

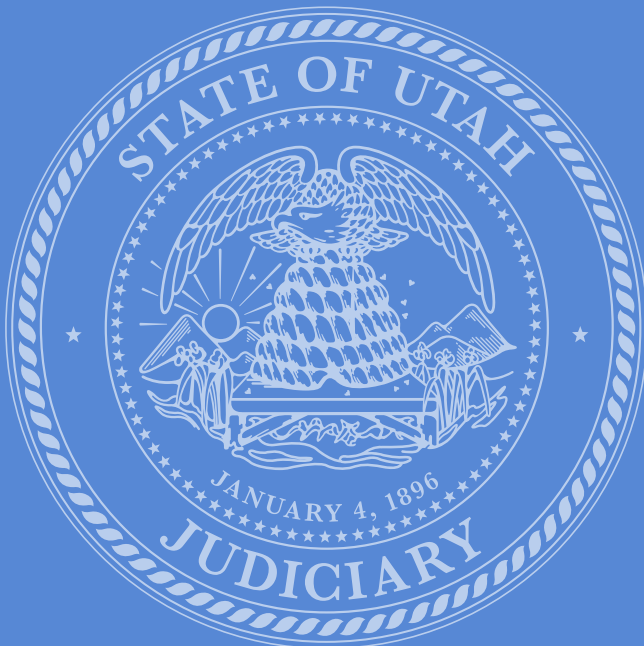


Annual Report to the Chief Justice, Governor, and Legislature

2026



*The mission of the
Utah State Courts
is to provide an open, fair,
efficient, and independent
system for the advancement of
justice under the law.*



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The members of the Judicial Council are Chief Justice Matthew B. Durrant, Judge David N. Mortensen, Judge Suchada Bazzelle, Judge Christopher G. Bown, Judge Jon Carpenter, Judge Samuel Chiara, Judge Rita Cornish, Judge Michael DiReda, Judge Susan Eisenman, Judge Michael Leavitt, Judge Angela Fannesbeck, Judge James Gardner, Judge Christine S. Johnson, Judge Brendan McCullagh, Judge Amber Mettler, Justice Paige Petersen, and Kristin Woods (Utah State Bar). Ron Gordon is the State Court Administrator.

Structure of the Utah Judiciary

The Utah Judicial Council is the governing body for the Utah Judiciary. It has the constitutional authority to adopt uniform rules for the administration of all court levels. The Council also sets standards for judicial performance, court facilities, information technology, support services, and judicial and non-judicial staff levels. The Council consists of 17 members with representatives from all court levels in the Utah Judiciary and the Utah State Bar.

The Chief Justice of the Utah Supreme Court always serves as the presiding officer of the Council. There are six court levels within the Utah Judiciary: four trial court levels - Justice Courts, the District Court,

the Juvenile Court, the Business and Chancery Court; and two appellate courts - the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court. The jurisdiction of each court level is established in statute. The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) implements decisions of the Judicial Council and provides support to all six court levels.

The AOC is led by a State Court Administrator who is appointed by the Supreme Court and who serves at the pleasure of the Supreme Court and the Judicial Council. The State Court Administrator appoints other administrators and directors to help accomplish the work of the AOC.

Structure of the Utah Judiciary

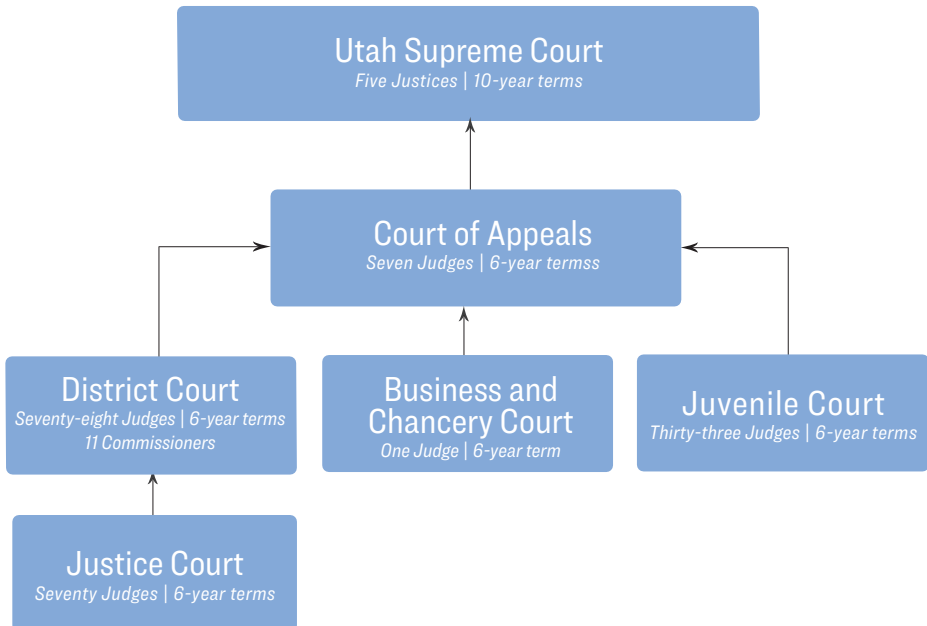
The District Court and Juvenile Court are divided into eight geographical divisions whereas the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court have statewide jurisdiction. Justice Courts are operated by cities and counties with approval from the Judicial Council and have jurisdiction within the city or county operating the court.

District Court judges and Juvenile Court judges in each judicial district elect a presiding judge and associate presiding judge for their respective court levels. Each of the appellate courts also elects a presiding judge and associate presiding judge. Justice Court judges serving in cities and counties located within the same judicial district elect a presiding judge and associate presiding judge.

