



In This Issue

Technology & Data	P.1
E-filing	P.1
Tech Refresh	P.1
Problem Solving Courts	P.2
Court Services	P.2
Court Security	P.2
Language Access	P.3
Research	P.4
Pretrial and Bail	P.4
Judicial Information	P.5
Enterprise Planning & Regulatory Services	P.5
JBCC	P.5
EPO	P.6
Guardianship, Abuse, Fraud & Exploitation Deterrence Program (GAFEDP)	P.6
Texas Forensic Science Commission	P.6



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:

- 590,000 users handling 48,000 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.
- 168 JPs across 44 counties that accept eFilings on a permissive basis.

Since the last meeting, the following eFiling initiatives have been completed:

- Phase 1 of eFile 2.0 functionality deployed to production.
- Deprecation of TLS 1.1 from the environment.
- Movement of the EFM from Databank (Local Tyler-hosted datacenter) to Amazon Web Services (AWS)

Over the next few months, Phase 2 of enhancements to the eFiling system will be completed. This phase will include a new security system that allows OCA to better manage security, improve the proposed order process, and the return for correction process for filers.

TECH REFRESH

The technology refresh for the FY22-23 cycle is near completion. Supply chain issues with parts of the refresh caused delays in the project. As old desktops and laptops are returned to OCA, they are wiped of all data and reformatted with a clean install of Windows 10 and then donated to counties and municipalities requesting computers.

Court Services

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



On September 14th and 15th, 2022, the Office of Court Administration (OCA), in partnership with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), hosted the Texas Judicial Branch Effective Case Management in a Post-Pandemic World training in Austin, TX. The NCSC prepared and presented a training focused on best practices for caseflow management and introduced their backlog simulator designed to assist courts with backlog. Twenty jurisdictions from across the state were in attendance and actively participated in discussions and shared ideas on how to address case backlog in their courts. Attendees included district and county judges, clerks, attorneys, court coordinators and administrators

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:

- Conducted 108 courthouse assessments to date.
- Processed 1,525 judicial officers' requests to date, to redact personal information from state public view.
- Administratively reported judicial threats to DPS for appropriate follow-up.

Problem Solving Courts

The Children's Courts program is comprised of 73 operational courts - 30 child protection and 43 child support courts (CPC and CSC, respectively). Each court has an associate judge appointed by the Presiding Judges of the Administrative Judicial Regions and a court coordinator. The judge and court coordinator are employed by the OCA. Effective September 2019, OCA obtained oversight authority of Texas Specialty Courts. Specialty Courts are required to register with the OCA prior to operating by submitting required documentation for official acknowledgement. The SPCC accepts, reviews, and processes registration documents.

CHILDREN'S COURTS

OCA hired the third Early Intervention Court Liaison (EICL) as part of the pilot project referenced in the last report. The EICL serves as a special assistant to the two child protection courts in Lubbock, Texas – South Plains Foster Care Courts No. 1 and No. 2. The three EICLs continue to work on building and strengthening connections amongst community child welfare stakeholders, child protective services, and the courts in their respective jurisdictions.

Departures and Arrivals:

- One Child Protection Court Coordinator resigned. Replacement hired.
- Three Title IV-D Court Associate Judges retired. Two judge replacements hired.
- Two Title IV-D Court Coordinators retired. Replacements to be hired.
- Caseloads for the court of the third retired judge to be covered by two Title IV-D Court associate judges in the Ninth AJR. Court realignment is planned for these courts.
- Court realignment conducted for three Title IV-D Courts in the First and Tenth AJRs.

