



State of the Court Report

MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT

MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT | 50 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland 20850

Please accept Montgomery County Circuit Court's Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) State of the Court Report. The Court understands the value of compiling and reflecting on past initiatives and those planned as we continue to strive to meet the judiciary's strategic initiatives and the Court's goal of providing fair, efficient, and effective justice for all. The report was completed at the direction of Administrative Judge James A. Bonifant, and in coordination with Karen A. Bushell, the Clerk of the Court, and Timothy H. Sheridan, Court Administrator.

Contents

Section I. Identifying Information	5
Section II. Executive Summary	6
Section III. Organizational Chart	8
Section IV. Positions, Projects & Initiatives	9
Courthouse Access to Justice & Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)	9
<i>High School Court Tour</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Montgomery County Public Schools Summer RISE Program</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Accessible Wayfinding and Courthouse Building Map Project</i>	<i>10</i>
Maintaining & Managing Court Records	10
<i>Electronic Filings</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>E-Service</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Document Scanning</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Converting Paper Files to the Electronic Record</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Reorganizing Physical Files at the Off-Site Warehouse</i>	<i>12</i>
Mediation & Alternate Dispute Resolution	12
<i>Custody/Access Mediation and Facilitation Programs</i>	<i>12</i>
Case Processing & Workflow Management	13
<i>Business Processes & Procedures</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Administrative Judge's Caseload Metrics & Data Dashboard Expansion</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Family & Juvenile Case Management: Custody Evaluations, Document & Case Management</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Criminal Department & Courtroom Clerks – Marijuana Pardon Clean-Up</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Statewide Research - Expanded Voir Dire Pilot Program</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Calendar Management – Enhancing the Efficiency and Accuracy of Judicial Scheduling</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>MDEC Configuration Analyst - Case Plans Management</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Business Data Quality Management – Civil Service Review & Identifying Questionable Case Data</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Juvenile Court Services</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Trust Office Guardianship Case Management: Cases with Less Restrictive Alternatives</i>	<i>21</i>

Court Public Assistance.....	22
<i>Family Law Self-Help Center – Expansion of Services</i>	22
<i>Law Library</i>	23
<i>Licensing & Land Records Filings</i>	24
Problem-Solving Court Practices	24
<i>Expand Program Access & Client Resources</i>	24
<i>Create a SharePoint site that is cross-agency accessible</i>	25
<i>Development of the Mental Health Court “Accelerated Track”</i>	25
Section V. Operations.....	25
Court Technology	25
Employee Support	26
<i>Employee Appreciation & Team Building</i>	26
<i>Lunch and Learns</i>	27
<i>Courthouse Wellness</i>	27
<i>Court Administration & Clerk of the Court Department Meetings</i>	28
<i>Operations Staffing (Clerk’s Office)</i>	28
Section VI. Facilities.....	30
Courthouse Security	30
Section VII. Justice Partner Initiatives & Community Outreach.....	32
<i>Visit from Argentinian Judicial Officers</i>	32
<i>Equal Justice Community Outreach Subcommittee</i>	33
Section VIII. Concerns/Issues.....	34
Legislative Concerns and Recommendations	34
Using Technology Effectively and Responsibly	34
Section IX. Conclusion	36
Appendices	37
Appendix A. Original Filings, Terminations, and Clearance Rates	37
Appendix B. Court Administration Operational Statistics, FY20-FY25	39

Section I. Identifying Information

- Montgomery County Circuit Court
- Montgomery County/Rockville
- Most Proximate/Completed Fiscal Year (FY): 2025
- Report Submission Date: October 15, 2025
- Staffing (Court Administration/Clerk of the Court)

Judges and Magistrates: 30 (Full-Time – 30)

Judges – 24, including the Administrative Judge per current statutory authority; however, currently the bench consists of 23 judges due to recent retirements.

Magistrates – Six (6), including five (5) Family Magistrates and one (1) Juvenile Magistrate

Clerk of the Court: 191 (Full-time)

Department	Full-Time	Temporary	Contractual	Total
Clerk of the Court (including six (6) Staff Spanish Interpreters)	12			12
Support Services (formerly Central Files and Exhibits)	12			12
Civil Department	30		1	31
Courtroom Clerks Department	35			35
Criminal Department	19			19
Family Department	33			33
Finance Department	5			5
Juvenile Department	15			15
Land Records/License (non-judicial)	30			30
Total	191	0	1	192

Positions frozen: Land Records (3 FTEs)

Court Administration: 132 (Full-Time - 129, Part-Time - 3)*

Division/Office	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total
Court Administration	5		5
Special Magistrates	1		1
Access to Justice Coordinator (DEI)	1		1
Administrative Aides	1		1
Assignment Office	14		14
Business Data Quality & MDEC Analysts	8		8
Criminal & Civil Case Managers	3		3
Family Division Services (including 22 grant-funded)	36		36
Family Magistrate Staff	7		7
Judicial Assistants	24		24
Jury Office	4		4
Law Library	2	2	4
Problem Solving Courts (including 2 grant-funded)	5		5
Research & Performance (Partially grant-funded)	2		2
Senior Judges' Administrative Aides	2		2
Technical Services	12		12
Trust Office	2	1	3
Total	129	3	132

* Note: Contractual employees are not included.

Section II. Executive Summary

During Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, Montgomery County Circuit Court ('the Court') processed nearly 26,000 new case filings and closed out a similar number of cases. In addition, the Court processed 8,700 business licenses, issued approximately 5,800 marriage licenses, and performed over 1,900 marriage ceremonies. The Court's Family Law Self-Help Center experienced more than 12,500 contacts, through phone consultations or in-person visits, supporting the needs of self-represented litigants. The Court also saw improvements in case processing performance for civil-other, family law and delinquency cases between FY24 and FY25. Performance remained unchanged for civil-foreclosures and criminal, while it declined in child in need of assistance (CINA) and termination of parental rights (TPR) matters.¹

The Court recognizes that access to the Court to resolve legal disputes is a fundamental right and affirms the importance of processing all cases in a fair, efficient, and effective manner. To further establish this commitment, the Court recently implemented three strategic initiatives:

- 1) Developing a centralized repository of all court procedures,
- 2) Collecting and utilizing data for decision-making, and
- 3) Affirming the essential role of all court personnel as vital members of the courthouse team.

Court Procedures - Judge Bonifant, Clerk Bushell, and Mr. Sheridan collaborated with senior court personnel to review, verify, and formalize the Court's processing procedures. These procedures assisted with the determining how best to handle new challenges involving foreclosures with federal liens and –civil child victims act cases. They are maintained in a shared, centralized repository accessible to all court staff. The Court will regularly review and update these procedures to respond to evolving internal and external factors that may impact performance.

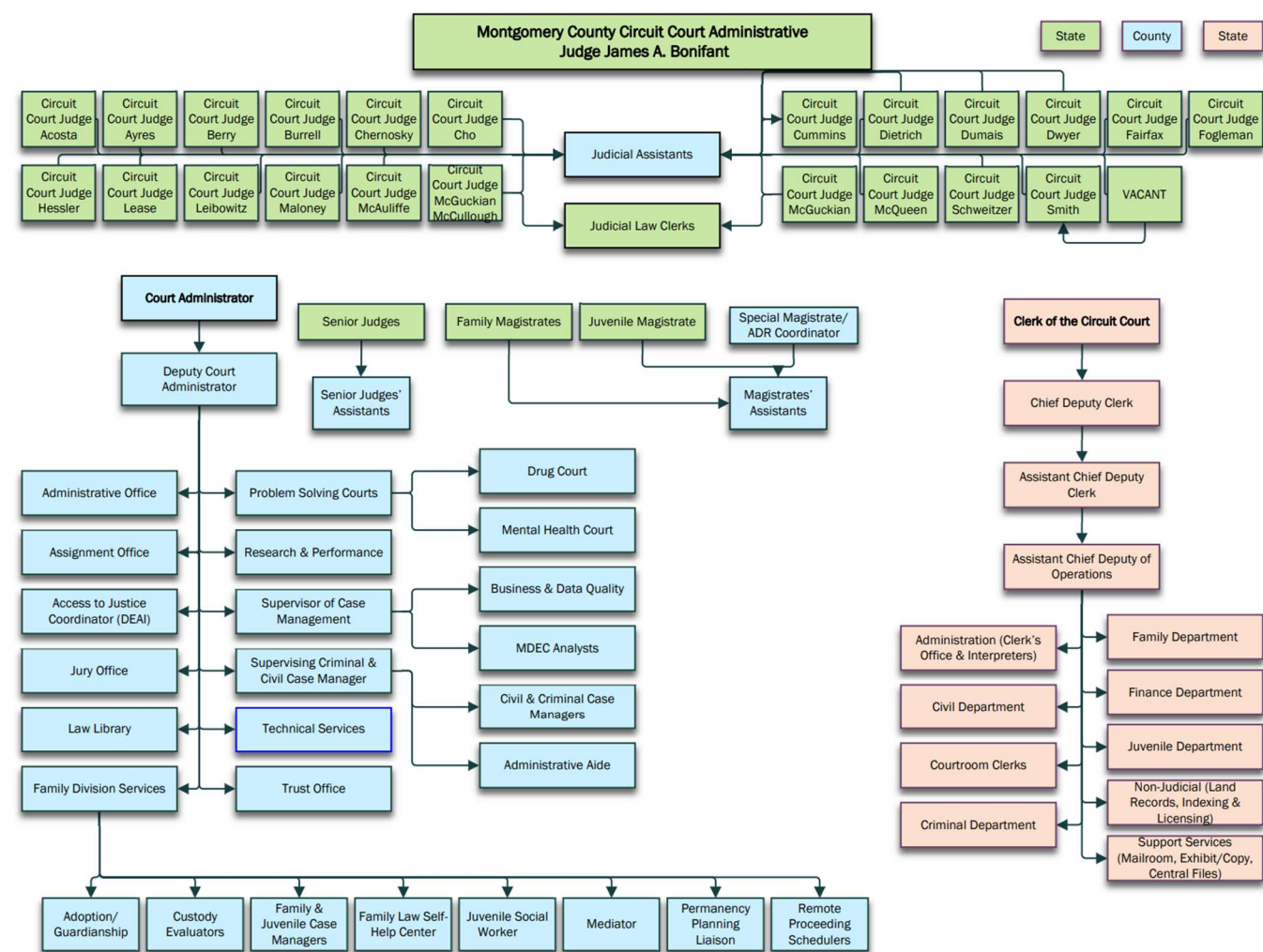
Recording and Utilizing Data – Over the past year, the Court's Research and Performance team developed and refined processes for collecting and reporting the Court's caseload data. Despite challenges due to limited data access, the resulting data dashboards and regular caseload and case processing performance reports confirmed the Court's resources were used efficiently.