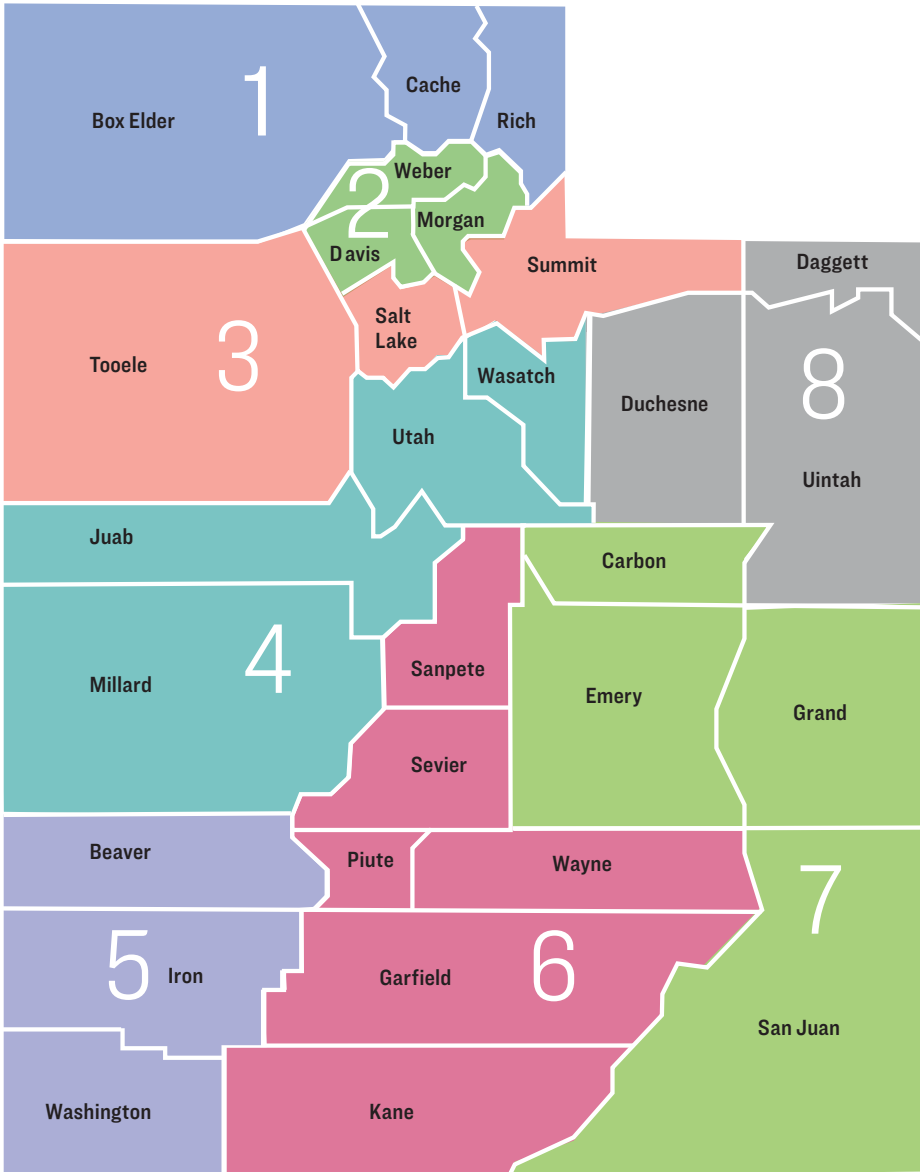
A trial court executive serves as the chief administrator in each judicial district for the District Court and the Juvenile Court.

Depending on the volume of filings in the judicial district, a trial court executive may have responsibilities for both the District Court and Juvenile Court or only one of those courts. Trial court executives, presiding judges, and associate presiding judges work together to oversee the work of the Judiciary within judicial districts. Cities and counties with justice courts appoint administrators who work with the local judges as well as the presiding judges and associate presiding judges to oversee the work of the Utah Judiciary within the boundaries of those local governments.

Some issues in the administration of the Judiciary are common throughout the state. Others are unique to particular areas of the state and therefore unique to individual judicial districts.



Judicial Districts



Appellate Courts

Utah's Appellate Courts consist of the five-member Supreme Court and the seven-member Court of Appeals, supported by approximately 50 staff. Both courts are housed in the Matheson Courthouse and exercise statewide appellate jurisdiction.

In 2025, the Appellate Courts focused on improving efficiency, access, and services to litigants. The year marked the first full year of appellate e-filing, allowing parties to file briefs directly into the appellate case management system and eliminating manual data entry by court staff. Appellate and district court case management systems can now communicate seamlessly, improving case transfers and processing. The courts also began developing an enhanced briefing feature that will allow parties to hyperlink directly to cited portions of the trial court record, improving usability for judges and litigants. This feature is expected to launch in 2026. In addition, the Appellate Courts began the process of making appellate case records publicly available online through the Judiciary's Xchange program, with public access expected in January 2026.

The Appellate Courts expanded access to justice through continued growth of the

Appellate Pro Bono Program. In partnership with the Utah State Bar and the Appellate Practice Section, the courts hosted free CLE training opportunities for volunteer attorneys focused on appellate advocacy. To date, the program has facilitated the appointment of pro bono counsel in 13 full appellate cases involving self-represented parties.

Public outreach and engagement increased in 2025. The Court of Appeals held eight off-site oral arguments across six judicial districts, providing opportunities to engage directly with communities statewide. Both appellate courts also held oral arguments at the Utah State Capitol, preceded by receptions for members of the Legislative and Executive Branches.

The Supreme Court continued its focus on expanding access to justice through the work of its Regulatory Reform Committee, High-Volume Case Filings Committee, and Rural Access to Legal Services Committee. Each committee is focused on increasing efficiency, reducing barriers to legal services, and improving access to justice statewide. Information about these committees is available on the Judiciary's website.



