



ANNUAL REPORT

Nebraska Administrative Office of the Courts & Probation

Fiscal Year July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016





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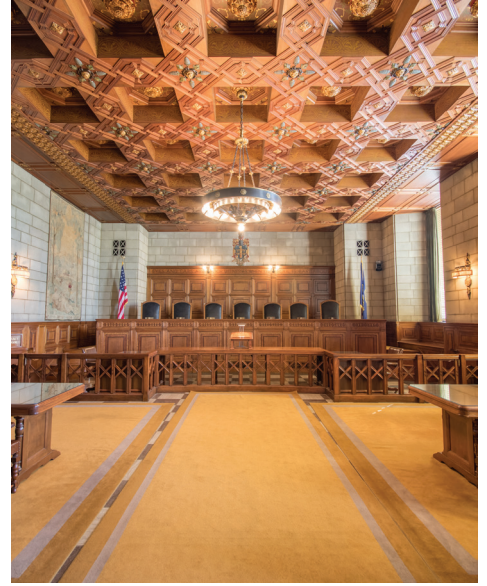
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Message from Chief Justice Mike Heavican



I am pleased to present this Annual Report of the Nebraska Judicial Branch on behalf of my colleagues on the Nebraska Supreme Court.

This report outlines the good works of the branch and our efforts to enhance the delivery of justice through the courts and through probation services during Fiscal Year 2016 (July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016).

The mission of Nebraska's court system is to provide citizens with an open, fair, efficient, and independent forum for the resolution of disputes in accordance with our state motto: Equality Before the Law.

The many accomplishments of this past year reflect the dedication of the individuals who work in our courts and probation systems.

Each of us within the branch understands that it is an honor to work for Nebraskans to preserve open access and timely justice.



STATE OF
NEBRASKA
JUDICIAL BRANCH

Judicial Leadership

The Nebraska Constitution provides that general administrative authority over all the courts in the state is vested in the Supreme Court and shall be exercised by the Chief Justice (Nebraska Const. art. V). The Chief Justice is the executive head of the courts and may appoint an administrative director to oversee the operations of the branch.

At the local level, trial court judges are responsible for the operation of the court system and are tasked with providing leadership within their judicial district that enriches the well-being of the court system.

The Court supports a number of commissions and committees consisting of citizens, judges, and lawyers who work together to improve the delivery of justice throughout the state. A complete listing of committees and their members can be found on the Judicial Branch Website under the Administration section.

Judicial Associations

While the Chief Justice provides leadership for the branch as a whole, each trial level of the court system has an association providing leadership for its judges. The presidents of the associations for the 2015-16 fiscal year are:

- District Court Judges' Association: Judge James E. Doyle, Lexington
- County Court Judges' Association: Judge Anne M. Paine, McCook
- Separate Juvenile Court Judges' Association: Judge Douglas F. Johnson, Omaha

Annual Leadership Conference

Each spring, the Chief Justice convenes an Annual Leadership Conference which includes the chairs of commissions and committees of the Supreme Court. The conference is designed to enhance the leadership skills of trial court judges and to promote innovative programming throughout the branch. Prior to the May 2015 meeting, Supreme Court committee chairs submitted their thoughts on "emerging issues" confronting the Judiciary. The Chief Justice selected six of the issues to be addressed over the upcoming year by new judge leaders.

Emerging issues and leaders are:

- **Case management in the trial courts: case progression and consistent practices**
 - Judicial Leaders: Judges Marcela A. Keim and Anne M. Paine
 - Committee Representative: Judge Curtis L. Maschman
- **Uniform rules for cameras in trial courts: trial court access**
 - Judicial Leaders: Judges Jeffrey J. Funke and Leigh Ann Retelsdorf
 - Committee Representative: Judge Todd J. Hutton
- **Parenting Act: high performance domestic relations case management, trend of unmarried parents and paternity identification**
 - Judicial Leader: Judge Michael E. Piccolo
 - Committee Representatives: Judges Everett O. Inbody and Gary B. Randall
- **Justice Reinvestment: sentencing options changes, community treatment and local supervision**
 - Judicial Leader: Judge Paul J. Vaughan
 - Committee Representative: Judge Leo P. Dobrovolny
- **Decreasing numbers of lawyers and judges in rural regions of state: local bar/bench coordination**
 - Judicial Leaders: Judges Kris D. Mickey and Russell W. Harford
 - Committee Representative: Judge James E. Doyle
- **Increasing number of non-English speaking litigants in the court: need for technology, education, resources**
 - Judicial Leaders: Judges Michael P. Burns and Ross A. Stoffer
 - Committee Representative: Justice William B. Cassel



Leadership Development Program Participants

In conjunction with the Chief Justice's Annual Leadership Conference, the education division sponsors a judicial leadership development program bringing together judges of all levels to consider creative ways of providing leadership for the Nebraska Judicial Branch. These judges meet regularly over the course of a year to develop an understanding of ways the courts can work for the betterment of the branch. The 2015-2016 Leadership Development Program judges includes:

- Richard A. Birch, District Court, North Platte
- Daniel R. Fridrich, Workers' Compensation Court, Omaha
- Thomas K. Harmon, County Court, Omaha
- Andrew R. Jacobsen, District Court, Lincoln
- Mark A. Johnson, District Court, Madison
- Sheryl L. Lohaus, County Court, Omaha
- Travis P. O'Gorman, District Court, Alliance
- C. Jo Petersen, County Court, Seward
- Timothy C. Phillips, County Court, Lincoln
- Reggie L. Ryder, Separate Juvenile Court, Lincoln
- Tami K. Schendt, County Court, Broken Bow
- Stephanie F. Stacy, Supreme Court, Lincoln
- Thomas E. Stine, Workers' Compensation Court, Lincoln
- Shelly R. Stratman, District Court, Omaha
- Paul G. Wess, County Court, Alliance
- Arthur S. Wetzel, County Court, Grand Island
- Jeffrey M. Wightman, County Court, Lexington



Nebraska's Judicial Branch Outreach & Community Involvement

2015-2016 Exemplary Programming: Community Services

It is well understood that the courts have a strong presence in every area of the state. There is a courthouse in each county seat, a mediation center designated to serve every location, regionally located public guardians, probation offices through out the system, and technology connecting everyone together.

The courts and court-related services are a prominent feature in every Nebraska community.

Nebraska State Probation Reporting Centers: Intensive Programming and Community Correctional Services

Within the Judicial Branch, the division with the greatest growth and a marked increase in community visibility is the statewide probation system. Five new community-based Reporting Centers have been established, bringing the total number of Reporting Centers to 16 statewide. New locations include: Beatrice (Gage County), Hastings (Adams County), North Platte (Lincoln County), and additional locations in Omaha (Douglas County) and Lincoln (Lancaster County). These new centers complement the Reporting Centers previously established in Bellevue, Nebraska City, Dakota City, Kearney, Lexington, Columbus, Gering, Norfolk, Grand Island, Lincoln and Omaha.

Core program components in Reporting Centers include: Drug and alcohol pre-treatment and relapse groups, employment and educational/life skills classes, and cognitive groups to assist clients in behavior change. In areas where Reporting Centers are not readily available, probation provides teleservice options to bridge the gap of rehabilitative services.

With the opening of these new Reporting Centers and the intensification of probation/community corrections services, probationers and their families are more readily served within their communities.



Nebraska's Judicial Branch Outreach & Community Involvement

2015-2016 Exemplary Programming: Education & Outreach

The Nebraska Judicial Branch sponsors a series of community-based projects that fall under the category of governmental educational outreach. From sponsorship of 'Adoption Saturday' to Law and Constitution Day celebrations to travelling appellate-level arguments, the Judicial Branch is committed to maintaining public awareness of the court system and providing law-related education to both students and adults.

Nebraska Supreme Court and Court of Appeals Oral Arguments and Educational Outreach

During 2015-2016, Nebraska's appellate courts redoubled their efforts with high school and college community outreach.

Supreme Court High School and Law School Oral Arguments

For over 30 years, the Supreme Court has traveled annually to both the University of Nebraska College of Law and Creighton University School of Law for the purpose of making the Court's business accessible to students on their campuses. Following each argument session, the justices spend time talking to students about the appellate process and career opportunities as lawyers. Immediately following the 2016 session at Creighton, the Supreme Court Justices held an additional court session at Omaha Central High School in front of an auditorium filled with high school students. Commenting on the importance of extending argument sessions to high schools, Chief Justice Mike Heavican noted, "It is critical that our students understand the workings of our democratic institutions and have confidence in our court system."

Court of Appeals College Campus Initiative

The Nebraska Court of Appeals held their 'College Campus Initiative' at both Concordia College in Seward and Peru State College in Peru. Through the initiative, the Court of Appeals hears several cases during both morning and afternoon argument sessions followed by an open question and answer session with students. Students are given detailed descriptions of each case in order to help them follow the legal arguments. College students, along with government classes from area high schools, are invited to attend and student journalists are encouraged to participate and ask questions.



Nebraska Judges

Judicial Excellence

Distinguished judges recognized for their contributions to the Nebraska Supreme Court in FY 2016 include:

- Service to the Community: Judge Frankie Moore, Chief Judge of the Nebraska Court of Appeals
- Service to the Judiciary: Judge John Colborn, District Judge, 3rd Judicial District

Judge Moore earned the honor for her leadership and commitment to improving access to the courts for self-represented litigants and her active community outreach efforts with both high schools and colleges.

Judge Colborn's outstanding service award was given in recognition of his many years of extensive involvement in judicial branch education along with his active participation in the development and promotion of court technology.

Chief Justice Mike Heavican with Judge Frankie Moore (left) and Judge John Colborn (right).



Judicial Appointments FY 2015-2016

All dates represent the date the judge took the bench on their respective court.

