



# Annual Report 2021

MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH

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**Minnesota Judicial Branch Mission: To provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.**

# Letter from the Chief Justice

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Dear fellow Minnesotans:

The court system in Minnesota is nationally recognized for its professionalism, efficiency, and innovation. We have made significant technological leaps in the last decade, focused on the people we serve and on our core mission. Many of these advancements helped maintain an open door to justice during the pandemic and ensure Minnesotans had a safe place to protect their rights and resolve their disputes.

We emerged from 2020 with high hopes that the pandemic would soon subside. Instead, we found ourselves in a continuous cycle of adapting and evolving to meet its changing dynamics. 2021 was a transformative year in the history of our court system. A year in which our judges and staff not only stepped up to keep our courts open during a time of crisis, but in which we laid the foundation for a more robust, efficient, effective, and accessible court system into the future.



During this past year:

- We embraced remote hearings as an integral part of the future of our courts and established a new initiative to help shape how we will integrate both remote and in-person hearings into ongoing court operations.
- We set aggressive goals to tackle the pandemic case backlog, prioritizing our time and resources to ensure timely access to justice for the people of Minnesota.
- We launched Minnesota Court Records Online, a historic effort that has greatly expanded access, convenience, and transparency in our judicial proceedings.
- We launched the Legal Paraprofessional Pilot Project and developed several new resources for self-represented litigants as part of our enduring commitment to ensuring access to justice for all Minnesotans.
- Through our Committee on Equality and Justice, we adopted a strategic plan to continue our vital work to eliminate bias from court operations, promote diversity and inclusion in our organization, and promote equal access to our courts.

This work would not be possible without the dedication and resiliency of our judicial officers and staff. Their service on behalf of our courts, and their ongoing commitment to deliver on our Constitutional mission, has never been more important or more impactful.

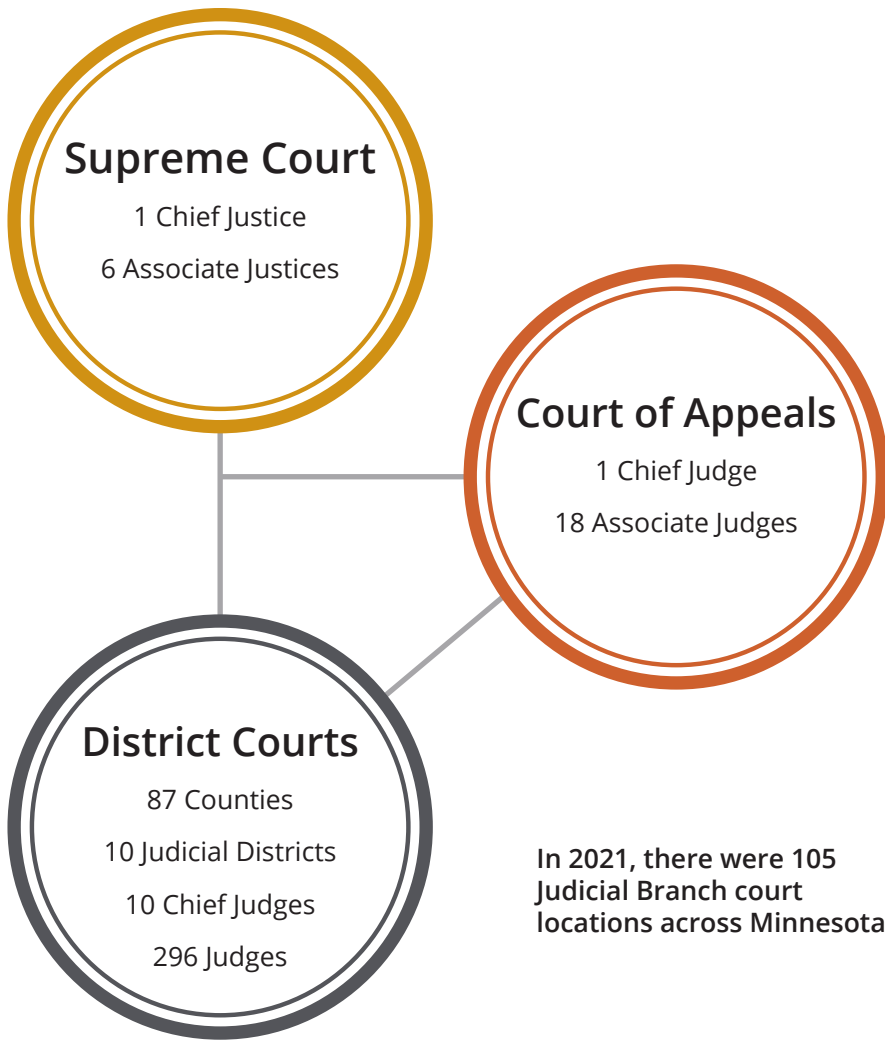
The achievements of the past year, and the lessons and experiences of the pandemic, are driving innovations that will modernize court operations in Minnesota and have a positive and lasting impact on the way we deliver justice in our state.

Sincerely,

Lorie S. Gildea  
Chief Justice  
Minnesota Supreme Court

# THE MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH

## The Courts



In 2021, there were 105 Judicial Branch court locations across Minnesota.

## Administration



### Central Administration to Judicial Branch:

#### Executive Office

- Court Information
- Intergovernmental Relations
- Internal Audit
- Legal Counsel
- Strategic Planning & Projects

#### Court Services

#### Finance

#### Human Resources & Development

#### Information Technology

## Fiscal Year 21/22 Biennial Budget

District Courts	\$655,118,000
Court of Appeals	\$27,064,000
Supreme Court/State Court Administration	\$86,413,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$768,595,000</b>

## Access to Justice

### Remote Hearings Remain Integral Part of Court Operations

Before the pandemic, the courts in Minnesota had limited experience using remote hearing technology. Recognizing that cases could not be suspended for the duration of the pandemic, the Minnesota Judicial Branch quickly pivoted to creating a virtual courtroom that would allow the courts to continue processing cases and provide access to justice.

As the courts gradually resumed in-person criminal and civil jury trials in 2021, remote hearings remained integral to court operations. Nearly 85% of all district court hearings occurred online. The Judicial Branch also worked to better support court users. One initiative was to provide designated technology rooms in courthouses or at local community sites for participants to attend hearings remotely if they didn't have internet access or the technology to do so. For more information, see [Around the State on page 12](#).

The Judicial Branch also made a concerted effort to listen to all who were impacted by this shift in operations to learn from their experience. Two common themes emerged through listening sessions with judicial officers, court staff, justice partners, attorneys, and court users: conducting court hearings online serves to increase access to justice, and some portion of court hearings should continue to be held online even after the pandemic subsides.

A new statewide steering committee, the oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative, is now overseeing efforts to improve how the courts conduct remote hearings and transform other court operations. See [Looking Forward: Designing the Future of Court Operations on page 11](#).

### Self-Help Center Assists Thousands of Minnesotans

Usage of the Statewide Self-Help Center, and other online resources that help Minnesotans find information and services about their legal problems if they are not represented by an attorney, continues to grow.

In 2021, the Self-Help Center received more than 30,000 calls for assistance and responded to nearly 8,000 emails – the highest volume of emails ever received. The eFile & eServe Support Center also experienced increased calls, responding to almost 13,000 calls compared to 9,000 calls received in 2020.

Guide & File, a web-based electronic tool that allows court users to create and electronically submit court forms in certain cases, also shows high usage and support. Approximately 35-40% of divorce filings, on average, come through the tool. Overall, 89% of Guide & File respondents indicate the tool is helpful or very helpful for completing their legal filings.

Maintaining a library of Help Topics is another core service of the Self-Help Center. In 2021, a new Help Topic for Traffic was created, and a series of videos were updated for the Help Topic for Child Support. Updates were also made to the Paternity, Civil Actions, Adoption, Child Custody and Parenting Time, Find a Lawyer, and Judgments Help Topics.

### Public Defender Application Process Streamlined

The Minnesota Judicial Branch launched an online version of the [statewide public defender application](#) in 2021 to allow defendants to complete and submit a request for a public defender from a computer, smartphone, or tablet. The online Public Defender Application was identified as one of the top pandemic-related

priorities to help improve customer service and operational efficiencies. The application includes translated forms in Spanish, Hmong, Somali, and Karen. Links to the application are available through the Judicial Branch website and remote hearing notices. From the time the application launched in April through December 31, 2021, 7,720 online Public Defender applications were submitted. There were 62,903 public defender applications filed in MNCIS during that same period. These totals do not include Public Defender applications submitted in the Fourth District, which uses a separate application system.

### **Civil Legal Representation in the Courts Increased**

In 2021, the [Legal Paraprofessional Pilot Project](#) began accepting applications from legal paraprofessionals and supervising attorneys who wish to participate in the two-year statewide Pilot. The Pilot intends to increase access to competent, quality legal representation in civil case types where parties are disproportionately unrepresented and reduce court congestion. Approved legal paraprofessionals can now represent and advise clients in select housing and family matters with oversight by a licensed Minnesota attorney. Over a dozen legal paraprofessionals were approved to participate in the Pilot in 2021.

### **Resources and Partnerships Developed to Mitigate and Address Eviction Cases**

To help mitigate and address an anticipated influx of eviction cases after pandemic-related state and federal eviction moratoriums expired in 2021, the Minnesota Judicial Branch developed and updated resources for judicial officers and court employees and partnered with organizations that were working to provide emergency rental assistance to Minnesotans:

- An illustrative breakdown of critical dates and information about the eviction moratorium off-ramp enacted by the Minnesota Legislature was created.

- A checklist for judicial officers, and other resources for court staff on handling eviction actions during the pandemic, were created.
- The [Landlord](#) and [Tenant](#) Help Topics were updated with new FAQs and new resources.
- Updated Guide & File interviews to start an eviction case and answer an eviction complaint now include information about the emergency rental assistance program.
- A new dashboard that features pending caseload and hearing activity, time from filing to summons, and upcoming first hearings scheduled was created.

The Judicial Branch also collaborated with the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency to connect individuals with information on [RentHelpMN](#). This federally funded program allowed low- and moderate-income renters to get caught up on overdue rent and utilities dating back to March 13, 2020. It also provided landlords with information about alerting their tenants who may qualify to apply.

## Effective Administration of Justice

### Pandemic-Related Case Backlog Reduction Planned

Backlogs and delays significantly impact the people of Minnesota, who count on the courts to deliver timely access to justice and resolution of their cases. Tackling a Major Criminal case backlog that has grown by approximately 40% since the start of the pandemic was deemed one of the Minnesota Judicial Branch's highest priorities as the courts resumed in-person court operations in 2021.

To reduce this backlog, the Minnesota Judicial Council set a goal to reduce the pending caseload of Major Criminal cases in the state's district courts by 20% every four months beginning November 1, 2021. In addition, each judicial district should maintain a 100% Major Criminal clearance rate to ensure that the backlog doesn't grow any larger. If this goal is met, the entirety of the pandemic Major Criminal case backlog will be eliminated by June 30, 2023.

A Backlog Goal dashboard is being used to monitor progress in meeting the goal. The dashboard features backlog data and trends, estimates the number of dispositions and clearance rates needed to meet backlog reduction goals, and compares the backlog goal to the target goals.

### Digital Asset Management Improved

Developing a new tool for managing digital exhibits has been one of the Judicial Branch's top pandemic-related priorities. A new digital exhibit management system pilot test is underway in four district courts.

Minnesota Digital Exhibit System (MNDES) will make it easier for judicial officers, staff, and court users to submit, manage, and display exhibits. The application provides a single, centralized solution for working with all types of exhibits in

district court cases, including documents, images, video, and audio.

The new system features a web-based application that attorneys, self-represented litigants, justice partners, and court staff will use to upload, review, open, and display digital exhibits. An application will also be available for judicial officers and court staff to open and view exhibits, update the exhibit record, add notes about the exhibits, and perform other functions.

If the pilot proves successful, the Judicial Branch will expand MNDES statewide in 2022.

### Hearing Check-In Process Improved

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is pilot-testing a new check-in solution to help prepare participants for their district court hearings and ensure that important administrative work is complete before the hearings. The solution is modeled on systems that have been used for several years by the Second and Fourth Judicial Districts. As currently planned, there will be three options for checking in for a district court hearing:

- Self-Check (or Pre-Check) would be an online solution enabled on all mobile platforms to allow participants to begin the check-in process up to five days before their hearings.
- Clerk-Assisted mode would be available in the courthouse and would share any data entry duties between the participant and court staff.
- The Express Check-In mode would also be available in the courthouse and have court staff complete all data entry on behalf of the participant.

Once implemented, participants will be able to verify their personal information, sign up for eReminders, submit their race and ethnicity data, apply for a public defender, request an interpreter, and review the appropriate statements of rights for their hearings.

