



# Annual Report 2018

---

## Racine County Clerk of Circuit Court

*[This annual report is a means of highlighting and communicating the accomplishments and needs of the Clerk of Court's Office in an open and transparent manner. This report covers statistical, fiscal, personnel information, the achievements during the past year, and challenges in the new year.]*

## Contents

Table of Figures.....	1
Introduction .....	2
Court Administration.....	2
Custodian of the Record.....	2
Civil Actions .....	2
<i>Civil &amp; Small Claims</i> .....	3
<i>Family</i> .....	4
<i>Probate</i> .....	6
Criminal & Juvenile Actions .....	7
<i>Felony</i> .....	7
<i>Misdemeanor &amp; Traffic</i> .....	8
<i>Juvenile</i> .....	10
County Comparison .....	12
Jury Management.....	14
Financial Management.....	14
Staffing.....	15
Goals and Challenges for 2019.....	16
Sources Cited.....	19

## Table of Figures

Figure 1 Civil and Small Claims case filings.....	4
Figure 2 Family and Paternity case filings.....	5
Figure 3 Probate case filings.....	7
Figure 4 Felony case filings.....	8
Figure 5 Misdemeanor & Traffic case filings .....	9
Figure 6 Traffic Ordinance Violation case filings .....	10
Figure 7 Juvenile case filings .....	11
Figure 8 District 2 Population & Circuit Court case filings .....	12
Figure 9 County Filings Comparison .....	14
Figure 10 Tenure by Employee (Contract vs County) .....	16

## **Introduction**

This annual report is a means of highlighting and communicating the accomplishments and needs of the Clerk of Court's Office in an open and transparent manner. This report covers statistical, fiscal, personnel information, the achievements during the past year, and challenges in the new year.

## **Court Administration**

Racine County is the 51<sup>st</sup> Circuit Court of Wisconsin. We are the 4<sup>th</sup> largest circuit court in the state in terms of number of judges. We are part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial Administrative District, along with Kenosha and Walworth Counties. As part of the district, we share judicial resources including a Chief Judge and a District Court Administrator. The current Chief Judge is Kenosha Circuit Court Judge Jason Rossell. The Deputy Chief Judge is Racine County Circuit Court Judge Timothy Boyle.

Racine County has ten (10) judges, a Judicial Court Commissioner, a Family Court Commissioner, a Deputy Court Commissioner, three (3) part-time, contracted Deputy Family Court Commissioners, a part-time, contracted Register in Probate, a staff of twenty-eight (28) full-time, seventeen (17) contracted, and fifteen (15) to twenty-five (25) part-time employees. The county pays the salaries of the staff, including the Register in Probate, the family and the judicial court commissioners. The state pays for the salaries of the judges and their court reporters.

The Clerk of Circuit Court is a public, constitutional officer elected for a four-year term in a countywide race. This office is responsible for a variety of record keeping functions of the courts as set forth in §59.40, Wis. Stats. Besides being responsible for court administration, the Clerk is the custodian of the record and is also responsible for jury management and court finances.

## **Custodian of the Record**

Record keeping for the courts is governed by state statute and Wisconsin Supreme Court rule. These require that the Clerk maintain records of all documents filed with the courts, keep a record of court proceedings and collect various fees, fines and forfeitures ordered by the court or specified by statute. The Clerk of Circuit Court also must establish and promote procedures for reasonable access to court records as well as maintain the confidentiality of records as set forth by statute and court order. We divide our records as follows:

## **Civil Actions**

Civil Court routinely handles noncriminal cases usually involving private property rights. For example, lawsuits involving breach of contract, probate, divorce, negligence, copyright violations, and injunctions are just a few of the many hundreds of varieties of civil actions. The divisions in the Racine County Civil Courts are as follows:

## *Civil & Small Claims*

### *Large Claim Civil*

- I. **Large Claim Civil** cases commonly involve claims for money or property worth over \$10,000. If the claim involves money or property worth \$10,000 or less, it must be filed as a small claims (SC) case. Other types of civil suits are restraining orders/injunctions, declaratory judgments, appeals from government agency or municipal court decisions, foreclosures, garnishments, minor court settlements, name changes, etc.

**Civil (CV) Filings:** 1,629 Civil cases were filed in 2018. This represents an eleven percent (11%) increase from 2017 and a fifty-one percent (-51%) decrease compared to 2008.

- a. Civil Injunctions (CV):
  - i. Domestic Abuse: 172 Petitions for Domestic Abuse Injunctions were filed.
  - ii. Harassment: 274 Petitioner for Harassment Injunctions were filed.

The majority of civil cases are handled by two (2) full time judges. Civil scheduling conferences are held by the Judicial Court Commissioner (JCC). Restraining Orders/Injunctions are heard by the Court Commissioners, specifically, Harassment Injunctions are heard by the JCC and Domestic Abuse Injunctions are heard by the Family Court Commissioner (FCC) or a Deputy Family Court Commissioner (DFCC). Civil Child Abuse and Vulnerable Adult Restraining Orders/Injunctions are held by the Probate Court Judge.

### *Small Claims Civil*

- II. **Small Claims** court is a special type of civil court where disputes may be resolved more quickly and inexpensively than in other court proceedings. Small claims court is limited to claims of \$10,000 or less. However, third-party claims of \$5,000 or less. The three most common types of small claims cases are claims for money, evictions regardless of the amount claimed, and replevin (return of personal property) actions.

**Small Claims (SC) Filings:** 5,763 Small Claims cases were filed in 2018. This represents a ten percent (10%) increase from 2017. We have seen an increase in small claims cases since an all time low in the number of filings in 2015, however the number of small claims filings still remain lower than average.

- a. Evictions & Replevin (SC):
  - i. Eviction Actions: 1,341 were filed in 2018.
  - ii. Replevin Actions: 169 were filed in 2018.

All eviction and replevin actions are heard by the two (2) civil courts judges per Wisconsin Statute and Local Court Rule. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the Small Claims case load is handled from beginning to the end by the Clerk of Courts' staff. There are one full-time and one part-time clerk handling these cases from beginning to end.

- b. Contested/Uncontested Small Claims (SC):
  - i. Contested Cases: 233 cases were contested in 2018.
  - ii. Default Judgment: 3,820 cases were granted judgment in default.

Small claims cases are only heard by a judicial officer if the matter is contested and goes to trial. Contested small claims trials are heard by the Judicial Court Commissioner and the two (2) civil courts.

Mandatory eFiling for Civil and Small Claims cases began December 2016. With its implementation for attorneys and high-volume filing agents, we have seen an average of roughly eighty-one percent (80.9%) of all Small Claims cases and sixty-nine percent (68.8%) all of Civil cases filed electronically.

