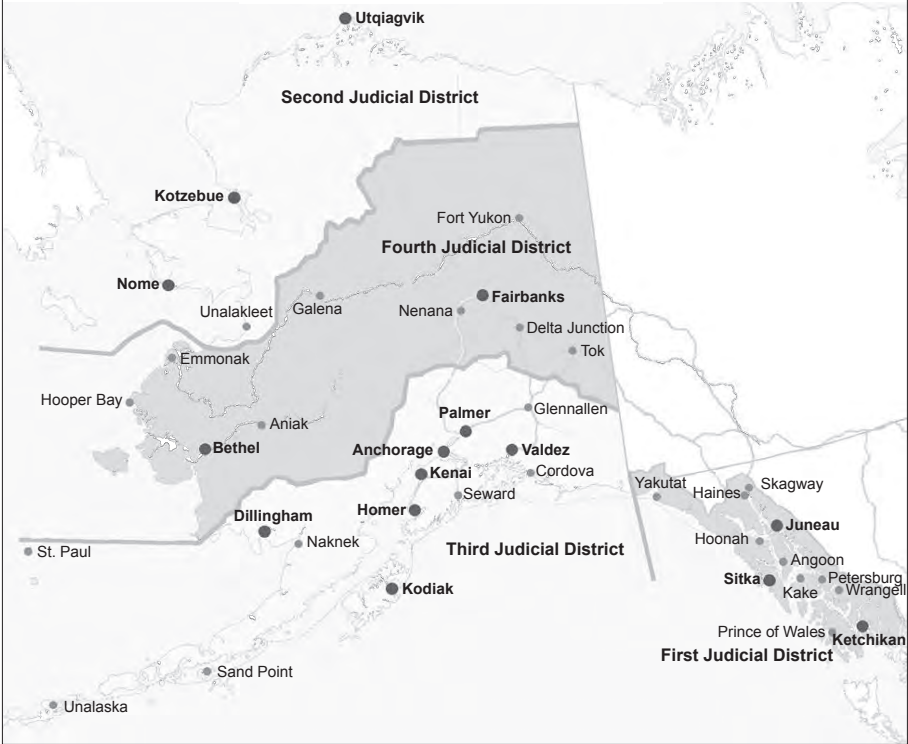




Alaska Court System Annual Report FY 2023

July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

Alaska Court Locations, FY 2023



Alaska Court System Annual Report FY 2023

July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023



© Copyright 2024 by the Alaska Court System.

Layout and compositing by Melissa S. Green, Field of Words, Anchorage, AK.

Printed by Northern Printing, Inc., Anchorage, AK.

A bookmarked PDF version of this annual report is available on the Alaska Court System website at <https://courts.alaska.gov/admin/index.htm#annualrep>.



Black brant flying in front of Mount Dutton, Izembek National Wildlife Refuge (Third Judicial District)

Contents

Introduction	2
Year in Review	6
Justices, Judges, and Senior Court Administrators	35
Court Statistical Highlights	40
Photo Permissions	42



Great Seal of the State of Alaska and dais, Alaska Supreme Court courtroom, Boney Courthouse, Anchorage

The Alaska Court System

The government of the State of Alaska is divided into three separate but equal branches: the *executive*, the *legislative*, and the *judicial*. By providing for checks and balances, this division prevents the concentration of governmental power in one or another function. The federal government and the governments of most other states are also structured in this way.

Although the terms *judicial branch* and *court system* are often used interchangeably, in fact, the Alaska judicial branch contains three separate entities: the *Alaska Court System*, the *Alaska Judicial Council*, and the *Alaska Commission on Judicial Conduct*, each with a function established in the state constitution.

Alaska has a unified, centrally-administered court system, totally funded by the state. Municipal governments do not maintain separate court systems. There are four levels of courts in the Alaska Court System, each with different powers, duties, and responsibilities. The *Superior Court* and *District Court* are *trial courts*, which initially hear and decide court cases. The *Supreme Court* and *Court of Appeals* are *appellate courts*, which review and decide appeals from decisions made by the trial courts. Title 22 of the Alaska Statutes sets out the jurisdiction and responsibilities of each court.

The Supreme Court and the Superior Court were established in the state constitution. In 1959, the legislature created a District Court for each judicial district and granted power to the Supreme Court to increase or decrease the number of District Court judges. In 1980, the legislature created the Court of Appeals.

The Chief Justice of the Alaska Supreme Court is the administrative head of the Alaska Court System. An administrative director is appointed by the chief justice with concurrence of the Supreme Court. The director supervises the administration of all courts in the state.

The Supreme Court sets out the rules governing the administration of all courts and the rules of practice and procedure for civil and criminal cases.



Participants in Color of Justice program, Anchorage, April 23, 2023

How Alaskans Choose Their Judges

The Alaska constitution provides for the selection of judges by merit; that is, judges are selected on the basis of their qualifications, rather than on their political or social connections. Alaska was one of the first states to adopt merit selection of judges. Today, over thirty other states select some or all of their judges in this way.

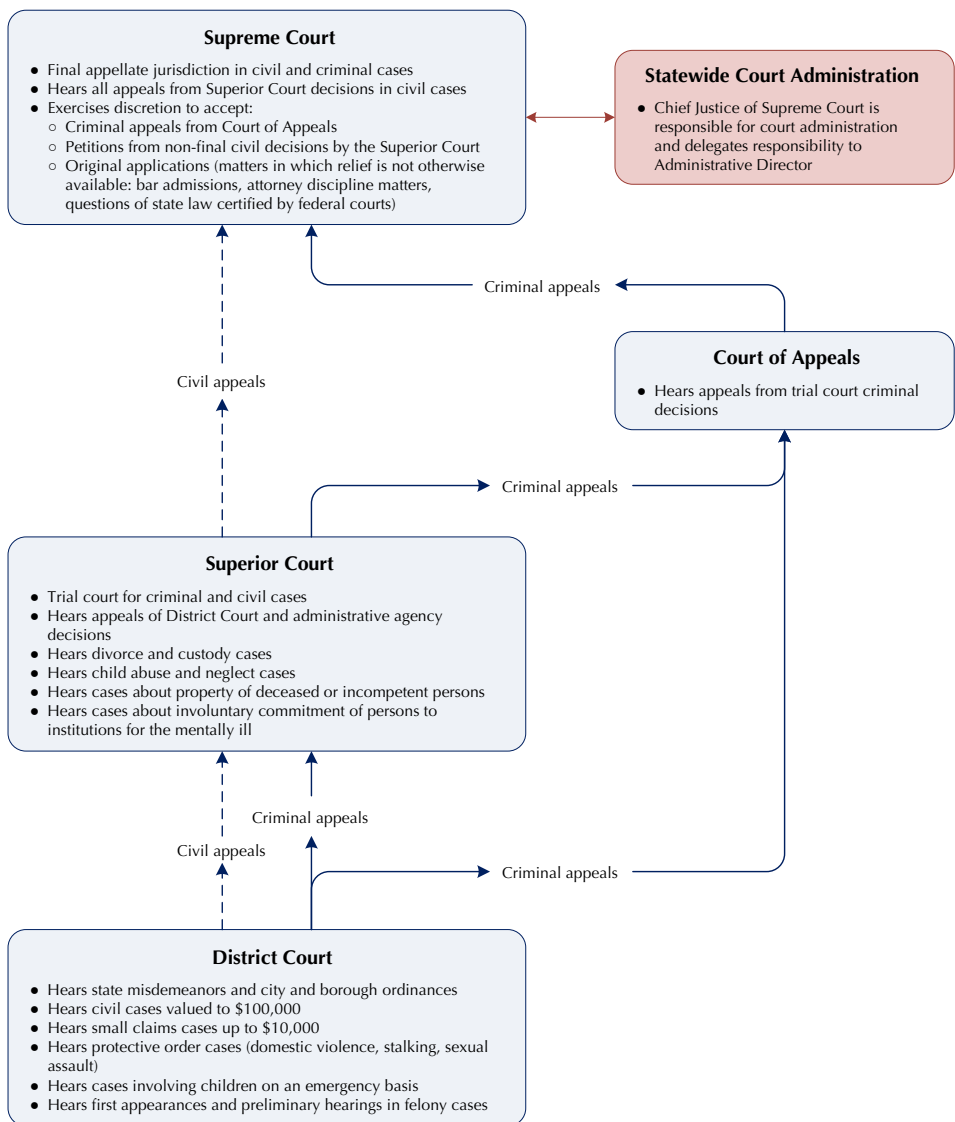
The Alaska Judicial Council, an independent citizens' commission, investigates and evaluates applicants for judicial positions for all courts except magistrate judge courts. The council sends the names of the most qualified applicants to the governor. The governor must make an appointment from this list. (Magistrate judges are selected according to a different process.)



Confluence of the Salcha and Tanana Rivers near Salcha
(Fourth Judicial District)

After serving for a specified period of time, all justices and judges in Alaska must stand regularly for approval by voters on a non-partisan ballot in a general election. This is called *retention*. The Judicial Council evaluates the performance of judicial officers standing for retention election. The evaluation includes a survey of attorneys, peace and probation officers, court employees, and others regarding the conduct of individual judges. Prior to the election date, the council provides detailed information from this evaluation to the public and makes recommendations regarding the retention of individual judges.