## **Paying Court-Ordered Fines and Fees Made Easier**

The Court Payment Center (CPC) processed more than 500,000 citations and responded to more than 160,000 telephone and email inquiries from court users in 2021.

The Judicial Branch made improvements to call center services and expanded payment options to make it easier and more convenient for people to make payments on their court-ordered fines and fees in criminal cases.

A new callback feature allows individuals to request a callback rather than wait in the queue for their telephone call to be answered by CPC staff. Callers can request the callback on a first-come, first-served basis or at a scheduled time that is convenient for them during the same business day.

The automated phone and online payment systems were expanded to allow payments totaling less than the total financial balance owed when a payment plan is past due and until the debt is referred to collections, and for all adult criminal mandatory court appearance-required cases. In addition, the payment plan for eligible adult criminal, non-mandatory appearance cases changed to \$50 per month until the fines/fees are paid in full.

## **Rule 20 Process Improved**

Pursuant to the Minnesota Rules of Criminal Procedure, Rule 20 evaluations occur in criminal cases when there is a belief that a defendant may not be competent to proceed with the case or was not responsible at the time of the alleged offense because of mental illness or developmental disability.

State district courts began using standard templates for adult criminal Rule 20 court order forms and examination reports in 2021 to improve how the courts respond to cases that involve parties with mental illness.

The templates help ensure consistent and thorough communication of timelines and examination report requirements to examiners, attorneys, justice partners, case managers, and other stakeholders. The templates include:

- Order for Rule 20.01 Competency Examination, which judges may use when appointing a forensic examiner to evaluate a defendant's competency to understand and participate in court proceedings;
- Order for Rule 20.02 Examination, which judges may use when appointing a forensic examiner to evaluate whether a defendant, because of a mental illness or cognitive impairment at the time of the crime, was laboring under such a defect of reason as not to know the nature of the act or that it was wrong; and
- Finding of Incompetency to Proceed and Order for Prepetition Screening, which judges may use to initiate the process for the county to review the case for possible civil commitment proceedings.

## **Statewide Consistency Supported in Jury Operations**

A single statewide jury administration plan was implemented in 2021 to support consistent jury operations across the state. The [Minnesota State Jury Administration Plan](#) includes:

- describing random selection procedures used in juror selection;
- listing the conditions that will justify jury duty deferral or excusing a juror;
- describing the juror qualification questionnaire;
- identifying policies and procedures for enforcing a summons and for monitoring failures to respond; and
- describing juror orientation and instructions.



### **New Supervision Module Improves Treatment Court Reporting**

A new statewide Treatment Court Supervision module now provides consistent reporting for all treatment courts and participants, reducing the likelihood of lost information, and helping showcase each court's effectiveness and success. Through Supervision, treatment court coordinators track each participant's status, drug and alcohol tests and results, incentives and sanctions, days of sobriety, referrals to other services, employment, housing, and other statistics.

### **New DWI Court in Clearwater County**

The Clearwater County DWI Court became the first new treatment court to launch in Minnesota since 2019 and is now the 69th [operational treatment court](#) in Minnesota. The Court has the capacity for 10 participants and serves Clearwater County residents who are repeat DWI offenders, diagnosed as chemically dependent, and currently facing DWI charges.

### **New District Court Judgeship Created**

There are now 296 district court judges in Minnesota after the Minnesota Legislature funded a new judgeship during the 2021 Legislative Session. Several revisions made by the Legislature to the state's criminal conduct statutes were estimated to create an increased caseload equal to one district court judge, which prompted the funding of the judgeship. The judge is chambered in the Fifth Judicial District.

## Public Trust and Accountability

### Expansion of Cameras in the Courtroom Evaluated

Audio and video coverage of court proceedings has been a critical component of public access during the pandemic. As public interest in and access to judicial proceedings is vital to the fair, open, and impartial administration of justice, the Minnesota Supreme Court [issued an order](#) in 2021 directing the Advisory Committee on the Rules of Criminal Procedure to consider whether the requirements for audio and video coverage of criminal proceedings in Minnesota should be modified or expanded.

The General Rules of Practice authorize audio and video coverage in certain criminal proceedings in district courts. The Rules allow coverage with the consent of all parties before a guilty plea has been accepted or a guilty verdict is returned. After a guilty plea is accepted or a guilty verdict is returned, coverage is presumed allowed, without the consent of the parties, unless the judge finds good cause to prohibit it.

The Committee will review whether expanded audio and video coverage of criminal proceedings maintain an appropriate balance between the fundamental right to a fair trial, society's interest in public proceedings, and the judiciary's interest in the fair and impartial administration of justice. A report from the Committee is due July 1, 2022.

### Online Access to Court Documents Expanded

Access and transparency are key to trust and confidence in the courts. With the launch of [Minnesota Court Records Online \(MCRO\)](#), the Minnesota Judicial Branch took a significant step forward in providing an online platform for public access to state district court documents.

MCRO provides the public with the ability to search for and retrieve appropriate public court documents online. The first phase of MCRO launched in March 2021 and provided individuals with access to documents filed in a case when searching by the case number. In December 2021, the Judicial Branch enhanced the application to include the ability to search by a person's name, a business name, an attorney name or bar number, and a case number or citation number. The enhanced application also featured a redesigned Register of Actions with details about each case, including case events, document index numbers, hearings, parties, financial information, and appropriate public documents.

More than 2 million documents were downloaded via MCRO in 2021.

Phase three will launch later in 2022 and provide improved search functionality for judgments and court calendars. An access fee for documents accessed through MCRO is scheduled to be applied when the application is fully implemented. The first page of a document will be free, and users will have the option of paying the access fee to view subsequent pages and download or print entire documents longer than one page. The fee will be the same amount as purchasing a copy of an uncertified document at a courthouse, as set by state statute.

### Performance Measures Show Progress, Areas of Improvement

The Minnesota Judicial Branch released its 13th annual [Performance Measures Report](#) in 2021. The Report establishes core performance goals and monitors key results that measure progress toward meeting those goals to ensure accountability, improve operations, and enhance public trust and confidence.

Performance measures highlighted in the report include:

- Positive feedback from court users on being treated with respect, feeling safe in the courthouse, and having easy access to website services.
- Improved clearance rates in six case groups – Major Criminal, Major Civil, Probate/Mental Health, Juvenile, Minor Civil, and Minor Criminal – over previous fiscal years.
- Improved data integrity by creating a Data Quality Team responsible for statewide document security, court administration processes, and process compliance.
- Improved collection of juror race data.
- High response rates to the Quality Court Workplace survey, with strong support for employee understanding of how their jobs meet the overall mission of the Judicial Branch.

The Report also indicated areas of improvement, including court user wait times, timelines for children to reach permanency, minority representation in the jury pool, employee separation rates, and major criminal clearance rates that worsened due to the pandemic.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Prioritized**

The Minnesota Judicial Branch promotes a quality court workplace for judicial officers and employees by fostering a collaborative culture valuing diversity, equity, inclusion, and development. In addition, it maximizes use of practices, tools, and techniques that eliminate bias to make equality under the law an enduring reality for all.

To help the Judicial Branch achieve these objectives, the State Court Administrator's Office and three judicial districts added Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion staff specialists in 2021 to lead work in this area and support the Committee for Equality and Justice district-level efforts.

Education and training on diversity, equity, and inclusion for court employees remain a priority.

The 2021 Court Business Conference featured a session called “We Are All Criminals” that explored perceptions of what it means to be a criminal through stories that focus on crime, privilege, punishment, and second chances. In addition to requiring “Why Diversity Matters” training for court employees, the Judicial Branch will be launching “Why Inclusion Matters” in 2022.

The Committee for Equality and Justice continued to advance efforts to eliminate bias from court operations, promote equal access, and inspire a high level of trust and public confidence in the courts in 2021. The Committee focused on developing its biennium strategic plan and outlined meaningful priorities to work on through each of its subcommittees. Key initiatives accomplished by the subcommittees included:

- The Access and Fairness Subcommittee, chaired by Judge Richelle Wahi (First Judicial District), published the [2020-2021 Study on Probation Revocations and Recommendations](#). The report examined processes used for local probation revocation studies to determine if they could be replicated in other districts and made recommendations for consideration by local Equal Justice committees. The Subcommittee also published “[2020-2021 Jury Race Data and Recommendations](#),” which reviewed the race data of those called for jury service and made recommendations on closing the identified gaps and encouraging people to serve as jurors.
- The Diversity and Inclusion Education Subcommittee, co-chaired by Judge JaPaul Harris (Second Judicial District) and Judge Angela Willms (Fourth Judicial District), developed topics and proposals for the 2021 Annual Conference of Judges. The Conference featured two equity-focused keynote sessions: “Breaking Barriers” by Chief Justice Richard Robinson of the Connecticut Supreme Court and “A Turning Point for Asian Americans” by Frank Wu of Queens College. Other training sessions included “Fostering a Work Culture of Diversity and Respect” and “Addressing Racial Bias in Delinquency Courts.”

- The Community Outreach Subcommittee, co-chaired by Judge Tracy Smith (Minnesota Court of Appeals) and Kim Mammedaty (Hennepin County Attorney's Office), met with district benches and Equal Justice committees across the state to share a 10-year review of community dialogues.
- The Civil Justice Subcommittee worked with judicial districts to share information on Civil Legal Aid and the Lawyers Step Up for Minnesota program to help increase pro bono representation for low-income Minnesotans in areas most impacted by the pandemic.

The Equal Justice committees in each judicial district also focused on a variety of measures, including:

- Examining outcome data in new ways to identify and understand disparities and disproportionality, make change, and collaborate with justice partners on solutions.
- Partnering with foundations and communities to explore upstream ways to collaboratively provide better justice.
- Evaluating and adjusting membership on the committees to ensure all voices are included.
- Holding community dialogues to hear thoughts and feedback on the court system.
- Holding local training to support knowledge gaps around equity and diversity.
- Holding book discussions about equity.
- Encouraging women and people from underrepresented communities to apply for judicial and court staff openings.
- Participating in school events to highlight career pathways in the courts.

### **Safe and Secure Courthouses Funded**

A \$500,000 appropriation from the Minnesota Legislature in 2021 will support the next round of funding for the Safe and Secure Courthouse Initiative. The Initiative was first launched in 2017 to provide matching grants to counties to fund courthouse security assessments and enhancements. A \$1 million appropriation from the Legislature previously helped fund security improvements in 57 court locations across the state. Final award decisions for the next round of

grants will be made in early 2022.

### **Redistricting Principles and Plans Evaluated**

Every 10 years following the U.S. census, new congressional and state legislative district boundaries are redrawn. The Minnesota Legislature has the authority to draft and enact district maps. However, if the Legislature and governor are not able to agree on a plan and pass it into law, the process falls to the court.

A [Special Redistricting Panel](#) was appointed in 2021 by Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea to hear and decide challenges to the validity of state legislative and congressional districts based on the 2020 Census. The Panel held 10 public hearings across the state to gather information, opinions, and concerns from Minnesotans related to the redistricting process. A remote option was also available for each public hearing.

The written statements, oral presentations, and other publicly available information will aid the Panel in evaluating the redistricting principles and plans that the parties propose. The information will also help the Panel establish new redistricting plans if the Legislative and Executive branches do not reach an agreement by February 15, 2022.

# Looking Forward: The Future of Court Operations

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Given the success the Minnesota Judicial Branch has experienced with remote hearings, and the positive feedback received from internal and external users, the Minnesota Judicial Council approved a new initiative in 2021 to design how the courts will operate once the pandemic subsides.

The oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative will determine how to make the courts more efficient and user-friendly. A Steering Committee of judges and court administrators assigned to the initiative is helping the Judicial Branch navigate this next phase of court operations.

In the initial phase of this work, district courts will follow statewide guidelines to determine which non-criminal hearings will be heard in person and which will be heard remotely. Each district will develop plans for using both remote and in-person hearings for criminal cases, providing maximum local flexibility to address the pandemic backlog. Meanwhile, the Steering Committee

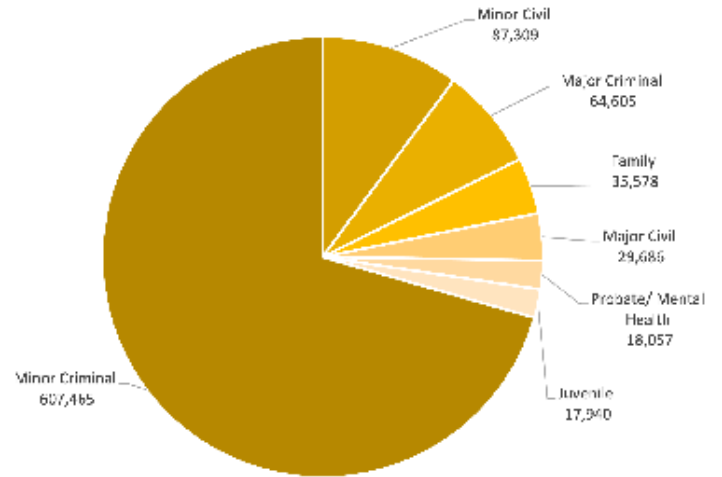
will establish a consistent approach for these hearings and oversee other efforts to improve court operations. This includes digital exhibit management and a statewide check-in process for court participants, among other initiatives.

