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District Courts

Agency Profile 1

https://www.mncourts.gov/

AT A GLANCE

- In 2025, 1,122,159 cases were filed in district court.
- District court proceedings are held in 104 locations throughout all 87 Minnesota counties.
- District courts are organized into ten judicial districts for administrative purposes.
- There are 296 district court judges.
- District courts serve all Minnesota residents.

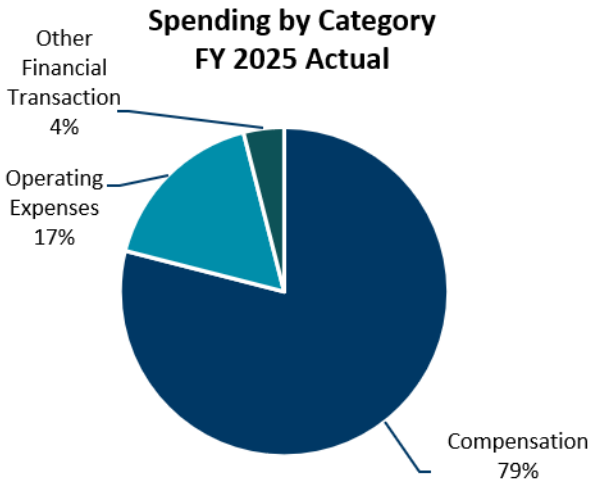
PURPOSE

The mission of the Judicial Branch is to provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.

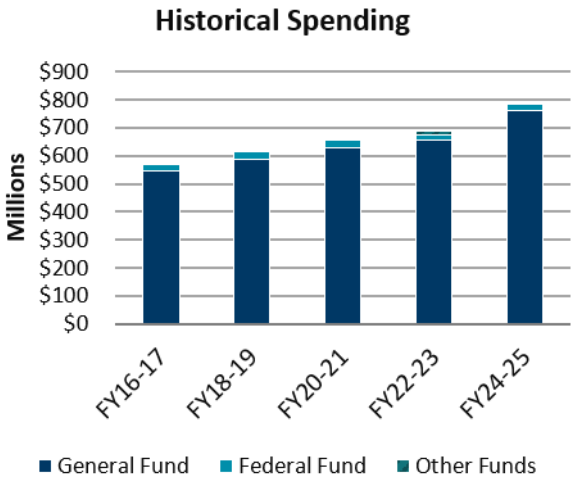
District courts are the backbone of the state's court system. District courts provide access to the justice system across the state, with courthouses located in all 87 counties. For administrative purposes, district courts are divided among ten judicial districts. A chief judge serves as the administrative head in each judicial district. Judicial District Administrators assist the Chief Judge in carrying out their responsibilities. Court administration staff at the county level manage scheduling, case flow, finance, personnel, and juries.

District court judges hear everything from traffic tickets, civil and family conflicts, and first-degree murder trials. Some district courts may have separate divisions, such as criminal, civil, probate, family, and juvenile courts.

BUDGET



Source: Budget Planning & Analysis System (BPAS)



Source: Consolidated Fund Statement

District courts spent $422 million in fiscal year (FY) 2025. Of this amount, $409 million (97 percent) was from state general fund appropriations, while the remaining $13 million (3 percent) was received from other sources, such as federal and local government grants and donations from foundations.

STRATEGIES

The District Court conducts its functions in support of three strategic goals to deliver its mission:

- Access to Justice - *A justice system that is open, affordable, understandable, and provides appropriate levels of service to all users.* Ensuring access to justice for all is an enduring commitment for Minnesota's court system. It is also an increasingly challenging concern given changing court user expectations, shifting demographics, and increased competition for scarce resources.
- Effective Administration of Justice - *A justice system that adopts approaches and processes for the fair and just resolution of all cases.* Over the last two decades, Minnesota courts have worked diligently to become increasingly efficient and effective. The Judicial Branch is focused on being a well-managed court system that seeks innovative ways to promote justice for individual litigants in individual cases.
- Public Trust and Accountability - *A justice system that engenders public trust and confidence through impartial decision-making and accountability for the use of public resources.* The Judicial Branch is accountable to the public and it is critical to maintain and continuously improve public trust and accountability. It must meet this challenge by collaborating with court customers to eliminate disparities in the court system.

Over the past 14 years, the Judicial Branch has engaged in a reform agenda to modernize and re-engineer the work of Minnesota's courts. These efforts have made the court system more efficient and more convenient for court users, while increasing access to court records for customers and the public.

Between 2012 and 2016, the eCourtMN Initiative transitioned Minnesota from paper-based court files to electronic case records improving efficiency, convenience for court users, information sharing between the state's justice partners, and access to court data. Following this initiative, the Judicial Branch adopted the oneCourtMN Vision to deliver "high-quality, consistent, and convenient court administration services anywhere in the state." To maintain access to justice during the COVID-19 pandemic, the courts transitioned the majority of court hearings to online courtrooms which became preferred due to the ease and convenience of conducting official court business online.