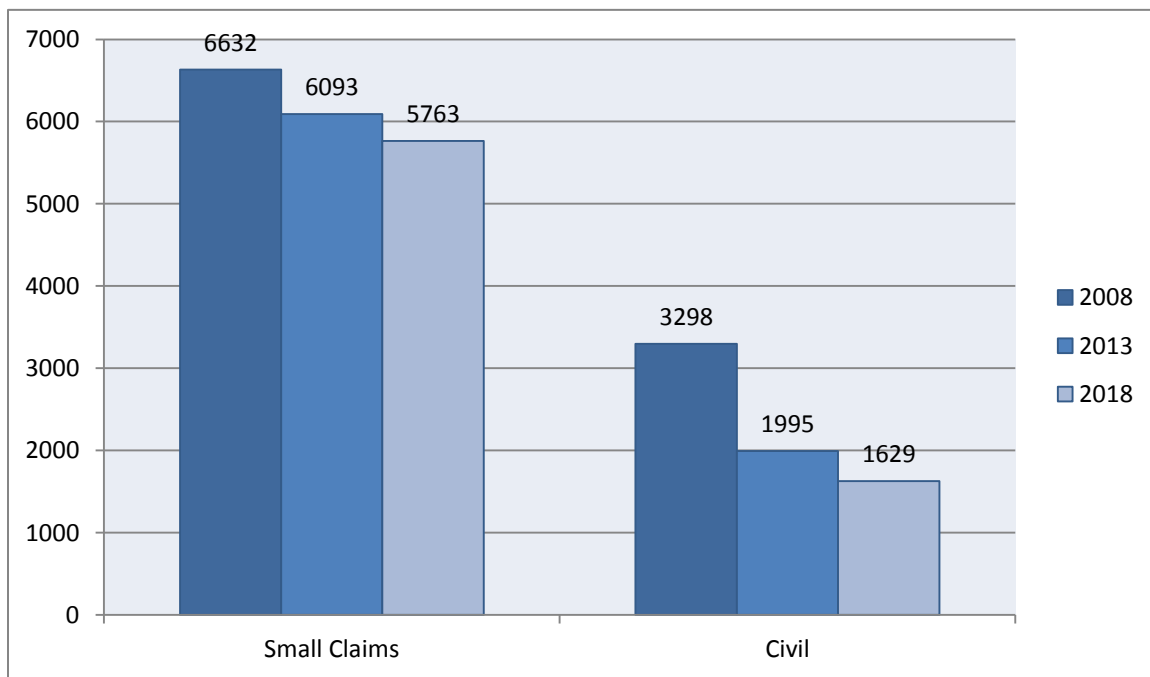


Figure 1 Civil and Small Claims case filings

**Family**

- III. Family court handles cases involving domestic issues including divorce, paternity, child-custody, etc. Family cases (FA) are filed for purpose of divorce or separation, maintenance, or child-custody issues. A paternity case (PA) is filed when the parents of a child were never married. The purpose of

these confidential cases are to establish parental rights over a child and to set custody, placement, and child support orders.

**Paternity (PA) Filings:** In 2018, 609 new Paternity cases were filed; this represents a three percent (-3%) decrease from 2017 and an eighteen (18) year low in paternity filings.

**Family (FA) Filings:** 1,338 Family cases were filed. This is a fifteen percent (-15%) decrease from 2017 and a twenty (20) year low in family court filings.

These cases are handled by one (1) full time and thirty percent (30%) of another's judge's time. Cases which are not contested are handled by the Family Court Commissioner and Deputy Family Court Commissioners. Most of the court's time is spent in handling post-judgment cases. Post-judgment cases go on until the child(ren) reach the age of eighteen (18). Custody cases are particularly difficult and take a considerable amount of the court's time. The county spends about seventy percent (70%) of its budgeted amount for Guardian Ad Litem (GALs) on custody matters.

Mandatory eFiling for Family and Paternity cases began December 2016. With it's implementation for attorneys, we have seen an average of just under seventy percent (67.2%) of all Family cases and ninety-nine percent (99.8%) of all Paternity cases filed electronically. The Racine County Child Support Agency continued to be the our largest e-Filer.

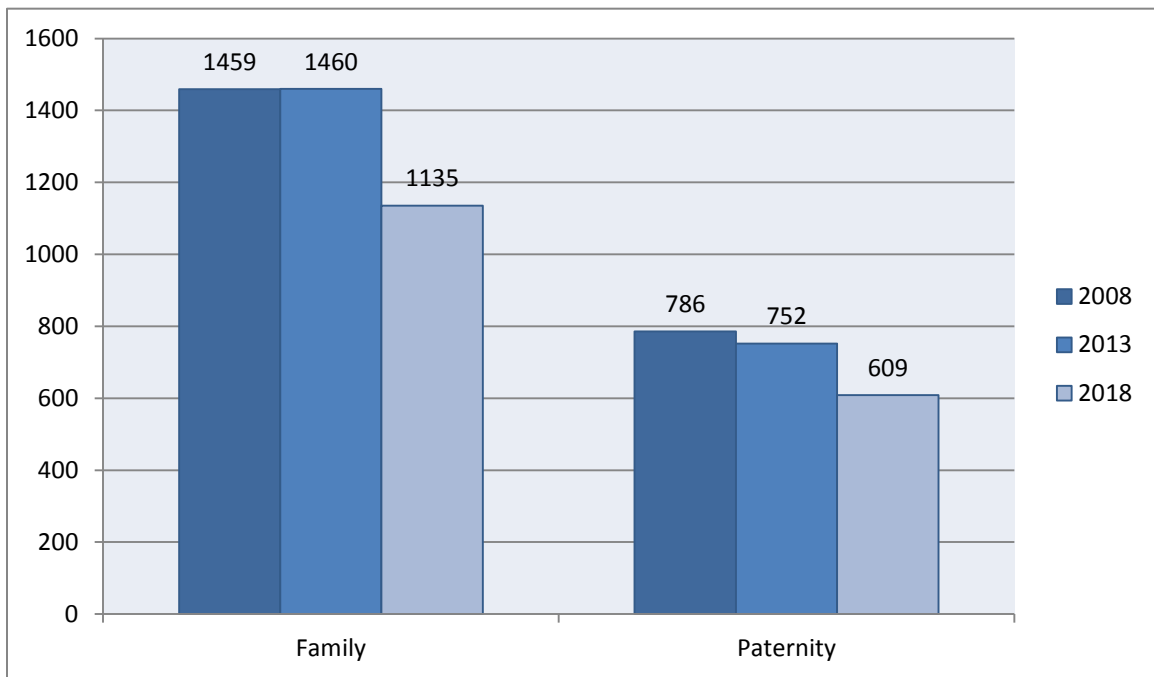


Figure 2 Family and Paternity case filings

## *Probate*

- IV. Probate court is a specialized court that deals with the property and debts of a person who has died. The basic role of the probate court is to assure that the deceased person's creditors are paid, and that any remaining assets are distributed to the proper beneficiaries.

**Guardianship (GN) Filings:** 261 cases were filed. This is a nine percent (9%) increase over 2017, bringing the total filings only slightly above the five (5) year average.

**Juvenile Mental (JM) Filings:** 24 cases were filed representing a eighty-five percent (85%) increase from the twenty (20) year low in filings seen in 2017.

