




Circuit Court

APPROVED FY25 BUDGET

\$19,389,766

FULL TIME EQUIVALENTS

128.50

 JAMES A. BONIFANT, ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE

MISSION STATEMENT




The mission of the Circuit Court is to serve Sixth Judicial Circuit residents in the determination of litigation in serious criminal matters, substantive civil cases, domestic cases, and child support cases in accordance with the United States and Maryland Constitutions while administering justice in an honest, fair, and efficient manner.

BUDGET OVERVIEW

The total approved FY25 Operating Budget for the Circuit Court is \$19,389,766, an increase of \$2,223,521 or 12.95 percent from the FY24 Approved Budget of \$17,166,245. Personnel Costs comprise 85.22 percent of the budget for 126 full-time position(s) and five part-time position(s), and a total of 128.50 FTEs. Total FTEs may include seasonal or temporary positions and may also reflect workforce charged to or from other departments or funds. Operating Expenses account for the remaining 14.78 percent of the FY25 budget.

COUNTY PRIORITY OUTCOMES

While this program area supports all seven of the County Executive's Priority Outcomes, the following are emphasized:

-  **Thriving Youth and Families**
-  **Safe Neighborhoods**
-  **Effective, Sustainable Government**

PROGRAM CONTACTS

Contact Timothy Sheridan of the Circuit Court at 240.777.9103 or Vivian Ikoro of the Office of Management and Budget at 240.777.2780 for more information regarding this department's operating budget.

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance measures for this department are included below (where applicable), with multi-program measures displayed at the front of this section and program-specific measures shown with the relevant program. The FY24 estimates reflect funding based on the FY24 Approved Budget. The FY25 and FY26 figures are performance targets based on the FY25 Approved Budget and funding for comparable service levels in FY26.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

☀️ Adjudication

Adjudication encompasses support staff for the Judiciary, Case Management, and Data Quality. Conceptually, this division monitors case assignments (criminal, civil, and family cases), provides expedited case disposition for incarcerated offenders, and provides supervision consistent with the complexity of each case filed. Adjudication and case management improve the efficiency of case processing and reduce the demand for judicial intervention at various stages of litigation. To minimize case delay, each case is assigned to an appropriate track that allows for the performance of pre-trial tasks and allocates the appropriate level of judicial intervention. Tracks are monitored for performance and are evaluated based on established performance measures. The Data Quality department maintains the integrity of the information the Court generates and improves the quality of the data the Court collects.

FY25 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY24 Approved	4,191,144	35.50
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	347,039	0.00
FY25 Approved	4,538,183	35.50

☀️ Administration

The Administrative Office of the Circuit Court serves as a conduit for many operations of the Court. The Court Administrator's role is to facilitate the administrative functions of the Court and to develop policies to enhance systems performance, while maintaining the independence of the Judiciary. Basic functions performed by the Court Administrator and staff include the following: fiscal administration of the budget, human resources, case flow management and statistics, technology management, information management, jury management, space management, intergovernmental liaison, and public information.

The Trial Court Researchers, funded in part by the Trial Court Research Partnership Grant, provide research and statistical support for judiciary-wide research projects; prepare reports based on statistics and other data collected from the Montgomery County Circuit Court; establish links to national research/statistical sources relative to courts; and analyze court-wide programs, functions, and organizations to determine whether current management systems accomplish objectives efficiently.

