



2024

NORTH DAKOTA COURT SYSTEM
ANNUAL REPORT

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide the people, through an
independent judiciary, equal access
to fair and timely resolution of
disputes under law.



Message From Chief Justice Jon J. Jensen



IT IS MY HONOR TO PRESENT THE NORTH DAKOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH'S 2024 ANNUAL REPORT, which provides an opportunity to reflect on the many ways our courts have worked to serve the people of our state this past year. As we move forward, we remain dedicated to ensuring a fair, efficient, and accessible system of justice for all North Dakotans.

Collaboration continues to be an essential part of our work. By working closely with other state agencies, local governments, and community partners, we have been able to address some of the most pressing challenges facing our justice system. Mental health remains a significant concern across North Dakota, and we have worked to expand specialized dockets that provide meaningful intervention for individuals dealing with mental health and substance use issues. These efforts are helping to improve lives while promoting public safety and accountability.

In 2024 the North Dakota State Auditor completed an audit of the Judicial Branch. The primary objective of the audit was to identify any errors, internal control weaknesses, or potential violations of law for significant or high-risk functions of the Judicial Branch. The report concluded, "No errors, internal control weaknesses, or potential violations of law were identified." The Judicial

Branch will continue to serve the public and be good stewards of the public funds provided for our operations by the legislature.

Our court system also recognizes the importance of continually improving the jury process. Jurors are the cornerstone of our justice system, and their time and service are invaluable. Over the past year, we have implemented measures to make the process more user-friendly and efficient, ensuring that those called to serve can do so with confidence and ease.

Transparency and access to justice are foundational to public trust and confidence in the judiciary. This year, we have taken additional steps to ensure that court proceedings, records, and resources are readily available to the public. By embracing technology and innovation, we are expanding access to justice for individuals across the state, including those in our rural communities.

“Collaboration continues to be an essential part of our work. By working closely with other state agencies, local governments, and community partners, we have been able to address some of the most pressing challenges facing our justice system.”

– Chief Justice Jon J. Jensen

Effective case management remains a top priority as well. The courts have continued to refine processes, adopt new tools, and focus on reducing unnecessary delays. These efforts are essential to maintaining public confidence and ensuring that cases are resolved fairly and without undue hardship for those involved.

The information outlined in this report is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our judges, court staff, and the many individuals and organizations that support the judicial branch. Together, we are addressing challenges, improving outcomes, and strengthening the trust that the people of North Dakota place in their courts.

I want to express my gratitude to everyone who has contributed to these efforts and to the people of North Dakota for your continued trust in our judiciary. As we look to the year ahead, we remain committed to serving you with integrity, fairness, and respect for the rule of law.



North Dakota Supreme Court

One Chief Justice &

Four Justices:

10-Year Terms

The North Dakota Supreme Court is the highest court for the State of North Dakota. It has two major types of responsibilities: 1) adjudicative and 2) administrative. It is primarily an appellate court with jurisdiction to hear appeals from decisions of the district courts.

The Court also has original jurisdiction authority and can issue such original and remedial writs as are necessary. In its administrative capacity, the Court is responsible for ensuring the efficient and effective operation of all non-federal courts in the state, maintaining high standards of judicial conduct, supervising the legal profession and promulgating procedural rules.

District Court

Eight Judicial Districts/

55 Judges:

Six-Year Terms

District Courts are the state trial courts of general jurisdiction. Among the types of cases they hear are civil, criminal, domestic relations, small claims, and probate. District Courts also serve as the Juvenile Courts in the state with original jurisdiction over any minor who is alleged to be delinquent or in need of protection. In some districts, judicial referees have been appointed to preside over juvenile, judgment enforcement, and domestic relations proceedings, other than contested divorces. District Courts are also the appellate courts of first instance for appeals from the decisions of many administrative agencies and for criminal convictions in Municipal Courts.

Municipal Court

73 Courts

54 Judges:

Four-Year Terms

Municipal Courts have jurisdiction over all violations of municipal ordinances, except certain violations involving juveniles. In cities with a population of 5,000 or more, the municipal judge is required to be a licensed attorney. Trials in municipal court are before the judge without a jury. State law permits an individual to serve more than one city as a municipal judge.

**North Dakota
Supreme Court**
One Chief Justice & Four Justices

10-YEAR TERMS

District Court

EIGHT Judicial Districts
55 Judges

6-YEAR TERMS

Municipal Court

54 Judges

4-YEAR TERMS

2024 ND Courts by the Numbers

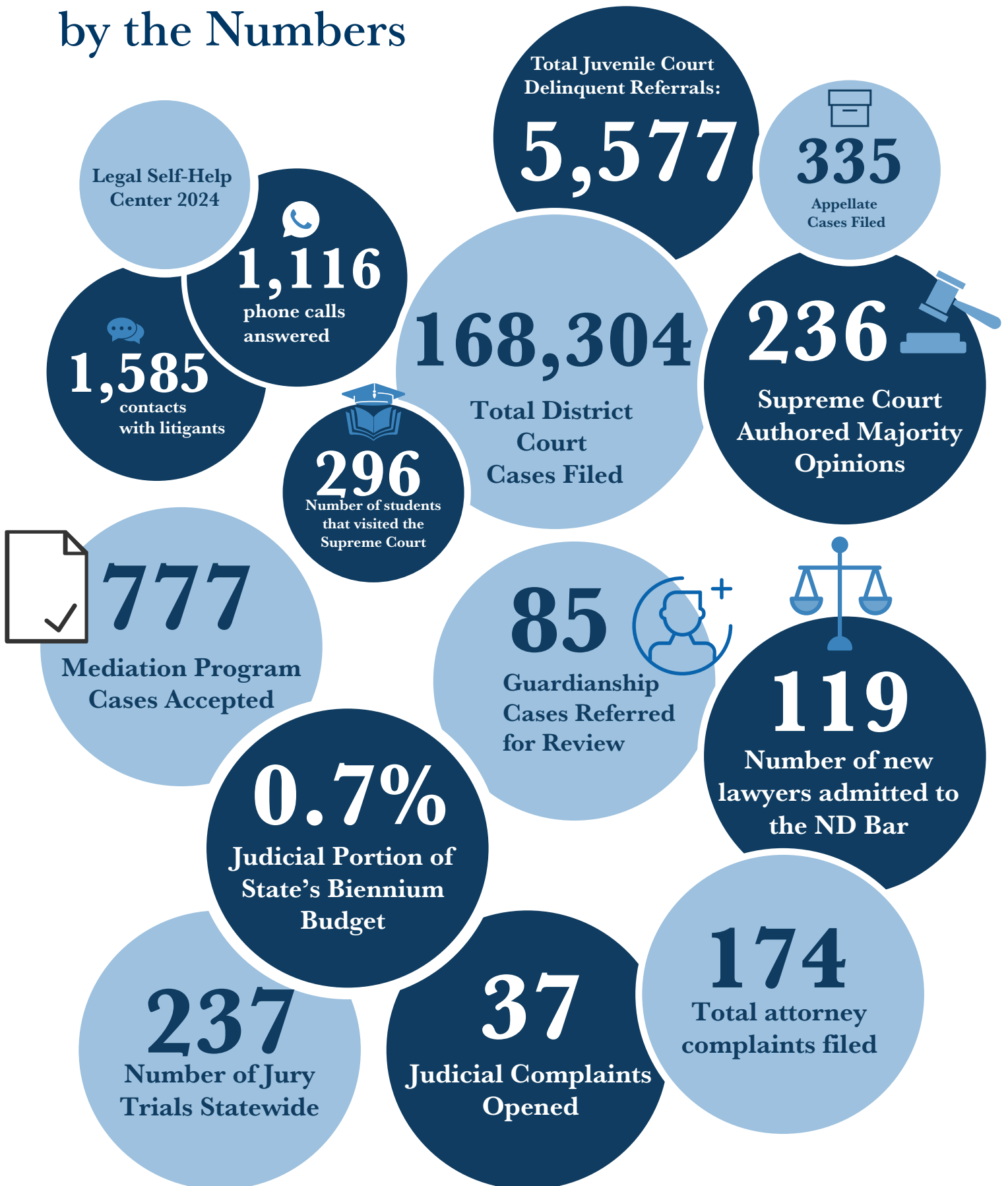


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SUPREME COURT

Overview



THE NORTH DAKOTA SUPREME COURT HAS FIVE JUSTICES. Each justice is elected for a ten-year term in a nonpartisan election. The terms of the justices are staggered so that only one judgeship is scheduled for election every two years. However, in the case of the retirement or death of a justice during the term of office, the Governor can appoint to fill the term for two years, when the person must then run for election.

Each justice must be a licensed attorney and a citizen of the United States and North Dakota.

One member of the Supreme Court is selected as Chief Justice by the justices of the Supreme Court and the District Court Judges. The Chief Justice's term is for five years or until the justice's elected term on the court expires. The Chief Justice's duties include presiding over Supreme Court arguments and conferences, representing the judiciary at official state functions, and serving as the administrative head of the judicial branch.

2024 North Dakota Supreme Court



From left, Justice Daniel J. Crothers, Justice Douglas A. Bahr, Chief Justice Jon J. Jensen,
Justice Jerod E. Tufte, and Justice Lisa Fair McEvers



2024 North Dakota Supreme Court

ND Supreme Court Justices



Chief Justice Jon J. Jensen

Born

1965 in Grand Forks, ND

Education

Minnesota State University in Mankato, BS in Accounting, 1987; University of North Dakota School of Law, 1990

Prior Experience

Law clerk North Dakota Supreme Court, private practice, District Court Judge

Appointed

2017 by Governor Doug Burgum; elected as Chief Justice in December 2019 effective Jan. 1, 2020 and re-elected for a full five-year term as Chief in 2020.

2024 North Dakota Supreme Court

ND Supreme Court Justices



Justice Daniel J. Crothers

Born

1957 in Fargo, ND

Education

University of North Dakota, 1979; University of North Dakota School of Law, 1982

Prior Experience

Law clerk New Mexico Court of Appeals; assistant state's attorney in Walsh County; private practice

Appointed

2005 by Governor John Hoeven



Justice Lisa Fair McEvers

Born

1962 in Minto, ND

Education

University of North Dakota, BBA in Information Management, 1993; University of North Dakota School of Law, 1997

Prior Experience

Law clerk North Dakota Supreme Court; private practice; Cass County Assistant State's Attorney; North Dakota Commissioner of Labor; District Court Judge

Appointed

2014 by Governor Jack Dalrymple

2024 North Dakota Supreme Court

ND Supreme Court Justices



Justice Jerod E. Tufte

Born

1975 in Minot, ND

Education

Case Western Reserve University, BS in Computer Engineering, 1997; Arizona State University College of Law, 2002

Prior Experience

Law clerk United States Court of Appeals; private practice; Kidder County and Sheridan County State's Attorney; governor's legal counsel; JAG officer Army National Guard; District Court Judge

Elected

2016, 10-year term



Douglas A. Bahr

Born

1960 in Corvallis, Oregon

Education

Brigham Young University, BS in 1987; University of South Dakota School of Law, 1990

Prior Experience

Law Clerk Iowa Supreme Court; Assistant Attorney General and North Dakota Solicitor General and Director of the Civil Litigation Division of the North Dakota Office of Attorney General; Adjunct Faculty, Bismarck State College; private practice; District Court Judge

Appointed

2023 by Gov. Doug Burgum

2024 North Dakota Supreme Court

North Dakota Supreme Court



THE SUPREME COURT IMPLEMENTED A NEW CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND A NEW PUBLIC INFORMATION ACCESS PORTAL IN 2024. The former case management program was created in the 1990s. The new public information access offers parties and the public access to case records, electronic filing, and online payment of filing fees. In an enhancement to that program created by in-house programmers, parties with an email address are emailed all filings in cases, whether filed by the parties or the Court. The new system represents a significant advancement in the Supreme Court's case management abilities.

New case classifications and dispositions were added in the new case management system. Therefore, some comparisons to prior years will not be possible in this annual report.

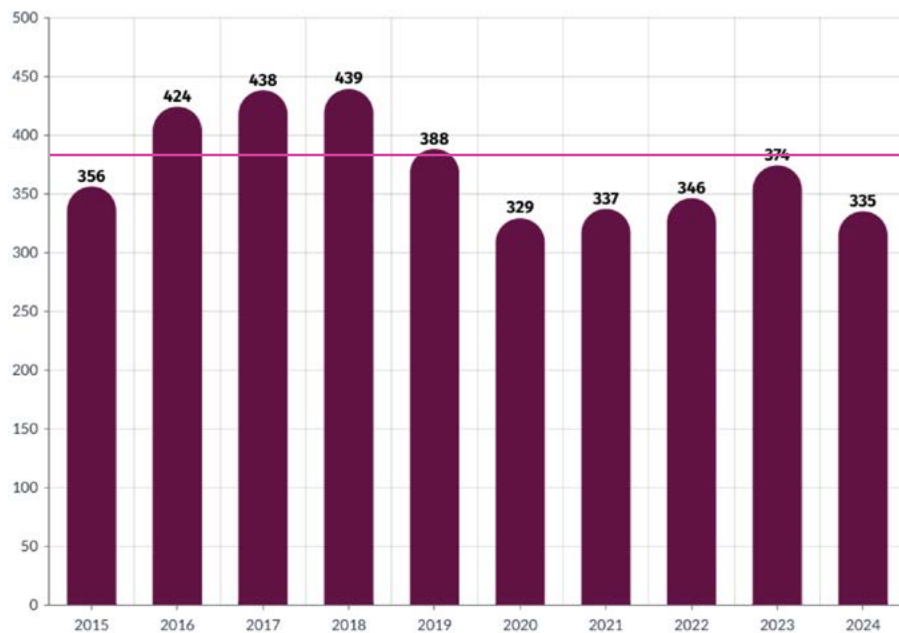
2024 North Dakota Supreme Court

Caseload Highlights

The number of new cases filed declined for first time since 2020. Filings decreased 11% from 2023. The number of new filings for the past 10 years is reflected in the figure below.



SUPREME COURT CASE FILINGS PER YEAR



2024 North Dakota Supreme Court

Caseload Highlights

Civil Filings – Civil matters accounted for 68% of the total caseload. Civil matters decreased 6% as compared to 2023.

- Family-related appeals remained the same as 2023 at 62 cases. Family-related appeals remain the largest percentage of civil filings. They accounted for 27% of the civil filings and 18% of the overall filings.
- Oil, gas, and minerals related matters decreased 91% as compared to 2023.
- Juvenile matters decreased 38% in 2024 as compared to 2023.
- Post-conviction relief matters decreased 6% as compared to 2023.
- The Court considered 13 civil petitions for original writs.

Criminal Filings – Criminal matters accounted for 32% of the total caseload. Criminal matters decreased 18% as compared to 2023.

- Matters involving drugs and driving under the influence decreased 6%. These matters accounted for 5% of the overall caseload and 16% of the criminal caseload.
- Matters involving miscellaneous felonies decreased 50%.
- Matters involving sex-related offenses decreased 46%.
- The Court considered six criminal petitions for original writs.



Oral argument was scheduled in 229 cases. Approximately 38% of the arguments were waived in whole as compared to 35% in 2023. Approximately 41% of arguments were waived in whole or in part as compared to 47% in 2023. Waivers occur by either the parties or the Court, and the matters are then submitted on the briefs and the record.

The Justices authored 236 majority opinions, which is a 5% decrease from 2023. An additional 33 separate opinions were written. Separate opinions include some form of written concurrence or dissent.

The most cases originated from the South Central Judicial District, followed by the East Central, Southeast, North Central, Northwest, Northeast Central, Southwest, and Northeast Judicial Districts.

The percent of cases involving a self-represented party at the time of closing the file increased 27% in 2024 as compared to 2023. Thirty-four percent of cases in 2023 included at least one self-represented party.

Administrative Filings – The Court considered whether to fill, abolish or transfer two district judge vacancies. There were 17 files opened for amendment of rules and policies. The Court continued regular weekly conferences to consider motions and other administrative matters impacting the Court's workload.

Outreach - The Supreme Court continued the Taking the Court to Schools program with visits to University of North Dakota School of Law, Fargo South High school, and North Dakota State University. In addition, over 300 students visited the Supreme Court in Bismarck during 2024.

2024 NORTH DAKOTA SUPREME COURT
CASELOAD SYNOPSIS OF THE SUPREME COURT

		2023	2024	PERCENT CHANGE
NEW FILINGS	CIVIL		208	*
	CRIMINAL	*	108	
	JUVENILE		25	
	TOTAL		341	
DISPOSITIONS	CIVIL		166	*
	CRIMINAL	*	79	
	JUVENILE		25	
	TOTAL		270	
TRANSFERRED TO COURT OF APPEALS	CIVIL/ CRIMINAL	0	0	0

* Due to docket system and disposition code changes, comparison to 2023 is not possible.