¹ It is important to note the decline with CINA-Shelter case processing performance is largely due to a change in the statewide time standard, specifically the removal of 'continued' adjudication hearing result as a valid case stop trigger.

Court Personnel - The well-being and professional development of court employees remains central to the Court's success. Supporting staff satisfaction and growth is essential to meeting the rising and increasingly complex needs of court patrons.

Looking Ahead - As the Court continues to promote clear procedures, data-informed decision making; and a respected, engaged workforce, it moves beyond simply processing cases. The Montgomery County Circuit Court remains committed to serving court patrons by resolving legal matters that impact their lives in a fair, efficient, and effective manner.

Section III. Organizational Chart



Section IV. Positions, Projects & Initiatives

Courthouse Access to Justice & Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

High School Court Tour

- On October 25, 2024, the Access to Justice Coordinator - whose position is funded through the Administrative Office of the Courts' DEI grant - organized a court tour for 60 students and chaperones from Wheaton High School, one of the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). This initiative was conducted in partnership with MCPS and the Montgomery County Career Advising Program. Since the Court resolves serious matters such as crime, contentious civil lawsuits, and family matters, it is critical for the Access to Justice Coordinator to share with the students a realistic and transparent perspective of the Court, while also being mindful that youth may have a variety of different reactions to this type of environment. As such, the coordinator made efforts to provide opportunities for students to comfortably engage, and disengage when desired, in a range of tour activities under the supervision of court staff. Participants were introduced to a wide variety of court professionals and departments, including the Court's Administrative, Associate, and Senior Judges; Clerk of the Court and Court Administration personnel; as well as personnel from the County Sheriff's Office and the State's Attorney's Office. They also met with the Director of the Access to Justice Resource Center from the Circuit Court for Baltimore County, MD.
 - At the end of the event, many of the students expressed a desire to return to the Court to learn more about court functions as well as careers in the Maryland Judiciary. The overall success of the event would not have been possible without the generous and enthusiastic engagement of judicial officers and court personnel, as well as the wonderful partnership with MCPS and Montgomery County Career Advising Program. This cross-departmental and cross-organizational event supports civic education and career exploration, aligning with the Maryland Judiciary's broader efforts to promote access to justice and equity through community engagement.

Montgomery County Public Schools Summer RISE Program

- In July 2025, the Access to Justice Coordinator organized a two-week externship for four MCPS high school students through the school district's Summer RISE Program. This initiative offers students hands-on, career-based learning experiences aligned with their interests. The Court's participation provided students a unique opportunity to explore careers in the legal and judicial systems.
 - Over the course of 50+ hours, students engaged with a wide range of professionals and department staff, including judges from both the Circuit and District Courts, the Clerk of the Court, Court Administration, Judicial Human Resources; and representatives from the

Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, State's Attorney's Office, and Public Defender's Office. Additional exposure included the Montgomery County Bar Foundation's Diversity Committee, as well as the Court's Business Data Quality Office, Courtroom Clerks, Family Department, Family Division Services, and the Public Law Library.

- The program's success was underscored by one student securing a fall internship with the Administrative Judge and another securing a summer internship with the Court's Business Data Quality Department in August 2025. This initiative reflects the Court's commitment to community engagement, career development, and access to justice through education.

Accessible Wayfinding and Courthouse Building Map Project

- During the 2024–2025 fiscal year, the Access to Justice Coordinator launched the Accessible Wayfinding and Courthouse Building Map Project to improve user navigation to its courthouse services, facilities, and amenities. Initially designed to support individuals with disabilities and those requiring accommodations, the project expanded to enhance overall navigation and to promote inclusivity for all court patrons.
 - In collaboration with the Court's Technical Services Department and with input from the Judicial Security Committee, the Coordinator developed a map prototype of the courthouse's first three floors. This prototype demonstrates how improved signage, and innovative, digital tools can support a more accessible and welcoming environment. Although still in its early stages, the project shows strong potential to advance the Court's commitment to equity, inclusion, and access to justice.

Maintaining & Managing Court Records

- In FY25, the primary goals for the Clerk of the Court regarding records management include:
 1. Providing the most efficient means for attorneys and parties to file their pleadings and papers with the Court pursuant to Title 20 of the Maryland Rules and the MDEC Policies & Procedures established by the State Court Administrator.
 2. Scanning and cataloguing physical case jackets and exhibits and disposing of them after processing.
 3. Transferring physical files to the Maryland State Archives to reduce the number of files stored in an off-site warehouse in Rockville.
 4. Initiating a project to reorganize case files in the off-site warehouse.

Electronic Filings

- Regarding electronic filings:
 - The Clerk's Office continues to closely monitor the status of pending envelopes in File & Serve.

- The Clerk's Office and its departments utilize several reports to keep track of their processing of Odyssey File & Serve envelopes. Based on the data provided by AOC's Research & Analysis Office, in FY25, the Court received an average of 2,977 envelopes per week. On average, the Clerk's Office processed 97% of them within one day.
- The Court's ability to process envelopes varies depending on the number of available workdays in each week, staff availability, as well as the number of envelopes filed. The functioning of the processing application also affects performance. For example, the number of pending envelopes increased from 269 with an average pending length of 0.3 days for the week ending September 25, 2024, to 327 with an average pending length of 0.4 days for the week ending May 28, 2025, which was a short week following the Memorial Day holiday when many court personnel took leave. During those same weeks, the number of envelopes reviewed increased from 2,760 to 3,708. Nevertheless, clerks were able to keep pace despite daily functionality issues with one or both primary applications for new filings – Odyssey and File & Serve – which occurred during the first part of the fiscal year. Between the period of November 1, 2024, and February 1, 2025, the Court submitted over 20 slowness issues related to one or both applications. Fortunately, the Maryland Judiciary's Judicial Information Systems (JIS) identified a solution. Normally, what starts out as a backlog early in the week is cleared out by Wednesday or Thursday of that same week.
- The above achievements are notable considering the Court consistently ranks among the top four circuit courts in the state in terms of filing volume.
- Self-represented litigants (SRLs) also have the option of filing electronically. The Court is tracking 327 cases in which self-represented litigants (SRLs) have submitted filings electronically, representing a 30% increase compared to the same period last year.

E-Service

- The Clerk's Office and the Court's Assignment Office continue to electronically serve orders, notices, and other court documents to filers and their service contacts. They created and electronically mailed 12,717 separate envelopes in the eight weeks between June 26 and August 22, 2025, an increase of 14 percent over the same period in 2024.
- The Juvenile Department continues to assist the Family Department with e-service, while the Civil Department started using Adobe Acrobat to merge documents together into one for greater e-service efficiency.

Document Scanning

- Parties can only access documents and exhibits electronically when they have been scanned into Odyssey.

- To date, over 11,600 pre-MDEC or converted civil, criminal, and family cases and all or part of at least 42,000 older juvenile cases have been scanned. Each case encompasses a varying number of documents, ranging from a single document to thousands.
- Clerks have also scanned several thousand of the most requested pleadings from older family cases prior to transferring the physical files to the Maryland State Archives.

Converting Paper Files to the Electronic Record

- The Clerk's Office faces the challenge of storing 30 years of files with limited storage space. In FY25, the Clerk completed one cycle of scanning, verification, and destruction of older, physical case files and exhibits, including those from an off-site warehouse. Support Services routinely conducts two cycles each calendar year – one in winter, the other in summer.

Reorganizing Physical Files at the Off-Site Warehouse

- This reorganization project aims to (1) reduce file search time by creating an accurate, chronological reference system, and (2) enhance safety for staff working in the warehouse. Over the final three months of FY25, Support Services staff, assisted by colleagues from several other Clerk's Office departments, conducted an after-hours inventory of case files stored in the Court's off-site warehouse.

Currently, the inventory includes approximately 2,800 boxes of criminal case files, 450 boxes of family case files, and 500 boxes of civil files. Despite working in hot and dusty conditions, staff completed 90% of on-site work within the targeted six-week period. Future plans include reorganizing the boxes by box number during the fall of FY26, followed by addressing the exhibits stored at the warehouse.

Mediation & Alternate Dispute Resolution

Custody/Access Mediation and Facilitation Programs

- The Custody/Access Mediation and Facilitation Programs within Family Division Services provide critical support to families navigating custody and access disputes. Launched in 2023, the on-site mediation program offered same-day mediation services aimed at resolving cases before trial. This approach improved case management efficiency and empowered litigants to shape their own parenting plans, often resulting in more sustainable agreements.
 - In FY25, on-site mediators conducted 298 sessions, with 172 resulting in full settlements and 16 partial settlements. Due to the high volume of referrals, the full-time staff mediator has been regularly supported by the Deputy Family Division Coordinator, also a trained mediator.
- In addition to the on-site program, the Court continues to provide mediation and facilitation across a range of family law matters using practitioners from the court-approved roster.