Nebraska Supreme Court

Max J. Kelch	Judicial District 4	3/1/2016
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District Court

Susan I. Strong	3 rd Judicial District	7/1/2015
Horacio J. Wheelock	4 th Judicial District	10/14/2015
Darla S. Ideus	3 rd Judicial District	1/8/2016
John H. Marsh	9 th Judicial District	5/2/2016
George A. Thompson	2 nd Judicial District	6/10/2016

County Court

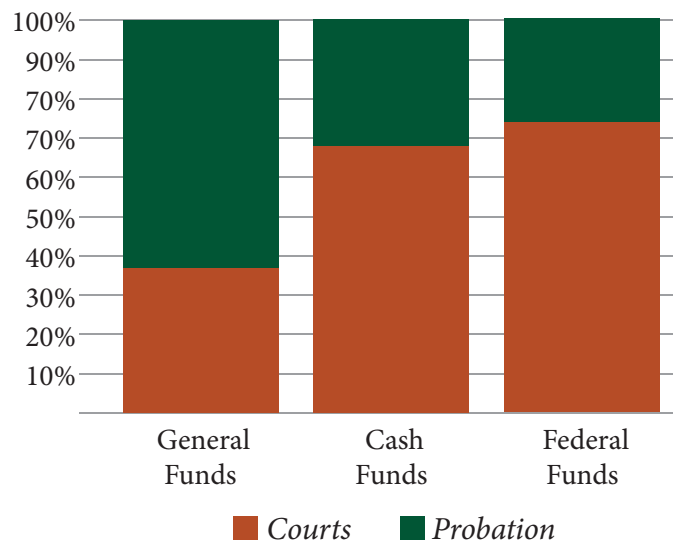
Stephanie R. Hansen	4 th Judicial District	11/13/2015
Thomas E. Zimmerman	3 rd Judicial District	11/25/2015
Rodney D. Reuter	3 rd Judicial District	6/14/2016

FY 2016 Judicial Branch Finances

Expenditures by Fund Source

	Court	Probation	Total
General Funds	\$60,262,797	\$102,561,986	\$162,824,783
Cash Funds	\$7,903,290	\$3,850,587	\$11,753,877
Federal Funds	\$625,355	\$209,329	\$834,684
Total	\$68,791,442	\$106,621,902	\$175,413,344

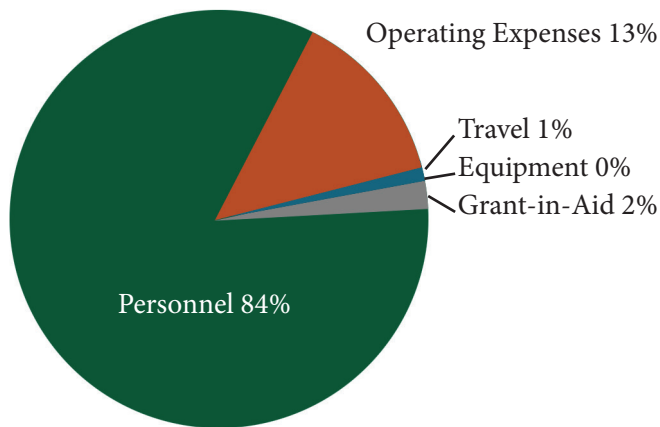
Expenditures by Fund Source FY 2016



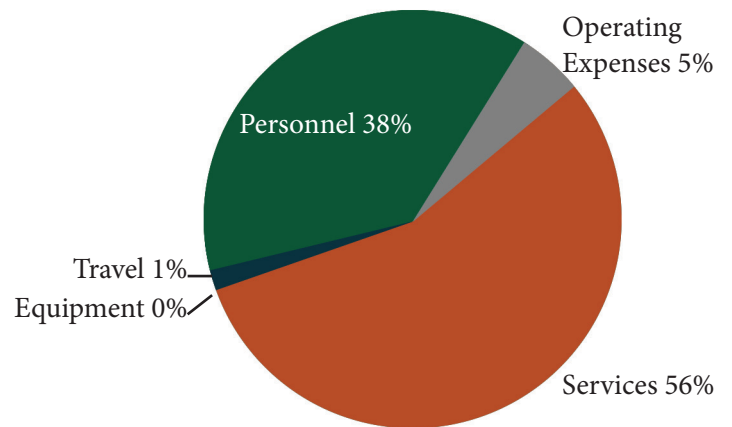
Expenditures by Major Account Category

	Court	Probation	Total
Personnel	\$57,569,247	\$40,948,296	\$98,517,543
Operating Expenses	\$9,241,240	\$4,901,305	\$14,142,545
Services	-	\$59,470,814	\$59,470,814
Travel	\$845,469	\$1,253,645	\$2,099,144
Equipment	\$45,979	\$47,843	\$93,822
Grant-in-Aid	\$1,089,506	-	\$1,089,506
Total	\$68,791,442	\$106,621,903	\$175,413,344

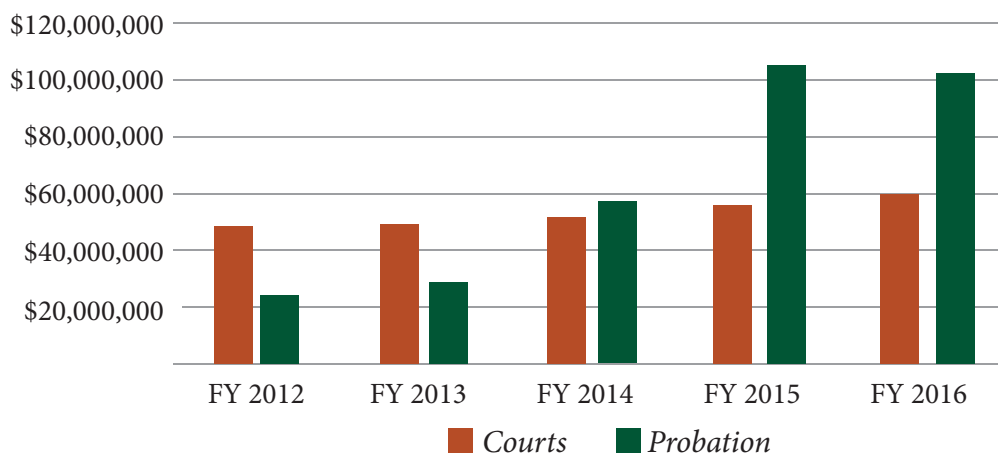
Court FY 2016 Expenditures by Major Account Categories



Probation FY 2016 Expenditures by Major Account Categories



General Fund Expenditures for Judicial Branch Operations



Legislative Initiatives

Enhancement of Problem-Solving Courts

Problem-solving courts have been shown to produce effective outcomes and interest continues to grow in establishing and expanding these courts. Expansion continued during this past fiscal year with passage of LB919 that enabled the establishment of a veteran's court pilot project. The court became operational in the fall of 2016. LB919 also clarified and expanded legislative intent to include additional types of problem-solving courts such as mental health and reentry courts.

Continued Juvenile Justice Reform Implementation

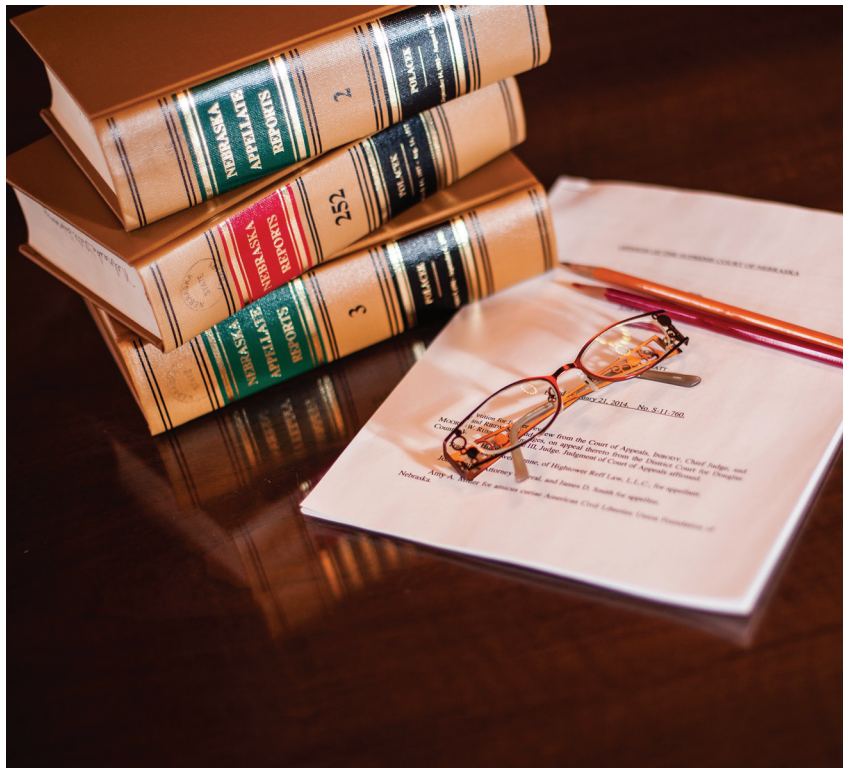
The goal of juvenile justice reform is to ensure that youth and families receive services and support that are grounded in best practice research. Juvenile Justice Reform is an on-going initiative and legislation continues to be passed related to juvenile justice. LB894, from the 2016 legislative session, amended provisions related to juvenile detention, appointment of counsel for juveniles, and guardians ad litem.

Expanded Justice Reinvestment

Justice reinvestment uses data to improve public safety and reduce prison usage. Any savings is slated to be reinvested in strategies that reduce crime and recidivism. LB605 (2015) initiated this multi-year project involving all three branches of Nebraska government. Last fiscal year, probation created and set in motion several services and programs, including additional Probation Reporting Centers located throughout the state. LB1094 (2016) made adjustments to policies and penalties to increase the effectiveness of justice reinvestment.

Enhancement of Office of Public Guardian

The Office of Public Guardian continued implementation of the Public Guardianship Act of 2014 during last fiscal year. Passage of LB934 from the 2016 legislative session included standards for reasonable staff caseloads and clarified legal representation and other court provisions.



Administrative Leadership for Courts & Probation

Corey R. Steel, State Court Administrator

Vision:

Be a trusted, collaborative, and respected catalyst for and provider of professional court administrative services.

Mission:

Under the direction of the Nebraska Supreme Court, the Administrative Office of the Courts' mission is to ensure the public has equal access to justice using leadership, education, technology, and administrative services to implement consistent, efficient, and effective court practices.



Core Values

To accomplish our mission and pursue our vision, the Nebraska Administrative Office of the Courts is guided by these core values:

- **Integrity and Professionalism:** As staff of the Administrative Office of the Courts, we hold ourselves to high ethical principles of integrity and professionalism. The principles of integrity and professionalism include fairness and impartiality; respect for the judiciary, colleagues and the public; responsiveness to the needs of a diverse population; and commitment to high quality service and faithful discharge of official duties.
- **Innovation and Continuous Improvement:** The need for continuous improvement and innovation drives the Administrative Office of the Courts' efforts to provide resources and services to the courts and court users. As the public's expectations for access to justice grow and change, we value innovation in advancing court practices, administrative services, and technology.
- **Accountability:** It is incumbent upon the Administrative Office of the Courts to be vigilant in our efforts to uphold and practice high standards of accountability. Accountability entails taking responsibility for complying with legal, policy and ethical rules in the performance of the functions of the Office. The core value of accountability includes good stewardship of public funds and property, effective and efficient use of resources, and open dissemination of disclosable information.
- **Excellence:** The Administrative Office of the Courts is committed to excellence in leadership, administration, and management. Consistent court practices are valued to ensure excellence for all court users. A high value is placed on rigorous and active continuing education, effective personnel recruitment, and development and retention of highly competent and diverse court staff.

Administrative Office of the Courts

The office is organized into three divisions:

- Attorney Services and Judicial Branch Education
- Court Services
- Information Technology

Plus two specialized offices:

- Nebraska Court Improvement Project
- Office of the Public Guardian

Program specific annual reports can be found on the Judicial Branch website (supremecourt.nebraska.gov).