DISPOSITIONS

The number of total dispositions remained consistent at 373 as compared to 371 in 2023. The chart shows the total civil and criminal dispositions from 2015-2024.

2024 NORTH DAKOTA SUPREME COURT
SUPREME COURT DISPOSITIONS BY YEAR



SUPREME COURT DISPOSITIONS BY OPINION

	Civil	Criminal	Juvenile	Rule	Other
Affirmed; Affirmed & Modified	84	40	2	0	N/A
Affirmed in Part & Reversed in Part, Remanded in Part, or Vacated in Part	17	4	0	0	N/A
Affirmed in Part & Dismissed in Part	0	0	0	0	N/A
Affirmed by Summary Disposition	25	22	19	0	N/A
Remanded	1	1	1	0	N/A
Reversed	7	4	0	0	N/A
Reversed & Remanded	16	4	3	0	N/A
Reversed in Part & Remanded	0	0	0	0	N/A
Reversed by Summary Disposition	0	0	0	0	N/A
Motion Denied by Opinion	0	0	0	0	N/A
Dismissed	6	2	0	0	N/A
Order/Judgment Vacated, Remanded	0	0	0	0	N/A
Certified Question Answered	2	0	0	0	N/A
Certified Question Not Answered	0	0	0	0	N/A
Petition – Granted	0	1	0	2	N/A
Petition – Denied	1	0	0	0	N/A
Petition – Granted in Part, Denied in Part	0	1	0	0	N/A
Petition for Rehearing	1	0	0	0	N/A
Discipline Imposed	6	0	0	0	N/A
Disability Inactive Status	0	0	0	0	N/A
TOTAL BY OPINION	166	79	25	2	N/A

SUPREME COURT DISPOSITIONS BY ORDER

	Civil	Criminal	Juvenile	Rule	Other
Dismissed	45	32	2	0	0
Petition – Granted	0	1	0	3	2
Petition – Denied	8	5	0	2	0
Petition - Granted in Part, Denied in Part	0	0	0	0	0
Discipline Imposed by Order	0	0	0	0	0
Notice of Appeal Void - No Filing Fee	10	0	0	0	0
Rules - adopted or approved	0	0	0	13	0
No Court Action Required	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL BY ORDER	63	38	2	18	2
GRAND TOTAL DISPOSITIONS	229	117	27	20	2

NORTH DAKOTA DISTRICT COURTS

Overview



THERE ARE DISTRICT COURT SERVICES IN EACH OF THE STATE'S 53 COUNTIES. North Dakota is a fully unified and consolidated court system and all district courts are under the administrative authority of the Chief Justice and funded by the state of North Dakota.

The district courts have original and general jurisdiction in all cases except as otherwise provided by law. They have the authority to issue original and remedial writs. They have exclusive jurisdiction in criminal cases and have general jurisdiction for civil cases. There are 55 district judges in the state and five judicial referees.

Judges in the district courts also serve on statewide committees, boards, and commissions; participate in state

and local bar association activities; and provide law-related public education to students and community members.

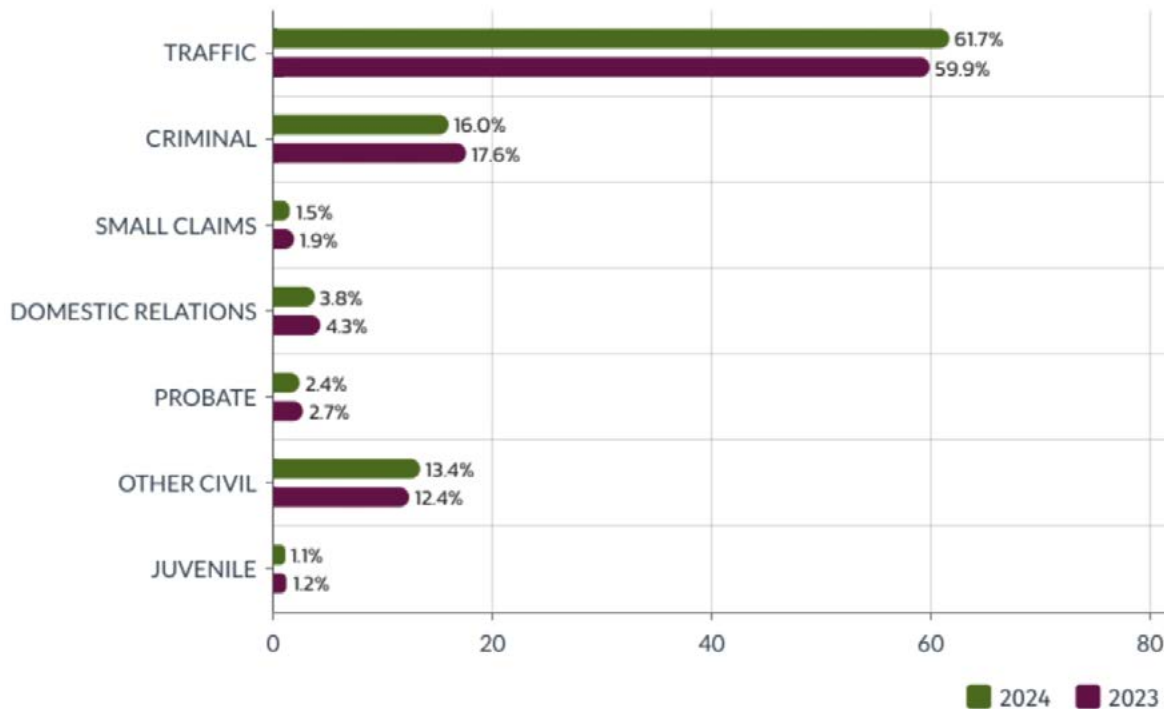
Presiding Judges

Each of the judicial districts has a presiding judge. Each presiding judge is elected by the judges within their district. The presiding judge is the chief administrative officer of all courts in the district and is responsible for all court services within the geographical area of the judicial district. The presiding judge provides leadership within his or her judicial district.

NORTH DAKOTA DISTRICT COURT
TOTAL DISTRICT COURT CASELOAD
 FOR CALENDAR YEARS 2024 & 2023

CASE FILINGS/ DISPOSITIONS	2024			2023			Change in Filings	Change in Dispo- sitions
	Filed	Reopen	Disp.	Filed	Reopen	Disp.		
Civil	33,086	6,397	39,040	29,860	6,200	35,445	10.80%	10.14%
Small Claims	2,557	41	2,629	2,910	146	3,027	-12.13%	-13.15%
Criminal	26,963	12,335	37,283	27,070	12,190	36,348	-0.40%	2.57%
Traffic	103,839	460	107,801	92,366	381	94,211	12.42%	14.43%
Juvenile	1,859	1,246	2,715	1,868	1,438	2,900	-0.48%	-6.38%
Total	168,304	20,479	189,468	154,074	20,355	171,931	9.24%	10.20%

TYPES OF CASES FILED IN DISTRICT COURT
 FOR CALENDAR YEARS 2024 & 2023



NORTH DAKOTA DISTRICT COURT JURY TRIALS BY JUDICIAL DISTRICT FOR 2024

District	2024	2023
Northeast	14	19
Northeast Central	17	18
East Central	16	30
Southeast	18	22
South Central	91	81
Southwest	7	5
Northwest	23	35
North Central	51	34
Total	237	244

*Based on jury trials paid.

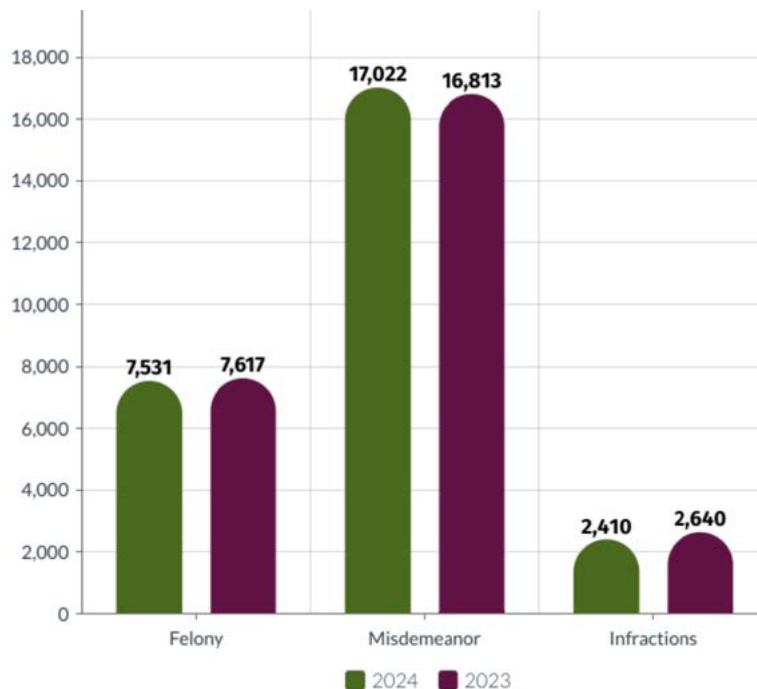


2024 North Dakota District Court

Criminal Caseload

Total criminal filings decreased by 0.4% from 2023 to 2024 with 26,963 cases filed compared to 27,070. Felony filings decreased by 1.1%; misdemeanors increased by 1.2%; and infractions decreased by 8.7%. Misdemeanors made up 63% of total criminal filings; felonies 28%; and infractions 9%.

ND DISTRICT COURTS CRIMINAL CASELOAD FOR 2024 AND 2023



2024 North Dakota District Court

Civil Caseload

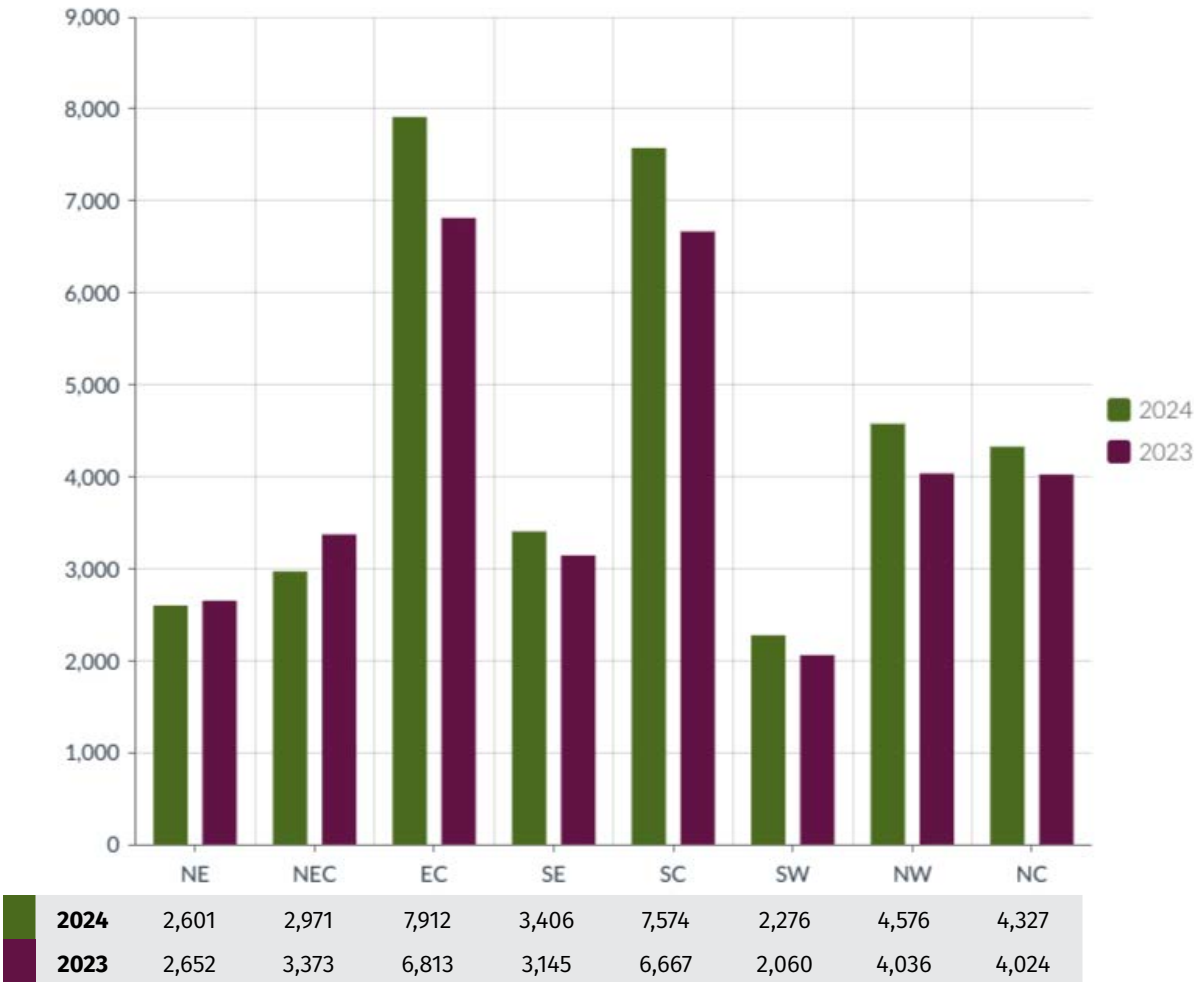
Civil filings increased by 2,873 or 8.8% in 2024 with total case filings of 35,643. There were 2,557 small claims cases in 2024, which is a decrease of 353 as compared to 2023. Domestic relations cases decreased by 176 or 2.6%, probate/guardianship cases increased by 41 or 1.0%, and other civil cases increased by 3,361 or 17.5% in 2024.

Contract/collection (68%), forcible detainer (17%) and civil commitment (4%) cases account for the majority of the 22,618 other civil case types. Contract/collection increased by 3,540 cases or 29.8%, forcible detainer decreased by 58 cases or 1.5% and civil commitment increased by 55 cases or 6.2% as compared to 2023.

There were 6,468 domestic relations case filings in 2024, consisting of the following: divorce (35%); protection/retraining orders (36%); support proceedings (14%); paternity (4%); adoption (5%); parenting responsibility filings (6%) and termination of parental rights (less than 1%).

Total divorce filings in 2024 were 2,235 compared to 2,230 in 2023. Support proceedings decreased by 18% with 913 cases filed, and protections/restraining order filings decreased by 1.6% with 2,355 cases filed.

ND CIVIL CASELOAD FOR DISTRICT COURTS
FOR 2024 AND 2023

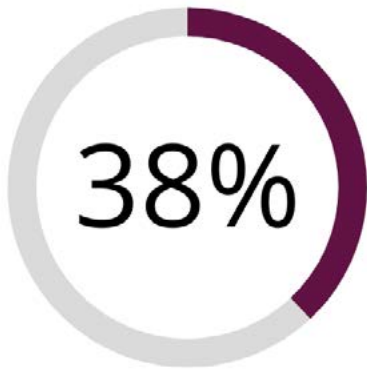


2024 North Dakota District Court

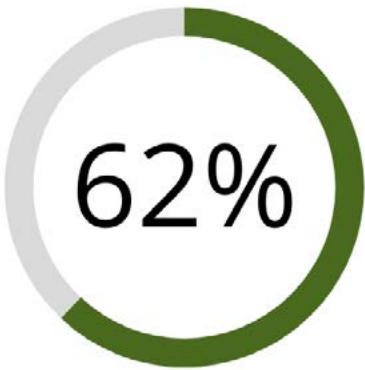
Administrative Traffic Cases

Administrative traffic filings increased by 11,473 (12.4%) from 2023. These cases make up 62 percent of the overall caseload; however, they require little judicial involvement. The processing time required impacts court clerk personnel almost exclusively.