- In FY25, 306 custody/access mediation sessions were held, yielding 120 full and 55 partial agreements.
- Additionally, the Court provided 461 facilitation sessions, resulting in 277 full and 19 partial agreements, and 84 CINA/TPR mediations with 32 full and 7 partial agreements.
- With support from the Business Data Quality Department, the program improved its feedback responses from roster mediators through enhanced survey distribution.
- Looking ahead, the Court aims to secure funding for an additional full-time mediator to expand access to day-of-trial mediation. The on-site mediation program is an increasingly critical resource for the bench, counsel, and litigants. Current staffing levels are insufficient to meet the growing demand. The Court needs additional personnel to sustain and expand service delivery. These programs align with the Maryland Judiciary's strategic initiatives to promote timely, cost-effective, and less adversarial resolutions in family law cases.

Case Processing & Workflow Management

Business Processes & Procedures

- The Clerk's Office collaborated with Court Researchers and Business Data Quality personnel to finalize several different business practices, including cases statuses and dispositions.

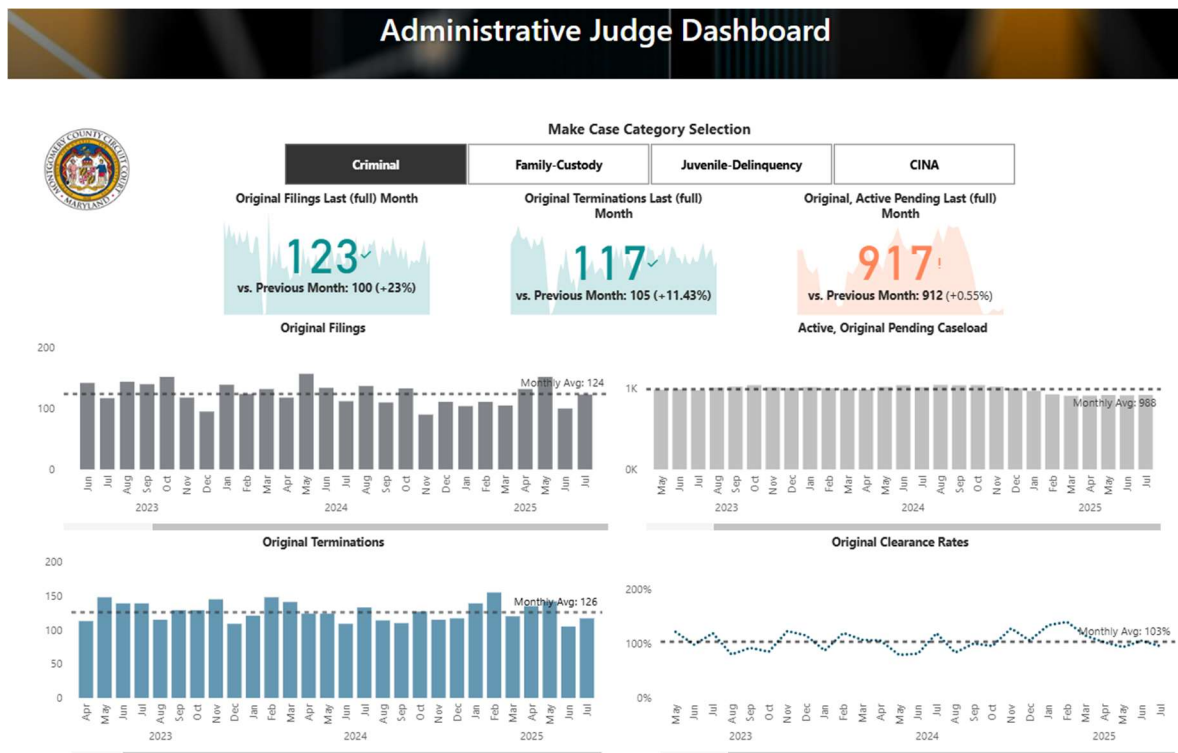
Administrative Judge's Caseload Metrics & Data Dashboard Expansion

- Administrative Judge James A. Bonifant made data utilization a top priority for monitoring and improving the Court's caseloads. Court Researchers in coordination with the Technical Services Department developed a set of dashboards/reports using Microsoft's Power Business Intelligence (BI) application. These dashboards continue to evolve to better meet the needs of the organization. Foundational caseload management data including filings, terminations, pending and projected pending caseloads are updated near real time and shared with the Administrative Judge. The dashboards display on a SharePoint site viewable by courthouse personnel.
- Additional visualizations on the dashboard reports have been developed to meet the Administrative Judge's inquiries, including civil caseload trends by case plan (i.e., Differentiated Case Management track), civil tort caseloads, and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) caseloads. The research team is working with the court's Business Data Quality manager on a pending dashboard to assist in their case-level monitoring of pending caseloads, as well as with another BDQ team member on automating quarterly reporting to MACRO.
- Ongoing discussion between the Clerk's Office and Court Administration personnel focus on using Family ID to monitor child welfare cases involving the same family. This ID assists judicial officers in examining child welfare caseloads by family where siblings have separate cases but have their hearings

scheduled together. For judicial officers, being able to group these cases together as a unit and assess their caseload is important because scheduling hearings by family requires additional resources and can create challenges with the processing of cases within time guidelines.

- Prior to converting to MDEC, the Court had access to all its case data for analytic purposes in support of judicial and administrative caseload management needs. When converting legacy case management system to Odyssey, the Court worked with the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) to establish several data feeds to maintain some of its core analytic and reporting initiatives. Since going live on Odyssey, the Court utilizes Odyssey's Enterprise Custom Reports (ECRs) and the JIS Data Store to obtain additional case data to better respond to judicial and court management data/analytic inquiries. However, the tools currently available are not sufficient nor flexible enough to support the Court's data needs. Further, when the Court needs to respond to an internal data inquiry that cannot be supported by ECRs, JIS Data Store views, or our current data feeds, creating a ticket request to the AOC delays access to needed information. The Court is hopeful that enhanced data access for local court research and IT personnel will become available when the Maryland Judiciary implements a Data Warehouse. Based on conversations with the AOC Research & Analysis Program Director, the Court anticipates access to the Data Warehouse (or related tools) will be made available to local court research and IT personnel in early 2026 so that it may better serve our local judicial, clerk, and administrative court personnel.

Caseload Dashboard: Filings, terminations, clearance rates and active, original pending.



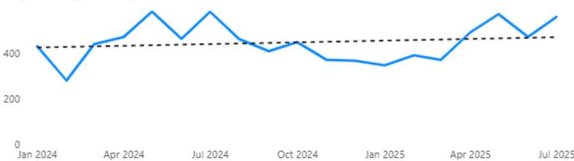
Caseload Dashboard Supplemental Inquiry: Civil caseload by Differentiated Case Management Plan

Administrative Judge Dashboard

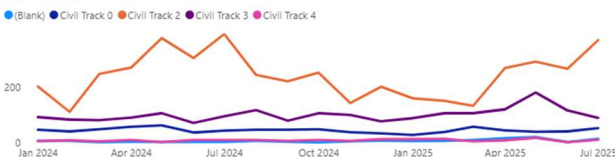


- Substantive Civil Cases:**
- Civil Liens are excluded from this data along with: Foreign Judgments, Foreclosures, and Independent Proceedings.
 - Original, substantive civil filings increased from 347 in January 2025 to 474 in June 2025 (+36.6%). During the same time period, original terminations decreased from 450 to 394 (-12.4%).
 - The original, clearance rate for substantive civil cases has decreased from 130% in January 2025 to 83% to June 2025.
 - We included the civil cases that are missing a Track (Case Plan) (blue trend line). Certain case types do not require a Track, and some are newly filed and have yet to receive a Track (per business process). Business Data Quality monitors such scenarios. The increase in original filings between January 2025 and June 2025 aligns with an increase in Track 2, Track 3 and Track 0 (current) assignments.

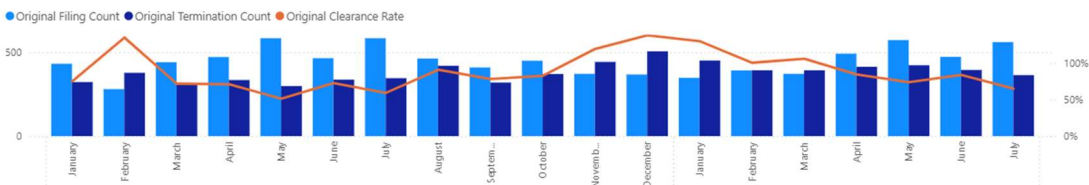
Original Filing Counts by Year and Month



Original Filing Counts by Year, Month and Case Plan (Track)



Original Caseload Counts by Year and Month



Pending Dashboard: Business Data Quality Management

BDQ - Pending Data



Caseload Group, Case Type

Civil

Warrant/Inactive Status?

