



State of the Court Report

MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT

MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT | 50 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland 20850

Please accept Montgomery County Circuit Court's Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) State of the Court Report. The Court understands the value of compiling and reflecting on past initiatives and those planned as we continue to strive to meet the judiciary's goal of providing fair, efficient, and effective justice for all. The Report was completed at the direction of Administrative Judge James A. Bonifant, and in coordination with the Karen A. Bushell, Clerk of the Court, and Timothy H. Sheridan, Court Administrator.

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Section I. Identifying Information

- Montgomery County Circuit Court
- Montgomery County/Rockville
- Most Proximate/Completed Fiscal Year (FY): 2024
- Report Submission Date: October 16, 2024
- Staffing (Court Administration/Clerk of the Court)

Judges and Magistrates: 30 (Full-Time – 30)

Judges – 24, including the Administrative Judge per current statutory authority; however, at this time the bench consists of 22 judges due to recent retirements

Magistrates – Six (6), including five (5) Family Magistrates and one (1) Juvenile Magistrate

Clerk of the Court: 193 (Full-time)

Department	Full-Time	Temporary	Contractual	Total
Clerk of the Court (including six (6) Staff Spanish Interpreters)	12			12
Support Services (formerly Central Files and Exhibits)	11			11
Civil Department	31			31
Courtroom Clerks Department	35			35
Criminal Department	19			19
Family Department	33			33
Finance Department	5			5
Juvenile Department	15			15
Land Records/License (non-judicial)	32			32
Total	193	0	0	193

Frozen Land Records – 1 FTE

Frozen Contractual – 1FTE

Court Administration: 132 (Full-Time - 128, Part-Time - 4)*

Division/Office	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total
Court Administration	5		5
Special Magistrates	1		1
Access to Justice Coordinator (DEI)	1		1
Administrative Aides	1		1
Assignment Office	14		14
Business Data Quality & MDEC Analysts	8		8
Criminal & Civil Case Managers	3		3
Family Division Services (including 22 grant-funded)	36	1	37
Family Magistrate Staff	7		7
Judicial Assistants	24		24
Jury Office	4		4
Law Library	2	2	4
Problem Solving Courts (including 2 grant-funded)	4		4
Research & Performance (Partially grant-funded)	2		2
Senior Judges' Administrative Aides	2		2
Technical Services	12		12
Trust Office	2	1	3
Total	128	4	132

* Note: Contractual employees are not included.

Section II. Executive Summary

During Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, Montgomery County Circuit Court ('the Court') processed nearly 26,000 new case filings and closed out a similar number of cases. In addition, the Court processed over 9,000 business licenses, issued approximately 5,800 marriage licenses, and performed over 2,000 marriage ceremonies. The Court's Family Law Self-Help Center (FLSHC) serviced more than 12,000 contacts including phone consultations and in-person visits to support the needs of self-represented litigants. In its recently filed FY24 Case Processing Report, the Court improved its performance from FY23 in five out of the eight case type categories and its performance remained unchanged in two others. In the one case type category (CINA-Shelter cases) the Court's performance did not improve from FY23, the Court still met the Judiciary's time standard of processing CINA-Shelter cases within 30 days, 94% of the time.

The Court recognizes that access to the Court to resolve legal disputes is a fundamental right held by all. Thus, the Court must process cases in a fair, efficient, and effective manner. To better meet this goal going forward, the Court recently employed three strategies: 1) developing a shared repository of all court procedures; 2) recording and utilizing data; and 3) confirming all court personnel are vital members of the courthouse team.

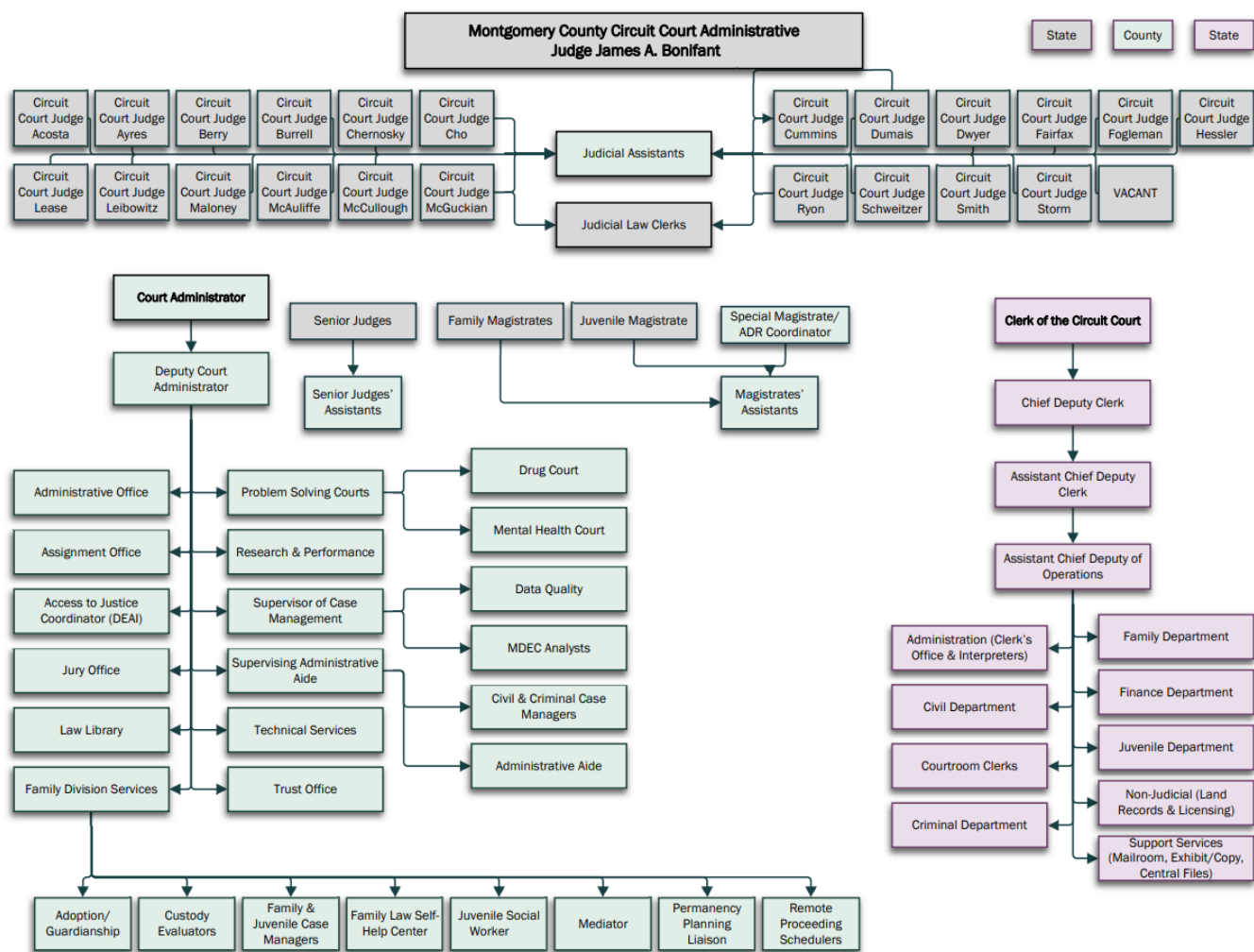
Court Procedures - Judge Bonifant, Ms. Bushell, and Mr. Sheridan are working with senior court personnel to review and confirm the Court's processing procedures. Once approved, procedures will be maintained in a shared repository, available to all court personnel. Thereafter, the Court will regularly review its procedures to identify whether new external or internal factors are affecting performance.

Recording and Utilizing Data – Over the past year, the Court's Research and Performance Department has developed and fine-tuned procedures to collect and report data. This is difficult and time-consuming work. But extremely important to ensure the court's resources are being efficiently utilized.

Court Personnel - The well-being of courthouse employees remains a key factor in the Court's success. In FY24, the Court received findings from the Maryland Judiciary's October 2023 Employee Experiences Survey and is reviewing the results to determine appropriate next steps for ensuring that the diverse needs of courthouse employees are met. Professional development and job satisfaction will ensure that the Court is able to successfully meet the mounting and complex needs of court patrons.

Clear and transparent procedures; recording and utilizing data; and a respected and proud workforce are the Court's goals for the coming year. When met, the Circuit Court for Montgomery County, MD will not be merely processing cases but rather serving the residents of Montgomery County by resolving legal matters that affect their lives in a fair, efficient, and effective manner.

