

KING COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT

2000 ANNUAL REPORT

King County Superior Court

King County Courthouse
516 – 3rd Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104-2312
(206) 296-9100
fax (206) 296-0986
www.metrokc.gov/kcsc/

Regional Justice Center

401 – 4th Avenue North
Kent, WA 98032-4429
(206) 205-2501
fax (206) 205-2585

Juvenile Court

1211 East Alder
Seattle, WA 98122
(206) 205-9500
fax (206) 205-9432

Message from the Presiding Judge
Brian D. Gain

Letter from the Court Administrator
Michael D. Planet

King County Superior Court is a general jurisdiction trial court with responsibility for:

- ◆ Civil matters involving more than \$300, unlawful detainers, and injunctions;
- ◆ Felony criminal cases;
- ◆ Family law, including dissolutions, child support, adoptions, parentage, and domestic-violence protection matters;
- ◆ Probate and guardianship matters;
- ◆ Juvenile offender cases;
- ◆ Juvenile dependencies, including abused and neglected children, children in need of services, at-risk youth, and truancies;
- ◆ Mental illness and involuntary commitment matters.

King County Superior Court:

- ◆ Is the largest of the 30 superior court districts in Washington State.
- ◆ Handles a caseload of about 65,000 new cases per year.
- ◆ Operates at five sites, including the King County Courthouse, Juvenile Court, and mental illness court at Seattle locations, the Regional Justice Center in Kent, and an Ex Parte calendar at Bellevue District Court.
- ◆ Has 50 judges and 11 commissioners
- ◆ Is supported by 451 Superior Court staff and 189 staff in the Department of Judicial Administration

In 2000, the Court handled 65,302 new cases, including:

- ◆ 10,806 criminal cases
- ◆ 20,569 general civil cases
- ◆ 13,110 domestic civil cases
- ◆ 6,121 juvenile offender cases
- ◆ 5,978 juvenile dependency cases
- ◆ 1,920 mental illness cases
- ◆ 8,862 other case types

JUDGES

Judges of the King County Superior Court serving as of December 2000 appear below. The year appointed (A) or elected (E) to the bench is shown in parentheses.

Richard M. Ishikawa (1979, E)*
Anthony P. Wartnik (1980, A)
Jim Bates (1981, A)*
George T. Mattson (1981, A)
Patricia Aitken (1982, A)*
Donald D. Haley (1983, A)
John Darrah (1985, E)*
Sharon Armstrong (1985, A)
Norma Smith Huggins (1988, A)*
Steven Scott (1988, A)
R. Joseph Wesley (1988, A)*
Michael J. Fox (1988, A)
J. Kathleen Learned (1988, E)
Dale B. Ramerman (1989, E)
Carol A. Schapira (1989, E)
William L. Downing (1989, A)
Joan E. DuBuque (1989, A)
LeRoy McCullough (1989, A)
Robert Alsdorf (1990, A)
Janice Niemi (1990, E)*
Larry A. Jordan (1991, A)
Ann Schindler (1991, A)
Peter D. Jarvis (1991, A)
Charles W. Mertel (1992, A)
Deborah D. Fleck (1992, A)
Laura C. Inveen (1992, A)
Michael C. Hayden (1992, E)
Brian D. Gain (1993, E)
Harriett M. Cody (1993, E)*
Michael S. Spearman (1993, E)
Richard A. Jones (1994, A)
Linda Lau (1995, A)
Richard D. Eadie (1995, A)
Nicole K. MacInnes (1995, A)
Jeanette Burrage (1995, E)
Michael J. Trickey (1996, A)
Glenna S. Hall (1996, A)
Jeffrey M. Ramsdell (1996, E)
Philip G. Hubbard, Jr. (1996, E)
Suzanne M. Barnett (1996, E)
Jay V. White (1996, E)
Jim Street (1996, E)
Patricia H. Clark (1998, A)
Dean S. Lum (1998, A)
Ronald Kessler (1999, A)
Terence P. Lukens (1999, A)
Palmer Robinson (1999, A)
Helen Halpert (1999, A)
James Doerty (1999, A)
Richard McDermott (2000, A)
Julie Spector (2000, A)
Mary Yu (2000, A)

Bruce W. Hilyer (2000, A)
James D. Cayce (2000, A)
Michael J. Heavey (2000, E)
Douglass North (2000, E)

COMMISSIONERS

Commissioners of the King County Superior Court who served during 2000 are listed below. They year appointed is shown in parentheses.