In 2022, the Minnesota Judicial Branch became one of the first court systems in the nation to commit to the long-term use of remote (online) district court hearings. The Judicial Council adopted the oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative Policy, which set a temporary framework for how district courts would use both in-person and remote hearings to deliver timely and efficient access to justice. In 2024, the Judicial Council adopted a new, permanent hearing framework for how district courts will use both in-person and remote hearings going forward. This new framework took effect in February 2025.

RESULTS

Part A: Performance Data

It is the policy of the Judicial Branch to establish core performance goals and to monitor key results that measure progress toward meeting these goals to ensure accountability of the Judicial Branch, improve overall operations of the court, and enhance the public's trust and confidence in the Judiciary. Throughout the year, the district courts are directed to review performance measure results. This review is shared with the Judicial Council (the Judicial Branch's governing body) twice a year.

An important goal is ensuring district courts resolve cases in a timely manner, and the Judicial Branch is pleased to report that Minnesota district courts have eliminated the pandemic backlog of felony and gross misdemeanor cases.

Given the public health precautions in place during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of pending felony and gross misdemeanor cases had grown by nearly 40 percent. In response, the Judicial Council adopted an aggressive backlog reduction goal and secured federal and state legislative funding to utilize senior judges, expand criminal case calendars, and organize special case resolution events to reduce this backlog of major criminal cases. By May 2024, the district courts had officially reduced the pending major criminal caseload to pre-pandemic levels, helping ensure timely access to justice and a high-functioning court system in Minnesota.

Below is a look at some other key performance measures for Minnesota's district courts.

Measure	Measure type	Measure data source	Historical trend	Most recent data
Statewide clearance rate – The clearance rate measures whether courts are disposing of as many cases as are filed in the same year. A clearance rate of 100 percent means as many cases were disposed in a year as were newly filed.	Result	Annual disposal and filing of court cases.	The percent decreased from 101 percent in 2023 to 98 percent in 2025.	98 percent in 2025
Statewide time to disposition - time to disposition assesses the length of time it takes a court to process cases. The goal is to dispose 99 percent of cases within Judicial Branch time objectives.	Result	The disposal of cases within the Judicial Branch time objectives.	The percent increased from 91 percent in 2023 to 95 percent in 2025.	95 percent in 2025
Statewide age of pending cases - Assesses the percentage of cases that are pending beyond Judicial Branch time objectives for all cases at the end of the fiscal year (excluding minor criminal). The goal is one percent or lower.	Result	Cases that are pending beyond Judicial Branch time objectives for all cases at the end of the fiscal year (excluding minor criminals).	The percent decreased from 13 percent in 2023 to 12 percent in 2025 of cases pending beyond Judicial Branch time objectives.	12 percent in 2025

Data are from the Judicial Branch 2023 Performance Measures - Key Results and Measures Annual Report (https://mncourts.gov/_media/migration/ciomedialibrary/documents/annual-report-2023-performance-measures.pdf) and 2025 Report (https://mncourts.gov/_media/migration/ciomedialibrary/documents/FY25-Performance-Measures-Annual-Report.pdf)

Part B: Evidence of Effectiveness

Minnesota's district courts are a constitutionally established component of state government and play a fundamental role in upholding the rule of law, protecting individual rights, promoting public safety, and providing a peaceful and impartial forum for resolving disputes. The effectiveness of the court system is reflected in its ability to provide fair, accessible, and timely justice to Minnesotans across the state. In 2025 alone, more than 1.1 million cases were filed in Minnesota's district courts, encompassing matters ranging from traffic and family disputes to civil cases and serious criminal proceedings.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is strongly committed to performance measurement, accountability, and the use of data and evidence to continually improve court operations. For the past 17 years, the Judicial Branch has published an annual Performance Measures Report evaluating results related to access to justice, timeliness, integrity and accountability, excellence, fairness and equity, and quality court workplace environment. These measures provide a consistent, transparent assessment of how Minnesota's courts are performing and identify both positive results and areas requiring continued attention. The most recent report and prior Judicial Branch performance reports are available on the Minnesota Judicial Branch Publications and Reports webpage (https://mncourts.gov/about-the-courts/publicationsandreports/mjb-performance-measures).

No evidence-based practices are known to be directly implemented by the District Courts.

The Minnesota Constitution, Article VI (https://www.revisor.mn.gov/constitution/#article_6) provides the authority for the District Court. Minn. Stat Chapters 484, 485, 486, 491, 491A, 492, and 493 (https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/part/JUDICIARY*)* provide the legal authority for district court operations.