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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 1100 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:

- 790,000 users handling about 46,000 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.
- 197 JPs across 51 counties accept eFilings on a permissive basis. Four additional precincts are pending.

Over the next few months, it will start requiring two-factor authentication for all users. Tyler Technologies will also be deprecating the old filer EFSP in favor

of the new filer app launched in 2023.

## TECH REFRESH

The FY24-25 computer refresh project is well underway with computers being delivered to several courts of appeals and judicial branch agencies. The child support court and child protection court computer refresh are also underway. During this refresh, OCA is switching from Windows 10 to Windows 11. Surplus computers are made available to counties for use in their courts as additional machines.

Additionally, the Infrastructure team is reviewing vendors and architectures associated with the upcoming network refresh. This refresh will replace the current network with one that has additional modern security protections.

## Court Services

*The Court Services Division includes the agency's court security, children's courts, specialty courts oversight, consulting, language access and bail/pretrial programs.*

### COURT CONSULTING

- Case Level data project includes assisting with reviewing NODS data elements, identifying data elements that are easily, difficult, or impossible to gather for reporting from the clerk's office.
- Assist with webinars, guidance, scheduled meetings, and questions received by email for new reporting requirements related to HB2384 and HB1182.
- Assist counties with implementing improvements for transitioning to paperless courts, leveraging technology for improving financial and case processing, and reviewing weighted caseload analysis to identify areas to focus and improve.
- Presented presentations related to OCA Monthly Reporting, New Reporting Requirements, Legislative Updates, and NICS reporting.
- Provide assistance with the NICS grant project for no-consequence audits including assisting team with:
  - Developing an audit procedure;
  - Conducting an audit with a pilot county, including reviewing over 2000 cases;
  - Developing a Final Review report;
  - Developing NICS training for Regional/Area clerks' meetings and conferences.
- Assisted clerks' offices with monthly reporting, including reviewing cases for accurate status and dispositions.
- Assist team in developing Business Court functionality related to a clerk's responsibilities including:
  - UCMS configuration;
  - E-file configuration;
  - Checklist including items to create or determine- (Exhibits room; Retention Schedule; Clerk resources; developing procedural manual for training; forms development; etc.)
- Court Reminder Project
- E-file (testing of new releases)
- Answer MH questions and update manual when needed.
- On-going project - creation of Court Administration Manual- draft

### 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 Child Protection and Child Support courts continue to maintain their dockets in a variety of ways – in-person, virtual, or in a hybrid form. Having multiple options have allowed them to decrease travel time for parties as well as accommodate multiple counties to participate without having to travel at all in some instances.

#### *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 over 1,000 referrals.

#### Departures and Arrivals:

CSC program – Two new Child Support Judges and one new coordinator have been hired in the last period representing the Montgomery County and Dallas County areas. These new judges come with well-qualified backgrounds to service these areas.

CPC program– One new court coordinators joined our Child Protection Courts during the last few months.

#### SPECIALTY COURTS

As of March 31, 2024, there were 259 registered Specialty Courts. The OCA received funding from the 88th Legislature for two positions dedicated solely for Specialty Courts. A new Program Manager began on April 15, 2024. During this last period, the SPSCC continued representing OCA and the State of Texas by participating in specialty court-related meetings and conferences sponsored by a diverse body of stakeholders.

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## PROJECTS

### Centers of Excellence

- The Centers of Excellence Program has one court set for recognition on April 26, 2024, at the next Texas Judicial Council Meeting, Travis County Justice of the Peace, Precinct 3.
- Active courts in the program:
  - District Courts: 4
  - Justice of the Peace: 7
  - Municipal Court: 1

### CJIS and NICS Reporting Grant Project Update

- From February 12-14, 2024, the CJIS and NICS Grant team was onsite with the District and County Clerks in Tom Green County.
- The project team reviewed over 2000 casefiles for compliance with NICS and CJIS reporting components and provided technical assistance to District and County Clerk Staff.
- The program is set to conduct its first training on NICS and CJIS Reporting in April.

### Protective Order Study

- The protective order study fielded the survey portion of the study on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024, to all relevant state and local stakeholders.
- The survey seeks to evaluate reporting, policies, and procedures related to the enforcement and efficacy of protective orders from law enforcement, courts, clerks, advocates, prosecutors, and legal aid and will be open for two weeks.