Alaska Court System Structure





Year in Review

Introduction

The Alaska Court System is pleased to present its FY 2023 annual report to the Alaska Legislature and public. The report includes an overview of court operations, a list of judicial officers and senior administrators who served during FY23, discussion of various court programs, highlights of case data, and summary budget information. The online version of this report (<https://courts.alaska.gov/admin/index.htm#annualrep>) contains comprehensive case data.

The Alaska Court System serves everyone in the state, under the framework of law established by the Alaska and U.S. constitutions.



Humpback whales, Portland Island (First Judicial District)



Sunset on the Iditarod National Historic Trail between Kaltag and Unalakleet (Second Judicial District)

Lessons from the Covid Pandemic

During FY 2023, as pandemic restrictions became less necessary, the court system sought to determine which emergency adaptations carried benefits worth continuing as part of ordinary operations. After considering input from judicial officers, administrative staff, and the public, the Supreme Court issued a series of orders adopting certain emergency practices as part of ordinary court operations:

- SCO 2005 — requires livestreaming, by video or audio, of non-confidential court proceedings, particularly in certain areas involving the welfare of the Alaska community, and in some felony criminal cases.
- SCO 2007 — continues some of the simplifications of filing procedures adopted during the pandemic.
- SCO 2012 — identifies which court proceedings should presumptively be held in person and which remotely by video or audio.
- SCO 2013 — refines the efficiency of jury administrative practices.

Some of these changes are discussed in more detail in the following segments.

Communication with Alaskans

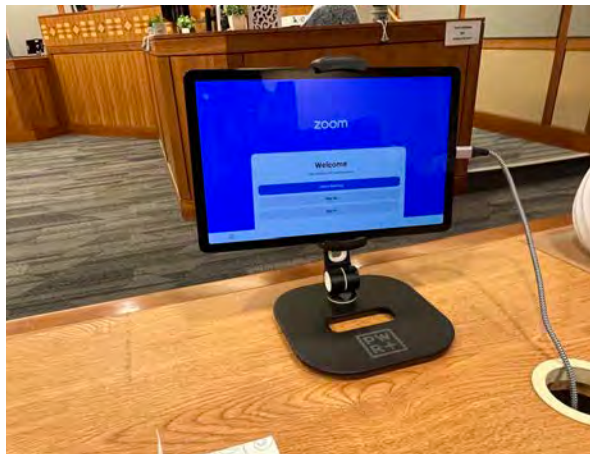
Regular communication with the Alaska public is an important aspect of court system work. The court communications team issues regular press releases on court operations and judicial matters, working with the general media to further public understanding of court functions and processes. It facilitates contact with judges, educates reporters on court procedures, and when appropriate, corrects inaccuracies in reported news stories. The team utilizes multiple tools in its work.

Court communication also includes facilitating public access to most judicial proceedings. In FY23, the Alaska Supreme Court expanded this access with a new order on livestreaming judicial proceedings.

Public Access

Access to judicial proceedings is important to the transparency and integrity of the court system. Most court proceedings are open to the public and to the media, and courtrooms include spaces for public observers. During the months of the covid pandemic, however, safety considerations required restrictions on in-person access to courtrooms. To maintain public access, the court system began to livestream more proceedings. The Alaska Supreme Court has decided to continue livestreaming some proceedings as an alternate means of access for the public. Although in-person attendance is again possible for non-confidential proceedings, continuing the livestreaming broadens public access, particularly for Alaskans who live off the road system or far from court facilities.

SCO 2005 (<https://courts.alaska.gov/sco/docs/sco2005.pdf>), issued in spring 2023, establishes the framework for regular livestreaming and specifies the type of cases for which streaming should occur “to the greatest extent possible.” The order covers cases generally open to the public, not those that are confidential.



*Courtroom, Nesbett Courthouse, Anchorage
(Third Judicial District)*

In general, the court will stream hearings and proceedings, including trials, on matters of safety and welfare; economic, environmental, or community well-being; and governmental matters, including elections. Criminal trials, except those involving sexual offenses, may also be livestreamed. The order details the considerations the trial judge should weigh in making the decision to livestream and the limitations on displaying certain kinds of evidence.

Oral arguments before the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals will also continue to be livestreamed.

The court system now has its own streaming server: <https://stream.akcourts.gov/>. The video streams of trial court proceedings are not archived or available to the public after the conclusion of the proceeding.

Website

The Alaska Court System website (<https://courts.alaska.gov/index.htm>) continues to be one of the primary means of communication with the public. The website is an information gateway to court operations. Its content is continuously refined and updated. In FY23, the court updated several sections for the self-help programs.

The Media and Community website section (<https://courts.alaska.gov/media/index.htm>) contains information of particular interest to the media, including a most-requested case files link and links to summary court case data. This section also presents coverage of regular court outreach efforts, such as Supreme Court LIVE, Law Day, and the Color of Justice program.

Social Media

Several social media platforms have become important tools for keeping the public up-to-date with different aspects of court operations: Facebook, X (formerly, Twitter), YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/AlaskaCourtSystem>) provides the platform for the communications team to send out timely notices on court operations, judicial decisions, judicial appointments, employment opportunities, schedule changes, and newsworthy events. The Facebook page also serves a public education function, offering links to court resources, such as instructional videos, and to other sources of information on court-related issues, such as general news articles.

The court uses X to share press releases and updates on high profile cases with the general news media as well as the public. Both X and Facebook

facilitate timely announcements of closures and other unexpected events.

The court's YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/AlaskaCourtSystem>) provides access to the many court-produced instructional videos.

The court system also uses LinkedIn to post hiring notices.



Caribou near Woolley Lagoon north of Nome (Second Judicial District)

Jurors and Jury Trials

Both the U.S. and the Alaska constitutions guarantee the right to a trial by jury. The covid pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for the Alaska Court System to meet this guarantee. While the pandemic affected the scheduling of jury trials, the court system continued to summon

Looking Forward

The court system is considering whether to expand the size of the geographic area from which potential jurors can be summoned. Due to cost considerations, the area has been limited to communities within a fifty-mile radius of the court location. The Alaska Supreme Court has authorized a pilot project to conduct jury selection by video. This has been done effectively outside Alaska. If the pilot proves successful, the court may authorize remote jury selection, allowing more Alaskans to serve.

jurors on a regular schedule and adapted procedures and courtroom layouts to permit trials to proceed safely.

A review of the data collected on these emergency changes revealed that some resulted in such generally positive effects that they should continue. Juror utilization improved — that is, fewer summoned jurors were sent home without being needed; and less time was spent in selecting juries. In FY23, the court system's Jury Improvement Committee recommended that several pandemic adaptations become permanent practices.

A Supreme Court Order effective in early FY 2024 has established that:

- The number of jurors requested per trial will be limited by trial type (with some exceptions).
- Jurors can request to be excused through the court system's online juror dashboard.
- The use of a pretrial electronic questionnaire will permit challenges for cause to be handled before jurors appear in the courtroom.
- Judges will conduct jury selection with smaller panels brought into the courtroom in time-staggered groups and the time for jury selection limited.
- Peremptory challenges should be exercised per panel or by the individual juror.

FY23 Jury Figures

In FY 2023, as it became possible to conduct jury trials on a full schedule, 17,676 people appeared statewide for jury duty — 2,864 for grand juries and 14,814 for trial juries. In FY22, slightly more than 10,000 appeared, and in FY19, the last full year before the start of the covid pandemic, over 23,000 people appeared.

Jurors were summoned for 421 trials, with 3,560 jurors sworn into service. These totals cover criminal and civil trials in both Superior and District Courts, as well as presumptive death, probate, and delinquency trials. Of the total, 328 cases actually went to trial; the remainder folded before trial. In FY22, 199 cases went to trial.

Grand juries continued to sit in twelve designated sites throughout the year. The term of a grand jury varies from location to location.

Juror expenses totaled a little under \$2 million in FY23. Of this total, slightly more than \$1.5 million in FY23 was juror pay. Juror pay has been raised to \$50 per day.

Travel, lodging, and meals cost \$464,000. Trials in Bethel, where jurors travel by air from villages in the region, accounted for \$272,000 of the travel total; and in Dillingham, \$101,000.

In calling potential jurors, the court system uses a numerically random system designed in accordance with state statutes and Alaska Rules of Court. By law, an Alaska juror must be a state resident and a U.S. citizen, at least eighteen years old, of sound mind and in possession of natural faculties, and able to speak or read English. The list of applicants for a Permanent Fund Dividend serves as the basis for identifying state residents.

The Work of Grand Juries

Grand juries, composed of twelve to eighteen people, sit regularly in twelve locations across the state. Jurors serve for varying lengths of time, and usually consider multiple cases during their period of service.

Under the state constitution, a grand jury has two functions. The first, most commonly exercised function involves criminal matters. Grand jurors consider whether a felony crime has been committed under state law and whether there is sufficient evidence to charge someone with that crime. The second, less commonly exercised function, is the power to investigate and report on matters related to public welfare and safety.