Using the experience, technological improvements, and feedback gained during this process, the Judicial Branch will implement a more permanent, statewide strategy on how the courts will use remote and in-person hearings into the future and deliver the highest quality system of justice possible to the people of Minnesota.

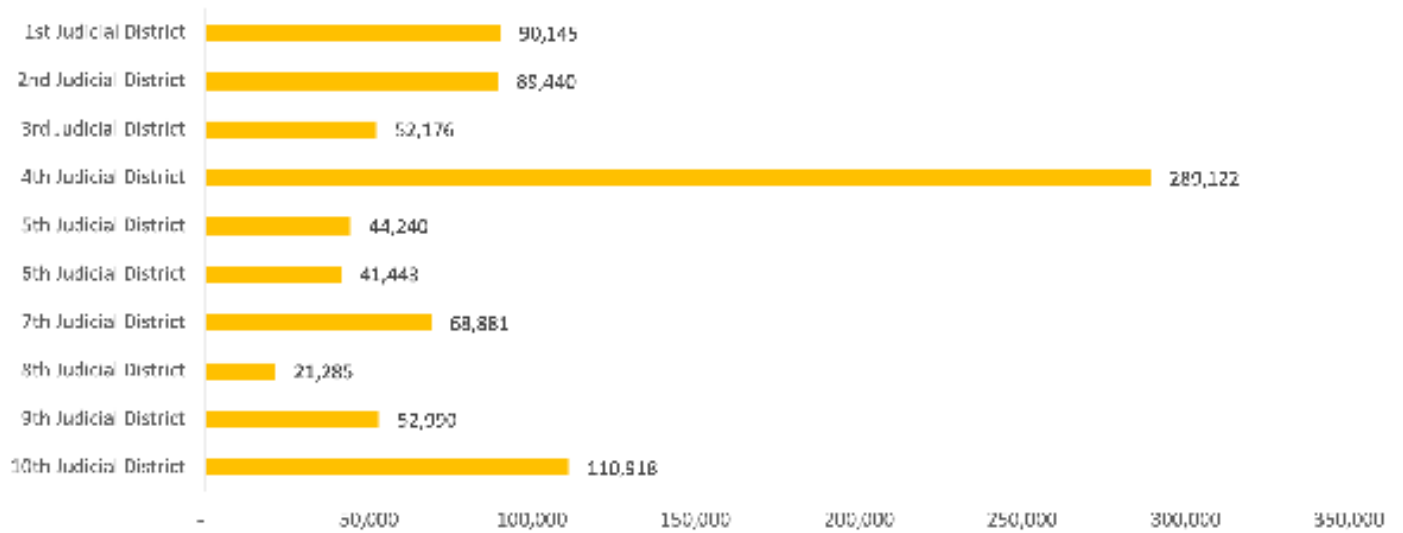
# District Courts



2021 Statewide Case Filings by Case Type

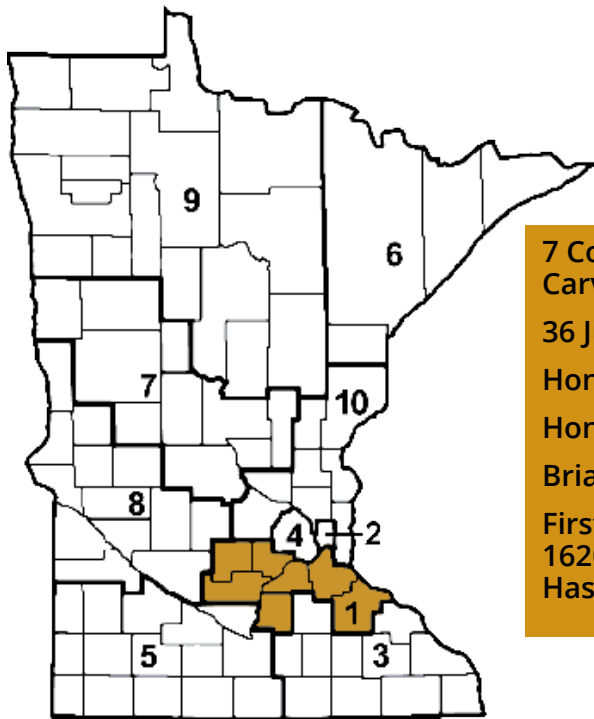


2021 Statewide Case Filings by Judicial District



2021 Total Filings: 860,604

# First Judicial District



**7 Counties:**  
Carver, Dakota, Goodhue, Le Sueur, McLeod, Scott, Sibley

**36 Judgeships, 4 Child Support Magistrates**

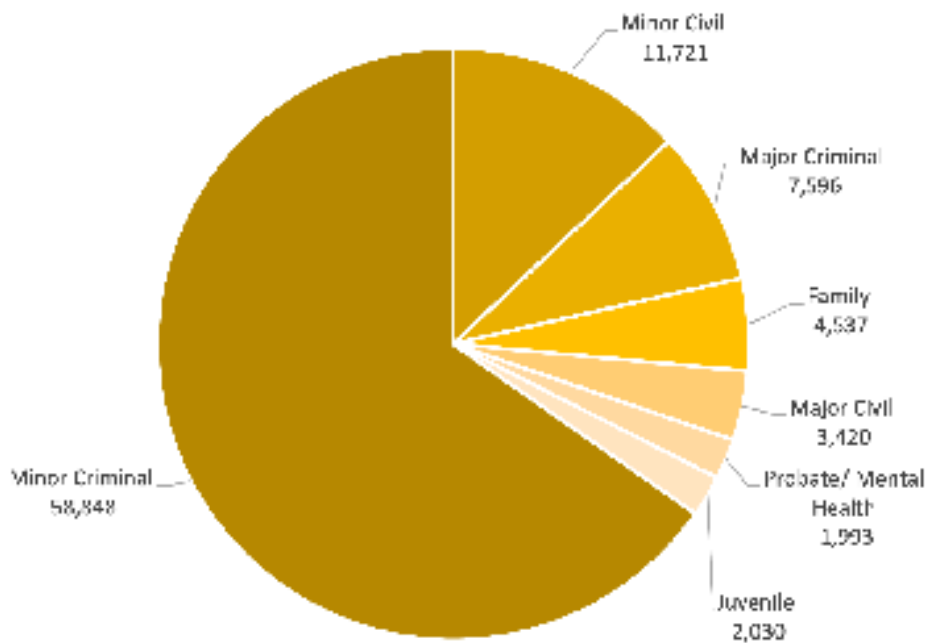
Hon. Kevin Mark, Chief Judge

Hon. Carrie Lennon, Assistant Chief Judge

Brian Jones, District Administrator

First Judicial District Administration  
1620 South Frontage Road, Suite 200  
Hastings, MN 55033

2021 First Judicial District Case Filings  
2021 Total Filings: 90,145



### **Judgment Processing Centralized**

The First Judicial District centralized the processing of judgments for all seven counties within the District in 2021. The Centralized Judgment Team (CJT) processes judgments and subsequent filings in the following areas: confession of judgments, default judgments, foreign judgments, restitution judgments, and transcript judgments. The CJT handles approximately 33 cases each day. This centralized process has balanced work between counties, created greater efficiencies, and provided consistency in customer service. Its implementation started with the three smallest counties and gradually included the larger counties over several months. Staff from Le Sueur, McLeod, and Sibley counties took on the processing of judgments in addition to their regularly assigned duties.

### **Lobby Display Monitors Upgraded**

The First Judicial District upgraded all digital lobby display monitors near courthouse entrances in 2021. Specifically, the upgrade allows the monitors to capture more cases on each. Most counties in the District also installed a general content monitor that includes announcements and other directional signage. The monitors serve as a guidepost for justice partners, attorneys, litigants, defendants, witnesses, victims, victim advocates, the public, and the media by directing them to the correct courtroom for the cases they are observing or participating in. The digital signage on the monitors operates similarly to airport information monitors. They refresh every 10 seconds and provide the most up-to-date calendar information, including daily court hearings listed by the party's last name. The monitors have reduced the number of questions staff receive from people searching for courtrooms and the judges hearing their cases. They have also saved expenses by eliminating the printing of paper calendars.

### **Technology Enhanced for Participation in Remote Hearings**

The First Judicial District upgraded almost all its courtrooms with technology to leverage various video conferencing platforms in 2021. Large monitors and cameras were installed to provide reliable video and audio feeds of the participants inside



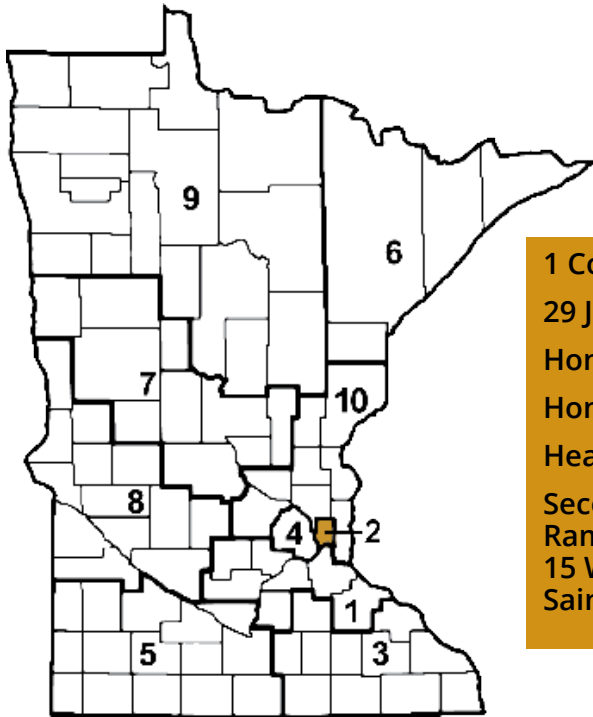
the courtrooms to the participants attending remotely. All remote participants are now shown on large monitors in the courtroom to provide an experience as close as possible to being in-person. The District also provides a physical location in each courthouse or a nearby library that attorneys and parties can use to participate in virtual hearings if they do not have the technology capabilities elsewhere. These locations are designed to ensure privacy, reduce distractions, and include a computer station with a camera, microphone, and speakers.

### **Dakota County Holds Remote Warrant Resolution Day**

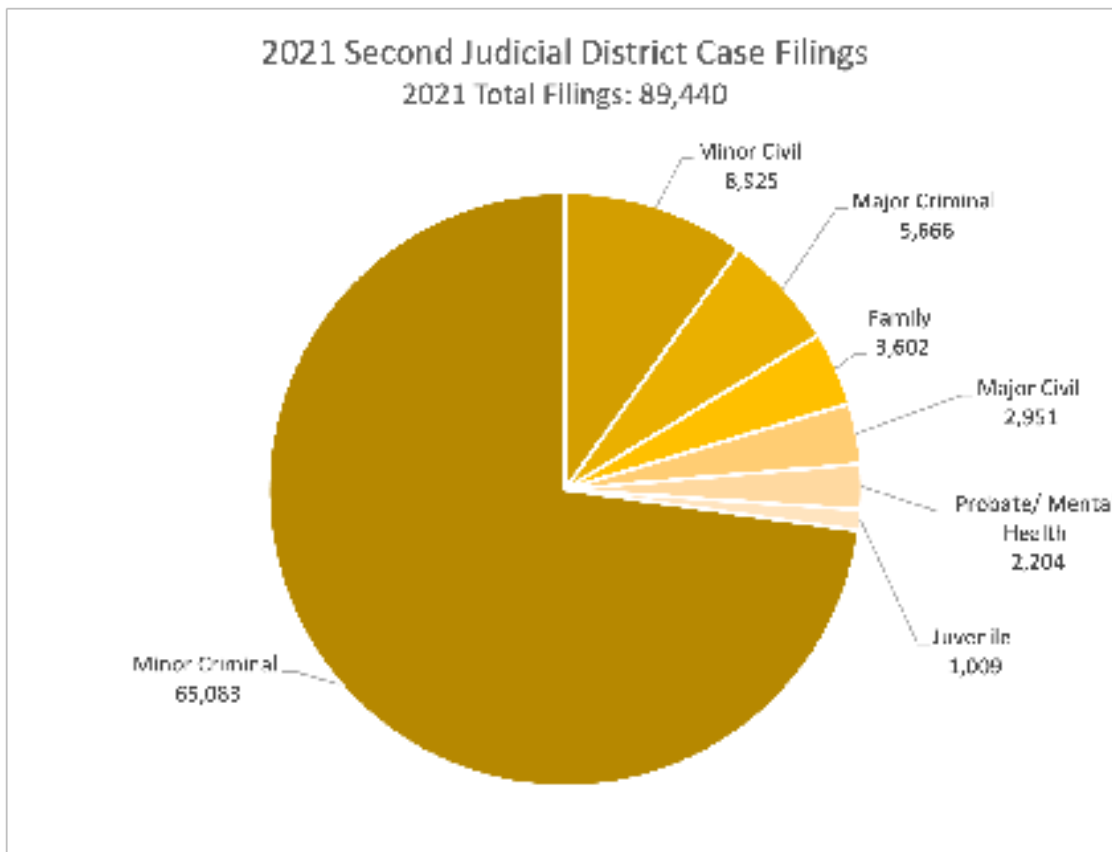
Dakota County held its first remote warrant resolution day on August 20, 2021. People with active warrants could call court administration before the event to schedule a spot on the remote calendar. A total of 70 cases were scheduled for the event, 61 warrants were recalled, and 37 cases were disposed of. The event received positive feedback. Defendants were happy to resolve outstanding warrants without fear of being arrested, and the courts were able to dispose of many cases.