TOTAL CASES FILED IN DISTRICT COURTS INCLUDING ADMINISTRATIVE TRAFFIC - 2024



ALL OTHER FILINGS



ADMINISTRATIVE TRAFFIC

ADMIN. TRAFFIC	2024	2023
CASE FILINGS	103,839	92,366
CASE RE-OPENS	460	381
CASE DISPOSITIONS	107,801	94,211



Northwest Judicial District

Number of Judges: 6

Number of Counties: 3

Northeast Judicial District

Number of Judges: 6

Number of Counties: 11

Southwest Judicial District

Number of Judges: 4

Number of Counties: 8

Southeast Judicial District

Number of Judges: 7

Number of Counties: 14

North Central Judicial District

Number of Judges: 5

Number of Counties: 3

Northeast Central Judicial District

Number of Judges: 6

Number of Counties: 2

South Central Judicial District

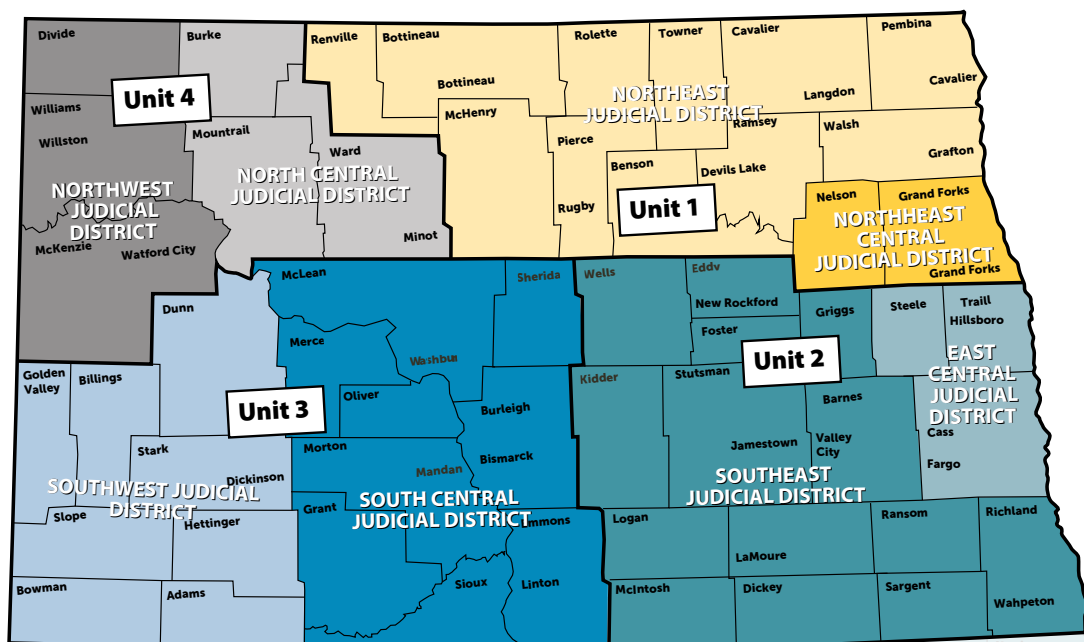
Number of Judges: 10

Number of Counties: 9

East Central Judicial District

Number of Judges: 11

Number of Counties: 3



UNIT 1 – 2024

Unit Administrator

Kelly Hutton

Deputy Administrator

Becky Nelson



PRESIDING JUDGE NORTHEAST JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Judge Donovan J. Foughty

Judges of the Northeast District

Kari Michelle Agotness
 Anthony Swain Benson
 Michael P. Hurly
 Lonnie Olson
 Barbara L. Whelan



PRESIDING JUDGE NORTHEAST CENTRAL JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Judge Donald Hager

Judges of the Northeast Central District

Jay Knudson
 Jason McCarthy
 Theodore Sandberg
 John A. Thelen
 Kristi Pettit Venhuizen

North Dakota District Court

UNIT 1 CASELOAD 2024



NORTHEAST DISTRICT COURT CASELOAD

FOR CALENDAR YEARS 2024 & 2023

CASE FILINGS/ DISPOSITIONS	2024			2023			2024/2023	
	Filed	Reopen	Disp.	Filed	Reopen	Disp.	Change in Filings	Change in Dispositions
Civil	2,443	615	3,395	2,422	736	3,374	0.87%	0.62%
Small Claims	158	2	170	230	5	255	-31.30%	-33.33%
Criminal	2,547	1,334	4,381	2,461	1,118	4,070	3.49%	7.64%
Traffic	12,578	46	12,954	10,720	44	10,844	17.33%	19.46%
Juvenile	131	88	253	178	115	332	-26.40%	-23.80%
Total	17,857	2,085	21,153	16,011	2,018	18,875	11.53%	12.07%

NORTHEAST CENTRAL DISTRICT COURT CASELOAD

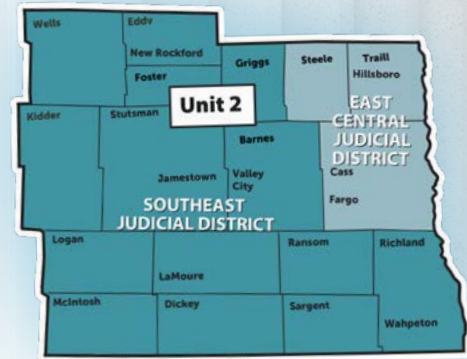
FOR CALENDAR YEARS 2024 & 2023

CASE FILINGS/ DISPOSITIONS	2024			2023			2024/2023	
	Filed	Reopen	Disp.	Filed	Reopen	Disp.	Change in Filings	Change in Dispositions
Civil	2,754	547	3,359	2,975	499	3,432	-7.43%	-2.13%
Small Claims	217	2	263	398	11	410	-45.48%	-35.85%
Criminal	2,739	898	3,503	2,792	783	3,434	-1.90%	2.01%
Traffic	7,539	20	7,897	7,346	28	7,607	2.63%	3.81%
Juvenile	286	171	426	322	204	463	-11.18%	-7.99%
Total	13,535	1,638	15,448	13,833	1,525	15,346	-2.15%	0.66%

UNIT 2 – 2024

Unit Administrator
Chris Iverson

Deputy Administrator
Megan Huffman



PRESIDING JUDGE EAST CENTRAL DISTRICT

Judge John C. Irby

Judges of the East Central District

Susan Bailey	Stephanie N. Hayden
Reid A. Brady	Steven E. McCullough
Nicholas W. Chase	Stephannie N. Stiel
Cherie L. Clark	Tristan J. Van de Streek
Constance L. Cleveland	Wade L. Webb

Referees in the East Central District

Dan Gast - Fargo
Scott Diamond - Fargo



PRESIDING JUDGE SOUTHEAST DISTRICT

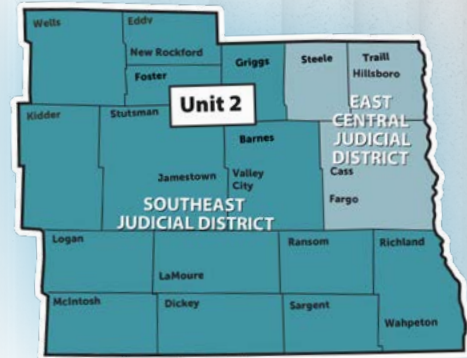
Judge Daniel D. Narum

Judges of the Southeast District

Bradley A. Cruff
James D. Hovey
Troy J. LeFevre
Jay A. Schmitz
James T. Shockman
Nicholas D. Thornton

North Dakota District Court

UNIT 2 CASELOAD 2024



EAST CENTRAL DISTRICT COURT CASELOAD

FOR CALENDAR YEARS 2024 & 2023

CASE FILINGS/ DISPOSITIONS	2024			2023			2024/2023	
	Filed	Reopen	Disp.	Filed	Reopen	Disp.	Change in Filings	Change in Dispositions
Civil	6,884	1,232	7,842	5,915	1,260	6,929	16.38%	13.18%
Small Claims	1,028	11	998	898	50	913	14.48%	9.31%
Criminal	5,919	2,037	7,484	6,269	2,095	7,560	-5.58%	-1.01%
Traffic	18,127	66	19,072	16,588	31	16,620	9.28%	14.75%
Juvenile	539	253	771	523	335	726	3.06%	6.20%
Total	32,497	3,599	36,167	30,193	3,771	32,748	7.63%	10.44%

SOUTHEAST DISTRICT COURT CASELOAD

FOR CALENDAR YEARS 2024 & 2023

CASE FILINGS/ DISPOSITIONS	2024			2023			2024/2023	
	Filed	Reopen	Disp.	Filed	Reopen	Disp.	Change in Filings	Change in Dispositions
Civil	3,081	739	3,747	2,792	656	3,368	10.35%	11.25%
Small Claims	325	6	323	353	10	363	-7.93%	-11.02%
Criminal	2,060	696	2,652	1,967	902	2,835	4.73%	-6.46%
Traffic	14,992	53	15,322	11,239	46	11,804	33.39%	29.80%
Juvenile	115	77	170	130	73	173	-11.54%	-1.73%
Total	20,573	1,571	22,214	16,481	1,687	18,543	24.83%	19.80%

UNIT 3 – 2024

Unit Administrator
Donna Wunderlich

Deputy Administrator
Michele Bring



PRESIDING JUDGE SOUTH CENTRAL DISTRICT **Judge Bruce A. Romanick**

Judges of the South Central District

Daniel J. Borgen	Lindsey Nieuwsma
Cynthia M. Feland	David E. Reich
James S. Hill	Bonnie L. Storbakken
Jackson J. Lofgren	Bobbi Weiler
Pamela A. Nesvig	

Referees in the South Central District

Jason Hammes – Bismarck (elected district judge Nov. 2024, takes office Jan. 1, 2025)
Tessa Vaagen - Bismarck



PRESIDING JUDGE SOUTHWEST DISTRICT **Judge William A. Herauf**

Judges of the Southwest District

Rhonda R. Ehliis
James D. Gion
Dann E. Greenwood

North Dakota District Court

UNIT 3 CASELOAD 2024



SOUTH CENTRAL DISTRICT COURT CASELOAD

FOR CALENDAR YEARS 2024 & 2023

CASE FILINGS/ DISPOSITIONS	2024			2023			2024/2023	
	Filed	Reopen	Disp.	Filed	Reopen	Disp.	Change in Filings	Change in Dispositions
Civil	7,143	1,303	8,297	6,125	1,272	7,323	16.62%	13.30%
Small Claims	431	8	452	542	26	574	-20.48%	-21.25%
Criminal	5,934	2,114	7,540	5,596	2,052	6,832	6.04%	10.36%
Traffic	19,599	91	20,153	17,191	53	17,351	14.01%	16.15%
Juvenile	398	291	550	339	318	576	17.40%	-4.51%
Total	33,505	3,807	36,992	29,793	3,721	32,656	12.46%	13.28%

SOUTHWEST DISTRICT COURT CASELOAD

FOR CALENDAR YEARS 2024 & 2023

CASE FILINGS/ DISPOSITIONS	2024			2023			2024/2023	
	Filed	Reopen	Disp.	Filed	Reopen	Disp.	Change in Filings	Change in Dispositions
Civil	2,191	430	2,552	1,946	397	2,292	12.59%	11.34%
Small Claims	85	2	92	114	9	120	-25.44%	-23.33%
Criminal	1,687	936	2,337	1,945	902	2,487	-13.26%	-6.03%
Traffic	8,321	57	8,683	8,621	61	8,785	-3.48%	-1.16%
Juvenile	100	28	96	66	29	109	51.52%	-11.93%
Total	12,384	1,453	13,760	12,692	1,398	13,793	-2.43%	-0.24%

UNIT 4 – 2024

Unit Administrator

Carolyn Probst



PRESIDING JUDGE NORTH CENTRAL DISTRICT

Judge Gary H. Lee

Judges of the North Central District

Todd L. Cresap
Richard L. Hagar
Stacy J. Louser
Douglas L. Mattson

Referees in the North Central

Kelly Dillon – Minot



PRESIDING JUDGE NORTHWEST DISTRICT

Judge Robin A. Schmidt

Judges of the Northeast Central District

Daniel S. El-Dweek	Joshua B. Rustad
Benjamin J. Johnson	Kirsten M. Sjue
Chas Neff, Jr.	

North Dakota District Court

UNIT 4 CASELOAD 2024



NORTHWEST DISTRICT COURT CASELOAD

FOR CALENDAR YEARS 2024 & 2023

CASE FILINGS/ DISPOSITIONS	2024			2023			2024/2023	
	Filed	Reopen	Disp.	Filed	Reopen	Disp.	Change in Filings	Change in Dispositions
Civil	4,426	700	5,011	3,869	611	4,322	14.40%	15.94%
Small Claims	150	4	164	167	21	180	-10.18%	-8.89%
Criminal	3,325	1,598	4,285	3,186	1,772	4,207	4.36%	1.85%
Traffic	9,972	40	10,470	8,607	39	8,922	15.86%	17.35%
Juvenile	131	118	184	123	116	200	6.50%	-8.00%
Total	18,004	2,460	20,114	15,952	2,559	17,831	12.86%	12.80%

NORTH CENTRAL DISTRICT COURT CASELOAD

FOR CALENDAR YEARS 2024 & 2023

CASE FILINGS/ DISPOSITIONS	2024			2023			2024/2023	
	Filed	Reopen	Disp.	Filed	Reopen	Disp.	Change in Filings	Change in Dispositions
Civil	4,164	831	4,837	3,816	769	4,405	9.12%	9.81%
Small Claims	163	6	167	208	14	212	-21.63%	-21.23%
Criminal	2,752	2,722	5,101	2,854	2,566	4,923	-3.57%	3.62%
Traffic	12,711	87	13,250	12,054	79	12,278	5.45%	7.92%
Juvenile	159	220	265	187	248	321	-14.97%	-17.45%
Total	19,949	3,866	23,620	19,119	3,676	22,139	4.34%	6.69%

SPECIALIZED DOCKET

Overview



A “SPECIALIZED DOCKET” IS A JUVENILE OR DISTRICT COURT that oversees a therapeutic program comprised of interdisciplinary teams, enhanced judicial involvement, court-supervised treatment programs, and other components designed to achieve effective alternatives to traditional case dispositions.

There are both adult and juvenile specialized dockets in North Dakota. There are juvenile drug courts, an adult treatment court, a veteran’s court, and a domestic violence court.

Adult drug courts are specialized dockets, but are under the supervision of the North Dakota Department of Corrections.

2024 Specialized Docket

Richland County Treatment Court

Judge Brad Cruff presides over the Richland County Treatment Court. This court meets in Wahpeton and accepts alcohol and drug related non-violent offenders from Richland County. In 2024, this court team achieved a graduation rate above the national average, while maintaining a full treatment court.

In May, Court Coordinator Allie Cory attended the National AllRise Conference. This conference gathers treatment court teams from across the country to share the latest studies, best practices and insights on effective treatment courts. In the fall of 2024, the Richland County Treatment Court invited an AllRise Tune Up Training group to evaluate their program and lead the team in three days of intense training. The Tune Up Training highlighted many areas of strength for this treatment court and provided guidance for ways to expand and enhance the program. With the help of this evaluation, the Richland

County Treatment Court has found new and creative ways to expand incentives and sanctions and provide support to their participants.



RICHLAND COUNTY TREATMENT COURT

OVERALL STATISTICS FROM START DATE

	Individuals Screened	Participants Admitted	Current Participants	Graduated	Terminated	Obtained Employment	Obtained Housing
2024	14	12	11	6	3	6	0
2023	9	7	8	4	4	13	15
2022	18	7	9	6	2	16	17
2021	18	12	9	1	0	9	6
2020	6	6	2	1	2	4	4

RICHLAND COUNTY TREATMENT COURT

RACE DATA 2024

White	Native American	Hispanic	Mixed	Unknown
12	5	1	1	1

RICHLAND COUNTY TREATMENT COURT

GENDER DATA 2024

Male	Female
16	4

2024 Specialized Docket

Veterans Treatment Court

Northeast Central Judicial District's Veterans Treatment Court saw growth in its second year. Judge Donald Hagar presides over this court which started in 2023 and is held at the Grand Forks County Courthouse.

This court has created a community of support around its participants that has assisted in helping one of the participants through schooling and another establish a safe home. As participants graduate, many of them have expressed an interest in continuing their support for the program. This group of graduates are creating an alumni group to continue to support each other and to jointly support the current participants and treatment court

team. The mentor program pairs court participants with individuals with similar military and substance use or mental health history. This program continues to be a key piece of this court and mentors join their participants at court each week. Throughout the week, the mentors and participants connect through conversation and social activities like weekly lunches at local restaurants and movie nights.

The success of this group has encouraged the creation of a Veterans Treatment Court in the East Central Judicial District that will be held in the Cass County Courthouse with Judge Constance Cleveland presiding.



VETERANS TREATMENT COURT PARTICIPATION AND COMPLETION DATA

CALENDAR YEARS 2023-2024

	2024	2023
Individuals Screened	45	13
Participants Admitted	5	8
Current Participants	7	6
Graduated	4	1
Terminated	3	1

RACE

	2024	2023
White	9	5
Native American	1	0
Black	2	3

GENDER

	2024	2023
Male	11	8
Female	1	0



2024 Specialized Docket

Grand Forks County Domestic Violence Court

The only Domestic Violence (DV) Court in the North Dakota Court System was started in August 2018 and is located in Grand Forks. Judge Jason McCarthy and Judge Kristi Pettit Venhuizen preside over the post-judgment model court.