Program Performance Measures	Actual FY22	Actual FY23	Estimated FY24	Target FY25	Target FY26
Case Clearance Rate (includes re-opened cases) - Civil	99.8%	107.6%	124.4%	127.1%	130.0%
Case Filings (includes re-opened cases) - Civil	5,794	7,252	6,078	6,466	6,785
Case Terminations (includes re-opened cases) - Civil (including District Court appeals)	5,781	7,801	7,562	8,218	8,819
Case Clearance Rate (includes re-opened cases) - Criminal	99.8%	100.4%	90.3%	91.4%	91.5%
Case Filings (includes re-opened cases) - Criminal	3,735	4,028	4,344	4,385	4,436
Case Terminations (includes re-opened cases) - Criminal (including District Court appeals)	3,729	4,045	3,923	4,008	4,059
Case Clearance Rate (includes re-opened cases) - Domestic Relations	91.8%	97.3%	107.1%	108.9%	109.0%
Case Filings (includes re-opened cases) - Domestic Relations	10,649	10,835	10,029	10,082	10,252
Case Terminations (includes re-opened cases) - Domestic Relations	9,777	10,542	10,739	10,974	11,175
Case Clearance Rate (includes re-opened cases) - Juvenile	107.3%	98.8%	83.5%	74.7%	65.3%
Case Filings (includes re-opened cases) - Juvenile	1,010	1,229	1,539	1,379	1,204

Program Performance Measures	Actual FY22	Actual FY23	Estimated FY24	Target FY25	Target FY26
Case Terminations (includes re-opened cases) - Juvenile (including Delinquency, CINA, and TPR)	1,084	1,214	1,286	1,030	786
Case Clearance Rate	96.1%	101.1%	106.9%	108.6%	109.5%
Number Case Filings	21,188	23,344	21,989	22,312	22,677
Number of Case Terminations	20,371	23,602	23,510	24,230	24,839
Number of Trials	1,183	1,562	1,479	1,540	1,536

FY25 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY24 Approved	2,307,358	8.23
Increase Cost: Restore One Time Lapse Increase	489,000	0.00
Add: Mid-Year Creation of a DEI Coordinator for the DEI Grant	106,553	1.00
Add: Mid-Year Creation of an Administrative Aide IV for the ADR Grant	89,748	1.00
Enhance: DEI Grant	16,000	0.00
Shift: Personnel Costs from Trial Court Research Grant to General Fund (General Fund)	7,897	0.05
Re-align: Personnel Costs from Trial Court Research Grant to the General Fund	(7,897)	(0.05)
Eliminate: Inactive Evaluator Position	(92,464)	(1.00)
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	134,379	0.05
FY25 Approved	3,050,574	9.28

☀ Case Assignment

The Assignment Office schedules and maintains all hearings, trials, and motion dates as well as special event dates for Judges and Family Magistrates of the Court and ensures that these events are scheduled in accordance with the Court's Differentiated Case Management (DCM) plans. The Assignment Office maintains all scheduling information related to criminal indictments and information; criminal jury demands and appeals; civil, juvenile, and family trial assignments; civil, family, and juvenile motions; and bench warrants. The Assignment Office also manages all courtroom information sheets, locates all files for assigned calendars, reviews each file, and delivers files.

FY25 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY24 Approved	1,415,960	14.00
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	138,686	0.00
FY25 Approved	1,554,646	14.00

☀ Family Division Services

This program provides a variety of services for children and families, most of them funded by the Family Law Grant. Services include case managers that provide day-to-day management of cases supported by Family Magistrates, Judges, counsel, and litigants; custody mediation involving litigants in an effort to obtain a settlement of custody issues prior to litigation; the Family Law Self Help Center staffed by attorneys to help individuals representing themselves in uncomplicated family law cases involving divorce, custody, and child support; psychological evaluations when psychological testing is necessary as an adjunct to arriving at a decision in the best interest of the children; best interest attorney appointments to specifically represent the interests of children; and operating expenses associated with managing the division.

Family Division Services also handles adoption investigations, as well as child custody and visitation evaluations. After the establishment of a Court Order, independent evaluations for child custody and visitation and adoption investigations are conducted by Court staff possessing substantial experience in social science or suitable credentials in the field of social work. The evaluator meets with the litigants and children and interviews professionals and collateral references to ascertain the appropriate custodial situation for the children.

The Court has an initiative that is allowing litigants to meet with a courthouse appointed mediator at no cost to the community. This is a response to the pandemic to allow litigants to have a licensed mediator to help them reach an agreement before going to trial.