No

Top 50 Oldest Clock Time by Caseload Grouping

Case Number	Case Type	Clock Time
V465930	Foreclosure - Residential	2,283
V471821	Interpleader	2,161
V472760	Foreclosure - Residential	2,122
V475654	Foreclosure - Residential	2,071
V476391	Foreclosure - Residential	2,051
V482865	Contract - Breach	1,828
V482026	Foreclosure - Residential	1,657
V485169	Foreclosure - Residential	1,586
V487211	Tort - Malpractice Medical	1,404
C-15-CV-21-000122	Tort - Other	1,348
C-15-CV-21-000496	Tort - Commercial	1,324
C-15-CV-21-000424	Foreclosure - Residential	1,322

Case Age

Clock Time

Number of Cases by 45-Day Age Increments



Case Numbers by Case Type, Case Age and Clock Time

Case Type	Case Number	Case Age	Clock Time
Foreclosure - Residential	V465930	2,284	2,283
Interpleader	V471821	2,162	2,161
Foreclosure - Residential	V472760	2,123	2,122
Foreclosure - Residential	V475654	2,072	2,071
Foreclosure - Residential	V476391	2,052	2,051
Contract - Breach	V482865	1,829	1,828
Foreclosure - Residential	V482026	1,902	1,657
Foreclosure - Residential	V485169	1,587	1,586
Tort - Malpractice Medical	V487211	1,405	1,404
Tort - Other	C-15-CV-21-000122	1,353	1,348
Tort - Commercial	C-15-CV-21-000496	1,325	1,324
Foreclosure - Residential	C-15-CV-21-000424	1,323	1,322
Foreclosure - Residential	V478643	1,997	1,204
Foreclosure - Residential	C-15-CV-22-001558	1,198	1,197
Tort - Wrongful Death	C-15-CV-22-002317	1,127	1,126
Foreclosure - Residential	C-15-CV-22-002351	1,122	1,121
Foreclosure - Residential	V476687	2,046	1,108
Contract - Breach	C-15-CV-22-002721	1,097	1,096
Foreclosure - Commercial	C-15-CV-22-000848	1,251	1,082
Foreclosure - Residential	C-15-CV-22-002946	1,077	1,076
Foreclosure - Residential	C-15-CV-22-003109	1,069	1,068
Foreclosure - Residential	C-15-CV-22-003394	1,043	1,042
Foreclosure - Residential	C-15-CV-22-003454	1,037	1,036
Contract - Breach	C-15-CV-22-003578	1,029	1,028
Attorney Grievance	C-15-CV-22-003709	1,022	1,021
Tort - Malpractice Medical	C-15-CV-22-003858	1,013	1,012
Foreclosure - Residential	C-15-CV-22-004300	979	978
Declaratory Judgment	V458498	2,438	977
Foreclosure - Residential	C-15-CV-22-003826	1,015	961
Foreclosure - Residential	C-15-CV-22-004531	957	956
Tort - Negligence	C-15-CV-22-004523	957	956
Contract - Commercial	C-15-CV-22-004669	951	950
Foreclosure - Residential	C-15-CV-22-004707	947	946

Open Pending Age - Rev Pending Age & Clock Time Detail - Rev Pending Age & Hearings - Rev Data Quality Checks - Possibly Requiring JIS...

- ***Custody Evaluation:*** The Custody Evaluation Office plays a vital role in supporting the Court by providing comprehensive recommendations on custody, parenting time, parental decision-making, and referrals for supportive family services. In FY25, the office received 274 referrals for custody evaluations, 244 of which were completed with full evaluations. Although 30 cases were not completed, many had already required significant evaluator effort before termination.
 - All staff evaluators are licensed clinical social workers who maintain their credentials through ongoing continuing education (CE). Over the past year, the Senior Court Evaluator enhanced CE opportunities by inviting local experts in mental health, substance use, and parenting education, to make presentations to the Court’s evaluators. Such interaction enriched the team’s knowledge of community resources and expanded the office’s informational portfolio for the Court and litigants. Providing custody evaluators with specialized training in family dynamics, intimate partner violence, and child welfare enhances consistency and standardization in the office’s overall work product.
 - The office also manages the Court’s Supervised Visitation Program, which provided safe access in 69 cases in FY25. To ensure staff safety, the team implemented measures such as clarifying subpoena procedures and allowing remote testimony when in-person appearances could escalate tensions. The office remains committed to delivering thoughtful, child-focused recommendations that serve the best interests of families, regardless of demographic or socioeconomic background. This work directly supports the Maryland Judiciary’s strategic initiative of equitable service delivery and access to justice. The project is ongoing and expected to continue in its current form.
- ***Family Department Project – Revision of Family Department Packets:*** In December 2024, the Family Department—working in collaboration with the Court’s Technical Services Department—completed a major revision of its informational packets for Self-Represented Litigants (SRLs). These packets, which cover topics such as divorce, custody, and name changes, were streamlined to reduce printing costs and paper usage while maintaining access to essential legal information.
 - Optional forms and lengthy filing instructions were removed and replaced with QR codes linking to up-to-date resources on the Court’s and Judiciary’s websites. This change reduced the size of each packet by at least 50%, leading to substantial cost savings and a more efficient printing and distribution process—without compromising the quality or accessibility of information.
 - The project aligns with the Maryland Judiciary’s strategic initiative of using resources wisely while preserving access to justice. Although the primary revision is complete, the Family Department continues to review and update the packets as needed to ensure accuracy and

relevance. This initiative demonstrates how thoughtful digital integration can enhance efficiency without compromising service to the public.

- ***Juvenile Department Project – Business Processes Review and Documentation:*** In Fall 2024, the Juvenile Department initiated a project to reassess and document its business processes, particularly those related to findings and dispositions. Unlike other departments, the Juvenile Department operates under much shorter timelines which demand a unique, more time-sensitive workflow.
 - The effort, led by the Juvenile Department Manager, involved collaboration with the Clerk’s Office, Court Administration, Business Data Quality, and Court Research personnel. As part of the planning and implementation process, staff—including the Assistant Chief Deputy of Operations—participated in several statewide workgroups to exchange best practices and work toward a shared approach to addressing complex procedural issues.
 - A key ongoing challenge is the manual creation of delinquency cases, which remains labor-intensive. In early 2025, Court staff engaged with the State’s Attorney’s Office to revisit a previous initiative aimed at enabling electronic case initiation. However, AOC/JIS requested the project be placed on hold until the release of the next version of Odyssey, anticipated in 2026.
 - The project’s primary goal is to gain a better understanding of current processes and to improve standardization—ultimately enhancing the department’s ability to meet case processing benchmarks and ensure consistency across staff roles. This aligns with the Maryland Judiciary’s strategic initiatives to promote accountability and enhance service orientation in court operations.

Criminal Department & Courtroom Clerks – Marijuana Pardon Clean-Up

- ***Marijuana Pardon Clean-Up:*** In response to Governor Wes Moore’s June 2024 executive order, which pardoned approximately 175,000 cannabis-related offenses, the Court launched the Marijuana Pardon Clean-Up Project in October 2024. Led by the Criminal Department management team, and supported by the Criminal Department and Support Services, the project aimed to ensure that all impacted cases are accurately reflected in Odyssey.
 - To support this initiative, JIS created a new case event code: “Misdemeanor Cannabis Possession Charge(s) Pardoned by Gov.” This code is essential for identifying and tagging cases eligible under the Governor’s directive. However, due to data conversion issues during the Court’s transition to Odyssey, many marijuana possession charges were not properly identified, as they were often coded similarly to non-marijuana drug offenses. To resolve this, staff have been manually reviewing thousands of cases. Support Services provides physical case files for review,

and the Criminal Department management team maintains a detailed spreadsheet tracking the accuracy and correction status of each charge. Over 6,000 charges have been reviewed to date, with staff working extended hours to meet the demands of this labor-intensive process.

- This project directly supports the Maryland Judiciary’s strategic initiatives of improving the accuracy of court records and ensuring that individuals eligible for pardons are properly recognized. The project is ongoing and expected to continue due to the volume of cases still requiring review.

Statewide Research - Expanded Voir Dire Pilot Program

- **Expanded Voir Dire MD Rule 16-310 Pilot Program** – In January 2025, the Court joined courts across the State of Maryland with the collection of data as part of the Judiciary’s Expanded Voir Dire Pilot Program. The Supreme Court of Maryland is considering changes to jury voir dire to allow questions to assist a litigant’s preemptory strikes. Successful implementation of collecting the data required close coordination with participating and non-participating judges and multiple court departments, including Courtroom Clerks, the Jury Office, Court Researchers, the Assignment Office, Administrative Aides, and Language Interpreter Coordinators. The pilot is expected to continue through the end of the calendar year, with tagging guidelines in place to ensure consistency and accuracy in data collection.

Calendar Management – Enhancing the Efficiency and Accuracy of Judicial Scheduling

- The Assignment Office, in collaboration with the MDEC Calendar Configuration Analyst and Technical Services, initiated a project to enhance the efficiency and accuracy of judicial scheduling. The primary objective is to support the Administrative Judge’s scheduling prioritization efforts through improved data access and visualization.
 - The team developed a comprehensive data extract from Odyssey reports, which was reformatted into a centralized spreadsheet. This tool consolidates trial availability for all judges, eliminating the need to review multiple reports. The extract incorporates the Court’s trial capacity rules—data not otherwise available through Odyssey—ensuring more accurate trial assignments.
 - Key implementation milestones include:
 - Creation of a unified spreadsheet for trial availability.
 - Expansion of the data extract to cover a 365-day period.
 - Integration of special assignment sessions (e.g., Family Duty, Civil Motions) into the extract.
 - Development of prep sheets for daily docket preparation.
- To further enhance scheduling transparency, the team developed the Montgomery Case Scheduling App, a custom tool designed to track and manage cases assigned to senior judges. This app ensures that senior

judges' assignments are clearly documented and seamlessly integrated into the overall calendar. One of the primary challenges to docket management is the fragmented nature of Odyssey reports, which require manual review of multiple calendars. This is now resolved through the creation of the consolidated spreadsheet and the automated data extraction processes. Project successes include:

- Increased efficiency in scheduling meetings with the Administrative Judge.
 - Improved accuracy in trial assignments.
 - Streamlined access to special assignment session data.
 - Increased transparency and accountability in senior judge scheduling.
- These two projects support the Maryland Judiciary's initiatives of equity, access to justice, and operational transparency by ensuring fair and efficient use of judicial resources. The projects aim to refine and expand data extraction to support long-term calendar management, as well as enhance the Montgomery Case Scheduling App to ensure ongoing support for senior judges' scheduling.