Work in Criminal Matters

With a possible felony criminal charge, a prosecutor presents the case to the grand jury, identifies the person possibly to be charged, and describes the events and situation and the laws that have been violated. The prosecutor calls witnesses and presents evidence. A grand jury does not determine guilt; rather it evaluates what the prosecutor presents to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to charge the individual with a crime and begin the criminal case. Ordinarily, the possible defendant does not appear before the grand jury. If a grand jury decides that the evidence presented does warrant a charge, the prosecutor will prepare an indictment — a charging document — to be presented to a judge. Once an indictment has been issued, the criminal case process will begin.

All grand jury proceedings are secret, including witness testimony, prosecutor statements, and any juror statements or questions. The proceedings are electronically recorded, however, and may later be referenced in the criminal case.

- Pretrial motions should be resolved before trial and before jurors are brought into the courtroom when possible.

The juror dashboard, accessed via the court's website, is now playing a more extensive role in the preliminary phases of juror selection. Individuals can complete the initial qualifying questionnaire, check their status, view local court information, upload documents, and submit requests for excusal and deferral online. Challenges for cause can usually be handled before potential jurors come to court.

In addition, court administration continues to expand the use of email and texting to communicate with jurors and others involved in the trial process, reducing printing and mailing costs significantly. The court system has also found that using social media is an effective way to inform jurors and the

Investigative Function

In Alaska, a grand jury also has the power to investigate and report on issues of public welfare and safety. Such investigations must pertain to the general public welfare; they cannot be matters precipitated primarily by the personal situation of an individual.

In this function the grand jury can subpoena and question witnesses, assemble information, write reports, and make recommendations. For this function also, a prosecutor guides the work of the grand jury, explaining points of law.

This type of grand jury investigation occurs infrequently, usually at the initiation of the Department of Law. A private citizen wishing to bring a matter of general public welfare to the attention of a grand jury must first contact the Department of Law. After considering the request, the department may then bring it to the grand jury for investigation. In FY23, after private citizens requested that grand juries investigate specific situations, the Alaska Supreme Court amended Criminal Rule 6.1 to clarify the process for a citizen to request an investigative grand jury.

public of events such as trial delays and suspensions. It permits inexpensive redundancies in communication, helping to ensure broad, timely notice.

To further improve and refine its jury procedures, the court system is continuing to collect data on juror utilization, trial fold rates, and the length of time necessary to seat a jury.



LeConte Glacier iceberg, Petersburg (First Judicial District)

Law Library

The Alaska State Court Law Library serves the legal information needs for the entire state. The library system comprises three sites staffed by professional librarians — in Anchorage, Juneau, and Fairbanks — and computer-access to electronic collections at smaller court sites around the state. It is the main law library system open both to the general public as well as to legal practitioners. It offers comprehensive access to Alaska and federal legal resources as well as to resources for other states. In FY23, the library's portal pages became accessible via court public computers at all court sites in the state.

Statutes, law reviews and journals, appellate court opinions, and other tools are available in electronic format. Through the court's public computers, library patrons throughout the state have access to all electronic resources. To facilitate ease of access, the library administration is continuing to upgrade electronic links within its catalog function, which is also accessible from the main court website (<http://www.courts.alaska.gov/library/index.htm>).

The library has added the entire American Bar Association collection to the Lexis Digital Library. It is available online to Alaska Bar members and to the general public on library computers.

Books and other hard-copy resources, including older materials not accessible online, can still be borrowed by court personnel and



members of the Alaska Bar Association. The general public can also use these materials on-site in staffed locations.

Professional library staff provide research assistance on-site in the three staffed libraries or by phone and email throughout the state. Although library branches have now reopened to the public with regular hours, the administration will continue to provide the toll-free line put in place during the pandemic.

The library system is a member of the Federal Depository Library Program.



*Rainforest, Bartlett Cove, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve
(First Judicial District)*

eFiling

Throughout FY 2023, court sites across the state continued to integrate electronic case filing into their operations with both criminal, minor offense, and general civil cases. Due to the complexity of the process, Alaska's adoption of criminal cases for electronic filing is unusual in the United States.

TrueFiling, a web-based platform, allows attorneys and parties to file electronic documents for new and existing criminal, minor offense, and civil cases. By the end of FY23, all but the largest Alaska court sites were using fully electronic case files for criminal and minor offense cases and had implemented eFile Lite for civil cases. With eFile Lite, parties file documents electronically with TrueFiling; filings are printed; and the paper file is the official file. As the technical development work is completed, civil cases will transition to fully electronic files.

When the TrueFiling platform becomes available at a court site, its use is mandatory.

Looking Forward

It is anticipated that eFiling for fully electronic civil cases, including confidential case types, will become available in 2025–2026.

Beginning with the smaller courts and tailoring the programming specifically to Alaska’s requirements, the court system has implemented the transition to eFiling over several years. The remaining court sites — Anchorage, Juneau, Fairbanks, Palmer, and Anchorage — were scheduled

to implement electronic filing for criminal and minor offense cases in late 2023 and early 2024.

eFiling improves case processing time, and it reduces the amount of paper generated in managing cases, with savings in paper and postage costs. It also contributes to efficiency and flexibility statewide. Staff now have the ability to work online from different venues to provide coverage during staffing shortages or other disruptions.

The eFiling page (<https://courts.alaska.gov/efile/index.htm>) on the court’s website provides updates on the status of the project at court sites across the state. It provides links to extensive training materials, including videos and webinars.



River & wetlands, Cape Krusenstern National Monument (Second Judicial District)

Online Dispute Resolution

The court system has been developing an online platform to help parties resolve disputes in such civil matters as debt collection, small claims, and eviction proceedings. Two options will be available to resolve disputes: negotiation and mediation.

Parties may choose to negotiate entirely online with the other party to find solutions to their dispute. Each side will be able to present relevant information and propose solutions. Another option is to involve a neutral mediator to work toward a resolution. With both options, parties will be able to work asynchronously; that is, the opposing parties will not need to be using the programs at the same time. Each side presents its proposal, and the opposing party has a time period within which to respond. The parties can go back and forth with modifications until an agreement is reached. Depending on the nature of the conflict and the solution reached, a judge may need to review the final agreement to ensure it meets legal requirements.

The platform is scheduled to launch on the court website’s self-help section in late 2023 or early 2024. While the platform will initially be available to parties in small claims, debt collection, and eviction proceedings, the court system hopes to expand the case types to include modifying parenting plans and, if municipalities are interested, resolving traffic cases.

Use of this approach will be voluntary. It is another tool for handling certain kinds of disputes in a convenient, timely manner. It offers flexibility regarding scheduling and may permit parties to avoid a more protracted, formal case process.

Eviction Diversion

With funding and legal protections in place to enable people to remain housed, the number of eviction cases filed in Alaska dropped during the pandemic. These protections and funds have now lapsed, and eviction case filings have returned to pre-pandemic levels. In FY23 the Alaska Court System launched a statewide eviction diversion pilot program with grant funding from the Eviction Diversion Initiative of the National Center for State Courts. The new program educates landlords and tenants about their rights and responsibilities within the eviction process; provides options for resolving disputes outside the formal court process; and guides those facing eviction to other possible sources of assistance. The court has issued provisional court rules for the pilot program (<https://courts.alaska.gov/adbulls/docs/ab98.pdf>).

Eviction diversion can benefit both landlords and tenants. For example, it can facilitate agreement on a move-out date for a tenant or establish a payment plan for back rent with the tenant remaining in the property. By avoiding formal, court-ordered eviction, a tenant can also avoid having an eviction judgment on the public record — a barrier to securing future housing. The diversion program offers a mediation process as one alternative to the formal court eviction process (<https://courts.alaska.gov/shc/housing/edp.htm>). Mediation can be less protracted and less costly in settling problems. Parties to a dispute can utilize mediation either before or after a court case begins. Both parties to the dispute must agree to participate.



*Butter and eggs (yellow toadflax),
Anchorage (Third Judicial District)*

As a participant in the NCSC Eviction Diversion Initiative, the Alaska Court System is also able to share experience with the other states in the program. The national initiative focuses on fashioning more holistic approaches to eviction problems, recognizing that the formal court eviction process should not be viewed in isolation but rather as part of a broader network of community systems. As part of this focus, community outreach — to landlords, tenants, attorneys, mediators, various agencies, and other stakeholders — is an important component of the Alaska program. In addition, the Alaska Court System housing web pages are being developed as a further community resource on landlord-tenant law; legal assistance; and other housing-related legal issues (<https://courts.alaska.gov/shc/housing/index.htm>).

Therapeutic Courts

Repeat criminal offenders often exhibit mental health or drug or alcohol addiction problems that contribute to their recidivism. Alaska's therapeutic courts provide an alternative to the ordinary criminal court process for some of these offenders. The courts enable the offenders to address addictions and mental health issues as part of the adjudication process.

A therapeutic court structures an extended, individualized plan for the offender as part of a plea agreement. If the offender completes the plan successfully, there is a more favorable legal resolution. The therapeutic court framework de-emphasizes the usual adversarial nature of the criminal justice process, while still holding the offender accountable. A team — judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, probation officer, treatment provider, and others — support the offender in recovery. Depending on the type of therapeutic court, completing the individualized plan usually takes a year or longer.