Section III. Organizational Chart



Section IV. Positions, Projects & Initiatives

Courthouse Access to Justice & Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Access to Justice Coordinator Position

- The Court applied for a grant from the Administrative Office of the Courts and secured funding for an Access to Justice/DEI Coordinator position, which was filled in June 2024. The Coordinator will focus on exploring diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible processes, projects, and initiatives to identify and address barriers that court users may experience while receiving services from the Court. The position also offers opportunities to explore employee supports and services around accessibility and inclusion.
 - As part of its onboarding process for this position, Court Administration arranged a series of introductory meetings with department managers under both Court Administration and Clerk of the Court divisions, in addition to several Circuit Court judges.
 - Several initiatives the Access to Justice Coordinator will explore in the first six months include but are not limited to:
 - **Community Partnerships**, which includes engaging with Montgomery County high schools to offer a courthouse tour, as well as have them interact with Court employees about the various careers with the Maryland Judiciary.
 - **Accessibility & Signage**, which includes ensuring that the courthouse has mobility assistance such as wheelchairs for patrons at the entrances of the building, as well as increasing signage in multiple languages to support the diverse community served by the Court.
 - **Courthouse Employee Lunch & Learns**, which will explore a variety of topics ranging from DEI & Belonging, wellness, and work/life balance.

With the support of Maryland Judiciary funding, the Court is excited to develop initiatives that support the diverse needs of all court employees and users.

Pilot Program: Qualified Bilingual Program

- In July 2023, the Judiciary announced that the Court would be part of the Pilot Program for the Judiciary's Qualified Bilingual Program. The goal of the program, which is currently available to Judiciary Clerks and License Clerks, is to identify court staff proficient in a second language who may be able to assist court patrons with limited English proficiency doing business with the Court. Any interested clerks were required to pass a Language Proficiency Interview in Spanish in October of 2023. The Clerk's Office had 12 employees who passed the Language Proficiency Interview and received a 3% increase in pay.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Subcommittee on Judicial Education

- The Clerk of the Court is part of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Subcommittee on Judicial Education. The Subcommittee formed two workgroups. One will develop future trainings for Judges and Magistrates, and the other workgroup will focus on future trainings for professional staff. The Clerk of Court is leading the workgroup for professional staff. The objectives are to propose new courses for 2024/2025; review existing courses and offer substantive ways to infuse DEI principles; and chart the future courses and DEI educational initiatives.

This workgroup created four new classes for the 2025 catalogue that focus on DEI principles.

Maintaining & Managing the Court Records

- In FY24, Clerk's Office's primary project goals regarding records management include:
 1. Providing the most efficient means for attorneys and parties to file their pleadings with the Court per Maryland Title 20 Rules related to electronic filing.
 2. Scanning and cataloging physical case jackets and exhibits, as well as disposing of them after they are scanned, in alignment with the Maryland Judiciary's Records Retention Schedule.
 3. Shipping physical files to the Maryland State Archives to reduce the number of files stored in an off-site warehouse in Rockville.

Electronic Filings

- The Clerk's Office continues to monitor the status of pending envelopes in File & Serve closely.
 - Several reports are utilized to enable even the busiest departments to keep track of their processing of Odyssey File & Serve envelopes. During FY24, the Court received on average of over 2,500 envelopes per week.
 - The Clerks' ability to process incoming envelopes has become more efficient as evidenced by the average percent of pending envelopes having declined from 13% between July 2023-February 2024 to 9% between March-June 2024. However, the Court's ability to process envelopes still varies depending on the number of work days between reviews because of holidays or vendor issues with the filing tool. For example, the number of pending envelopes increased from 142 with an average pending length of 0 days for the week ending September 20, 2023, to 374 with an average pending length of 0.4 days for the week ending May 29, 2024, following a holiday that normally involves staff taking additional leave.
 - Consistently, what starts out as a backlog early in the week is cleared out by Wednesday or Thursday of that same week.
 - The above achievements are notable considering the Montgomery County Circuit Court consistently ranks among the top four circuit courts in the state in terms of filing volume (2,541 envelopes per week for FY24), along with Baltimore County (2,794), Baltimore City (2,447), and Prince George's County (2,804) Circuit Courts.
 - Self-represented litigants (SRLs) also have the option of filing electronically. The Court is tracking 249 cases in which self-represented litigants (SRLs) have submitted filings electronically, representing a 67% increase compared to the same period last year.

E-Service

- The Clerk's Office and Court Administration's Assignment Office continue to electronically serve Orders, Notices, and other court documents back to filers and their service contacts, resulting in approximately 11,200 envelopes created and electronically mailed in the eight weeks between June 26 and August 22, 2024, an increase of 20 percent over the same period in FY23.

- The Juvenile Department began assisting the Family Department with their E-Service.

Document Scanning

- Electronic access tools for parties are only valuable when documents and exhibits in cases have been scanned successfully into Odyssey.
 - To date, over 10,750 pre-MDEC or converted Civil, Criminal, and Family cases and all or part of at least 42,000 older juvenile cases have been fully scanned. Each case encompasses a varying number of documents, ranging from a single document to thousands.
 - Clerks have also scanned several thousand of the most requested pleading exhibits in older family cases before sending them to the Maryland State Archives.
 - The Court's Trust Office is also scanning documents and linking them to probate cases to support parties' access to case information and to create a comprehensive electronic court record. By the end of FY24, the Trust Office completed scanning and linking of all paper case files (> 2,000).

Reorganizing the Electronic Record

- The Clerk's Office faces the challenge of accommodating 30 years' worth of files with limited storage space. To address this, the Clerk took advantage of Maryland Rule 301(a)(1) and Maryland Rule 20-106(D)(5), which authorizes the disposal of paper files that have been scanned and digitized into Odyssey's case management system.
 - In FY24, the Court completed three cycles of scanning, verification, and destruction of older, physical case files and exhibits, including those from an off-site warehouse (September 2023, January & June 2024).

Docket Efficiency Initiatives (Clerk's Office)

- The Courtroom Clerks implemented a series of initiatives to improve efficiencies in courtroom processing by creating internal "time standards" for entering all (adult) case types or case dispositions. These time standards put emphasis on specific cases that have dispositions impacting other stakeholders (jail records, pre-trial services, juvenile department, sheriff's department, MVA cases, etc.). Moreover, some dispositions are time sensitive.

Mediation & Alternate Dispute Resolution

On-site Mediator Position

- The Court's On-site Mediation Program continued to be very well utilized over the past year. The mission of the program remains the same since its inception in 2023 - to ensure efficient case management and facilitate early case resolution prior to trial in family cases.
 - As the program has gained awareness amongst members of the bench, the staff mediator is frequently called upon to mediate on the day of trial in cases where the judicial officer believes it beneficial. These cases often result in the full resolution of contested issues, enabling judges or magistrates to hear other matters, and giving parties the ability to exercise self-determination. Moreover, litigants frequently contact the Family Division for "Early Resolution Service," which is a program whereby one of the Court's staff mediators meets with litigants, if appropriate, to help parties secure an agreement before the case even proceeds to a Scheduling Hearing. This service has been well used because of advertising at the Family Department front counter (where initial filings are received), on the Court's website, and at the Family Law Self-Help Center.
 - Over much of the past year, the staff mediator has provided mediation services in post-judgment cases that had previously been referred to Post Judgement Settlement Conferences (PJSC) with a Senior Judge. The mediator will continue to provide this service until more dates for PJSCs with Senior Judges become available. As a means of supporting the staff mediator with this extra workload, the Deputy Family Division Coordinator, who is also a trained mediator, has been able to assist with mediating and facilitating pre- and post-judgment cases.
 - During FY24, the onsite staff mediators offered 270 mediation sessions with 164 (61%) resulting in a full or partial settlement.

Custody/Access Mediation and Facilitation Programs

- The Court's Family Division Services continues to provide mediation and facilitation services using practitioners from the Court approved roster. While full settlement rates of the cases referred for these services do not appear to be extraordinarily high, many of these cases ultimately settle prior to trial partly because of discussions during mediation or facilitation.
 - A total of 322 custody/access mediation sessions were conducted, of which 117 resulted in full agreements and 33 in partial agreements (47% full or partial settlement).