MDEC Configuration Analyst - Case Plans Management

- Since April 2022, the MDEC Configuration Analyst within the Business Data Quality Department has been overseeing the configuration and maintenance of Odyssey's Case Plans, which reflect the court's Differentiated Case Management (DCM) tracks. The analyst maintains detailed documentation of all configuration changes and conducts biannual audits to ensure accuracy and consistency. She is also collaborating with Court Researchers to develop a data feed that will extract case plan data across all categories, helping to identify cases that exceed time guidelines. This initiative is in its early stages, focusing on data component identification and testing.
- The analyst is also leading a Security Access Project to streamline access management for Court Administration staff. This includes developing templates for new employees and improving the quarterly Statewide Re-Certification Process.
- The analyst's responsibilities also include managing judge and magistrate case assignments, supporting docket preparation through Odyssey and its Judge's Edition, and maintaining the Reserved Case Report. She monitors Chambers workflow queues and collaborates with the Assignment Office to ensure timely case processing. The analyst actively contributes to Statewide Work Groups, helping to shape business processes in response to legislative changes. Notably, the analyst successfully proposed and implemented an event status configuration in Odyssey, creating visual markers to help court staff identify events requiring judicial action.
- The projects undertaken by the MDEC Configuration Analyst support the Maryland Judiciary's strategic initiatives of promoting accountability and public trust, as well as utilizing technology effectively and responsibly to enhance court accessibility and improve judiciary operations. Projects undertaken by this position are ongoing and expected to continue with enhancements.

Business Data Quality Management – Civil Service Review & Identifying Questionable Case Data

- **Civil Service Review** – Initiated in August 2024, the Civil Service Review project is led by Business Data Quality in response to concerns raised by the Administrative Judge regarding civil cases set for Pre-Trial and Status/Pre-Trial Conferences that are not in proper posture, primarily due to service issues. Historically, the department reviewed family and civil cases for potential dismissals under Maryland Rule 2-507 (for lack of jurisdiction or prosecution), and service review in civil cases had not been part of their scope.
 - To address this gap, a collaborative process was developed to proactively review service in civil cases and facilitate timely dismissals under Maryland Rule 2-507 before cases reach the courtroom. The department conducts a multi-stage review process, beginning five weeks before scheduled conferences, to identify cases with insufficient service or those ripe for dismissal. Team members issue non-compliance notices or contact the moving party directly to resolve issues. They also monitor cases at the 121-day mark and work closely with the Assignment Office in the lead-up to hearings to ensure dockets are accurate and up to date. Thanks to the department's strong relationships with attorneys and court staff, team members have encountered minimal challenges, and their efforts have significantly contributed to reducing delays and improving case processing times.
 - This project aligns with the Maryland Judiciary's strategic initiative of encouraging a service-oriented approach to court operations, as well as promoting accountability and public trust through case monitoring and management. The project is ongoing and expected to continue with enhancements.
- **Tracking and Resolving Questionable Case Data** – In Fall 2023, Business Data Quality launched the Questionable Case Application project. The initiative established a centralized repository to track and report questionable case corrections, enhancing data integrity across Clerk of the Court and Court Administration departments. Over the past year and a half, the repository has proven successful in identifying and addressing data inconsistencies in Odyssey. Now entering Phase 2, the project expands through collaboration with Technical Services and Research and Performance to develop reporting mechanisms—such as dashboards, data feeds, and reports—that will provide actionable insights into data quality issues.
 - Phase 2 aims to present these insights to court leadership, helping to identify trends and areas for improvement, including training needs, Quick Reference Guides, or business process refinements. Anticipated challenges include accurately associating correction types with the appropriate departments, especially when multiple departments are involved, and determining the most effective ways to leverage the data for systemic improvements. Furthermore,

determining the best ways to translate findings into process improvements (e.g., targeted staff training, updated Quick Reference Guides, or business process adjustments) will require strategic planning and cross-department collaboration. The project aligns with the Maryland Judiciary’s strategic initiatives of promoting data accuracy and ensuring cases are properly closed. The project is ongoing.

Juvenile Court Services

- The Juvenile Court Social Work Program continues to expand its impact in supporting court-involved youth and their families. In its second year with a full-time social worker, program referrals totaled 45 youth in FY25, with continued interest in referrals driven by growing stakeholder trust and appreciation. The program also saw heightened participation in the Conflict Resolution Course with 62 youth referrals and Youth Substance Abuse Program with 15 referrals, both of which were adapted to better meet the needs of a diverse youth population. These adjustments have led to greater engagement and enthusiasm from both participants and referring stakeholders. The lower number of referrals for the Youth Substance Abuse Program is due to the program being relatively new and a longer program/course duration compared to the other programs.
- A major highlight of the year for the Juvenile Court Social Work Program was the Gun Violence Prevention Summit, organized in collaboration with the Juvenile Magistrate and attended by nearly 200 Montgomery County Public School students. The event featured speakers and activities focused on nonviolent conflict resolution. Additionally, the program welcomed several new graduate-level interns for the 2025–2026 school year, including Spanish-speaking students—an invaluable asset for serving the Court’s diverse families. The program remains committed to equitable, respectful service for all youth, regardless of background, and aligns closely with the Maryland Judiciary’s strategic initiatives of access to justice and inclusive support. The project is ongoing and expected to continue in its current form.

Trust Office Guardianship Case Management: Cases with Less Restrictive Alternatives

- Launched in FY2024, this ongoing project focuses on identifying and processing guardianship cases where less restrictive alternatives to full guardianship of property are appropriate. The goal of the project is to terminate guardianship of property when a less restrictive alternative such as representative payee or the ABLE account is available and to waive ongoing reporting requirements when full guardianship is no longer necessary.
- In collaboration with the Guardianship Case Manager and the Guardianship Judge, the project includes the following steps:
 1. Screening cases to determine if a less restrictive alternative exists.

2. Issuing a show cause order (via task to the case manager) to initiate termination of the property guardianship.
3. Processing termination orders if no opposition is filed by the guardian within 20 days.
4. Handling ABLE account cases by preparing proposed orders to waive reporting requirements, submitting them to the judge, and docketing the orders.

Obstacles addressed include coordination among offices and ensuring timely follow-up on tasks and docketing. The project has successfully streamlined case processing and reduced unnecessary guardianship oversight.

- This effort promotes the Maryland Judiciary’s strategic initiatives of commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion by ensuring individuals are not subjected to overly restrictive legal controls when viable, less restrictive alternatives exist. The project also aligns with the Judiciary’s strategic initiative to improve systems and processes. When cases no longer require a guardian of the property, this project ensures judicial resources are appropriately directed while promoting the use of least-restrictive legal mechanisms. Finally, the project exemplifies the Judiciary’s commitment to modernizing case management, reducing administrative burden, and upholding the dignity and rights of individuals subject to guardianship.

Court Public Assistance

Family Law Self-Help Center – Expansion of Services

- The Family Law Self-Help Center continues to serve as a vital resource for Montgomery County’s large population of self-represented litigants. In FY25, the Center assisted 12,564 individuals, confirming the high demand for the Center’s services. Despite expanded service delivery methods introduced during COVID-19 emergency operations; staff continue to struggle to meet demand. Most days, the Center reaches capacity by mid-morning.
- A new online sign-in/intake form was implemented to streamline access, allowing litigants to secure a place in line before arriving at the courthouse. However, this improvement has led to the Center reaching capacity even earlier in the day. To further support court efficiency, the “Fast Pass” program—launched in FY24—has been increasingly utilized by judges and magistrates to expedite attorney consultations for self-represented litigants. While telephone assistance remains robust, the Center continues to face challenges in meeting demand.
- The Court is exploring funding for an additional full-time attorney to expand capacity. These efforts align with the Maryland Judiciary’s strategic initiative to ensure equal access to justice by supporting and educating self-represented litigants. However, without increased staffing, the Center’s ability to meet the growing need remains limited.

Law Library

- The Montgomery County Circuit Court Law Library is a public resource offering legal research expertise and materials to the Court, local legal community, and members of the public. The services provided are at peak demand since the litigants in many cases are self-represented. The Law Library remains committed to facilitating access to justice initiatives both inside and outside the courthouse. In FY25, the Library aims to enhance its services, resources, programming, messaging, and physical space to provide the best and most inclusive support to its patrons. Below are notable accomplishments:
 - In FY25, the Law Library responded to 12,539 inquiries, 68% of which came from the public, including self-represented litigants. Librarians provided 787 targeted referrals to court departments, community services, and pro or low-bono legal assistance. Additionally, 1,182 inquiries came from judiciary staff, often involving complex legal research supported by the Maryland Historical Law Collection. Use of the library's MDEC kiosks increased by 19% from FY24, with 618 patrons assisted, and public patron use of MDEC kiosks rose from 64% to 80% between FY24 and FY25. The use of the kiosks often resulted in librarians providing full-service support, including legal research support, guidance on accessing case documents online, electronic filing, and free notary services for MDEC party access forms.
 - The Law Library also contributed to statewide access to justice efforts. The Law Library Director presented and moderated at Maryland conferences, including the Maryland Judiciary Self Help Providers Conference and the Maryland Pro Bono Resource Center's Partners for Justice Conference, linking law library expertise with access to justice and pro bono efforts.
 - In June 2025, the Law Library delivered an interactive Law Library services and Westlaw training session for court staff during the Court's Lunch and Learn series.
 - Library staff contributed to the *Law on the Frontlines* project, which trains public librarians in legal reference skills to improve access through community libraries.
 - During the summer of 2025, the Law Library staff presented legal research workshops to Montgomery College paralegal students and provided an interactive legal research training to high school students participating in MCPS Summer RISE program.
- Looking ahead, the Law Library's goals are to:
 - Continue providing expert, inclusive legal research assistance to the Court, legal community, and public—especially self-represented litigants.

- Facilitate access to justice initiatives through partnerships and programming that benefit local legal partners and the wider community.
- Support continuing education for librarians to maintain professional expertise.
- Improve library guides, website, and signage to enhance clarity and inclusiveness.

Licensing & Land Records Filings

- In FY25, the License and Land Records Department discontinued the use of the outside drop boxes for filings, a temporary measure originally introduced during the COVID-related emergency operations period.
- The License Department remains one of the most frequently visited offices in the courthouse. In FY25, the department:
 - Performed 1,920 marriage ceremonies, issued 5,777 marriage licenses, and recorded 5,384 marriage certificates.
 - Mailed over 15,700 business license applications and issued 8,695 business licenses. Staff also started an online business license registration process this past Spring and created a dedicated email address to reduce the volume of calls received.
 - Added two Spanish-speaking employees to assist the public and conduct marriage ceremonies.
 - Increased the frequency of marriage ceremonies to every 30 minutes, and further to every 15 minutes to meet increased demand during the summer.
- The Land Records Department, responsible for all real estate transaction matters:
 - Recorded 72,122 land instruments, representing a 14% increase from the previous year.
 - Assumed the responsibility of managing State Tax Liens.