Stephen M. Gaddis (1981)
Carlos Y. Velategui (1986)
Bonnie Canada-Thurston (1993)
Kimberley D. Prochnau (1994)
Eric B. Watness (1995)
Hollis Holman (1996)
Nancy Bradburn-Johnson (1998)
Leonid Ponomarchuk (1998)
Marilyn Sellers (1998)
Richard Gallaher (2000)

* Judges who left the Court in 2000.

A New Approach to Managing Drug Cases

Controlled substances cases (“drug cases”) comprise a significant portion of the criminal caseload in King County Superior Court. Between January 1999 and June 2000, nearly half of the criminal filings to be heard at the Seattle courthouse were drug cases. Delays in providing information to defendants and their counsels, continuances of court appearances, and delayed plea opportunities impede the movement of these cases through the court system.

To improve management of drug cases, the Court piloted a special track for these cases in October 1999. The drug track features earlier appointment of counsel; earlier delivery of discovery, criminal history and a plea offer to defense counsel; designated judicial resources for combined hearings; and assignment to a judge when the trial date is set.

Each criminal justice agency modified their operating structure and procedures to facilitate the new process. The Court assigns one judge to manage the initial appearance, plea and sentencing calendars and three judges to handle cases set for trial. The Prosecutor’s Offices has assigned seven deputies and some of the defense agencies have dedicated attorneys to these types of cases.

The Office of Public Defense appoints a defense agency within one day of the filing of a new drug case, while the arraignment or initial appearance is scheduled fourteen days from filing. At arraignment, the defendant has the option of either setting the case for trial or entering a guilty plea and proceeding to sentencing. Trial dates are set six weeks from arraignment regardless of custody status. Once a case is set for trial, the assigned judge hears all pre-trial motions.

The pilot project has had a significant impact on reducing case processing time and the time defendants spend in jail, demonstrating that the dedication of judicial resources to these cases and elimination of unnecessary hearings leads to earlier resolution and cost savings.

King County Drug Court, implemented in August 1994, was the twelfth drug court in the country and now serves as a national mentor to the more than 400 drug courts operating across the nation. Drug Court is a pre-sentencing program that provides eligible defendants the opportunity to receive drug treatment in lieu of incarceration. Participants are required to attend treatment sessions, undergo random urinalysis, and appear before the Drug Court judge on a regular basis. Defendants who meet the requirements of each of three levels of Drug Court graduate from the program and the charges are dismissed. Those who fail to make progress are terminated from the program and sentenced on their original charge. The Drug Court Program accepts cases in which the defendant has been arrested on felony drug possession charges and has no prior adult convictions for sex or violent offenses. Since the program’s inception 1,494 defendants have entered treatment; 402 are currently active in the program; and 366 have graduated.

The Mandatory Arbitration Program provides an equitable, less expensive and faster means of resolving civil disputes while reducing court congestion, case processing costs, and litigants’ expenses. Implemented in October 1980, the program was initially limited to civil cases involving monetary judgments of less than \$10,000; this limit has been raised several times and now reaches \$35,000 per claim. In 1999, 2,013 cases were resolved by arbitration.

Interpreter Services has assisted people with interpreters at the downtown courthouse, Regional Justice Center, and Juvenile Court since 1992. The staff of six, including two court-certified Spanish interpreters, is responsible for scheduling interpreters for all foreign spoken languages and American Sign language for hearings, trials and court-related programs in criminal, civil and family law matters. As the number of languages serviced has grown to over 90, the number of interpreters associated with the office is more than 200.

Guardianship-Probate Program volunteers are available four days per week to help guardians and estate representatives to resolve delinquent cases or bring them into compliance with court requirements. The program maintains a pool of about 40 volunteer attorneys and paralegals who commit to six months of service in exchange for CLE training in guardianship and probate matters.

Family Court Services was established in 1950 to provide professional evaluation services to assist judges and commissioners in making decisions in the best interest of children and families. In addition, social workers provide and recommend intervention services that move families from litigation and conflict escalation to mediation and conflict resolution. Services provided include parenting plan mediation and evaluation, parent seminars, domestic violence assessments, conciliation counseling, independent adoption oversight, and marriage waiver assessment. In 2000, FCS screened more than 2,500 Family Law cases and reviewed 1,119 adoptions calendars. More than 1,100 parents attended the parenting seminar and 782 families representing 1,500 children completed services.

