

2019

WASHOE COUNTY

# Second Judicial District Court Community Report



# Introduction

As evidenced by the 16,842 disposed cases last year, the Second Judicial District Court continues to instill and sustain public confidence in the justice system. The fair and timely administration of justice from the 15 elected judges and court staff, in both the general jurisdiction division and family division, play a significant role in the successful execution of efficient and non-adversarial dispute resolution. In 2018, there were 19,159 new cases, with the majority initiated in the family division. Community partners, such as CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) volunteers and Paws 4 Love continue to play key roles in court programs by providing services to the most vulnerable populations. The Court's commitment to families continues to be an important standard in the well-being of Washoe County children. In May 2019, the Court adopted the nationally recognized Safe Babies program foster care initiative, striving to dramatically impact the foster care system in Washoe County. This initiative has demonstrated positive outcomes that have improved timeliness to permanency, reduced recurrence of maltreatment and enhanced child well-being.

Based on the 2017 assessment from the National Center for State Courts, the Second Judicial District Court proposed the Courthouse Project for the expansion of the court. Governor Brian Sandoval proposed the court site as an Opportunity Zone in April 2018, which was then certified by the U.S. Treasury Department encouraging long-term private investment. The goal of the Courthouse Project is to create a more safe, efficient and updated facility that meets modern courthouse requirements for the general public, victims, witnesses, individuals in the judicial system, families, and court employees.

## Mission Statement

*The mission of the **Second Judicial District Court** is to provide timely, fair and efficient administration of justice under the law, in a manner that instills and sustains the public's confidence in the judicial system.*

*The mission of the **Second Judicial District Court's Family Division** is to provide fair, efficient, accessible justice under the law, which encourages alternative and non-adversarial dispute resolution, in a manner that serves the public and sustains confidence in the judicial branch of government.*

# Leadership

## Judicial Departments

### General Jurisdiction Division

DEPT. 1	Judge Kathleen Drakulich
DEPT. 3	Judge Jerome Polaha
DEPT. 4	Judge Connie Steinheimer
DEPT. 6	Judge Lynne Simons
DEPT. 7	Judge Egan Walker
DEPT. 8	Judge Barry Breslow
DEPT. 9	Judge Scott Freeman
DEPT. 10	Judge Elliott Sattler
DEPT. 15	Judge David Hardy

### Family Division

DEPT. 2	Judge Dixie Grossman
DEPT. 5	Judge Cynthia Lu
DEPT. 11	Judge Chuck Weller
DEPT. 14	Judge Tamatha Schreinert
DEPT. 13	Judge Bridget Robb

## Commissioners/Masters

### General Jurisdiction Division

PROBATE  
Commissioner Joe Gorman

DISCOVER  
Commissioner Wes Ayres

### Family Division

DEPENDENCY  
Master Alison Testa

CHILD SUPPORT  
Master Greg Shannon

TEMPORARY PROTECTION ORDERS  
Master Amy Banales

DELINQUENCY  
Master Paige Dollinger

## Administrative Team

ADMINISTRATOR/CLERK OF COURT  
Jackie Bryant, Esq.

ASSISTANT CLERK OF COURT  
Julie Wise, J.D., PHR

ASSISTANT COURT ADMINISTRATOR  
Alicia Lerud, Esq.

CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER  
Craig Franden

CHIEF FISCAL OFFICER  
Heather Potts, MBA

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
Gina Greco



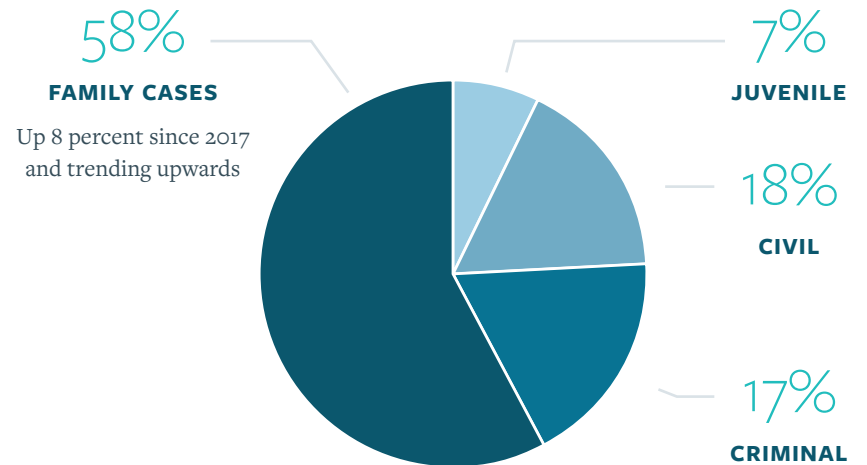
Our aim is to assist those individuals whose mental health challenges impede their ability to ask for help. These programs are not only changing lives by keeping those with severe mental health issues out of jail and hospitals, but they are helping them become active members of the community, so they can lead healthy and safe lives.