Judicial Branch Education and Attorney Services

Carole McMahon-Boies

Administrator for Judicial Branch Education and Attorney Services Division

Office of Judicial Branch Education

Provides essential continuing education for judges and judicial branch employees with the goal of increasing professional competence in order to ensure the delivery of quality judicial services to the people of the State of Nebraska. In-house programming for court staff, probation, and judges is guided by the Judicial Branch Education Advisory Committee with project leadership from each employee group within the branch. Nebraska Supreme Court rules outline minimum continuing education requirements for all Nebraska judges, clerks, probation officers, and other branch employees bound by the Judicial Branch Education Standards. Judicial Branch Education is also tasked with providing education for attorneys in specific areas of the law and for certain individuals who serve the courts in a volunteer capacity or through appointment by the court.

Attorney Services Division

Oversees the regulation of the legal profession and the provision of services by the Supreme Court to all attorneys licensed in Nebraska.

Mandatory Continuing Legal Education: Oversight of programming to ensure that active attorneys obtain mandatory continuing legal education each year. The division ensures that attorneys comply with all mandatory annual licensing rules and approves vendors of continuing legal education. Annual attorney license renewals are obtained through the division's online portal. Attorneys are able to maintain their personal information, trust account, and malpractice coverage information and print an annual membership or license card as part of the annual license renewal.

Counsel for Discipline: Investigation of disciplinary complaints against attorneys for alleged violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct as adopted by the Nebraska Supreme Court.

Spotlight

Judicial Branch Education (JBE) expanded to a new facility that allows all probation education and court staff education to take place in its own facilities alleviating the need to rent conference space for education.

Staff Training

With the use of funds earmarked for trainer positions JBE was able to expand staff and increase the amount of JUSTICE (computer system) education and probation education offered to employees.

Attorney Education

JBE developed several courses to satisfy education requirements for court-appointed attorneys and service providers including the required Bridge to Independence course and an updated guardian ad litem course.



Information Technology

Jennifer Rasmussen

Deputy State Court Administrator for Information Technology

The Information Technology Division provides support and enhancement for the case management systems and other court technology projects. The division fulfills the technology needs of all offices, including those that provide accounting services, human resources, legal support, policy direction, and education and training.

JUSTICE: Management and updating of the Judicial Users System to Improve Court Efficiency (JUSTICE) case management system for trial courts throughout the state.

SCCALES: Management and updating of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals Legal Entries System (SCCALES) case management system for the appellate level courts in Nebraska.

Specialized Court Technology: Day-to-day support of technology for all county, district, and separate juvenile courts using digital recording and video conferencing in the courtroom and document scanning within the court office.

Online Services: Coordination with the state's network manager to provide online services such as eFiling, ePayment, and court case information search. Development of new and better solutions to help courts run more efficiently in delivering information and services to the public and the legal community.

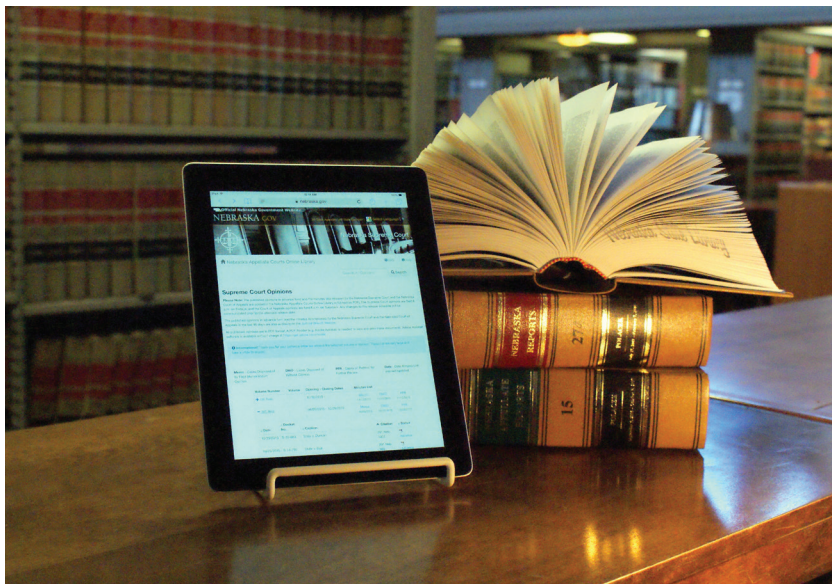
Spotlight

Free online access to official published judicial opinions of the Nebraska Supreme Court and Nebraska Court of Appeals were made available to the public January 1, 2016.

Text-searchable opinions dating back to 1871 are available for the Nebraska Supreme Court. The full collection of opinions of the Nebraska Court of Appeals, beginning with its establishment in 1992, are offered.

Previously, appellate court opinions were printed or were available online through various for-profit subscription services. Now, all published opinions are provided via the Nebraska Appellate Courts Online Library at ne.gov/go/opinions and the printed versions of judicial opinions has ceased.

Official opinions in the online library are accessible 24/7 using smart phones, tablets or computers from anywhere with Internet access. Access via the online library allows the appellate courts to make their judicial opinions more easily available to the public.



Court Services

Judy Beutler

Deputy State Court Administrator for Court Programs and Services

The Court Services Division oversees both court and internal programs and services for the public. The division is responsible for communicating Supreme Court administrative policy, providing procedural standards for court operations, and providing publications and procedural manuals along with standard court forms for use in daily operations within the courts.

Programs and services for the public include:

Children in District Court: Program development and management of resources designed for the protection and care of children involved in the court system through divorce. Services include parenting plans, mediation, and education.

Community Outreach and Public Education: Special events and community outreach planning for citizens of all ages with student-focused programs designed for each educational level from grade school to law school.

Dispute Resolution and Mediation: Management of the state organization of nonprofit mediation centers in providing alternative dispute resolution and conflict resolution in every area of the state, including education, training, and consultation.

Interpreter Services: Coordination of services for Nebraska courts and probation offices to provide qualified interpreters for the deaf and hard of hearing and those with limited English language proficiency.

Jury Service: Publication of materials and information designed to enhance the understanding of the petit and grand jury systems throughout the state.

Self-Represented Litigants/Pro Se Resources: Development of resources enabling non-lawyers to access the court system using online forms, instructions, and resource listings.

Spotlight

In Fiscal Year 2016, language access was assured to speakers of 49 different languages from Albanian to Vietnamese by more than 120 interpreters in over 22,000 contacts with both court and probation. In just two years, the number of interpreter contacts with Nebraska Judicial Branch programs nearly doubled, reflecting a strong commitment to language access and the State of Nebraska's growing diversity.

Nebraska is increasingly the destination of choice for many newly arrived immigrants. In 1990, immigrants accounted for only 1.8 percent of the state's total population. By 2010, that share had climbed to 6 percent, and between 2010 and 2014, Nebraska's foreign-born population increased by nearly 11,000 people, almost 10 percent growth, significantly greater than other states. As Nebraska's non-English speaking population increases, its language access challenges grow.

Affirming its commitment to language access as essential to providing justice, the Judicial Branch hired a Statewide Language Access Coordinator in late 2015. With the implementation of dedicated statewide leadership, scheduling court interpreters has grown increasingly efficient, reporting has improved, and independent contractor interpreter resources have been reallocated to enhance services while containing costs. In addition, the biannual Interpreter Orientation Workshop was revised to be more interactive, and interpreter written test scores, an essential step toward certification, have increased.



Specialized Offices

Court Improvement Project

Deb VanDyke-Ries

Director for Nebraska Court Improvement Project

The Nebraska Court Improvement Project is a long-standing program of the Nebraska Supreme Court that operates under the guidance of the Supreme Court Commission on Children in the Courts. The goal of the Nebraska Court Improvement Project is to improve court processing of child welfare and juvenile justice cases. Through the Court Improvement Project, the commission identifies areas of concern, looks for more efficient and effective approaches to case processing, and recommends changes to the Nebraska Supreme Court to ensure the court system is responsive to the needs of the children who interact with it.

Child Welfare: Children who come to the attention of the court due to a child abuse or neglect finding for their parents or guardians are considered child welfare cases. The desired outcomes in child welfare focus on the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child or children.

Juvenile Justice: Children who have violated the law or have come to the attention of the courts due to a status offense are part of the juvenile justice population. The desired outcomes in juvenile justice are to treat and rehabilitate court-involved youth, prevent juveniles from returning to the juvenile justice system or entering the criminal justice system, and ensuring community safety.

Initiatives of the Nebraska Court Improvement Project include:

Juvenile Justice Home-Based Initiative: A collaborative project between the Nebraska Court Improvement Project, the Administrative Office of Probation, and local foundations, aimed at reducing the number of out-of-home placements for justice-involved youth across the state. (See page 18 for Juvenile Services Spotlight)

Nebraska Crossover Youth Initiative: The crossover model was developed by Georgetown University's Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and describes the specific practices that need to be in place within a jurisdiction in order to reduce the number of youth who "crossover" between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Stakeholder Education: Educational opportunities focused on issues relevant to child welfare and juvenile justice across the state are provided annually. Every three years, the Children's Summit provides an opportunity for hundreds of stakeholders to gather for collaboration and education.

Through the Eyes of the Child Initiative: Under the leadership of Chief Justice Michael Heavican, the Through the Eyes of the Child Initiative is a multidisciplinary network of judge-led local teams that work to improve systems processes. Each of the 29 local teams select specific projects and goals based on the needs of the community and court system.



Specialized Offices

Office of Public Guardian

Michelle J. Chaffee

Director of the Office of Public Guardian

A Public Guardian is designed to serve as a means of last resort for those situations where no family member or other suitable individual is available to act as guardian or conservator. The Office of Public Guardian is designed to provide four distinct services:

Court-Appointed Guardians and Conservators: Responsible for general and specific community supports and services to individuals served by the Office of Public Guardian as appropriate to each ward.

Successor Guardians and Conservators: Location of individual community members with a variety of backgrounds who are willing to serve as guardians and conservators.

Education, Support, and Information: Support for private guardians and conservators with resource information and skill development.

Court Visitor Program: Location of individual community members with backgrounds in law, nursing, social work, mental health, gerontology, intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities, drug abuse, or alcoholism to serve as volunteer court visitors.



Spotlight

The Office of Public Guardian (OPG) began taking guardianship and conservatorship cases in December 2015. The case data during the first six months revealed that wards served by the Office of Public Guardian had a combination of complex issues including: cognitive impairment, mental health diagnosis, developmental disabilities, substance/alcohol abuse, medical conditions, history of criminal justice involvement, or a history of Mental Health Board commitments.

The Public Guardianship Act mandates that service is provided only for individuals for whom there is no other alternative, in the least restrictive manner, and as a last resort. Cases for which the OPG is nominated are screened by a Court Visitor or Guardian ad Litem to determine qualification under the Act and provide information on the individual's capacity.