The goals of the court are to increase offender compliance with court orders, reduce recidivism, enhance victim safety, and increase the effectiveness/efficiency of court processes relating to domestic violence cases.

Under N.D.C.C 12.1-17-13, any sentence of a domestic

violence offender must include an order to complete an evaluation as well as follow-through with program recommendations including the New Choices program administered by the Community Violence Intervention Center (CVIC). CVIC monitors individual compliance after conviction and provides coordination services to the DV Court.

The DV Court tracks data to assist with monitoring progress as well as attempting to enhance the effectiveness of the program.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURT

Participation and Completion Rates

Calendar Years 2022 - 2024

	2022	2023	2024*
# DV Court sessions held	19	18	15
# Cases ordered into DV Court**	115	92	95
# Unduplicated defendants ordered into DV Court	106	89	92
Male	90 (85%)	72 (81%)	75 (82%)
Female	16 (15%)	17 (19%)	17 (18%)
# DV Court cases completed***	48	59	57
# Unduplicated DV Court participants completed	44	54	53
Male	35 (80%)	49 (91%)	44 (83%)
Female	9 (20%)	5 (9%)	9 (17%)
# of DV Court Post-Sentence Review (DVCPSR) hearings held	458	455	340
# Unduplicated cases with a DVCPSR	180	166	135
Attendance for DVCPSR hearings by case			
Attended/Appeared	355 (78%)	351 (77%)	273 (80%)
Bench Warrant	103 (22%)	72 (16%)	48 (14%)
Non-Appearence, No Warrant Issued****		32 (7%)	19 (6%)
Total Cases Heard in DV Court	458	455	340
# Unduplicated participants with a scheduled DVCPSR hearing	156	149	123
Male	132 (85%)	124 (83%)	99 (80%)
Female	24 (15%)	25 (17%)	24 (20%)

*In 2024, an additional judgeship was added in the Northeast Central Judicial District. Since DV Court sessions occur on each week of the presiding judges' master criminal court calendar, this led to less DV Court sessions, impacting the data. **Some defendants were ordered to DV Court in multiple cases. ***Participants that completed during each reporting period could also include cases that were ordered the year(s) before. ****In 2023, DV Court started tracking DVC hearings where the defendant did not attend, and the hearing was continued without issuing a warrant.

Juvenile Court Mission Statement



THE JUVENILE COURT PROTECTS THE BEST INTERESTS OF CHILDREN and addresses the unique characteristics and needs of children that come before the court as children in need of protection and delinquent matters. Following the principles of Balanced and Restorative Justice, the mission of the North Dakota Juvenile Court is to promote public safety, hold juvenile offenders accountable, and increase the capacity of juveniles to contribute productively to their community. The courts empower victims, encourage community participation, and support parental responsibility.

2024 Juvenile Court

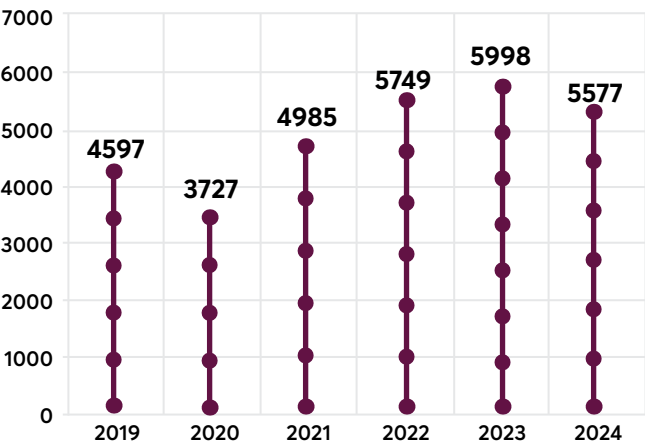
Juvenile Court Case Highlights

The juvenile court has jurisdiction over all delinquent, child in need of protection, termination of parental rights, and guardianship case types. In 2024, delinquencies made up 74% of case referrals to juvenile court, child in need of protection/termination of parental rights made up 23%, and guardianship 3%.

2024 Delinquent Referrals

In North Dakota, the Juvenile Court has exclusive jurisdiction over youth age ten to eighteen who are alleged to have committed a delinquent offense.

DELINQUENT REFERRALS



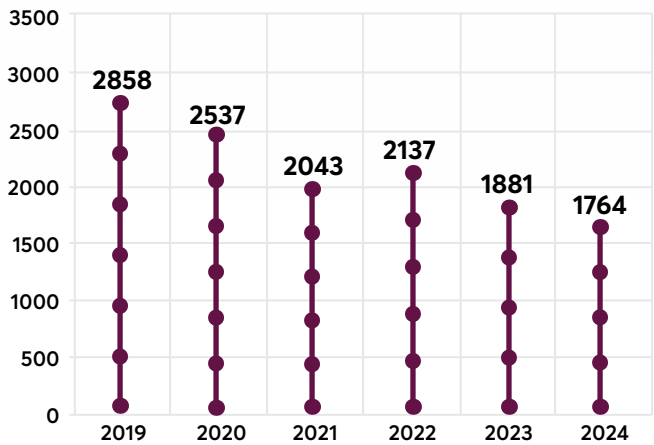
TOTAL REFERRALS BY OFFENSE TYPE

	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Against Person Offenses	1609	1545	1486	1276	871	1048
Drug/Alcohol Offenses	1388	1594	1619	1317	856	858
Property Offenses	1399	1585	1313	1127	1035	1341
Public Order	866	1000	1122	971	722	1108
Traffic	254	223	178	253	216	201
Weapons	61	51	31	41	27	41
TOTAL	5577	5998	5749	4985	3727	4597

Child in Need of Protection and Termination of Parental Rights

Child in Need of Protection and Termination of Parental Rights, more commonly known as child abuse and neglect, are referred to the courts by the human service zone after a child abuse and neglect investigation.

**CHILD IN NEED OF PROTECTION/
TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS**



Guardianship of a Minor

The juvenile court is responsible for reviewing petitions to establish, modify, or terminate guardianship of a minor child filed under N.D.C.C. 27-20.1 and for reviewing child placements in residential treatment under N.D.C.C. 27-20.2-058(1)(k).

In 2024, the juvenile court received 248 new filings and had 413 juvenile guardianship review hearings on existing cases.

Qualified Residential Treatment Placement Reviews

When a North Dakota Human Service Zone or the Division of Juvenile Services places youth in a Qualified Residential Treatment Facility, Maximus Ascend must first assess the placement to ensure its appropriateness. If it is approved, the juvenile court director must review the process.

In 2024, the juvenile court received 162 assessments from Maximus Ascend. The juvenile court director or designee reviewed 135 approvals. Twenty-seven of the placements were denials, which the juvenile court does not review.

2024 Juvenile Court

Juvenile Drug Court

The past year was a year of growth for the Juvenile Drug Courts of North Dakota. The teams that serve these courts found creative and supportive ways to surround the participants with the tools and opportunities they needed to succeed. During their time in the program, participants were supported as they found jobs, completed General Equivalency Degrees (GED's), reconnected with family and built a foundation for a healthy life. With the help of the Juvenile Drug Court team, one participant was able to secure a full scholarship to a trade school.

In October, the Juvenile Drug Court teams participated in the Upper Midwest Drug Court Conference in Fargo. Speakers from around the county covered topics on how addiction works in the brain, incentives and sanctions, drug trends and how trauma impacts addiction. Teams were able to connect with their counterparts across the state to brainstorm and share ideas. A review of program manual gave these courts an opportunity to review their current practices and ensure that they are in line with the Best Practice Standards released by AllRise in 2024.

In 2025, Juvenile Drug Courts will focus on ways to provide better support services to the families of participants. Supporting the family as a unit is expected to lead to increased success rates of the participants. Court teams are also exploring new ways to approach incentives and sanctions to best encourage positive behavior changes in the participants.



2024 JUVENILE DRUG COURT STATISTICS BY INDIVIDUAL COURT

	Grand Forks	Fargo	Bismarck	Minot/ Williston	Devils Lake/ Spirit Lake	Stutsman/ Barnes	Totals
Individual Participants Served	15	27	19	9	7	5	82
Current Participants	4	11	10	4	5	2	36
Terminated	10	11	7	3	0	2	33
Timed Out	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Other	0	1 (moved)	0	1 (moved)	0	0	2
Graduated	5	2	1	1	0	0	9
Drug Tests	313	660	529	266	179	142	2089
Community Service	0	148.5	0	246	0	10	404.5
Gender							
Male	8	15	8	7	2	2	42
Female	7	7	11	2	5	3	35
Race							
White	8	12	11	8		3	42
Native American	1	3	5	1	7	2	19
Asian Pacific Island	2						2
Black	3	5	1				9
Mixed	1	1					2
Unknown			1				1

2024 Juvenile Court

Court Improvement Program

The Court Improvement Program (CIP) provides support and resources to North Dakota's state courts, allowing them to evaluate and enhance court processes in response to the needs of children in the child welfare system. The CIP is funded by a federal grant provided by the Administration of Children and Families Children's Bureau.

The CIP grant enables state courts to assess the role, responsibilities, and effectiveness of courts in carrying out laws relating to child welfare proceedings. It also allows courts to improve the safety, well-being, and permanency planning for children in foster care. The grant supports court data collection and analysis, promotes data sharing between courts, child welfare agencies, and tribes, and is used to increase child welfare expertise within the legal community and facilitate cross-training opportunities among agencies, tribes, courts, and other key stakeholders.

Updated CIP program requirements for 2024 included focusing on quality hearings in child welfare cases, quality legal representation for parents and children, joint projects and collaboration with the state's child welfare agency, as well as supporting participation of legal and judicial

partners in all stages of North Dakota's Children and Family Review. CIP must also use at least thirty percent of grant funds to collect data jointly with the child welfare system. The data is used to improve case tracking and achievement of permanency goals for children and families.

In 2024, the CIP completed its facilitation of a workgroup to examine the practices of the Lay Guardian Ad Litem Program. The Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) workgroup met monthly either via Zoom or in person, administered surveys



of stakeholders, reviewed and analyzed data from the GAL case management system and other GAL reports, and analyzed the program structure and model of GAL service delivery in Children in Need of Protection, termination of parental rights, and guardianship cases. Findings and recommendations of the GAL workgroup were provided to court and child welfare stakeholders during its assessment. The workgroup's recommendations continue to be reviewed and utilized to make practice improvements within the program.

Over the past year, the North Dakota Court Improvement Program, Legal Services of North Dakota, Children and Family Services, and the North Dakota ICWA Partnership grant continued to work on providing pre-petition legal representation to families in two Human Service Zones. The pre-petition legal representation model aims to keep families together while providing early advocacy in child welfare cases before court involvement.

The pre-petition legal representation model continues to operate within the Burleigh County and Three Rivers Human Service Zones for children at risk of being placed in foster care. The goal of the model is to maintain children in their homes, mitigate safety issues, and decrease the disproportionality rate of American Indian children entering foster care. In 2024, 25 families were referred to the program. Of the families successfully served by the pre-petition team, 70% of children of those families remained in the home.

The Court Improvement Program funds and oversees the North Dakota Dual Status Youth Initiative (DSYI) to address issues related to dual status youth – those youth who have been involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems in North Dakota. Between January 1, 2024, and December 31, 2024, the DSYI served 1001 youth. To achieve the best possible oversight and coordination of dual status youth cases, CIP continues to support a workgroup of CHINS specialists and the juvenile court DSYI Liaisons.



2024 Juvenile Court

Dual Status Youth Initiative

The Court Improvement Program funds and oversees the work of the North Dakota Dual Status Youth Initiative.

Dual Status Youth are those North Dakota youth simultaneously involved or previously involved in the state's child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The North Dakota Dual Status Youth Initiative (DSYI) works to improve collaboration, communication, and exchange of information between agencies. Once children are identified as dual status, the agencies work together to improve outcomes for the youth. This is accomplished by increasing interagency information sharing between juvenile court and child welfare and establishing child and family-centered multidisciplinary policies and practices.

To achieve the best possible oversight and coordination of dual status youth cases, the Human Service Zone Child in Need of Services (CHINS) specialists and the juvenile court have designated a "DSY Liaison" in each respective area. Roles and responsibilities of the DSY Liaisons include serving as a point of contact for all dual status youth notifications, clarifying policies and practices to agency staff, participating in monthly DSYI workgroup meetings to discuss best practices, and ensuring that child welfare agency staff and juvenile court officers have a complete understanding of their role and responsibilities when working with dual status youth.

Based on feedback from the DSYI Liaison workgroup, the Court Improvement Program updated the Protocol and Practice Guide in July and created multiple resources to enhance compliance with the DSYI protocol process.

Resources include a DSY protocol quick sheet and flow chart to assist the Human Service Zones, Child in Need of Services (CHINS) specialists, and the juvenile court in supporting DSY best practices timelines. The CIP coordinator provides regional training on the DSYI protocol to the CHINS specialists, juvenile court staff, and Zone staff as needed.

One resource used to improve outcomes for dual status youth is the Family Centered Engagement meeting (FCE). The Village Family Service Center provides the FCE. The meeting consists of a facilitated team process that includes participation from parents, extended family, children, service providers, child welfare staff, and juvenile court staff to make critical decisions regarding the safety and well-being of the child to achieve the safest and least restrictive outcomes that are in the best interest of the dual status youth. In 2024, 170 FCE meetings, along with additional follow-up meetings, were provided to dual



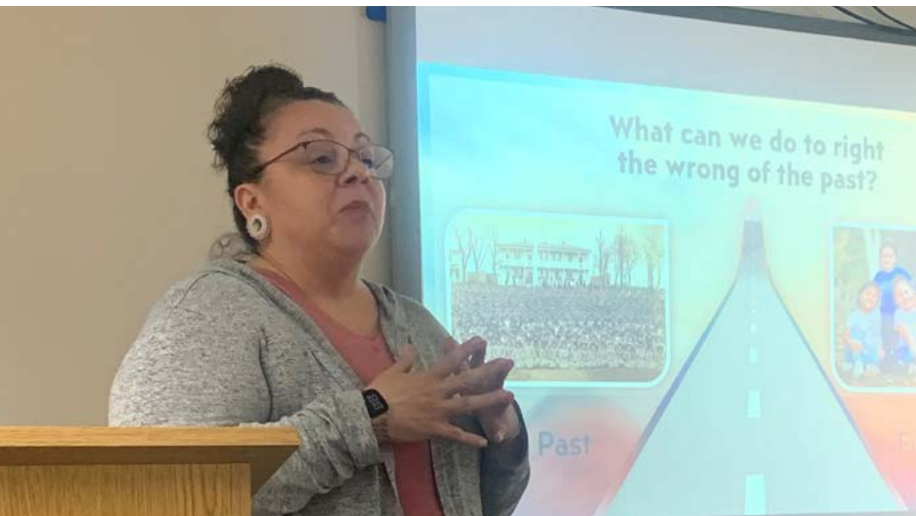
In 2024, there were 1001 dual status youth identified by the Initiative. The map below shows where the dual status youth were identified:

The map displays the following death rates per 100,000 people by state:

State	Death Rate per 100,000
Alaska	0
Arizona	1
California	0
Colorado	5
Connecticut	0
Delaware	2
District of Columbia	5
Florida	7
Georgia	16
Hawaii	52
Idaho	5
Illinois	65
Indiana	2
Iowa	2
Kansas	1
Kentucky	35
Louisiana	4
Maine	108
Maryland	25
Massachusetts	3
Michigan	7
Minnesota	1
Mississippi	285
Missouri	1
Montana	1
Nebraska	0
Nevada	1
New Hampshire	0
New Jersey	5
New Mexico	4
New York	1
North Carolina	0
North Dakota	1
Ohio	5
Oklahoma	0
Oregon	4
Pennsylvania	0
Rhode Island	45
South Carolina	1
South Dakota	0
Tennessee	173
Texas	2
Utah	45
Vermont	8
Virginia	53
Washington	0
West Virginia	3
Wisconsin	0
Wyoming	0

COURT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Overview



THE NORTH DAKOTA COURT SYSTEM PROVIDES A NUMBER OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO ASSIST WITH THE RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES. Those programs include family mediation, guardianship monitoring, and assistance for self-represented litigants in civil cases.

Reports on these services can be found in this section.

2024 Court Programs And Services

Family Mediation Program

The Family Mediation Program is a statewide program that provides a high-quality, impartial, and efficient forum for resolving disputed parental rights and responsibilities and grandparent visitation matters through mediation.