The Juvenile Division is also a part of Family Division Services and is responsible for oversight of delinquency petitions, Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) petitions, Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) petitions, Voluntary Placement petitions, and Petitions for Peace Orders. These matters, which are governed by strict statutory timeframes, require a high degree of judicial oversight by the Court on a long term basis.

FY25 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY24 Approved	1,849,639	15.27
Shift: Personnel Costs for the Family Grant from the General Fund to the Grant Fund	185,309	0.37
Add: Mid-Year Creation of Mediator Position	165,337	1.00
Shift: Personnel Costs for the Family Grant from the General Fund to the Grant Fund	(185,309)	(0.37)
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	(93,213)	(1.27)
FY25 Approved	1,921,763	15.00

Family Magistrates

Family Magistrates are qualified individuals appointed by the Judges of the Circuit Court to hear family matters and make reports and recommendations based on testimony and analysis of the testimony received at hearings. Family Division Judges continue to review the recommendations, make rulings, and issue orders based on the recommendations of the Family Magistrates and any exceptions filed. The Juvenile Magistrate is an officer of the Court assigned to conduct proceedings on matters within the Juvenile Court of the Circuit Court for Montgomery County, pursuant to the Annotated Code of Maryland and the Maryland Rules, and in accordance with the Juvenile Differentiated Case Management plan, procedures, and policies. Juvenile Judges continue to review the recommendations and hear immediate reviews and exceptions in addition to other juvenile and CINA matters.

FY25 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY24 Approved	769,953	7.00
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	(151,535)	(1.00)
FY25 Approved	618,418	6.00

Grants

The Family Law Grant is funded by the State Judiciary and provides services to families to reduce conflict and introduce the parties involved in litigation to problem-solving techniques to help reduce future litigation. See the Family Division Services Program for a description of the services supported by this grant.

The Trial Court Research Partnership Grant supports one Trial Court Researcher assigned to the Administration Program. This individual provides research, analysis, statistical support, and related reports on County and judiciary-wide research projects.

The Montgomery County Adult Drug Court is funded by the State Judiciary through a grant from the Office of Problem Solving Courts. The mission of the Adult Drug Court is to eliminate drug abuse, crime, and their consequences by forging continuing partnerships with the Court, health treatment providers, concerned community organizations, and law enforcement. By leveraging its partnerships and its authority, the Court directs substance-abusing offenders into evaluation and treatment to achieve personal responsibility and productive citizenship.

The Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEI) Grant is funded by the State Judiciary to support one DEI Coordinator. The employee will raise awareness and support of equity, accessibility, and inclusion values. They will work on enhancing and strengthening system programs to ensure each service, program and activity operated in the Court building is readily accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities.

The Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Grant is funded by the State Judiciary to support ADR programs and projects which benefit our Court and the residents of Montgomery County. The ADR programs and projects will focus on expanding access to justice, enable the resolution of disputes with efficiency and prevent conflicts from escalating into violence or litigation.

FY25 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY24 Approved	3,317,641	25.00
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	850,526	2.22
FY25 Approved	4,168,167	27.22

Jury

The Jury Office manages prospective and active jurors for civil and criminal proceedings. In accordance with Maryland Courts and Judicial Proceedings, Title 8, every citizen may serve as a juror and must serve when summoned. The Jury Commissioner and staff dispatch questionnaires to prospective jurors using information gathered from voter registration and Motor Vehicle Administration listings. The Jury Commissioner maintains a qualified jury pool from the individuals who are determined to be qualified as jurors under Maryland Courts and Judicial Proceedings § 8-207.

FY25 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY24 Approved	958,373	4.00
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	37,020	0.00
FY25 Approved	995,393	4.00

Law Library

The Law Library supports the research activities of the Court, the Bar, and the public, and is the only law library open to the public in Montgomery County. The Library has a comprehensive collection of law, including U.S. statutes and the codes of

Maryland, Washington D.C., Virginia, and local ordinances. It has a complete collection of judicial opinions and a variety of subject treatises and reference materials. The Law Library also offers free access to the major online legal databases. Library staff are available to answer questions regarding the library and its collection but cannot give legal opinions or advice. The staff will provide limited assistance over the telephone and by e-mail.