SPECIALTY COURTS

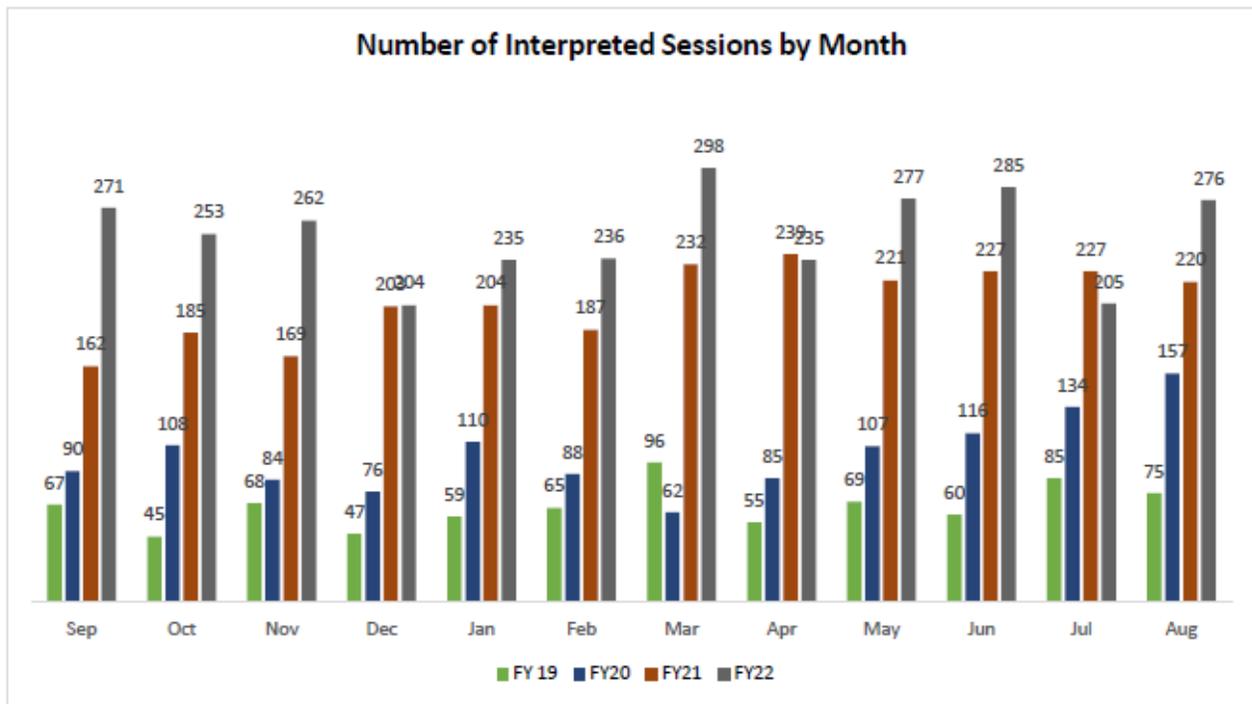
The Specialty Courts Program Manager/Statewide Specialty Court Coordinator continued representing OCA and the State of Texas by attending and participating in specialty court-related meetings sponsored by a diverse body of state and federal governmental and non-profit agencies and other stakeholders.

- Participated in judicial and staff training conferences.
- Conducted in-person security presentations before a broad spectrum of county and municipal court stakeholders.
- Reporting of judicial threats and inappropriate communication to 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 April 1, 2022 through August 31, 2022, TCRIS staff provided interpreting services in 1,279 hearings in 70 counties. The chart below shows the consistent demand increase for OCA's Remote Interpreter Services.



RESEARCH

In partnership with the Supreme Court of Texas Children's Commission, the Texas Office of Court Administration hired a full-time Senior Data Analyst. This analyst works in the Research section of the Research and Court Services Division. Research revolves around the child welfare system, court data, and implementation of various initiatives in partnership with the Supreme Court of Texas Children's Commission.