# Second Judicial District



**1 County: Ramsey**  
29 Judgeships, 5 Referees, 3 Child Support Magistrates  
Hon. Leonardo Castro, Chief Judge  
Hon. Sara Grewing, Assistant Chief Judge  
Heather M. Kendall, District Administrator  
Second Judicial District Administration  
Ramsey County Courthouse  
15 West Kellogg Boulevard  
Saint Paul, MN 55102



### **Access to Justice Continues During Pandemic**

The transition to a fully remote housing court docket in November 2020 due to COVID-19 challenged the Second Judicial District and its Housing Court legal clinic partners, the Minnesota Justice Foundation, and the Ramsey County Law Library, to find new ways to provide legal aid, emergency rental assistance services, and mediation to landlords and tenants seeking to resolve rental disputes in 2021. Clinic services were rebuilt within the Zoom virtual hearing environment to ensure those attending eviction hearings continued to have access to vital services. Standard scripts were delivered to court customers identifying available services and breakout rooms to provide virtual spaces for clinic partners to meet with participants. Additionally, the District's housing calendars were restructured with staggered start times to reduce the wait time for litigants and to give tenants time with representatives from RentHelpMN, a program to help Minnesota renters who are at risk of losing their housing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, to begin the rental assistance process.

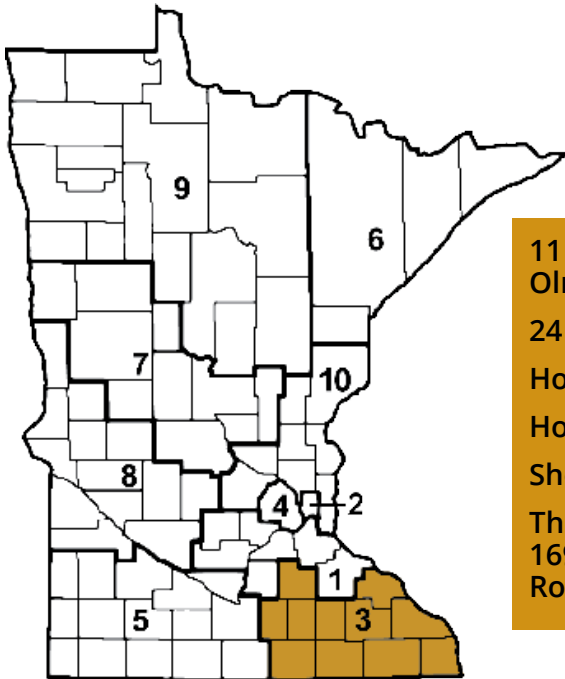
The Second Judicial District's Self-Help Service Center (SHSC) did not see a decrease in the need for self-help services and resources once it started providing services remotely due to the pandemic. The rise in the number of paperwork reviews conducted by SHSC staff with parties was approximately 20 percent, and, as of October 2021, the number of paternity form reviews usually conducted during a given year had already doubled. The number of emergency motions reviewed more than doubled, and contempt motion reviews increased by 57%. After recently adding expungement reviews to its repertoire, the SHSC is exploring further expansion of the types of services it plans to provide to the public. The focus is on civil cases, including conciliation court and name changes. The SHSC is also in the process of improving its local resources, so court staff are more easily equipped to assist parties

with finding forms, identifying available legal clinics, and relevant contact information.

### **Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Efforts Will Enhance the Effective Administration of Justice and Public Trust and Accountability**

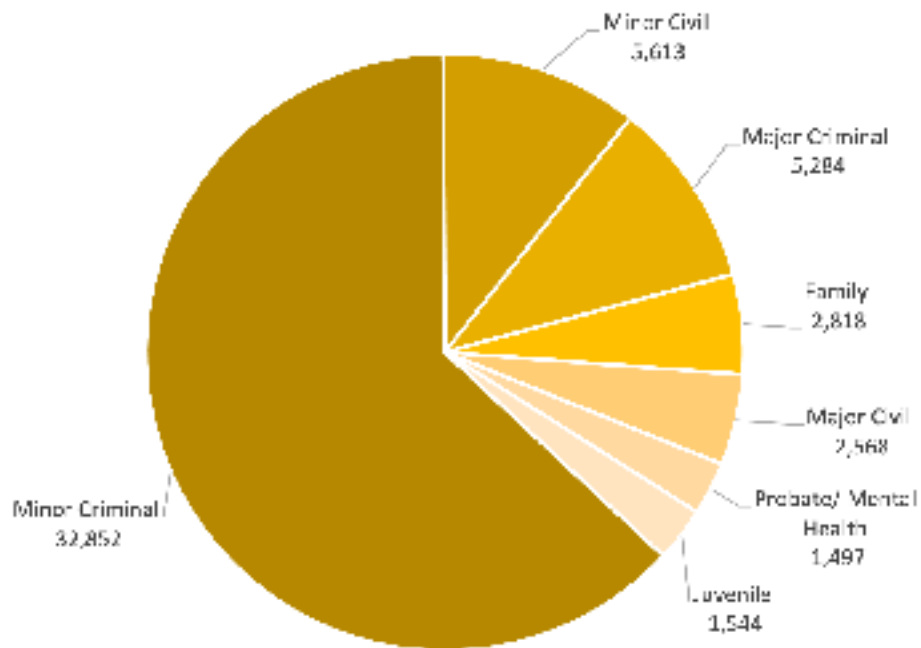
As part of its goal to advance diversity, inclusion, and equity, the Second Judicial District moved its agenda forward in 2021 with its Staff Equal Justice Committee. Three objectives and nine workplan initiatives were created to help identify, reduce, and eliminate disparities in the court system. Of the nine initiatives, three will directly benefit court users, including a technological tool in the filing system to improve name pronunciation and the use of personal gender pronouns, the translation of remote hearing instructions related to courtroom decorum into multiple languages, and education for court employees on diversity, inclusion, and equity, including systemic racism, to help ensure fair, unbiased, and impartial service is provided to all those coming into contact with the court system. The District also partnered with the Tenth Judicial District in July 2021 to hire a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Specialist who works closely with the Second District Equal Justice Committee and the Staff Equal Justice Committee. The Specialist also influences the development and implementation of the DEI strategy, provides consultation and helps to change the culture in the districts.

# Third Judicial District



11 Counties: Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, Waseca, Winona  
24 Judgeships, 1 Referee, 2 Child Support Magistrates  
Hon. Joseph Bueltel, Chief Judge  
Hon. Christine Long, Assistant Chief Judge  
Shelley Ellefson, District Administrator  
Third Judicial District Administration  
1696 Greenview Drive SW  
Rochester, MN 55902

2021 Third Judicial District Case Filings  
2021 Total Filings: 52,176



### **Consistency and Convenience Enhanced**

The Third Judicial District enhanced consistency in case processing and fostered convenience for court users and justice partners through its monthly Document Acceptance Team (DAT) newsletter, which provides filing tips, recommendations for filing codes, and new information beneficial to filers. Also, the Third District's Probate Subgroup and Districtwide Case Processing Subgroup worked collaboratively to create practices and new administrative orders that resulted in judges and staff delivering a reliable, consistent, and convenient court process for court users and justice partners.

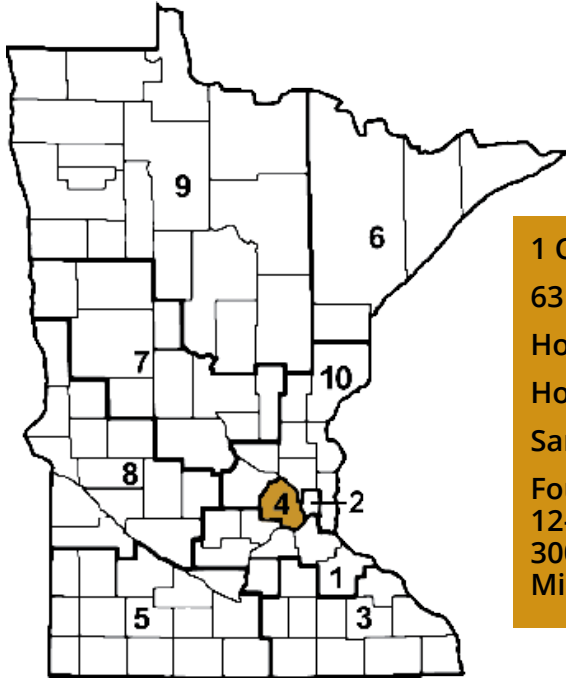
### **Telephone System Upgraded**

In its ongoing effort to collaborate and provide good customer service in 2021, the Third District successfully used the VoIP telephone system implemented in 2020 to routinely assist callers throughout the District. In March, a centralized telephone payment process was added for court users seeking copies of documents or to pay their fines. The districtwide finance team can now process all payment transactions, resulting in a streamlined, high-quality, and convenient customer experience.

### **Awareness of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Raised**

Third District judges and staff participated in a five-part series of racial diversity awareness training in 2021. They also had the opportunity to participate in fairness challenges to help raise awareness of and practice skills that ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the forefront of court user interactions.

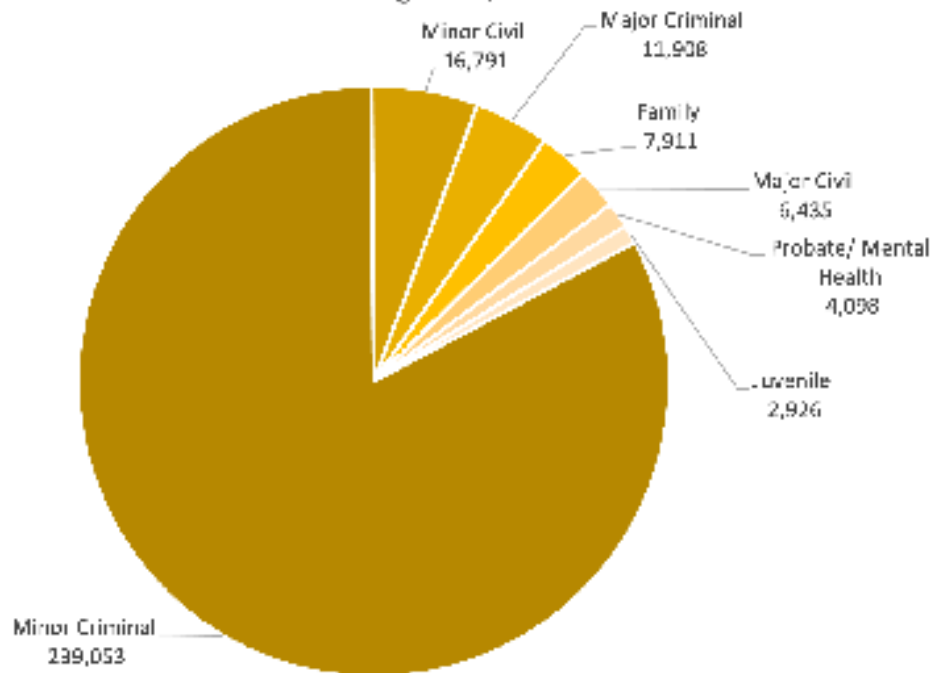
# Fourth Judicial District



1 County: Hennepin  
63 Judgeships, 13 Referees, 5 Child Support Magistrates  
Hon. Toddrick S. Barnette, Chief Judge  
Hon. Kerry W. Meyer, Assistant Chief Judge  
Sarah Lindahl-Pfieffer, District Administrator  
Fourth Judicial District Administration  
12-C Government Center  
300 South Sixth Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55487

## 2021 Fourth Judicial District Case Filings

2021 Total Filings: 289,122



### **Self-Help Center Celebrates 25 Years**

The Fourth Judicial District Self-Help Center celebrated 25 years of offering services to people representing themselves in court. The Center served approximately 3,000 people the month they opened in December 1996 and served more than 40,000 people in 2019. The pandemic forced the Self-Help Center to be innovative and adapt to provide more customer-centered support in a remote environment and create more efficient internal processes to provide services.