Court Visitors

In order to expedite the evaluation of cases, Court Visitor screening tools and uniform reporting forms were developed. Twenty-four volunteer Court Visitors have been recruited and trained (at no charge) covering 67 counties. Ten of the trained Court Visitors are private attorneys.

Additionally, 44 attorneys have been named as Guardians ad Litem (GAL) to public guardian-nominated cases to provide court visitor reports.

Court Visitor screening resulted in the correct utilization of OPG resources, identified more appropriate guardians, and-most importantly- protected the freedom of individuals who should not have been placed under guardianships.

Private Guardianship Education

In January 2016, the Office of Public Guardian began providing the education and certification required for newly appointed private guardians and conservators. According to surveys, 94% of participants responded that they gained a "clear understanding of financial responsibilities to ward" and a similar number responded that they had a better understanding of the duty to encourage physical, financial, and personal independence, as much as possible.

Administrative Leadership for Courts & Probation

Ellen Fabian Brokofsky, State Probation Administrator

Vision:

Be a nationally recognized leader in the field of justice, committed to excellence and safe communities.

Mission:

We, the leaders in community corrections, juvenile and restorative justice are unified in our dedication to delivering a system of seamless services which are founded on evidence-based practices and valued by Nebraska's communities, victims, offenders and courts. We create constructive change through rehabilitation, collaboration, and partnership in order to enhance safe communities.



Values/Beliefs Statement

To reach our Vision and accomplish our Mission, the Nebraska Probation System is guided by the following values and beliefs:

- We Believe in Dignity, Respect and Integrity: As Officers of the Court, we are held to a higher ethical standard. We take responsibility for treating employees, victims, offenders, and all others with dignity and respect in all interactions. Victims of crime are ensured a voice. Staff are valued and respected for who they are and what they do. We appreciate the cultural and gender differences of all.
- We Believe in Professionalism: Probation staff adhere to a standard of excellence and serve as role models for all offenders. We value and show professionalism toward the courts, victims, offenders, colleagues, and community partners. We value a well-trained, highly-skilled professional staff. Being sensitive to the needs of victims and offenders is key to the success of our mission.
- We Believe in Resourcefulness: We value evidence-based community correctional programming as a cost-effective alternative to incarceration. A creative and innovative staff is our greatest resource. Investing in juvenile justice ultimately reduces recidivism.
- We Believe in Excellence in Strength-Based Services: Vital to rehabilitation and accountability is community-based cooperation and collaboration. Solid probation practices based on proven research is fundamental to our success. Positive change is achievable.
- We Believe treatment is a means of crime control: Developing competencies in the youth of today will lead to better citizens of tomorrow. Building on the strengths of offenders creates a basis for positive growth and change.

Administrative of Office Probation

The office is organized into three divisions:

- Administration and Operations
- Community-Based Programs and Field Services
- Juvenile Services

Program specific annual reports can be found on the Judicial Branch website (supremecourt.nebraska.gov).

Community-Based Programs and Field Services

Deb Minardi

Deputy Probation Administrator for Community-Based Programs and Field Services

The Division of Community-Based Programs and Field Services develops, trains, implements, and conducts quality assurance for all adult and some specialized juvenile programs and services provided to the courts for probationers. The division oversees a continuum of evidence-based programs ranging from presentence investigations, assessments, and supervision, including specialized domestic violence and sex offender/youth who sexually harm. Specialized services offered include reporting centers, financial assistance for individuals in need of treatment, RISE (Rural Improvement for Schooling and Employment), and behavioral health services guided by the Standardized Model for the Treatment of Substance Abusing Offenders.

Specialized Substance Abuse Supervision (SSAS)

Program: An intensive supervision and treatment focused program targeted at high risk substance-using offenders who would otherwise be in prison.

Problem-Solving Courts: Staffing of Nebraska Drug and Problem-Solving Courts for adult, young adult, juvenile, and family courts.

Specialized Supervision Caseloads: Individualized case management for specific targeted populations such as sex offenders, domestic violence offenders, gang members, and those with significant mental health issues to assist in providing risk reduction strategies for unique populations.

Probation Reporting Centers: Development and ongoing building of a continuum of services for clients under one roof through the pooling of state and county resources providing a means by which clients' time is structured. Reporting Centers assist in engaging clients in rehabilitative services

while simultaneously providing enhanced supervision through probation. Services range from employment and educational opportunities to life skills and cognitive programming that meet the needs of probationers within the community.

TeleServices: Allowing programming that would not otherwise be available in certain parts of the state.

Victim-Centered Approach: Providing a specialized approach to the investigation and supervision for domestic violence and sex offenders while taking into account victim safety and restitution.

Standardized Model for Delivery of Substance Use Disorder Services: Providing guidance to providers and probation officers alike on substance use evaluations and treatment services obtained through registered service providers.

Fees for Service Voucher Program: Financial assistance programming designed to help individuals mitigate financial barriers preventing access to substance abuse, mental health, sex offender and other evaluations, treatment, or other programming needs.

Spotlight

New to Nebraska is the concept of determinate sentencing created under LB605 (2015). As defined in statutes, prison sentences are given by a judge for a specific length of time with an additional provision that the court retain jurisdiction over the individuals through probation when they are released from incarceration.

The implementation of “post-release” supervision (monitoring of and assistance for individuals after they leave prison) became a reality in 2016. Previously a parole function through the Executive Branch, the Judicial Branch now oversees the supervision of individuals sentenced under Class III, Class IIIA, or Class IV felonies and assists in their reentry to the community.

The courts and probation have tackled the monumental task of implementation of the new law by vigorously creating new court rules, policies, procedures, and programs to accommodate the oversight of this population. This includes the expansion of probation's successful flagship supervision program known as the Specialized Substance Abuse Program (SSAS). In addition, two new programs have been implemented:

- Reframe – for individuals at a high risk to reoffend, but do not have substance abuse issues; and,
- Transitional Intervention Program (TIP) – for individuals at the highest risk to reoffend based on criminal history.

These new and expanded programs serve to encompass not only the new post-release supervision individuals, but also other probationers who are at high risk to commit further offenses.

Juvenile Services

Jeanne K. Brandner
Deputy Probation Administrator for Juvenile Services

The Juvenile Services Division is responsible for statewide administration of intake and detention alternatives, investigations, assessments and evaluations, case management/supervision and services, placement, reentry, and funding for juveniles in addition to providing leadership for the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative and Crossover Youth Practice Model (a program with specific practices designed to reduce the number of youth who “cross over” between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems). The juvenile probation system goals for reducing recidivism by preventing juveniles from returning to the juvenile justice system or entering the criminal justice system are:

- Engaging juveniles and their families in the juvenile court process,
- Eliminating barriers to accessing effective treatment and services, and
- Partnering with educational and community stakeholders.

Intake: Utilization of a standardized tool when law enforcement request a youth is detained which assesses the youth’s risk of reoffending before the next court hearing and the risk of failing to appear in court.

Detention Alternatives: Creation of a continuum of alternatives to detaining youth throughout the state with the assistance of communities, families, and other stakeholders.

Investigations/Assessment and Evaluation: Use of a validated risk assessment, motivational interview skills, and investigation formats to assist in the establishment of proper recommendations for the court. Additionally, focused evaluations are identified during this process to assist the youth and family in behavior change.

Juvenile Case Management/Supervision and Services: Engagement of youth and families as an “agent of change,” creating plans focused on risk and need and how to move a youth through stages of change and successful completion of probation.

Placement: Location of out-of-home settings when care and treatment are necessary away from the family home due to youth’s risk level and/or behavioral health needs with immediate transition planning to help children successfully return to their communities.

Reentry: Preparation of youth and families for return from the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers (YRTC) back to communities. Activities and communications prior to discharge strengthen the connection between the youth in placement with their family, home, and community.

Funding: Allocation of public money for the cost of placement, treatment, or detention considering parental funds, private or public insurance, entitlements, grants, and other resources prior to the authorization of state appropriated monies.

Rural Improvement for Schooling and Employment (RISE): Leveraging additional programming through AmeriCorps to increase support services and educational opportunities for probationers.

Spotlight

Over the last several years the Nebraska Legislature and other juvenile justice stakeholders have voiced a vision for juvenile justice reform which would reduce the number of out-of-home placements for youth. Effective intensive in-home family and community-based services are currently not available in most Nebraska communities. Where services are available, they often lack the capacity to meet the needs of all youth. In response, the Judicial Branch has developed the Juvenile Justice Home-Based Initiative, a collaborative project between the Juvenile Services Division of probation, the Nebraska Court Improvement Project, and local foundations aimed at reducing the number of out-of-home placements for justice-involved youth across the state.

Funding provided by the local foundations make it possible to implement Multisystemic Therapy (MST) services in several areas across the state and for the Boys Town Ecological In-Home Family Treatment services to be expanded and replicated. The purpose of the initiative is to increase the availability of in-home services to youth, allowing more youth to remain in their home and fewer to be placed out-of-home. The services offered are designed to decrease recidivism.

Phase one includes the implementation of four MST providers across the state based in the Omaha, Lincoln, and Norfolk areas. Phase one also incorporates an expansion of existing Boys Town services in the Grand Island/Kearney and North Platte areas. During phase two, additional teams will be added and Boys Town will select and train a provider in the Scottsbluff/Gering region to replicate services.

Administration and Operations

Gene Cotter

Deputy Probation Administrator for Administration and Operations

The Administration and Operations Division is responsible for policies and procedures, quality assurance, information technology, and state-owned inventory along with oversight of the interstate and intrastate transfers necessary for probation supervision. The goal of this division is to enhance the structure of the probation system for both juvenile and adult populations involved with the court system.

Policies and Procedures: Administration of uniform policies and procedures following goals and operational procedures as approved by the Supreme Court.

Quality Assurance: Regular review of existing processes within each probation district as applied to the qualitative systematic approach to case management set by the courts. In addition, supervisory and officer skills are assessed in accordance with established quality assurance measures.

Interstate and Interdistrict Transfer Cases: Authority over interdistrict movement of individuals from probation district to probation district within the state and movement of probationers living in other states when moving to Nebraska.

Information Technology: Responsible for the improvement and maintenance of Nebraska Probation Applications for Community Safety (NPACS) case management system and the Problem-Solving Court Management Information System (PSCMIS) along with the technology used to support the efficient operation of probation, including applications to manage vouchers, register service providers, and deliver online training. Promotion of full utilization of video conferencing and teleservices to reduce travel time and expense, and to provide services where they would otherwise not be available.

State-Owned Inventory: Handling of statewide equipment inventory, including communication technology, officer safety devices, video conferencing equipment, and state-owned vehicles.



Court and Probation Combined Internal Services

In order to effectively utilize Judicial Branch resources, probation and court internal and operational services are merged into the following service divisions:

Domestic Violence/Sex Offender: Single point of contact for the Judicial Branch on domestic violence, sexual assault, and victim-specific issues including review and maintenance of protection orders.