After declining somewhat during the covid pandemic, enrollment in the state's therapeutic court program rebounded during FY23. At the end of the fiscal year, the Juneau Therapeutic Court, the Palmer Wellness Court, and the Anchorage Veterans Court were each operating at close to or above 100 percent capacity, and six of the state's fourteen therapeutic courts were averaging a utilization rate of 76 percent. In FY23, 121 participants successfully graduated from the state's therapeutic courts.

Alaska now has fourteen therapeutic courts in six communities — Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Sitka, Palmer, and Kenai. Two of the courts — the Palmer Families with Infants and Toddlers Court (FIT) and the

Anchorage CINA Therapeutic Court — focus specifically on families with open Child in Need of Aid (CINA) cases in which addictions have undermined family stability. Another two — the Sitka Healing to Wellness Court and the Henu' Community Wellness Court in Kenai — are joint state-tribal courts. There are now also two veterans courts — in Anchorage and Fairbanks.



Sitka rose, Anchorage (Third Judicial District)

Since the individualized case plans focus on treatment and rehabilitation, the administration of the various courts has forged working alliances with social service and treatment providers in the community. In particular, in FY23, the therapeutic courts worked with Cook Inlet Tribal Council on the possibility of referring court participants to CITC's treatment and parenting services.

Throughout FY23, the court system also worked with the Center for Justice Innovation to prepare for an external evaluation of the drugs and DUI courts. The evaluation is planned for FY24.

Children's Issues

In FY23 the Department of Law, with the Office of Children's Services, filed 1901 Child in Need of Aid (CINA) cases with the court system. Of these, 1299 were to determine whether a child should be adjudicated a Child in Need of Aid — that is, whether the state should assume custody to ensure the child's safety and well-being. There were 602 filings to terminate parental rights. Nearly two thirds of the total filings were in the Third Judicial District. The filings have declined over twenty-six percent since FY19, the last full year before the pandemic.

Court Improvement Program

The court system is continuing to participate in the federally-funded Court Improvement Program (CIP). This program monitors and improves the way the court system handles CINA cases and enhances coordination between the court system and other agencies and tribes involved in CINA cases.

The Chief Justice of the Alaska Supreme Court appoints members to the statewide CIP committee. Current members include judges, the Director of

the Office of Children’s Services, tribal representatives, and representatives from other state agencies, including the Department of Law, the Public Defender Agency, the Office of Public Advocacy, and the Division of Behavioral Health.

CINA cases can be complex and protracted, involving many individuals and many hearings over the life of the case. Participants can include the children themselves; parents; guardians; other family members; tribes; attorneys for the parents, the children, and the state; guardians ad litem for the children; caseworkers from the Office of Children’s Services; and judicial officers. A case may also involve a mediator.

CIP continues to work on a data-sharing program between the court and the Office of Children’s Services to streamline the exchange of information on cases; and it has created a dashboard for judges and magistrate judges with comprehensive scheduling and case status data available statewide.

In March 2023, CIP and the Nome Eskimo Community conducted a three-day training in Nome for judges, caseworkers, Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) workers, attorneys, and others involved in these cases. Experienced professionals from the Department of Law, the Public Defender Agency, the Office of Public Advocacy, the Office of Children’s Services, the Alaska Native Justice Center, and Kawerak provided training and guidance on laws, responsibilities, practices, and procedures in CINA cases.

In addition, CIP has produced several short instructional videos introducing CINA courtroom roles and procedures to parents, family members, and others involved with these cases. It is also revising its e-learning course to reflect changes in laws. These materials are available through the CIP section on the court’s website (<https://courts.alaska.gov/cip/index.htm>).

Also in FY23, CIP conducted CINA bench-bar sessions in Fairbanks and Anchorage.



Chugach Mountains from Birchwood (Third Judicial District)

In addition, judges experienced with CINA matters participated in Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) trainings conducted by the Alaska Native Justice Center for ICWA workers, tribal administrators, and tribal council members.

Implementation Sites Project



Birch woods, Fairbanks (Fourth Judicial District)

Since 2021, the Fairbanks court has been participating in the Implementation Sites Project of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). The project seeks to reduce the number of children in foster care and improve outcomes for children by assessing current practices, gathering data, measuring performance, and offering ongoing training opportunities. Fairbanks was one of the first twelve sites selected across the country; more have since joined the project. The selected sites receive technical assistance and tailored support from the NCJFCJ. They draw upon the best practices presented in NCJFCJ's *Enhanced Resource Guidelines* (<https://www.ncjfcj.org/publications/enhanced-resource-guidelines/>) and *Key Principles of Permanency Planning for Children* (<https://www.ncjfcj.org/publications/key-principles-for-permanency-planning-for-children/>).

The goals identified for the Fairbanks project include facilitating collaboration among CINA professionals, providing exposure to the court for new professionals as well as children, improving court processes, engaging parents early in the CINA case process, and meeting other training needs. The project stakeholder group includes professionals involved with CINA cases: judicial officers, court administrators, representatives from the Office of Children's Services, attorneys, guardians ad litem, ICWA workers, and tribal representatives.

In FY23, the project stakeholder group sponsored an open house at the courthouse for everyone involved with foster care, guardianship, and adoption. The open house gave professionals new to CINA cases, families, and children an opportunity to explore a courthouse and meet with a judicial officer outside of an actual hearing. In addition, the project has enabled the creation of a dedicated room for children involved in hearings.

Also in FY23, members of the stakeholder group attended an NCJFCJ All Sites Conference in Georgia to learn from and share practices with representatives from other sites in the country.

The Alaska Court System is also participating in the development of an ICWA court in Southeast Alaska that will specifically handle CINA cases involving ICWA considerations.

Panels at both the FY23 Newer Judges Conference and the Magistrate Judge Conference addressed CINA considerations.

Adult Guardianships and Conservatorships

Under Alaska state law, the court may appoint a guardian or a conservator to handle the affairs of an individual who lacks the capacity to make decisions in various areas. Under a guardianship, the guardian has the authority to make decisions for the protected person about such things as housing, medical care, financial matters, and legal issues. A conservator handles only financial affairs.

The number of case filings in Alaska for guardianships and conservatorships continues to grow. Filings increased from 960 in FY13 to 1125 in FY23, an increase of 17 percent. Because these cases remain open until the protected person regains capacity or dies, the number of open guardianship cases has also trended upward for several years.

Since the need for the appointment of a guardian or conservator is often a factor of aging and health, the increase in filings is a reflection of the growth in the number of older Alaskans. According to figures from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the state's overall population grew less than one percent between mid-2012 and mid-2022 (beginning of FY23). The population aged 65 or older, however, increased by 77 percent over the decade, from just under 61,000 to a little less than 108,000. *(The figures for the population aged 65 and older originally presented in this segment were incorrect. They were corrected 8/2024.)*

Guardians and conservators submit annual reports for court review. Effective review of these annual reports is necessary to ensure the continued safety and well-being of the individual wards.

In addition, the court appoints a court visitor for each new guardianship case. After initial appointment and assessment, the court visitor also



Alverstone and Hubbard Glaciers, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (Third Judicial District)

reports every three years on the respondent's medical, housing, financial, educational, and employment status as well as on family relationships. In FY23, the court system assumed oversight responsibility for court visitors. These positions were previously under the Office of Public Advocacy.

With a federal Administration for Community Living Elder Justice Opportunity grant, the court system is refining its handling of these cases. During FY23, monitors worked in four court locations under a grant-funded pilot program. These monitors provide an initial layer of annual report review and elevate those with concerns to the judicial officer. They also work directly with guardians to provide guidance in completing annual reports that meet the statutory requirements for providing relevant information. The monitors bring perspective derived from reviewing multiple filings about potential issues facing a private professional guardian.

Another focus of the court's work in this area is educating the public about the roles and responsibilities of guardians and conservators and providing guidance for those who are appointed to these positions. The court continues to expand the information available on the court website. Self-help software to assist Alaska guardians and conservators in keeping track of income and expenses is now available through the website. The court guardianship team also staffs a self-help phone line and offers live classes via Zoom on various aspects of the process and roles of guardians and conservators.

A three-part online course for those seeking to be appointed as guardian is being updated and translated into multiple languages, including Spanish, Korean, and Tagalog.

Judicial officers have access to online training in this area, with hard copy desk references also available. The FY23 Magistrate Judge Conference included a session on guardianships.

Competency, Commitments, and Mental Health Issues

Throughout FY23, the court system continued to address issues raised by the intersection of the justice system and individuals with mental and behavioral health issues.

Competency Cases

Under both the state and federal constitutions, individuals charged with crimes have a due process right to understand their court proceedings and to participate in their own defense. If there is a question whether

Looking Forward

The court system is working toward centralizing competency calendars for additional court sites.

an individual lacks the ability to comprehend the proceedings or is unable to participate in the defense, the court will order a competency evaluation to be conducted by a

qualified psychiatrist or psychologist. The recommendation of the evaluator and additional evidence are presented in court for a judicial ruling on competency.