The Family Mediation Program accepted 777 cases into the Program. Data for completed cases indicates 43% reached full agreement, while an additional 19% reached partial agreements for a positive impact on 62% of cases.

There are currently 27 mediators on the Family Mediation Roster.

FAMILY MEDIATION CASES

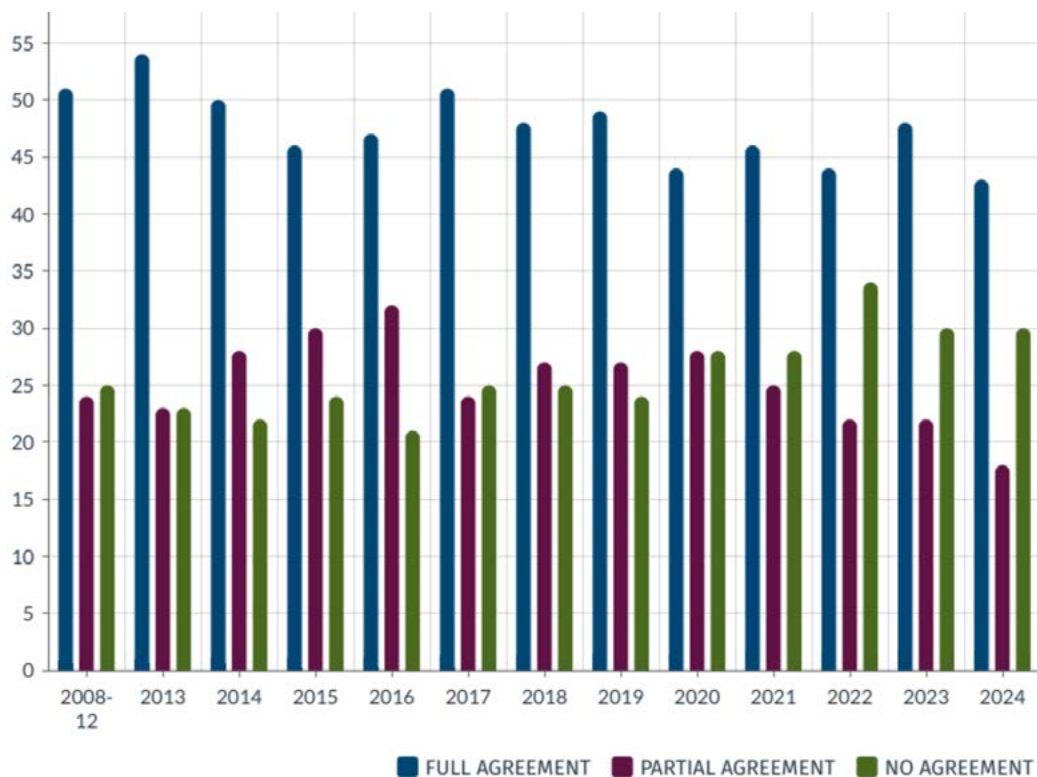
January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024

Total cases referred to the mediation program		1615
Cases rejected or dropped out		838
Custody issues settled before mediation	418	
Existence of domestic violence restraining order in case record or domestic violence issues identified	59	
Default divorce	440	
One party incarcerated	7	
Mediation attempted prior to filing divorce action	2	
One or both parties did not comply with order	111	
Parties reconciled	4	
Dismissed	30	
Miscellaneous	167	
Cases accepted into the Family Mediation Program		777
Cases pending outcome		224

Through the Family Mediation Program, the parties are empowered and encouraged to present their concerns to each other face-to-face and reach their own mutual agreements. The parties reduce the expenses and stress of court proceedings and the emotional toll of conflict. The participants can benefit greatly by preserving the possibility of ongoing relationships in the future and avoiding lengthy court proceedings.

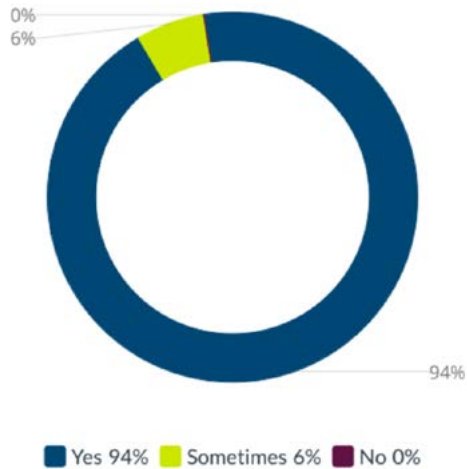


FAMILY MEDIATION PROGRAM YEARLY SETTLEMENT RATE

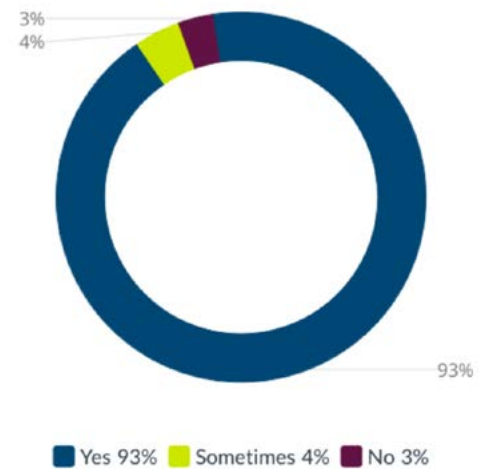


The court periodically evaluates different aspects of the program to ensure it is meeting its goal. Results of the Family Mediation Program survey that was completed in June, August, and September are shown below. A total of 120 surveys were completed.

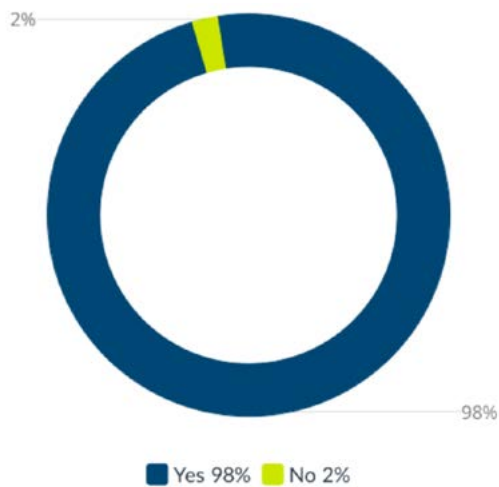
Did the mediator explain things in a way that was easy to understand?



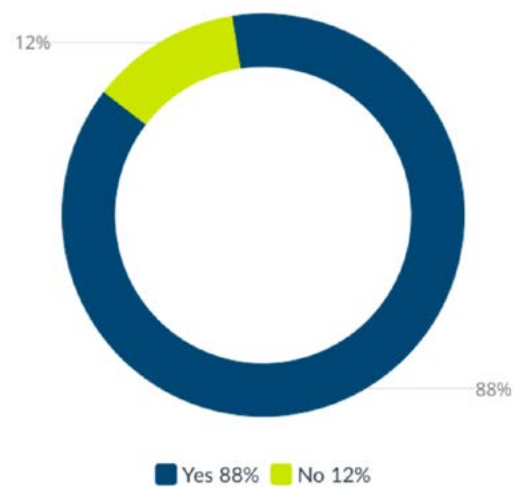
Did the mediator treat you fairly?



Did the mediator let you share your ideas on how to resolve disagreements?



Did the mediator give you helpful examples of how other parents were able to resolve problems you face?



More information on the Family Law Mediation Program can be found at:

<http://www.ndcourts.gov/court/rules/NDROC/rule8.1.htm>

2024 Court Programs And Services

Expedited Mediation

In 2024, the Expedited Parenting Time Mediation Program received 73 requests for a referral to the Program. The expedited mediation program is voluntary and 37% of responding parties declined to participate. Data for completed cases indicates 61% reached an agreement.



EXPEDITED PARENTING TIME MEDIATION PROGRAM – JANUARY 1, 2024 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2024

Total cases referred to the program	73
Cases where one party declined to participate	27
Cases rejected	14
Cases that entered the Program	32
As of January 9, 2024 - Cases mediation completed	31
As of January 9, 2024 - Cases pending	1

2024 Court Programs And Services

Guardianship Monitoring Program

Monitoring Referrals and Case Reviews

In 2024, 85 cases were referred to the monitoring program by district court judges, and an additional 6 cases were randomly selected for review. The two most common reasons for referrals are when it appears that the guardian has stopped performing their duties and when guardians seem to be unmindful of their fiduciary responsibilities.

Court visitors appointed through the monitoring program are frequently tasked with locating an appropriate person or agency to act as successor guardian. There are currently nine professional guardianship agencies providing services in North Dakota, and they usually have a waitlist of proposed cases.

Education and Outreach

The program provides education to guardians on statutory requirements and shares resources for services that may be a benefit to the guardian or to the individual under guardianship. In 2024, the monitoring program hosted 5 online educational trainings for guardians and others that work with vulnerable adults. We reached a total of 394 attendees on a variety of topics including Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, and Individual Justice Planning.

This year the program manager worked on an information sheet for assisting parties in determining a reasonable fee for services provided as a guardian. Another area where guardians need to propose costs to the court is when they are requesting approval for room and board expenses. An information sheet was also created for these situations that lists examples for guardians to consider such as expenses frequently considered to be a room and board related cost, as well as items that are not usually included.

Another project was the creation of a packet of information to be mailed to new guardians. This information expands on the details provided in the court's training video for proposed guardians. Some of the primary topics include immediate responsibilities, decision-making as a guardian, financial duties, and resources available. We will begin mailing these packets to new guardians in 2025.

A new internal workflow was created to improve case management of emergency guardianship appointments. In the past, these appointments were nearly identical to long-term guardian appointments in the court's case management system. By making a separate designation for emergencies, these appointments will be easier to identify on the public website and will be simpler to manage in the system. Additionally, the court will now have accurate data on the number of emergency appointments that are made each year.



The program manager acts as customer service contact for guardians, proposed guardians, and the general public. Referrals are frequently made to resources including the court's self-help site and North Dakota Aging Services. Additionally, local service providers such as county social services and the centers for independent living have many resources for people assisting vulnerable adults.

The North Dakota Court System continues to host a guardianship training website that provides valuable information to guardians and proposed guardians. This year, 451 people completed the adult guardianship training video. Other free courses included New Guardian Duties, Alternatives to Guardianship, and Mental Health Decision Making; 253 people viewed these trainings.

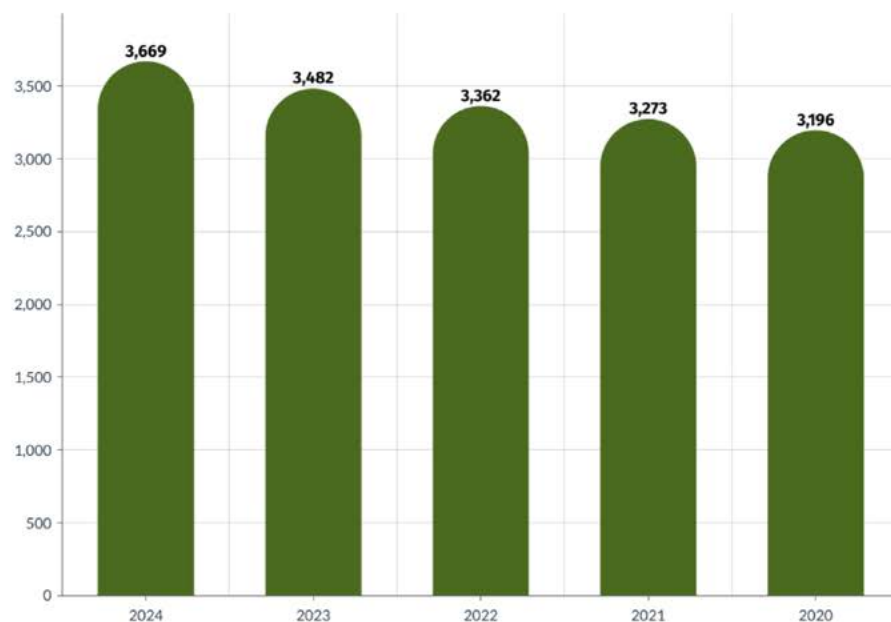
Case Counts

During the past year, 408 new guardianships were established by the district courts. The number of active guardianships of adults at year-end was 3,669.

A majority of the cases are managed by non-professional guardians. In instances when no one is available to be appointed as guardian, a professional agency may be appointed. These agencies are currently providing services to more than 1,200 vulnerable adults.

This chart shows total guardianships in North Dakota for the past five years:

ACTIVE GUARDIANSHIP OF AN ADULT CASES AT YEAR-END



2024 Court Programs And Services

Self Help Center Provides Civil Court Resources

The North Dakota Legal Self Help Center is a neutral resource designed to provide civil court process information to the thousands of self-represented litigants involved in a North Dakota civil legal issue. The Center began providing services in 2014.

The North Dakota Legal Self Help Center is a division of the North Dakota Supreme Court Law Library. The Law Library and Center are staffed by three people.

The Center's webpage is housed on the North Dakota Court System website and is the main contact point for locating resources. The Center's webpage contains all of the forms, informational guides, research guides and brochures available through the Center. As of December 31, 2024, over 800 forms, guides and brochures are available. These are mainly created and maintained by Center staff. Court System committees and State Court Administration staff also contribute content.

The forms, informational guides, and research guides on the Center's webpage are available for many civil legal issues, such as family law, guardianship, small claims, name change, informal probate, protection and restraining orders, and eviction. New forms and guides are created largely based on the volume of requests for a specific process or topic. Center staff update existing forms and guides on a defined schedule, and as dictated by changes to laws, rules, and court process.

Center staff provide direct support to self-represented litigants by phone and email. Center staff answer questions about civil court processes, procedures and legal terms. Staff provide contact information for other agencies that may be able to assist with a problem. Self-represented litigants are directed to state laws, rules and regulations that may be relevant to a legal issue. Staff notify every person who contacts the Center of the services the Center can provide, and that legal advice and legal representation cannot be provided under any circumstances.

The Law Library's print collection and two patron access computers are available to self-represented litigants for in-person legal research. The print collection and computers are located at the Capitol Building in Bismarck, North Dakota.

The number of forms, informational guides, and research guides available on the North Dakota Legal Self Help Center webpage at the end of 2024:

- Individual forms (including instructions): 705
- Mental health commitment forms: 61
- Informational guides: 53
- Research guides: 45

In 2024, new forms and resources were created by Center staff and added to the webpage, including:

- Forms for contested divorce from start to finish;
- Plaintiff's voluntary dismissal form set for civil cases;
- Plaintiff's voluntary dismissal form set for eviction cases;
- A declaration of petitioner in adult name change cases to notify the court of the status of their criminal history record check and/or objections to the petition;
- A declaration of petitioner in minor name change cases to notify the court of the status of the minor's criminal history record check and/or objections to the petition;
- Ward's petition for a different guardian in an adult guardianship case;
- A proposed order to dismiss a Small Claims Court case;
- A Juvenile Court general-use affidavit form;
- A Frequently Asked Questions guide to answering a summons and complaint; and
- An annulment research guide.

North Dakota Clerks of District Court are the most frequent referral source for the Center. Referrals from Supreme Court Clerks of Court, Child Support offices, law enforcement, the State Bar Association of North Dakota, individual attorneys, and other agencies are also common.