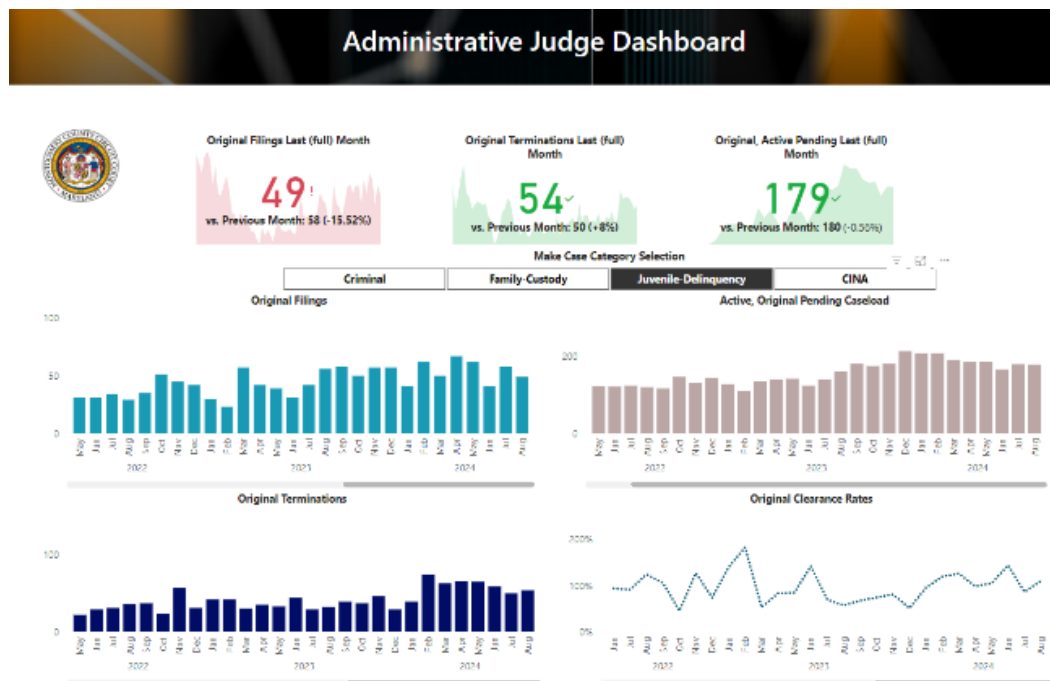
- The Court conducted 466 facilitation sessions, of which 196 reached full agreements and 20 reached partial agreements (46% full or partial agreement).
- The Court also provided mediation services in 65 CINA/TPR case matters, resulting in 30 full agreements and 12 partial agreements (65% full or partial agreement).

Case Processing & Workflow Management

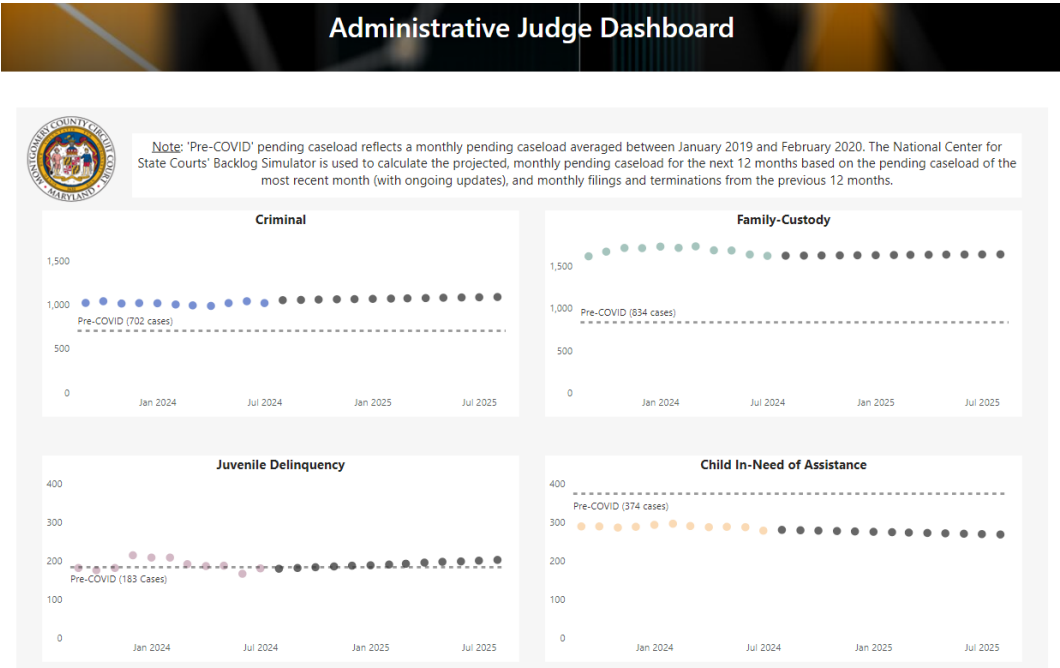
Administrative Judge's Caseload Metrics

- Administrative Judge Bonifant has made data utilization a top priority for monitoring and improving the Court's caseloads. A Tableau dashboard of key caseload metrics was developed and is accessed routinely by the Court. To expand its access to all court leadership, the research team in coordination with the Technical Services Department has developed a set of dashboards/reports using Microsoft's Power Business Intelligence (BI) application. These dashboards continue to evolve to better meet the needs of the organization.

Caseload Dashboard: Filings, terminations, and clearance rates.



Caseload Dashboard: Pending Caseload and Pending Projections



Family Case Management: Expanding SIJS Case Management, Custody Evaluations & Monitoring Dockets

- **SIJS Case Management:** During FY24, Family Division Services' Case Management Team worked diligently to improve case processing efficiency. This was particularly needed for cases with a Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) petition, the filings of which increased by 57% (475 cases) from 833 in FY22 to 1,308 in FY24.
 - The Court hired a full-time SIJS Case Manager. The position was created by the AOC's Family Law Grant to ensure that each SIJS case is in the proper posture to proceed to the scheduled hearing. If the case is not ready to proceed, the case manager informs parties/counsel of any deficiencies and gives them opportunities to rectify any issues. This not only guarantees that cases are ready to be heard at the upcoming, scheduled event, but also makes sure that all parties are aware of and given the opportunity to comply with case processing guidelines, thereby assuring equal access to justice.
 - The rest of the Case Management Team worked with the Family and Juvenile Judges in Charge and the Administrative Judge to enact changes to case preparations that were found to be beneficial to the bench. This included changing "Hearing/Trial Prep Sheets" to reflect filings of documents and open motions more clearly and adding case numbers of ancillary Domestic Violence cases that were filed within the previous seven years.
- **Custody Evaluation:** The Custody Evaluators' Office continued to provide custody evaluations in high conflict cases, completing 269 evaluations in FY24. All Court's evaluators are licensed social workers who have completed adoption home study investigations ordered by the Court. During FY24, the Office worked with the Family Division Coordinator and Court Administration to implement some measures to enhance security for the social workers and their work environment. These efforts include establishing new protocols for home visits, reviewing concerning interactions with litigants, and underscoring the need for all staff to be vigilant of their surroundings in and out of the Court when dealing with highly emotional families.
- **Custody Case Management:** The Family Division Coordinator and the Deputy Coordinator continued to meet with the Administrative Judge and the Assignment Commissioner each week to review cases on the docket for the upcoming two weeks. Information about these cases is gleaned from Odyssey, as well as from direct inquiries via email to parties/counsel. With feedback from meeting participants, the Administrative Judge can have a detailed understanding of all cases proceeding in the scheduled week and is well prepared to make docket changes or rule on postponements if the need arises. The weekly

endeavor has resulted in the Court having the ability to resolve issues as soon as possible and has improved communication and collaboration between different court departments.

Civil & Criminal Case Management – Bond Review & County Sequential Intercept Mapping Projects

- ***Bond Review Docket*** - In February 2024, the Court implemented the Bond Review docket for incarcerated defendants to reduce a hearing backlog created by a decrease in the number of cases heard weekly from six (6) to four (4) cases, which was a request initially made by stakeholders due, in part, to resource constraints and delays in inter-court processing.
 - The reduced number of cases heard weekly caused hearing scheduling backlogs; it was taking 60 or more days to set a hearing. In addition, the change caused judges to review all cases.
 - With the new process, unless deemed an emergency or assigned to a Track 4 case plan, all bond reviews for incarcerated defendants are sent to the Criminal Case Managers for review. The assigned Criminal Case Manager creates a case review and submits the review and request for bond review by a Senior Judge. The Senior Judge determines if the bond review merits a hearing. If so, the motion is scheduled on the Bond Review docket within 1-2 weeks from filing of the motion. If the request does not merit a hearing, the motion is denied.

Since implementation of the Bond Review Docket, bond review hearings are now set within 1-2 weeks of filing. The project has shown to be effective since implementation. The project is on-going and has been fully integrated into the Court's business procedures.

- ***Montgomery County Sequential Intercept Mapping*** – In May 2024 the Montgomery County Circuit Court hosted, in collaboration with the Centers of Excellence within the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy, a Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) Mapping workshop. The Sequential Intercept Model is a systems-level framework for criminal justice and behavioral health stakeholders to prevent entrance into the criminal justice system, provide services if in the criminal justice system, and engage individuals with behavior health services and recovery supports as they transition into the community from the criminal justice system. The workshop was attended by over 100 leaders from different agencies in Montgomery County. Workshop participants were able to help identify gaps and discuss existing resources along with potential strategies to better serve those with mental and substance abuse disorders. The project is on-going.

Calendar Management

- The Assignment Office has worked closely with the MDEC Calendar Configuration Analyst to effectively monitor the Court’s schedule and support the Administrative Judge’s scheduling prioritization efforts.
- In coordination with the Court’s Technical Services Department, a data extract of the Court’s calendars was ultimately reformatted into a spreadsheet to improve monitoring of information by Assignment Office personnel.
 - The spreadsheet provides users with a single information source to view trial availability among all twenty-four members of the bench, thus eliminating the review of multiple Odyssey reports. Personnel has been able to efficiently and effectively capture information that is critical for meetings with the Administrative Judge.

