



## Legislative Council Staff

*Nonpartisan Services for Colorado's Legislature*

# Memorandum

September 30, 2025

**TO:** Interested Persons  
**FROM:** Clayton Mayfield, Fiscal Analyst  
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**SUBJECT:** Overview of the Colorado Judicial Branch

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## Summary

This memorandum provides an overview of the Colorado Judicial Branch, also referred to as the Judicial Department when described as part of the state budget. Established in Section 1 of Article VI of the Colorado Constitution, and further governed by Title 13 of the Colorado Revised Statutes and the Colorado Court Rules, the branch is responsible for administering a court system to resolve disputes and enforce civil and criminal laws. The branch has evolved over time to include other duties beyond courts, such as providing representation and support for indigent offenders and justice-involved families, supervising offenders on probation, and overseeing other justice-related programs. The state's General Fund provides a significant portion of funding for the branch, but fees and fines also support and fund other functions. This memorandum will use the terms Judicial Branch and Judicial Department interchangeably.



## Colorado State Courts

Colorado's state court system includes trial, appellate, and specialty courts, and the Colorado Supreme Court, which collectively handle most legal cases under state law. Municipal, federal, and tribal courts are separate from the state system. For a court to have jurisdiction, the incident in question must occur within the court's geographic area, or the individuals involved must reside there.

### County Courts

County courts have limited jurisdiction and primarily handle civil cases involving less than \$25,000, misdemeanors, traffic infractions, some felony complaints (which may be sent to district court), protection orders, and small claims. County court decisions may be appealed to the district court. With the exception of [Denver County Court](#), county courts are funded by the state. The state covers court staff salaries and operational costs, while counties are responsible for providing and maintaining adequate court facilities. Because their cases are generally less complex, county courts usually process a higher volume of cases than district courts.

### District Courts

District courts hear civil cases in any amount, felony criminal cases, probate cases, domestic relations cases, cases for and against the government, juvenile delinquency cases, dependency and neglect cases, and mental health cases. District court decisions may be appealed to the Colorado Court of Appeals, and, in some cases, directly to the Colorado Supreme Court.

Colorado currently has [23 judicial districts](#). Unique to Denver, the Denver District Court is aided by the Denver Probate Court and Denver Juvenile Court. Each trial court within a judicial district is staffed by judges and other full-time and part-time employees who provide clerical, legal research, accounting, and administrative support, all funded by the state. Judicial districts also employ magistrates, who are not constitutionally judges but are empowered to hear both county and district court cases except for jury trials. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court appoints the Chief Judge in each district from among the district court judges in that district. The General Assembly is responsible for determining the number of judicial districts and justices or judges at each level of the state court system.

### Colorado Court of Appeals

The [Colorado Court of Appeals](#) is the state's intermediate appellate court. The court has initial jurisdiction, with exceptions, over appeals from the district courts, Denver Probate Court, and



Denver Juvenile Court. In addition, the Court of Appeals has specific appellate jurisdiction over decisions originating from a number of state administrative boards and agencies, including the Industrial Claim Appeals Office.

The Colorado Court of Appeals consists of 22 judges who hear cases in three-judge panels. The Chief Judge, appointed by the Chief Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court, assigns judges to these panels and rotates their assignments three times per year.

## **Colorado Supreme Court**

The [Colorado Supreme Court](#) is the state's court of last resort, has exclusive jurisdiction over the practice of law in Colorado, and serves as the central administrator of the Judicial Branch.

Requests to review decisions of the Colorado Court of Appeals constitute a majority of the Supreme Court's filings, which it has the authority to accept or refuse. It also is the court of first appeal in some circumstances, including cases involving:

- water rights;
- Public Utilities Commission decisions;
- writs of habeas corpus;
- summary proceedings initiated under the Election Code; and
- search and seizure questions in pending criminal proceedings.

Decisions made in the Colorado Supreme Court can only be further appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, and then generally only when there is a question of constitutionality with regard to the federal constitution. The Colorado Supreme Court also has exclusive jurisdiction to promulgate rules governing practice and procedure in civil and criminal actions.

The court is composed of [seven justices](#) who are elected to ten-year terms and assisted by the Clerk of the Supreme Court. The Chief Justice is selected from the membership of the body, serves at the pleasure of a majority of the justices, and is the executive head of the Judicial Branch.