In FY23, the court ordered an evaluation for competency in 461 cases statewide; and for FY22, in 404 cases. Approximately half of the FY23 orders were issued from the Anchorage centralized competency calendar, which was established in 2019. Centralizing the calendar before one Superior Court judge has reduced delays in handling these cases in the initial stages.

If deemed incompetent, a person cannot be tried, convicted, or sentenced while the incompetency remains; proceedings are therefore stayed. In felony cases, the court commits the individual to the Alaska Department of Family and Community Services for competency restoration. Alaska law allows for three periods of restoration. If competency is restored, the criminal case will proceed. If competency cannot be restored in the time allowed, charges are dismissed and continued commitment of the defendant is governed by civil law.

In misdemeanor cases, the judge may also commit the defendant for restoration, but is not required to do so.

The Department of Family and Community Services has only one facility, the Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API), that can house and treat those



Moose along Chena Hot Springs Road (Fourth Judicial District)

committed for restoration. API has ten beds for evaluation and restoration patients in its forensic unit. Because this number does not meet the need, individuals ordered for restoration must wait until a bed is available.

Involuntary Commitments

In FY23, the court handled 2,824 involuntary civil commitment proceedings for mental and alcohol/drug commitments; and in FY22, 2,961. By far, mental commitment proceedings form the major portion of these totals, with no more than 20 commitment proceedings for alcohol or drugs in either FY22 or FY23.

The problems presented for law enforcement and the courts by individuals with mental illness are complex, and the state lacks adequate facilities for treatment. API, the largest psychiatric facility in the state, has only sixty beds available for adult civil commitments and ten for adolescents.

A committee convened by the court system is currently in the process of drafting court rules pursuant to Alaska Statute 47.30. The committee's goal is to formulate rules guiding procedures on the voluntary and involuntary civil mental health commitments for adults and minors. The committee anticipates submitting the rules for Supreme Court approval during FY24.

Recent efforts to address these problems, including the passage of HB172 in 2022, have provided for the establishment of crisis care centers, mobile mental health units, and crisis response lines. As these plans become realized, they will affect the picture of court competency and commitment proceedings in future years.

Meeting Language Needs

The court system received 1159 requests for spoken language interpretation in FY 2023 and provided interpreters in 43 different foreign and Alaska Native languages. In addition, it also received 242 requests for American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation. Requests both for ASL and spoken language interpretation came from court sites in all four judicial districts, with well over two-thirds from the Third District.

The most commonly requested foreign languages were Spanish, Samoan, Tagalog, Somali, and Korean. Other frequently requested languages

Looking Forward

The court is updating and translating the online course required for adult guardians and conservators into several languages.

included Arabic, Russian, Vietnamese, Yup'ik, Hmong, and Mandarin Chinese. Requests for interpreters arose across the spectrum of court operations, with requests in criminal, civil, CINA, delinquency,

minor offense, and probate cases the most common. Spoken and sign language interpreters were also provided in small claims cases, customer service, and for deaf and hard-of-hearing jurors.

Most foreign language interpretation took place via telephone or video remote. The court system contracts with a telephonic language line and uses certified and qualified remote interpreters from other state courts for video remote interpreting, along with Alaska's two certified Spanish interpreters and qualified Yup'ik interpreters. ASL interpreters worked either on site or by video remote. Certified deaf interpreters (CDIs) from out-of-state also often work on a remote basis alongside ASL interpreters. The court system is also acquiring tablets to be used with ASL interpretation at sites where the bandwidth is adequate.

In addition, in FY23 the court also continued to translate instructional documents needed for domestic violence protective order petitions into Spanish, Tagalog, Russian, Vietnamese, Samoan, Chinese, Somali, Arabic, and Korean. The court system has also updated its website section on language assistance to provide more information about arranging for an interpreter as well as access to documents detailing court policies and guidelines.

The scope of Alaska Court System interpreter services is covered under Administrative Rule 6.

Tribes and Tribal Courts

In a relationship that has developed over many years, the Alaska Court System is continuing to work with tribes and tribal courts on matters of mutual concern. The 2022 Alaska Legislature's formal acknowledgement of the sovereignty of the 229 federally-recognized Alaska tribes will further strengthen this relationship.

A critical point of intersection between the state court system and the tribes involves the welfare of Alaska Native children, as governed by the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). Under this federal law, the state must notify a tribe when a child in a

Child-in-Need-of-Aid (CINA) is a member of the tribe or is eligible for membership. A tribal representative can participate in the case, or the tribe can petition to take jurisdiction.

Tribes participated in 327 cases disposed in FY 2022 in courts

throughout the state; and in 372 cases disposed in FY 2023. In FY22, tribes took jurisdiction in 106 CINA cases; and in FY23, 130. (A new state court rule establishing uniform procedures for transfer of jurisdiction in CINA cases went into effect early in FY24. The rule specifies that the request to transfer can be made orally or in writing. Another court rule, also effective in FY24, allows the court to accept a notice of intervention orally or in writing, on the record. The request to intervene need not be a formal motion.)

As part of the federally-funded Court Improvement Program (CIP), the court system conducts regular training for judges and case stakeholders on ICWA provisions. In FY23, a three-day training in Nome on laws and procedures for CINA cases included instruction on ICWA.

The CIP program has also developed an extensive e-learning course on ICWA (<https://courts.alaska.gov/cip/icwa-course.htm>). The course covers

Looking Forward

When new court facilities are built or remodeled, the court system would like to co-locate with tribal courts, where possible, to increase coordination between the different courts and broaden service within the Alaska community.



*Alder cones, Nenana River Gorge
(Fourth Judicial District)*



Moonrise over Kivalina Lagoon (Second Judicial District)

the act's history, law, and practice. It includes a series of documentary vignettes on aspects of Alaska Native historic experience prior to the passage of ICWA.

In another recent development related to the administration of ICWA, the court system

is working with the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska to develop a separate joint state-tribal ICWA court to improve outcomes in CINA cases. It is envisioned that a court of joint jurisdiction specifically handling CINA cases governed by ICWA can improve communication and interaction among involved parties, leading to better outcomes for the children. The project is in the final planning stages. The project team has included representatives from the tribes and all the major participating agencies. As part of the planning process, members of the team have been able to observe similar ICWA courts in other states. Casey Family Programs has also contributed to the planning.

Other State-Tribal Interaction

The court system also participates in two joint-jurisdiction therapeutic courts: the Henu' Community Wellness Court with the Kenaitze Tribe in Kenai and the Healing to Wellness Court with the Sitka tribe. These courts focus on offenders with drug and alcohol problems. A state judge and a tribal court judge preside together.

In another area of state court system and tribal interaction, the court has now put in place standardized statewide procedures for referrals to tribal restorative justice programs under Criminal Rule 11(i) and Delinquency Rule 23(f). Previously, it had been necessary for an individual tribe to establish a separate Memorandum of Understanding with the court system for referrals in these cases. The new procedures will apply to all tribes, including those without previous agreements with the court.



Kivalina (Second Judicial District)

The court system has also been working on a new civil rule that would provide comity recognition for certain tribal court orders and would establish uniform procedures statewide for registering these orders. In addition, with a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, the court is developing judicial bench books on comity issues.

Throughout FY 2023 state judicial officers represented the court system at various Native-sponsored events, including two outreach trips to Nulato to join the tribe in community training. In addition, a court administrator and representative from the Alaska Native Justice Center presented a session on state court and tribal court engagement at the annual state court judicial conference in autumn 2022. The court system anticipates more on-going programming with tribes on a local basis, in such areas as training, registering tribal court orders, rule updates, Criminal Rule 11(i) agreements, and general outreach.

Professional Development

The Alaska Court System emphasizes continued professional development for judicial officers and other court employees. During the pandemic years, the restrictions on in-person meetings and travel resulted in an expanded use of technology to facilitate professional development. The restrictions, however, also served to underscore the value of regular in-person conferences and meetings. In FY23, the court system was able to return to its full pre-pandemic schedule of regular conferences while continuing to make use of web-based training.

Judicial Officers

For its judicial officers, there were three statewide, in-person conferences in FY23: the annual Fall Judicial Conference, in Girdwood in October 2022; the Newer Judge Conference in January 2023 in Anchorage; and the Magistrate Judge Conference in April 2023 in Anchorage.

The attention to judicial education in its different modes is a year-round effort. Planning committees of judicial officers and administrative personnel work to determine the content of the annual judicial conferences. Representatives from the Alaska Judicial Council and the Commission on Judicial Conduct also participate.

Looking Forward

The court system is developing audio bench books with recordings of hearings involving points of judicial concern. Among the first bench books will be selected hearings from CINA and adult guardianship cases.



Kayakers, Fritz Cove (First Judicial District)

The committees maintain a list of core topics particularly important in Alaska judicial work. Committee members also consider suggestions and ideas from other judicial officers and administrative personnel. They draw upon what they have observed in their own courtrooms and professional spheres and on what they are seeing and learning in the broader community.

Recent Alaska appellate decisions as well as federal decisions are reviewed as possible topics, along with implementation of new legislation. The committees also consider suggestions for guest presenters from Outside. At least one guest speaker from Outside is usually invited to address the conference on a topic related to judicial work.