The data extract has helped to ensure the accuracy of trial assignments during weekly prioritization meetings with the Administrative Judge since the data incorporates the Court’s trial capacity rules, which are not available from any Odyssey reports. Another benefit of the extract is that it indicates special assignment sessions (e.g., Family Duty, Civil Duty, Civil Motions, etc.), which are hard to gather from Odyssey reports since compiling the information requires reviewing multiple calendars. Personnel also uses this information when updating “prep sheets” for daily dockets.

Local MDEC Analyst's Positions – Critical to Support Calendar and Case Plans Management

- In August 2021, the position of MDEC Calendar Configuration Analyst was established to assist the Court in configuring its calendars and sessions in alignment with the judges’ calendar rotations and the magistrates’ schedules while also complying with local session rules.
 - Since MDEC implementation, numerous rotation and business process changes have occurred resulting in the need for constant monitoring and routine maintenance of the calendars and sessions. The analyst maintains a record of session change requests and charts of the current session configuration for all the Court’s calendars.
 - The analyst can build the judicial rotation schedule in advance through Odyssey’s Session Builder process. This is a complicated process of creating resource groups, configuring rotation assignments and session templates (when necessary), incorporating the rotation assignments, and then finally launching the Session Builder process to apply the session templates.

- MDEC Case Plans Configuration Analyst (Case Plans), a position created in April 2022, monitors and maintains local changes associated with Odyssey's Case Plans functionality. Case Plans represent the Court's Differentiated Case Management (DCM) plans, which guide case processing and case management decisions. The Analyst continues to maintain a configuration change log, which captures all information associated with all configuration changes, and a configuration spreadsheet for all case plans that captures each case plan design and layout. Case Plan audits are performed every six months for any undocumented changes or updates to the configurations. The Analyst also performs the following tasks in support of case management:

- Monitors, updates, and maintains all case staff assignments in Odyssey, including annual judge rotation changes and case staff reassignments as needed.
- Ensures that Judges' and Magistrates' chambers are prepared for their dockets through the effective navigation of Judge Edition and Odyssey.
- Monitors and maintains the monthly Reserved Case Report and associated data entry for judges. This report monitors all cases that a judge has reserved for ruling beyond 60 days.
- Reviews Chambers workflow queues to ensure the Assignment Office is notified of affected cases on the Judges' and Magistrates' dockets.
- Provide with the Clerks with technical assistance to resolve Odyssey case plan-related issues,

Business Data Quality Management – MD Rule 2-507 Management & ADR Reporting Support

- **MD Rule 2-507 Monitoring** – In March 2024, a Business Data Quality Office Assistant was hired to, in part, manage the process of issuing the 2-507 contemplated and dismissal notices. Specifically, the employee in this position performs the following tasks: adding action dates and reviewing actions past due in the various open and re-open case reports, reviewing reports to determine if the case should be dismissed or action required, monitor the Business Data Quality task queue, reviewing assignment sheets for orders that may need to be submitted, managing questionable cases sent through the Questionable

Case Application, reviewing select motions to ensure that they have been tasked for ruling, and reviewing cases that are in need of a No Answer/No Default notice.

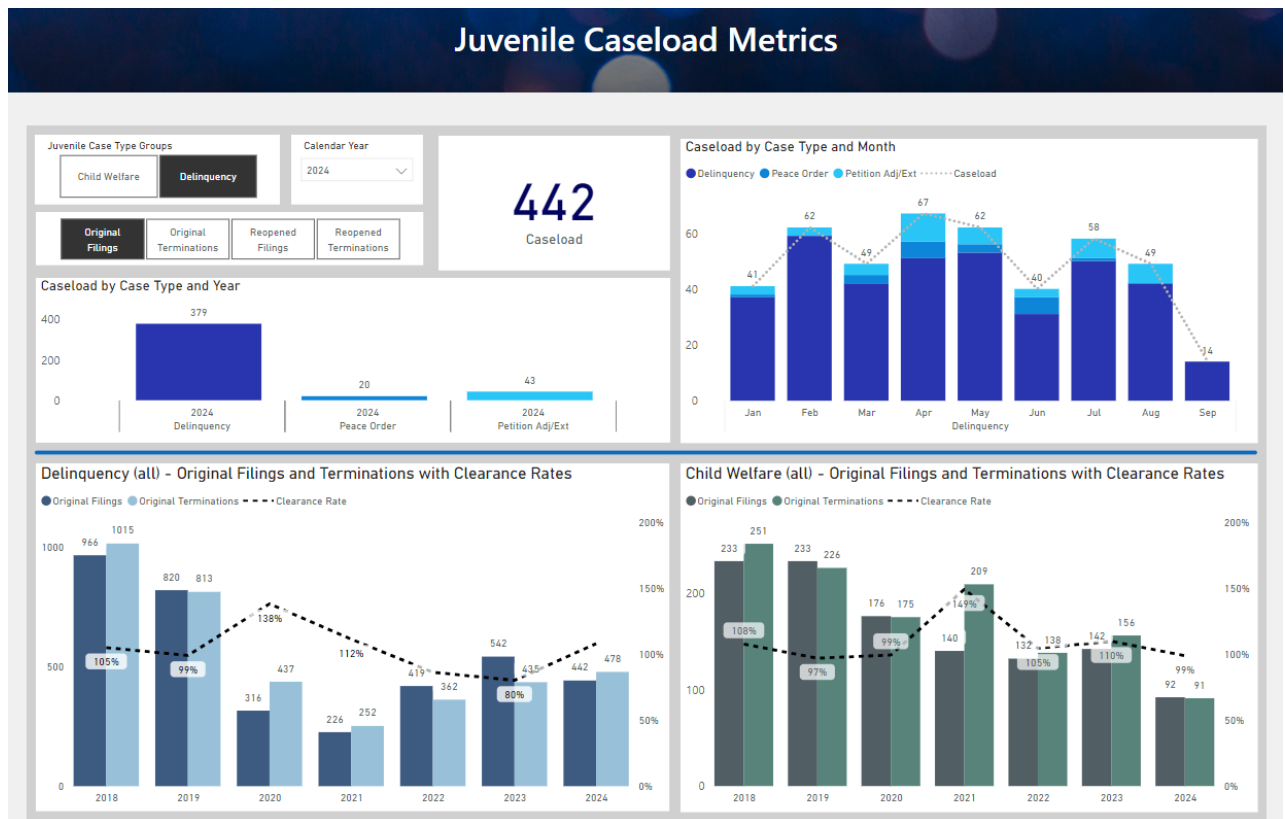
- Since the inception of the new case management system, Business Data Quality has been tasked with the issuance of the 2-507 contemplated dismissals, as well as 2-507 dismissals, manually. (In the previous legacy system, the process was largely automated.)
- Montgomery County Circuit Court has large Civil and Family caseloads (accounting for approximately 86% of the Court's original filings in FY24); this task has been a huge undertaking and consumed approximately 50%, if not more, of the staff's workload. It became clear that in order to better manage cases and perform data quality checks, it was necessary to expand the Business Data Quality team. This position remains valuable to the team and is important for managing the 2-507 process for the Court.
- ***ADR Reporting Support*** - Montgomery County Circuit Court offers a variety of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) services, including facilitation, mediation, post judgment settlement conferences, settlement conferences, and resolution conferences. Data collection and reporting is imperative to ensure that the ADR process, from the referral to the feedback, is performing as expected. In early 2024, the position of Administrative Aide for ADR Data Collection and Reporting was established within Business Data Quality. This role focuses on a variety of tasks and projects including but not limited to:
 - Ensuring the accurate collection and reporting of data to the Maryland Judiciary's Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO) as part of their quarterly grant reporting requirement;
 - Compiling mediation data for custody mediation and settlement conferences (to be implemented the Fall of 2024); and
 - Developing surveys to obtain feedback from the parties involved in the ADR process (implemented in July 2024).

Juvenile Court Services

- FY24 marked the first full year that the Court has had a full-time social worker, the position created in the Court's Family Division Services by the Judiciary's Family Law Grant to support youth involved in the Juvenile Court. The social worker worked closely with the Juvenile Judge in Charge and the Juvenile

Magistrate to expand the various intervention initiatives offered through the Court's Social Work Intern Program. As a result, stakeholder buy-in has increased in these cases, enhancing communication both among the stakeholders and with the Court.

- The social worker provides oversight of the Intern Program and ensures the integrity of the program, in addition to carrying a caseload. The social worker also coordinates referrals to the Conflict Resolution Course and the Youth Drug Program, which is a collaboration with alumni from the Drug Court Program. These programs have been well attended and have been completed with great enthusiasm by youth who were initially resistant to attending.
- The Juvenile Court Social Work Program is in the process of developing an ongoing support group for youth whose cases have closed and are no longer under the Court's supervision. The virtual group will provide a safe space within which youth can check in and discuss any issues, that they may be experiencing. Participation is voluntary. It is anticipated that the group will fill a needed gap for a group of youth who are no longer in programs but who seek continuing supports.
- The staff social worker recruits interns for the programs by contacting a number of schools of social work in the Maryland, Virginia and Washington, DC. Interns who participate in the programs are largely representative of the diverse demographic background of the youth in Juvenile Court.
- Efforts have been undertaken to build a Juvenile Court data dashboard to display juvenile caseload metrics and information regarding the Social Worker Intern Program. The dashboard continues to evolve, seeking to automate data capture and reporting for the staff social worker.