Problem-Solving Court Practices

Expand Program Access & Client Resources

- The Mental Health Court updated its admission documents, which now include options for additional requirements upon program enrollment that are selected on a case-by-case basis. These added safeguards have expanded the range of defendants that the program can accept, including those who have a propensity for violence when under the influence or not properly medicated.
- Drug Court and Mental Health Court significantly expanded their screening process for incarcerated defendants to ensure all their basic needs are met, including clothing, shoes, undergarments, toiletries, and a pre-paid phone in advance of release so they are immediately accessible. Re-entry ID's are also requested from the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to ensure vital records can be obtained.

- Drug Court and Mental Health Court provided new program participants with pre-loaded SmarTrip cards to ensure they have means to get to treatment, urinalysis, and the Court.

Create a SharePoint site that is cross-agency accessible

- The Montgomery County problem-solving courts created a SharePoint site that can be accessed by problem-solving court coordinators and case managers to ensure information is easily shared. This assists with tracking bed space at houses, monitoring funds distributed through the 501(c)3, and developing lists for SCRAM appointments and random urinalysis assignment.

Development of the Mental Health Court “Accelerated Track”

- The Mental Health Court developed an “Accelerated Track” to provide services to individuals who are stable and engaged with appropriate services at the time of admission. Individuals who are currently enrolled in Drug Court or DUI Court but determined to be more clinically appropriate for Mental Health Court are also able to enroll in this track. It is six months shorter than the traditional track and reduces the likelihood of the team’s resources being used for individuals who do not require 18 months of supervision.

Section V. Operations

Court Technology

- In FY25, the Court’s Technical Services Department engaged in a variety of projects that supported infrastructure and equipment needs, as well as case management efforts. Highlighted projects aim to support the Maryland Judiciary’s access to justice and service-oriented approach to court operations and include:
 - A project to fully replace the audio/video systems in the Jury Assembly room began on November 1, 2024 which is completed. The initiative aimed to enhance communication between Jury Office staff and citizens, including individuals with hearing impairments. This upgrade supports the Maryland Judiciary’s strategic initiative of ensuring a service-oriented approach to court operations by fostering clearer, more inclusive communication in court settings.
 - An ongoing project to review the County Court website for accessibility began on November 1, 2024. The initiative focused on understanding updated accessibility standards, identifying areas of non-compliance on the current website, and improving content—such as enhancing image descriptions and converting PDFs to web content—to ensure greater accessibility for all users. This effort directly supports the Maryland Judiciary’s strategic initiatives of promoting Access to Justice and ensuring a service-oriented approach to court operations.
 - A project to install assisted listening systems in all 16 North Tower courtrooms began on January 1, 2025 which is completed. Previously reliant on shared equipment, these courtrooms now offer

immediate access to hearing enhancement hardware for participants, improving inclusivity and user experience. This initiative aligns with the Maryland Judiciary's strategic goals of access to justice and ensuring a service-oriented approach to court operations by supporting equal participation for individuals with hearing impairments.

- A project to implement a chatbot on the County Court website began on November 1, 2022, and is being led by Technical Services in collaboration with JIS. The goal is to provide users with quick, question-and-answer style summaries of court information, helping to reduce phone call volume and wait times. Despite facing technical and policy challenges, the team aims to launch the chatbot in FY26. This initiative supports the Maryland Judiciary's strategic priorities of access to justice and ensuring a service-oriented approach to court operations by improving the accessibility and efficiency of public information.
- Finding creative ways to obtain Odyssey data to support local case management and analytics through building or supporting SharePoint, Microsoft Access, or data visualization applications.

Employee Support

Employee Appreciation & Team Building

- The Circuit Court employees remain the Court's greatest asset. Identifying professional development opportunities for employees promotes the Court's goal of providing effective and efficient delivery of justice and promotes positive attitudes and keeps employees engaged. With this in mind, the Circuit Court for Montgomery County launched a comprehensive campaign focusing on professional development, employee appreciation events, and team-building exercises.
- In April, Court Administration and the Clerk of the Court crafted a successful Employee Professional Day that included a variety of activities, such as office workouts and a wellness hour aimed at stress management. Additionally, a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) presentation educated employees about accessibility within the court system and provided tools to meet the needs of a diverse public.
- During the event, employees prepared thank-you cards for Sheriff's Office personnel, expressing gratitude for their role in ensuring the safety of judges and employees throughout the year. Court Administration organized a workshop designed to help alleviate stress. Attendees learned about the Employee Assistance Program.
- The Sheriff's Office contributed by conducting an informative session on active shooter protocols and provided a presentation on NARCAN, training judges and employees on its use. All attendees were advised that NARCAN is included in bleed kits located on every floor of the courthouse. Security and responsivity to a crisis is improved with the knowledge that emergency tools and response protocols are

broadly understood. Employees expressed appreciation on being informed of possible security situations and the planned responses to them.

- The event provided an opportunity for employees to socialize and receive recognition for their hard work across departments. Interdepartmental interaction was encouraged, and participation from both the Clerk's Office and County employees fostered the development of new working relationships.

Lunch and Learns

- Launched in Fall 2024, the Lunch and Learns initiative is led by the Business Data Quality Department. The project was developed to educate court personnel on relevant topics while fostering collaboration and face-to-face interaction. The department began by surveying staff to identify areas of interest, which was used to build a dynamic list of topics and a tentative yearlong schedule. Each month, the department selects a topic, coordinates with a subject matter expert, and works with Court Administration to secure a venue. The department then designs and distributes promotional materials through email, the court's intranet, and physical postings. Sessions are interactive, often supported by PowerPoint presentations, and attended by judges, judicial assistants, law clerks, and court staff.

Despite challenges such as scheduling conflicts, telework considerations, and varying availability, the department has adapted by offering sessions on different days and exploring alternative formats like "Coffee Talks" and "Sweet Treats" to accommodate more participants. High-demand topics are also revisited regularly. The overarching goal is not only to provide professional development but also to rebuild interpersonal connections that have diminished with the rise of digital communication tools. This initiative directly supports the Maryland Judiciary's strategic initiative of workforce development and employee support by promoting continuous learning, collaboration, and a stronger sense of community within the court system.

Courthouse Wellness

- Employee support is a priority focus for Court leadership. Exploring ways to support personnel who regularly navigate stressful and, at times, emotional situations inside and outside the courtrooms. Courthouse meditation and yoga sessions are offered to courthouse personnel, as well as a courthouse book club and walking club. These resources expand upon those available through the Maryland Judiciary and the County government.
 - Court personnel are also partnering with the AOC on offering similar wellness content statewide. Beginning in 2025, the Court's online 10-minute meditation sessions expanded to include AOC management and personnel. Discussions are ongoing with AOC Professional

Development personnel on meditation, yoga, compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma content to be provided locally and statewide. SharePoint sites have also been created with content to support the needs of employees.

- Additionally, the Law Library enhances the walking club experience by sharing historical insights about various landmarks around the City of Rockville during a one-mile loop. The walking club welcomes all employees, including those from the Register of Wills and the State's Attorney's Office.

Court Administration & Clerk of the Court Department Meetings

- Court Administration and the Clerk's Office hold regular meetings to discuss issues affecting the Court. Quarterly meetings with Department leaders facilitate information exchange and promote professional development and growth.
 - All employees have access to Professional Development courses, and many are given the opportunity to attend relevant conferences. Court leaders are committed to the ongoing development of the workforce.

Operations Staffing (Clerk's Office)

- The Clerk of the Court's Office continues to offer telework to eligible staff. The number of staff taking advantage of teleworking has increased in 2025, and we continue to reap the benefits of increased productivity and higher morale.
- **Community Engagement:** During FY25, the Hon. Karen Bushell, Clerk of the Court, served as a member of the following Committees, Subcommittees, Commissions, and Workgroups:
 - Accessibility & Accommodations Subcommittee
 - Administrative Office of the Courts FAMLI Workgroup
 - Administrative Office of the Courts HR Policy Review Workgroup
 - Community Liaisons Workgroup
 - Community Outreach Subcommittee
 - Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission
 - Diversity & Inclusion Workgroup for Court Professionals
 - Diversity and Inclusion Education Subcommittee
 - Facility Security Review Workgroup
 - Judicial Council's Special Projects, Security Task Force
 - Juvenile Justice Trends Subcommittee
 - MDEC Advisory Subcommittee
 - Montgomery County Circuit Court Security Committee
 - Statewide Summit on Behavioral Health

- **Equal Justice Initiatives:** As part of the Court’s ongoing commitment to equity, accessibility, and community engagement, the Clerk of the Court continued to serve on the Community Outreach Subcommittee of the Maryland Judiciary’s Equal Justice Committee. This subcommittee plays a vital role in organizing community forums across the state to increase public understanding of the courts and their services, to listen to community concerns, and to identify ways to improve access to justice.
- The Clerk of the Court was instrumental in organizing the Montgomery County Equal Justice Forum, which was held on at Montgomery College’s Germantown Campus on September 12, 2024 (see more details under Section VII.)
- **Human Resources Collaboration and Policy Updates:** On September 11, 2024, representatives from the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) Human Resources Department visited the Court to provide an in-depth policy briefing for the Clerk’s Office management team. The session offered a valuable opportunity for managers to engage directly with AOC HR leadership and gain updates on key personnel policies. Topics covered included:
 - Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
 - Progressive Discipline procedures
 - CONNECT, the Judiciary’s employee management platform
 - Common employee relations questions and issues

This visit ensured that Clerk’s Office managers remain well-informed and aligned with statewide HR policies, supporting consistent, effective, and compliant personnel management. The open dialogue also strengthened collaboration between local court leadership and the AOC, reenforcing a shared commitment to foster a positive, fair, and equitable workplace environment.