Appellate Courts

Caseload Growth and Judicial Capacity

The Appellate Courts experienced record-setting caseload growth in FY2025. FY2024 and FY2025 were two of the three highest filing years in the past decade, and FY2025 recorded the highest number of appellate filings in the history of both the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals. This sustained increase in filings reflects growing demand for appellate review and increasing pressure on existing judicial resources.

In response to this trend, the Judicial Council submitted a funding request in August 2025 for an additional judge on the Court of Appeals. Since the creation of the Court of Appeals in 1987, no additional appellate judges have been added despite significant population growth and rising caseloads. Utah now has more than 500,000 residents per Court of Appeals judge, compared to population-to-judge

ratios of approximately 300,000 to 350,000 residents per judge in comparable states such as Arizona, New Mexico, Oregon, and Colorado. Record-high filings and comparative data demonstrate a clear need to expand the Court of Appeals to ensure the timely and effective administration of justice.

The Supreme Court also experienced a personnel transition at the close of 2025. Justice John Pearce resigned in December after ten years on the Supreme Court and two years on the Court of Appeals. Judge John Nielsen of the Third District Court was appointed to fill the vacancy and assumed office in December 2025. The Court also appointed Justice Jill Pohlman as Associate Chief Justice, reflecting her demonstrated leadership and commitment to court administration.



District Court

The District Court is Utah’s trial court of general jurisdiction. It includes 78 full-time judges, 10 domestic court commissioners, and one criminal case commissioner, supported by 37 attorney law clerks and approximately 400 staff members. These staff include judicial assistants, case managers, team managers, clerks of court, trial court executives, and others who support daily court operations across the state.

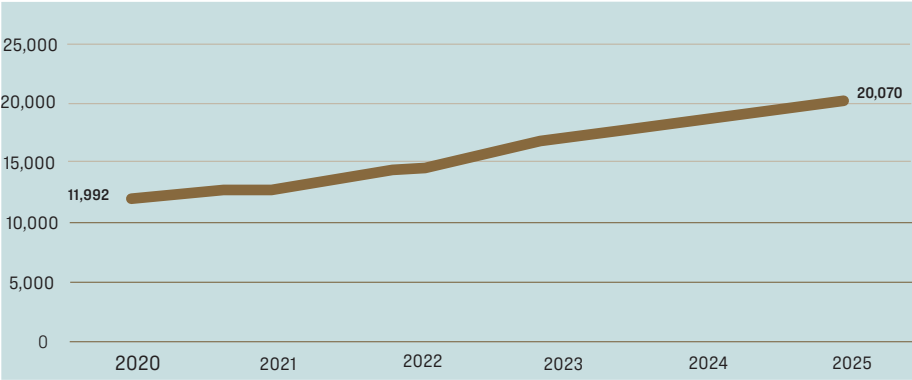
CASELOAD AND HEARINGS

In FY2025, the District Court received 265,351 new case filings, up from 256,588 in FY2024. While overall filings increased modestly, the demand for court hearings continued to rise. In 2016, district courts held 346,306 hearings statewide. By FY2025, that number had grown

to 429,397—an increase of more than 83,000 hearings, or 24 percent over nine years.

Search warrant activity has grown even more sharply. In 2020, district court judges reviewed 11,992 search warrants. By FY2025, that number increased to 20,070 - a 67 percent rise. The most significant growth occurred in Electronic Service Provider (ESP) warrants, which increased from 853 in 2020 to 5,860 in 2025 - a 587 percent rise. Judges review search warrants around the clock, often outside normal court hours. At an average of 12 minutes per warrant, the increase in warrant activity represents more than 1,600 additional hours of judicial time annually—roughly equivalent to the workload of one full-time judicial officer.

Search Warrants FY20– FY25



WORKLOAD AND STAFFING PRESSURES

The FY2025 Judicial Weighted Caseload Study shows district court judicial officers carrying an average of 112 percent of a standard caseload, with some districts operating at 122 percent. To meet statutory and judicial time standards, the study identified a need for 12 additional judicial

officers. Currently, there are 89 district court judicial officers statewide; the study indicates a need for at least 101.

Workload growth continues to outpace available resources. Over the past 12 years, hearings increased by 25 percent and warrant activity by 190 percent, while the number of district court judges increased by only 8 percent.

District Court

Judicial assistants face similar pressures. They perform highly technical and essential work, including issuing notices and summonses, managing case records, coordinating hearings, and communicating with attorneys and the public—all while ensuring compliance with legal and ethical boundaries. The work is fast-paced and detail-oriented and often involves exposure to sensitive or traumatic information.

Turnover remains a significant challenge. From FY2023 to FY2026, judicial assistants experienced an average turnover rate of 26.5 percent, with some districts reaching 32 percent. As of December 2025, 30 percent of judicial assistants had less than two years of experience, and 60 percent had less than five years. Because training typically takes one to two years, a substantial portion of the workforce is still

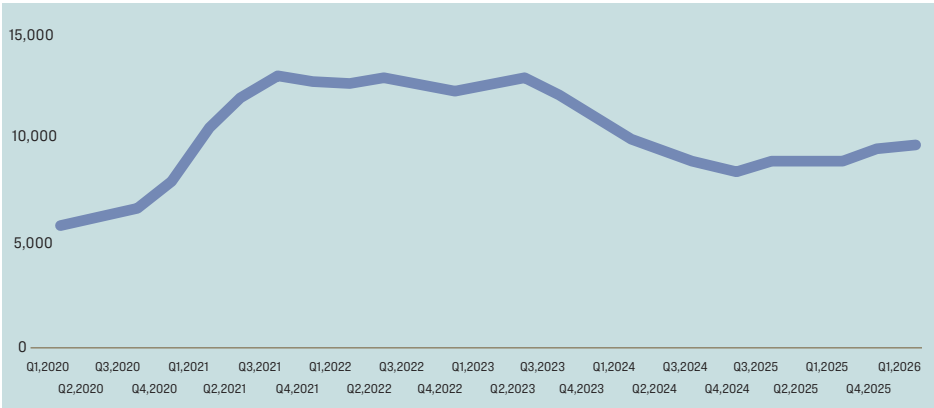
developing proficiency while experienced staff absorb additional workload.