### **Criminal Trial Streamed Live for the First Time in Minnesota History**

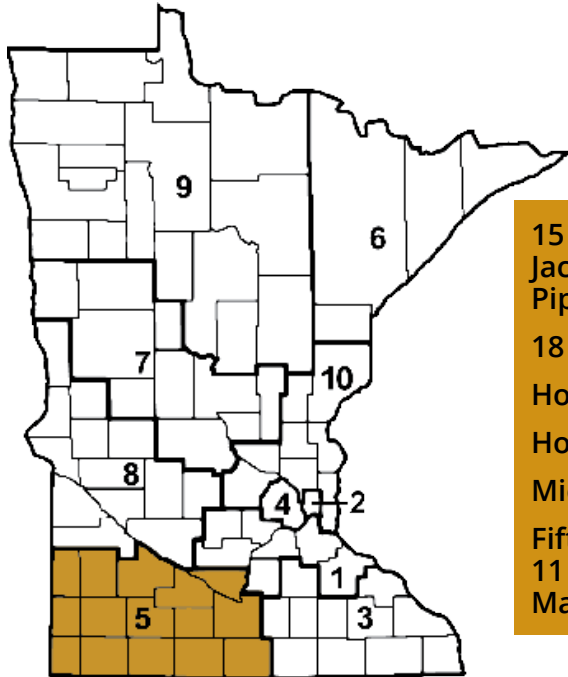
An estimated 23 million people watched in 2021 as the Fourth Judicial District facilitated the first live streaming of a criminal trial, State vs. Derek Chauvin, in Minnesota history. A high-profile trial team of dozens of Fourth District and State Court Administration staff spent months planning and executing every detail of the trial and earned the State Court Administrator Team Award for how it handled the trial and public access to it, especially during a global pandemic. Months after the trial, and due to the ongoing pandemic, the Fourth District again facilitated live streaming for the State vs. Kimberly Potter trial in late 2021.



### **Workplace Challenges and Inclusivity Addressed**

The Fourth District took steps to uniquely support its judicial officers and staff in response to the death of George Floyd, the subsequent civil unrest, and the pressures associated with the State vs. Derek Chauvin trial. District leadership conducted employee listening sessions and created a Bias Incident Response Protocol and Employee Support Model, including a Stress Inoculation Toolkit and a Courageous Conversations guide for supervisors to support employees. In addition, the second cohort of Fourth District employees completed the Access, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (AIDE) program in spring 2021. The work of the District's Racial Equity Strategic Leadership Team (RESLT) continues, is open to court employees at all levels, and is drafting goals for 2022 around inclusion and belonging, recruitment, and hiring. An Inclusive Leadership Program will be launched in 2022 to help supervisors lead more inclusive teams and facilitate organizational change.

# Fifth Judicial District



15 Counties: Blue Earth, Brown, Cottonwood, Faribault, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Martin, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock, Watonwan

18 Judgeships, 2 Child Support Magistrates

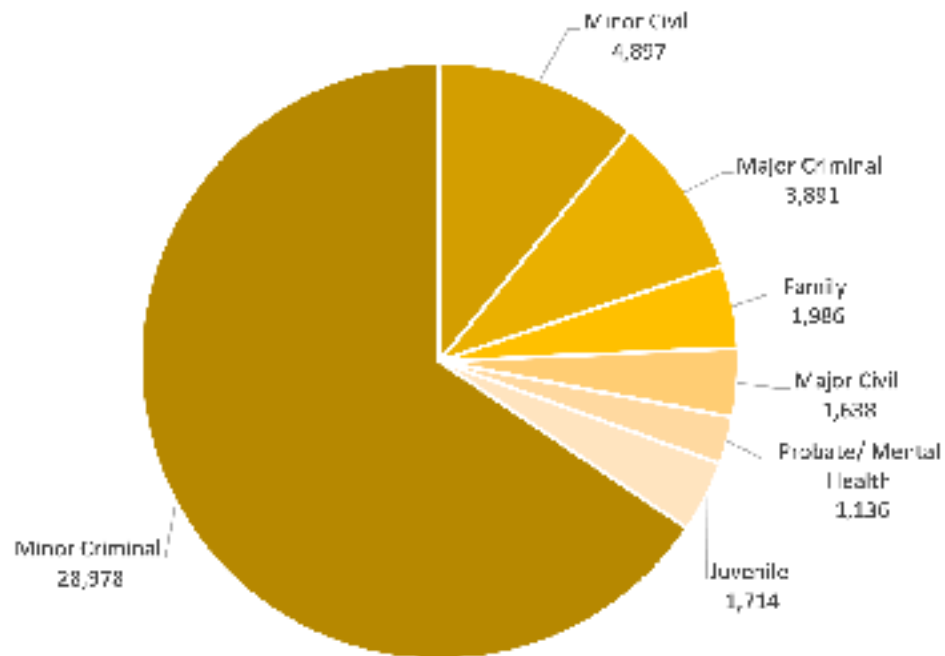
Hon. Michelle A. Dietrich, Chief Judge

Hon. Darcy Bentz, Assistant Chief Judge

Michael J. Kelley, District Administrator

Fifth Judicial District Administration  
11 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 205  
Mankato, MN 56001

2021 Fifth Judicial District Case Filings  
2021 Total Filings: 44,240



### **Onboarding Improved and Specialization Expanded**

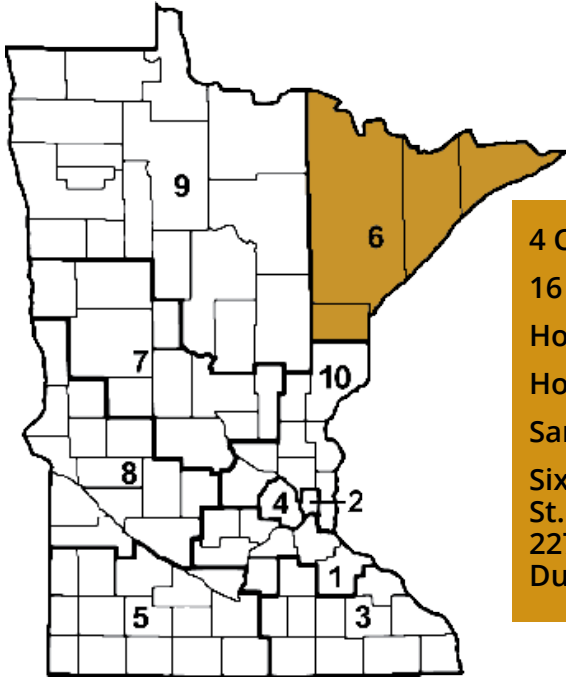
The Fifth Judicial District continued to work collaboratively to provide court users with a high-quality customer experience. Given the unprecedented level of staff turnover, the District developed robust onboarding platforms for use with new judges, court administrators, and court administration and judicial staff, making onboarding the key to providing a more consistent and effective experience for those served. The District also identified the expansion of specialized work as one of its top strategic priorities and continues to consider areas of operations and administration that may be suited to the specialized model. Several specialized teams have already expanded the scope of work they perform, resulting in increased accuracy, efficiency, and consistency.

### **Feedback on Calendaring Practices Gathered**

The Fifth Judicial District solicited feedback from business partners regarding remote hearing experiences throughout the pandemic to better align scheduling preferences and expectations with the court and improve the efficiency by which court and partner resources are used. The District formed a committee of court leaders and public defenders who meet monthly to discuss successes and challenges in calendaring practices.



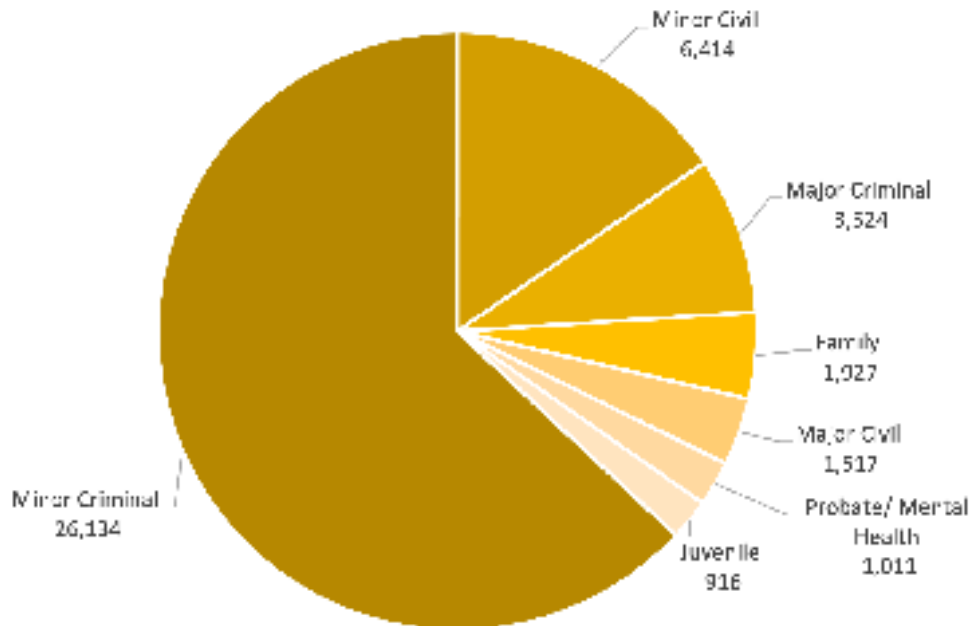
# Sixth Judicial District



4 Counties: Carlton, Cook, Lake, St. Louis  
16 Judgeships, 1 Referee, 2 Child Support Magistrates  
Hon. Michael J. Cuzzo, Chief Judge  
Hon. Leslie E. Beiers, Assistant Chief Judge  
Sara Taylor, District Administrator  
Sixth Judicial District Administration  
St. Louis County Courthouse  
227 West First Street, Suite 302  
Duluth, MN 55802

## 2021 Sixth Judicial District Case Filings

2021 Total Filings: 41,443



### **Zoom Practice Sessions Offered**

The Sixth Judicial District launched a new service for court customers in 2021 to support them in the enhanced use of technology to conduct court business. Court customers who are new to or need additional assistance with Zoom can now attend practice sessions with court staff. Court customers can log into a Zoom session before their court hearings and test their audio and video connections while becoming familiar with and asking questions about the platform. This service allows those with inadequate access to technology to schedule time with court-provided technology, which has helped alleviate the anxiety associated with appearing for court remotely. The service is now being offered by other judicial districts as well.

### **Quality Court Workplace Promoted**

The Sixth District created employee-led committees to evaluate and make recommendations regarding the 2021 Quality Court Workplace Survey. There are now opportunities for staff to train, develop, and advance due to the District's efforts to continue to be an employer of choice. The District's Chief Judge is also evaluating Survey results from judicial officers and working with judges to promote increased workplace quality. The District also evaluated and acted on lessons learned in the pandemic and continues to offer staff and judges hybrid working options. In addition, advancement opportunities were created in the Court Clerical Assessment and through the placement of lead workers in various locations across the District.

### **Equal Justice Committees Stay Active**

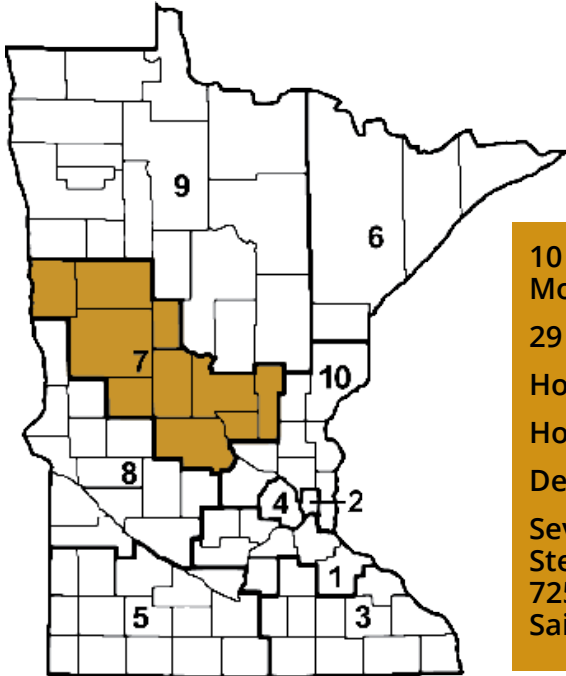
The Sixth Judicial District Equal Justice committees, one in the Iron Range and one in Duluth, stayed very active in 2021. Both met monthly over Zoom.

