

Agency Purpose

The Minnesota's trial courts resolve citizens' criminal cases and civil disputes.

- ⇒ **Mission** – To provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair, competent, and timely resolution of cases and controversies.
- ⇒ **Vision** – The general public and those who use the court system will refer to it as accessible, fair, consistent, responsive, free of discrimination, independent, and well managed.

Core Functions

The trial court has original statewide jurisdiction in all civil and criminal actions within district boundaries. There are 10 judicial districts, and 281 district court judges. A family court division, juvenile court division, probate division, conciliation court division, and a traffic and ordinance violations bureau exist in the district court.

In support of these core functions, the trial courts are implementing the following service strategies:

- ⇒ Set case processing and case management standards, and institute monitoring programs for exceptions to ensure timely disposition of cases.
- ⇒ Develop programs to allow litigants meaningful access to the court process, e.g., court interpreter programs, free legal services for the poor, and self-help programs for persons who choose to guide their own litigation.
- ⇒ Explore ways to use technology to improve and expedite the work of the courts, including making justice more consumer oriented.
- ⇒ Develop programs and technologies to provide judges the critical information needed to make timely and sound case and policy decisions.
- ⇒ Delegate legal research and where possible draft decision writing to law clerks, freeing judges to spend more time hearing cases or directing the case dispositional activities.
- ⇒ Review and evaluate court practices and policies to identify the need for systemic improvement through the Judicial Council and its committees.
- ⇒ Explore greater integration and coordination with other justice and social service agencies.
- ⇒ Develop an adequate and stable funding base, and develop a long-term allocation formula to equitably distribute state funding among the ten judicial districts.

Operations

With more than two million cases filed each year, the work of the trial courts has a substantial impact on Minnesotans.

Judges are assisted in their adjudicative work by law clerks (who perform legal research) and court reporters (who record trial proceedings). Court administration staff at the county and district level manage scheduling, case flow, finance, personnel, and juries. Judicial District Administrators and staff assist the Chief Judge in each district in carrying out his/her responsibility as the administrative head of all courts within the district.

At A Glance

- ◆ Each year, there are more than two million cases filed in Minnesota's trial courts.
- ◆ Trial court judges in Minnesota are among the hardest working in the country. They handle an average of 49% more cases each than do judges in states with comparable court systems.
- ◆ Caseloads continue to increase while time per case is being cut.
- ◆ The Legislative Auditor found that from FY 1996-2001, filings of major cases statewide in trial courts increased twice as fast as expenditures on the judiciary.
- ◆ The judiciary has completed a massive transformation, moving from a county-funded to state-funded system. As of FY 2006 all trial courts were state funded.
- ◆ The trial courts are implementing its new Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS) technology application in counties throughout the state.
- ◆ The judicial branch operates in a constantly changing environment.
 - ⇒ Laws, case types, and legal sanctions change annually.
 - ⇒ Caseload volume is determined by other branches and levels of government.
- ◆ The Minnesota courts regularly review their effectiveness by monitoring:
 - ⇒ case filing trends;
 - ⇒ case clearance rates; and
 - ⇒ elapsed case time from filing to disposition.

Budget

Of the funding for the trial courts, over 99% is from General Fund direct appropriations. Federal (and other) grants represent a very small source of funding. Another small source of funding which will increase over time is reimbursements assessed for Guardian ad Litem services.

Contact

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Dollars in Thousands

	Current		Forecast Base		Biennium 2008-09
	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	
<u>Direct Appropriations by Fund</u>					
General					
Current Appropriation	230,973	231,253	231,253	231,253	462,506
Forecast Base	230,973	231,253	231,253	231,253	462,506
Change		0	0	0	0
% Biennial Change from 2006-07					0.1%
<u>Expenditures by Fund</u>					
Direct Appropriations					
General	219,020	243,151	231,253	231,253	462,506
Statutory Appropriations					
General	205	584	769	769	1,538
Misc Special Revenue	154	135	135	135	270
Federal	511	411	412	412	824
Miscellaneous Agency	837	214	198	198	396
Gift	55	92	0	0	0
Total	220,782	244,587	232,767	232,767	465,534
<u>Expenditures by Category</u>					
Total Compensation	182,330	193,409	193,013	193,013	386,026
Other Operating Expenses	37,416	51,138	39,729	39,729	79,458
Local Assistance	215	25	25	25	50
Other Financial Transactions	821	15	0	0	0
Total	220,782	244,587	232,767	232,767	465,534
<u>Expenditures by Program</u>					
Trial Courts	220,782	244,587	232,767	232,767	465,534
Total	220,782	244,587	232,767	232,767	465,534
Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)	1,906.9	2,745.6	2,745.6	2,745.6	

TRIAL COURTS

Agency Revenue Summary

Dollars in Thousands

	Actual FY2006	Budgeted FY2007	Current Law		Biennium 2008-09
			FY2008	FY2009	
<u>Non Dedicated Revenue:</u>					
Other Revenues:					
General	27,777	27,897	26,850	26,850	53,700
Total Non-Dedicated Receipts	27,777	27,897	26,850	26,850	53,700
<u>Dedicated Receipts:</u>					
Grants:					
Misc Special Revenue	17	0	0	0	0
Federal	480	408	408	408	816
Gift	121	25	0	0	0
Other Revenues:					
General	544	567	567	567	1,134
Miscellaneous Agency	4,160	0	0	0	0
Other Sources:					
Miscellaneous Agency	17	0	0	0	0
Total Dedicated Receipts	5,339	1,000	975	975	1,950
Agency Total Revenue					
	33,116	28,897	27,825	27,825	55,650