## **Specialty Courts**

Specialty courts focus on specific topics, offenses, or offender types. Colorado uses these courts, which are at the district level in most cases, to address substance abuse, behavioral health, water law, and competency-related proceedings, among other subject matters.



## **Problem-solving Courts**

Problem-solving courts offer a non-traditional approach to integrating court-ordered treatment provisions and criminal case processing. These courts rely on close collaboration by multidisciplinary teams, which include members from the judicial and treatment communities, to provide both accountability and treatment and services to offenders to reduce substance use and recidivism. These courts include Veterans Treatment Courts, Recovery Courts (adult drug court), Wellness Courts (mental health and dually diagnosed courts), Family Treatment Court (dependency and neglect), Juvenile Drug Courts, and Sobriety Courts (DUI). There are 71 active problem-solving courts.

## **Competency Court Dockets**

Competency court dockets are similar to problem-solving courts in that they provide a designated time and place for stakeholders to meet concerning offenders with mental or behavioral health disorders or other conditions that affect their competency to stand trial. They are structured to meet the needs of local jurisdictions, with variations in approach. Some jurisdictions partner with civil courts to divert individuals from the criminal courts when the offender is unlikely to be restored to competency and the civil court is better suited to facilitate necessary behavioral health services. Others collaborate with pre-trial mental health diversion programs to stabilize individuals before or in place of a competency evaluation. Some work with problem-solving courts to transition individuals into behavioral health programs and supportive supervision upon a finding of competency.

Fourteen judicial districts are currently operating competency dockets for adults, three districts have juvenile competency court dockets, and five districts are in various stages of implementing competency dockets.

## **Water Courts**

Water Courts have exclusive jurisdiction over cases concerning water matters. The Water Right Determination and Administration Act of 1969 created seven water divisions according to drainage patterns of various rivers in Colorado. Each water division is staffed with a division engineer, appointed by the state engineer; a water judge, appointed by the Supreme Court; a water referee, appointed by the water judge; and a water clerk, assigned by the district court. Water judges have jurisdiction in the determination of water rights, the use and administration of water, and all other water matters within the jurisdiction of the water divisions.



## Court Administration and Oversight

The administration of the Judicial Branch and other functions of the Colorado Supreme Court are assisted by several offices within and independent of the court, as outlined below.

### Office of the State Court Administrator

The Supreme Court justices appoint a State Court Administrator to assist in performing its daily, administrative functions. The [State Court Administrator's Office \(SCAO\)](#) serves as a centralized administrative, policy, and technical support system for the state courts and probation services.

### Attorney Regulation, Mentoring, and Assistance

Located within the Colorado Supreme Court, the independent [Office of Attorney Regulation Counsel](#) regulates the practice of law in Colorado by administering the bar examination, overseeing attorney admissions and registration, providing mandatory continuing legal and judicial education, investigating and prosecuting unauthorized practice of law, and enforcing attorney discipline rules. A Presiding Disciplinary Judge appointed by the Colorado Supreme Court oversees attorney disciplinary and disability proceedings, unauthorized practice of law cases, and certain bar admission cases within the state. The office is funded by annual registration fees assessed on attorneys.

The Colorado Supreme Court also provides two free programs for attorneys for professional development and employee assistance. The [Colorado Attorney Mentoring Program](#) provides free professional development to lawyers, law students, and firms in all stages of practice across Colorado. The [Colorado Lawyer Assistance Program](#) provides free and confidential assistance to the Colorado legal community for personal and professional issues.

### Nominating Commissions and Term Limits

In 1966, Colorado adopted a merit-based judicial appointment system, replacing elections with a process where [Judicial Nominating Commissions](#) recommend judicial candidates to the Governor. There are two types of commissions:

- the Supreme Court Nominating Commission recommends judges for the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals; and
- the Judicial District Nominating Commissions, one for each of Colorado's 23 judicial districts, recommends county and district judges.



Each commission includes seven lawyers and non-lawyers, with political balance required. Non-lawyers are appointed by the Governor; lawyers are appointed jointly by the Governor, Attorney General, and Chief Justice. Commission members serve six-year terms.

When a judicial vacancy occurs, a commission interviews applicants and must submit a list of nominees within 30 days. The Governor then has 15 days to make an appointment. If the Governor fails to act, the Chief Justice makes the appointment.

Judges serve an initial two-year term, after which they must stand for retention in a general election. Terms thereafter vary by court as follows:

- County Court: 4 years
- District Court: 6 years
- Court of Appeals: 8 years
- Supreme Court: 10 years

All state judges must retire by age 72; however, there are exceptions that allow judges to work after retirement to fill critical shortages.

