

05 - 0490

**OFFICE OF STATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR
SCREENER-COLLECTOR PROGRAM IN
FIFTH, SEVENTH, & NINTH JUDICIAL DISTRICTS**

Prepared Pursuant to
Laws 2001, 1st Sp., Chapter 8, Article 4, section 4

Office of State Court Administrator
135 MN Judicial Center
St. Paul, MN 55155
(651) 296-2474
August 15, 2005

**OFFICE OF STATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR
SCREENER-COLLECTOR PROGRAM IN
FIFTH, SEVENTH, & NINTH JUDICIAL DISTRICTS**

**Prepared Pursuant to
Laws 2001, 1st Sp., Chapter 8, Article 4, section 4**

Introduction

The 2001 Legislature appropriated funds for the Judicial Branch to implement screener-collector programs in the Fifth, Seventh, and Ninth Judicial Districts. The enabling legislation provided that:

...The fifth, seventh, and ninth judicial district courts shall implement screener collector programs to enhance the collection of overdue fine revenue by at least ten percent in each location serviced by a screener collector. By August 15, 2002, and annually thereafter, the state court administrator shall report to the chairs and ranking minority members of the house of representatives and senate committees with jurisdiction over criminal justice policy and funding issues on the total amount of fines collected, the amount of overdue fines collected for the two preceding fiscal years, and the expenditures associated with the screener collector program.

This report is filed pursuant to this mandate.

Screener-Collector Duties

Trial courts throughout the state utilize screener-collectors to enhance the collection of fines, restitution, public defender reimbursement and other revenue owed to state and local government. This collection responsibility is accomplished through post-conviction interviews where the offender and screener-collector mutually agree on a payment plan which is subsequently monitored by the screener – collector and through professional debt collection methods, such as Revenue Recapture. In addition, this position is usually responsible for screening applicants for public defender services.

Fifth/Seventh/Ninth Judicial Districts' Screener – Collector Programs

Screener-collectors funded under this legislation serve the following counties in the Fifth/Seventh/Ninth Judicial Districts:

- District 5:** Blue Earth, Brown, Cottonwood, Faribault, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Martin, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock, and Watonwan
- District 7:** Becker, Benton, Clay, Douglas, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Otter Tail, Stearns, Todd, and Wadena
- District 9:** Cass, Crow Wing, Itasca, Koochiching, Polk

2004 Program Collections

The 2001 enabling legislation asked for historic and current information on the total amount of fines collected under the new program. Figure 1 shows a comparison of all revenue collected during FY04 and FY05. As can be seen, the amount collected increased by **\$2,040,713** or **6.74%**.

FIGURE 1

**Trial Courts
Screener Collector Data
Districts 5, 7, & 9
FY 2004/05**

	FY04 Collections	FY05 Collections	Increase/ (Decrease)	Percent Change
District 5	9,632,851	10,287,309	654,458	6.79%
District 7	15,024,974	15,878,958	853,984	5.68%
District 9	5,614,750	6,147,021	532,271	9.48%
Total	30,272,575	32,313,288	2,040,713	6.74%

This information can also be depicted on a county-by-county basis, as seen on the following page in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

**Trial Courts
 Screener Collector Data
 Districts 5, 7, & 9
 FY 2004/05**

County	FY04 Collections	FY05 Collections	Increase/ (Decrease)	Percent Change
Blue Earth	2,051,252	2,245,863	194,611	9.49%
Brown	836,841	903,439	66,598	7.96%
Cottonwood	351,256	406,814	55,558	15.82%
Faribault	507,223	536,730	29,507	5.82%
Jackson	449,672	457,689	8,017	1.78%
Lincoln	138,820	136,095	(2,725)	-1.96%
Lyon	851,683	846,494	(5,189)	-0.61%
Martin	698,566	917,418	218,852	31.33%
Murray	282,684	258,492	(24,192)	-8.56%
Nicollet	1,148,877	1,147,807	(1,070)	-0.09%
Nobles	712,342	670,582	(41,760)	-5.86%
Pipestone	365,785	399,092	33,308	9.11%
Redwood	524,971	569,602	44,631	8.50%
Rock	303,889	350,111	46,222	15.21%
Watonwan	408,993	441,081	32,089	7.85%
5th District Total	9,632,851	10,287,309	654,458	6.79%
Becker	1,235,419	1,200,072	(35,347)	-2.86%
Benton	988,828	1,089,278	100,449	10.16%
Clay	2,121,216	2,410,028	288,812	13.62%
Douglas	1,028,355	1,011,835	(16,519)	-1.61%
Mille Lacs	966,435	1,094,394	127,959	13.24%
Morrison	1,155,041	1,067,862	(87,179)	-7.55%
Otter Tail	1,508,584	1,519,847	11,263	0.75%
Stearns	4,694,672	5,165,476	470,804	10.03%
Todd	893,736	897,267	3,532	0.40%
Wadena	432,688	422,897	(9,791)	-2.26%
7th District Total	15,024,974	15,878,958	853,984	5.68%
Cass	955,153	995,214	40,061	4.19%
Crow Wing	2,035,387	2,118,573	83,187	4.09%
Itasca	1,253,287	1,567,507	314,221	25.07%
Koochiching	392,301	412,836	20,535	5.23%
Polk	978,622	1,052,890	74,267	7.59%
9th District Total	5,614,750	6,147,021	532,271	9.48%
Total Districts 5, 7, & 9	30,272,575	32,313,288	2,040,713	6.74%

The enabling legislation also requested information on the amount of overdue fines collected for the two preceding fiscal years. The current judicial branch case management system does not maintain this data and the manual data collection effort undertaken to comply with this report was unable to distinguish between overdue and current financial obligations and payments.

Program Cost

The enabling legislation also asked that the report address the expenditure associated with the program. Using the average cost of a court employee of \$59,000 (salaries and benefits), the cost of the 19.24 FTE screener/collectors serving 30 counties in the three Judicial Districts is approximately \$1,135,160.

Conclusion

The screener-collector program authorized by the 2001 Legislature has had a positive impact on revenue collection in the 30 counties being served in these three judicial districts. The annual cost of the program (\$1,135,160) is offset by the increase in revenue (\$2,040,713) generated through the active collection efforts provided by these programs. The use of screener-collectors facilitates the payment of fees, fines, surcharges and public defender fees ordered by the courts, which in turn benefits the state and local governmental agencies responsible for proving public safety to the citizens of this state. The judicial branch is committed to continuing these efforts.

APPENDIX A

COUNTIES WITH SCREENER – COLLECTOR POSITIONS

At present fifty (50) counties are served by 1 or more full or part-time screener-collectors:

Becker	Morrison
Benton	Mower
Blue Earth	Murray
Brown	Olmsted
Carver	Otter Tail
Cass	Nicollet
Clay	Nobles
Cottonwood	Pine
Crow Wing	Pipestone
Dakota	Polk
Dodge	Ramsey
Douglas	Redwood
Faribault	Renville
Freeborn	Rice
Goodhue	Rock
Hennepin	Scott
Houston	Sherburne
Itasca	Sibley
Jackson	Stearns
Koochiching	Steele
Kandiyohi	Todd
Lincoln	Wabasha
Lyon	Wadena
Martin	Wantonwan
Meeker	Waseca
Mille Lacs	Winona