Most requested topics in 2024:

- Divorce
- Custody and Visitation
- Small Claims
- Guardianship of Adults
- Probate
- Eviction
- Guardianship of Minors



ND Legal Self Help Center

Contact Data

Contact data for the Center for the past 5 years is below:

	Q1 2024	Q2 2024	Q3 2024	Q4 2024	TOTAL 2024
Phone Calls	241	322	284	319	1166
Emails	78	87	135	98	398
Letters	3	5	2	2	12
In-Person	2	4	2	1	9
Total	324	418	423	420	1585

	Q1 2023	Q2 2023	Q3 2023	Q4 2023	TOTAL 2023
Phone Calls	376	287	303	250	1216
Emails	90	98	80	80	348
Letters	1	7	3	0	11
In-Person	1	3	7	0	11
Total	468	395	393	330	1586

	Q1 2022	Q2 2022	Q3 2022	Q4 2022	TOTAL 2022
Phone Calls	347	376	409	324	1,456
Emails	75	72	73	51	271
Letters	2	1	0	4	7
In-Person	0	1	0	3	4
Total	424	450	482	382	1,738

	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Q3 2021	Q4 2021	TOTAL 2021*
Phone Calls	410	347	366	322	1,445
Emails	81	68	87	59	295
Letters	3	4	5	0	12
In-Person *	0	0	0	0	0
Total	494	419	458	381	1,752

**From January 1, 2021 through November 30, 2021, all in-person assistance was suspended for the safety of staff and patrons due to the Covid-19 pandemic.*

	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020	TOTAL 2020**
Phone Calls	430	263	447	336	1476
Emails	83	75	77	64	299
Letters	4	2	0	1	7
In-Person *	2	0	524	401	2
Total	519	340	458	381	1784

***From March 23, 2020 through December 31, 2020, all in-person assistance was suspended for staff and patron safety due to the Covid-19 pandemic.*

2024 Court Programs And Services

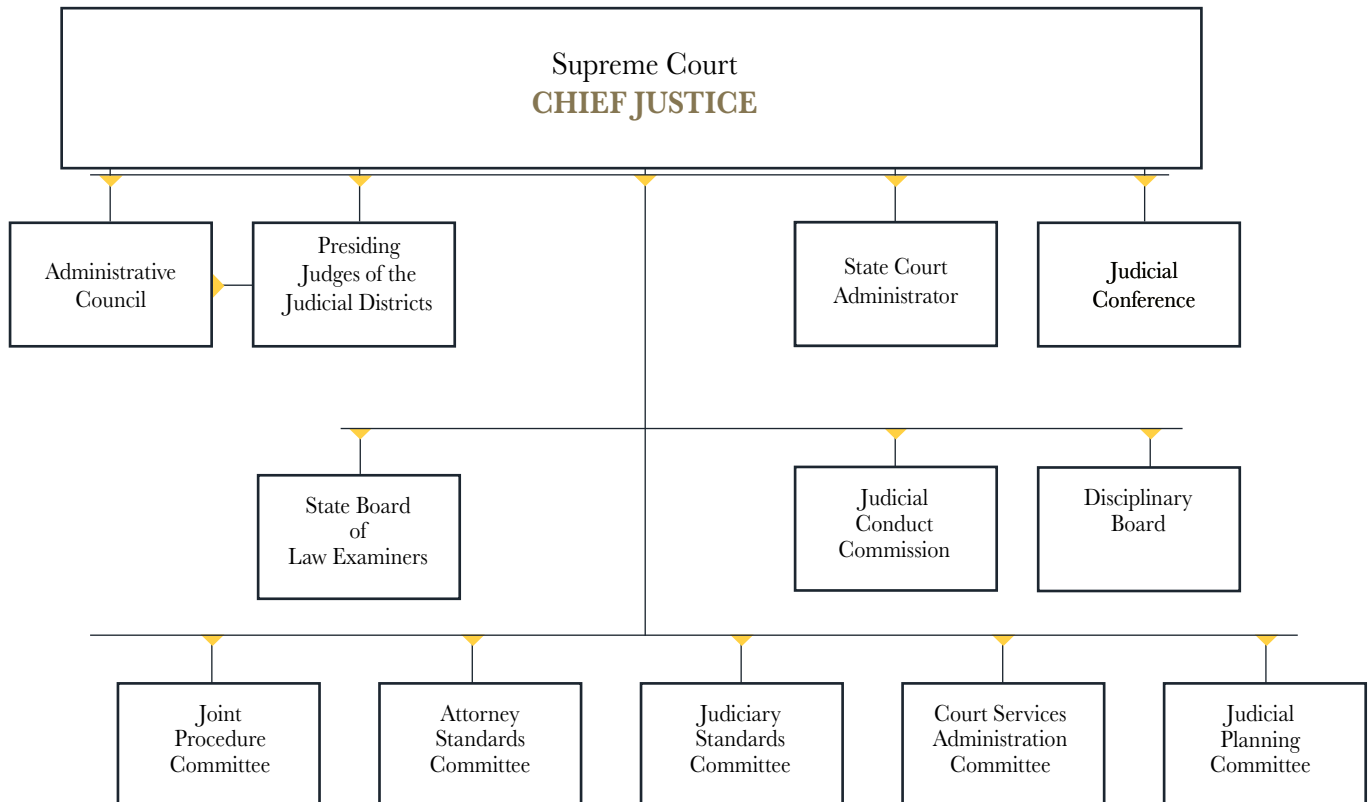
Administration of the Court System

Ultimate responsibility for the efficient and effective operation of the court system resides with the Supreme Court. The Constitution establishes the Chief Justice's administrative responsibility for the court system. To help it fulfill these administrative and supervisory responsibilities, the Supreme Court relies upon the state court administrator, Supreme Court clerk, directors, staff attorneys, presiding judges, and various advisory committees, commissions, and boards.



The Hon. Jon J. Jenson
Chief Justice

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION OF THE NORTH DAKOTA JUDICIAL SYSTEM





State Court Administrator

Sally Holewa

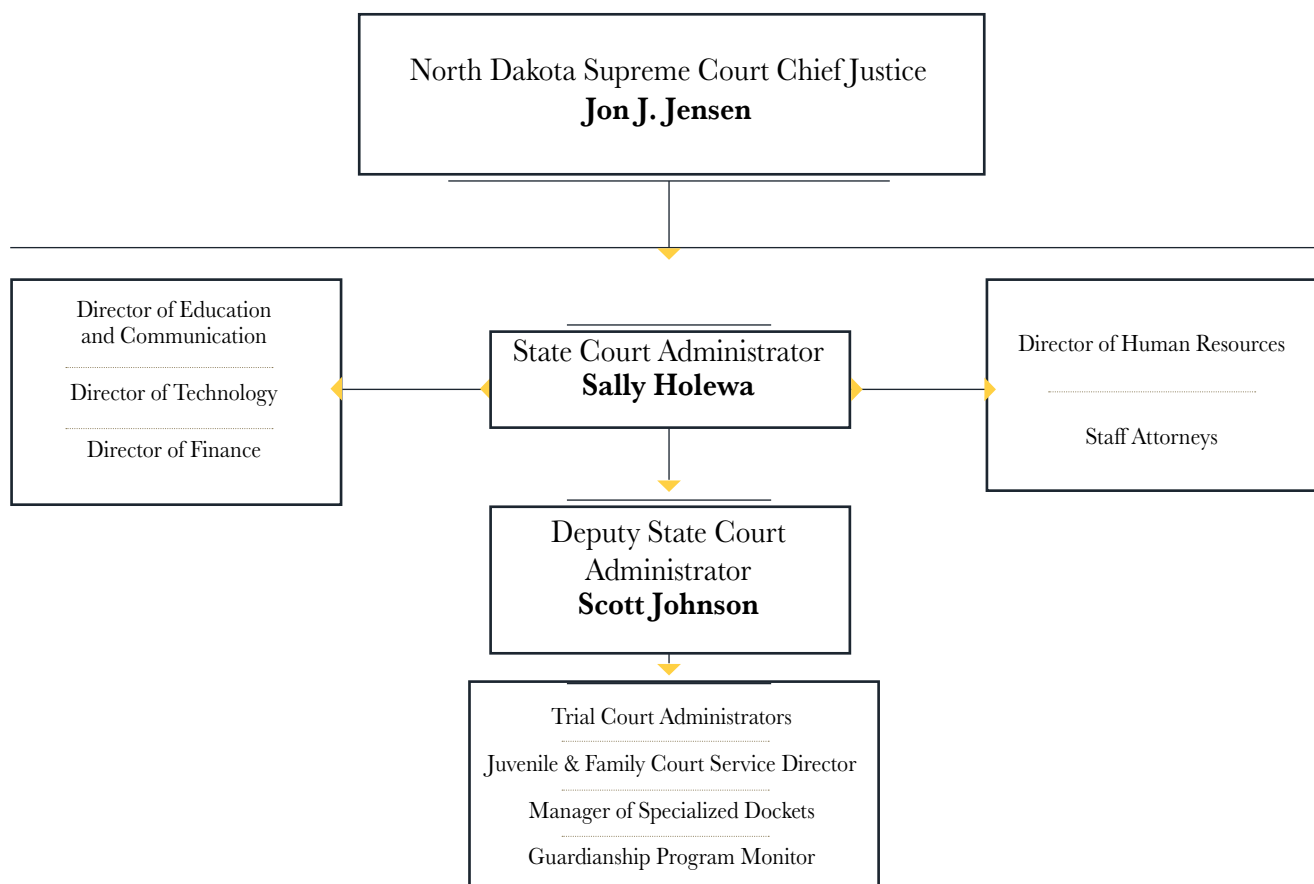
Deputy State Court Administrator

Scott Johnson

Article VI, Section 3, of the North Dakota Constitution authorizes the chief justice of the Supreme Court to appoint a court administrator for the unified judicial system. Pursuant to this constitutional authority, the Supreme Court has outlined the powers, duties, qualifications, and term of the state court administrator in an administrative rule. The duties delegated to the state court administrator include assisting the Supreme Court in the preparation and administration of the judicial

budget, providing for judicial education services, coordinating technical assistance to all levels of courts, planning for statewide judicial needs, and administering a personnel system. Trial court administrators in each unit assist the state court administrator. Also assisting are directors and personnel who work in finance, general counsel, human resources, technology, and judicial education.

NORTH DAKOTA ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURT



Court Administration

Trial Court Administration

Trial Court Administrators

Under the direction of the state court administrator, the trial court administrator plans, organizes, and directs court administrative activities for all courts within one of four state administrative units. This position is responsible for supervising a large staff engaged in providing service to high volume and complex caseloads including comprehensive district-wide programs, juvenile, and court administrative services. As the senior administrative position within the administrative unit, the position is responsible for providing leadership and guidance in all administrative areas with emphasis on the development and implementation of efficient and cohesive administrative processes.

Deputy Trial Court Administrators

Under general supervision of the trial court administrator, the deputy trial court administrator implements the

policies and procedures of the state judiciary and assists the trial court administrator in coordinating and monitoring administrative activities of the courts.

Director of Juvenile Court Services

The director of juvenile court services works under the direction of the trial court administrator and is responsible for planning and directing all juvenile court services in the administrative unit. The director of juvenile court services also provides leadership in fostering the development of community-based programs and in developing statewide policy and practice for juvenile court.

2024 TRIAL COURT ADMINISTRATION

ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT 1

Trial Court Administrator



Kelly Hutton

Deputy Trial Court Administrator
Becky Nelson

ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT 2

Trial Court Administrator



Chris Iverson

Deputy Trial Court Administrator
Megan Huffman

ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT 3

Trial Court Administrator



Donna Wunderlich

Deputy Trial Court Administrator
Michele Bring

ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT 4

Trial Court Administrator



Carolyn Probst

Court Administration

Clerks of Court

The clerk of district court works under the direction of the unit trial court administrator and is responsible for planning, directing, organizing and supervising all personnel assigned to the office of the clerk. This position is responsible for maintaining all court records and developing office operational procedures associated with all district court cases involving criminal, civil, restricted, traffic, or other cases filed with district court.

North Dakota Century Code, Chapter 27-05.2, states that the North Dakota Supreme Court shall provide clerk of district court services in each county in the state. The Supreme Court may provide such services through clerks of district court, deputies, and assistants who are employees of the state judicial system or through service agreements with the counties.

While the court has assumed the responsibility for the expenses of operating the clerk's offices statewide, only a portion of the clerks have transferred to state employment. A distinction is made based on number of staff in each office. In offices with a need of five or more employees, the clerk and staff are required to become state employees

unless the county chooses to keep the clerk functions and forgo any state funds to support the office.

For offices ranging in staff size need from one to four, the county retains the option to transfer the clerk and deputies



to state employment. Finally, the smallest counties are ineligible to transfer the clerk position to state employment.

When a county transfers clerk responsibility to the state, the clerk position becomes a classified position within the court's employee classification and compensation system. In those counties that chose to retain clerks and staff as county employees, and those that are ineligible to transfer, the county can continue to choose whether the clerk must run for election or whether the office will be an appointed one. Under state law, counties can choose to combine positions and decide if a combined position will be an appointed or elected position.

TOTALS	County-Contract	39
	State-Employed	14
	Total Clerks	53
	Combined Offices	25
	Separate Offices	14
	Total	39
	Elected	27
	Appointed	12
	Total	39

Eligible for Transfer to State



DUNN
MCHENRY
MCLEAN
MERCER
MOUNTRAIL

State Employed Clerk of Court Offices



BARNES
BURLEIGH
CASS
GRAND FORKS
MCKENZIE
MORTON
RAMSEY

RICHLAND
ROLETTE
STARK
STUTSMAN
WALSH
WARD
WILLIAMS



COUNTY-EMPLOYED CLERKS OF COURT METHOD OF ATTAINING OFFICE

County Name	Full-Time /Part-Time	Role: Combined / Separate	Elected	Appointed as Clerk	Eligible to be transferred to State Employment
Adams	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder		No
Benson	Part-time	Separate	as Clerk		No
Billings	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk		No
Bottineau	Full-time	Separate		X	No
Bowman	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder		No
Burke	Full-time	Recorder	as Recorder		No
Cavalier	Full-time	Separate		X	No
Dickey	Full-time	Separate		X	No
Divide	Full-time	Recorder	as Recorder		No
Dunn	Full-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk		Yes
Eddy	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk		No
Emmons	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk		No
Foster	Full-time	Separate		X	No
Golden Valley	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk		No
Grant	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk		No
Griggs	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk		No
Hettinger	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk		No
Kidder	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder		No
Lamoure	Full-time	Separate		X	No
Logan	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder		No
McHenry	Full-time	Separate	as Clerk		Yes
McIntosh	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk		No
McLean	Full-time	Separate		X	Yes
Mercer	Full-time	Separate		X	Yes
Mountrail	Full-time	Separate		X	Yes
Nelson	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk		No
Oliver	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder		No
Pembina	Full-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk		No
Pierce	Part-time	Separate		X	No
Ransom	Full-time	Separate		X	No
Renville	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder		No
Sargent	Part-time	Recorder & Treasurer & Clerk	as Recorder/Clerk/ Treasurer		No
Sheridan	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk		No
Sioux	Part-time	Recorder & Treasurer & Clerk	as Recorder/Trea- surer		No
Slope	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder/Clerk		No
Steele	Part-time	Recorder		X	No
Towner	Part-time	Recorder	as Recorder		No
Traill	Full-time	Separate	as Clerk		No
Wells	Full-time	Separate		X	No

JUDICIAL SYSTEM BUDGET

JUDICIAL PORTION OF THE STATE'S BUDGET

2023-2025 BIENNIUM

JULY 1, 2023- JUNE 30, 2025

Total State General and Special Funds Appropriation

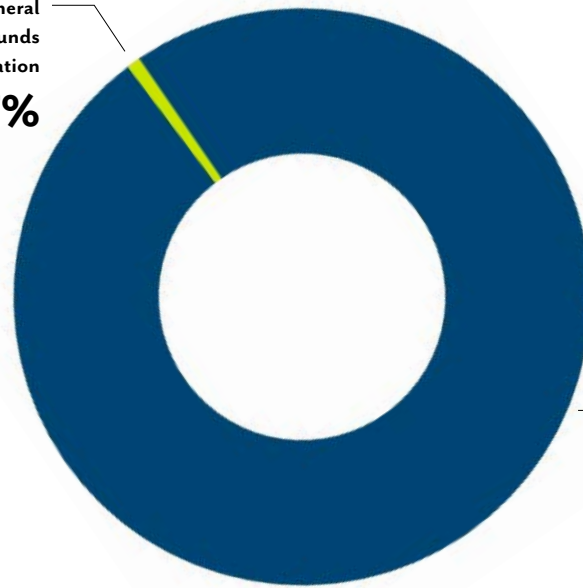
\$19,609,601,647

■ Executive and Legislative Branch General and Special Funds Appropriation

\$19,478,362,515 (99.3%)

■ Judicial Branch General and Special Funds Appropriation

\$131,239,132 (.7%)

Judicial Branch General
and Special Funds
Appropriation**0.7%**Executive and Legislative
Branch General and Special
Funds Appropriation**99.3%**

Funding:	Total	Judicial	Net
General Fund	\$ 6,096,193,537	\$ 129,410,704	\$ 5,966,782,833
Special Funds	\$ 13,513,408,110	\$ 1,828,428	\$ 13,511,579,682
Total	\$ 19,609,601,647	\$ 131,239,132	\$ 19,478,362,515