The Clerical Weighted Caseload Study found that judicial assistants in some districts are operating at up to 128 percent of a standard workload and identified a need for at least 35 additional positions statewide.

CASE BACKLOG

Case backlog—defined as cases exceeding the Judicial Council’s time-to-disposition guidelines—peaked during the pandemic at 12,847 cases. With temporary staff and significant support from senior judges, backlog was reduced to 8,087 cases by late 2024. As those temporary resources ended and workload continued to rise, backlog increased again to 9,212 cases in FY2025, nearly double pre-pandemic levels. Without additional judicial and staff resources, backlog is expected to continue growing.

District Court Backlog



TREATMENT COURTS

District Court treatment courts provide alternatives to incarceration by combining public safety and public health approaches. These courts use evidence-based practices and multidisciplinary teams to support individuals with high needs and high risk.

Utah’s District Court currently operates 27 adult drug courts, 11 adult mental health courts, and three veterans treatment courts. All treatment courts are certified every two years by the Judicial Council and operate in accordance with national best-practice standards.

Juvenile Court

Utah's Juvenile Court is a state trial court of limited jurisdiction, equal in status to the District Court. It handles juvenile delinquency matters and child welfare cases involving abused, neglected, or dependent children. Juvenile Court judges work closely with youth and families and preside over all proceedings arising from delinquency referrals and child welfare petitions.

A defining feature of the Juvenile Court is the one-family-one-judge model, a nationally recognized best practice that assigns a single judge to oversee all matters involving a family. This approach promotes consistency and informed decision-making over the life of a case. Depending on the circumstances, the court may order services while a child remains in the home, place a child in the custody of the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS), or order supervision or placement through the Division of Juvenile Justice and Youth Services (JJYS).

While filing numbers provide only a partial measure of workload, Juvenile Court cases require significant judicial time and sustained involvement. Many matters involve behavioral health needs, educational challenges, or complex family dynamics that extend beyond a single hearing and require ongoing court oversight.

CHILD WELFARE CASES

In FY2025, the Juvenile Court handled 3,437 child welfare matters, including Protective Supervision Services (PSS) cases and custody petitions. The court continued to meet legislatively mandated

timelines at very high rates across all major case milestones, including shelter, adjudication, disposition, and permanency hearings.

Delays were generally attributable to factors outside the court's control, such as party stipulations, scheduling conflicts, unresolved paternity issues, or statutorily authorized extensions of reunification services. In addition to these proceedings, the court processed 336 adoption cases arising from child welfare matters.

DELINQUENCY CASES

The Juvenile Court administers a probation department that supervises youth placed on probation and oversees cases diverted from formal court processing through Nonjudicial Adjustments (NJAs). Probation officers assess risk, promote accountability and skill development, protect community safety, and support victim restoration.

In FY2025, the court handled 14,181 delinquency referrals. Sixty-five percent of these cases were diverted from formal court proceedings through NJAs, reflecting the court's emphasis on early intervention and risk-based decision-making. The vast majority of NJAs involved low- or moderate-risk youth, and 94 percent were successfully completed.

When a youth is petitioned to court, the court may order Intake Probation or Formal Probation, with statutory presumptive time limits designed to prevent cases from lingering once a youth has substantially completed required obligations. Risk assessment data shows that formal probation resources are appropriately concentrated on higher-risk youth, while lower-risk youth are more often supervised through intake probation or diversion.

Juvenile Court

Since October 1, 2023, the Juvenile Court has also processed 2,674 automatic expungements for eligible individuals whose records consisted solely of successfully completed NJAs, pursuant to legislative changes enacted in 2023.

The Juvenile Court also coordinates with the Interstate Compact on Juveniles to supervise youth moving between states, reflecting its role in cross-jurisdictional case management.

TREATMENT COURTS

The Juvenile Court operates problem-solving treatment courts to address substance use disorders and related needs in both child welfare and juvenile justice cases. These courts use a collaborative, team-based approach that connects youth and families with treatment, mental health services, and other supports, with the goals of child safety, family stability, and reduced recidivism.

There are 16 active treatment courts statewide, including Family Treatment Courts, Juvenile Mental Health Courts, Family Support Courts, and a Juvenile Recovery Court. All treatment courts must be approved and certified by the Judicial Council and are regularly reviewed for compliance with nationally recognized best practices.

RESOURCE NEEDS

Juvenile Court judges and staff manage complex and demanding caseloads that require substantial judicial involvement and coordination with partner agencies, schools, treatment providers, and caseworkers. Many cases involve co-occurring behavioral health needs, family instability, or educational barriers that require sustained attention both in and out of the courtroom.

Despite strong performance and high staff commitment, limited resources constrain the court's capacity to respond to increasing case complexity. Additional staffing and services would enhance the court's ability to meet these demands, including support tailored to female youth and interventions for youth with co-occurring behavioral health conditions.

The Juvenile Court plays a critical role in protecting children, supporting families, and promoting community safety. Continued investment in personnel and services will strengthen outcomes for youth and families statewide.