While Denver County Court follows a similar process as the state, its appointment, retention, and selection process is governed by its [city charter](#).

## **Rules Committees**

The Supreme Court appoints committees to periodically review, correct, update, and improve State Court Civil Rules including the [Civil Rules Committee](#), the [Appellate Rules Committee](#), and the [Evidence Rules Committee](#).

## **Colorado Supreme Court Law Library**

The [Supreme Court Library](#) supports the research needs of the Colorado Judicial Branch. The library is also open to members of the Bar and the general public. As part of its mission, law library personnel are available to assist members of the public with research and training.

## **Probation**

Probation is the largest corrections agency in the state, supervising nearly 70,000 adult and juvenile offenders each year. Probation serves as an alternative to incarceration, allowing offenders to remain in their homes and jobs while under court supervision. Probation is often confused with parole, though they are distinct. Parole is a conditional release from custody of



the Department of Corrections and applies to individuals released from prison, while probation is one of several alternatives to incarceration that the court may impose.

Probation services are delivered through a network of 24 probation departments with over 70 offices statewide. Probation staff are state employees who operate under the authority of the Chief Judge and Chief Probation Officer in each judicial district. They provide a wide range of services, including:

- preparing pre-sentence reports with information about the offense, victim impact, and the defendant to help with court sentencing decisions;
- conducting risk assessments to determine the level of supervision necessary while an offender is on probation;
- supervising offenders to ensure they complete the terms and conditions of the probation sentence, such as payment of court-ordered fines or restitution, or completion of a substance abuse treatment program or mental health counseling;
- notifying the court of probation violations; and
- providing support and notification services to victims.

The [Division of Probation Services](#), located within the State Court Administrator's Office, coordinates with probation departments to offer administrative support, program evaluation, and education services.

Adults on supervised probation are required to pay a monthly \$50 supervision fee.

## Independent Judicial Agencies

There are 11 independent agencies in the Judicial Branch. Most are governed by constitutional or statutory boards or commissions. While each agency manages its own operations, some centralized services are handled by the new Office of Administrative Services for Independent Agencies. Though each agency submits its own annual budget proposal, funding for the independent agencies is included in the overall Judicial Department budget request submitted to the General Assembly. The agencies are listed below by their year of establishment, with budget data from the [FY 2025-26 Long Appropriations Bill](#).

## Office of the State Public Defender

The [Office of the State Public Defender](#) (OSPD), started in 1963 and established as an independent agency in 1970, provides legal representation to indigent defendants in criminal and juvenile delinquency cases where a prison sentence is possible. The OSPD has a central administrative office, 21 regional trial offices in order to serve clients in each of the 23 judicial



districts, and a central appellate office to serve clients during the appeals process. The OSPD's FY 2025-26 budget is \$192.8 million and 1,212.1 FTE.

### **Commission on Judicial Discipline**

The [Colorado Commission on Judicial Discipline](#) (CJD) was established by a constitutional amendment in 1966 and was substantially amended in 2024 by Amendment H, as discussed in this [LCS Issue Brief on Judicial Discipline](#). The 10-member commission operates as an independent agency responsible for investigating complaints of judicial misconduct and incapacity and for disciplining judges. The commission's FY 2025-26 budget is \$1.4 million and 5.0 FTE.

### **Office of the Alternate Defense Counsel**

The [Office of the Alternate Defense Counsel](#) (OADC), established in 1996, provides legal representation to indigent defendants in case where the OSPD has an ethical conflict of interest. The office contracts with licensed attorneys to provide this defense. The OADC's FY 2025-26 budget is \$69.3 million and 41.0 FTE.

### **Office of the Child's Representative**

The [Office of the Child's Representative](#) (OCR), established 2000, oversees the provision of legal representation to children and youth involved in the justice system, primarily due to abuse, neglect, or delinquency. The OCR primarily contracts with licensed attorneys to provide these services. The OCR's FY 2025-26 budget is \$44.3 million and 39.0 FTE.

### **Independent Ethics Commission**

The [Independent Ethics Commission](#) (IEC), established 2006, oversees state ethics rules as they apply to state and local employees and elected officials by providing ethics guidance, hearing complaints, and imposing penalties or sanctions as appropriate. The IEC's FY 2025-26 budget is \$0.4 million and 1.5 FTE.