JUDICIAL SYSTEM BUDGET

STATE JUDICIAL BRANCH APPROPRIATION
BY APPROPRIATED LINE ITEM
2023-2025 BIENNIUM

Total Judicial Branch General and Special Funds Appropriation
\$131,239,132

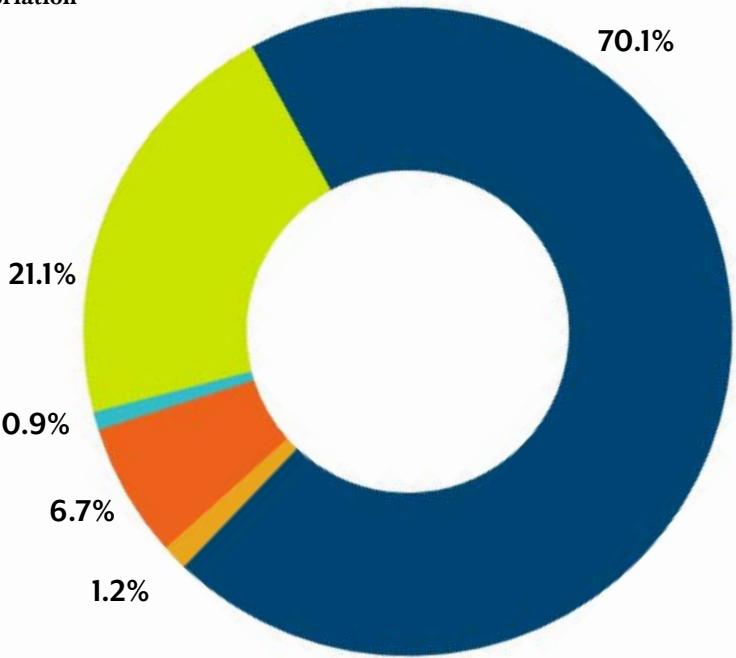
Salaries and Benefits
\$ 92,033,118 (70.1%)

Operating Expenses
\$27,734,878 (21.1%)

Capital Assets
\$1,153,720 (0.9%)

New and Vacant FTE Funding Pool
\$8,740,214 (6.7%)

Special Purposes
\$1,577,202 (1.2%)



Special purposes:

Judge's retirement	\$ 177,340
JCC/DB	\$ 1,399,862
Total	\$ 1,577,202

JUDICIAL SYSTEM BUDGET

STATE JUDICIAL BRANCH APPROPRIATION

BY TYPE OF ACTIVITY

2023-2025 BIENNIUM

Supreme Court

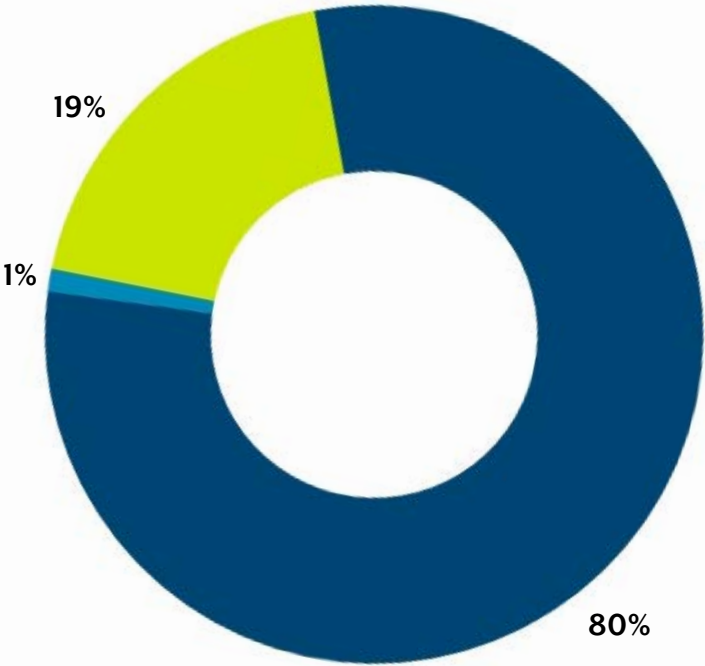
General Fund	\$23,949,9587
Special Funds	\$21,344
Federal Funds	\$464,449
TOTAL	\$24,435,751 (19%)

District Courts

General Fund	\$104,573,201
Special Funds	\$0
Federal Funds	\$830,318
TOTAL	\$105,403,519 (80%)

Judicial Conduct Commission & Disciplinary Board

General Fund	\$887,545
Special Funds	\$512,317
TOTAL	\$1,399,862 (1%)



COMMITTEES, COMMISSIONS, BOARDS AND WORKGROUPS

Overview



IN ITS ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY, THE SUPREME COURT HAS MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES for ensuring the efficient and effective operation of all courts in the state, except federal and tribal courts; maintaining high standards of judicial conduct; supervising the legal profession; and promulgating procedural rules that allow for the orderly and efficient transaction of judicial business. Within each area of administrative responsibility, the court has general rulemaking authority.

The court carries out its administrative responsibilities with the assistance of various committees and boards. It exercises authority to admit and license attorneys through the State Board of Law Examiners. Supervision of legal ethics is exercised through the Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court and supervision of judicial conduct is exercised through

the Judicial Conduct Commission. Continuing review and study of specific subject areas within its administrative jurisdiction are provided through five advisory committees: the Joint Procedure Committee, the Joint Committee on Attorney Standards, the Judiciary Standards Committee, the Court Services Administration Committee, and the Judicial Planning Committee. Other committees, such as the Continuing Judicial Branch Education Commission and Personnel Policy Board, also provide valuable assistance to the Supreme Court in important administrative areas. The court also utilizes a number of workgroups, to study and work on discreet topic areas such as guardianships, mental health, bail, and jury.

Information about the activities of the committees can be found on the Court's website at <https://www.ndcourts.gov/supreme-court/committees>.

Committees, Commissions, Boards And Workgroups

North Dakota Board of Law Examiners

Petra H. Mandigo Hulm, Secretary-Treasurer of the Board of Law Examiners

The State Board of Law Examiners assists the Supreme Court of North Dakota in its constitutional responsibility to regulate the admission to the practice of law.

In 2024, Board members were Jane Dynes, Fargo; Bradley Beehler, Grand Forks; and Scott Porsborg, Bismarck. Dynes served as President of the Board. The Director of Admissions, Laurie Guenther, assists the Board in its statutory responsibilities.

The 2024 Character and Fitness Committee members were Chair Paul F. Richard, Fargo attorney; Penny Miller, Bismarck attorney; Lisa K. Edison-Smith, Fargo attorney; Dr. Naveed Haider, Fargo psychiatrist; and Rebecca L. Ternes, Bismarck.

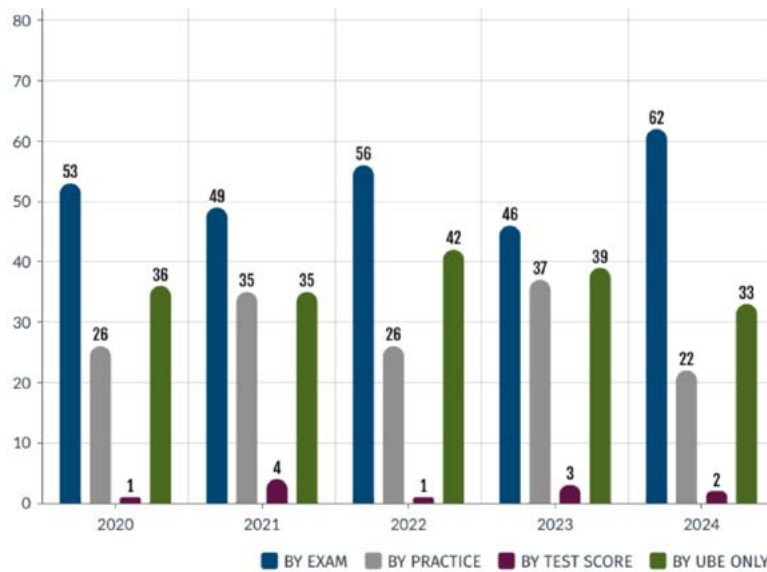
Beginning in 2027, the Supreme Court adopted a new exam known as the NextGen to be administered to those

seeking admission to practice law in North Dakota. The NextGen bar exam will replace the Uniform Bar Exam in North Dakota. North Dakota was the first jurisdiction to administer the UBE in February 2011. With adoption of the new exam, North Dakota continues to be at the forefront of bar examination and admission.

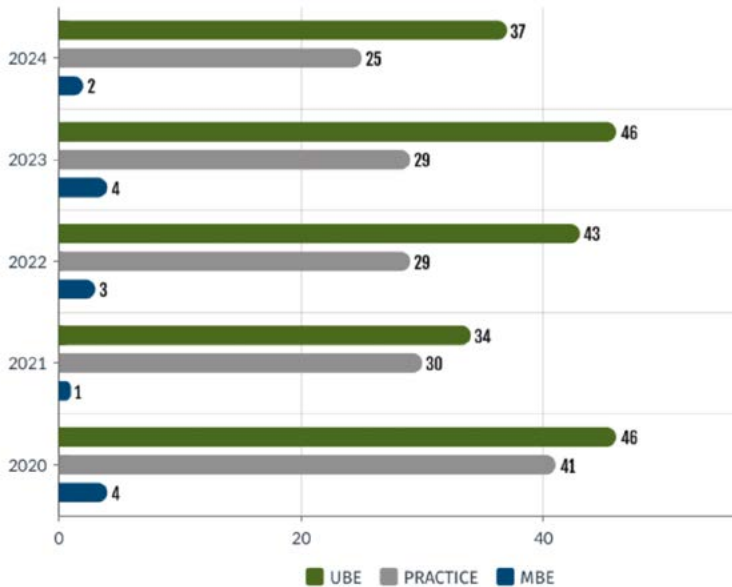
Admission

The total number of newly admitted attorneys remained consistent in 2024 as compared to 2023 – 119 attorneys. Admitted attorneys do not all become licensed. The figure below shows the number of admissions by type for the last five years.

NEWLY ADMITTED - 2020-2024



BAR APPLICATIONS BY TYPE OF MOTION - 2020-2024





Sixty-four motions for admission based on practice or test score transfer were filed, compared to 79 in 2023. Ninety-five percent of motions for admission on test score were filed based on the transfer of a Uniform Bar Examination score received in another jurisdiction.

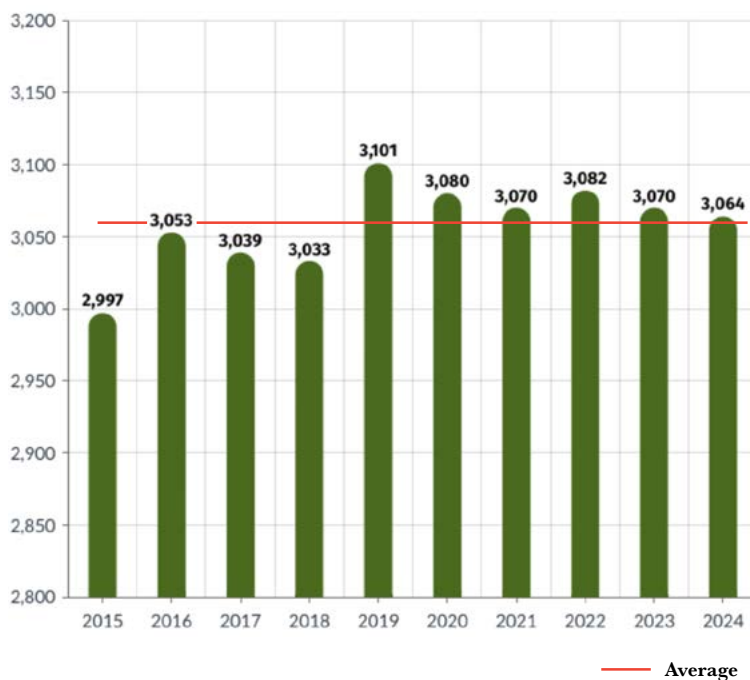
Motion applications declined 19% in 2024 as compared to 2023. The figure below shows the number of admissions by motion type for the last five years.

Licensing

In 2024, 3,064 licenses were issued, which is consistent with 2023. Licenses issued remain greater than the 10-year average and more than 3,000 licenses have been issued annually since 2016. Below are the total licenses issued for the last 10 years.

Three hundred and sixty eight nonresident attorneys appeared pro hac vice in 2024 in North Dakota courts under Admission to Practice Rule 3, a reduction of 4% as compared to 2023.

LAW LICENSES ISSUED 2015 – 2024



PRO HAC VICE FILINGS



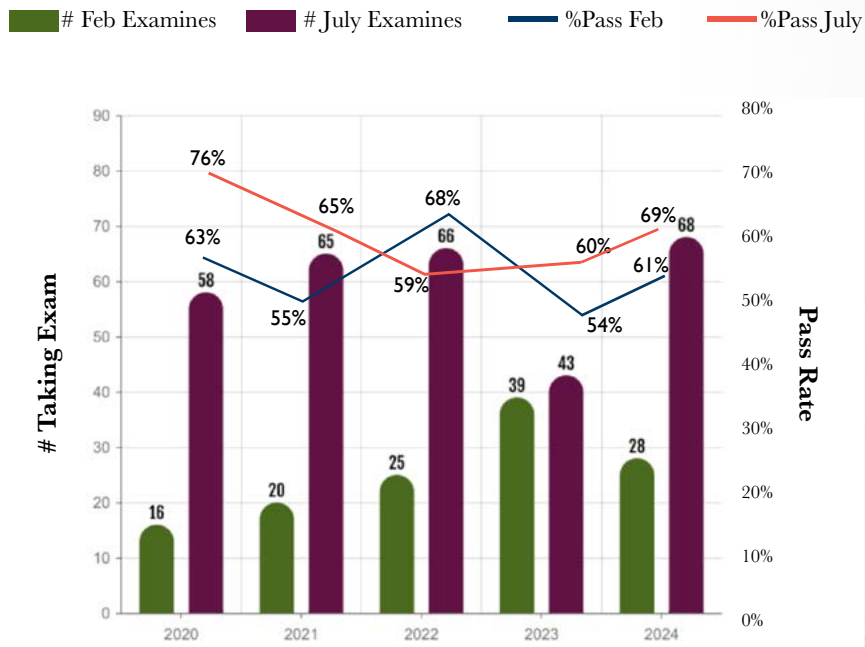
The fees received under this rule are distributed in the same manner as license fees: \$75 for the lawyer disciplinary system sent to the State Bar Association, with the remainder split 80% to the State Bar Association and 20% to the State Board of Law Examiners.

Seven temporary licenses were approved while applicants licensed in another jurisdiction awaited the review and approval of their North Dakota applications. Two attorneys were registered as in-house counsel under Admission to Practice Rule 3.

Exams

The number of February and July examinees (columns) and the passage rates (lines) for 2020-2024 are shown in the figure below. After a reduction in the number of July examinees in 2023, the number of examines in 2024 was consistent with prior years.

LAW EXAMINEES AND PASSAGE RATES



2024 Committees, Commissions, Boards And Workgroups

Lawyer Disciplinary Board

Petra H. Mandigo Hulm, Secretary of the Disciplinary Board

The lawyer disciplinary process, with the Disciplinary Board at the center, provides a procedure for investigating, evaluating and acting upon complaints alleging unethical conduct by lawyers licensed in North Dakota. The Rules of Professional Conduct are the primary guide for lawyer conduct, and the North Dakota

Rules for Lawyer Discipline provide the procedural framework for the handling and disposition of complaints.

A summary of the workload under consideration in the lawyer discipline system in 2024 is below.

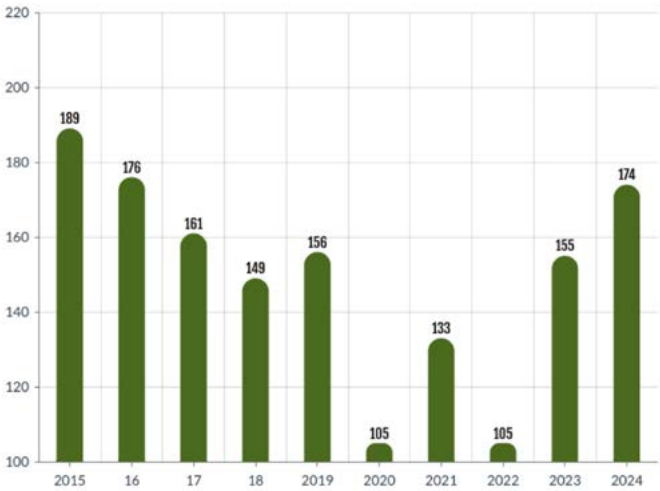
GENERAL NATURE OF COMPLAINTS

Client Funds & Property	1
Conflict of Interest	4
Criminal Convictions	0
Disability/Incapacity to Practice Law	0
Excessive Fees	4
Failure to Communicate/Cooperate with Client	48
Improper Conduct	97
Incompetent Representation	11
Misappropriation/Fraud	0
Neglect/Delay	0
Petition for Reinstatement	0
Unauthorized Practice of Law	8
Reciprocal Discipline	1
Solicitation	0
Total New Complaints	174
Formal Proceedings Pending From Prior Years	8
Other Complaint Files Pending From Prior Years	27
Appeals Filed with Disciplinary Board	6
Appeals Allowed by Supreme Court	0
Total Formal Matters	41
TOTAL FILES AVAILABLE FOR CONSIDERATION	215

New Complaints

One hundred and seventy-four new complaints were filed in 2024, which is a 12% increase from 2023 and the highest number of new complaints since 2016. Two hundred complaints represented 116% of the 10-year average of new complaints filed. Below is a figure showing the new complaints filed from 2015 to 2024.