Justice Courts

Justice courts are state trial courts that operate at the local level. Although each of Utah's 105 justice courts is funded and staffed by a municipality or county, all are part of the state Judicial Branch. Justice courts are created by the Legislature and are subject to rules and oversight established by the Utah Supreme Court and the Utah Judicial Council. Statute emphasizes that justice courts must remain independent from local executive and legislative branches to preserve judicial neutrality.

Justice courts have jurisdiction over class B and C misdemeanors, infractions, and small claims cases involving amounts up to \$20,000. Judges may impose incarceration, fines, surcharges, or community service where authorized by law. Fines collected by justice courts are shared between the local government responsible for the court and the local prosecuting authority, while statutorily required surcharges are remitted to the State Treasurer.

Local governments seeking to establish a justice court must apply to the Judicial Council and demonstrate the ability to meet statutory and rule-based operating standards. These standards address court

facilities, staffing, security, and access to legal materials. The approval process varies by county or municipality classification and is designed to ensure that new courts can operate effectively and independently within the statewide judicial system.

Justice court judges must meet statutory qualification requirements, including age, residency, citizenship, and, for judges appointed after May 3, 2023, a law degree qualifying the judge for bar admission in any state. Like other trial court judges, justice court judges serve six-year terms and stand for unopposed retention elections. Prior to each election, judges are evaluated by the Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission (JPEC), which assesses judicial competence, demeanor, and courtroom performance and issues a public report.

Justice court judges are responsible for the administration and operation of their courts in coordination with the Judicial Council and the Administrative Office of the Courts. While justice courts must comply with applicable local administrative requirements, judges retain ultimate responsibility for ensuring the fair, efficient, and impartial administration of justice as part of an independent judicial branch.

Business and Chancery Court

In 2023, the Legislature enacted HB 216, creating Utah's Business and Chancery Court. The court is a court of record with limited statewide jurisdiction and hears complex business disputes involving more than \$300,000 in monetary damages that fall within one of 21 statutorily defined business-related case categories.

The court was established to provide a dedicated forum for the efficient resolution of complex commercial disputes and equitable claims, including matters involving corporate governance and contract disputes. By concentrating these cases in a specialized court, the Business and Chancery

Court promotes consistent case management and predictable outcomes for business-related litigation statewide.

Judge Rita Cornish has served as the Business and Chancery Court judge since the court began operations on October 1, 2024. The court continues to receive filings from across the state.

To support the court's launch, existing file room and meeting space in the Matheson Courthouse was repurposed to create a dedicated courtroom, judicial chambers, and workspace for three support staff. Construction was completed in early May 2025. Since opening, the Business and Chancery Court has received more than 100 case filings.



Judicial Council Budget Priorities

FY 2027

1 – Core Courthouse Workforce Retention *\$5,899,800 ongoing*

This request seeks legislative funding for salary increases to improve retention levels of the Judiciary’s core courthouse workforce — judicial assistants, managers, probation officers, administrative staff, etc. The Judiciary has been unable to retain a sufficient level of institutional knowledge in its workforce because of a stubbornly high turnover rate (around 20%) in this core courthouse workforce over the last four years. This funding will be used to address this unsustainable level of personnel instability.

2 – Judicial Officers and Support Staff *\$9,211,600 ongoing; \$1,380,000 one-time*

The Judiciary has historically requested new judges only during crisis points, failing to fully convey the true public’s need for judicial resources. Comprehensive Utah judicial workload studies show a need for 10 new judges (eight district; one juvenile, and one Court of Appeals), four commissioners, and support staff as follows:

Juvenile Court Judges (1)	4th District – Juab, Millard, Utah, Wasatch
District Court Judges (8)	1st District – Box Elder, Cache, and Rich 2nd District – Davis, Morgan, Weber 3rd District x3 – Salt Lake, Summit, Tooele 4th District – Juab, Millard, Utah, Wasatch 5th District – Beaver, Iron, Washington 6th District – Garfield, Kane, Piute, Sanpete, Sevier, Wayne
Commissioners (4)	2nd District – Davis, Morgan, Weber 3rd District x2– Salt Lake, Summit, Tooele 4th District – Juab, Millard, Utah, Wasatch
Court of Appeals Judge (1)	Statewide

This request also necessitates one-time funding to complete an additional —currently shelled — courtroom in Tooele County for a district court judge to hear cases.

3 – Sixth District Training Coordinator *\$102,300 ongoing*

The Sixth District covers a large geographical area (six counties and over 16,000 square miles), creating unique challenges in consistently training court staff. The Sixth District is currently the only judicial district without a training coordinator, a position that has proved essential in all other districts in maintaining a fully trained workforce. Training coordinators help employees understand and execute court operations and procedures and help employees properly implement legislative changes. A training coordinator position in the Sixth District would significantly enhance the ability to support staff development and promote efficiency while enhancing the ability to advance justice across the district.

Judicial Council Budget Priorities

FY 2027

4 – Integrated Domestic Violence Court *\$1,972,600 ongoing; \$1,285,000 one-time*

Domestic violence represents a significant threat to the health, safety, and wellbeing of Utah's families. To effectively address domestic violence, the Judiciary proposes implementing the Integrated Domestic Violence (IDV) Court in Tooele County. IDV Court uses a “one judge, one family” model and seeks to improve safety for victims and their children, hold defendants accountable, and reduce domestic violence recidivism. IDV Court accomplishes these goals with a judge and staff who have advanced domestic violence training, a dedicated Guardian ad Litem attorney to assess the risk of abuse for children, legal representation for litigants, treatment resources, and supervised visitation when necessary.