- **Clerk of Court Employee Appreciation Luncheon:** The Clerk’s Office held its annual Employee Appreciation Luncheon on April 23, 2025, to recognize and thank staff for their dedication and service throughout the year. This year, the Office partnered with a new vendor offering a wide variety of menu selections to accommodate diverse dietary needs and preferences. Feedback from employees was overwhelmingly positive, with many noting the excellent food quality and appreciated the variety. Beyond the meal, the luncheon served as an opportunity to build camaraderie, boost morale, and reinforce the Court’s commitment to fostering and cultivating a supportive and appreciative workplace culture.

Section VI. Facilities

Courthouse Security

- The Montgomery County Sheriff's Office became accredited in 1995 by the Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies after meeting numerous stringent standards established for law enforcement agencies nationally. The Sheriff's Office continues to maintain this accreditation through rigorous on-site evaluations. The Sheriff's Courthouse Security Team works closely with the Administrative Judge, the Clerk of the Court and Court Administration to coordinate security within the courthouse. The team also ensures the safety of children and staff located at Kids Spot Child Care, prisoners in custody during transports, and all individuals present in the courtroom when an emergency evacuation occurs.
 - The Sheriff's Office currently has four explosive-detecting trained K-9 teams, which are also firearms detection trained. The Sheriff's Office also has one Controlled Dangerous Substance (CDS) detection K-9 team that assists the Courthouse Security Team. In addition, the Office has two comfort dogs to assist court patrons, including individuals attending the Mental Health Court, victims such as child, and adult victims in domestic violence cases seeking assistance at the Family Justice Center.
 - Screening stations are present at all three public entrances with private security and Sheriff's Office Courthouse Security Deputies. Screening of court patrons is accomplished by magnetometers, x-ray machines, and handheld wands.
 - The Courthouse Security Committee was established with the objective of providing input and guidance on issues involving the security of the courthouse building and surrounding areas. The Committee, comprised of major Circuit Court stakeholders, was tasked to review current screening practices, building access policies, and other courthouse-security related policies and programs for the court. The Committee meets quarterly to actively address courthouse security concerns and remain abreast of best practices.
- During FY25, the following security upgrades were implemented by the Sheriff's Office:
 - Installed duress alarms in four South Tower Lobby Level offices for House of Ruth Legal Self Help to support emergency protocols and staff safety.
 - Connected delayed egress push bars at entrances to secure hallways on Second through Fifth Floors in the South Tower to duress alarm system to alert Sheriff's deputies of unauthorized access to secure Judges and Magistrates chamber hallways.
 - Installed card access and a security camera in the Trust Office on the North Tower Second Floor.

- Daily utilization of static marked cruisers for increased security visibility at the Maryland Avenue and Monroe Street Courthouse entrances.
- The Clerk of the Court is a member of the Judiciary Security Workgroup of the newly created Judiciary Security Task Force (JSTF) and the Montgomery County Circuit Courthouse Security Subcommittee.
 - As noted in last year's report, staff in the Central Files Office, Finance Office, and Land Records Office raised serious safety concerns that need to be addressed. In FY25, the Clerk's Office implemented a series of significant security upgrades to promote a safer, more secure environment for both staff and the public in these departments. Key improvements included:
 - **Clerk of Court's Administrative Office:**
 - Installation of frosted windows to enhance privacy
 - Addition of a Request to Exit (REX) button to improve access control
 - **Central Files Office (Lobby Level):**
 - Installation of an additional duress button and a security camera to enhance emergency preparedness and monitoring
 - **Land Records Office (Second Floor):**
 - Installation of new security cameras and duress buttons
 - Installation of card-access only to one door for better control of internal movement
 - **Indexing Office (Second Floor):**
 - Installation of card-access entry
 - Implementation of a duress button at the Supervisor's desk for quick emergency response
 - **Finance Office (Second Floor, North Tower):**
 - Installation of additional duress buttons to support emergency protocols and staff safety

These upgrades reflect the Clerk's Office's ongoing commitment to workplace security and employee well-being. By enhancing both physical infrastructure and emergency alert systems, the Office continues to align with Judiciary-wide efforts to maintain a responsive and secure courthouse environment.

Section VII. Justice Partner Initiatives & Community Outreach

Visit from Argentinian Judicial Officers

- On May 21, 2025, the Court hosted a delegation of 17 judges from Argentina, who were in the United States to attend a seminar on Human Rights and Environmental Law at the American University Washington College of Law. The visit began at 9:00 a.m. with a meet-and-greet session featuring Circuit Court Judge Rachel J. McGuckian and District Court Judge Victor Del Pino.

During their time at the Court, the Argentinian judges observed the closing arguments of a criminal jury trial and met with John McCarthy, the head of the State's Attorney's Office. They also engaged in discussion with several appellate judges and joined members of the bench for lunch before departing. The delegation was accompanied by Victoria Abalo, Program Coordinator for the International and Comparative Legal Studies at the American University Washington College of Law, who also served as a Spanish interpreter.



- On September 30, 2025, Circuit Court Judge Carlos Acosta hosted 14 judges from different provinces in Argentina. The day-long visit allowed the visiting judges to view all aspects of court operations. The group was particularly interested in the Court's Differentiated Case Management Plans, requesting copies of the Court's plans for criminal, civil, family, and juvenile cases.

Equal Justice Community Outreach Subcommittee

- The Clerk of the Court, who is a member of the Equal Justice Community Outreach Subcommittee, coordinated with the Maryland Judiciary's Equal Justice Committee (EJC) and its Community Outreach Subcommittee to develop community forums across the state to increase public understanding of the courts and their services in addition to learn the community's needs and identify the ways in which the courts can provide better services.
 - On September 12, 2024, the Montgomery County Equal Justice Forum was held at Montgomery College's Germantown Campus. The Clerk of the Court was instrumental in organizing the forum, titled *"Navigating Family Matters in the Court: Custody, Child Support, Divorce, and Domestic Violence."* The forum brought together judicial leaders and legal experts to provide critical information on navigating the family court system.

The event was moderated by Judge Kathleen Dumais, with a distinguished panel including Judge Jennifer Fairfax, Judge Mary Beth Ayers, Judge Louis Leibowitz, Judge J. Bradford McCullough, Shelley Barber, Esq., Family Law Self-Help Center, and Deena Hausner, Esq., Director, Domestic Violence Legal Clinic, House of Ruth.

This collaborative event was made possible through partnerships with key community organizations, including the Family Justice Center, House of Ruth, Maryland Legal Aid, Montgomery County Government, and Upcounty Hub. These efforts underscore the Court's continued dedication and commitment to fostering transparency, enhancing legal literacy, and ensuring that all members of the community feel seen, heard, and supported in their interactions with the judicial system.

Section VIII. Concerns/Issues

Legislative Concerns and Recommendations

- It is hoped the Legislature increases the number of Circuit Court judges for Montgomery County. The County has not had any additional judges added since 2016. *2016 Maryland Laws Ch. 91 (H.B. 74)*. Montgomery County is the most populous county in the state, accounting for nearly 17% of the state's 6.2 million population. The United States Census Bureau estimates 1.1 million individuals reside in the County and that its population increased by 8.3% between 2010 and 2022. A fundamental value embraced by Maryland courts is equal access to justice. One way to measure this concept is by examining the number of residents served by a single circuit court judge. Currently, Montgomery County Circuit Court has 43,855 residents per circuit court judge. Compared to the statewide average (35,227), judges in Montgomery County Circuit Court serve over 8,500 more residents per judge.
- In 2024, the Legislature passed the Assisted Outpatient Treatment Act. *2024 Maryland Laws Ch. 703 (H.B. 576)*. The Act requires each Maryland county to establish an assisted outpatient treatment program by July 1, 2026. The understandable goal of the Act is to provide court-ordered care and treatment to individuals with serious mental illness who have demonstrated difficult engaging in treatment. However, there are concerns: 1) the Act mandates circuit court proceedings with attorneys from the Office of Public Defender providing representation to the Respondent; 2) mental health professionals must appear in-person; and 3) the Act provides the Court may not use its contempt powers to enforce its orders. A Judiciary Advisory Panel has been formed to provide support and guidance on the implementation of AOT and Administrative Judge James Bonifant was asked to be a member. More study, research, and preparation will be needed with regard to the Act's implementation.

Using Technology Effectively and Responsibly

- Proposed strategic initiatives of the Maryland Judiciary's strategic plan include a focus on using technology effectively and responsibly. Of particular interest for the Court is an initiative to improve access to court information and its quality. The Court believes its employees are part of the Maryland Judiciary workforce despite the reality of different funding structures (i.e., grant, county, and state). The Court also believes the need for expanded access to its case data to support local case management practices and to identify issues and solutions, as well as to support statewide initiatives, even though the data is now part of the statewide case management system.

- For instance, local technical and research personnel have skills to query and analyze data to meet the data inquiries of court personnel. The Court welcomes opportunities to partner with state judiciary employees to develop applications and solutions built locally, which in turn are leveraged for statewide purposes, if appropriate.
- Local courts have a responsibility to support and provide feedback on state initiatives related to a variety of topics from code reviews to business processes. A challenge the local court faces in performing these tasks is that staff are limited in their access levels to the court's data. The Court looks forward to accessing the data via the Maryland Judiciary's data warehouse. However, minimal conversations regarding project plans and access levels have occurred primarily due the initial planning phase of the project, which is focused on AOC personnel and the public-facing dashboards. The Court requests that dialogue continue and increase regarding court data access levels to technical and researcher personnel at the local court. We believe that through shared data access, coordination, and collaboration, we can be a more effective judiciary in our efforts to demonstrate our shared values of accountability and transparency.