## 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 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:

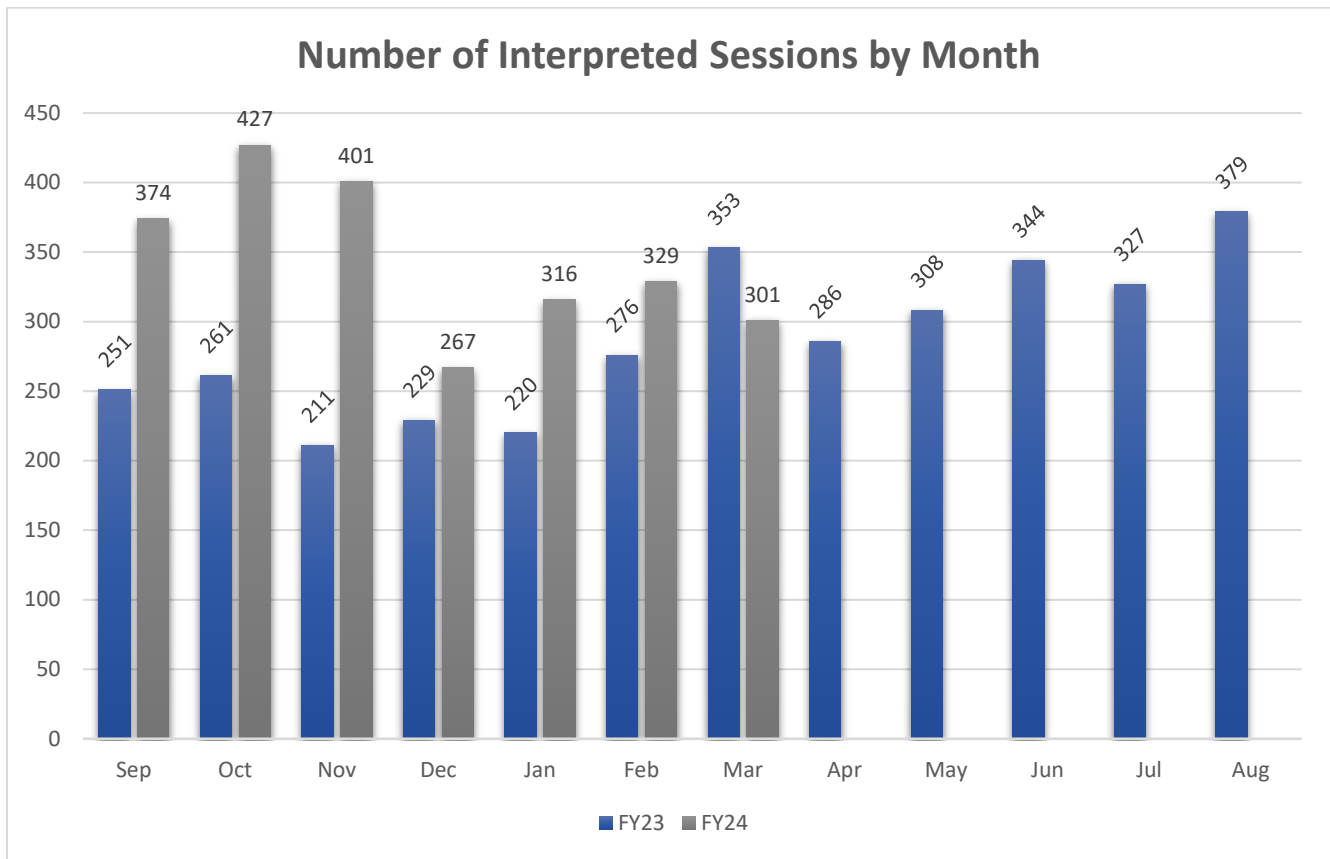
The Division assists courts in facilitating assessments and recommending best practices to enhance their security environment.

- Increase in the Division's resources with the addition of two Court Security Specialists.
- Conducted 156 courthouse assessments to date.
- Processed 1,700 judicial officers' requests to date, to redact personal information from public view.
- Administratively reported judicial threats to DPS for appropriate follow-up.
- Participated in judicial and staff training conferences.
  - Regional Judicial Conferences
  - Staff and court support presentations throughout the State.
- Conducted comprehensive safety presentations on courthouse violence, de-escalation, and mitigation strategies with a targeted audience of law enforcement, judiciary, and court staff.
- Reporting of judicial threats and inappropriate communication to [www.iWatchtx.com](http://www.iWatchtx.com), a DPS managed reporting system.
- Expansion of judicial, court staff, and courthouse safety training to address awareness, and violence mitigation.

## 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 for other interpreters contracted to interpret in central magistration proceedings under Operation Lone Star.

