
- FY2023, 305 written and oral court interpreter and guardian examinations were administered.
- Since June 1, 2019, our team has conducted 26,398 background checks, 35,662 guardianship trainings with 55,398 guardianship registrations received.
- The Commission approved the proposed JBCC rules for a 30-day public comment period on August 4, 2023. The proposed rules were sent to the Court for adoption.
- Commission meetings are conducted quarterly throughout the year. The last meeting of the Commission was held on August 4, 2023. The next meeting will be on November 3, 2023.

EPO PROJECT UPDATE

The Enterprise Planning Office (EPO) manages agency projects within OCA. Our goal is to plan, execute, and deliver projects statewide. Our team oversees the projects by collaborating with subject matter experts and project team members to develop requirements and implement projects. The EPO also manages the agency contract management process.

- Our team is currently working on implementing the Uniform Case Management System, eFile 2.0, Case Level Data System, Court Notification Project, Gatekeeper Contract Management Software, and the Guardian Online Reporting System and SharePoint Audit Tool.
- The team continues to work on enhancement to the Public Safety Report System (PSRS).

Guardianship Abuse, Fraud & Exploitation Deterrence Program (GAFEDP)

The GAFEDP provides resources to the courts relating to monitoring and compliance of guardianship matters.

On September 1, 2019, the OCA implemented the GAFEDP to provide resources to the courts relating to monitoring and compliance of guardianship matters pursuant to SB 31 & HB 1286 (Zaffirini/Smithee). Our team of auditor's review guardianship cases to identify reporting deficiencies by guardians, audit annual accountings, and report to the courts any concerns of potential abuse, fraud, or financial exploitation. *"Our mission is to assist the courts in protecting our most vulnerable citizens and their assets."*

GAFEDP Overall Numbers from September 1, 2019, to August 31, 2023

- Initial Compliance Reviews Conducted in 315 Courts and 248 Counties
- 69,516: Total Number of Guardianship Cases Reviewed
- 32,961: Total Number of Cases Recommended for Closure
- 35,817: Total Number of Active Guardianships Identified
 - 25% Percentage of Cases Missing Annual Reports
 - 42% Percentage of Cases Missing Annual Accountings
 - 40% Percentage of Cases Missing Inventories
 - 32% Percentage of Cases Out of Compliance
 - 10% Waived Bonds
 - 6,746: Total Number of Deceased Wards Identified

GAFEDP FY2023 Totals as of August 31, 2023

- Initial Compliance Reviews Conducted in 50 Courts and 40 Counties
- 11,426: Total Number of Guardianship Cases Reviewed
- 5,914: Total Number of Cases Recommended for Closure
- 5,443: Total Number of Active Guardianships Identified

- 24% Percentage of Cases Missing Annual Reports
- 48% Percentage of Cases Missing Annual Accountings
- 42% Percentage of Cases Missing Inventories
- 32% Percentage of Cases Out of Compliance
- 13% Waived Bonds
- 1290: Total Number of Deceased Wards Identified

Texas Forensic Science Commission (TFSC)



The TFSC is responsible for accreditation of crime laboratories; designation of forensic disciplines for accreditation or exemption; investigation of allegations of professional negligence and misconduct; implementation of a Code of Professional Responsibility for Forensic Analysts and Management; and the licensing of forensic analysts.

The TFSC has nine members appointed by the Governor of Texas. Seven of the nine commissioners are scientists and two are attorneys (one prosecutor and one defense attorney).

The TFSC held its most recent quarterly meeting on October 20, 2023, and meets again on January 26, 2024. Commissioners will consider a variety of matters including complaints against laboratories, laboratory self-disclosures of internal non-conformities, accreditation reports, and licenses issued pursuant to the forensic analyst licensing program. The Commission currently has a pending investigation in firearm/toolmark analysis and recently concluded an investigation in friction ridge analysis. During the months of June, July, August, and September, Commission staff gave presentations at various forensic and criminal justice annual conferences, including the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors Symposium, the Association of Firearm and Toolmark Examiner's Conference, and the International Association for Identification's Conference.

To date, the Commission has licensed approximately 1,455 forensic analysts since the inception of its licensing program, January 1, 2019. On November 2-3, 2023, the Commission will host a program on DNA training for lawyers and judges in collaboration with the Court of Criminal Appeals, the Texas District and County Attorneys Association, and the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association at the Capitol. In November, the Commission will conclude a month-long training for laboratory managers across Texas by the American Society of Crime

Laboratory Director's Leadership Academy. November 16-17, 2023, the Commission will host the inaugural meeting of the nation's first Association of State Forensic Boards with the common goal of improving integrity and reliability in state criminal courts. The Commission continues to work with representatives from the Organization of Scientific Area Committees for Forensic Science of the National Institute of Standards and Technology and accredited crime laboratories on implementation of consensus standards in various forensic science disciplines.

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