Section IX. Conclusion

Montgomery County Circuit Court takes great pride in its position as a member and a partner of the Maryland Judiciary. This State of the Court Report provides a clear picture of the Court's accomplishments over the past year, the challenges ahead, and the resources needed to reach our goals. The Court remains committed to implementing innovative solutions and working collaboratively with our justice partners to serve the residents of Montgomery County, MD.

Appendices

Appendix A. Original Filings, Terminations, and Clearance Rates

During Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25, July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025), Montgomery County Circuit Court processed close to 27,600 filings and over 26,800 terminations (original and reopened combined), 1,600 more filings and 1,200 terminations than FY24 (figures not shown). Table 1 provides original filings, terminations, and clearance rates over the past three fiscal years and FY19.² The Court's overall original filings (17,983 cases) and terminations (17,571) in FY25 both exceeding the FY19 level (17,108 filings and 16,801 terminations in FY19). In civil and family cases, the FY25 original filings exceeded their FY19 level. In civil and family cases, the FY25 original terminations were greater than FY19. Since the overall terminations were slightly lower than filings in FY25, the clearance rate³ was 98%. FY25 clearance rates were at or over 100% in criminal, family and TPR cases.

Table 1. Original Filings, Terminations and Clearance Rates, FY2019, FY2023-FY2025*

Case Category	Filings					Terminations				
	FY19	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY19-25 Change	FY19	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY19-25 Change
Civil	5,932	5,804	6,133	7,083	19.4%	5,682	5,616	5,757	6,624	16.6%
Criminal	1,884	1,434	1,570	1,397	-25.8%	1,930	1,424	1,532	1,512	-21.7%
Family	8,170	8,465	8,823	8,784	7.5%	8,029	8,089	8,969	8,757	9.1%
Delinquency	893	458	643	598	-33.2%	927	441	578	554	-40.0%
CINA	204	103	106	97	-52.5%	183	100	112	93	-49.2%
TPR	25	34	33	24	-4.0%	50	46	38	31	-38.0%
Overall	17,108	16,298	17,308	17,983	5.1%	16,801	15,716	16,986	17,571	4.6%

Clearance Rate					
	FY19	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY19-25 %Difference
Civil	96%	97%	94%	94%	-2.3%
Criminal	102%	99%	98%	108%	5.8%
Family	98%	96%	102%	100%	1.4%
Delinquency	104%	96%	90%	93%	-10.9
CINA	90%	97%	106%	96%	6.2%
TPR	200%	135%	115%	129%	-70.8%
Overall	98%	96%	98%	98%	-0.5%

* Civil liens and restitution judgments are excluded. Delinquency includes juvenile delinquency and other non-child welfare juvenile cases (such as miscellaneous petitions and peace orders).

Source: Odyssey Case Statistics ECR (for all fiscal years) as of August 27, 2025.

² Terminations align with the status of a case changing from open to close rather than a case stop condition or case eligibility criteria aligned with the Maryland Judiciary's Case Time Standards.

³ The Clearance Rate is a case processing efficiency measure calculated by dividing terminations by filings for a particular reporting period.

Original Pending Caseload

Table 2 provides case type-specific original pending caseload and the pending caseload/filing ratio for FY19 and FY23-25. Compared to FY19, the FY25 original pending caseload is smaller in CINA cases, by 22%, whereas in the other five case types (civil, criminal, family, delinquency and TPR cases), the pending caseload is higher than FY19. In CINA cases, the reduced pending caseload appears to have been caused by the reduced filings, which in turn reduce the number of pending cases as older cases are terminated. In contrast, in criminal cases, reduced filings did not result in the lowered pending caseload largely because of the cascading impact of the backlog created during the COVID emergency operations in FY21 and FY22. The criminal pending caseload increased by 48% from 707 in the third quarter of FY20 to 1,045 in the second quarter of FY22. However, the criminal pending caseload declined significantly in FY25, underscoring the efforts undertaken by the Court to monitor and manage the caseload.

Table 2. Original Pending Cases, FY2019 (pre COVID19) FY2023 – FY2025

Case Type	Original Pending					Pending Caseload/Filings Ratio				
	FY19	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY19-25 Change	FY19	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY19-25 Change [±]
Civil	2,933	3,179	3,621	4,071	38.8%	0.49	0.55	0.59	0.57	16.2%
Criminal	696	989	1,039	912	31.0%	0.37	0.69	0.66	0.65	76.7%
Family	3,557	4,418	4,177	3,955	11.2%	0.44	0.52	0.47	0.45	3.4%
Delinquency	180	125	168	187	3.9%	0.2	0.27	0.26	0.31	55.5%
CINA	373	290	287	292	-21.7%	1.83	2.82	2.71	3.01	64.6%
TPR	45	61	57	49	8.9%	1.8	1.79	1.73	2.04	13.4%
Total	7,784	9,062	9,349	9,466	21.6%	0.45	0.56	0.54	0.53	15.7%

* The pending caseload was measured as of the last day (June 30th) of a given fiscal year and includes open-active and open-inactive cases. Open-inactive cases only exist in cases converted from the Court's legacy case management system as this case status is no longer available in Odyssey. Delinquency includes juvenile delinquency and other non-child welfare juvenile cases (such as miscellaneous petitions and peace orders). The pending caseload of CINA and TPR cases includes post-disposition cases as cases do not close until court jurisdiction is terminated. Accordingly, their pending caseload/filing ratio is substantially higher than that of other case types.

Sources: HP Open Case Report (FY19 Pending), Odyssey Open Report (FY22-24 Pending, as of August 19, 2024), Odyssey Case Statistics ECR (FY19-24 filings, as of September 5, 2024; FY25 Pending Data Feed (PendingDataHist) as of August 27, 2025).

± The percentage change figure in the table accounts for additional decimal spaces not shown, which yields different percentage values than one would get if they calculated percentage change with the figures for FY19 and FY25 shown in the table. With small numbers, a little change in the ratio results in a rather noticeable percentage change.

The right half of the table presents the size of the pending caseload in relation to *the size of original filings*.⁴ The smaller the ratio, the more efficient the court's case processing since a smaller caseload is preferable with a given filing level. In all case types, the pending/filing ratio in FY25 is still larger than that of FY19. However, in civil, criminal, and family case types, the ratio declined between FY24 and FY25, suggesting the Court's case processing efficiency has been gradually returning to the pre-COVID level in these case types.

⁴ Pending caseload is largely a function of two factors—filings and terminations; while the former increases the pending caseload, the latter reduces it. A reduced pending caseload may result from declined filings, increased dispositions, or a combination of the two. While the pending caseload per filing ratio shows the relative size of the former over the latter, it also shows the impact of the court's efforts to dispose cases. The pending caseload/filing ratio less than 1 indicates that the pending caseload is smaller than the size of filings, suggesting the court's ability to manage the processing of the current caseload whereas the ratio greater than 1 indicates that the pending caseload is higher than the filings, suggesting challenges with efficiently processing the caseload volume. Courts should also pay attention to a change in the ratio since an increase suggests a decrease in case processing efficiency resulting in an increase in pending caseload.

Appendix B. Court Administration Operational Statistics, FY20-FY25

Trust Office

Task	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Number of Fiduciary Reports Audited	858	1,097	924	1,067	958	1,007
Number of Show Cause Hearings Issued	229*	332*	NA	115	116	114
Number of Reports Filed Timely and Processed						
Inventory and Information Reports	233	244	221	232	231	263
Annual Reports	990	1,352	1,210	1,318	1,344	1,458
Annual Fiduciary Reports	900	1,097	934	1,131	1,023	1,115
Number of Guardianship of Person Reports Reviewed and Processed	990	1,352	1,210	1,230	1,344	1,458
Number of New Cases Processed	388	425	331	344	365	416
Number of Guardianship of Person and Property Cases Terminated	280	367	422	248	329	329
Number of Active Cases at the End of fiscal Year	2,560	2,563	NA	NA	2,185	2,316

* Numbers include those issued for show cause for terminations.

Quality Control/Research & Performance

Number of Case Audits Performed by Case Type, FY20 – FY25

	FY20	FY21	FY22*	FY23	FY24	FY25
Civil	4,680	3,926	1,316	961	724	309
Criminal	1,449	1,365	1,003	753	417	526
Family	6,156	6,542	2,929	740	1,239	963
Juvenile	1,235	1,130	260	250	169	135
Total	13,520	12,963	5,508	2,454	2,380	1,933

* Based on the number of event code (CAAUD: 'Case Audited') entered in Odyssey during the reporting period. The Juvenile audit figures for FY23-FY25 are data quality checks performed on cases for the Maryland Judiciary's Caseflow Assessment. Family The volume of FY22 audits was affected by the Court's transition to MDEC as Business Data Quality staff were heavily involved in development and conversion activities, as well as post-GO-Live implementation/follow-up efforts. The audit counts for FY22 are more reflective of the cases reviewed as part of the FY22 Case Processing Performance Analysis.

Sources: Cases with Selected Event ECR (as of August 27, 2025), Maryland Judiciary's Caseflow Assessment Application.

Family Division Services

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Individuals (Visits) Served by Family Law Self-Help Center	9,822	7,080	8,172	9,262	9,845	12,219	12,564
Cases Ordered to Participate in Facilitation	525	399	73	278	436	554	585
Custody/Access Mediation							
Cases Set	239	180	280	305	528	534	565
Cases Held	148	89	174	199	268	337	306
Cases Fully or Partially Settled	99	58	100	129	151	150	175
Cases Ordered for Custody/Visitation Evaluations	334	118	369	276	319	276	274
Cases Ordered for Adoption Investigations and/or Reviews	106	24	73	48	76	53	34
Families Ordered to Participate in Supervised Visitation	65	53	48	77	95	92	69
Co-Parenting Classes							
Persons Ordered to Attend	2,197	1,497	1,867	796	1,228	1164	1,174
Persons Completed the Class	1,571	1,003	749	444	577	657	675
Families Participated in Child Welfare Mediation	107	153	136	132	77	80	84

Source: Montgomery County Circuit Court, Family Division Services.