Financial Division: Oversight of all financial transactions and budget management for the Judicial Branch.

Interpreter/Translation: Coordination of interpreters and translators for the trial courts and probation offices.

Information Systems: Management of administrative office business technology solutions including computer equipment, software procurement, and end user support.

Judicial Branch Education: Provider of required and enhanced educational services for all judges and employees of the Judicial Branch.

Personnel Services: Oversight of payroll, benefits, and all other personnel functions for the approximately 1,500 employees and judges of the Judicial Branch.

Public Information and Communications: Management of both external and internal communications and related programming for the court system.



Exemplary Employees of the Nebraska Judicial Branch

Chief Justice Mike Heavican presented 11 Employee Recognition Awards to individuals and team members during the Nebraska Supreme Court's seventh annual recognition event.

The 2015 Award Recipients include:

- Employee of the Year: Gary Dietrich, Senior Probation Officer, District 4J, Omaha.
- Diversity Leadership Award: Adriana Hinojosa, Interpreter Coordinator, Omaha.
- Innovation Award: Carrie Rodriguez, Deputy Chief Probation Officer, District 5, Columbus.
- Outstanding Clerk of the District Court: Janet Wiechelman, Clerk of the Cedar County District Court, Hartington.
- Outstanding Court Supervisor: Darla Schiefelbein, Clerk Magistrate, Platte County Court, Columbus.
- Outstanding Customer Service: Johnny Blackburn, Accounting Clerk, Douglas County Court, Omaha.
- Outstanding Probation Employee: Danielle Graybill, Office Manager, District 5 Probation, Columbus.
- Outstanding Probation Officer: Jeff Banholzer, Specialized Substance Abuse Supervision Probation Officer, District 5 Probation, Columbus.
- Outstanding Probation Supervisor: Heather Briggs, Probation Supervisor, District 4J, Omaha.
- Outstanding Appellate Court Personnel: Jackie Hladik, Administrative Assistant for Chief Justice Heavican, Lincoln.
- Outstanding Team Award: CCJ/COSCA Planning Team:
Marcie Luhman, Eileen Janssen, Carole McMahan-Boies, Judy Beutler, Jennifer Rasmussen and Ralene Cheng, Administrative Office of the Courts, Lincoln.

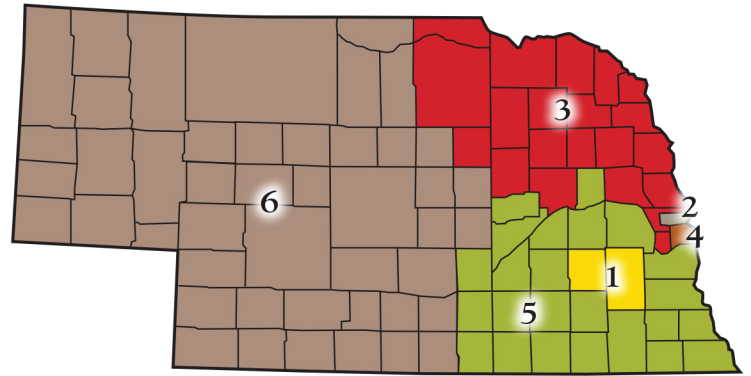
Nebraska Court Case Filings

The Constitution of the State of Nebraska distributes the judicial power of the state among the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, district courts, and county courts. All state courts operate under the administrative direction of the Supreme Court.

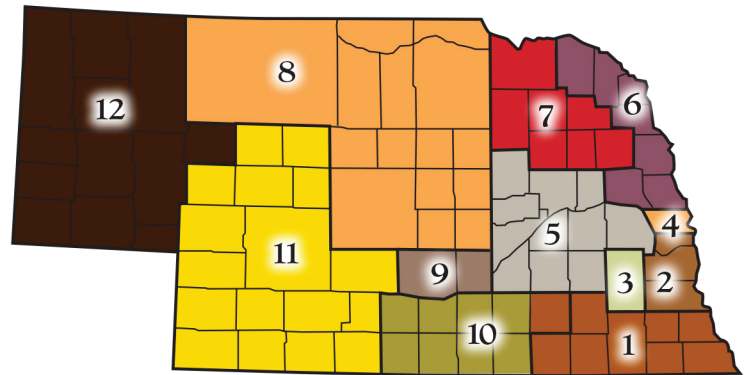
There were a total of 1,294 cases filed in the Nebraska appellate courts in FY 2016.

There were a total of 378,330 cases filed in the Nebraska trial courts in FY 2016.

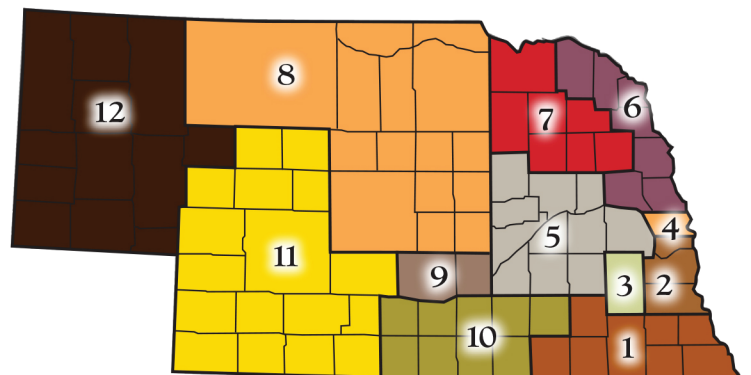
Supreme Court & Court of Appeals Judicial Districts



District Court Judicial Districts

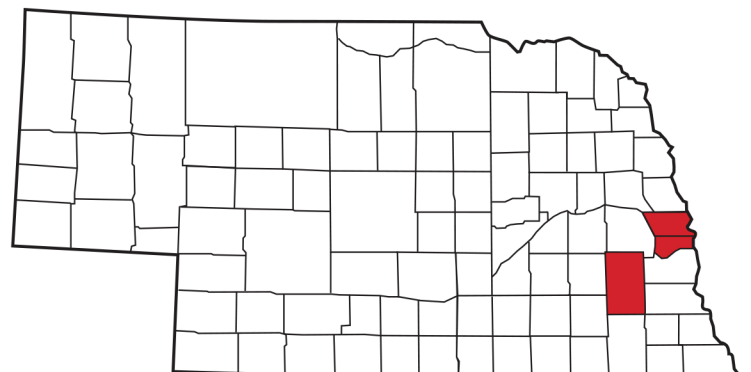


County Court Judicial Districts



Separate Juvenile Courts

Note: Sarpy, Douglas, and Lancaster.



Appellate Courts

All arguments before the Nebraska Supreme Court are streamed live and preserved on the Oral Argument Archive of the Nebraska Judicial Branch website. Available arguments include the court sessions held at the University of Nebraska College of Law and Creighton University School of Law.

Court of Appeals arguments heard at the State Capitol in Lincoln are streamed live and archived. When the court hears arguments in communities across the state, the audio recording is archived on the website.

Caseload Nebraska Supreme Court

	FY 2015	FY 2016
New Cases Docketed	50	63
• Petitions to Bypass Filed	52	62
• Petitions to Bypass Granted	30	35
• Petitions to Bypass Denied	22	31
Cases Transferred from Court of Appeals	155	117
• Petitions for Further Review Filed	298	216
• Petitions for Further Review Granted	32	13
• Petitions for Further Review Denied	266	210
Cases Disposed by Opinion	255	179
Cases Disposed Without Opinion	31	30
Total Cases Disposed	286	209

Caseload Nebraska Court of Appeals

	FY 2015	FY 2016
New Cases Docketed	1,085	1,231
• Transferred to Supreme Court	155	117
• Petitions to Bypass Granted	30	35
Cases Disposed by Opinion	467	399
Total Cases Disposed	1,031	995



District Courts

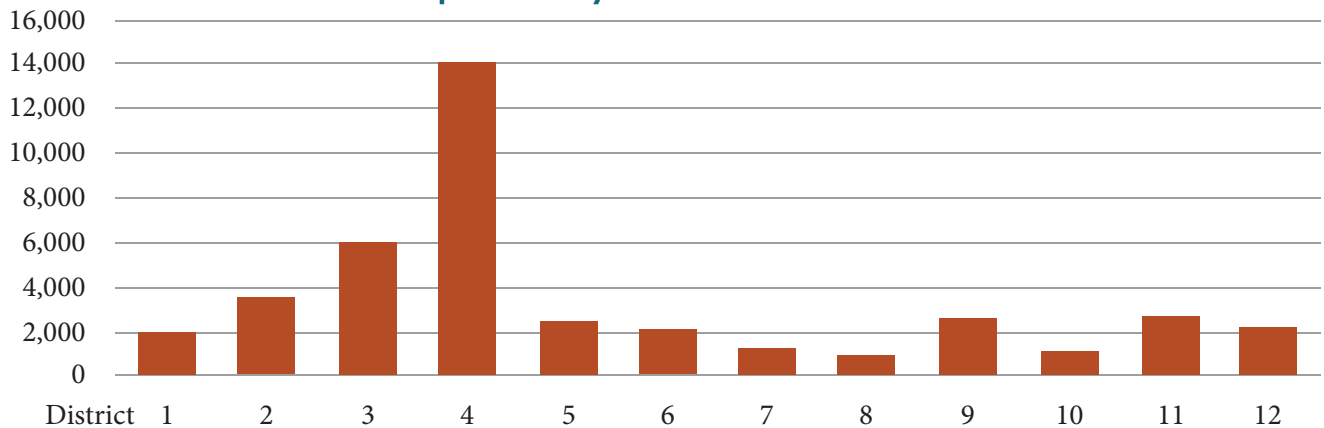
With 41,034 adult cases opened in FY 2016 in Nebraska's district courts, over a third or 34% were in District 4 (Douglas County) while 15% were in District 3 (Lancaster County). Combined, Districts 3 and 4 comprised 49% of district court adult cases opened during the year.