### **Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman**

The [Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman](#) (OCPO), established in 2010, investigates complaints and grievances about child protection services, makes recommendations about system improvements, and serves as a resource for persons involved in the child welfare system. The OCPO's FY 2025-26 budget is \$2.6 million and 15.0 FTE.



## **Office of the Respondent Parents' Counsel**

The [Office of the Respondent Parents' Counsel](#) (ORPC), established 2014, oversees the provision of legal representation for indigent parents or guardians who are involved in dependency and neglect proceedings. The office contracts with licensed attorneys to provide this defense. The ORPC's FY 2025-26 budget is \$35.8 million and 20.0 FTE.

## **Office of Public Guardianship**

The [Office of Public Guardianship](#) (OPG), established as a pilot program in 2017 and permanently in 2023, provides legal guardianship services for incapacitated and indigent adults when other guardianship possibilities are exhausted. The OPG is required to operate in all judicial districts by the end of 2030. The OPG's FY 2025-26 budget is \$3.2 million and 16.9 FTE.

## **Bridges of Colorado**

The Statewide Behavioral Health Court Liaison, known more commonly as [Bridges of Colorado](#) (BRI), started in 2018 and established as an independent agency in 2023, places court liaisons to serve defendants with significant mental health needs and partners with providers, courts, and often families to provide wraparound care. For FY 2025-26, Bridges of Colorado has a budget of \$17.4 million and 123.0 FTE.

## **Office of Administrative Services for Independent Agencies**

The [Office of Administrative Services for Independent Agencies](#) (ASIA), established in 2023, provides human resources, operational, and technology infrastructure support for all independent agencies but the OSPD. ASIA's FY 2025-26 budget is \$2.4 million and 6.0 FTE.

## **Office of Judicial Ombudsman**

The Office of Judicial Ombudsman (OJO), was created in state law in 2023, but has not yet been formed as of this writing. It received no funding in FY 2025-26.

## **Accessing Court Services**

The Judicial Branch offers several ways for the public to access court services.

### **Public Records and Engagement**

The [Colorado Case Law Search site](#) provides free public access to the published opinions of the Colorado Supreme Court and to the published and unpublished opinions of the Colorado Court



of Appeals. An opinion is unpublished because it does not address any new areas of law, but rather reiterates an already-resolved question.

Oral arguments in both the Colorado Supreme Court and the Colorado Court of Appeals are open to the public. These courts are on the first, third, and fourth floors of the Ralph L. Carr Colorado Judicial Center at [2 East 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Denver](#). Other court records made, maintained, or kept by the courts may be physically inspected at custodial locations, subject to applicable laws and court rules. Online access to trial court documents is not available directly through the Judicial Branch website, but the branch does provide information on accessing records online through commercial search websites.

## **Self-help Resources and Online Services**

The Judicial Branch maintains [a self-help resources webpage](#) for the public with a full listing of available self-help resources and online services. General information is available based on topic areas. For individuals representing themselves in non-criminal matters, every Judicial District has a self-represented litigant coordinator, known as a Sherlock, who can assist with court forms, rules, and procedural questions. Legal clinics offered on a regular schedule provide information on legal topics to the public. Additionally, the branch can connect people to mediation services through the Office of Dispute Resolution. Mediation is an alternative dispute resolution process sometimes required, but also voluntarily entered into by parties, as a less costly way of resolving disputes short of filing a civil case.

## **Language and Accessibility Services**

Language and accessibility can present barriers for individuals seeking to access Judicial Branch services. The Office of Language Access provides resources, including interpretation and translation services, in more than 120 languages. Each judicial district has an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator for court service users requesting an accommodation, and a Jury Commissioner that handles these requests from jurors. The branch maintains [a webpage](#) with information on these topics. Interested persons can find digital accessibility information on [this webpage](#).

## **Budget and Funding**

Besides Denver County Court and municipal courts, the state is responsible for operational funding of the court system while counties must provide and maintain physical facilities for district and county courts within their respective judicial districts. The following sections highlight recent appropriations and the major cash funds of the Judicial Department.



## Recent Appropriations and Fund Sources

The [FY 2025-26 Long Appropriations Bill](#) and other bills passed during the 2025 regular legislative session appropriated about \$1.15 billion in total FY 2025-26 funding for the Judicial Department and independent judicial branch agencies, as shown in Table 1 below. Of this amount, about \$879 million (76.3 percent) was from the state General Fund, while the remaining \$204 million (17.7 percent) was primarily from cash funds supported through fines and fees. This ratio of General Fund to other sources has generally been consistent in recent fiscal years. Total appropriations to the department have grown by 34.3 percent from FY 2021-22 to FY 2025-26.

