

Agency Purpose

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

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

Core Functions

The trial court has original statewide jurisdiction in all civil and criminal actions within district boundaries. There are ten judicial districts, and 289 district court judges. A family court division, juvenile court division, probate division, conciliation court division, and a traffic and ordinance violations bureau exist in the district court.

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

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

Operations

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

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

At A Glance

- ◆ Each year, there are more than two million cases filed in Minnesota's trial courts.
- ◆ Trial court judges in Minnesota are among the hardest working in the country. They handle an average of 49% more cases each than do judges in states with comparable court systems.
- ◆ Caseloads continue to increase while time per case is being cut.
- ◆ The judiciary has completed a massive transformation, moving from a county-funded to state-funded system. As of FY 2006 all trial courts were state funded.
- ◆ The trial courts have fully implemented in 2008 its new Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS) technology application.
- ◆ The judicial branch operates in a constantly changing environment.
 - ⇒ Laws, case types, and legal sanctions change annually.
 - ⇒ Caseload volume is determined by other branches and levels of government.
- ◆ The Minnesota courts regularly review their effectiveness by monitoring:
 - ⇒ case filing trends;
 - ⇒ case clearance rates; and
 - ⇒ elapsed case time from filing to disposition.

Key Goals

The Trial Courts Court conducts its administrative functions in support of the following three strategic priority areas:

- ◆ **Access to Justice** – A justice system that is open, affordable, understandable, and provides appropriate levels of service to all users.
- ◆ **Administering Justice for More Effective Results** – Adopting approaches and processes for the resolution of cases that enhance the outcomes for individual participants and the public.
- ◆ **Public Trust Accountability and Impartiality** – A justice system that engenders public trust and confidence through impartial decision-making and accountability for the use of public resources.

Key Measures

To further the three goals contained in the branch's strategic plan – Access to Justice; Administering Justice for More Effective Results; and Public Trust Accountability and Impartiality – the strategic plan outlines future priorities. Each of these specific priorities addresses challenges facing the court system by targeting judicial branch resources in a focused manner on achievable and measurable strategies. Implementation of these priorities will take place over the life of the strategic plan with specific performance measures to evaluate their success.

http://www.mncourts.gov/documents/0/Public/Court_Administration/Strategic_Plan_for_Minnesota_Courts.pdf

Budget

Of the funding for the trial courts, over 99% is from general fund direct appropriations. Federal (and other) grants and Guardian ad Litem reimbursements represent a very small source of funding.

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Dollars in Thousands

	Current		Forecast Base		Biennium 2010-11
	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	
<u>Direct Appropriations by Fund</u>					
General					
Current Appropriation	246,077	252,116	252,116	252,116	504,232
Forecast Base	246,077	252,116	252,116	252,116	504,232
Change		0	0	0	0
% Biennial Change from 2008-09					1.2%
<u>Expenditures by Fund</u>					
Carry Forward					
Miscellaneous Special Revenue	117	0	0	0	0
Direct Appropriations					
General	239,913	258,280	252,116	252,116	504,232
Statutory Appropriations					
General	600	1,369	1,249	1,150	2,399
Miscellaneous Special Revenue	272	374	340	338	678
Federal	982	1,014	990	990	1,980
Miscellaneous Agency	1,173	8,021	16,020	16,020	32,040
Gift	35	46	0	0	0
Total	243,092	269,104	270,715	270,614	541,329
<u>Expenditures by Category</u>					
Total Compensation	204,120	215,755	215,288	215,288	430,576
Other Operating Expenses	37,406	44,932	39,097	38,996	78,093
Payments To Individuals	2	6	6	6	12
Local Assistance	412	611	524	524	1,048
Other Financial Transactions	1,152	7,800	15,800	15,800	31,600
Total	243,092	269,104	270,715	270,614	541,329
<u>Expenditures by Program</u>					
Trial Courts	243,092	269,104	270,715	270,614	541,329
Total	243,092	269,104	270,715	270,614	541,329
Full-Time Equivalents (FTE)	2,607.1	2,743.0	2,616.3	2,500.1	

TRIAL COURTS

Agency Revenue Summary

Dollars in Thousands

	Actual FY2008	Budgeted FY2009	Current Law		Biennium 2010-11
			FY2010	FY2011	
<u>Non Dedicated Revenue:</u>					
Other Revenues:					
General	28,499	27,841	27,850	27,850	55,700
Other Sources:					
General	58	0	0	0	0
Total Non-Dedicated Receipts	28,557	27,841	27,850	27,850	55,700
<u>Dedicated Receipts:</u>					
Departmental Earnings:					
Miscellaneous Special Revenue	27	33	33	33	66
Grants:					
Federal	982	990	990	990	1,980
Gift	15	0	0	0	0
Other Revenues:					
General	620	585	585	585	1,170
Miscellaneous Special Revenue	106	150	150	150	300
Miscellaneous Agency	5,101	11,977	16,000	16,000	32,000
Gift	44	0	0	0	0
Other Sources:					
Miscellaneous Agency	19	20	20	20	40
Total Dedicated Receipts	6,914	13,755	17,778	17,778	35,556
Agency Total Revenue	35,471	41,596	45,628	45,628	91,256