**Mental Commitments (ME) Filings:** 154 Mental Commitments were filed. This is an five percent (-5%) decrease from 2017 and a twenty (20) year low in filings.

**Probate (PR) Filings:** 360 matters were filed representing a twenty-two (-22%) percent decrease from 2017.

One judge handles these matters. This judge spends roughly seventy percent (70%) of their time on probate matters and the remainder of their time on family matters.

Probate cases are mostly administrative, and only involve the judge when a matter is contested. Our part-time Register in Probate also acts as a Probate Commissioner to handle probate matters when necessary. A GAL, a psychiatrist, and psychologist are needed on the other case types. We do have a policy in effect whereby we collect reimbursement for the GAL and doctor's costs. An annual review by the GAL on the status of a person protectively placed is required by §55, Wis. Stats. Subsequent summary hearings, called a WATTS reviews, are heard by the Judicial Court Commissioner.

Voluntary eFiling for some probate matters was implemented on July 1, 2017. An average of roughly seventy percent (69.6%) of probate cases per month have been filed electronically.

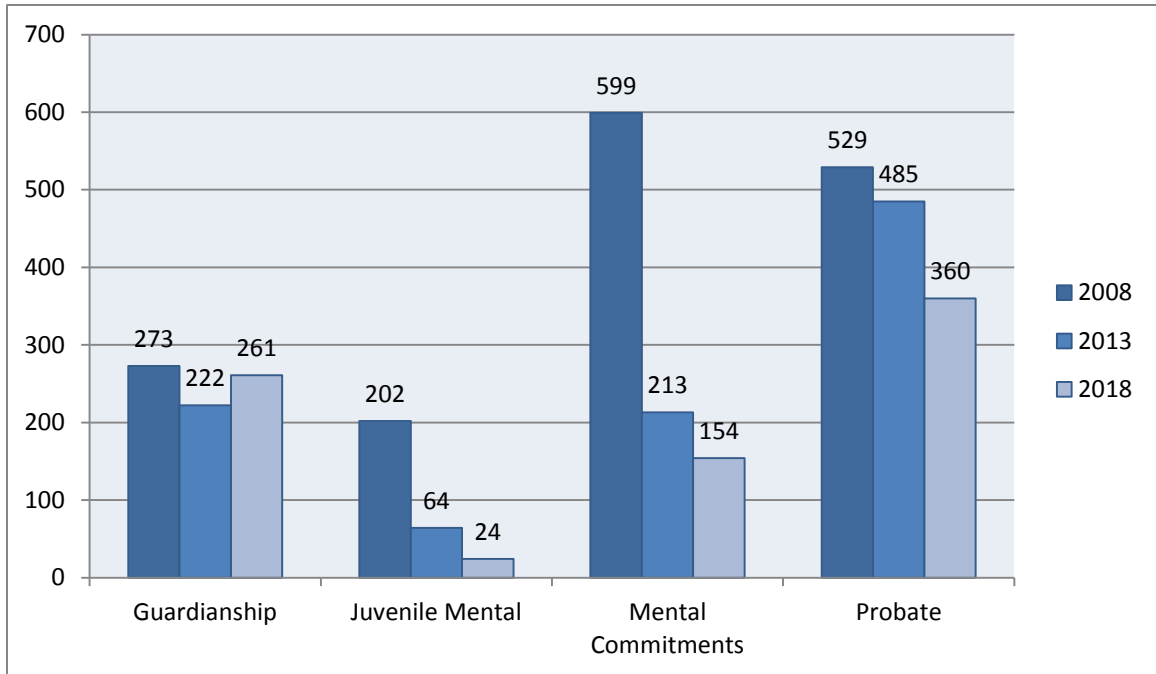


Figure 3 Probate case filings

### Criminal & Juvenile Actions

Criminal Court is concerned with actions that are dangerous or harmful to society as a whole. Because of this, prosecution is pursued not by an individual but rather by the state represented by the District Attorney’s Office. Criminal Court, in general, handles violations of state law, including both Felony and Misdemeanor charges. Traffic Court handles criminal traffic charges, County Ordinance violations, State Patrol citations, and Department of Nature Resource citations.

Juvenile Court has special jurisdiction over underage defendants who violate state law or county ordinance or any child who is abused, neglected or dependent. Usually, this court has jurisdiction of those under the age of 18.

#### Felony:

- I. Felony cases are crimes sufficiently serious enough to be punishable a term of incarceration in prison. These can include such crimes as homicide, sexual assault, arson, robbery or burglary.

**Felony (CF):** 1,805 felonies were filed in this division. This represents a four percent (4%) increase from 2017. This small increase brings the felony filings in line with the five (5) year average of filings. The number of 2018 filings represents a forty-seven percent (47.1%) increase over 1998.



Three (3) full-time judges handle the felony cases. Pretrial matters, including initial appearances and preliminary hearings, for all felony case are heard by the Judicial Court Commissioner.

Mandatory eFiling for Criminal Court began March 2017. All criminal court cases are initiated electronically from an interface with the District Attorney’s Office. Additionally, upon disposition documents in Felony matters are transmitted electronically via interface to the Department of Corrections.

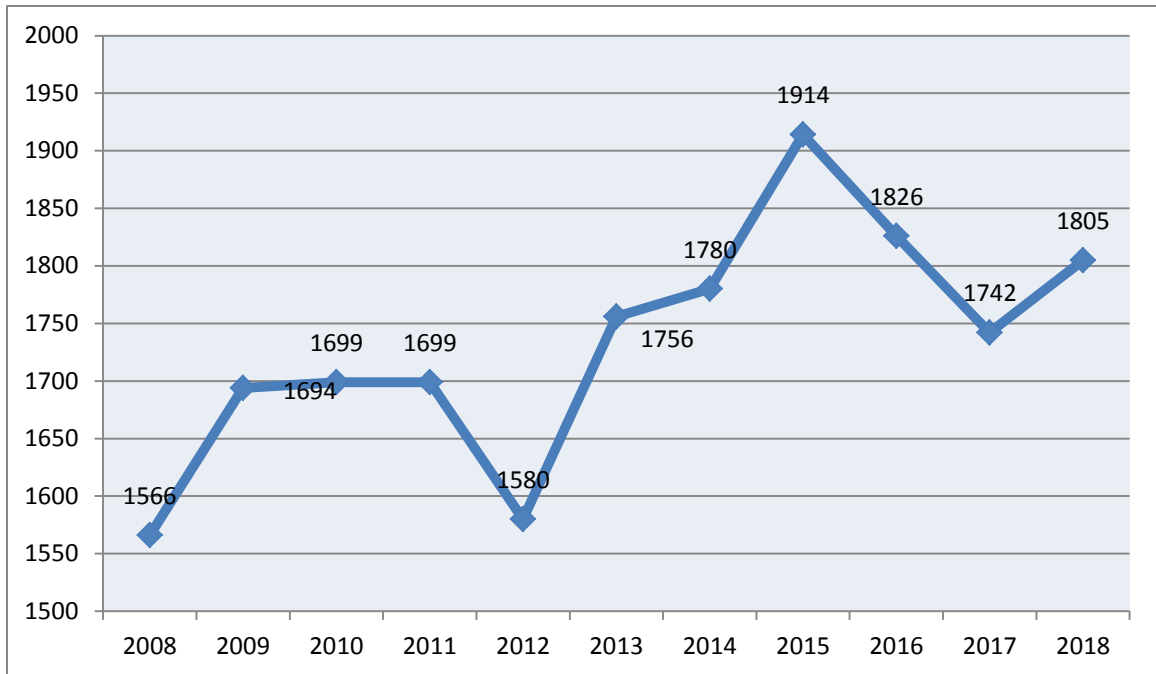


Figure 4 Felony case filings

**Misdemeanor & Traffic:**

- II. Misdemeanor and Criminal Traffic cases are crimes typically described as being of lesser seriousness than felonies. They are generally punishable by a term of incarceration in the county jail and/or a monetary fine.