FY25 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY24 Approved	500,524	3.00
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	27,171	0.00
FY25 Approved	527,695	3.00

Technical Services

Technical Services is responsible for every aspect of the Court's information systems. The duties of, and services performed, range from installing and maintaining server/PC hardware and software applications to designing and troubleshooting complex computer networks and information databases. The department manages the electronic recording of all courtroom and hearing room proceedings. All video conferencing between the Circuit Court, District Court, Montgomery County Detention Center, and Montgomery County Correctional Facility is handled through this division. This equipment is used on a daily basis in order to conduct bond hearings via a video connection. Copies of court transcripts are purchased through this division. The Court's website and internal servers for the Court and Clerk's Office are administered by Technical Services.

FY25 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY24 Approved	1,560,196	12.00
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	127,326	0.00
FY25 Approved	1,687,522	12.00

Trust and Guardianships

The Trust Office administers the case files for fiduciary entities (primarily guardianships) who are required to comply with the reporting requirements set forth in the Maryland Court Rules, Title 10, Guardians and Other Fiduciaries. The reports required to be filed include the Inventory and Information Report and Annual Fiduciary Report for guardianships of the property of a minor or disabled person and the Annual Report of the guardianship of the person. The Trust Clerk examines the Annual Fiduciary Reports filed and prepares the Report of Trust Clerk for the Court.

FY25 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY24 Approved	295,457	2.50
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	31,948	0.00
FY25 Approved	327,405	2.50

BUDGET SUMMARY

	Actual FY23	Budget FY24	Estimate FY24	Approved FY25	%Chg Bud/App
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BUDGET SUMMARY

	Actual FY23	Budget FY24	Estimate FY24	Approved FY25	%Chg Bud/App
COUNTY GENERAL FUND					
EXPENDITURES					
Salaries and Wages	7,778,177	8,452,132	8,918,589	9,608,457	13.7 %
Employee Benefits	2,561,703	2,864,456	2,887,486	3,061,130	6.9 %
County General Fund Personnel Costs	10,339,880	11,316,588	11,806,075	12,669,587	12.0 %
Operating Expenses	2,699,161	2,549,879	2,676,071	2,552,012	0.1 %
County General Fund Expenditures	13,039,041	13,866,467	14,482,146	15,221,599	9.8 %
PERSONNEL					
Full-Time	99	99	99	99	—
Part-Time	4	4	4	4	—
FTEs	101.23	101.60	101.60	101.28	-0.3 %
REVENUES					
State Jury Fee Reimbursement	567,840	1,165,570	1,165,570	1,165,570	—
Miscellaneous Revenues	54,291	55,230	55,230	55,230	—
County General Fund Revenues	622,131	1,220,800	1,220,800	1,220,800	—
GRANT FUND - MCG					
EXPENDITURES					
Salaries and Wages	1,998,101	2,306,629	2,306,629	2,926,106	26.9 %
Employee Benefits	674,607	696,090	696,090	929,002	33.5 %
Grant Fund - MCG Personnel Costs	2,672,708	3,002,719	3,002,719	3,855,108	28.4 %
Operating Expenses	231,835	297,059	297,059	313,059	5.4 %
Grant Fund - MCG Expenditures	2,904,543	3,299,778	3,299,778	4,168,167	26.3 %
PERSONNEL					
Full-Time	24	25	25	27	8.0 %
Part-Time	1	1	1	1	—
FTEs	24.27	24.90	24.90	27.22	9.3 %
REVENUES					
State Grants	2,891,866	3,299,778	3,299,778	4,168,167	26.3 %
Federal Grants	12,676	0	0	0	—
Grant Fund - MCG Revenues	2,904,542	3,299,778	3,299,778	4,168,167	26.3 %
DEPARTMENT TOTALS					
Total Expenditures	15,943,584	17,166,245	17,781,924	19,389,766	13.0 %
Total Full-Time Positions	123	124	124	126	1.6 %
Total Part-Time Positions	5	5	5	5	—
Total FTEs	125.50	126.50	126.50	128.50	1.6 %
Total Revenues	3,526,673	4,520,578	4,520,578	5,388,967	19.2 %