District Court Cases Opened by District FY 2016

District	FY 2016
District 1	1,997
District 2	3,500
District 3	5,993
District 4	14,135
District 5	2,454
District 6	2,063
District 7	1,304
District 8	873
District 9	2,650
District 10	1,145
District 11	2,707
District 12	2,213
Statewide Case Filings	41,034



District Court Cases Opened by District FY 2016

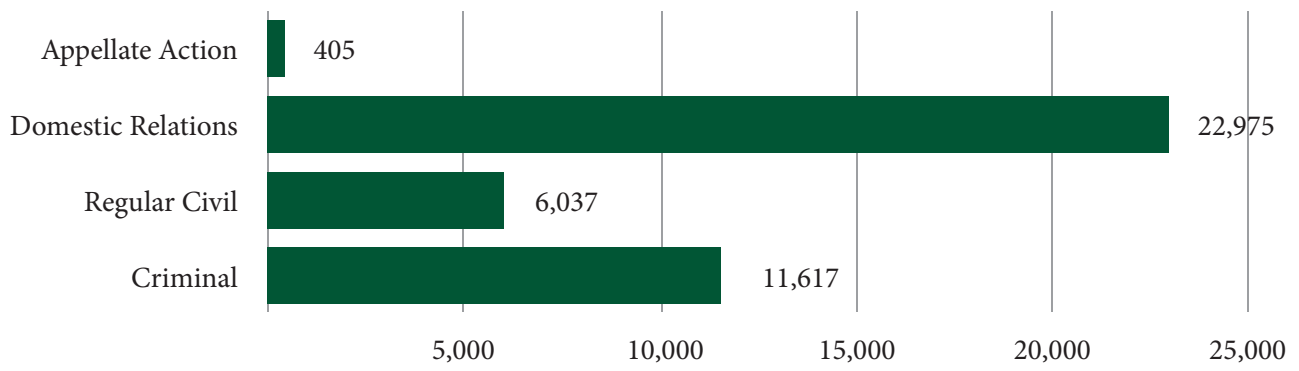


Domestic relations cases comprised over half or 56% of case types heard in Nebraska's district courts. Criminal cases comprised 28% of cases, regular civil 15%, and appellate action was a scant 1% of cases.

District Court Cases Opened by Case Type FY 2016

Criminal	11,617
Regular Civil	6,037
Domestic Relations	22,975
Appellate Action	405
Statewide Case Filings	41,034

District Court Cases Opened by Case Type FY 2016



County Courts

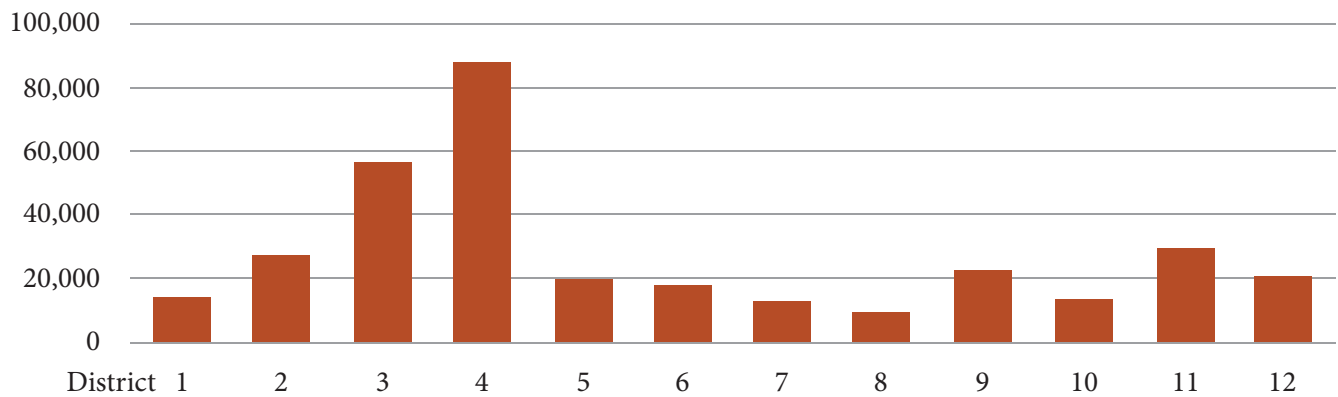
There were 327,499 adult cases opened in FY 2016 in Nebraska's county courts. Districts 3 (17%) and 4 (27%) comprised 44% of these cases.

County Court Cases Opened by District FY 2016

District	FY 2016
District 1	13,971
District 2	27,507
District 3	55,819
District 4	87,211
District 5	19,208
District 6	17,583
District 7	12,125
District 8	9,576
District 9	21,949
District 10	13,332
District 11	28,967
District 12	20,251
Statewide Case Filings	327,499



County Court Cases Opened by District FY 2016



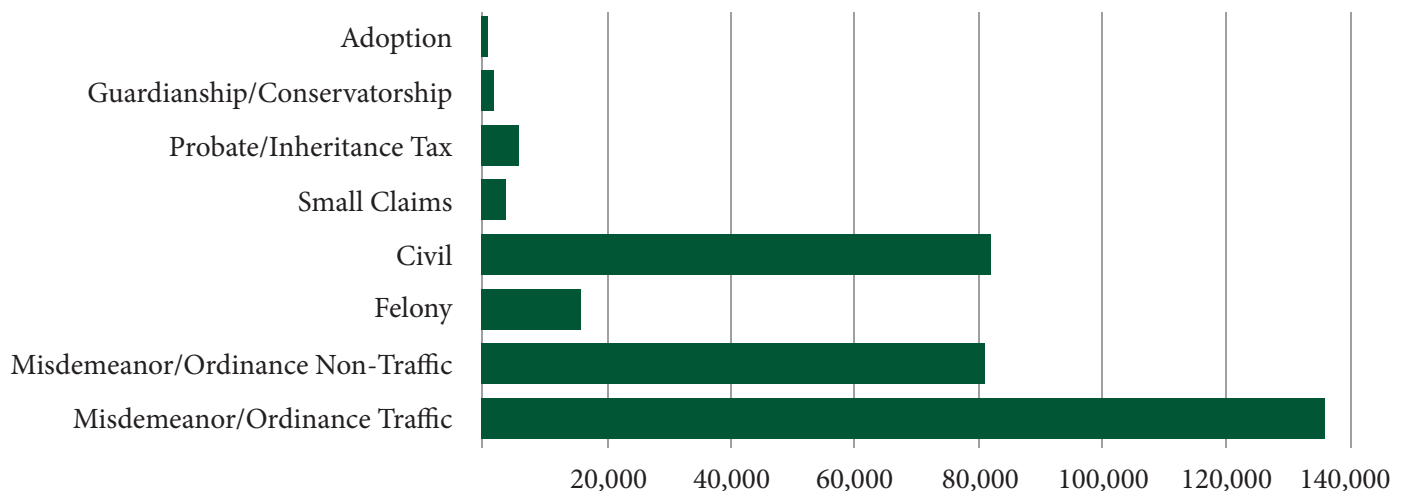
91% of Nebraska's cases opened in FY 2016 were comprised of three case types: 41% misdemeanor/ordinance traffic, 25% misdemeanor/ordinance non-traffic, and 25% civil. Felony cases were 5% of Nebraska's total cases opened.

County Court Cases Opened by Case Type FY 2016

Misdemeanor/Ordinance Traffic	135,833
Misdemeanor/Ordinance Non-Traffic	81,355
Felony	15,796
Civil	81,817
Small Claims	3,877
Probate/Inheritance Tax	6,042
Guardianship/Conservatorship	1,911
Adoption	868
Total Cases	327,499



County Court Cases Opened by Case Type FY 2016



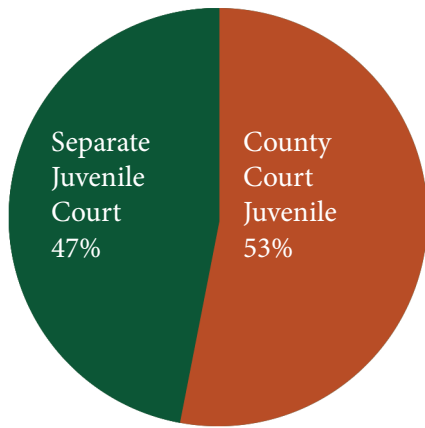
Juvenile Jurisdiction Case Filings

Over half or 53% of the juvenile caseload in Nebraska is heard by 90 county courts across the state, with 47% of the opened cases heard by three Separate Juvenile Courts located in Douglas, Lancaster and Sarpy counties.

Juvenile Jurisdiction Cases Opened by Court Type FY 2016

County Court Juvenile	5,189
Separate Juvenile Court	4,608
Total Juvenile Cases	9,797

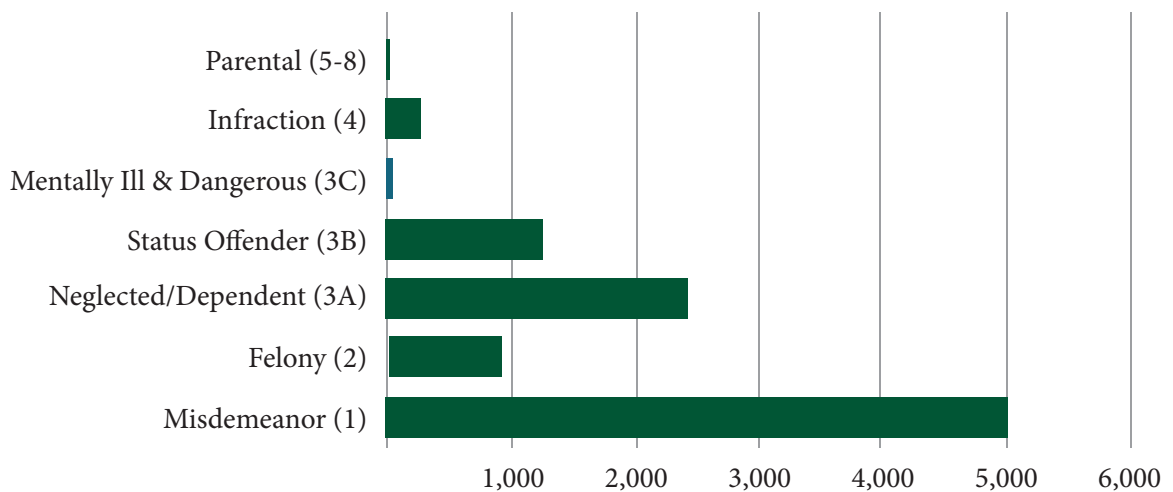
Juvenile Jurisdiction Cases Opened FY 2016



Juvenile Jurisdiction Cases Opened by Case Type FY 2016

Misdemeanor (1)	5,034
Felony (2)	861
Neglected/Dependent (3A)	2,426
Status Offender (3B)	1,222
Mentally Ill & Dangerous (3C)	29
Infraction (4)	205
Parental (5 - 8)	20
Total Juvenile Cases	9,797

Juvenile Jurisdiction Cases Opened by Case Type FY 2016



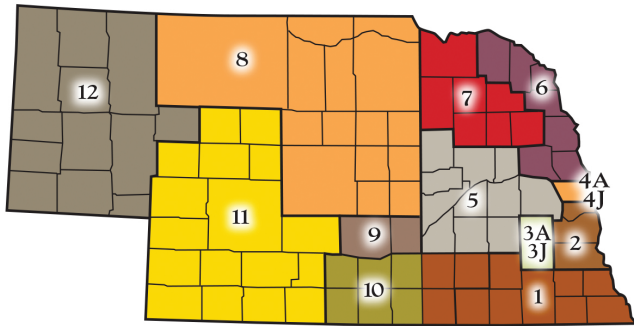
Of the 9,797 juvenile cases opened in Nebraska during the year, half or 51% were misdemeanor cases, a quarter or 25% were neglected/dependent (3A) cases, 12% were status offender (3B) cases, 9% were felony (2), and 2% infraction (4). Only 0.2% of juvenile cases opened were parental (5-8) cases.