From October 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024, Language Access Department staff provided interpreting services in 2,041 hearings in 101 counties. The chart below shows the consistent demand for OCA's Remote Interpreter Services due to the shortage of qualified licensed court interpreters statewide and underscoring the need for more interpreters in Texas.

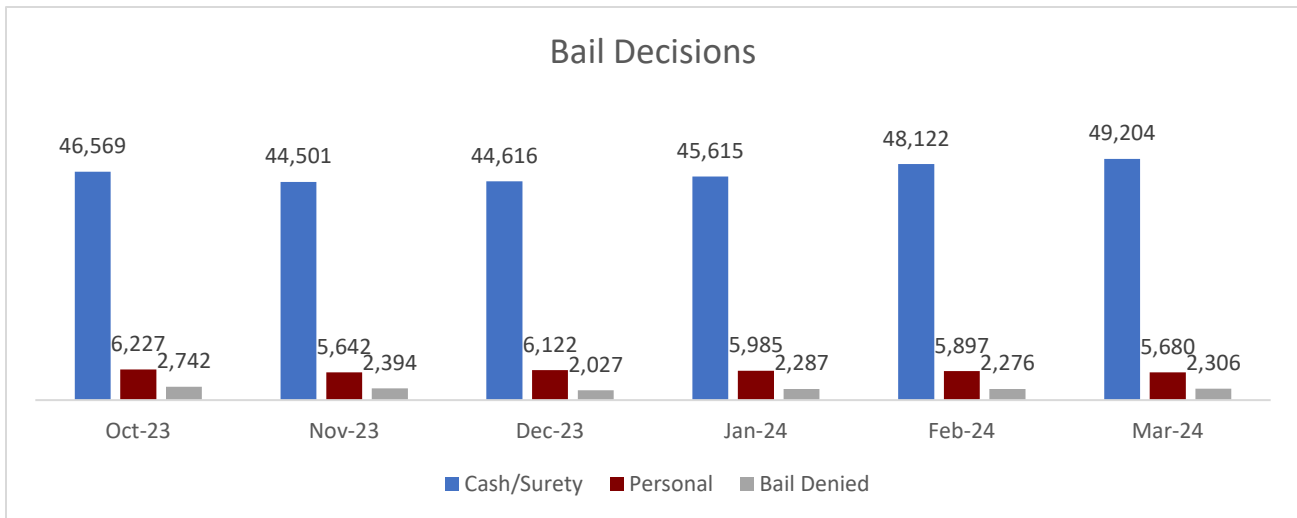


In October 2023, OCA issued a request for proposals for court interpreter services to procure additional interpreters for central magistration in Operation Lone Star (OLS). After the closing of the proposal window, a total of seven contracts were awarded. These vendors are scheduled by the Language Access Department to provide interpreting services for OLS on a daily basis for the central magistration dockets.

## 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. There are currently 7,061 active users and 239 counties that have completed magistrations in the system. From October 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024, a total of 256,728 bail forms were completed. Bail decisions are detailed in the chart below. Multiple offenses may be included on one bail form.



To date, six updates of the system have been released. Upcoming enhancements will include user ad hoc report capability, an upgrade of the Application Programming Interface, and improved 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](mailto:bail@txcourts.gov), Q&A sessions, conference attendance, the PSRS help center, and the vendor's technical support at [support@automon.com](mailto:support@automon.com).

Pursuant to Section 9, Article 17.071, Bexar County has provided charitable bail reports to OCA during the period of October 2023 through February 2024. Texas Organizing Project posts the bails in Bexar County. Bail bonds were made for 65 offenders during this period.

## Data & Research

OCA's Data & Research Division was created September 1, 2023. The Judicial Information program exists within the Division and collects and maintains information from courts at all levels, analyzes court data, produces reports, and provides data support to various internal and external entities. The Division is also responsible for implementing, providing guidance, and overseeing new reporting requirements.

### Reports Produced

- [Judicial Bypass](#)
- [Writs of Attachment](#)
- [Appointments and Fees](#)
- [Hate Crimes](#)
- [Performance Measures](#)
- [Statewide Caseload trends](#)

### Data Requests and Analysis

- Hundreds of queries for statistics and other information for internal and external stakeholders.
- Analyses for evaluating and monitoring pandemic-related backlog.
- Twenty-five analyses for new district and county courts at law.

- Two proposals for transfer of cases among the Courts of Appeals for Supreme Court's [docket equalization program](#).
- Inquiries related to CPCMS data.
- Inquiries related to PSRS data.