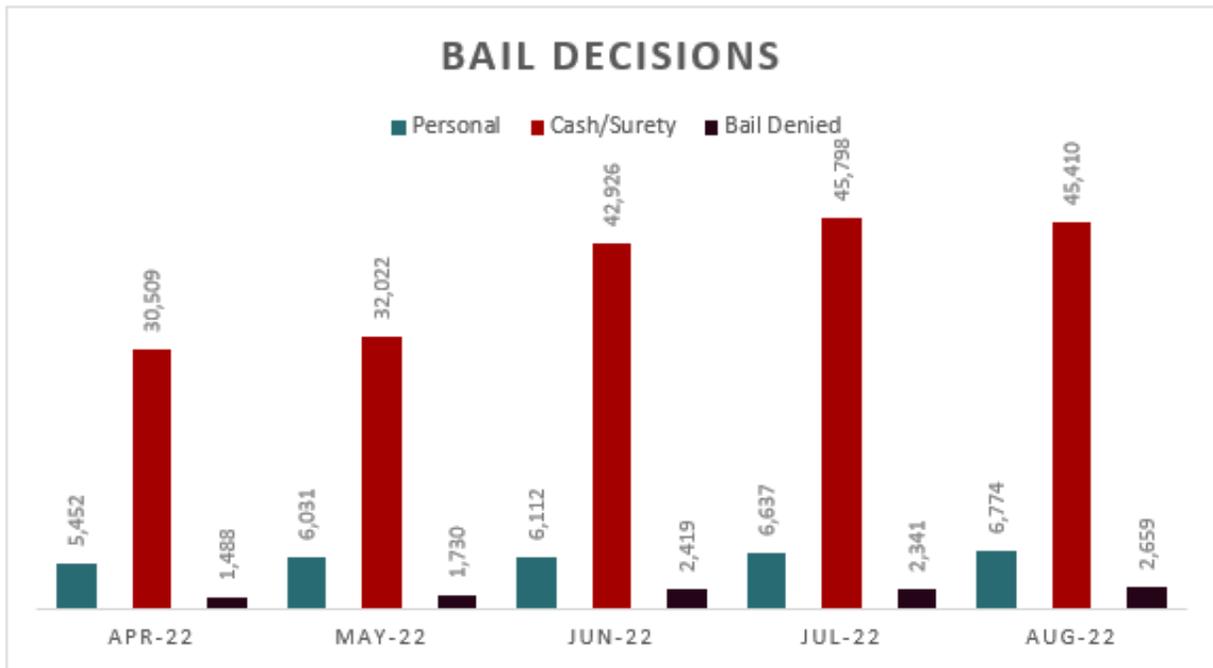
Research and Analyses:

- In depth evaluation of OCA's Child Protection Courts Management System (CPCMS).
- Conduct a study on the effect of COVID-19 in child abuse and neglect cases.
- Address data inquires related to CPCMS and DFPS data.
- Analyze impact of removals of children from their homes as a result of policy and legislative changes.
- Collaborate with the NCSC on a study related to virtual hearing in child protection cases.

PRETRIAL AND BAIL

Pretrial is a new addition to the Research and Court Services Division. OCA was tasked with implementing bail reform as a result of Senate Bill 6 from the 2nd called Special Session of the 87th Legislature.

Senate Bill 6 created the Public Safety Report System which has been operational since April 1, 2022. There are currently 6,035 active users and 216 counties have completed magistrations in the system. A total of 205,190 bail forms have been completed from April 1 through August 31, 2022. Bail decisions are detailed in the chart below. Note that multiple offenses may be included on one bail form.



Three updates to the original system have been released and additional enhancements are being planned in response to user requests and system improvements.

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.

Three counties have provided charitable bail reports to OCA this year, Harris, Hays, and Travis. One organization, The Bail Project, is responsible for all the bails posted in the reported counties. These counties submitted reports indicating 17 bail bonds were made in from April to August of this year.

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](#)
- [2022 Judicial Directory](#)
- [2021 Texas court statistics submitted to NCSC's Court Statistics Project](#)

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 and analyses for testimony in various legislative and budget hearings and documents.
- Data support for Judicial Compensation Commission.
- Seven analyses for new district and county courts at law.
- Two proposals for transfer of cases among the courts of appeals [docket equalization program](#).
-

Presentations

- Caseload trends and backlog: 5
- Trial Court Reporting: 4
- Mental Health Data, NICS: 3
- Public Safety Report System: 2
- Judicial turnover and salaries: 2

Meetings and Trainings

- Conference of State Court Administrators' Court Statistics Committee
- Executive Forum for Criminal Justice Planners
- National Association of Court Management Conference

Other Projects

- Case Level Data
- SB 6 (Public Safety Report System and data) implementation
- E-filing Insights Program
- Research and recommendations related to NICS reporting in light of new federal laws.