**Table 1A**  
**Total Appropriations to the Judicial Department by Legislation Type**  
FY 2021-22 to FY 2025-26

Source	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26
Long Bill	\$850,125,537	\$908,505,850	\$1,004,627,098	\$1,096,505,689	\$1,148,010,817
Supplements	\$5,665,208	\$2,282,845	\$12,238,901	\$11,617,296	N/A
New Legislation	\$7,260,253	\$7,230,090	\$6,316,134	\$2,104,659	\$3,741,831
<b>Total Appropriations</b>	<b>\$857,385,790</b>	<b>\$915,735,940</b>	<b>\$1,010,943,232</b>	<b>\$1,098,610,348</b>	<b>\$1,151,752,648</b>
<b>Total FTE</b>	<b>5,009.9 FTE</b>	<b>5,177.9 FTE</b>	<b>5,366.8 FTE</b>	<b>5,630.9 FTE</b>	<b>5,724.8 FTE</b>

Source: Joint Budget Committee Staff Appropriations Reports.

**Table 1B**  
**Appropriations to the Judicial Department by Fund Source**  
FY 2021-22 to FY 2025-26

Source	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26
General Fund (GF)	\$620,585,050	\$670,675,697	\$451,489,527	\$642,305,874	\$878,946,616
Cash Funds (CF)	\$184,341,883	\$185,322,748	\$510,184,248	\$397,757,895	\$203,914,808
Reapprop. Funds (RF)	\$53,699,065	\$57,595,340	\$57,083,358	\$65,738,875	\$64,466,224
Federal Funds (FF)	\$4,425,000	\$4,425,000	\$4,425,000	\$4,425,000	\$4,425,000
<b>Total Appropriations</b>	<b>\$857,385,790</b>	<b>\$915,735,940</b>	<b>\$1,010,943,232</b>	<b>\$1,098,610,348</b>	<b>\$1,151,752,648</b>
Percent General Fund	71.9%	73.1%	44.1%	57.9%	76.3%
Percent Other Funds	28.1%	26.9%	55.9%	42.1%	23.7%

Source: Joint Budget Committee Staff Appropriations Reports.



## Judicial Department Cash Funds

After the General Fund, Judicial Department cash funds are the next largest source of funding for the department. The top five cash funds by collections from the past few years are outlined below and shown in Table 2.<sup>1</sup> The court system also collects a substantial amount of restitution payments from offenders, but this money is transmitted directly to victims and does not factor into the department's budget.

- **Judicial Stabilization Fund.** Although this fund consists of all fees deposited as required by law, it mostly receives fees paid to file a variety of actions in civil cases. It is annually appropriated to the department for the expenses of the trial courts.
- **Judicial Information Technology Fund.** This fund is annually appropriated to the Judicial Department for any expenses related to information technology needs. It receives fees for electronic filings, searches of court databases, electronic searches of court records, and any other information technology services the department provides to users.
- **Offender Services Fund.** This fund is annually appropriated to the department for the administrative and personnel costs of adult and juvenile probation services. It receives revenue from charges assessed on probationers, which can include the costs of treatment services. The amount listed in the table below is only for probation supervision fees.
- **Justice Center Fund.** This fund is used to pay for the operation of the Ralph L. Carr Colorado Judicial Center. It receives a certain portion of filing fee revenue and lease payments from agencies located in the center.
- **Judicial Collection Enhancement Fund.** This fund receives revenue from installment payments and late penalty fees as required by law when defendants do not pay amounts owed as a result of the disposition of their case. The fund is annually appropriated to the Judicial Department for administrative and personnel costs incurred in collecting monetary assessments, such as fines, fees, and restitution.

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<sup>1</sup> Statutes governing these funds are located in state law as follows: **Judicial Stabilization Fund**, Section 13-32-101, C.R.S.; **Judicial IT Fund**, Section 13-32-114, C.R.S.; **Offender Services Fund**, Section 16-11-214, C.R.S.; **Justice Center Fund**, Section 13-32-101, C.R.S.; and **Judicial Collection Enhancement Fund**, Section 16-11-101.6, C.R.S.