Court Public Assistance

Family Law Self-Help Center – Expansion of Services

- As noted above, the Family Law Self Help Center continued to provide over 12,000 services of legal assistance to self-represented litigants during FY24. As methods of service delivery, such as telephone assistance and scheduling appointments, which were developed during the pandemic period, became customary, access to the Self-Help Center has expanded substantially for the many litigants unable to wait for hours for help.
 - In response to the increase in the number of litigants seeking assistance from the Self-Help Center, late afternoon/evening hours one day per week were added to regular daytime hours. Evening hours have been fully utilized providing the public with greater access to legal assistance and justice.
 - In FY24, the Center implemented the utilization of a “Fast Pass,” which allows self-represented litigants to be consulted by the Center’s attorneys on an expedited basis when a judge finds that the litigant needs assistance to ensure that necessary filings are made so that their case is in the proper posture to proceed to trial. This approach not only helps litigants who are often

overwhelmed by the entire court process, but it also promotes docket efficiency because without the help, their cases are likely to be postponed.

Law Library

- Montgomery County Circuit Court Law Library (hereafter, referred to as “Law Library”) is a public library that provides legal research expertise and resources to the Court, local legal community, and members of the public who are impacted by legal processes. The Law Library strives to facilitate access-to-justice initiatives inside and outside the Court and aims to continue to provide the best and most inclusive service to its patrons. This includes improving services, resources, messaging, programming, and physical spaces. Highlighted successes include:
 - Answered 12,302 patron questions in FY24, a 52% increase from FY23. Of these questions, 65% were asked by members of the public like self-represented litigants. Additionally, librarians provided these public patrons with 1,025 targeted and informed referrals to court departments, community services, and pro- and low-bono services.
 - Of the questions asked in FY24, 1,302 were brought by members of the Judiciary, including employees of Circuit Court departments as well as judges and their staff at the Circuit Court and Appellate Courts’. Many of these questions involved complex issues such as legislative history and utilized librarian expertise and the Law Library’s Maryland Historical Law Collection.
 - The Law Library has three (3) MDEC Kiosk and File and Serve stations. Assistance in using these stations was provided to 519 patrons, 64% of which were members of the public. Many of these interactions led to full-service moments where Law Library staff provided litigants with assistance about how to access their case documents online and/or file electronically. The Law Library also provided free notary services for their MDEC party access application court forms.
- In FY24, the Law Library director served as Chair for both the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors of Maryland (CMCLLD) and the Legal Information Services to the Public chapter of the American Association of Law Libraries. In these capacities, she championed the value of law libraries’ participation in collaborating on judicial access-to-justice initiatives; improved referrals between law libraries and pro bono organizations; provided guidance on legal resources collection development for non-staffed court law libraries in small jurisdictions in Maryland; and fostered public

law libraries' commitment to being proactively inclusive spaces for all patrons. Her national chapter sponsored a program for the 2024 American Association of Law Libraries Annual Meeting with the theme "Advancing A2J: Building Collaborative Partnerships with State Courts to Improve Usability of Judicial Legal Applications for All Users."

- Law library staff editorially contributed to CMCLLD's Law on the Frontlines Project, which aims to provide public librarians basic-intermediate legal reference skills. Public libraries are more accessible and perceived as community spaces, compared with law libraries, which are housed within courthouses.
- Law Library staff gave a tour to the new leadership of the Rockville Help Center, and authored a new guide for self-help attorneys who refer litigants to law library services.
- Law Library staff provided several customized and in-depth legal research training classes on topics such as Maryland treatises, legislative history, and Westlaw searching for various court departments and chamber staff. Tours were also given to the Montgomery County Community College's paralegal students and summer highschooler program.
- The Law Library published its newsletter, *Just Ask!* for a sophomore year. This newsletter aims to teach court employees in engaging ways about how library services and resources can aid their roles in the Court and assist the public we all ultimately serve.
- The Law Library will continue to provide expert and inclusive legal research assistance and resources to the Court and its patrons, as well as facilitate access to justice initiatives through coordination with other court offices and departments. Law Library staff are planning to revive Everyday Law programming in FY25, which is an initiative that partners with Montgomery County Public Law Libraries and local attorneys to present basic everyday legal information and resources on common law topics such as estate planning, neighborhood law, etc.

Alternate Filing Methods, Licensing & Land Records Services

- Although the Court reopened fully to the public in 2021, it continued the practice of accepting pleadings in outside drop boxes, which are open 24 hours 7 days a week. License staff also continue to swear notaries outside by appointment only. In FY24, License Department staff:

- Performed 2,106 marriage ceremonies, issued 5,736 marriage licenses, and recorded 5,207 marriage licenses.
- Mailed over 21,000 business license applications and issued 9,441 business licenses (a 5 percent increase from FY2023 on each).
- The Land Records Department, which handles all matters relating to real estate transactions, had the following accomplishments last year:
 - Recorded 63,490 land instruments.
 - Hired two Spanish-speaking employees to assist the public: one employee is in the Land Records Information Office, and the other is in the License Department, which is one of the most heavily visited offices in the courthouse.
 - Instituted a change in civil ceremonies to have Spanish-speaking employees available to perform ceremonies four days a week.
 - Ensured all License Department forms are printed in both English and Spanish.
 - Discussed the creation of Spanish-speaking webpages on the Court’s public website for business and marriage licenses.

Problem-Solving Court Practices

Implement an Equity and Inclusion Assessment Tool for Drug Court

- In March 2024, the Court’s Drug Court implemented an assessment tool provided by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals to ensure equal access to problem solving courts in accordance with best practice standards. Data has been collected regarding the race, gender, age, and ethnicity of defendants who have been referred to Drug Court, admitted to Drug Court, terminated from Drug Court, and successfully completed Drug Court. This data will be used to inform the Drug Court team of identifying possible barriers to serving groups of individuals and may lead to programmatic changes. The first round of data is expected to be collected by November of 2024 with the next group of graduates.

Translate all Drug Court documents to Spanish

- Although the Participant Handbook for Drug Court was previously translated to Spanish, many of the other documents participants use on a regular basis were still in English. In February 2024, Drug Court’s bilingual case manager started translating the admission documents, court tracking sheets, and phase advancement applications to Spanish. This effort aims to ensure ease of access to programmatic documents for Spanish-speaking participants.

Create orientation for participants entering or re-entering the workforce

- Many participants enrolled in the county's problem-solving courts require additional support obtaining and maintaining employment. In May 2024, a curriculum was developed to orient new participants to the basics of job searching by assisting them with creating a resume, practicing interview skills, and providing digital literacy. The first class was held on September 16, 2024.

Section V. Operations

Court Technology

- In FY24, the Court's Technical Services Department was engaged in a variety of projects that supported infrastructure and equipment needs, as well as case management efforts. Highlighted projects include:
 - Replaced over 400 county-supplied computers with Judiciary computers, and improved capture of the record by replacing damaged wiring in four courtrooms. Almost 4,000 courtroom audio and transcript requests were processed, as well as over 1,100 technical troubleshooting, desk moves, new hires, security, and software installation requests through the Maryland Judiciary's ServiceNow system.
 - Migrated all computers and printers to the Maryland Judiciary's (mdcourts) network infrastructure and led the onsite installation of equipment. The Department also moved Microsoft Teams and all Office 365 components along with 99% of servers, including CourtSmart, to the mdcourts network.
 - Began procurement processes for an audio/video/communication system refresh in the Jury Assembly Room and Courtrooms to enhance access to justice and inclusion for court patrons.
 - Migrated and modernized the Court's databases and applications to the state network. The Court's existing Maryland Automated Guidelines System data monitoring and reporting database was reviewed and discussed with the Maryland Judiciary for implementation statewide as other circuit courts are interested in having a similar management tool.
 - Technical Services staff worked with other court personnel to update the Court's website, create Microsoft Forms, and develop applications utilizing data from Judicial Information System (JIS). These applications allow Court leadership and staff to make informed decisions regarding business processes and questionable case information, underscoring a data-driven approach to court and case management.
- The Technical Services Department continues to find creative ways to obtain Odyssey data to support local case management and analytics. Some of this data has allowed for expanded dashboards both in Tableau and Power BI.

- Collaboration, which is critical to the success of technical innovations locally and statewide, increased by having the Court’s Technical Chief join the Maryland Judiciary’s Technology Committee and by attending Court technology conferences.