JUDGE CYNTHIA LU



## In 2018

Over the course of the year, the Second Judicial District Court assisted 58,276 people through the filing office, Self-Help Center, and Law Library. In 2018, there were 19,159 new cases filed. Out of these cases, 16,842 (or 88 percent) were completed within one year.



The courts must accommodate everyone in our diverse community. A large segment of this population has limited English proficiency. To provide justice for these individuals, the Court has provided interpreters in 1,902 hearings and assisted in the translation of 20 different languages.

# In the Community

## **Court-of-the-Year Award**

On May 31, 2019, the Nevada Association of Court Executives (NACE) presented the Court of the Year Award to the Second Judicial District Court. NACE is a professional organization that promotes quality court management and leadership through education, best practices and process improvement. The COY award recognizes the Second Judicial District Court for its' use of best practices to develop, implement and benchmark innovative and efficient processes that result in the effective delivery of judicial services to the public.

## **Keep Truckee Meadows Beautiful Great Community Cleanup**

The Second Judicial District Court Volunteer Committee facilitated employee participation in the Keep Truckee Meadows Beautiful Great Community Cleanup, maintains the Second Judicial District Court reading rooms, and the AHA Heart Walk.

## **Hosted 3rd Annual Flag Day**

On June 14, 2019, the Second Judicial District Court, in partnership with the U.S. District Court, hosted the 3rd annual Flag Day at the Courthouse. In addition to annual festivities, this year the District Court incorporated a naturalization ceremony. Local, state and federal officials led a traditional hometown celebration to welcome fifty new U.S. citizens. U.S. Senator Catherine Cortez Masto was the Keynote Speakers. Other guest speakers included District Court Chief Judge Scott Freeman, U.S. Magistrate Judge William Cobb and District Court Judge Barry Breslow.

## **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Grant**

The Second Judicial District Court, in partnership with Washoe County, received \$1.8 million from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Grant funds will be used to expand and enhance the Adult Drug and Diversion Courts. The grant funding will allow all new participants to receive a comprehensive evaluation which will identify the participant's risk and needs related to substance abuse, mental illness, and criminality, as well as identify and treat needs across the entire spectrum of psycho-social conditions which is crucial for long-term success and rehabilitation in accordance with the Risk-Need-Responsivity Model.

## COURT PROGRAMS OFFERED

# Family Services

## CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates)

CASA volunteers offer a community based solution by advocating for the child's best interests based on an independent assessment of a child's needs.

## Family Peace Center

The Family Peace Center is a free court-ordered program designed to provide children and parents (custodial and non-custodial) with a safe and conflict-free place to visit during the time they have pending cases in the Family Division. In 2018, 1,069 people partook in family visitation, allowing for dozens of families to see their loved ones in a safe and constructive atmosphere.

## Mediation

The Family Mediation program is designed to assist parents in ways of becoming active participants in conflict resolution in discussing how parenting time is to be divided by promoting the best interests of the child.

## Justice Dogs

In partnership with Paws 4 Love, a local non-profit organization, the Court provides trained therapy dogs for client support during specialty court proceedings in the Family Treatment Court.





COURT PROGRAMS OFFERED

## General Services

### **Washoe County Law Library**

The Law Library provides legal information, education, resources, tools and materials, to help ensure the needs of the community. In 2018, 1,309 self-represented litigants received legal information and assistance through Lawyer in the Library—a program providing free weekly legal resources to those in the community who need it the most.

A new program, the Legal Assistance Workshop (LAW), started this year and is aimed at reaching out to at-risk and homeless youth in our community. Once a month, the program brings a volunteer attorney to the Eddy House, Northern Nevada's central intake and assessment facility for homeless and at-risk youth, to provide legal education to the youth that utilize the facility. In addition to that, we continue to host our weekly Lawyer in the Library events to a full crowd of patrons. This highly popular program serves several families and individuals each week, providing an opportunity for free legal guidance to those in need.

### **Safe Babies Court Program**

The Safe Babies Court Program is a foster care initiative designed to focus services towards infant and toddler development, providing those families with Child Parent Psychotherapy (CPP) and more frequent court hearings to reduce the child's time in foster care and minimize Adverse Childhood Experiences.

### **Family Division Self-Help Center**

The Self-Help Center provides citizens with general information about court process and procedures, provides educational material and information regarding legal resources in the community, and creates packets and forms for family division cases. Interpreter services are available in 240 different languages.