Probation Case Statistics

Nebraska's probation districts mirror the areas outlined by the district courts. Districts 3 and 4 (Lincoln and Omaha) have separate adult and juvenile offices within each district.

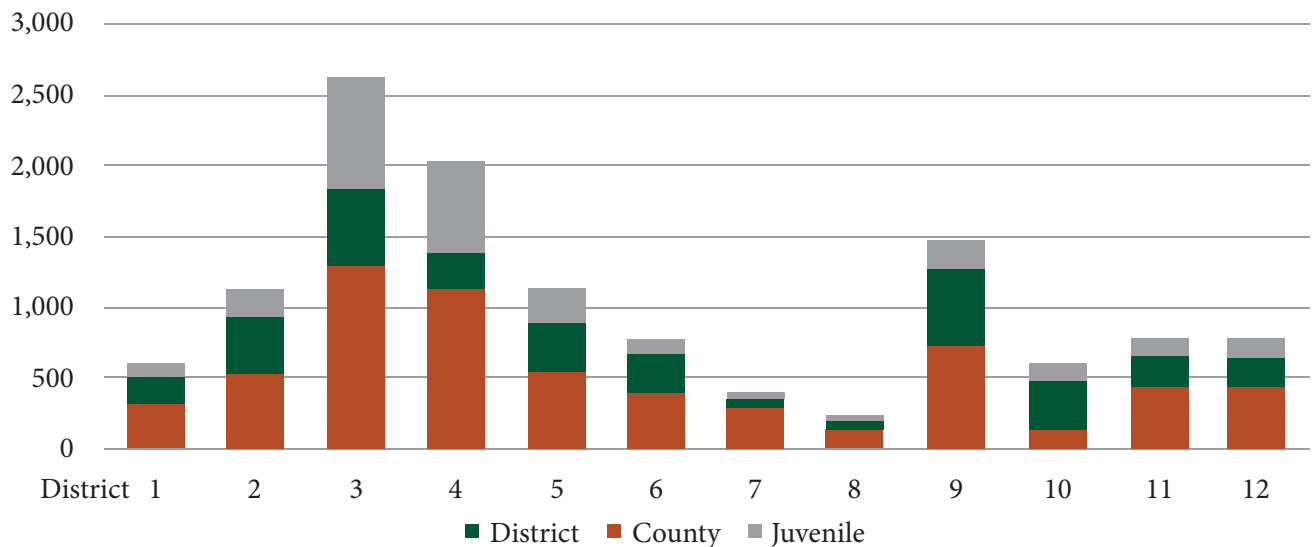
Number of Probation Investigations Completed by Court Type FY 2016

PSI for adults and PDI for juveniles.

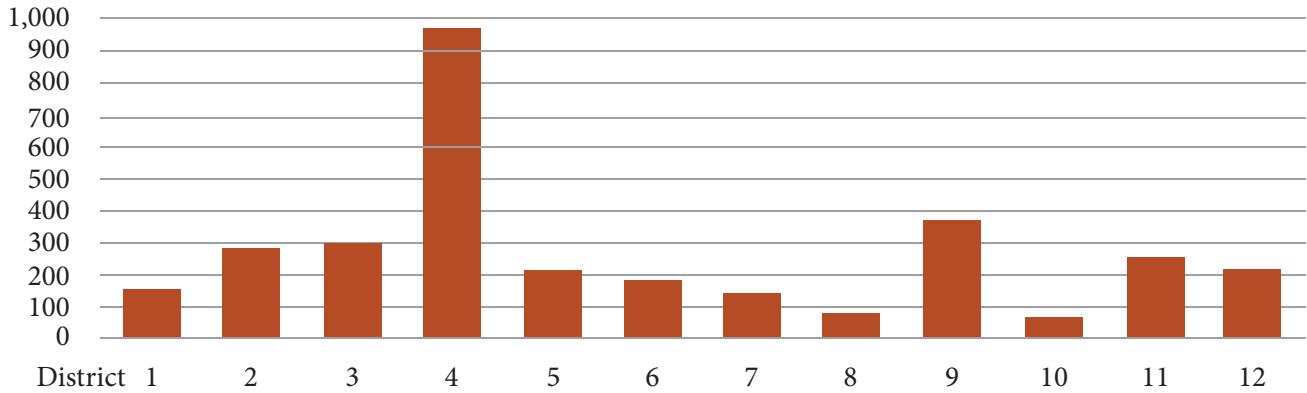


District #	District	County	Juvenile	Total
District 1	313	197	83	593
District 2	518	398	189	1,105
District 3	1,278	526	790	2,594
District 4	1,117	248	643	2,008
District 5	539	340	253	1,132
District 6	326	339	100	765
District 7	253	97	60	410
District 8	137	57	45	239
District 9	723	532	204	1,459
District 10	133	341	131	605
District 11	437	210	131	778
District 12	445	187	138	770
Total	6219	3472	2767	12,458

Number of Probation Investigations Completed by Court Type FY 2016

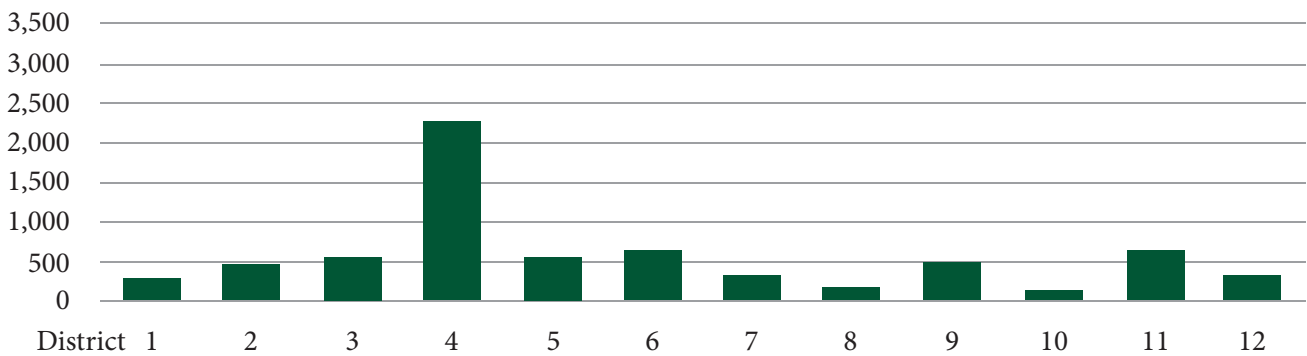


District Court Cases with Disposition of Probation FY 2016



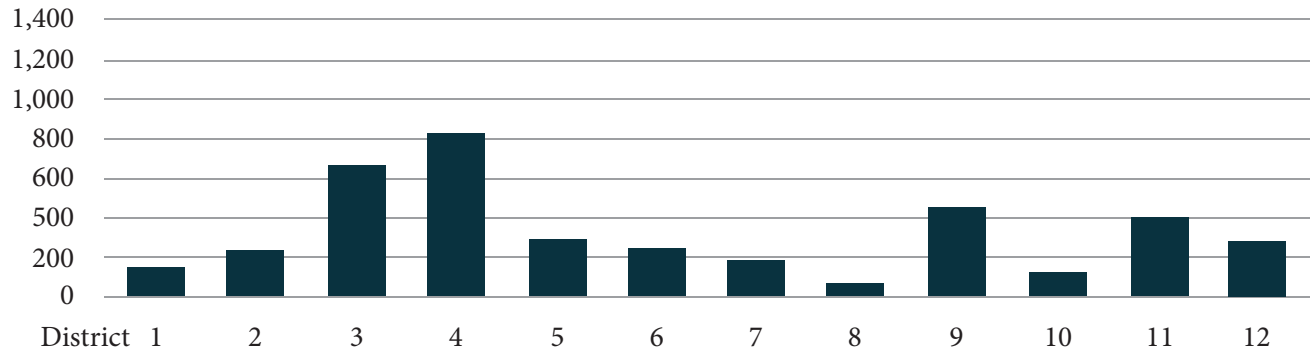
There was a 6% increase in cases sentenced to probation in the district courts compared to FY 2015.

County Court Cases with Disposition of Probation FY 2016



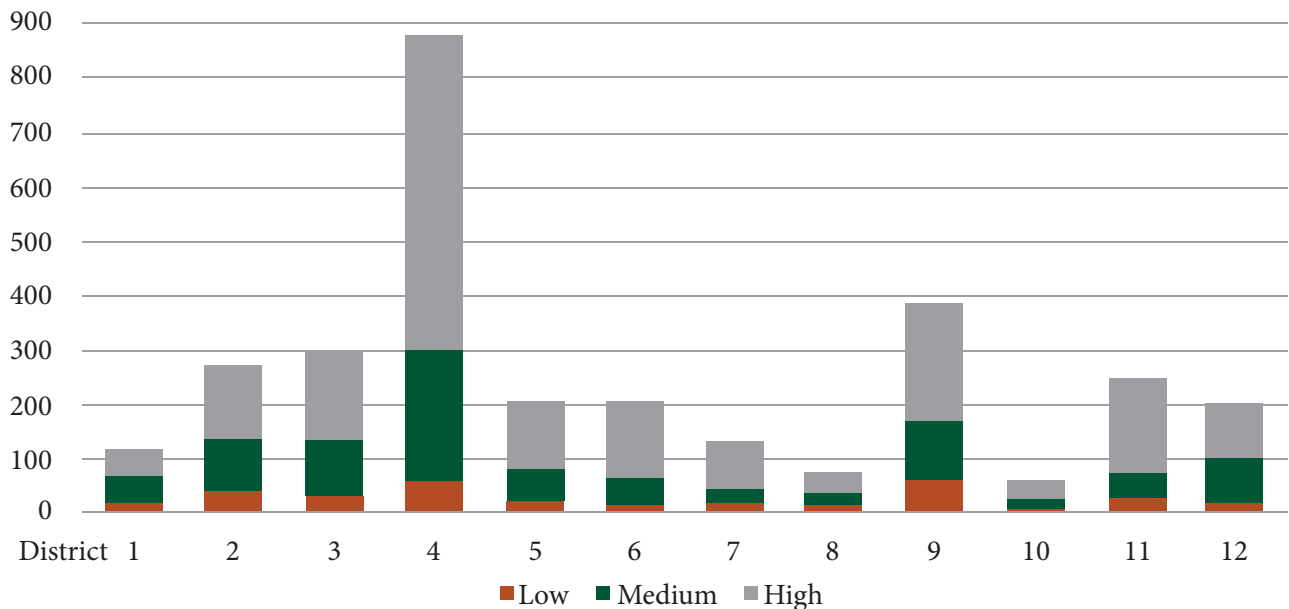
Cases sentenced to probation in the county courts decreased 4% compared to FY 2015.