Remote Proceedings Team

- Since the return to non-emergency court operations after the COVID 19 restrictions, most court proceedings are in-person. However, some proceedings have remained virtual. These are mainly short matters dockets, such as Scheduling Hearings, Pre-Trial Hearings, and Uncontested Divorces. The decision to continue these proceedings remotely was made to alleviate the need for litigants to travel to the courthouse and spend several hours of their time for hearings that oftentimes conclude in a matter of minutes. The Remote Proceedings Team continues to support the smooth flow of these hearing types by making sure that litigants and counsel receive Zoom links prior to their hearings, that the cases move in and out of courtrooms smoothly, and that questions about the process are answered almost immediately via their telephone “hotline.”
 - The Remote Proceedings Team also serves as a conduit between the Court and litigants by sending links and attachments, where applicable, for Co-parenting Class registration, Vital Records Forms for Absolute Divorce, the Maryland Parenting Plan Tool, and the Joint Statement of the Parties Concerning Decision making Authority and Parenting Time. Included in the email related to parenting plans is information about when the Joint Statement must be filed, and a link to the Maryland Courts’ website’s parenting plans video library.
 - The team is comprised of four members, three of whom are bi-lingual in languages other than English (two in Spanish). This has proven to be extremely helpful when interacting with many Spanish-speaking litigants in the County, many of whom are self-represented and need a great deal of support navigating the court system. The Remote Proceedings Team’s ability to speak with this large Spanish-speaking population without hesitancy undoubtedly improves the population’s access to justice and increases case processing efficiency by fostering more informed litigants.

Employee Support

Professional Development, Employee Appreciation & Team Building

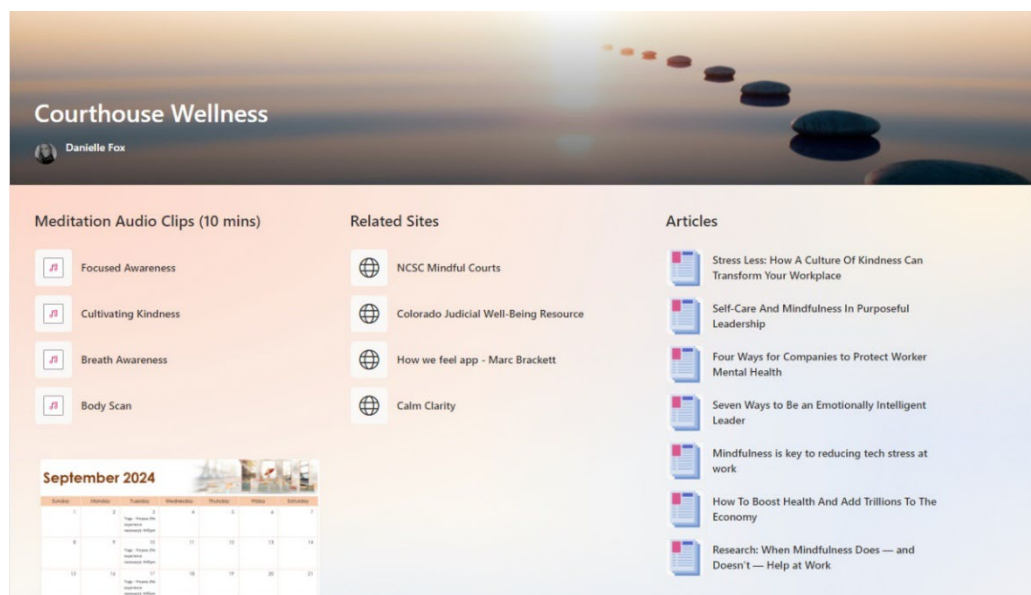
- The Circuit Court employees are the Court’s greatest asset. It is imperative that the Court keeps staff well-trained and engaged in the delivery of justice. With those goals in mind, the Circuit Court for Montgomery County promoted a multi-prong campaign of professional development, employee

appreciation events, and team-building exercises. While it is difficult to assess the benefits of each program, it is evident that the combined effect of those efforts positively impacted employees.

- Court Administration and Clerk of the Court planned, promoted, and implemented a successful Employee Professional Day in April 2024. The event featured office workouts, a wellness hour that included coping with grief, and exploring the employee assistance program. Court Administration also had a ‘duck hunt’ for employees where the employees would mention a fun fact, and they would pick a duck for a prize, which would include comp time, a gift card, or another fun treat to employees. The Sheriff’s Office provided an active shooter informative event as well as an event on our newly installed bleed kits and sovereign citizens. This event offered employees an opportunity to socialize and be recognized for all the hard work that each department does. The event promoted interdepartmental interaction; both Clerk’s Office and county-funded employees participated, and new working relationships were forged.
- Court Administration and the Clerk’s Office meet regularly to stay on top of issues impacting the Court. Department head meetings are held quarterly to exchange information and to promote professional development and growth. Several departments, such as Assignment and the Law Library, took field trips to neighboring Maryland courts to compare practices and observe new programs and business practices. All employees are offered professional development courses, and many are given the opportunity to attend relevant conferences. Court leaders are invested in the continual development of the workforce and seek innovative ways to proactively engage our greatest asset.
 - In fact, an employee of the Court’s Business Data Quality Department participated in a three-day intensive and challenging problem-solving course offered by Montgomery County Government. The employee presented her project at a showcase that included fellow innovators and County Executive staff. Her projects, which focused on developing action plans for: 1) an instructional guide for Odyssey development testing; 2) an onboarding manual for new team members; and 3) an effective performance management plan manual will serve as key resource documents for the Court and statewide once completed. As a result of her efforts, this employee was selected by the course as an innovator who exhibited an innovative spirit and offered outstanding contributions during the program.
 - The Clerk’s office, with assistance from Court Researchers and Business Data Quality staff, offered two Odyssey Navigator and Odyssey File & Serve sessions in the Spring of 2024 to reiterate best practices. It had been several years since Clerks had assembled to discuss business

processes together. This training was mandatory for all Clerks and offered to Court Administration Staff. The goal was to train Clerks in standardized procedures related to document titling, document security, and working envelopes in File & Serve. In addition, the presenters offered tips on how best to use Odyssey and File & Serve. Several documents were provided as a follow up to this training; Clerk Administration worked closely with Court Administration to assemble both a Case Status Manual and Appeals Case Status Manual, each of which included real-life scenarios. A separate document on pre-payment waiver case statuses is also being finalized.

- Court leadership also encourages departments and offices to support information sharing through lunch-and-learn opportunities within the courthouse. For instance, such internal trainings were launched to discuss business processes; diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging topics; and navigating the statewide case management system.
- Courthouse wellness is an ongoing focus for Court leadership as they explore ways to support personnel who regularly navigate stressful and, at times, very emotional situations inside and outside the courtrooms. Courthouse meditation and yoga sessions are being offered to courthouse personnel as resources expanding upon those available through the Maryland Judiciary and the County government. A SharePoint site has been created that continues to evolve with content that may serve as one of the many supports for employees.



Operations Staffing (Clerk's Office)

- The Clerk of the Court's Office began offering telework to eligible staff in April 2024. The policy started out with one day a week of telework and will be reevaluated to add a second day in 2025. The ability to telework has had a positive effect on employee morale and work productivity. The Clerk's Office is hopeful that this added benefit will help with our retention rate.

Section VI. Facilities

Courthouse Security

- The Montgomery County Sheriff's Office became accredited in 1995 by the Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies after meeting numerous stringent standards established for law enforcement agencies nationally. The Sheriff's Office continues to maintain this accreditation through rigorous on-site evaluations. The Sheriff's Courthouse Security Team works closely with the Clerk of the Court and Court Administration to coordinate security within the courthouse. The team also ensures the safety of children and staff located at Kids Spot Child Care, prisoners in custody during transports, and all individuals present in the courtroom when an emergency evacuation occurs.
 - The Sheriff's Office currently has two explosive-detecting trained K-9 teams, which are also firearms detection trained. The Sheriff's Office is in the process of training two new K-9 Teams, which will also be trained in patrol, explosive, as well as firearm detection. The Sheriff's Office also has one Controlled Dangerous Substance (CDS) detection K-9 team that assists the Courthouse Security Team. In addition, the Office has two comfort dogs to assist court patrons, including individuals attending the Mental Health Court, victims such as child, and adult victims in domestic violence cases seeking assistance at the Family Justice Center.
 - Screening stations are present at all three public entrances with private security and Sheriff's Office Courthouse Security Deputies. Screening of court patrons is accomplished by magnetometers, x-ray machines, and handheld wands.
 - The Courthouse Security Committee was established with the objective of providing input and guidance on issues involving the security of the courthouse building and surrounding areas. The Committee, comprised of major Circuit Court stakeholders, was tasked to review current screening practices, building access policies, and other courthouse-security related policies and programs for the court. The Committee meets quarterly to actively address courthouse security concerns and remain abreast of best practices.
 - Following a study analyzing courthouse traffic volume entering public and employee entrances, the committee submitted six security-related recommendations including expanding the scope of screening at public entrances to include all individuals whose offices are not located in the courthouse and instituting two full screening days a month that include individuals whose offices

are in the courthouse building. Individuals illegally parked on Truck Street and within the courthouse loading dock area have been issued parking citations by the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office Courthouse Security Deputies. The Administrative Judge accepted all recommendations from the committee and instituted the expanded and full screening procedures.