#### COURT PROGRAMS OFFERED

## Continued General Services

### Language Access Department

The Language Access Department provides interpreters for those with limited English proficiency. Interpreters are automatically provided in court hearings at no charge to the parties. To provide fair access to information and services for all individuals, interpreters are also accessible in court programs and services.

### Project ONE

Project ONE provides families with the same judge throughout the life of their case to avoid failure to share information between judges, creating more attention to detail towards the safety, permanency, and well-being of children. It is a program by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

### Assisted Outpatient Treatment Program

The Assisted Outpatient Treatment program (AOT) provides severely mentally ill participants with the necessary support to help them be successful in the community with court ordered outpatient mental health treatment and intensive case management, which benefits both the individual and community as a whole. The program has reduced the number of hospitalizations, incarceration, homelessness, victimizations, and emergency room visits while assisting these individuals to reside safely in the community and improve their quality of life.



## Specialty Courts

### **The Specialized or Problem-Solving Court Model**

Specialized courts differ from traditional courts because they focus on one type of offense or offender. An interdisciplinary team led by a judge (or parole authority) works collaboratively to achieve two goals:

Case management expedites case processing and reduces caseload and time to disposition, thus increasing trial capacity for more serious crimes.

Therapeutic jurisprudence reduces criminal offending through therapeutic and interdisciplinary approaches that address addiction, mental illness, and other underlying issues without jeopardizing public safety and due process.

In 2018, 1,231 people participated in Specialty Courts.

### **Adult Drug Court**

The Adult Drug Court focuses on an 18-month intensive therapeutic and judicial intervention designed to engage a criminal offender who is diagnosed with a substance use disorder, with the goal of reducing further involvement in the criminal justice system.

### **Diversion Court**

The Diversion Court is applied to defendants who are designated as being diagnosed by a qualified clinician as having a substance use disorder and after completion of testing and treatment, and final disposition, the case is dismissed and sealed.

### **Family Treatment Court**

The Family Treatment Court collaborates with Child Protective Services, treatment providers and community support agencies to ensure that a child is able to return to a safe and nurturing environment through sober parenting.

### **Felony DUI Court**

The Felony DUI Court provides alternative criminal case processing including a three to five-year mandatory program aiming to rehabilitate third time felony DUI offenders where participants have weekly progress meetings with the judge, staff, the deputy district attorney and the deputy alternate public defender.

### **Medication-Assisted Treatment Court**

The Medication-Assisted Treatment Court (MAT) provides participants with a primary diagnosis of opioid use disorder with individualized treatment plans, case management, and vocational and academic referral and linkage.



## **Mental Health Court**

The Mental Health Court, a multi-jurisdictional court that has been selected as one of five national learning sites, is designed to treat individuals with serious mental illnesses who have been unable to receive services through the Drug Court Program.

## **Prison Reentry Court**

The Prison Reentry Court provides intensive supervision and treatment with the goal to reduce the number of nonviolent offenders in prison. In Nevada, 92 percent of the graduates in the past four years have not returned to prison.

## **Veterans Court**

The Veterans Court is designed to aid non-violent veterans who suffer from mental illness, alcohol or drug abuse, or post-traumatic stress disorder to better adjust to civilian life.

## **Youth Offender Diversion Court**

The Youth Offender Diversion Court (YOD) program is designed for 18-24-year-olds referred by the criminal court on a diversion status with a primary diagnosis of opioid use disorder and offers an individualized treatment approach and academic assistance.

# Preparing for the Future

The Court is resolved to address relevant safety and security issues affecting court staff, the general public and individuals in the judicial system. Unfortunately, the current court building does not meet modern courthouse requirements and is inadequate for the expected population growth in Washoe County. The historic building lacks modern security, technology and is non-compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The concurrent health concerns, inadequate zoning and circulation systems create an unsafe working environment for all, putting in jeopardy a courthouse that instills and sustains the public's confidence in the judicial system.

There is a dire need for an expansion of the current courthouse to prepare for the future and create a respectful and safe environment for the current court staff, families and individuals. A solution is of top priority to maintain the safety of the public, court staff, and judges.

## Facts & Figures

- In 2017, there were **1,450** cases in which litigants submitted evidence, which was then stored in below optimal conditions.
- In 1960, Reno had a population of 51,470 people, today it has **248,853**—a population **growth of 4.8x**—beyond what the courthouse structure can accommodate.
- The current building is not ADA compliant and creates numerous challenges and access limitations for the disabled population.
- Antiquated building materials and poor ventilation contributed to a significant decrease in the air quality.



TIMELY, FAIR AND EFFICIENT  
ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

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**Second Judicial District Court**  
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Washoe County