**Misdemeanors (CM) Filing:** 2,365 misdemeanor cases were filed. This is a nine percent (-9%) decrease from 2018 and a twenty (20) year low in filings.

**Criminal Traffic (CT) Filing:** 1,675 criminal traffic cases were filed. A four percent (-4%) decrease from 2017.

**Forfeitures (FO) Filing:** 1,333 forfeitures cases were filed. A sixteen percent (-16%) decrease from a ten (10) year high in filings in 2017. This is the first time since 2012 we have seen a decrease in forfeiture filings from the year prior.

**Traffic (TR) Filings:** 23,759 traffic citations were filed. This represents a fifteen percent (-15%) decrease over 2017 and the lowest number of filings since 2014.

Two (2) full-time judges handle the misdemeanor and traffic cases. These judges divide the caseload equally. Initial appearances for all misdemeanor cases are handled by the Judicial Court Commissioner.

The majority of traffic (TR) and forfeiture (FO) cases are violations of state law and local ordinances that are punishable by a fine only. These cases are disposed of by clerks after defendants have pre-trial meetings with the District Attorney’s Office. Contested traffic and forfeiture cases are heard before the judges.

- a. Contested/Uncontested traffic (TR) cases:
  - i. Contested Cases: 1,021 not guilty pleas were entered in 2018; representing roughly four percent (4%) of all traffic cases.
  - ii. Default Judgment: 15,615 cases resulted in default judgments.

Mandatory eFiling for Criminal Court began March 2017. All criminal court cases are initiated electronically from an interface with the District Attorney’s Office. County, State Patrol, and DNR citations are uploaded electronically via interface. Upon disposition documents are transmitted electronically via interface to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