In March, the Iron Range Equal Justice Committee hosted a Justice Partners Career Panel Discussion for approximately 50 local students. In November, two warrant resolution events were held. The

Committee also held a remote Conversation with the Courts community event in April that focused on race and equality in the courts. A second Conversation with the Courts was held in May to identify topics for future conversations. A subcommittee was formed and connected with Voices for Ethnic and Multicultural Awareness (VEMA) to focus on the topics. In November, a Community Meet, Greet and Eat event was also held at the VEMA office. The partnership continues to explore ideas to connect with the community, and a combined expungement clinic and warrant resolution event is now in the planning stages. In August, the Committee participated in a discussion about a local Suicide Prevention Project being organized by Saint Louis County Public Health and Human Services to focus on suicide prevention/mental health promotion and training for court staff.

The Duluth Equal Justice Committee continued its partnership with the University of Minnesota-Duluth student group, Black Men Serving Excellence. It hosted another Conversation with the Courts event that was well-attended in 2021. The Committee also hosted a virtual "Consider the Courts, event in partnership with Denfeld High School. Committee members also shared information about initiatives within their organizations to increase awareness of opportunities connected to access to services or justice.

# Seventh Judicial District



10 Counties: Becker, Benton, Clay, Douglas, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Otter Tail, Stearns, Todd, Wadena

29 Judgeships, 3 Child Support Magistrates

Hon. Sarah Hennesy, Chief Judge

Hon. Michael Fritz, Assistant Chief Judge

Deb Mueske, District Administrator

Seventh Judicial District Administration

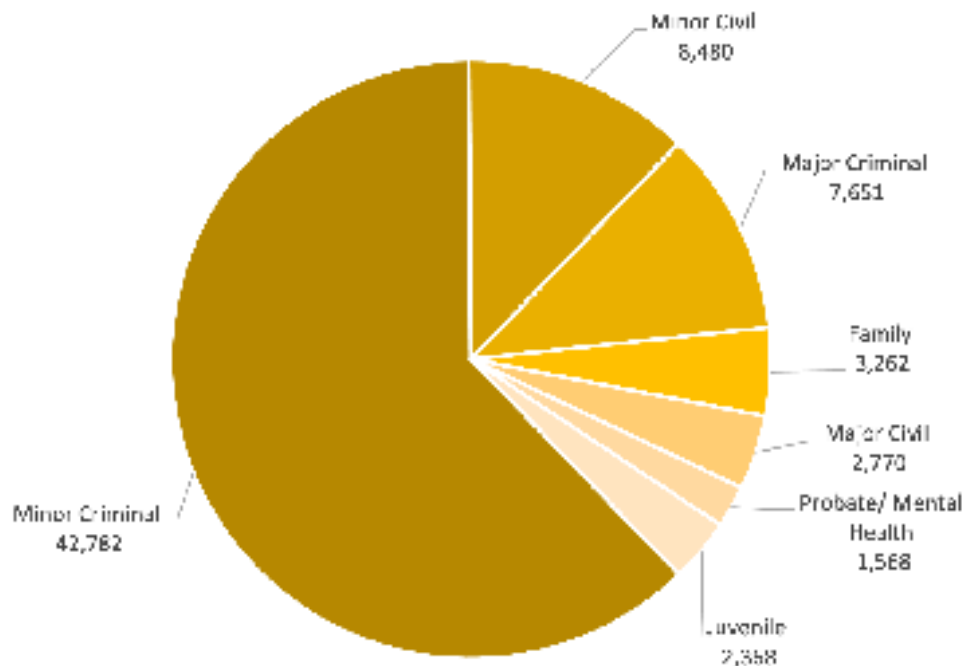
Stearns County Courthouse

725 Courthouse Square #406

Saint Cloud, MN 56303

## 2021 Seventh Judicial District Case Filings

2021 Total Filings: 68,881



## Access to Remote Hearings Made Easier



The Seventh Judicial District partnered with Otter Tail County to establish three locations within the county for people to participate in remote court hearings. The locations, Pelican Rapids Public Library, Perham Public Library, and Otter Tail County Courthouse, provide access to reliable internet and the technology needed to connect to remote court hearings. Private rooms are available at all three locations to ensure confidentiality. In addition, Zoom testing sessions were offered in 2021 as part of a partnership between the Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Judicial Districts. Before their hearings, court customers can connect with court staff to test audio/video/internet connections and receive quick ‘how to’ training on various functionalities within Zoom.

## Eviction Cases Centralized During Off-Ramp Process

An eviction specialty court with centralized calendars in two areas of the Seventh District was launched in 2021 in partnership with Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid. The temporary use of centralized calendars and senior judges presiding over cases during the eviction off-ramp process made case processing more efficient.

## Exploring Additional Centralization

The Seventh District explored additional

districtwide centralization opportunities in 2021 to make case processing more efficient. The District already uses a centralized process for paper and electronic document acceptance, default judgments, and guardianships/conservatorships. Specific areas discussed include probate, financial account reviews, conciliation, a call center, and child support magistrate calendars.

## Collaborative Culture Fostered

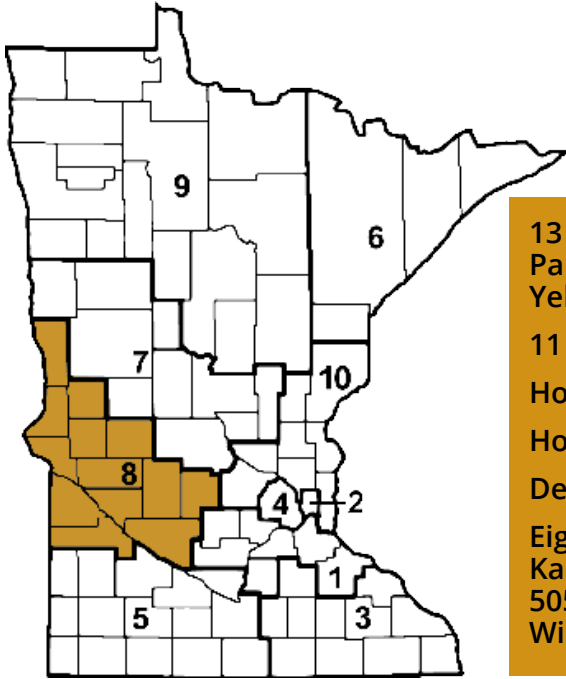
The Minnesota District Judges Foundation awarded Seventh District Chief Judge Sarah Hennesy the Tammy A. Fredrickson Judicial Service Award. The Award recognizes the efforts of a judge who provides outstanding service within the judicial system. Chief Judge Hennesy received the Award for working with justice partners to found the Mille Lacs County Domestic Violence Court and her judicial education contributions, mentoring other judges, and other contributions to the Judicial Branch.

The Seventh District implemented a law clerk mentorship program in 2021 to assist with onboarding new staff and hired a referee to help with the caseload in Becker, Clay, and Otter Tail counties.

## Staff Educated on Diversity and Inclusion

During the Seventh District’s employee staff development days in December 2021, Dr. Jermaine Davis spoke on leading and working with an inclusive lens and achieving organizational synergy with diversity and inclusion.

# Eighth Judicial District



13 Counties: Big Stone, Chippewa, Grant, Kandiyohi, Lac Qui Parle, Meeker, Pope, Renville, Stevens, Swift, Traverse, Wilkin, Yellow Medicine

11 Judgeships, 2 Child Support Magistrates

Hon. Stephanie Beckman, Chief Judge

Hon. Rodney Hanson, Assistant Chief Judge

Deb Mueske, District Administrator

Eighth Judicial District Administration

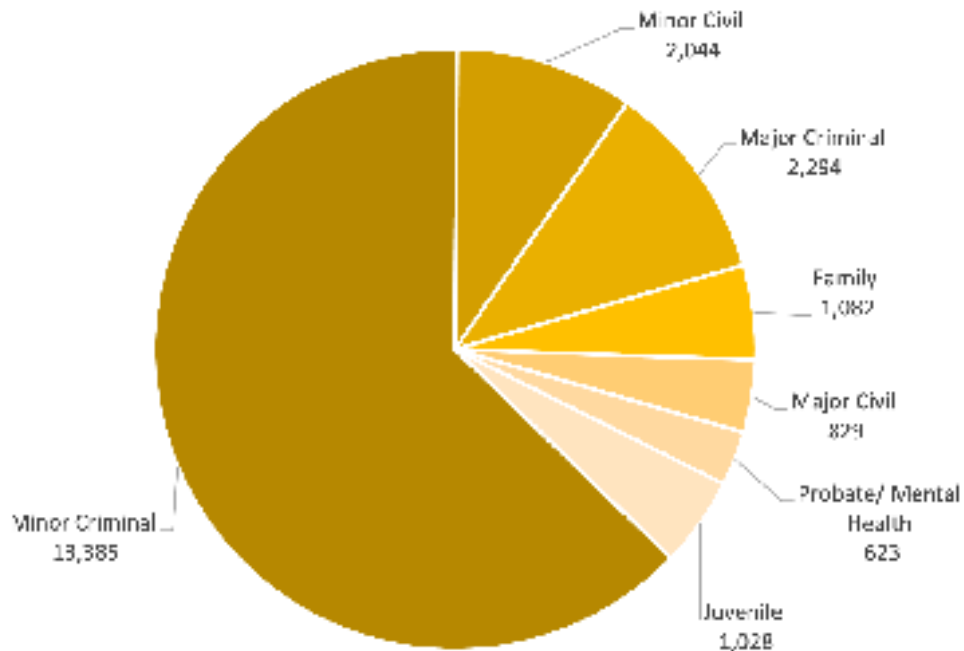
Kandiyohi County Courthouse

505 Becker Avenue SW, Suite 107

Willmar, MN 56201

## 2021 Eighth Judicial District Case Filings

2021 Total Filings: 21,285



### **Access to Remote Hearings Made Easier**

The Eighth Judicial District made digital tablets available in each of its courthouses to assist court customers who do not have the necessary technology to participate in remote hearings. The tablets can be used across county lines so that customers need only travel to the courthouse nearest to them in the District rather than traveling to the county of venue. In addition, Zoom testing sessions began to be offered in 2021 as part of a partnership between the Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Judicial Districts. Before their hearings, court customers can connect with court staff to test audio/video/ internet connections and receive quick 'how to' training on various functionalities within Zoom.

### **Eviction Cases Centralized**

An eviction specialty court with a centralized calendar was launched in the Eighth Judicial District to make the processing of eviction cases more efficient. Staff from Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid attended the hearings and breakout sessions to facilitate settlements and provide representation to court customers. Eighth District Chief Judge Stephanie Beckman and law clerk Alejandro Moreno also prepared an eviction moratorium off-ramp checklist for judges and staff in the Eighth and Seventh Judicial districts to use in determining which cases could move forward during the various stages of the off-ramp process and clarify the requirements needed for the filing of cases and notification to landlords and tenants.

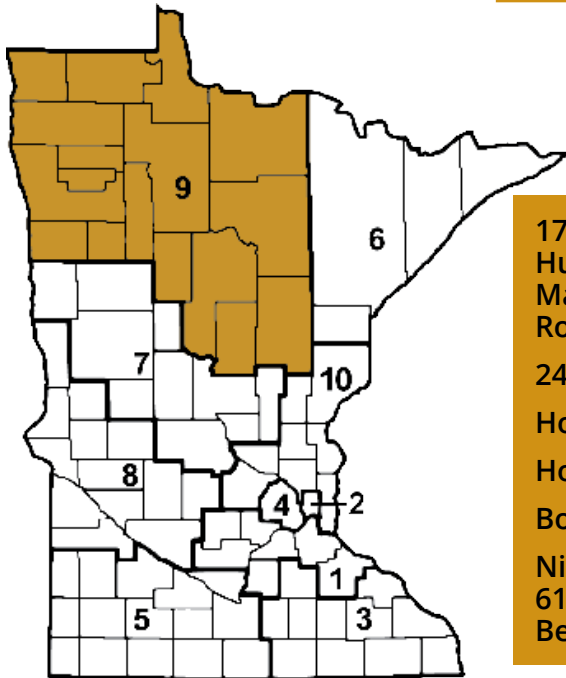
### **Centralization Implemented**

To make case processing more efficient, the Eighth District implemented districtwide centralization of family law cases in October 2021, after creating a districtwide family/Children in Need of Protection or Services court operations specialist position in September 2021.