FY25 APPROVED CHANGES

	Expenditures	FTEs
COUNTY GENERAL FUND		
FY24 ORIGINAL APPROPRIATION	13,866,467	101.60
<u>Changes (with service impacts)</u>		
Add: Mid-Year Creation of Mediator Position [Family Division Services]	165,337	1.00
Eliminate: Inactive Evaluator Position [Administration]	(92,464)	(1.00)
<u>Other Adjustments (with no service impacts)</u>		
Increase Cost: FY25 Compensation Adjustment	587,615	0.00
Increase Cost: Annualization of FY24 Compensation Increases	541,998	0.00
Increase Cost: Restore One Time Lapse Increase [Administration]	489,000	0.00
Shift: Personnel Costs from Trial Court Research Grant to General Fund (General Fund) [Administration]	7,897	0.05
Increase Cost: Printing and Mail	2,746	0.00
Decrease Cost: Motor Pool Adjustment	(613)	0.00
Decrease Cost: Retirement Adjustment	(6,540)	0.00
Decrease Cost: Annualization of FY24 Personnel Costs	(154,535)	0.00
Shift: Personnel Costs for the Family Grant from the General Fund to the Grant Fund [Family Division Services]	(185,309)	(0.37)
FY25 APPROVED	15,221,599	101.28

GRANT FUND - MCG		
FY24 ORIGINAL APPROPRIATION	3,299,778	24.90
<u>Federal/State Programs</u>		
Add: Mid-Year Creation of a DEI Coordinator for the DEI Grant	106,553	1.00
Add: Mid-Year Creation of an Administrative Aide IV for the ADR Grant	89,748	1.00
Enhance: DEI Grant	16,000	0.00
<u>Other Adjustments (with no service impacts)</u>		
Increase Cost: Annualization of FY24 Personnel Costs	478,676	0.00
Shift: Personnel Costs for the Family Grant from the General Fund to the Grant Fund [Family Division Services]	185,309	0.37
Re-align: Personnel Costs from Trial Court Research Grant to the General Fund [Administration]	(7,897)	(0.05)
FY25 APPROVED	4,168,167	27.22

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Program Name	FY24 APPR Expenditures	FY24 APPR FTEs	FY25 APPR Expenditures	FY25 APPR FTEs
Adjudication	4,191,144	35.50	4,538,183	35.50
Administration	2,307,358	8.23	3,050,574	9.28
Case Assignment	1,415,960	14.00	1,554,646	14.00
Family Division Services	1,849,639	15.27	1,921,763	15.00

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Program Name	FY24 APPR Expenditures	FY24 APPR FTEs	FY25 APPR Expenditures	FY25 APPR FTEs
Family Magistrates	769,953	7.00	618,418	6.00
Grants	3,317,641	25.00	4,168,167	27.22
Jury	958,373	4.00	995,393	4.00
Law Library	500,524	3.00	527,695	3.00
Technical Services	1,560,196	12.00	1,687,522	12.00
Trust and Guardianships	295,457	2.50	327,405	2.50
Total	17,166,245	126.50	19,389,766	128.50

FUNDING PARAMETER ITEMS

CC APPROVED (\$000S)

Title	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30
COUNTY GENERAL FUND						
EXPENDITURES						
FY25 Approved	15,222	15,222	15,222	15,222	15,222	15,222
No inflation or compensation change is included in outyear projections.						
Labor Contracts	0	304	304	304	304	304
These figures represent the estimated annualized cost of general wage adjustments, service increments, and other negotiated items.						
Subtotal Expenditures	15,222	15,526	15,526	15,526	15,526	15,526

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