From year to year, the conferences rotate sessions on core topics common in Alaska judicial work. In FY23, participants at the statewide Fall Judicial Conference were able to attend sessions on bail issues; racial disparities in court; engaging youth in court; and state and tribal court engagement — all topics that hold continual relevance for judicial officers.

The FY23 Newer Judge Conference — involving judges who have been on the bench usually fewer than three years — covered matters that are often part of a judicial workload. These included sessions on DUIs and criminal matters; judging in domestic violence cases; and Child in Need of Aid (CINA) issues.

The Magistrate Judges Conference in FY23 offered presentations in matters frequently heard by magistrate judges: domestic violence and stalking protective orders; CINA probable cause hearings; mental health commitments; and search warrant application hearings.

All conferences always include at least one session on judicial ethics. The conferences also always include updates on administrative concerns. Court security and matters related to judges as supervisors of other court

employees can also be addressed. In addition, the conferences regularly offer presentations focused on cultural competency. They also often include information on working with interpreters — something that can arise in any type of case.

Beyond the statewide conferences, the court system offers other training and development opportunities throughout the year. Most recently, a web-based course offered training in judicial settlement conferences. In addition, judges attend courses at the National Judicial College on a regular schedule determined by their time on the bench.

Clerks of Court

In spring 2023, the court system also conducted a statewide conference with clerks of court and rural court administrators. Conference sessions addressed topics of particular importance to these employee groups. Participants received updates on appellate decisions and on state legislation affecting the courts. Other sessions covered security issues, eFiling progress, and Child in Need of Aid matters. Presenters addressed how best to serve customers affected by domestic violence and how to work with high-conflict customers. Guest presenters from Outside conducted sessions on civility and inclusion in the courts. Other sessions focused on employee motivation and effective leadership.

Court Administrators

Administrative staff were able to take advantage of diverse opportunities for professional development, including many online webinars.

Court Facilities

In early FY23, the Palmer courthouse celebrated its grand re-opening after extensive flooding in January 2022 necessitated extensive repair work.

The court system has also contracted for preliminary design work on an expansion of the Palmer courthouse to allow for additional judges. The Palmer court is one of the busiest sites in the state with the highest per judge caseload, and the Mat-Su Valley population is projected to grow for many years. The court will request funding for the expansion in the FY25 budget cycle.

Looking Forward

The court system has awarded a contract for the conceptual design of a justice center building in Bethel. The center will house court system facilities as well as the offices of several executive branch agencies and possibly a tribal court.

The court system facilities department oversees the physical operation of buildings at over forty court sites across the state, including lease management, routine and deferred maintenance, and security-related details. At many of these sites the department also handles grounds and parking lots, including landscaping and snow removal.



Arctic tern, Delta Wild and Scenic River Watershed (Fourth Judicial District)

The court system owns seven buildings: the Nesbett Courthouse, the Snowden Administrative Building, two smaller administrative buildings in Anchorage; the Rabinowitz Courthouse in Fairbanks; and the courthouses in Kenai and Palmer. It utilizes space in buildings owned by other state government entities at eleven sites and leases facilities from local governments, Native organizations, and private owners at twenty-seven locations.

In addition to restoring the Palmer courthouse in FY23, the facilities department managed the repairs to the Boney Plaza necessitated by the 2018 earthquake. In Skagway, a fire in winter 2023 destroyed the space leased by the court system. Under a Memorandum of Understanding with the borough, the court will temporarily use municipal space as a trial site.

After receiving funding from the legislature, the court system awarded a contract for the conceptual design of a new justice center in Bethel. The center will house court facilities as well as the offices for several executive branch entities and possibly a tribal court at one site. The goal is to make it simpler for the public to access state government services and tribal court services in one location. In Kotzebue, design for a new Superior Court courtroom was completed, and a construction contract will be sought. The court system is also considering possible relocation of the Sitka court into the vacant Stratton Library space.

Security for judges and other court employees was another focus of facilities work in FY23. Security cameras for smaller rural court locations have been ordered; and as clerk counters are upgraded, attention is being given to the installation of blast-resistant ballistic shielding. The department completed upgrades at clerk counters in the Palmer, Fairbanks, Homer, Seward, and Kotzebue courthouses, as well as a complete renovation in the Haines courthouse. The department works closely with the court system Director of Security on identifying and addressing security issues.

Court System Security

The ability of the court system to handle its responsibilities to the Alaska community depends upon its security. Security is multi-faceted: it involves the safety of court personnel and members of the public, court physical facilities, and cyber-security. The earthquake in 2018, the covid pandemic, and the cyber-attack in 2021 each presented different security challenges. In successfully responding to these events and others over the last five years, the court system has gained valuable, detailed experience of what can be involved in sustaining its operations safely.

The court is conducting on-going security training for court personnel. In FY23, as part of a multi-year project, staff received instruction in developing observational skills and situational awareness. The training focused on becoming more alert to one's physical environment as well as to the people in a given situation. It emphasized the development of patience and calm in handling customer anger, aggression, and the unexpected.

The physical security of court facilities also received attention during the fiscal year, with planning for the installation of more security cameras at courthouses throughout the state, including at smaller rural sites. In addition, the upgrading of security at clerks' counters and in other public areas continued.

The court is also revising its Continuity of Operations Plan, with plans being particularized for individual court sites. The sites vary greatly in size, complexity of operations, and different kinds of emergencies.

Court security also involves working with other government branches, particularly the Department of Public Safety, Judicial Services, local police departments, and the U.S. Marshals Service to coordinate plans for handling emergencies.

The court system must also secure access for members of the public engaged in court-related business. To ensure the orderly use of court facilities and access to the court as a neutral forum, in FY23 the court administration issued Administrative Bulletin 97. The bulletin specifies the boundaries of court facilities and the limitations on public protests and demonstrations on courthouse grounds.



Weather over the Gulf of Alaska from NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center's Aqua-MODIS, 19 May 2014

A black and white photograph of tall grasses covered in numerous water droplets, creating a textured, glistening effect.

Justices, Judges, and Senior Court Administrators

Grasses in the rain, Marion Creek Campground, Dalton Highway (Second Judicial District)

July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

Justices — Alaska Supreme Court

Daniel E. Winfree (2007), Chief Justice (retired 2023)

Peter J. Maassen (2012), Chief Justice

Susan M. Carney (2016)

Dario Borghesan (2020)

Jennifer S. Henderson (2021)

*M. Jude Pate (2023)

Statewide Court Administration

Stacey Marz, Administrative Director

Doug Wooliver, Deputy Director — Legislative Session

Judges — Court of Appeals

Marjorie K. Allard (2012), Chief Judge

Tracey Wollenberg (2017)

Bethany Harbison (2018)

Timothy W. Terrell (2020)

Clerk of the Appellate Courts

Meredith Montgomery

*Also served in another judicial position in FY23.

First Judicial District

Amy G. Mead, Juneau (2018), Presiding Judge

Emily Wright, Area Court Administrator (2022–2023)

* Clayton Jones, Area Court Administrator

Judges — Superior Court

Marianna Carpeneti, Juneau (2021)

Daniel E. Doty, Ketchikan (2022)

Katherine H. Lybrand (2022)

Daniel Schally, Juneau (2018)

Judges — District Court

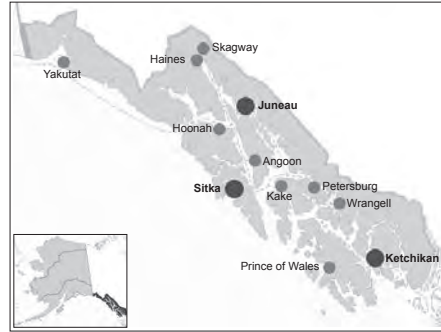
Kevin G. Miller, Ketchikan (1999) (retired 2022)

Kristian B. Pickrell, Ketchikan (2022)

Kirsten L. Swanson, Juneau (2016)

Magistrate Judges

**Orion Hughes-Knowles; Juneau (2021–2022)



Paul Korchin, Haines / Yakutat / Hoonah / Skagway (2022)

Peggy McCoy, Juneau (2023)

Rachel Newport, Petersburg / Wrangell (2020)

*Kimberly Rice, Prince of Wales (2022)

Amanda Schulz, Ketchikan (2010)

Pamela Stahla-Kernin, Sitka / Angoon (2020)

Second Judicial District

Paul A. Roetman, Kotzebue (2010), Presiding Judge

Brodie Kimmel, Area Court Administrator (retired 2022)

* Robert Colvin Area Court Administrator

Judges — Superior Court

Romano D. DiBenedetto, Nome (2017)

David Roghair, Utqiagvik (2021)

Magistrate Judges

Colleen Baxter, Utqiagvik (2022)

Heidi Ivanoff, Unalakleet (1998)

Aaron Michels, Kotzebue (2016)

Pamela Smith, Nome (2019)



* Also served in another court position in FY23.