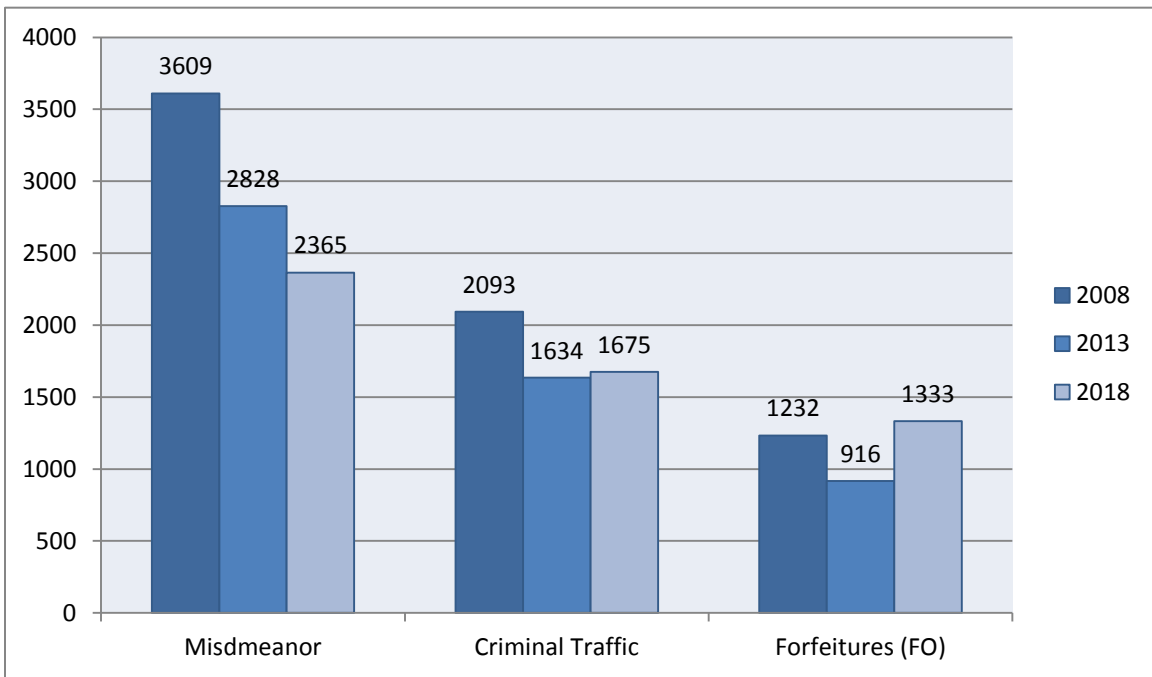


Figure 5 Misdemeanor & Traffic case filings

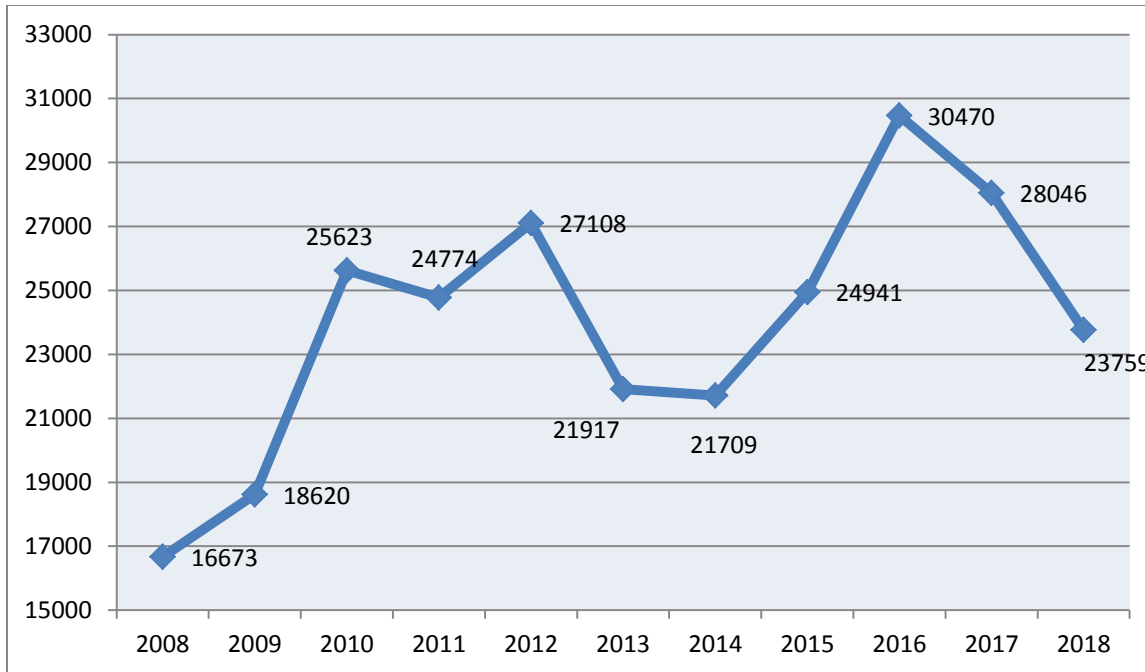


Figure 6 Traffic Ordinance Violation case filings

### Juvenile

III. The Juvenile court is a special court that deals with minors who have been accused of violating a criminal statute. The proceedings are civil as opposed to criminal. Instead of being formally charged with a crime, juvenile offenders are accused of committing a delinquent act.

The Juvenile court handles delinquency cases, cases involving Child In need of Protective Services (CHIPS), termination of parental rights, Juvenile Ordinance violations, and Juvenile restraining orders/Injunctions.

**Delinquencies (JV) Filing:** 284 cases were filed. An eighteen percent (-18%) decrease from 2018, and another all-time low in filings.

**CHIPS (JC) Filings:** 129 Chips actions were filed. This is a forty-eight (-48%) decrease from 2017 and the lowest number of filings since 2009.

**Termination of Parental Rights (TP) Filings:** 47 cases were filed; a nominal increase from the prior year.

**Juvenile Ordinance (JO) Filings:** 105 cases were filed. This represents a twenty-eight (-28%) decrease from 2017, a twenty-three percent (23%) increase from 2013, but a forty percent (-40%) decrease from 2008.

**Juvenile Injunctions (JI) Filings:** 49 petitions for injunction were filed. This is a nominal increase from 2017 but represents just under half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) the number filed in 2013.

One (1) full-time judge handles the juvenile division. Delinquencies can include serious matters such as armed robbery, theft, battery, and sexual assault. Children in need of protective placement/services (CHIPS) are matters where the child has potentially been exposed to neglect, abuse, or inadequate care.

Many, if not all, the delinquencies and CHIPS matters require post-dispositional hearings (ie. extensions, revisions, and periodic review hearings). The post dispositional hearings require about fifty percent (50%) of the judge's time on the bench. There are no jury trials for juvenile court proceedings, with the exception of CHIPS and Termination of Parental Rights cases.

The probate judge hears the Child Abuse, Vulnerable Adult, and Juvenile Injunction (JI) cases.

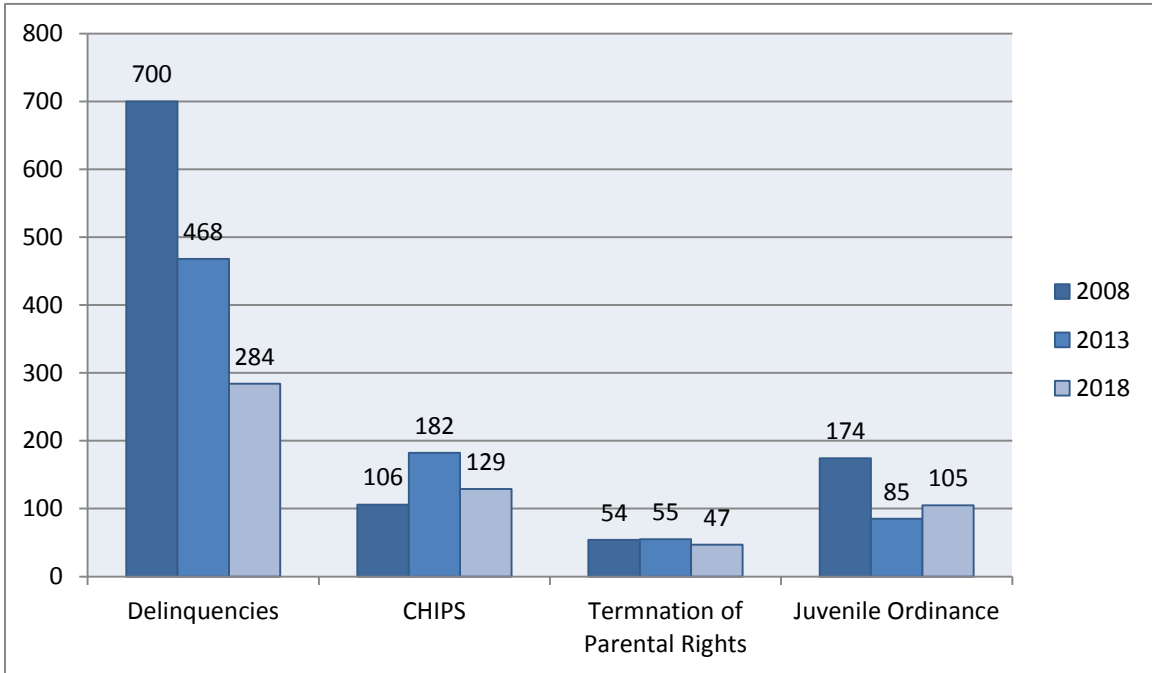


Figure 7 Juvenile case filings

## County Comparison

Comparison of the number of filings and case dispositions is useful within the Judicial Administrative District to better understand and identify our workload. Racine is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial Administrative District along with Kenosha and Walworth counties. The other counties are smaller by population than Racine. Kenosha's population is roughly fourteen percent (14%) smaller and Walworth's being just over forty-seven percent (47%) smaller than Racine's.

County	County Population <sup>1</sup>	Vs Racine Population
Kenosha	167,886	-13.9%
Racine	195,101	0%
Walworth	102,917	-47.2%

Despite the relative similarity in population size, Kenosha has roughly thirty-three percent (33%) fewer filings than Racine. At the same time, while Walworth County has just over half of the population of Racine, they carry only about twenty-seven percent (27%) of the filings that Racine does.