**Table 2**  
**Top Five Judicial Department Cash Funds by Collections**

Fund	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24
Judicial Stabilization Fund	\$27,450,830	\$29,926,613	\$33,160,208	\$33,084,016
Judicial IT Fund	\$17,382,467	\$28,619,972	\$29,634,405	\$28,950,745
Offender Services Fund	\$18,824,887	\$17,964,923	\$24,626,156	\$19,914,070
Justice Center Fund	\$14,595,457	\$14,958,966	\$15,852,139	\$16,600,692
Judicial Collection Enhancement Fund	\$6,661,593	\$6,833,217	\$9,377,175	\$7,753,015
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$84,915,234</b>	<b>\$98,303,691</b>	<b>\$112,650,083</b>	<b>\$106,302,538</b>

Source: Judicial Department Budget Requests and Annual Statistical Reports.

Additional information on cash funds in the [budget documents prepared by the Joint Budget Committee](#), and more information on fines and fees in the criminal justice system can be found in a [memorandum prepared by Legislative Council Staff](#).

## Recent Legislation

The tables below list legislation adopted in the past five years (2021 to 2025) impacting the Judicial Branch and the courts.

**Table 3A**  
**2025 Legislation Impacting Courts**

Bill	Summary
<b>SB 25-024</b> Judicial Officers	Adds a total of 15 new district and county court judges over a two-year period, and allocates funds for courts to add public defenders, deputy district attorneys, and other related personnel.
<b>SB 25-062</b> Failure to Appear Charges in Municipal Court	Prohibits municipal courts from using failure to appear as the basis of a municipal criminal offense. Home rule cities cannot override these restrictions. The bill does not prevent a municipal judge from issuing a bench warrant for failure to appear or from considering such failures when setting bond at a later hearing.
<b>SB 25-189</b> Require Jury to Determine Prior Convictions	Requires juries, rather than judges, to determine habitual criminal status by hearing information on prior criminal convictions.
<b>HB 25-1147</b> Fairness & Transparency in Municipal Court	Aligns certain municipal court operating procedures with those used in state courts.
<b>HB 25-1275</b> Forensic Science Integrity	Creates a process for individuals impacted by CBI testing anomalies to seek post-conviction relief through the courts.



**Table 3B**  
**2024 Legislation Impacting Courts**

<b>Bill</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<b><u>SB 24-064</u></b> Monthly Residential Eviction Data & Report	Requires the Judicial Department to perform certain duties related to forcible entry and detainer actions, and eviction filings.
<b><u>HB 24-1031</u></b> Accessibility for Persons in Child Welfare Matters	Requires courts to provide and consider language access in certain types of cases and proceedings.
<b><u>HB 24-1034</u></b> Adult Competency to Stand Trial	Makes several changes to the adult competency process, including clarifying who raises the competency question in parole hearings and requiring certain reports in a competency hearing.
<b><u>HB 24-1045</u></b> Treatment for Substance Use Disorders	Provides funding for grants to district attorneys through the Judicial Department for adult pretrial diversion programs targeting substance use disorders.
<b><u>HB 24-1046</u></b> Child Welfare System Tools	Provides funding to the Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman to conduct an audit of assessments used in the child welfare system.
<b><u>HB 24-1099</u></b> Defendant Filing Fees in Evictions	Prohibits filing fees for defendants in eviction actions and provided funding to the Judicial Department to facilitate defendant filings
<b><u>HB 24-1133</u></b> Criminal Record Sealing & Expungement Changes	Makes several changes to the process to access, seal, or expunge a criminal record.
<b><u>HB 24-1241</u></b> Alignment of Petty Property Crime Threshold	Aligns state and municipal practice by prohibiting municipal courts from setting cash bonds for municipal charges that mirror state petty property crimes.
<b><u>HB 24-1291</u></b> Licensed Legal Paraprofessionals	Implements the licensure of legal paraprofessionals that was allowed by Colorado Supreme Court Rule and codified the ability of these individuals to represent clients in certain legal proceedings.
<b><u>HB 24-1355</u></b> Measures to Reduce the Competency Wait List	Enhances programs within the Judicial Department designed to reduce pending competency cases and provided funding for these enhancements.
<b><u>HB 24-1445</u></b> Probation & Parole Reporting & Fee Conditions	Requires reporting on probation fees. Requires probation officers to schedule meetings in good faith at a mutually agreeable time, and allows audio-visual meetings if consistent with the court order.