### **Onboarding and Diversity and Inclusion Training Enhanced**

The Eighth Judicial District Implemented a judicial staff training and mentorship program to assist in onboarding new judicial staff. During the District's employee staff development days, Dr. Jermaine Davis spoke on leading and working with an inclusive lens and achieving organizational synergy with diversity and inclusion.

# Ninth Judicial District



17 Counties: Aitkin, Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, Kittson, Koochiching, Lake of the Woods, Mahnomon, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, Roseau

24 Judgeships, 2 Child Support Magistrates

Hon. Tamara L. Yon, Chief Judge

Hon. Jana M. Austad, Assistant Chief Judge

Bob Sommerville, District Administrator

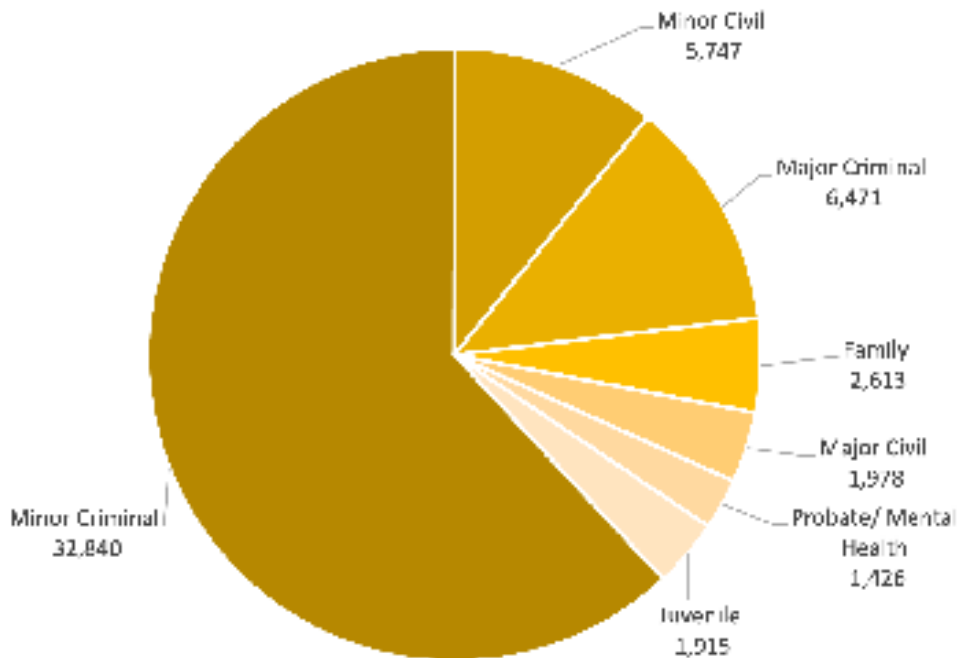
Ninth Judicial District Administration

616 America Avenue NW #250

Bemidji, MN 56601

## 2021 Ninth Judicial District Case Filings

2021 Total Filings: 52,990



### **Customer Service Improved through Remote Hearings Training**

The Ninth Judicial District is committed to meeting the remote hearing training needs of court staff and external court customers. In an ongoing effort to fulfill that commitment, the District offers Zoom training sessions for all court staff and created a Zoom best practices document. The District, in collaboration with four other Judicial Districts, hosts live training sessions two times per week for external court customers to practice using Zoom, test their audio, video and internet connections, and ask questions. The training sessions have helped people gain a level of comfort and understanding with Zoom prior to their remote hearing.

### **Focus Groups Drive Process Improvement**

To enhance the experience of court customers and achieve a more accurate and complete case management system record, the Ninth Judicial District created court staff focus groups to improve efficiencies and create more consistency in case processing throughout the District. Staff from all 17 court offices in the District meet to collaborate and discuss case-specific issues and processes to learn from one another and ensure compliance with Court Administrative Processes.

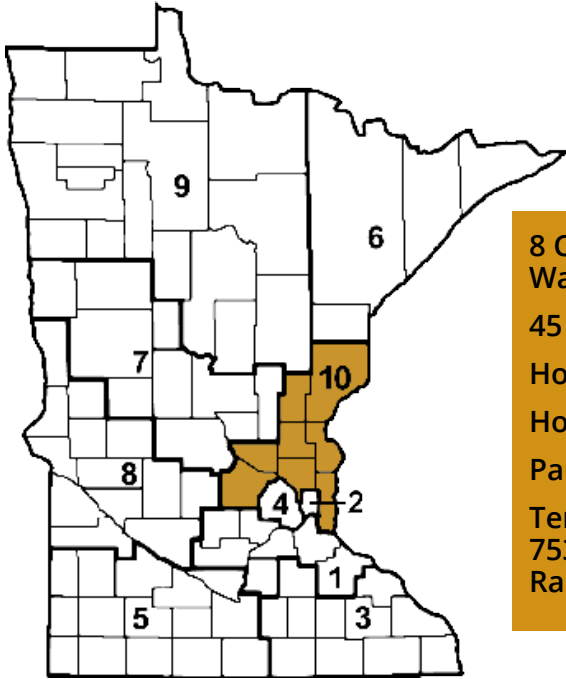
### **Remote Hearing Calendars Centralized**



The Ninth Judicial District established a centralized remote hearings calendar, which is used by all 17 counties in the District, to oversee the following case types: Domestic Abuse (OFP), Harassment Restraining Orders (HRO), Probate, Commitments, Guardianship & Conservatorship, Uncontested Dissolution and Family matters, Minor Civil, and Eviction matters. Offering a centralized remote calendar provides consistency in court processes and allows legal aid services, attorneys, and other advocacy groups to easily participate in court proceedings in various locations. In addition, court customers can participate in hearings and have access to legal representation without traveling to a courthouse.

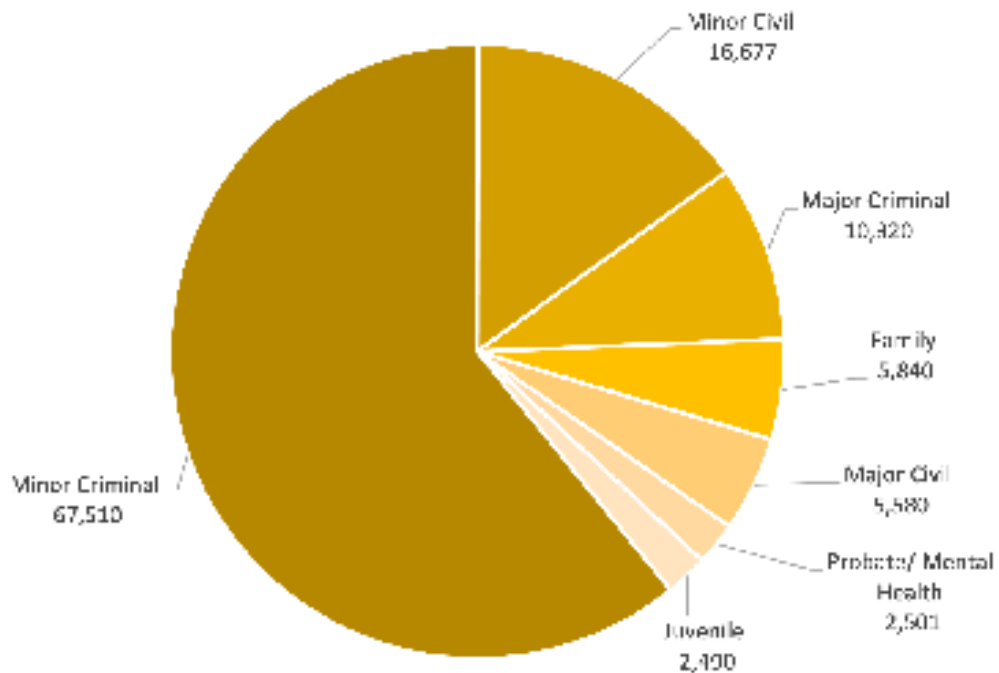


# Tenth Judicial District



8 Counties: Anoka, Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Pine, Sherburne, Washington, Wright  
45 Judgeships, 4 Child Support Magistrates  
Hon. Stoney L. Hiljus, Chief Judge  
Hon. Elizabeth H. Strand, Assistant Chief Judge  
Paul Patterson, District Administrator  
Tenth Judicial District Administration  
7533 Sunwood Drive NW, Suite 306  
Ramsey, MN 55303

2021 Tenth Judicial District Case Filings  
2021 Total Filings: 110,918



### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Enhanced**

As part of its goals to advance diversity, inclusion, and equity, the Tenth Judicial District reconvened its Equal Justice Committee in 2021 after a hiatus earlier in the year. Specifically, the Committee discussed creating school outreach events and training for employees to help ensure fair, unbiased, and impartial service.

The Tenth District also partnered with the Second Judicial District to hire a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Specialist in July 2021 to work closely with the Equal Justice Committee. Specifically, the Specialist influences the development and implementation of the DEI strategy, providing consultation and helping to change the culture in the districts. The Specialist is also partnering with a professional development specialist to facilitate a six-hour unconscious bias training once a quarter. The training was first offered in November 2021. Training on unconscious bias helps individuals, groups, and institutions become aware of preferences that can negatively or positively affect daily interactions and decisions.

### **Financial Operations Centralized**

A workgroup was convened in 2021 to centralize financial operations in the Tenth Judicial District. By having dedicated specialists perform this work, efficiencies are gained in purchasing supplies and equipment, and staff resources have been freed up to focus on case processing. Extra case processing resources are critical as the District addresses its case backlog caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The workgroup is also reviewing case financial records to provide the checks and balances necessary to preserve the integrity of financial transactions.

### **Virtual Law Day Event Held**

In April 2021, the Tenth Judicial District held its first-ever Virtual Law Day event. Hosted by the District's Litigant Services team, volunteer attorneys offered free clinics on family, civil, probate, and criminal expungement case types. Approximately 100 people attended the event to either get free, one-on-one legal advice from an attorney or observe a presentation on how they could get their criminal records expunged. Having an old criminal record can significantly impact an individual's ability to obtain employment and housing. Providing individuals with the knowledge and tools necessary to pursue expungement can have a positive, long-lasting impact.

# Court of Appeals

Chief Judge Susan Segal  
 Judge:  
 2019 - April 2020  
 Chief Judge:  
 May 2020 - present

Judge Renee L. Worke  
 2005 - present

Judge Kevin G. Ross  
 2006 - present

Judge Francis J. Connolly  
 2008 - present

Judge Matthew E. Johnson  
 Judge:  
 2008 - Nov. 2010;  
 Nov. 2013 - present  
 Chief Judge:  
 Nov. 2010 - Oct. 2013

Judge Michelle A. Larkin  
 2008 - present

Judge Louise Dovre Bjorkman  
 2008 - present

Judge Denise D. Reilly  
 2014 - present

Judge Peter M. Reyes, Jr.  
 2014 - present

Judge Lucinda E. Jesson  
 2016 - present

Judge Tracy M. Smith  
 2016 - present

Judge Diane B. Bratvold  
 2016 - present

Judge James B. Florey  
 2017 - present

Judge Jeanne M. Cochran  
 2018 - present

Judge Randall J. Slieter  
 2018 - present

Judge Jeffrey Bryan  
 2019 - present

Judge Jennifer L. Frisch  
 2020 - present

Judge Theodora Gaitas  
 2020 - present

In 2021, the Minnesota Court of Appeals utilized remote technology for oral arguments, which allowed greater ease and access for interested members of the public to observe oral arguments through links on the court website. At the start of 2022, the Court of Appeals initiated a hybrid model with some in-person and some remote oral arguments, allowing attorneys the option to request that the argument be held remotely. The Court has and will continue to solicit feedback from the appellate bar as the Court develops a post-pandemic policy for in-person and remote oral arguments. The Court is also exploring cost-effective options for remote access to in-person oral arguments.

The Court of Appeals also established its own equality and justice committee in 2021. The committee has implemented steps, in coordination with the Court's group law clerk hiring program, to increase diversity among applicants for Court of Appeals clerkships.

## 2021 Court of Appeals Case Information

Case Type	Cases Filed	Dispositions
General Civil	371	360
Criminal	591	804
Administrative Rule	11	7
Economic Security	70	63
Writs - Certiorari	64	53
Habeas/Certified Questions	18	13
Commitment	31	34
Family	183	191
Juvenile Delinquency	17	16
Juvenile Protection	81	65
Implied Consent	12	17
Discretionary Review/Writs	78	81
Probate	24	31
Unlawful Detainer/Eviction	7	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,558</b>	<b>1,750</b>

# Supreme Court

## In-Person Oral Arguments Resume

The start of the Minnesota Supreme Court’s September 2021 term marked the resumption of in-person oral arguments, with appropriate COVID-19-related protocols in place. Oral arguments were held from the start of the term through the end of the year in the Capitol Courtroom and were open to the public. A live video feed of oral arguments was also made available on a screen outside the Courtroom to encourage social distancing. In addition, oral arguments continued to be available live over the Internet and on-demand on the Minnesota Judicial Branch’s website. The return to in-person oral arguments also marked the return to the traditional format of open questioning from all members of the Court, rather than the remote hearing format of questioning by order of seniority. In the future, the Court also remains able to hold oral arguments remotely if circumstances require it in any case.