Juvenile Court Cases with Disposition of Probation FY 2016



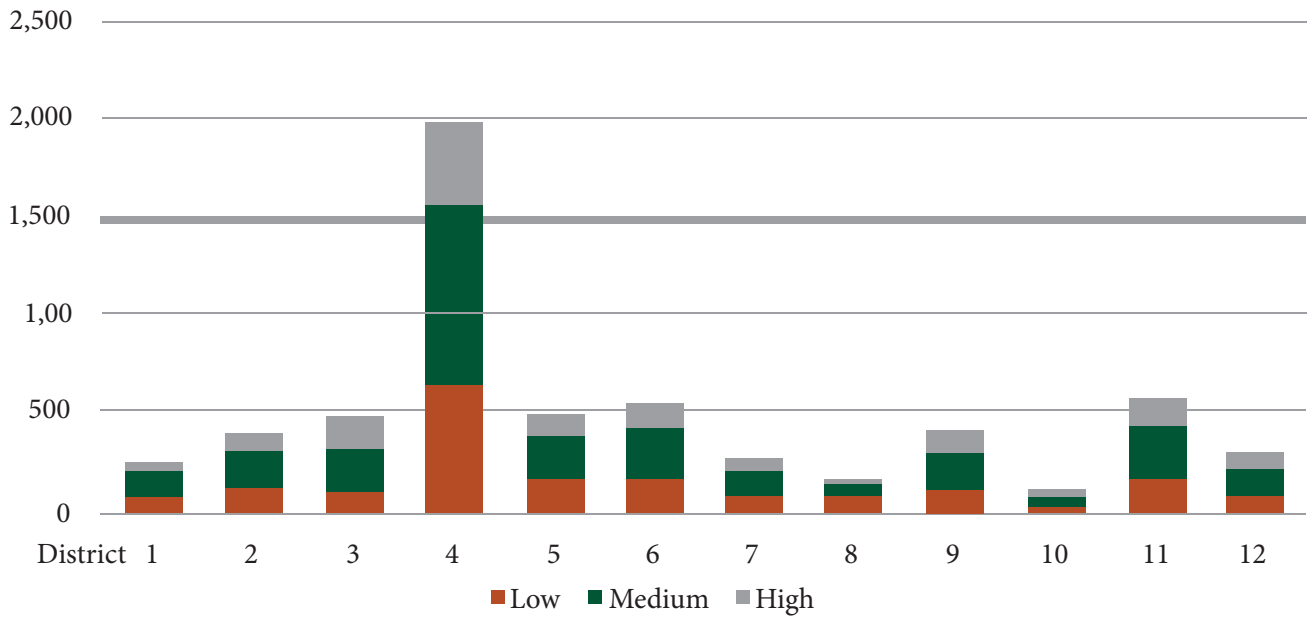
Cases sentenced to probation from juvenile court decreased 11% from FY 2015. This trend continues from the previous year.

District Court Probation Cases and Risk to Reoffend FY 2016



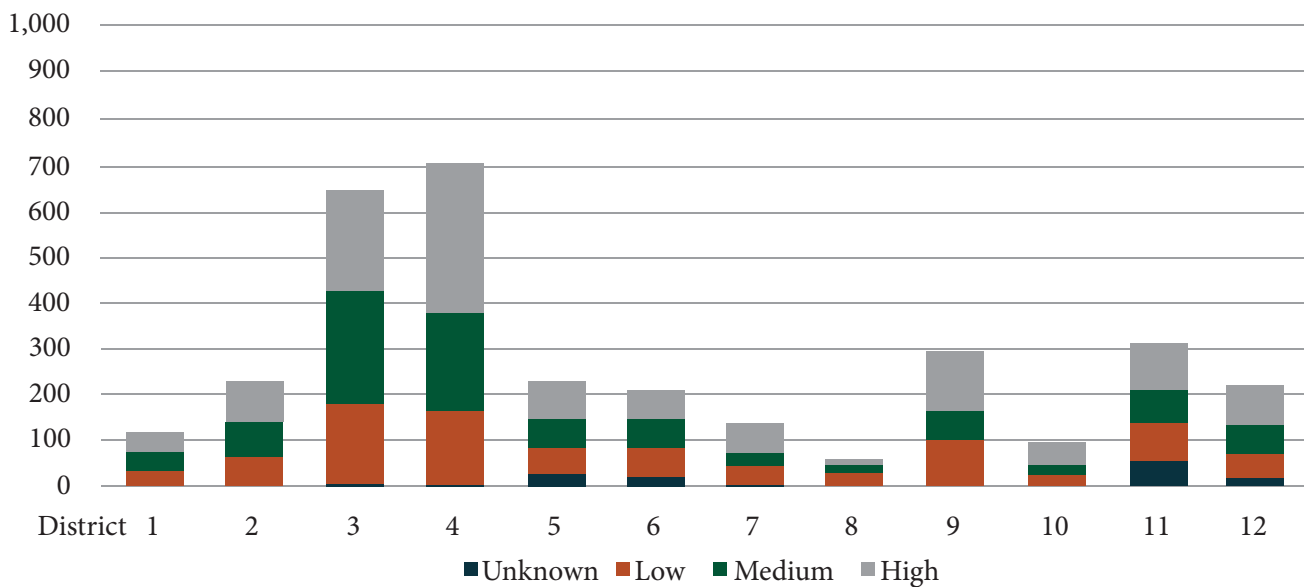
62% of individuals sentenced to probation from the district court were high risk. 30% were medium risk and 8% low risk.

County Court Probation Cases and Risk to Reoffend FY 2016



24% of the individuals sentenced to probation in the county court were assessed to be high risk. 44% were assessed to be medium risk and 31% were assessed at a low risk to reoffend.

Juvenile Court Probation Cases and Risk to Reoffend FY 2016



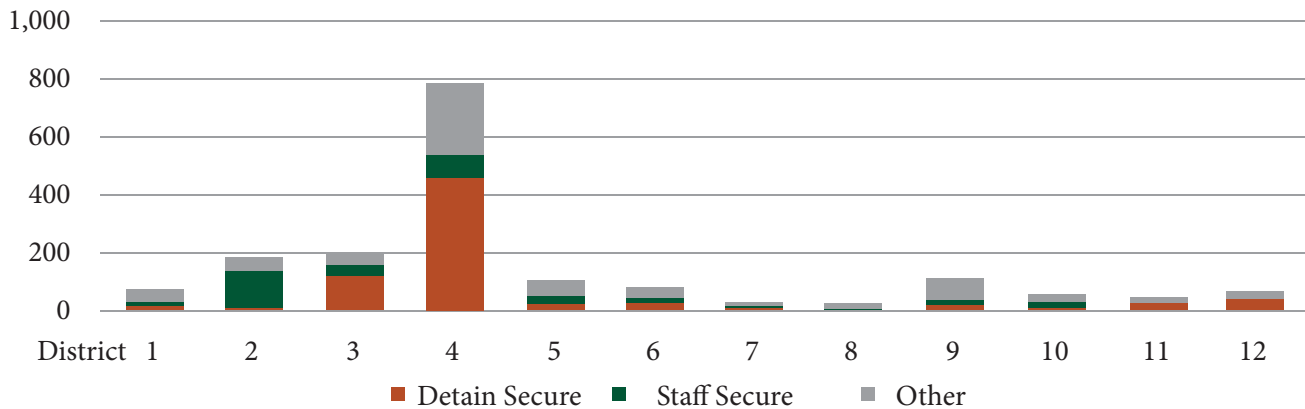
41% of youth placed on probation were initially assessed as high risk, 31% medium risk and 26% low risk.

Probation Juvenile Intakes and Detention Decisions FY 2016

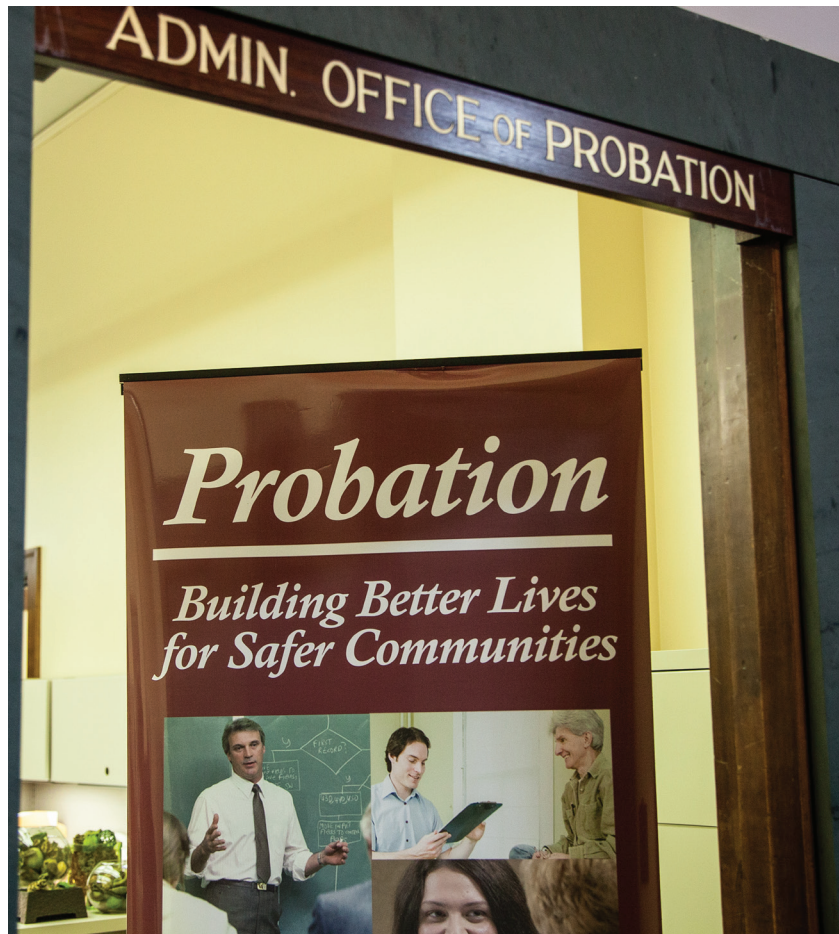


District	Detain Secure	Detain Staff Secure	Other	Total
District 1	15	12	51	78
District 2	8	127	56	191
District 3J	121	36	46	203
District 4J	463	79	254	796
District 5	26	22	52	100
District 6	25	15	40	80
District 7	7	7	11	25
District 8	5	2	10	17
District 9	18	16	76	110
District 10	12	17	21	50
District 11	24	2	20	46
District 12	41	0	28	69
Total	765	335	665	1,765

Probation Juvenile Intakes and Detention Decisions by District FY 2016



Nebraska State Probation had a total of 1765 intakes performed by probation officers during FY 2016. This is a 4.4% decrease from FY 2015. Probation continues to stress alternatives to detention. Expanded information regarding juvenile detention is available on the Judicial Branch website.



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