#### Presentations

- Caseload trends and backlog
- Trial Court Reporting
- New Reporting Requirements – HB 1182, HB 2384, SB 380/HB 3474
- PSRS & Bail

#### Meetings and Trainings

- Executive Forum for Criminal Justice Planners
- CMS Vendor Roundtable
- Numerous Court Level reporting meetings with counties and CMS vendors
- NCSC NODS Implementation Sites
- Presiding Judges In-Person Meetings
- Annual Council of Presiding Judges meeting

#### Other Projects

- Case Level Data
- New Reporting Requirements Implementation
- Bail data analyses
- DIR Open Database Portal
- Protective Order Study
- CPCMS Data Analysis
- NICS Reporting Audit Pilot Site Visit
- Updates to Presiding Judges Monthly Report system
- Data Governance Plan

#### Judicial Directory

- Continuous updates 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 Texas Legislature established the nine-member Judicial Branch Certification Commission (JBCC) during the 83rd Regular Session. The commission is appointed by the Supreme Court of Texas and has the core responsibility for overseeing the certification, registration, and licensing of approximately **6,908** court reporters and court reporting firms, guardians, guardianship programs, guardianship registrations, process servers, as well as licensed court interpreters. Hon. Sid Harle serves as the Chair of the commission.

- FY2024, the total number of active licenses is 6,908. 2,280 court reporters, 260 court reporting firms, 3,400 process servers, 465 guardians, 33 guardianship programs, and 470 court interpreters.
- FY2024, the licensing team processed 717 new certifications and 1,384 renewals.
- FY2024, the compliance team received 55 for investigation.
- FY2024, 219 licensed court interpreter and guardian examinations administered.
- FY2024, the registration team processed 1,797 background checks, provided 2,657 guardianship trainings, and received 3,276 guardianship registrations.
- The Court adopted the new JBCC rules on November 17, 2023.
- Commission meetings are held quarterly with the most recent on February 2, 2024, and the next scheduled for May 3, 2024.

## EPO PROJECT UPDATE

*The Enterprise Planning Office (EPO) within OCA manages agency projects and aims to plan, execute, and deliver projects statewide. Our team collaborates with subject matter experts and project team members to develop requirements and implement projects. Additionally, the EPO manages the agency contract management process and is currently working on the OCA projects below.*

- Case level data project procurement
- Court notification project procurement
- Uniform case management project completion
- New 15th Court of Appeal implementation
- Assisting with the new business courts implementation
- New 7th floor conference room space construction
- Guardian online reporting application development
- Continued 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.*

The Guardianship Abuse, Fraud, and Exploitation Deterrence Program (GAFEDP) was implemented by the Office of Court Administration on September 1, 2019, in response to SB 31 & HB 1286 (Zaffirini/Smithee). The program aims to provide resources for monitoring and compliance of guardianship matters. Auditors review guardianship cases to identify reporting deficiencies by guardians, audit annual accountings, and report any concerns of potential abuse, fraud, or financial exploitation to the courts. The GAFEDP mission is to assist the courts in protecting our most vulnerable citizens and their assets.

### GAFEDP Overall Numbers from Jan 30,2019 to Mar 05, 2024

- Initial Compliance Reviews Conducted in 306 Courts and 240 Counties
- 48,693: Total Number of Guardianship Cases Reviewed

- 19,922: Total Number of Cases Recommended for Closure
- 28,771: Total Number of Active Guardianships Identified
  - 23% Percentage of Cases Missing Annual Reports
  - 42% Percentage of Cases Missing Annual Accountings
  - 40% Percentage of Cases Missing Inventories
  - 30% Percentage of Cases Out of Compliance
  - 12% Waived Bonds
  - 4,457: Total Number of Deceased Wards Identified

### GAFEDP FY2023 Totals

- 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
- 4,619: 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
  - 37% 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 January 26, 2024, and meets again on April 26, 2024, and October 25, 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 for which it plans to adopt a final investigative report at its April 26, 2024, quarterly meeting. The Commission recently concluded an investigation in [friction ridge analysis](#). During the months of January, February, and March, Commission staff gave presentations at various forensic and criminal justice conferences, including the American Academy of Forensic Sciences Annual Conference in Denver, Colorado.

To date, the Commission has licensed approximately 1,500 forensic analysts since the inception of its licensing program, January 1, 2019. In November 2-3, 2023, the Commission hosted a program on DNA training for lawyers and judges in collaboration with the Court of Criminal Appeals, the Texas Center for the Judiciary, the Texas District and County Attorneys Association, and the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association at the Capitol. The Commission also concluded a month-long training for laboratory managers across Texas by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Director's Leadership Academy in November 2023. November 16-17, 2023, the Commission hosted 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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