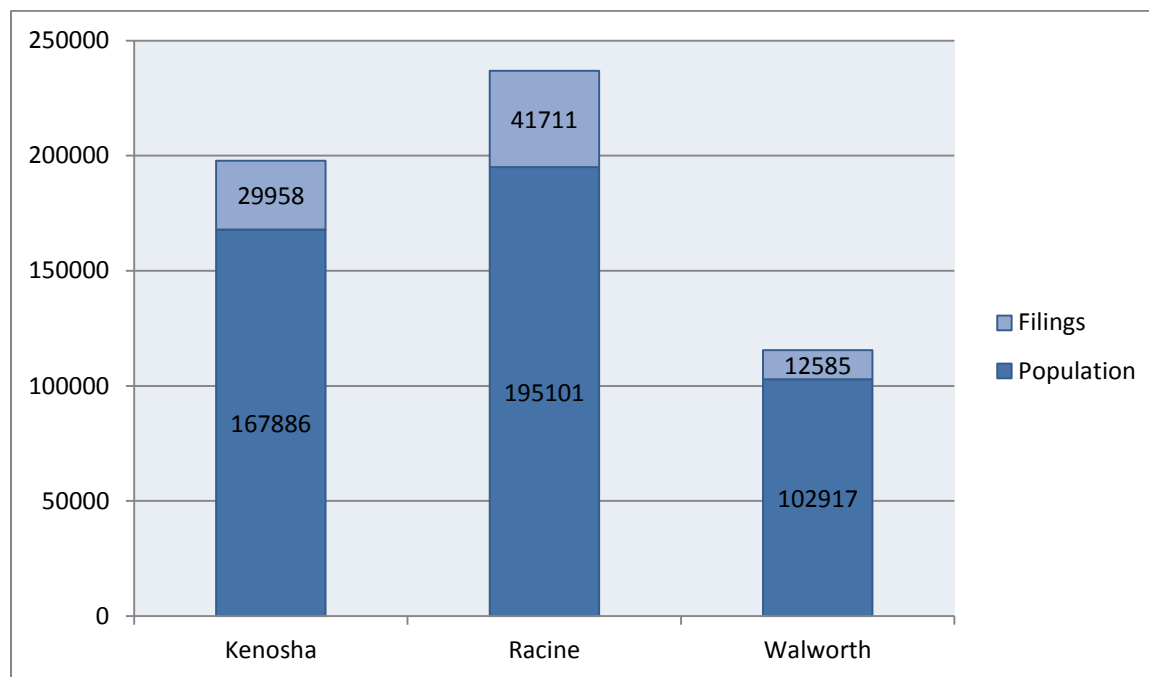


Figure 8 District 2 Population & Circuit Court case filings

A comparison of the number of judges, number of employees, and case filings shows that Racine Circuit Court employees carry a higher workload than their District 2 counterparts with Racine carrying roughly seventeen percent (17%) more cases per employee than Kenosha and just over fifty-nine percent (59%) more cases per employee than Walworth.

<sup>1</sup> (US Census Bureau)

County	# of Judges	Cases opened <sup>2</sup>	Cases disposed <sup>2</sup>	# of Employees <sup>3</sup>	Employees per Judge	Cases per Employee
Kenosha <sup>4</sup>	8	29,958	30,485	40.5	5.06	739.7
Racine	10	41,711	40,961	45.9	4.59	908.7
Walworth <sup>5</sup>	4	12,585	12,770	32.11	8.03	391.9

In terms of the number of judges, Racine County is the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) largest Circuit Court in Wisconsin. As such, a comparison between Racine and the other larger counties is useful. Additionally, Brown County is of comparable population size as to provide a useful comparison.

County	County Population <sup>6</sup>	Vs Racine Population
Brown	258,004	32.2%
Dane	536,416	174.9%
Milwaukee	956,586	390.3%
Racine	195,101	0%
Waukesha	396,731	103.3%

Racine County is significantly smaller in population than Dane, Milwaukee, and Waukesha counties. Additionally, Racine is only roughly two-thirds (2/3) the size of Brown County. Despite being smaller than the other four counties, Racine can be ranked third (3<sup>rd</sup>) in terms of number of filings and dispositions with roughly thirty-five percent (35%) more filings than Brown County and just sixteen percent (16%) less than Dane county.

Racine County can be ranked first (1<sup>st</sup>) or highest in the caseload per employee. In addition, Racine can be ranked fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) in number of employees and fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) in employees per Judge.

County	# of Judges	Cases opened <sup>7</sup>	Cases disposed <sup>7</sup>	# of Employees <sup>8</sup>	Employees per Judge	Cases per Employee
Brown <sup>9</sup>	8	28,703	29,428	50.72	6.34	565.9
Dane <sup>10</sup>	17	52,790	52,467	109.6	6.45	481.7
Milwaukee <sup>11</sup>	47	124,783	123,151	279	5.94	447.2
Racine	10	41,711	40,961	45.9	4.59	908.7
Waukesha <sup>12</sup>	12	27,275	27,232	76.21	6.35	357.9

<sup>2</sup> (Office of Court Operations, 2018)

<sup>3</sup> Excludes Circuit Court Commissioners

<sup>4</sup> (Kenosha County, 2018)

<sup>5</sup> (Walworth County, 2018)

<sup>6</sup> (US Census Bureau)

<sup>7</sup> (Office of Court Operations, 2018)

<sup>8</sup> Excludes Circuit Court Commissioners

<sup>9</sup> (Brown County, 2018)

<sup>10</sup> (Dane County, 2018)

<sup>11</sup> (Milwaukee County, 2018)

<sup>12</sup> (Waukesha County, 2018)

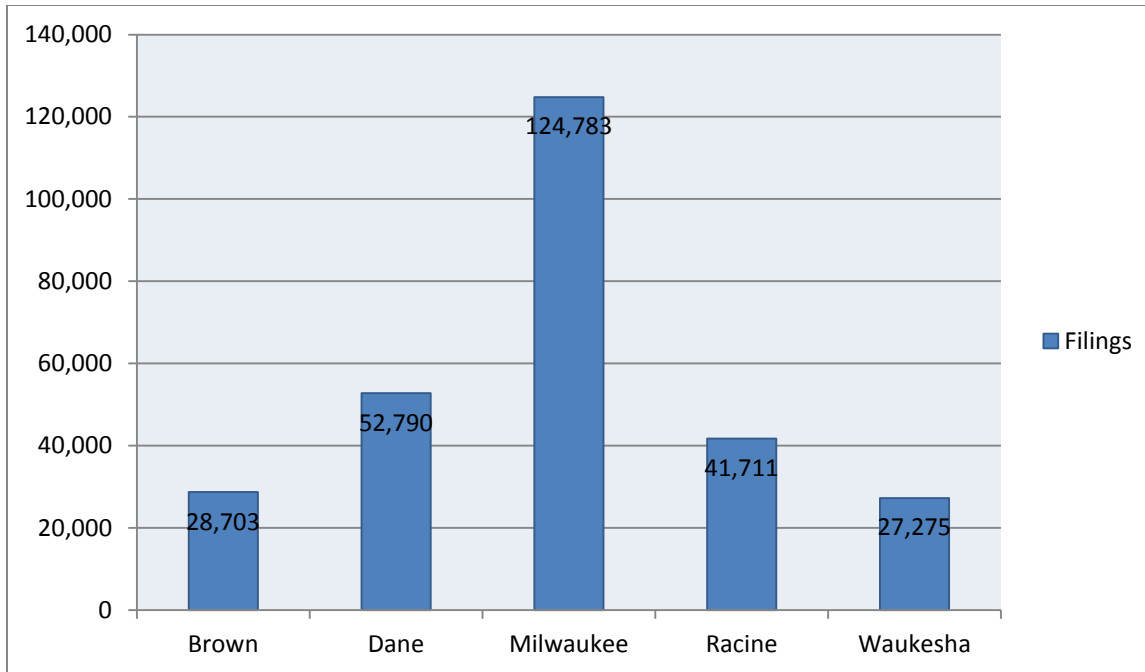


Figure 9 County Filings Comparison

## Jury Management

This office is responsible for summoning qualified jurors for jury service. In 2018, this office sent Jury Summons to roughly 15,134 Racine County residents. In comparison, this office sent only 10,371 Summons in 2008.