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 **6,544** court reporters and court reporting firms, guardians and guardianship programs and guardianship registrations, and licensed court interpreters. Hon. Sid Harle serves as chair of the commission.

- FY 2022, our licensing team processed 729 new certifications and renewed 2,730 certifications
- FY 2022, 96 complaints have been filed with the JBCC Compliance team and are in process or resolved.
- Recently, the JBCC team administered 55 oral court interpreter examinations, 175 court interpreter written examinations, and 87 guardian written examinations.
- JBCC meetings are conducted quarterly throughout the year. The Commission met on November 5, 2021, February 4, 2022, May 6, 2022, and August 5, 2022. The next meeting of the Commission is November 4, 2022.

EPO PROJECT UPDATE

The Enterprise Planning Office (EPO) manages agency projects within OCA. Our goal is to plan, execute, and deliver projects statewide. Our four project managers guide the projects by collaborating with SMEs, stakeholders, 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 the Public Safety Report System, Uniform Case Management System, eFile 2.0, Court Notification Project, Case Level Data Project, Guardian Online Reporting System, Court Case Backlog Summit, Local Rules Website, and our Appellate Case Management System Project.

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. We currently have one manager, two trainers, and 15 program auditors assigned statewide. On January 1, 2022, the GAFEDP issued the [2021 annual report](#) to the Texas Legislature. *"Our mission is to assist the courts in protecting our most vulnerable citizens and their assets."*

- Initial Compliance Reviews in 282 Courts and 227 Counties Overall
- 67,317 Total Number of Guardianship Cases Reviewed GCP/GAFEDP
- 32,335 Total Number of Cases Recommended for Closure
- 28,899 Total Number of Active Guardianships Identified
 - 27% Percentage of Cases Missing Annual Reports
 - 43% Percentage of Cases Missing Annual Accountings
 - 39% Percentage of Cases Missing Inventories
 - 34% Percentage of Cases Out of Compliance
- 6,654 Total Number of Deceased Wards Identified

Texas Forensic Science Commission (TFSC)



The TFSC is responsible for accreditation of crime laboratories and other entities that perform forensic analysis; designation of forensic disciplines for accreditation or exemption; investigation of allegations regarding professional negligence and misconduct; adoption and regulation of a Code of Professional Responsibility; 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 July 22, 2022. Commissioners considered 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. In the past year, the Commission released investigative reports in eight matters. In five of the matters, the Commission issued a finding of professional misconduct. The Commission currently has pending investigations in the following disciplines: DNA mixture interpretation; toxicology; firearm/toolmark analysis; and friction ridge.

To date, the Commission has licensed approximately 1,401 forensic analysts since the inception of its licensing program, January 1, 2019. The Commission is working with Judge Barbara Hervey of the Court of Criminal Appeals and the Bexar County District Attorney's office on the development of DNA training for lawyers and judges. The Commission continues to work with representatives from the Organization of Scientific Area Committees for Forensic Science and accredited crime laboratories on implementation of consensus standards in various forensic science disciplines. The Commission also plans to sponsor Texas lab directors attendance at the National Forensic Leadership Academy later this fiscal year.

TEXAS JUDICIAL COUNCIL

205 WEST 14TH STREET, SUITE 600

TOM C. CLARK BUILDING

(512) 463-1625 | FAX (512) 463-1648

P.O. BOX 12066 | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711-2066

CHAIR:

Hon. Nathan L. Hecht, Supreme Court

VICE CHAIR:

Hon. Sharon Keller, Presiding Judge, Court of Criminal Appeals

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Megan LaVoie