Chief Justice  
Lorie S. Gildea  
Associate Justice  
2006 - June 2010  
Chief Justice  
July 2010 - present

Associate Justice  
G. Barry Anderson  
2004 - present

Associate Justice  
Natalie E. Hudson  
2015 - present

Associate Justice  
Margaret H. Chutich  
2016 - present

Associate Justice  
Anne K. McKeig  
2016 - present

Associate Justice  
Paul C. Thissen  
July 2018 - present

Associate Justice  
Gordon L. Moore, III  
August 2020 - present

## 2021 Supreme Court Case Information

### Direct Appeals & Original Actions

Workers’ Compensation	10
Tax Court	7
Professional Regulation	48
First Degree Murder	15
Writs/Miscellaneous	8
Total Direct Appeals / Original Actions	88

### Petitions for Further/Accelerated Review (PFR/PAR)

Filed (PFR/PAR)	551
Review Denied	466
Granted Further/Accelerated Review	66
Other (Remand, Dismiss)	7

### Opinions/Disposition Orders

Affirmed	46
Affirmed in Part	14
Reverse/Remand	26
Other (Discipline, dismiss, other disposition)	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>

# Demographic Data

In January 2016, the Lawyer Registration Office began collecting race/ethnicity information in addition to gender data from attorneys during the lawyer registration process. The following data was reported in 2021.

## Active - ALL

	Active Total	Active Admitted 0 to 10 yrs	Active Admitted 11 to 20 yrs	Active Admitted 21 to 30 yrs	Active Admitted 31 to 40 yrs	Active Admitted 41+ yrs
Asian/Pacific Islander	839	435	249	130	21	4
Black/African American	616	265	160	116	59	16
Hispanic/Latino	347	178	92	51	23	3
Native American/ Alaskan	118	32	33	36	14	3
White/ Caucasian	19,835	5,341	5,280	4,051	3,207	1,956
Multiple	332	178	100	41	9	4
Choose Not to Answer	3,587	1,106	1,061	730	458	233
Unknown	452	425	16	6	3	2
Total	26,126	7,960	6,991	5,161	3,794	2,221

## Inactive - ALL

	Inactive Totals	Inactive Adm 0 to 10 yrs	Inactive Adm 11 to 20 yrs	Inactive Adm 21 to 30 yrs	Inactive Adm 31 to 40 yrs	Inactive Adm 41+ yrs
Asian/Pacific Islander	147	43	60	38	5	1
Black/African American	88	16	26	30	12	4
Hispanic/Latino	45	8	21	11	5	0
Native American/ Alaskan	13	1	6	5	1	0
White/ Caucasian	3,001	328	881	832	679	281
Multiple	44	11	19	9	5	0
Choose Not to Answer	492	70	158	145	84	35
Unknown	1	0	1	0	0	0
Total	3,831	477	1,172	1,070	791	321

# Demographic Data

In January 2016, the Lawyer Registration Office began collecting race/ethnicity information in addition to gender data from attorneys during the lawyer registration process. The following data was reported in 2021.

## Male Active

	Male Active Totals	Male Active Adm 0 to 10 yrs	Male Active Adm 11 to 20 yrs	Male Active Adm 21 to 30 yrs	Male Active Adm 31 to 40 yrs	Male Active Adm 41+ yrs
Asian/Pacific Islander	361	180	110	56	12	3
Black/African American	325	122	85	72	34	12
Hispanic/Latino	164	81	39	24	17	3
Native American/ Alaskan	63	19	17	15	9	3
White/ Caucasian	11,499	2,755	2,653	2,254	2,147	1,690
Multiple	158	78	49	23	4	4
Choose Not to Answer	826	228	196	184	130	88
Unknown	12	4	5	1	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,408</b>	<b>3,467</b>	<b>3,154</b>	<b>2,629</b>	<b>2,355</b>	<b>1,803</b>

## Male Inactive

	Male Inactive Totals	Male Inactive Adm 0 to 10 yrs	Male Inactive Adm 11 to 20 yrs	Male Inactive Adm 21 to 30 yrs	Male Inactive Adm 31 to 40 yrs	Male Inactive Adm 41+ yrs
Asian/Pacific Islander	72	23	26	20	3	0
Black/African American	34	6	9	13	4	2
Hispanic/Latino	22	6	8	7	1	0
Native American/ Alaskan	7	1	3	3	0	0
White/ Caucasian	1,466	154	367	377	362	206
Multiple	19	3	8	5	3	0
Choose Not to Answer	89	14	24	19	20	12
Unknown	1	0	1	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,710</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>220</b>

# Demographic Data

In January 2016, the Lawyer Registration Office began collecting race/ethnicity information in addition to gender data from attorneys during the lawyer registration process. The following data was reported in 2021.

## Female Active

	Female Active Totals	Female Active Adm 0 to 10 yrs	Female Active Adm 11 to 20 yrs	Female Active Adm 21 to 30 yrs	Female Active Adm 31 to 40 yrs	Female Active Adm 41+ yrs
Asian/Pacific Islander	475	254	138	73	9	1
Black/African American	290	142	75	44	25	4
Hispanic/Latino	181	96	52	27	6	0
Native American/ Alaskan	55	13	16	21	5	0
White/ Caucasian	8,245	2,543	2,609	1,785	1,049	259
Multiple	173	99	51	18	5	0
Choose Not to Answer	509	194	161	86	49	19
Unknown	7	1	3	2	0	1
Total	9,935	3,342	3,105	2,056	1,148	284

## Female Inactive

	Female Inactive Totals	Female Inactive Adm 0 to 10 yrs	Female Inactive Adm 11 to 20 yrs	Female Inactive Adm 21 to 30 yrs	Female Inactive Adm 31 to 40 yrs	Female Inactive Adm 41+ yrs
Asian/Pacific Islander	72	18	33	18	2	1
Black/African American	54	10	17	17	8	2
Hispanic/Latino	22	2	12	4	4	0
Native American/ Alaskan	5	0	3	2	0	0
White/ Caucasian	1,526	174	511	450	316	75
Multiple	24	8	10	4	2	0
Choose Not to Answer	81	14	21	31	12	3
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1,784	226	607	526	344	81

# Demographic Data

In January 2016, the Lawyer Registration Office began collecting race/ethnicity information in addition to gender data from attorneys during the lawyer registration process. The following data was reported in 2021.

## Choose Not to Answer Gender Active

	Active Totals	Active Adm 0 to 10 yrs	Active Adm 11 to 20 yrs	Active Adm 21 to 30 yrs	Active Adm 31 to 40 yrs	Active Adm 41+ yrs
Asian/Pacific Islander	3	1	1	1	0	0
Black/African American	1	1	0	0	0	0
Hispanic/Latino	2	1	1	0	0	0
Native American/ Alaskan	0	0	0	0	0	0
White/ Caucasian	91	43	18	12	11	7
Multiple	1	1	0	0	0	0
Choose Not to Answer	2,252	684	704	460	279	126
Unknown	433	420	8	3	1	1
Total	2,783	1,151	732	476	291	134

## Choose Not to Answer Gender Inactive

	Inactive Totals	Inactive Adm 0 to 10 yrs	Inactive Adm 11 to 20 yrs	Inactive Adm 21 to 30 yrs	Inactive Adm 31 to 40 yrs	Inactive Adm 41+ yrs
Asian/Pacific Islander	3	2	1	0	0	0
Black/African American	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hispanic/Latino	1	0	1	0	0	0
Native American/ Alaskan	1	0	0	0	1	0
White/ Caucasian	9	0	3	5	1	0
Multiple	1	0	1	0	0	0
Choose Not to Answer	322	42	113	95	52	20
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	337	44	119	100	54	20

## Retired

	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Black/ African American	Hispanic/ Latino	Native American/ Alaskan	White/ Caucasian	Multiple	Choose Not to Answer	Unknown
Total	5	14	4	1	1352	6	162	2590



# Appellate Clerk's Office



## Appellate E-Filing Update

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and through all of 2021, the appellate courts have leveraged electronic filing tools to continue court operations and provide access to justice in a largely remote work environment. Appellate e-filing accounted for at least 93% of all appellate filing submissions, consistent with the previous two years' usage statistics. The appellate courts also continue to rely on the C-Track system, which provides appellate court personnel and judicial officers with on-demand access to evidence and exhibits via a web-based application, eliminating the end user's need for specialized viewing equipment and software.

## Commitment Appeal Panel Update

Commitment Appeal Panels are three-judge Panels that conduct hearings when a civilly committed patient petitions for release from a state security hospital or requests a less restrictive placement. There are three Commitment Appeal Panels in Minnesota. District court judges from the Second and Tenth judicial districts serve as chief judges of two of the Panels, and a senior (retired) judge serves as the chief of the third and entirely remote Panel. Appellate Court Clerk's Office personnel are responsible for docketing all filings for the Panels, conducting pre-hearing conferences, assigning judges to the Panels, and scheduling hearings.

Year	Number of CAP Cases Initiated
2009	54
2010	62
2011	98
2012	87
2013	106
2014	108
2015	185
2016	200
2017	193
2018	176
2019	196
2020	202
2021	200

# State Law Library

The Minnesota State Law Library continued to strive toward providing access to justice and support public trust and accountability in 2021 through its service to self-represented litigants.

## Legal Information Services

Despite the Minnesota State Law Library being closed to the public for almost half of the year, Library staff increased its remote services and answered more than 9,100 questions in 2021. As an additional service, since many public libraries and courts were closed, the Library mailed 592 packets of court forms to the public at no charge. In addition to providing legal information service to the courts, attorneys, state employees, and the public, the Law Library Service to Prisoners program provides legal materials to Minnesota state inmates. The librarians who staff this prisoner-funded program answered over 20,000 questions from 2070 inmates in 2021.

## Appellate Self-Help Clinics

The Minnesota State Law Library hosts two self-help clinics to provide free assistance to individuals seeking to file an appeal with the Minnesota Court of Appeals or the Minnesota Supreme Court. These clinics offer self-represented litigants an opportunity to have a brief meeting, at no cost, with a volunteer attorney to understand better the rules and procedures of Minnesota's appellate courts. Almost a quarter of all appeals in Minnesota involve a party not represented by an attorney. In 2021, due to COVID, the appellate clinics were offered via phone.

The general appeals clinic, staffed by volunteer attorneys from the Appellate Practice Section of the Minnesota State Bar Association (MSBA),



assisted 135 people in 2021. Additionally, the Unemployment Appeal Self-Help Clinic assisted 74 people, which amounted to a 95% increase from 2020. There were 137 unemployment appeals filed in 2021. This 93% increase from 2020 reflects the large numbers of people filing for unemployment benefits during the pandemic. More than 80% of this type of appeal involves a party who is unrepresented. The Clinic's volunteer attorneys are primarily members of the Labor and Employment Law Section of the MSBA.

# 2021 Awards

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## **Minnesota Supreme Court**

Supreme Court Associate Justice Anne K. McKeig received the 2020 Child Welfare Leadership Award from the University of Minnesota School of Social Work Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare.

Supreme Court Associate Justice Paul Thissen was presented with the Elmer H. Wiblishauser Author's Award by the Publications Committee of "Bench & Bar," the official publication of the Minnesota State Bar Association, for his commentary, "When Rules Get in the Way of Reason: One judge's view of legislative interpretations."

## **State Court Administrator's Office**

Minnesota State Court Administrator Jeff Shorba was named President of the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA) and Vice-Chair of the National Center for State Courts.

The Personal Well-Being Report, used by guardians in guardianship cases, was named the Best Static Form by the Self-Represented Litigation Network.

## **Judicial Districts**

### **First Judicial District**

Judge Jerome Abrams was elected to serve as the national board representative of the American Board of Trial Advocates by members of the state chapter.

Dakota County Family Dependency Treatment Court was recognized with an Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties.

Katie Moras, volunteer mentor with Scott County Treatment Court, and conciliation court referees James Kretsch Jr., Steven Pattee, Markus Yira, and Lisa Vandelist, were the recipients of the First Judicial District's 11th Annual Amicus Curiae Award.

### **Fourth Judicial District**

Judge Bruce D. Manning received the 2021 Casey Excellence for Children Leadership Award from the Casey Family Program.

### **Seventh Judicial District**

Judge Sarah Hennesy was awarded the Tammy A. Fredrickson Judicial Service Award by the Minnesota District Judges Foundation



**MINNESOTA  
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Produced by the State Court Administrator's Office

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