- During FY24, the following security upgrades were implemented by the Sheriff's Office:
 - Installed electromagnetic locks on the inner doors at all three main entrances to the courthouse. By adding locking capabilities to the inner set of doors provides a second line of defense against unauthorized entry to the building. Controls of these electromagnetic locks were added to the Security Monitor Room touch screen to enable immediate lock down of the main entrances in case of a security concern.
 - One exterior PTZ camera was added to the North Tower Lobby Level Monroe Street entrance. This camera provided more coverage of the exterior of the building. Two fixed cameras were added to the exterior of the North Tower Lobby Level Maryland Avenue entrance. Three fixed cameras were installed in the counter area of Central Files, Copy Room and Trust Office. These offices in the courthouse provided services to the public that did not have video coverage of their front counters. The cameras provide the Sheriff's Office with an immediate view of the area when a duress alarm is activated. One fixed camera was installed in the South Tower Lobby Level north to south transition hallway. This was a blind spot with no video coverage. It is also the entrance to the Kids Spot Child Care area. One camera was added to the South Tower Second Floor Hall at the Magistrates Chambers entrance.
 - Two duress alarms buttons were added to the interior and exterior of the G1 Parking Garage Elevator lobby.

Clerk's Office

- The Clerk of the Court is a member of the Judiciary Security Workgroup of the newly created Judiciary Security Task Force (JSTF) and the Montgomery County Circuit Courthouse Security Subcommittee.
- In April 2024, the Clerk's Office, with guidance from the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, reviewed safety concerns for the Clerk's offices/physical spaces and staff. The Sheriff's Office added several duress alarm buttons where they were needed and installed additional cameras inside the Land Records Office because there is no secure area for the employees. There was a Request to Exit (REX) button

installed in the Clerk of the Court's Administrative Office to eliminate the sensor that was previously there. The old sensor picked up movement in the office and would unlock the main doors constantly. This left the doors unlocked and easily accessible to anyone who tried to enter the office.

- Staff in the Central Files Office, Finance Office, and Land Records Office have serious safety concerns that need to be addressed. Each office will need secure front counters constructed to provide a barrier for the staff's safety.

Section VII. Justice Partner Initiatives & Community Outreach

Visit from Senegalese Ministry of Justice and Superior Council Magistracy Officials

- The Court hosted a visit by a delegation of Senegalese Ministry of Justice and Superior Council Magistracy officials on Tuesday, December 12, 2023. Their visit was part of a Senegal Development Strategy called “Plan Senegal Emergent” to help modernize the Senegal Criminal Justice System to international standards. The purpose of this study visit was to draw ideas, recommendations, and strategies on United States judicial and legal reform to address challenges in strengthening the Senegalese justice system. This visit, and the work of the Senegalese officials, was instrumental in formulating specific prescriptions and guidelines on what can be done to improve the quality of justice delivery across the system. It also furthered the establishing of an independent and effective justice system that safeguards human rights, facilitates access to all, and provides transparent and objective recourse.
 - The Court compiled an agenda covering core topics such as judicial recruitment and selection, court performance, case management, access to justice, management of court personnel, judicial resources, and the promotion of public trust in the judiciary. The Court had several speakers for each topic, including department managers and Judges. The delegation also had the opportunity to enjoy lunch with our bench.





Visit from the Office of the General Counsel/Montgomery County Public School

- A group from the Office of the General Counsel at Montgomery County Public Schools visited the Court on Thursday, July 18, 2024. John J. Delaney, Esq., Assistant General Counsel, accompanied the visitors. Their itinerary included observing a Civil Pretrial Docket with the Court's Administrative Judge, attending several hearings, and attending a Civil Motions Docket Hearing before the Honorable John Maloney. They also took a courthouse tour guided by Court Administrator, Tim Sheridan.

Equal Justice Community Outreach Subcommittee

- The Clerk of the Court, who is a member of the Equal Justice Community Outreach Subcommittee, coordinated with the Maryland Judiciary's Equal Justice Committee (EJC) and its Community Outreach Subcommittee to develop community forums across the state to increase public understanding of the courts and their services in addition to learn the community's needs and identify the ways in which the courts can provide better services.
 - Montgomery County Circuit Court is planning to host the second Community Forum. The Forum topic will be "Navigating Family Matters in the Court: Custody, Child Support, Divorce and Domestic Violence." The Panelist for the Forum will consist of five of our sitting judges, one (1) attorney from the Circuit Court's Family Self-Help Center, and two (2) local attorneys well versed in Family Law and Domestic Violence. The Court has partnered with Maryland Legal Aid, the Family Justice Center, The Upcounty Hub, and the House of Ruth to host the event.

Section VIII. Concerns/Issues

Legislative Concerns and Recommendations

- It is hoped the Legislature increases the number of Circuit Court judges for Montgomery County. The County has not had any additional judges added since 2016. *2016 Maryland Laws Ch. 91 (H.B. 74)*. Montgomery County is the most populous county in the state accounting for nearly 17% of the state's 6.2 million population. The United States Census Bureau estimates 1.1 million individuals reside in the County and that its population increased by 8.3% between 2010 and 2022. A fundamental value embraced by Maryland courts is equal access to justice. One way to measure this concept is by examining the number of residents served by a single circuit court judge. Currently, Montgomery County Circuit Court has 43,855 residents per circuit court judge. Compared to the statewide average (35,227), judges in Montgomery County Circuit Court serve over 8,500 more residents per judge.
- In 2024, the Legislature passed the Assisted Outpatient Treatment Act. *2024 Maryland Laws Ch. 703 (H.B. 576)*. The Act requires each Maryland county to establish an assisted outpatient treatment program by July 1, 2026. The stated goals of the Act are to provide care and treatment to those whose illness has gone untreated. However, many civil rights groups express concern over the violation of the individual's rights. The Act mandates circuit court proceedings and orders but states courts may not use their contempt powers to enforce its orders. There is concern that the Act will require significant judicial resources. More study, research, and preparation will be needed with regard to the Act's implementation.

Expanded Language Proficiency Testing for the Qualified Bilingual Program

- The Qualified Bilingual Pilot Program has been helpful for court customers but has created discontent with some staff who speak Spanish but were not permitted to be part of the Pilot Program, such as Lead Workers and Supervisors and, at times, Managers called upon to assist customers. The Family Department now has only one Qualified Bilingual clerk on staff, and the person is assigned to the Department's busy front counter. While the department has two Language Line handsets at the front counter, wait times can be long. Some customers become impatient and join the queue to be assisted by the Qualified Bilingual clerk. There are times when two clerks are free and available to help, but there are two to three people in the queue waiting for a qualified bilingual clerk. As a result, wait times for our limited English proficient customers who speak Spanish have become longer. The shifting workload has also had a negative impact on front counter staff morale.

- The Clerk has requested another round of testing by the Maryland Judiciary to allow more clerks to test and has requested that Lead Workers and Supervisors also be eligible to qualify for the Qualified Bilingual designation. Utilizing and compensating personnel for their skills is a critical successful factor in maintaining and building a strong, engaged workforce.

Use Technology Effectively and Responsibly

- Proposed strategic initiatives associated with the Maryland Judiciary’s strategic plan include a focus on using technology effectively and responsibly. Of particular interest for the Court is an initiative that enhances access to and quality of court information. Montgomery County Circuit Court employees believe they are part of the Maryland Judiciary workforce despite the reality of different funding structures (i.e., grant, county, and state). Even though its records are part of the statewide case management system, the Court emphasizes the need for complete access to its court’s data to support local case management solutions and statewide initiatives.
 - For instance, local technical and research personnel have skills that afford them the ability to query and analyze data to innovate and support the needs of the local court. The Court supports opportunities for local personnel to partner with state judiciary employees to ensure applications and solutions built locally are leveraged for statewide purposes, if appropriate.
 - Further, local courts have a responsibility and routinely provide feedback on state initiatives related to a variety of topics from codes to business processes. A challenge that the local court faces is that staff are limited in their access levels to the court’s data tables. While the Court looks forward to accessing the statewide data warehouse, there is limited visibility into project plans on what the warehouse will contain and who will have access to what at a local level. Questions remain about its viability as a tool for the local court. The Court requests that dialogue continue and increase regarding court data access levels to technical and researcher personnel at the local court. We believe that through shared access, coordination, and collaboration, we can be a more effective judiciary when it comes to data access and data management.

Section IX. Conclusion

Montgomery County Circuit Court takes great pride in its position as a member and a partner of the Maryland Judiciary. Through completing our State of the Court report, we have a clear picture of where we have been, where we are going, and the resources needed to reach our goals. The Court is committed to implementing innovative solutions and working collaboratively with our justice partners.