**Table 3C**  
**2023 Legislation Impacting Courts**

<b>Bill</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<b>SB 23-054</b> Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Office	Provides funding to the Judicial Department to update information technology systems to track indigenous cases.
<b>SB 23-075</b> Deletion of Child's Name from Criminal Justice Records	Expands a requirement to delete a child's name from criminal justice records released to the public and provided funding for the Judicial Department to implement this expansion.
<b>SB 23-164</b> Sunset Sex Offender Management Board	Continues the Sex Offender Management Board and modifies Judicial Department duties for probation.
<b>SB 23-170</b> Extreme Risk Protection Orders	Establishes a new type of civil action related to firearms and provided funding for the Judicial Department to implement its duties under the bill.
<b>SB 23-228</b> Office of Administrative Services for Independent Agencies	Creates an administrative support office for independent agencies in the Judicial Department.
<b>SB 23-229</b> Statewide Behavioral Health Court Liaison Office	Creates a new office to administer the Bridges of Colorado program. The program facilitates collaboration between the court system and behavioral health service providers.
<b>HB 23-1012</b> Juvenile Competency to Proceed	Modifies the process for competency proceedings regarding juvenile cases.
<b>HB 23-1019</b> Judicial Procedures and Reporting	Adds requirements for the Judicial Department regarding judicial discipline proceedings and reporting.
<b>HB 23-1042</b> Admissibility Standards For Juvenile Statements	Makes any statement or admission of a juvenile presumptively inadmissible in court if a law enforcement official knowingly uses untruthful information or belief, as defined in the bill, prior to or during the custodial interrogation, unless the prosecution can prove that the statement was made voluntarily despite the deception.
<b>HB 23-1120</b> Eviction Protections for Residential Tenants	Requires mediation prior to eviction proceedings for certain tenants and obligates the state to a portion of tenant fees for mediation.
<b>HB 23-1138</b> Procedures Related to Adult Competency	Modifies adult competency proceedings to allow for treatment in the civil rather than criminal system for certain cases.



Bill	Summary
<b><u>HB 23-1155</u></b> Advisement During Custodial Interrogation	Prohibits the court from admitting as evidence a statement made by a defendant unless the defendant received a statement of their Miranda Rights (the right to remain silent and have an attorney present).
<b><u>HB 23-1186</u></b> Remote Participation in Residential Evictions	Places requirements on eviction proceedings that generally allow for remote participation and electronic filing. Prohibits electronic filing fees for these proceedings.
<b><u>HB 23-1187</u></b> Alternatives in Criminal Justice System and Pregnant Persons	Encourages courts to offer alternative sentencing and bond amounts for defendants who are pregnant.
<b><u>HB 23-1205</u></b> Office of Judicial Ombudsman	Creates an administrative framework for a judicial ombudsman to receive and report on judicial officer complaints.
<b><u>HB 23-1249</u></b> Reduce Justice-involvement for Young Children	Requires additional involvement from the Probation division with local collaborative management programs for justice-involved children who would benefit from integrated multi-agency services.
<b><u>HB 23-1293</u></b> Felony Sentencing Commission Recommendations	Reclassifies various criminal offenses based on the recommendations of the Colorado Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice.
<b><u>HCR 23-1001</u></b> Judicial Discipline Procedures and Confidentiality	Refers a question to the 2024 general election ballot to ask voters to amend the constitution to change how disciplinary hearings for judges are handled. Amendment H was subsequently adopted by voters.

**Table 3D**  
**2022 Legislation Impacting Courts**

Bill	Summary
<b><u>SB 22-010</u></b> Pretrial Diversion for Person with Behavioral Health	Expands the scope of the pretrial adult diversion program to identify individuals with behavioral health disorders who committed a low-level offense in order to divert them from the criminal justice system and into community treatment programs.
<b><u>SB 22-018</u></b> Expand Court Reminder Program	Requires automatic enrollment of criminal defendants for an existing court reminder program.
<b><u>SB 22-043</u></b> Restitution Services for Victims	Creates the Office of Restitution Services to assist victims who are owed restitution, and modifies allowable expenses when calculating restitution.