5– Domestic Violence Courts *\$618,600 ongoing*

The efforts of Grand County and Wasatch County to improve their response to domestic violence by implementing Domestic Violence Courts have been undermined by a lack of resources. For Domestic Violence Courts to operate effectively and improve outcomes in domestic violence cases, defendants must be able to access treatment resources. This funding would make necessary treatment resources available including domestic violence treatment, substance use treatment, and mental health treatment. Funding would also allow Grand County and Wasatch County to share a full-time Domestic Violence Court Coordinator to attend to the many details and logistics involved in operating a Domestic Violence Court.

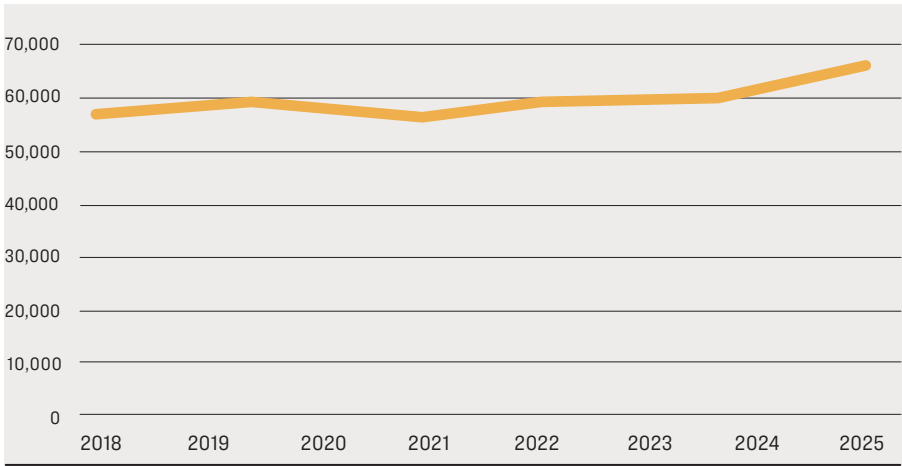
UNNUMBERED BUDGET PRIORITY – STATUTORY REQUIREMENT

Guardianship Signature Program Attorney Pass-Through *\$667,600 ongoing*

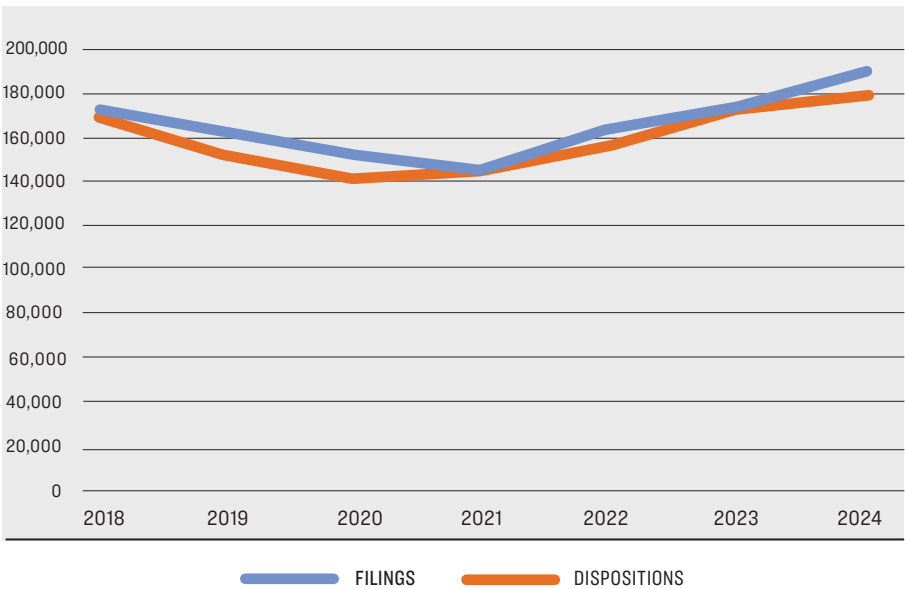
Utah law (Utah Code 75-5-303(2)) ensures the right to counsel for individuals facing guardianship proceedings. However, if the individual and their parents are indigent, no dedicated resources exist to secure legal representation. Efforts to address this need through attorney volunteerism have fallen short, with 62% of qualifying cases lacking attorney involvement. This funding would support a program manager and the equivalent of two FTE contract attorneys experienced in guardianship matters to support the allegedly incapacitated individuals through the process.

Statewide Caseload Statistics

Pending Cases in District Court



District Court Filings and Dispositions



HOME Court

Healing Opportunities to Mentally Excel

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The HOME (*Healing Opportunities to Mentally Excel*) Court is a pilot program authorized by House Bill 421 that began operations in October 2024 and is scheduled to run through June 2029. The program provides comprehensive, individualized treatment and services to individuals with mental illness who are supervised through a voluntary civil court model.

HOME Court serves individuals in Salt Lake County who have a qualifying mental illness and, because of that illness, are unlikely to remain safe or stable without supervision, assistance, or services. Participation is limited to individuals for whom no appropriate less-restrictive alternative exists, who are likely to benefit from the program, and for whom capacity is available. The program is designed to address significant mental health needs while supporting stability, safety, and long-term independence.

PARTICIPATION AND SERVICES

Participants may enter HOME Court through two approved pathways. One pathway includes individuals involved in involuntary commitment proceedings who do not meet full civil commitment criteria, or who voluntarily choose HOME Court as an alternative. The second pathway serves individuals at risk of eviction due to mental illness. Each pathway has a capacity of up to 20 participants. A third pathway is under consideration to serve individuals with mental illness who also have pending criminal charges.

HOME Court operates through a collaborative, multidisciplinary partnership that includes Salt Lake County Behavioral Health Services and network providers, the



Salt Lake Legal Defenders Association, Utah Support Advocates for Recovery Awareness, the Salt Lake County District Attorney's Office, the Division of Services for People with Disabilities, Housing Connect, Utah Legal Services, and the Third District Court.