The Family Law Facilitator Program was piloted in 1993 and became a permanent part of court operations in 1994. The Facilitator Program provides procedural and referral information to pro se litigants, to help them prepare their case for a hearing before a commissioner or judge. Assistance in obtaining and understanding required forms and complying with local rules improves litigants' access to the court and reduces the time judges and commissioners spend on their cases. To further enhance services, in 1998 the Family Law Information Center was opened at the RJC. In 2,000, the facilitator program served more than 5,300 walk-in clients and 3,800 ex-parte clients in both locations.

Unified Family Court, at the Regional Justice Center, has two judges assigned to the project who hear only Title 26 and Title 13 cases with children. In addition, the UFC provides case management services for selected families that have multiple Title 26 & 13 court cases or issues such as domestic violence, mental illness, substance abuse, or child abuse or neglect. Cases managed by the UFC are assigned to one judge and one commissioner. Case management coordinates cases and services, identifies procedural issues, and encourages alternative dispute resolution. Each case in the UFC is monitored for compliance with court ordered services and evaluations. Since 1997, the UFC has provided case management for more than 180 families. Additionally, the UFC Training Oversight Committee has provided more than 50 presentations to the public and the court regarding issues affecting families and children.

The Family Law Court Appointed Special Advocates (Family Law CASA) program was established in 1983 to protect the best interests of children in custody and visitation disputes. The Family Law CASA Program provides qualified, trained volunteers to conduct independent investigations and submit unbiased recommendations to the Court. A CASA is appointed in family law cases with allegations of sexual, substance, and/or physical abuse, third party custody proceedings or when a child has reached the age of discretion. In 2000, volunteers were appointed to 203 new cases, serving 326 children.

Court Takes Responsibility for Juvenile Probation

Effective January 2000, Superior Court resumed responsibility for juvenile probation services under the Department of Juvenile Court Services. This function was formerly handled by the Department of Youth Services, an Executive branch agency that was dissolved at the end of 1999. Detention services were transferred to the County's Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention.

Juvenile Court Services' expanded role now encompasses probation and screening, court operations, and management of dependency, diversion, and Becca cases. Through the merger, Superior Court added about 150 employees and \$12 million to its budget.

The purpose of the reorganization is to increase efficiency in the juvenile justice system and responsiveness to youth and families by giving Juvenile Court judges greater control over the supervision of court-involved youth. The reorganization changed the role of Juvenile Probation Counselors, resulting in less time spent in court and greater emphasis on being in the community supervising youth and working with providers to arrange services for youth and their families.

Since the reorganization Juvenile Court Services has:

- ◆ Implemented the state risk needs assessment tool;
- ◆ Transferred half of the Intake Juvenile Probation Counselors to community supervision;
- ◆ Developed progression interventions and sanctions for probation violations consistent with judicial oversight and direction;
- ◆ Held regular meetings between probation staff and judges; and
- ◆ Provided training for judges on probation practices and programs.

The Court continues to work with juvenile detention services to establish detention screening criteria and population management strategies, including addressing overcrowding in the detention facility. Collaborative efforts are also underway with the Department of Community and Human Services to access additional rehabilitative services for court-involved youth.

The Dependency Court Appointed Special Advocates (Dependency CASA) program trains volunteers to represent the best interests of abused and neglected children in juvenile dependency cases. Established in 1977, this program was the first of its kind and has served as a national model for involving community volunteers in court proceedings. Volunteers spend thousands of hours each year investigating cases, interviewing parties involved in cases, monitoring compliance with court orders, and attending court hearings. In 2000, 1,726 children were served by the program.

The Partnership for Youth Justice program is an alternative to the formal court process for youth who are charged with misdemeanor offenses. The goals are to hold youth accountable, provide restitution to the victim, and assign consequences to prevent the youth from entering the formal court process. The Community Accountability Boards that conduct the process consist of specially trained volunteers from the youth's local community, operating under the supervision and support of court staff. In 2000, community volunteers served about 3,000 youth outside of the court process.

The Truancy Program assists the 19 school districts in King County to develop truancy prevention and intervention programs, community truancy boards, and collaborative relationships with community-based agencies that serve truant youth and their families. Small grants are distributed to schools and community agencies to support innovative responses to truancy and alternatives to the formal court process. Workshops are offered to families in eight regional locations, to enable them to assume control over the issues contributing to truancy and avoid appearing in court. A truancy case manager helps families access appropriate services in their school district or community to prevent or reduce the incidence of contempt hearings. In 2000, the program held 79 truancy workshops and contracted with four communities for truancy intervention services.