For those individuals that fail to respond to their summons or fail to appear, they are served with an Order to Show Cause for Contempt. These potential jurors appear before the Judicial Court Commissioner. Typically, they are required to reschedule their term of jury service. In rare instances, the individuals are fined. Fines for failure to report or respond for jury service can be as much as \$500 but typically are assessed at \$50.

Our approximate cost per day of a Jury Trial: \$780

Our 2018 expenses for Jury Management were approximately: \$163,000

## Financial Management

Trust:

This office collects a great deal of money for the benefit of others and holds that money in trust. For example, the Clerk of Court's Office holds bond money posted by the defendant in criminal matters, money being held for a determination of the payee by the court, restitution money owed to victims, and down payments on foreclosure actions. We collect and disperse this money on a weekly basis, and often, daily basis.

#### Revenue:

It is the responsibility of the Clerk of Circuit Court's Office to collect filing fees, fines, costs, jail assessments, bond forfeitures, reimbursement of guardian ad litem fees, attorney fees, psychiatric fees, and public defender attorney fees for juveniles. We are also responsible for submitting reports to the State in order to collect annual support grants, guardian ad litem fees, and interpreter reimbursement.

Our revenues for 2018 were approximately: \$3,800,000

#### Expenditures:

This office pays for all witnesses summoned by the District Attorney and Public Defender offices; pays Jurors for service and mileage; pays psychologists and psychiatrists who perform evaluations for defendants, juveniles, and for probable mental commitment cases. We pay for court appointed attorneys for indigent defendants, Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) for juveniles, family matters, and guardianships and provide court reporters for the family court commissioners and the judicial court commissioner.

Our expenses for 2018 were approximately: \$4,345,000

#### Electronic/Online Payments:

This office has been collecting payments for fines and fees via two online portals since late 2008. We use an online service, Government Payment Systems (GPS) and an integrated online service through the Wisconsin Court System (CCAP). 2018 saw just under twenty-five thousand (24,703) online payment transactions which is a sixty-seven percent (67%) increase from 2016. The total dollar amount for online payments in 2018 was just over three point four million dollars (\$3,400,000), an increase of forty-eight percent (48%) over 2016 and a three-thousand, four hundred, twenty-six percent (3,426%) increase from 2008.

Our payments collected online for 2018 were approximately: \$3,462,000

## **Staffing**

An important administrative responsibility of the Clerk of Court's Office is to recruit and maintain a competent staff.

In 2018, we had forty-eight (48) full and part-time employees (excluding the Family Court Commissioner, Deputy Family Court Commissioner, Judicial Court Commissioner, and on-call bailiffs). Of this staff, thirty-three (33) were county employees and fifteen (15) were contracted employees.



The majority of the staff, sixty-two percent (62%) have been with the office between one (1) and five (5) years. Sixteen percent (16%) of the staff have been with the office for over twenty (20) years. Average staff tenure in 2018 was approximately eight (8) years per employee. Average staff tenure in 2008 was approximately 17 years per employee.

Staff training is typically done on a one-on-one basis within the various divisions of the office. In 2017, to provide additional staff training, we implemented ‘Lunch & Learn’ trainings. These training were non-mandatory training sessions over lunch hours. Training topics included Family & Child Support, Sealing & Redacting Court Records, and Criminal Competency Exams. We will continue these training sessions in 2019.

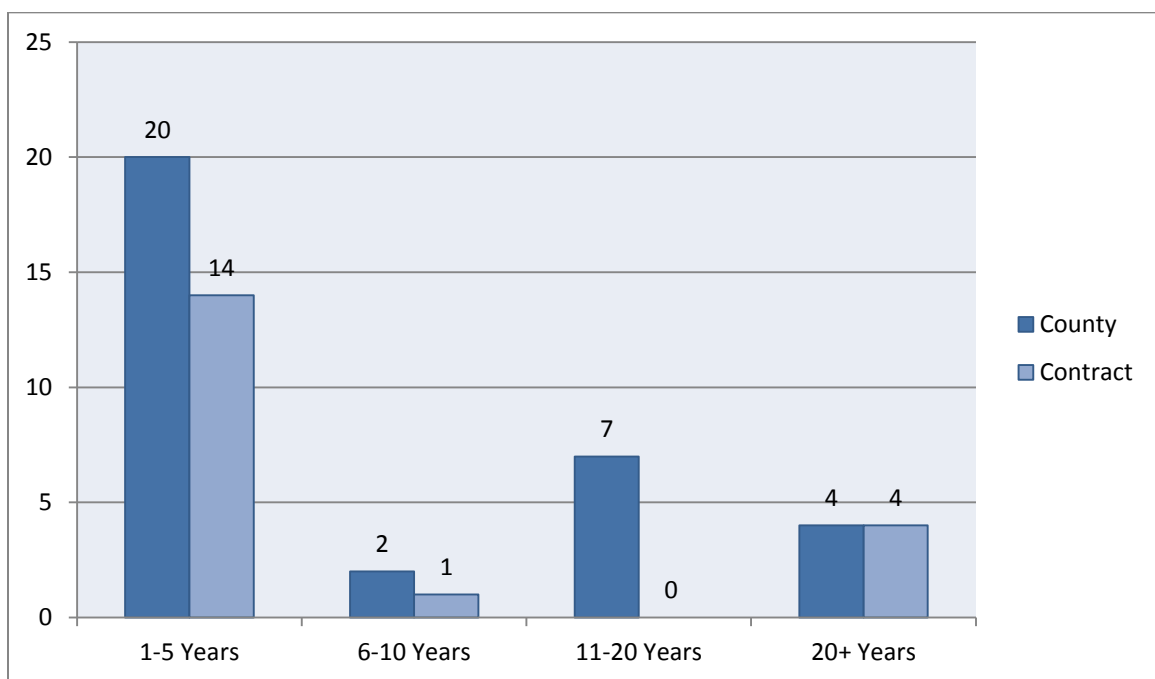


Figure 10 Tenure by Employee (Contract vs County)

## Goals and Challenges for 2019

There are a number of goals and challenges that will need to be met for 2019. These include:

- Collections.** We currently use one (1) traditional collection agencies for collection of delinquent fines and fees, RSI Enterprises (RSI). The agency has a collection rate of roughly fifteen (15%) to eighteen (18%) percent. In 2017, we began utilizing the State Debt Collection Agency (SDC), a division of the Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR). While our initial concentration was to turned delinquent restitution amounts over to SDC, we have seen success with SDC and have increase to roughly 50% of all debts being turned over to SDC or RSI. The Consolidated Court Automation Program (CCAP) implemented an electronic interface with the

DOR. Because of the continued success with SDC, we will begin to explore solely using SDC as our collection agency.