Participants receive coordinated services tailored to individual needs, including mental health treatment supported by a dedicated Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team, housing assistance, social services, case management, peer support, and transition planning. The program emphasizes individualized goals and structured supports to promote stability and successful completion.

MyCase



MyCase is a no-cost, online portal that allows parties, including self-represented litigants, to manage nearly all aspects of their court cases in one place. Users can view case history, access filed documents, pay fines and fees, and link multiple Utah court cases.¹ MyCase also enables self-represented litigants to e-file court documents in select civil case types, including evictions, debt collection, and small claims, as well as in all criminal cases. In addition, MyCase serves as the access point for MyPaperwork, the courts' guided online form system that helps users complete and file court documents through an interview-style process.

Recent enhancements have expanded MyCase's functionality and usability. Users can now initiate certain cases, including name and sex designation changes, directly into the court's case management system through MyPaperwork. MyCase also supports e-filing by defendants in all criminal cases and offers mobile-friendly guided interviews for civil protective orders, child protective orders, and

civil stalking injunctions, allowing victims to initiate urgent filings remotely.

In FY2025, the Administrative Office of the Courts received \$205,000 in grant funding from the Utah Bar Foundation to support strategic enhancements to the MyCase platform. This funding is focused on improving access to timely, case-critical information, particularly in high-volume case types such as evictions and debt collection, where clear communication is essential.

Grant-funded projects currently underway include improved hearing notifications, critical email alerts for defendants in high-volume cases, seamless navigation between MyPaperwork and MyCase, and expanded automation of complex case types such as guardianship and conservatorship matters. These enhancements are expected to be completed by July 2026.

Together, these improvements strengthen the courts' online services for self-represented litigants and support access to justice for the nearly 90 percent of civil cases in Utah that involve at least one pro se party.

¹Litigants who are represented by an attorney must file court documents through their attorney

Interpreter Training Program and Partnership with Utah State University

ADDRESSING THE INTERPRETER SHORTAGE

The Utah Judiciary has partnered with Utah State University (USU) to launch a specialized court interpreter training program beginning in January 2026. This statewide initiative responds to a persistent shortage of qualified court interpreters that has affected court operations and access to justice for Utah's limited English proficient population since the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, the transition to virtual court proceedings fundamentally altered the interpreter services market. Contract interpreters were suddenly able to accept work from courts nationwide, transforming what had been a local workforce into a national one. As a result, Utah's courts began competing with jurisdictions across the country for qualified interpreters, leading to ongoing staffing challenges in providing constitutionally required language access services.

The Judiciary's Language Access Program has made significant progress in recruitment, expanding interpreter recruitment cohorts from fewer than 10 participants in 2020 to an average of 50 participants per cohort. Despite this growth, certification remains a major barrier. Low pass rates on the required oral certification exam reflect the absence of formal training pathways that prepare candidates for the specialized legal knowledge and interpreting skills the exam demands.

A SUSTAINABLE TRAINING MODEL

The partnership with Utah State University builds on a proven workforce development model. Legislators previously collaborated with

USU to establish a successful medical interpreter training program, creating a foundation for specialized interpreter education. As court interpreter shortages became more acute, representatives from the judiciary, legislature, and USU worked together to adapt this model to meet the needs of the courts. The result is a collaborative initiative drawing on USU's Translation and Interpretation Program, Criminal Justice Program, and the Judiciary's Language Access Program.

The pilot program will train two cohorts of approximately 50 bilingual participants each year, beginning in January and August 2026. The curriculum consists of three modules totaling approximately 52 to 55 hours of instruction. Participants will receive foundational instruction in the criminal justice system, develop core court interpreting skills, and complete advanced exam preparation. The program also includes interpreter shadowing opportunities, individualized feedback, and the development of targeted practice resources.

By addressing the primary barriers to certification through structured education, this initiative is expected to increase certification exam pass rates and expand the pool of qualified court interpreters available statewide. In doing so, the program will help reduce case delays, decrease reliance on out-of-state interpreters, and strengthen compliance with constitutional language access requirements. The Judiciary views this partnership as a sustainable, cost-effective approach to workforce development and a meaningful investment in equal access to justice for all Utahns.

System Review - Strengthening the Judiciary from Within

The Utah Judiciary has long been recognized as a national leader in court administration, known for innovation, efficiency, and a strong commitment to access to justice. Sustaining that reputation requires continual reflection and improvement. To that end, the Utah Judicial Council partnered with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to conduct a comprehensive system review of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and the broader judicial branch, examining how the organization functions as both a justice system and an employer. Together, these efforts reflect the Judiciary's commitment to continuous improvement in how it serves the public and supports the employees who make that service possible.

The assessment evaluated governance, administrative support, business processes, workload, staffing, workflows, budget practices, and workplace culture through a statewide survey, interviews, and focus groups. Its purpose was to understand employee and judicial officer experiences and identify opportunities to strengthen internal operations. Of the 46 recommendations identified, the Utah Judiciary has completed 25 (54%), with an additional 12 (26%) currently in progress, while the remaining recommendations are under exploration or scheduled for future work.

The initiatives highlighted below represent select examples of the Judiciary's response to the assessment findings and reflect key efforts focused on employee support, communication, training, and workplace effectiveness.

SUPPORTING EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING AND COMMUNICATION

Several initiatives focused on strengthening employee support and communication. The Judiciary expanded awareness of employee assistance programs and mental health

resources, including trauma-informed training developed in partnership with Trauma-Informed Utah, recognizing the emotional demands placed on court personnel and providing tools to address secondary traumatic stress.