** Prior service during FY23 in Aniak / St. Mary's / Hooper Bay, Fourth Judicial District.

Third Judicial District

William F. Morse, Anchorage (2002),
Presiding Judge (2022)
Thomas A. Matthews, Anchorage (2018),
Presiding Judge (2023)
Carol McAllen, Area Court Administrator

Judges — Superior Court

Eric A. Aarseth, Anchorage (2005)
(retired 2023)
Rachel Ahrens, Valdez (2019)
John C. Cagle, Palmer (2019)
Dani Crosby, Anchorage (2015)
Catherine M. Easter, Anchorage (2012)
Una S. Gandbhir, Anchorage (2018)
Josie W. Garton, Anchorage (2018)
Jason Gist, Kenai (2018)
Andrew Guidi, Anchorage (2010)
Laura Hartz, Anchorage (2023)
Lance E. Joanis, Kenai (2018)
Kari Kristiansen, Palmer (2006)
Yvonne Lamoureux, Anchorage (2017)
Kelly J. Lawson, Kenai (2023)
Erin B. Marston, Anchorage (2012)
(retired 2023)
Jack R. McKenna, Anchorage (2021)
David A. Nesbett, Anchorage (2023)



Andrew Peterson, Anchorage (2018)
Peter Ramgren, Anchorage (2019)
Christina Rankin, Anchorage (2023)
Christina Reigh, Dillingham (2017)
Kevin M. Saxby, Anchorage (2012)
Bride Seifert, Homer (2019)
Kristen C. Stohler, Palmer (2019)
Herman G. Walker, Anchorage (2015)
Stephen B. Wallace, Kodiak (2019)
Jennifer K. Wells, Kenai (2017) (retired
2023)
Ian Wheeles, Anchorage (2022)
Jonathan A. Woodman, Palmer (2016)
Adolf Zeman, Anchorage (2020)

Judges — District Court

Amanda L. Browning, Palmer (2021)
Jo-Ann M. Chung, Anchorage (2011)
Brian K. Clark, Anchorage (2003)
Leslie Dickson, Anchorage (2012)
Martin C. Fallon, Kenai (2019)
Michael J. Franciosi, Anchorage (2017)
J. Patrick Hanley, Anchorage (2005)
Tom V. Jamgochian, Palmer (2020)

Michael B. Logue, Anchorage (2018)
Kari L. McCrea, Anchorage (2017)
David A. Nesbett, Anchorage (2019)
Shawn D. Traini, Palmer (2019)
David R. Wallace, Anchorage (2009)
Pamela S. Washington, Anchorage
(2010)

Magistrate Judges

Judson Adams, Glennallen / Valdez
(2018)
Kay Adams, Cordova (2008)
Michael Aiello, Dillingham / Naknek /
Unalaska (2019)
Marika Athens, Anchorage (2021)
David Bauer, Anchorage (2011)
Sidney Billingslea, Anchorage (2013)
Katherine Chung, Anchorage (2021)
Suzanne Cole, Anchorage (1997–2023)
Anna Cometa, Palmer (2020–2022)
Craig Condie, Palmer (2010–2023)
Michelle Higuchi, Kenai (2021)
Derek Koehler, Palmer (2023)

Elisia Kupris, Anchorage (2022)
Jennifer Manculich, Anchorage (2018)
Donna McCready, Anchorage (2013)
Heather O'Brien, Anchorage (2018)
Robert Polley, Anchorage (2017)
Matthew Slodowy, Anchorage (2018–
2023)
Michael Smith, Anchorage (2015)
Hannah Steketee, Palmer (2023)
Kimberley Sweet, Kenai (2018)
Christina Teaford, Anchorage, Seward
(2008)
Dawson Williams, Kodiak (2007)

Fourth Judicial District

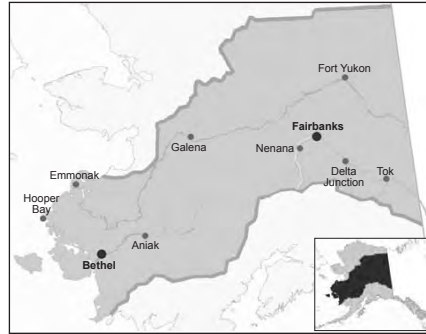
Terrence P. Haas, Bethel (2018),
Presiding Judge
Candice Duncan, Area Court
Administrator

Judges — Superior Court

Brent Bennett, Fairbanks (2019)
Patricia L. Haines, Fairbanks (2021)
Paul R. Lyle, Fairbanks (2008)
Michael A. MacDonald, Fairbanks
(2007) (retired 2022)
Nathaniel Peters, Bethel (2017)
Earl A. Peterson, Fairbanks (2019)
Kirk Schwalm, Fairbanks (2022)
Thomas I. Temple, Fairbanks (2018)
Amy K. Welch, Fairbanks (2023)

Judges — District Court

Maria Bahr, Fairbanks (2021)
Matthew Christian, Fairbanks (2013)
William T. Montgomery, Bethel (2018)
Benjamin A. Seekins, Fairbanks (2012)



Magistrate Judges

Darlene Johnson-Edwards, Emmonak
(2000)
Risa C. Leonard, Fairbanks (2021)
Jeffrey May, Nenana / Galena / Fort Yukon
(2018)
Spenser J. Ruppert, Fairbanks (2021)
Coralette Waite, Aniak / Hooper Bay
(2023)
Bruce G. Ward, Bethel (2012)
Yvette Young, Delta Junction / Tok (2018)

Active Pro Tem Judges

Eric A. Aarseth
Joel H. Bolger
William B. Carey
Robert L. Eastaugh
Dana A. Fabe
Gregory L. Heath
Donald D. Hopwood
Michael A. MacDonald
David Mannheimer
Warren W. Matthews

Michael P. McConahy
Gregory A. Miller
Anna M. Moran
Gregory J. Motyka
Nancy J. Nolan
Philip M. Pallenberg
Eric B. Smith
Michael R. Spaan
Trevor N. Stephens

Deputy Magistrates, Clerks of Court, and Rural Court Administrators

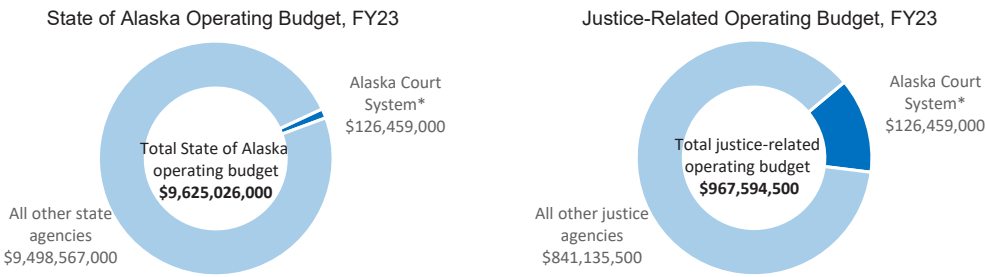
Susan Adams, Anchorage
Natalie Alexie, Bethel
Kimberly Bates, Glennallen
Brielle Boswell, Valdez
Lauren Burnham, Tok
Raúl Calvillo, Fourth Judicial District
Denice Chappell, Kenai
Barbara Cloud, Palmer
Anissa Coleman, Juneau
Suzanne Cowley, Kodiak
Brandi Davis, Ketchikan
Annalisa DeLozier, Fourth Judicial
District
Rebecca Duffy, Unalaska
Jenna Durst, Petersburg
Rae Ann Filla, Delta Junction
Bridgit Gillis, Kenai
Marla Grant, Nome
Michelle Hall, Juneau
Rose Hansen, Naknek
MacKenzie Houser, Prince of Wales
(Craig)
Amy Jo Howard, Sitka
Regina Johnson, Bethel
Taylor Kelso, Naknek
James Kwon, Third Judicial District

Lori Marvin, Third Judicial District
Ruth Meier, Fairbanks
Natalie Monroe, Palmer
Stacey Nemanic, Ketchikan
Jenny Nicoli, Aniak
Tonya O'Connor, Dillingham
Jennifer Opie, Haines
Dawn Osenga, Seward
Cynthia Percy, Anchorage
Arlene Peter, Fort Yukon
Pamela Pitka, Galena
Sheri Ridgeway, Wrangell
Linda Rios, Anchorage
Caitlin Rothbart, Juneau
Melissa Samuels, Second Judicial
District
Zachary Singleton-Havner, Utqiagvik
Tessa Tate, Fairbanks
Samantha Thompson, Nenana
Sarah Tipikin, Homer
Lorraine Tomaganuk-Moses, Hooper Bay
Crystal Toolie, Nome
Jan Tronrud, Skagway
Kristie Vienna, Kenai
Jolene Watkins, Angoon
Niccole Williams, Hoonah



Court Statistical Highlights

Alaska Court System Budget



* Alaska Court System budget figure includes Alaska Judicial Council and Alaska Commission on Judicial Conduct.
Note: These budget charts reflect the enacted FY 2023 operating budgets for the given agencies. They do not include the additional amounts that each agency received when HB 226 lapsed into passage.

Filings and Dispositions by Case Type, FY23

Alaska Supreme Court	Filings	Dispositions
Civil appeals	169	177
Petitions for hearing	80	79
Petitions for review	48	59
Bar / original applications	7	6
Total	304	321

Alaska Court of Appeals	Filings	Dispositions
Merit appeals	140	163
Sentence appeals	20	10
Petitions	30	41
Bail appeals / original applications	7	8
Total	197	222



Kuskokwim River (Fourth Judicial District)

Further FY 2023 Alaska Court System data are available at:

Alaska Court System Statistical Report FY 2023

<https://courts.alaska.gov/admin/index.htm#annualrep>

The online document includes data on case filings and dispositions for both trial and appellate courts for all case types for FY23, as well as comparative figures for previous fiscal years. It also includes summary analyses of the figures from both trial and appellate courts.