Juvenile Drug Court, implemented in July 1999, was funded by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) as a 24-month pilot project. As a pre-sentencing program for eligible youth offenders, the project's purpose is to demonstrate the effectiveness of intense treatment modalities when combined with weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly status hearings. Under the leadership of the presiding juvenile court judge, a team of the prosecutor, defender, probation and community treatment staff work together to apply immediate graduated sanctions and strategic incentives. This intensive approach motivates participants to progress through mandatory treatment, school, employment, community service and other court-ordered conditions. Juvenile Drug Court can enroll up to 50 participants at any given time.

The Victim Inclusion Project incorporates the philosophy of balanced justice into the juvenile court system. Balanced justice means including victims in the court process, holding offenders accountable for the crime, and working as partners with the community to prevent and control juvenile crime. The project contacts victims of property crime to provide information about their case, answer questions, troubleshoot problems with restitution, and offer the opportunity to participate in a Victim Impact Panel. Victim Impact Panels offer a forum for crime victims to talk to youth offenders about the emotional and financial harm caused by crime. The program also offers mediation between victims and offenders so that youth can directly learn about the impact of their crime. Between April and December 2000, the program conducted outreach to about 170 victims of juvenile crime and held 7 Victim Impact Panels for approximately 50 youth offenders.

JUDICIAL CASELOAD

2000 CASE FILINGS

In 1999, the total number of cases filed with King County Superior Court was 65,302¹ and the overall caseload increased by 1% from 1999. Criminal filings rose by 6.7% continuing a trend of several years. Annual criminal filings have increased by 33% in the past five years. Juvenile dependency filings increased by 13.5% in 2000, due largely to growth in truancy filings. Juvenile offender filings declined by more than 17.5% and were the lowest number filed in the past nine years.

Case Type	2000 Filings	Change from 1999
Civil	20,569	6.4%
Criminal	10,806	6.7%
Family Law	13,110	-4.1%
Probate	6,798	-2.0%
Juv. Dependency	5,978	13.5%
Juvenile Offender	6,121	-17.5%
Mental Illness	1,920	0%

2000 CASE RESOLUTIONS

The Court resolved a total of 62,924² cases in 1999, a decrease of about 2% from 1999. The decrease was due largely to the 1,154 fewer juvenile offender resolutions. The number of resolutions increased for criminal and civil cases, mirroring the growth in these caseloads. The pending caseload at the end of 2000 was 26,144 cases, an increase of 2,248 cases, or 9%, from 1999.

Case Type	2000 Resolutions	Change from 1999
Civil	19,862	3.5%
Criminal	10,434	8.4%
Family Law	13,071	-6.5%
Probate	6,539	-4.2%
Juv. Dependency	4,648	-3.0%
Juvenile Offender	6,477	-15.1%
Mental Illness	1,893	.9%

2000 CRIMINAL CASELOAD

	2000 Filings	Change from 1999
Homicide	73	12%
Assault	1,381	-7.8%
Robbery	424	8.4%
Burglary/Theft	1,934	4.7%
Motor Vehicle	580	16.2%
Controlled Substance	4,308	12.4%
Sex Crime	436	6.6%
Other	1,670	4.8%

¹ An additional 8,768 civil matters were filed with the Superior Court Clerk.

² An additional 8,766 civil matters were resolved by the Superior Court Clerk.

BUDGET

2000 FUNDING

In 2000, King County Superior Court received a total of \$38,063,770 from county, state, and grant sources. The majority of the Court's funding (80.5%) came from King County. The State of Washington provided a total of \$1,970,037. A combination of federal, state and private grants provided a total of \$5,461,881 (14.4%). The State also directly paid for half of the judges' salaries and benefits, as well as the State's share of arbitrator and pro tem judge payments.

2000 EXPENDITURES

Operating costs include salaries for judges, bailiffs, court reporters and support staff, as well as payments to jurors and interpreters. Other expenditures were made in the following programs:

Civil: Family Court Services, Family Law Department, Family Law CASA, Arbitration, and Family Law Facilitator programs.

Juvenile: Partnership for Youth Justice, Dependency CASA, juvenile court operations, and juvenile probation services

Administration: Chief Administrative Officer, Court Clerk, Court Administrator, Presiding Judge, department directors, personnel, computer services, and support staff for payroll, purchasing, facility, accounts payable and clerical services.

Unified Family Court: Case Manager for UFC and staff for the Family Law Information Center.