- **Court Appointed Attorneys.** We have seen an extraordinary increase in the number of Court Appointed Attorneys due in large part to the State Public Defender's (SPD) office being unable to find attorneys willing to accept their appointments. The SPD office currently reimburses court appointed attorneys at a rate of \$40 per hour while, per WI Supreme Court Rule, the county currently reimburses court appointed attorneys at a rate of \$70 per hour. The Supreme Court recently increased the rate for the county to reimburse at \$100 per hour, effective 2020.
- **Court Reporters.** There are on-going nationwide, shortages of stenographic court reporters. Many of the state's experienced stenographic court reporters are reaching retirement age and there are only a limited number of new graduates from court reporting schools. While court reporters are state employees, the shortage will effect the county operations. We need to explore, in partnership with the state offices, how to continue court operations without a court reporter in some emergency situations. This may include county employees performing limited operation of state-owned Digital Audio Recorder (DAR) units.
- **Facilities.** Working with Buildings and Facilities, we are continuing to explore a remodel of the courtrooms. We have identified the courtrooms on the main level of the Law Enforcement Center (LEC) as being a priority. The current layout and design is inadequate for current use. There are safety and security concerns as well as accessibility (including ADA accessibility) concerns that need to be addressed.
- **Guardian ad Litem (GAL).** We continue to contract with five (5) attorneys to serve as GALs with a sixth position being filled on a rotating basis from a list of attorneys. This list is compiled by the Family Court Commissioner and approved by the Judges. These attorneys bill the Clerk of Court's office per case and in turn, this office bills the appropriate parties for the GAL's services. The billing rate for GALs has been increased by the WI Supreme Court from \$70 per hour to \$100, effective 2020. We will need to explore our GAL services during 2019 to account for this increase.
- **Interpreter Services.** 2018 saw the addition of a full-time, Spanish-language interpreter. We have seen a reduction in our overall costs in hiring contracted interpreters. The Director of State Courts' Office has changed from a reimbursement model for payments to Circuit Courts to a payment model. We will continue to monitor and watch for additional areas of savings.

- **Mandatory eFiling.** Mandatory eFiling is in effect for all Civil, Small Claims, Family, and Criminal matters. Most Probate Court and Juvenile case types are currently voluntary and will become mandatory eFiling cases beginning March 2019. The vast majority of case types are mandatory to be eFiled with the exceptions for Restraining Orders. Pro-se litigants are welcome to use the eFiling system but do not fall under the mandatory eFiling requirement.
- **Paper-on-demand Work Environment.** With the implementation of mandatory electronic filing in the Criminal, Probate, Civil and Family areas, we should be moving toward a paper-on-demand work environment. These areas are virtually paperless now.
- **Refunds.** We will be exploring moving towards limiting the number of checks issued for refunds. In 2019, we will move toward issuing debit cards via an agency, CourtFunds. The move brings us closer to other industry standards in terms of refunds/payments. Additional, by issuing debit cards we should see cost savings in related areas.
- **Scanning.** Our criminal court area continues to need drastic help in the area of scanning. We will explore adding another additional full-time document clerk to help with the criminal scanning. The bulk of these positions will be focusing on the criminal court area. We will be evaluating the placement of our bulk scanners to help alleviate the need in criminal court.
- **Staffing.** Retention of quality staff members continues to becoming increasingly difficult. We continue to see turn over with not only the contracted staff but the county employees taking higher paying jobs that require less responsibility. What we see in terms of cost savings in health benefits is lost when considering cost in terms of time spent on repeated recruitment, selection, and training of new staff. Currently, just less than half of our staff is made up of contract individuals through PIE Management, Inc.
- **Sound System Upgrades.** We have successfully upgraded the majority of courtroom sound systems. The last courtroom was upgraded in 2018. Hearing assistance equipment is available in five of our updated courtrooms and will need to be expanded to additional areas to comply with ADA regulations.
- **Video Conferencing.** We successfully use video conferencing on a daily basis for the judicial court commissioner and the family court commissioners. We have videoconferencing in place for the juvenile courts. This office has been exploring expanding video conferencing into all circuit courts since the late 1990s. It appears that the county would

realize significant cost savings (specifically in the Sheriff's transportation costs) if we invest in the video conferencing into other existing courtrooms. 2019 will see the addition of a video conferencing unit installed in the 6<sup>th</sup> Floor Courtroom.

Samuel Christensen  
Clerk of Circuit Court

## Sources Cited

- Brown County. (2018). *2018 Adopted Budget*. County Executive's Office, Green Bay. Retrieved from [http://www.co.brown.wi.us/i/f/county\\_executive/2018%20adopted%20budget/3\\_%20Court%20System\(1\).pdf](http://www.co.brown.wi.us/i/f/county_executive/2018%20adopted%20budget/3_%20Court%20System(1).pdf)
- Dane County. (2018). *2018 Adopted Budget*. Controller's Office, Madison. Retrieved from [https://admin.countyofdane.com/budget/pdf/2018/2018\\_Adopted\\_Budget\\_w\\_links.pdf](https://admin.countyofdane.com/budget/pdf/2018/2018_Adopted_Budget_w_links.pdf)
- Kenosha County. (2018). *2018 Adopted Budget*. Finance Department, Kenosha. Retrieved from <https://www.kenoshacounty.org/DocumentCenter/View/7420>
- Milwaukee County. (2018). *2018 Adopted Budget*. Department of Administrative Services, Office of Performance Strategy & Budget, Milwaukee. Retrieved from <https://county.milwaukee.gov/files/county/administrative-services/PSB/BudgetsCopy-1/2018-BudgetCopy-1/2018-Adopted-BudgetCopy-1/MilwaukeeCounty2018AdoptedBudgetFINALFORWEB.pdf>
- Office of Court Operations. (2018). *Caseload Summary Report*. Madison: Director of State Court's Office. Retrieved from <https://www.wicourts.gov/publications/statistics/circuit/docs/caseloadcounty18.pdf>
- US Census Bureau. (n.d.). *2017 ACS 5-Year Population Estimates*. Retrieved from <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>
- Walworth County. (2018). *2018 Adopted Budget*. Finance Department, Elkhorn. Retrieved from [http://www.co.walworth.wi.us/government%20center/finance/budget/Adopted\\_Budgets/2018\\_Adopted\\_Budget\\_Book-Walworth\\_Cty.pdf](http://www.co.walworth.wi.us/government%20center/finance/budget/Adopted_Budgets/2018_Adopted_Budget_Book-Walworth_Cty.pdf)
- Waukesha County. (2018). *2018 Adopted Budget*. Department of Administration, Budget Division, Waukesha. Retrieved from <https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/globalassets/administration/budget/2018-adopted-budget/9-button-pdfs/2018-adopted-budget-book-with-bookmarks-and-links.pdf>

###