Appendices

Appendix A. Original Filings, Terminations, and Clearance Rates

During Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24, July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024), Montgomery County Circuit Court processed close to 25,900 filings and over 25,500 terminations (original and reopened combined), 1,600 more filings and 1,800 terminations than FY23 (figures not shown). Compared with the FY19 (pre-COVID), both filings and terminations in FY24 are still down by 2,800 (10%) and 3,000 (11%), respectively. Table 1 provides original filings, terminations, and clearance rates over the past three fiscal years and FY19.¹ The Court's overall original filings (17,308 cases) and terminations (16,986) in FY24 both slightly exceeded the FY19 level (17,108 filings and 16,801 terminations in FY19). In civil, family and TPR cases, the FY24 original filings exceeded their FY19 level. In civil and family cases, their FY24 original terminations were also greater than FY19. Since the overall terminations were slightly lower than filings in FY24, the clearance rate² was 98%. FY24 clearance rates were over 100% in family, CINA and TPR cases.

Table 1. Original Filings, Terminations and Clearance Rates, FY2019 (Pre-COVID19), FY2022-FY2024*

Case Category	Filings					Terminations				
	FY19	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY19-24 Change	FY19	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY19-24 Change
Civil	5,932	5,041	5,804	6,133	3%	5,682	4,945	5,616	5,757	1%
Criminal	1,884	1,367	1,434	1,570	-17%	1,930	1,315	1,424	1,532	-21%
Family	8,170	7,938	8,465	8,823	8%	8,029	7,556	8,089	8,969	12%
Delinquency	893	307	458	643	-28%	927	286	441	578	-38%
CINA	204	104	103	106	-48%	183	123	100	112	-39%
TPR	25	38	34	33	32%	50	26	46	38	-24%
Overall	17,108	14,795	16,298	17,308	1%	16,801	14,251	15,716	16,986	1%

Clearance Rate					
	FY19	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY19-24 %Change
Civil	96%	98%	97%	94%	-2%
Criminal	102%	96%	99%	98%	-5%
Family	98%	95%	96%	102%	3%
Delinquency	104%	93%	96%	90%	-14%
CINA	90%	118%	97%	106%	16%
TPR	200%	68%	135%	115%	-85%
Overall	98%	96%	96%	98%	0%

* Civil liens and restitution judgments are excluded. Delinquency includes juvenile delinquency and other non-child welfare juvenile cases (such as miscellaneous petitions and peace orders).

Source: Odyssey Case Statistics ECR (for all fiscal years) as of September 5, 2024.

¹ Terminations align with the status of a case changing from open to close rather than a case stop condition or case eligibility criteria aligned with the Maryland Judiciary's Case Time Standards.

² The Clearance Rate is a case processing efficiency measure calculated by dividing terminations by filings for a particular reporting period.

Original Pending Caseload

Table 2 provides case type-specific original pending caseload and the pending caseload/filing ratio for FY19 and FY22-24. Compared to FY19, the FY24 original pending caseload is smaller in delinquency and CINA cases, by 7% and 23%, respectively, whereas in the other four case types (civil, criminal, family, and TPR cases), the pending caseload is higher than FY19 by 23%, 49%, 1%, and 27%, respectively. In CINA and delinquency cases, the reduced pending caseload appears to have been caused by the reduced filings, allowing the Court to terminate newly-filed cases. In contrast, in criminal cases, reduced filings did not result in the lowered pending caseload as terminations remained lower due to the case backlog created during the COVID emergency operations in FY21 and FY22.

Table 2. Original Pending Cases, FY2019 (pre COVID19) FY2022 – FY2024

Case Type	Original Pending					Pending Caseload/Filings Ratio				
	FY19	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY19-24 Change	FY19	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY19-24 Change
Civil	2,933	2,838	3,179	3,621	23%	0.49	0.56	0.55	0.59	19%
Criminal	696	979	989	1,039	49%	0.37	0.72	0.69	0.66	79%
Family	3,557	4,197	4,418	4,177	17%	0.44	0.53	0.52	0.47	9%
Delinquency	180	122	125	168	-7%	0.20	0.40	0.27	0.26	30%
CINA	373	279	290	287	-23%	1.83	2.68	2.82	2.71	48%
TPR	45	70	61	57	27%	1.80	1.84	1.79	1.73	-4%
Total	7,784	8,485	9,062	9,349	20%	0.45	0.57	0.56	0.54	19%

* The pending caseload was measured as of the last day (June 30th) of a given fiscal year and includes open-active and open-inactive cases. Open-inactive cases only exist in cases converted from the Court's legacy case management system as this case status is no longer available in Odyssey. Delinquency includes juvenile delinquency and other non-child welfare juvenile cases (such as miscellaneous petitions and peace orders). The pending caseload of CINA and TPR cases includes post-disposition cases as cases do not close until court jurisdiction is terminated. Accordingly, their pending caseload/filing ratio is substantially higher than that of other case types.

Sources: HP Open Case Report (FY19 Pending), Odyssey Open Report (FY22-24 Pending, as of August 19, 2024), Odyssey Case Statistics ECR (FY19-24 filings, as of September 5, 2024).

The right half of the table presents the size of the pending caseload in relation to *the size of filings*.³

The smaller the ratio, the more efficient the court's case processing since a smaller caseload is preferable with a given filing level. In all case types but TPR, the pending/filing ratio in FY24 is still larger than that of FY19. However, in criminal, family, and delinquency case types, the ratio declined between FY22 and FY24, suggesting the Court's case processing efficiency has been gradually returning to the pre-COVID level in these case types.

³ Pending caseload is largely a function of two factors –filings and terminations; while the former increases the pending caseload, the latter reduces it. A reduced pending caseload may result from declined filings, increased dispositions, or a combination of the two. While the pending caseload per filing ratio shows the relative size of the former over the latter, it also shows the impact of the court's efforts to dispose cases. The pending caseload/filing ratio less than 1 indicates that the pending caseload is smaller than the size of filings, suggesting the court's ability to manage the processing of the current caseload whereas the ratio greater than 1 indicates that the pending caseload is higher than the filings, suggesting challenges with efficiently processing the caseload volume. Courts should also pay attention to a change in the ratio since an increase suggests a decrease in case processing efficiency resulting in an increase in pending caseload.

Appendix B. {Select} Court Administration Operational Statistics, FY20-FY24

Trust Office

Task	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Number of Fiduciary Reports Audited	858	1,097	924	1,067	958
Number of Show Cause Hearings Issued	229*	332*	NA	115	116
Number of Reports Filed Timely and Processed					
Inventory and Information Reports	233	244	221	232	231
Annual Reports	990	1,352	1,210	1,318	1,344
Annual Fiduciary Reports	900	1,097	934	1,131	1,023
Number of Guardianship of Person Reports Reviewed and Processed	990	1,352	1,210	1,230	1,344
Number of New Cases Processed	388	425	331	344	365
Number of Guardianship of Person and Property Cases Terminated	280	367	422	248	329
Number of Active Cases at the End of fiscal Year	2,560	2,563	NA	NA	2,185

* Numbers include those issued for show cause for terminations.

Quality Control/Research & Performance

Number of Case Audits Performed by Case Type, FY20 – FY23

	FY20	FY21	FY22*	FY23	FY24
Civil	4,680	3,926	1,316	961	724
Criminal	1,449	1,365	1,003	753	417
Family	6,156	6,542	2,929	740	1,239
Juvenile	1,235	1,130	260	250	169
Total	13,520	12,963	5,508	2,454	2,380

*Based on the number of event code (CAAUD: 'Case Audited') entered in Odyssey during the reporting period. The Juvenile audit figures for FY23 and FY24 are data quality checks performed on cases for the Maryland Judiciary's Caseflow Assessment. Family The volume of FY22 audits was affected by the Court's transition to MDEC as Business Data Quality staff were heavily involved in development and conversion activities, as well as post-GO-Live implementation/follow-up efforts. The audit counts for FY22 are more reflective of the cases reviewed as part of the FY22 Case Processing Performance Analysis.

Sources: JIS Data Store (as of September 6, 2024), Maryland Judiciary's Caseflow Assessment Application.

Family Division Services

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Individuals (Visits) Served by Family Law Self-Help Center	9,822	7,080	8,172	9,262	9,845	12,219
Cases Ordered to Participate in Facilitation	525	399	73	278	436	554
Custody/Access Mediation						
Cases Set	239	180	280	305	528	534
Cases Held	148	89	174	199	268	337
Cases Fully or Partially Settled	99	58	100	129	151	150
Cases Ordered for Custody/Visitation Evaluations	334	118	369	276	319	276
Cases Ordered for Adoption Investigations and/or Reviews	106	24	73	48	76	53
Families Ordered to Participate in Supervised Visitation	65	53	48	77	95	92
Co-Parenting Classes						
Persons Ordered to Attend	2,197	1,497	1,867	796	1,228	1164
Persons Completed the Class	1,571	1,003	749	444	577	657
Families Participated in Child Welfare Mediation	107	153	136	132	77	80

Source: Montgomery County Circuit Court, Family Division Services.