Bill	Summary
<b>SB 22-049</b> Victim Rights Act	Creates additional victim's rights during court proceedings and related to subpoenas for victim's records. Requires the Division of Probation to notify a victim, upon request, of any complaint, summons, or warrant it files.
<b>SB 22-099</b> Sealing Criminal Records	Expands the automatic sealing of criminal records to a wider variety of cases, including civil infractions.
<b>SB 22-196</b> Health Needs of Persons in Criminal Justice System	Provides major funding to a variety of state agencies regarding behavioral health needs for persons in the criminal justice system; specifically established a grant program in the Judicial Department for pretrial diversion programs.
<b>SB 22-201</b> Commission on Judicial Discipline	Creates the Office of Judicial Discipline to support the work of the previously established Colorado Commission on Judicial Discipline; adds requirements for the handling of complaints about judicial officers.
<b>HB 22-1032</b> Jury Postponement for Out-of-State Students	Allows Colorado residents attending in-person classes at out-of-state institutions of higher education to postpone their term of juror service by up to twelve months.
<b>HB 22-1067</b> Clarifying Changes to Ensure Prompt Bond Hearings	Requires bond hearings within 48 hours for defendants held solely on municipal charges.
<b>HB 22-1091</b> Online Availability of Judicial Opinions	Requires the Judicial Department to publish online in a free, searchable format the opinions issued by the Colorado Supreme Court and Colorado Court of Appeals pursuant to state law or court rules.
<b>HB 22-1211</b> Sunset Juvenile Justice Reform Committee	Extends the work of the committee until December 31, 2022, to complete specified tasks.
<b>HB 22-1229</b> SB 21-271 Clean-up	Updates the procedures for civil infractions created under SB 21-271.
<b>HB 22-1257</b> 2022 Criminal and Juvenile Justice Commission Recommendations	Modifies probation officer arrest authority and requires the Division of Probation to use a system of structured and individualized behavioral responses to guide probation officers in determining how best to motivate positive behavior change and the appropriate response to a violation.
<b>HB 22-1373</b> Court-ordered Restitution Paid by Juveniles	Prohibits juvenile courts from ordering juveniles to pay restitution to an insurance company. A court may still order a juvenile to pay restitution to a victim for the portion of a victim's pecuniary loss from which a victim cannot be compensated under an insurance policy.



Bill	Summary
<b><a href="#">HCR 22-1005</a></b> New 23rd Judicial District Judges	Refers a measure to the 2022 general election ballot to ask voters to amend the constitution to require the Governor to reassign judges from the 18 <sup>th</sup> Judicial District to the new 23rd Judicial District on a one-time basis. Designated judges must establish residence in the new district. Amendment D was subsequently adopted by voters.

**Table 3E**  
**2021 Legislation Impacting Courts**

Bill	Summary
<b><a href="#">SB 21-271</a></b> Misdemeanor Reform	Reclassifies various criminal offenses based on the recommendations of the Colorado Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice.
<b><a href="#">HB 21-1136</a></b> Judicial Division Retirees Temporary Judicial Duties Compensation	Adds additional contract periods of 10, 20, and 30 days per year to the amount of time a retired judge may work after retirement.
<b><a href="#">HB 21-1214</a></b> Record Sealing Collateral Consequences Reduction	Establishes a process to automatically seal certain criminal records related to drug offenses, and to retroactively allow adults and juveniles to petition for relief from collateral consequences.
<b><a href="#">HB 21-1280</a></b> Pre-trial Detention Reform	Modifies procedures for bond setting hearings; created the position of a bond hearing officer, who is a magistrate that conducts bond hearings; required the availability of bond hearings outside normal business hours.
<b><a href="#">HB 21-1313</a></b> Child Protection Ombudsman and Immigrant Children	Expands the duties of the Child Protection Ombudsman to cover immigrant children.
<b><a href="#">HB 21-1314</a></b> DOR Action Against Certain Documents	Repeals the Department of Revenue's authority to revoke driver licenses when certain offenses are committed, reducing fee revenue to the courts.
<b><a href="#">HB 21-1315</a></b> Costs Assessed to Juveniles in the Criminal Justice System	Repeals the requirement that juveniles pay certain court related fees and fines.

Tables compiled by Legislative Council Staff.



## Additional Resources

For statistical information on each court, refer to the Colorado Judicial Branch's [Annual Statistical Reports](#). For organizational charts and other useful overview information, see the [Colorado Courts Annual Report](#). The most recent [Judicial Department Performance Plan](#) was presented during its 2025 SMART Act hearing with the Joint Judiciary Committee.

Legislative Council Staff compiles a [Crime Classification Guide](#) each year, outlining all crimes and infractions in state law organized by offense and crime type. The [Fiscal Notes Considerations for Bills with Criminal Justice System Impacts](#) memorandum describes Judicial Department caseload standards.