To improve transparency and alignment, the AOC launched an internal website designed to centralize information, clarify organizational structure, and promote direct communication between leadership and employees. Updated onboarding materials and training resources now provide clearer explanations of how the Judiciary operates and how individual roles support the branch's mission.

STRENGTHENING WORK AND TRAINING PRACTICES

In response to employee feedback, the Judiciary clarified and expanded flexible work options that support productivity while maintaining public service. While some arrangements existed prior to the system review, employees were not always aware of them or how they could be adapted to district needs. To address this, the Human Resources Department published a comprehensive list of flexible work options, including flexible schedules and telework and hybrid arrangements, to promote clarity and consistent use statewide.

Training and professional development remained a central focus. The Judiciary expanded onboarding programs, established a Training and Onboarding Committee to standardize core processes statewide, partnered with higher education institutions to explore expedited training pathways for judicial assistants, and introduced a "Training Corner" resource to support employee proficiency with software tools and emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence. Employee engagement data reflects the impact of these efforts, with employees identifying 711 online courses and 293 live courses as relevant to their work and 91% of professional development enrollees completing their courses.

Court Connect Town Halls

This year, the Utah Judiciary launched Court Connect town halls, a statewide initiative designed to engage directly with communities, strengthen public trust and confidence in the courts, increase access to justice, and inform residents about available court resources and services. This series of town hall meetings represents a significant step in the Judiciary's ongoing commitment to transparency, accessibility, and responsive public service.

Court Connect town halls bring judges and court leadership into local communities across Utah - meeting people where they are in libraries, community centers, courthouses, and other accessible venues. These conversations are intended to demystify the judicial system, explain how courts function, and provide space for residents to ask questions, share concerns, and learn how the Judiciary serves the public.

At its core, Court Connect is about listening as much as it is about informing. Community members are invited to discuss topics such as court processes, access to services, and the role of judges, while also offering feedback on their experiences with the justice system. These conversations help the Judiciary better understand

local needs and identify opportunities to improve access, communication, and service delivery.

The initiative supports several key priorities of the Utah Judiciary, including building public trust, increasing transparency, and promoting civic understanding. By engaging directly with the public, judges and court leaders reinforce the Judiciary's commitment to fairness, independence, and accountability, while also clarifying the limits of judicial roles and decision-making.

Importantly, Court Connect town halls are not case-specific forums. Judges do not discuss pending matters or individual rulings. Instead, the focus remains on education, process, and the broader mission of the courts—helping the public understand how justice is administered and why judicial independence matters.

As the program continues statewide, Court Connect reflects a broader commitment to openness and engagement. Through respectful dialogue and shared understanding, the Judiciary aims to strengthen relationships with the communities it serves and ensure that Utah's courts remain accessible, trusted, and responsive to the people.



Our Why: The People Behind the Utah Judiciary

The Utah Judiciary's mission is carried out each day by employees whose work is grounded in service, integrity, and a commitment to fairness. Across courtrooms, offices, and communities statewide, Judiciary employees bring purpose and compassion to roles that support justice at every level. While their responsibilities vary, they are united by a shared belief in the importance of public service and the impact their work has on individuals, families, and communities.

The following reflections offer a glimpse into what motivates Judiciary employees and why they choose to serve.

JUSTICE UNDER THE LAW

Many employees describe their work as a direct contribution to fairness, accountability, and trust in the justice system.

"Every task I do helps ensure that justice runs smoothly. It's not just paperwork—it's being part of something that truly matters."

— **Judicial Assistant**

"I value the opportunity to contribute to the meaningful work of upholding our Constitution and applying the law fairly to all."

— **Law Clerk Attorney**

"Working for the judiciary means standing behind values that make a difference—fairness, integrity, and service to the public."

— **Team Lead Judicial Assistant**

Others emphasized the privilege of serving in specialized areas, particularly within juvenile justice.

"The Utah Juvenile Court is a national leader in evidence-based practices. Being part of that work and helping kids change their lives is incredibly meaningful."

— **Probation Supervisor**

SERVING OUR COMMUNITIES

For many employees, their motivation is rooted in supporting others during difficult moments and strengthening trust within their communities.

"Working in the judiciary allows me to remind both staff and patrons of their worth while helping them navigate challenges with respect and understanding."

— **Court Program Manager**

"I want to make sure every child is treated fairly and has the resources to succeed—now and in the future."

— **Juvenile Probation Officer**

"Public service is about showing up for people when they need it most. Justice begins with compassion."

— **Judicial Assistant**

Our Why:

The People Behind the Utah Judiciary

(continued)

Employees also spoke about the importance of representation, access, and stability for vulnerable populations.

“A child’s past should never define their future. Every day I have the opportunity to help change someone’s life for the better.”

— **Juvenile Probation Officer**

“That steady presence—being seen and valued—can change the entire course of a child’s life.”

— **CASA Program Administrator**

HOPE, PURPOSE, AND A FUTURE

Across roles, employees consistently described their work as a source of hope—for themselves and for those they serve.

“Helping others navigate the court system and seeing success stories, especially in recovery courts, reminds me why this work matters.”

— **Judicial Assistant**

“My work helps others do theirs. Even behind the scenes, I know I’m contributing to something bigger.”

— **Administrative Assistant**

“I know that when children leave the court system, they are in a better place than when they entered—and there is nothing more rewarding.”

— **Guardian ad Litem Attorney**

Together, these voices reflect a workforce deeply committed to the Utah Judiciary’s mission: to provide the people an open, fair, efficient, and independent system for the advancement of justice under the law. The dedication of Judiciary employees is not only the foundation of court operations—it is the reason the system continues to serve Utah communities with integrity, compassion, and purpose.



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