NEW COMPLAINTS



Dispositions

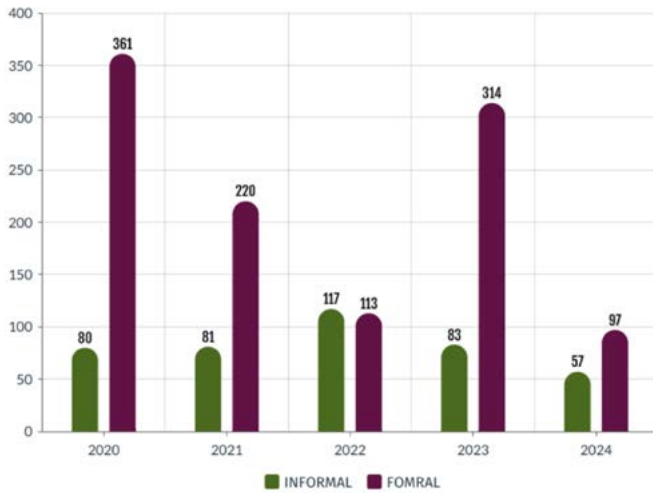
The number of dispositions increased 54% in 2024 as compared to 2023. The number of disposition was the highest since 2017.

DISPOSITIONS

Inquiry Committees	Dismissal	23
	Summary Dismissal	129
	Admonition	7
	Referral to Lawyer Assistance Program	0
	Consent Probation	2
	Dismissal Without Prejudice	0
	No Action - Referred to Another State	0
Disciplinary Board	Approve Inquiry Committee Dismissal	6
	Approve Inquiry Committee Admonition	0
	Approve Inquiry Committee Consent Probation	0
	Disapprove Inquiry Committee Disposition	0
	Diversion by Hearing Panel of the Board	0
	Dismissal by Hearing Panel/Disciplinary Board	0
	Reprimand by Hearing Panel/Disciplinary Board	1
	Consent Probation by Hearing Panel of the Board	0
Supreme Court	Reprimand	0
	Suspension	2
	Disbarment	2
	Interim Suspension	2
	Reinstatement	0
	Court Vacated Interim Suspension	0
	Transfer to Disability Inactive Status (No DB File)	1
	Dismiss/Disapprove Petition for Discipline	0
TOTAL DISPOSITIONS		175

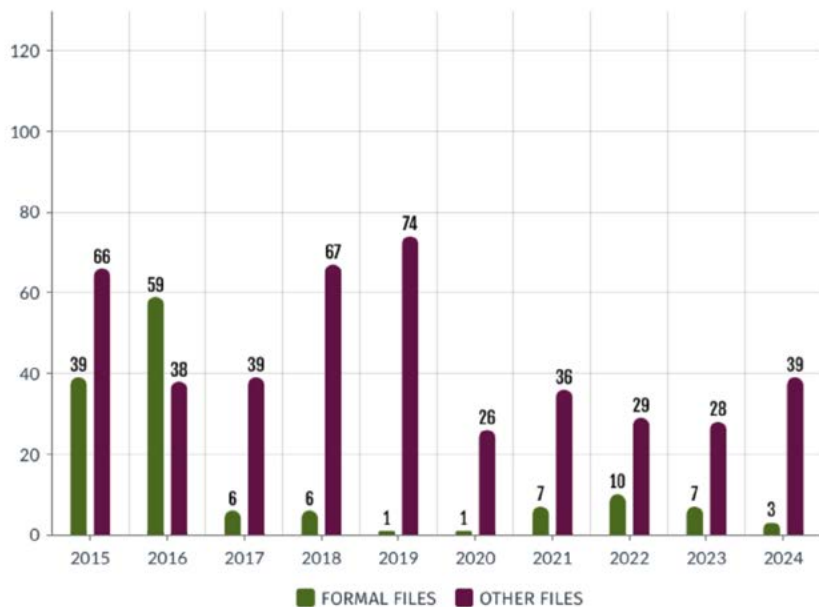
The time to disposition (days) for formal and informal matters from the past five years is below. The time to disposition for both informal and formal cases reduced in 2024.

TIME TO DISPOSITION



Below is a comparison of the number of informal and formal files pending at the end of 2015-2024. Other complaint files pending at the end of 2024 increased 28%.

COMPARISON OF PENDING INFORMAL/FORMAL FILES 2015-2024



2024 Committees, Commissions, Boards And Workgroups

Judicial Conduct Commission

The Judicial Conduct Commission was established in 1975 to receive, evaluate, and investigate complaints against any judge in the state and, when necessary, conduct hearings concerning the discipline, removal or retirement of any judge.

The Commission consists of four non-lawyers, two judges, and one lawyer. The non-lawyers are appointed by the Governor; the judges are appointed by the North Dakota Judges Association; and the lawyer member is appointed by the State Bar Association.

(http://www.ndcourts.gov/court/committees/Jud_Cond/Commission.asp)

Of the new complaints filed in 2024:

- 33 were against 24 District Court Judges
- 3 were against 3 Municipal Judges
- 1 was against 1 U.S. District Court Judge

New Complaints Opened in 2024	37
General Nature of Complaints:	
Bias, discrimination/partiality	12
Improper decision/ruling	19
Failure to follow law/procedure	2
Improper conduct on bench	2
Delay Ct. Business	2
Education Requirements	1
Conflict of Interest	1
Complaint Files Carried Over from 2023	12
Total Files Pending Consideration in 2024	49
Disposition of Complaints:	
Summary Dismissal	41
Formal	1
Total 2024 Dispositions	42
Complaint Files Pending as of 12/31/2024	7

2024 Committees, Commissions, Boards and Workgroups

Jury Workgroup Focuses On Improving Process

The Jury Workgroup, chaired by Walsh County Clerk Bev Demers reviewed and led significant initiatives to improve jury processes as well as to enhance and simplify prospective and current juror experiences with the North Dakota Court System. The workgroup, in coordination with the education and information technology departments, has either substantially completed or finalized the process for the following initiatives:

1. new jury orientation video,
2. simplified juror summons and qualification form with a quick response (QR) code for immediate access to online forms and information;
3. online request for excusal/deferment; and
4. updated jury management system manuals.

Finally, the workgroup reviewed background on and developed information to ensure that all remaining counties in the state that currently use a multi-step juror summons and qualification process move to a single-step process in 2025. This action will streamline communications with jurors, improve response rates and limit potential juror time availability requirements for jury service.

2024 Committees, Commissions, Boards and Workgroups

Workgroup Addresses Mental Health Training And Court Processes

The Mental Health Workgroup, chaired by Judge Brad Cruff, has continued to engage stakeholders throughout the state on areas of mutual interest and collaboration. The workgroup has sought to enhance awareness and communication throughout the past year. Additionally, the workgroup guided and supported collaboration between the South Central Judicial District (SCJD) and the Interdisciplinary Committee to receive approval from the Supreme Court for the development of the first Mental Health Court in the State of North Dakota. Legislation was signed in to law that authorized the creation of the court during the 68th legislative assembly. Judges Bobbi Weiler and Jackson Lofgren of the SCJD along with Unit 3 Administrator Donna Wunderlich and Specialized Dockets Manager Jessica Throlson have completed the initial requirements for court implementation in 2025 if funding is authorized. Also, the workgroup collaborated with Lee Ann Barnhardt, Director of Judicial Education to complete training initiatives on mental health for judges and staff.

Chief Justice Jon Jensen authorized the workgroup to establish two taskforces to address the topics of judicial well-being, fitness to proceed and criminal responsibility. Both made significant progress in 2024. The Fitness to Proceed/Criminal Responsibility Taskforce was chaired by Judge Nicholas Thornton of the Southeast Judicial District and was supported by Staff Attorney Sara Behrens. The task force completed an extensive review of forms that have been approved by the full workgroup and distributed for use throughout the court system and documented processes. The work of this taskforce added clarity to court processes in this area for judicial officers, attorneys, staff and practitioners. Finally, the taskforce on judicial well-being completed its work on two administrative rules adopted by the Supreme Court to support judges in the area of behavioral health.



2024 Committees, Commissions, Boards and Workgroups

Interdisciplinary Committee For Specialized Dockets Approved New Programs

The Interdisciplinary Committee for Specialized Dockets is tasked with assisting the state's juvenile and district courts that manage a therapeutic program to achieve effective alternatives to traditional case dispositions. These courts include juvenile and adult drug courts, veteran's treatment court, and a domestic violence court. The committee is composed of individuals from the judicial system, the Department of Corrections and Department of Health and Human Services.

In 2024, the Interdisciplinary Committee for Specialized Dockets approved the creation of three new specialized dockets and has submitted a funding request to the state legislature. The first is a veteran's treatment court to be located in Fargo. This court will be modeled after the existing Veterans Treatment Court in Grand Forks and will allow more veterans with substance use and mental health issues to take advantage of this court program. The second approved court is a Mental Health Court in Bismarck. This court will be the first of its kind in North Dakota and will work with individuals with serious mental illness in the justice system by providing them with supervision, treatment and resources specific to their needs. The third court is an Indian Child Welfare Act Court that will serve families in the Northeast Judicial District. An ICWA Court specializes in keeping American Indian families connected to their community and culture which allows for faster reunification and permanency placements and fewer Termination of Parental Rights cases.

The Committee requested a manual update from each of the existing specialized dockets. These will be reviewed in early 2025, along with a proposal to create a domestic violence court in Bismarck.

Committees, Commissions, Boards and Workgroups

North Dakota Judicial System Committees, Councils, Commissions and Boards

Administrative Council

The Administrative Council is established by Administrative Rule 22. Duties of the Council are to develop uniform administrative policies and procedures for the trial courts and juvenile courts and make recommendations for their implementation; to review the biennial budget proposals submitted by the trial court administrators for the respective administrative units; to review and approve for submission to the Supreme Court a proposed trial court component of the unified judicial system budget for each biennium; to monitor trial court budget expenditures; and to perform other duties as directed by the Chief Justice.

Advisory Commission on Electronic Media in the Courtroom

The Advisory Commission on Electronic Media in the Courtroom is established by Supreme Court Administrative Rule 21 and governs electronic and photographic coverage of court proceedings. The Commission generally monitors the experience with cameras in the North Dakota Supreme Court, in district courts, and municipal courts.

Caseflow Management Committee

Established by Policy 510, the Caseflow Management Committee is developed under the auspices of the Administrative Council to provide recommendations to the Council on case management activities governing all trial courts statewide. The purpose of the Committee is to establish and monitor caseflow management practices in each judicial district of the state.

Commission on Judicial Branch Education

The Judicial Branch Education Commission was established by Supreme Court Administrative Rule 36 in 1993. The responsibilities of the Commission are to establish policies that effect the implementation of the mandatory education provision of the rule; develop judicial education programs for judges and court personnel; develop and recommend

to the North Dakota Supreme Court a biennial budget for judicial education activities; and provide resource materials for judges and court support personnel.

Committee on Tribal and State Court Affairs

The Committee on Tribal and State Court Affairs, established following adoption of Administrative Rule 37 by the Supreme Court, is comprised of tribal and state court judges, tribal and state court support services representatives, and public members. It provides a vehicle for expanding awareness about the operation of tribal and state court systems; identifying and discussing issues regarding court practices, procedures, and administration which are of common concern to members of the different court systems; and for cultivating mutual respect for, and cooperation between, tribal and state courts.

Court Services Administration Committee

The Court Services Administration Committee, established under Section 8 of the Rule on Procedural Rules, is responsible for the study and review of all rules and orders relating to the administrative supervision of the judicial system.

Court Technology Committee

The Court Technology Committee is established by Administrative Order 9 and is responsible for the planning and implementation of information technology for the judicial system. The Committee's coordinated efforts are responsible for consistent and efficient management of information technology resources.

Informal Complaint Panel

The Informal Complaint Panel is established by Supreme Court Administrative Rule 44. It provides an informal forum to address complaints or concerns about judges or other employees of the state judicial system. It is confidential, non-confrontational and educational. It is

intended to constructively influence conduct and resolve issues before they rise to a level of a formal grievance or disciplinary proceeding.

Interdisciplinary Specialized Docket Committee

Established by Administrative Rule 60, the interdisciplinary committee on specialized dockets is established as a collaborative mechanism to acquire and analyze relevant information related to the need for and feasibility of establishing specialized dockets. A “specialized docket” is a juvenile or district court that oversees a therapeutic program comprised of interdisciplinary teams, enhanced judicial involvement, court-supervised treatment programs, and other components designed to achieve effective alternatives to traditional case dispositions.

Joint Committee on Attorney Standards

The Joint Committee on Attorney Standards, established by Supreme Court Administrative Rule 38, is comprised of members appointed by the Chief Justice and the Board of Governors of the State Bar Association. The Committee is responsible for the study and review of all rules and proposals concerning attorney supervision, including admission to the bar, attorney discipline, rules of professional conduct, and law student practice.

Joint Procedure Committee

The Joint Procedure Committee is the standing committee of the Supreme Court responsible for proposing adoption, amendment, or repeal of rules of civil procedure, criminal procedure, appellate procedure, evidence, and specialized court procedure. The Committee membership of 10 judges and 10 attorneys is appointed by the Supreme Court, except for one liaison member appointed by the State Bar Association.

Judicial Planning Committee

The Judicial Planning Committee is established under Section 8 of the Rule on Procedural Rules. The Committee studies the judicial system and makes recommendations concerning long-range and strategic planning and future improvements for the system.

Judiciary Standards Committee

The Judiciary Standards Committee, established under Section 8 of the Rule on Procedural Rules, studies and

reviews all rules relating to the supervision of the judiciary, including judicial discipline, judicial ethics, and the judicial nominating process.

Juvenile Policy Board

The Juvenile Policy Board is established by Supreme Court Administrative Rule 35 to define the mission of juvenile court services consistent with N.D.C.C. 27-20-01 to provide the administrative mechanism and authority to ensure the implementation of the policies; and to ensure the full involvement of the judges and personnel of the North Dakota judicial system in the development of juvenile court policies and procedures.

Minority Justice Implementation Committee

The Minority Justice Implementation Committee was established by Supreme Court Administrative Order 21 to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the North Dakota Commission to Study Racial and Ethnic Bias in the Courts.

North Dakota Judicial Conference

The North Dakota Judicial Conference is established by statute for the purpose of soliciting, receiving, and evaluating suggestions relating to the improvement of the administration of justice; considering and making recommendations to the Supreme Court for changes in rules, procedures, or any matter pertaining to the judicial system; and establishing methods for reviewing proposed legislation, which may affect the operation of the judicial branch.

Committee on Legislation

The Committee on Legislation, a standing committee of the Judicial Conference, drafts, reviews, and tracks proposed legislation that may affect the North Dakota judicial system. During legislative sessions, the Committee provides weekly reports to the members of the conference on legislation that could affect judicial services.

Parenting Investigator Review Board

The Parenting Investigator Review Board is established by Rule of Court 8.6. It addresses complaints about parenting investigators. It has nine members: three judges and one lawyer appointed by the Chief Justice, two lawyers

appointed by the State Bar Association, and three parenting investigators appointed by the Chief Justice and the president of the State Bar Association acting together.

Pattern Jury Instruction Commission

The Pattern Jury Instruction Commission, established by Supreme Court Administrative Rule 23, is composed of six lawyer members appointed by the State Bar Association of North Dakota Board of Governors and six judge members appointed by the chair of the Judicial Conference after consultation with the Executive Committee. In addition to revising and developing instructions corresponding to current law, the Commission is engaged in an extensive review of all pre-1986 civil and criminal instructions. A primary goal is rewriting the instructions using plain English, that is, language that is understandable by jurors without a legal background.

Personnel Policy Board

The Personnel Policy Board is established by Supreme Court Administrative Rule 33. The Board is comprised of a Supreme Court justice, district court judges, Supreme Court department heads, and employees of the supreme and district courts. The Board is tasked with the responsibility of reviewing and implementing the personnel system and developing a salary administration plan for the judiciary.