Superior Court	Filings	Dispositions
Felony	6,485	7,034
CINA	1,901	2,129
Delinquency	583	384
Domestic relations	3,520	3,535
General civil	2,288	2,334
Probate	6,588	5,733
Total	21,365	21,149

District Court	Filings	Dispositions
Misdemeanor	17,339	19,093
Minor offense	36,911	36,207
Small claims	3,258	4,003
Civil protective order	7,765	7,621
General civil	5,315	5,296
Total	70,588	72,220

Photo Permissions

Kaskawulsh Glacier, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (Third Judicial District)

Cover photograph: Ice fog along the Tanana River, 23 Nov 2012. Photo by Frostnip. (Used in accordance with Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC 2.0 Deed) license.)

Photos used with permission

The following photos are used without charge, including photos chosen from Creative Commons-licensed photos at Flickr (www.flickr.com). Creative Commons licensing information can be found at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

Photos by Alaska Court System: page 2, Great Seal of the State of Alaska and dais, Alaska Supreme Court courtroom, Boney Courthouse, Anchorage, 10 Nov 2021; page 3, Participants in Color of Justice program, Anchorage, 23 Apr 2023; page 8, Courtroom, Nesbett Courthouse, Anchorage. (Used by permission.)

Photo by Mark Byzewski ([markbyzewski on Flickr](http://markbyzewski.com)): page 15, Rainforest, Bartlett Cove, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, 23 Jul 2013. (Used in accordance with Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0 Deed) license.)

Photo by Stephen Cysewski ([cysewski on Flickr](http://stephencysewski.com)): page 21, Birch woods, Fairbanks, 21 Nov 2008. (Used in accordance with Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC 2.0 Deed) license.)

Photos by Richard Droker ([wanderflechten on Flickr](http://wanderflechten.com)): page 23, Alverstone and Hubbard Glaciers, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, 1 Aug 2017; page 42, Kaskawulsh Glacier, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, 1 Aug 2017. (Used in accordance with Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 Deed) license.)

Photos by Melissa S. Green: page 17, Butter and eggs (yellow toadflax), Anchorage, 16 Jul 2014; page 19, Sitka (*rugosa*) rose, Anchorage, 19 Jul 2014; page 25, Moose along Chena Hot Springs Road, 9 Jun 2021; page 27, Alder cones, Nenana River Gorge, 18 Jun 2014. (Used by permission.)

Photos by Douglas Greenberg ([dagberg on Flickr](http://dagberg.com)): page 10, Caribou near Woolley Lagoon north of Nome, 7 Jun 2023; page 42, Red-necked grebes, Nome, 4 Jun 2023. (Used in accordance with Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC 2.0 Deed) license.)

Photo by i threw a guitar at him ([becc on Flickr](http://becc.com)): page 28, Moonrise over Kivalina Lagoon, 5 Nov 2014. (Used in accordance with Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0 Deed) license.)

Photo by Joseph ([umnak on Flickr](http://umnak.com)): pages 40–41, Kuskokwim River, 26 Apr 2012. (Used in accordance with Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic (CC BY-SA 2.0 Deed) license.)

Photo by Josh Kellogg ([kelloggphotography on Flickr](http://kelloggphotography.com)): page 16, River & wetlands, Cape Krusenstern National Monument, 7 Aug 2008. (Used in accordance with Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 Deed) license.)

Photo by Arthur T. LaBar ([arthurlabar on Flickr](http://arthurlabar.com)): page 35, Grasses in the rain, Marion Creek Campground, Dalton Highway, 20 Aug 2016. (Used in accordance with Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0 Deed) license.)

Photo by NASA/Goddard/OceanColor/MODIS ([gsfc on Flickr](http://gsfc.nasa.gov)): page 34, Weather over the Gulf of Alaska from NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center's Aqua-MODIS, 19 May 2014, 2 May 2014. (Public domain.)

Photos by Neil Nesheim: page 6, Humpback whales, Portland Island, 12 Jul 2009; page 13, LeConte Glacier iceberg, Petersburg, 4 Aug 2019; page 20, Chugach Mountains from Birchwood, 16 Sep 2023; page 30, Kayakers, Fritz Cove, 1 May 2020. (Used by permission.)

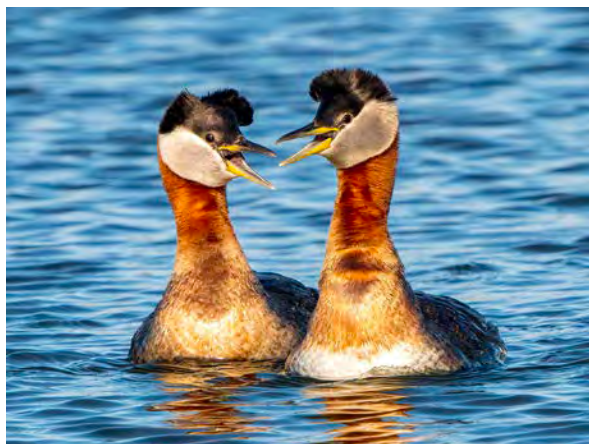
Photo by ShoreZone.org ([shorezone on Flickr](http://shorezone.com)): page 28, Kivalina, 22 Jul 2012. (Used in accordance with Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0 Deed) license.)

Photo by Kristine Sowl, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ([usfws_ alaska on Flickr](http://usfws.gov)): page ii, Black brant flying in front of Mount Dutton, Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, 1 Oct 2008. (Public domain.)

Photo by James St. John ([jsjgeology on Flickr](http://jsjgeology.com)): page 4, Confluence of the Salcha and Tanana Rivers near Salcha, 29 Jul 2017. (Used in accordance with Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0 Deed) license.)

Photos by Bob Wick, Bureau of Land Management ([blmalaska on Flickr](http://blmalaska.com)): pages 6–7, Sunset on the Iditarod National Historic Trail between Kaltag and Unalakleet, 11 Mar 2016; ([mypubliclands on Flickr](http://mypubliclands.com)): page 32, Arctic tern, Delta Wild and Scenic River Watershed, 19 Jun 2014. (Public domain.)

Printed and bound by Northern Printing, Inc., Anchorage, AK at a cost of \$7.10 per copy in a run of 80 copies.



Red-necked grebes, Nome (Second Judicial District)



ak-courts.info/shc

ACCESS TO JUSTICE SERVICES



Family Law Self-Help Phone Line

- Provide legal information about family law cases, forms, and other resources
- Help with e-file and Online Dispute Resolution
- Present Family Law Education Class on Zoom

Adult Guardianship Self-Help Phone Line

- Provide legal information about adult guardianship cases, forms, and other resources
- Present educational classes to court participants in guardianship cases

Language Access Services

- Provide spoken and sign language interpreters to court participants
- Depending on the specifics of the case and the availability of a court-qualified interpreter, the interpreter will interpret over the telephone, by video, or in person

Dispute Resolution Services

- Early Resolution Program
- Parenting Plan Dispute Resolution
- Co-Parenting Coaching Program
- Child Interviews
- Child in Need of Aid Mediation
- Minor Guardianship Mediation
- Adult Guardianship Mediation

Online Interviews & E-Forms

AKCourts Access to Justice
Asking for Child Support in Alaska

What is going on in your case?

☐ The other parent started a case and I have to file papers to respond.

☐ I filed papers to start the case and am waiting for the other side to respond.

☐ We have an open case.

☐ The case ended and we got our final paperwork.

[Back](#) [Next](#)

Self-Help Webpages

Home > Self-Help > Represent Yourself

Self-Help: Represent Yourself

Many people represent themselves in court for a variety of reasons. Some cannot afford to pay lawyers and others believe that they can handle their case on their own. The Alaska Court System has information to help you represent yourself in some types of cases. Even if you plan to represent yourself in court, it is a good idea to talk with a lawyer to understand some of the options and risks in your case. It is important that you notify the court if you change your contact information [here](#).

ABOUT REPRESENTING YOURSELF	APPEALS	GUARDIANSHIP
CLASSES & RESOURCES	CHILD IN NEED OF AID (video)	HOUSING ISSUES
FILING FEES & FEE WAIVER	CRIMINAL CASES	JUVENILE DELINQUENCY
FINDING A LAWYER	DEBT COLLECTION	PROBATE: ESTATES
LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE	DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	SMALL CLAIMS
NAME CHANGE	FAMILY LAW	TRAFFIC CASES (MINOR OFFENSES)

Forms Office

Publish forms used by self-represented litigants, lawyers, and agencies to help them move their cases through the court.

Eviction Diversion Program

New grant program offering dispute resolution to parties, both before and after filing an eviction case.

State Jury Office

Oversee the jury process, support courts holding jury trials, and keep the public informed about their jury service.



Office of the Administrative Director
Alaska Court System
303 K Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
(907) 264-0548