



Annual Report

State Fiscal Year 2026



SOUTH DAKOTA
UNIFIED JUDICIAL SYSTEM



State Fiscal Year 2026

SOUTH DAKOTA UNIFIED JUDICIAL SYSTEM ANNUAL REPORT

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South Dakota Unified Judicial System

South Dakota Supreme Court

Justice Scott P. Myren, Fifth District; Justice Mark E. Salter, Second District; Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen, Fourth District; Justice Patricia J. DeVaney, Third District; and Justice Robert Gusinsky, First District



Our Mission

The Unified Judicial System (UJS) is dedicated to providing a fair, impartial, and accessible court system that upholds the rule of law and is worthy of the public's trust and confidence.

Our Vision

Justice for All.

Sloger's

CHIEF JUSTICE MESSAGE



As I reflect on the work of the South Dakota Unified Judicial System during the past year, I am encouraged by the progress we continue to make while remaining grounded in the fundamental responsibility entrusted to our courts: providing fair, impartial and accessible justice to the people of South Dakota.

This FY 2026 Annual Report highlights the work of our Supreme Court, circuit and magistrate courts, and the State Court Administrator's Office from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. Throughout the year, we continued to strengthen court services, embrace opportunities to improve how we serve the public, and respond to the changing needs of the people and communities who rely on our courts.

That work is possible because of the commitment of judges, court employees and justice partners across our state. Whether their work takes place in a courtroom, clerk of courts office, court services office or behind the scenes, each plays an important role in ensuring South Dakota's courts operate effectively and that those who come through our doors are treated with dignity and respect. I am grateful for their professionalism, adaptability and dedication to public service.

As we move forward, we remain focused on building a court system prepared to meet both the needs of today and the challenges of tomorrow. That means continuing to improve access to justice, making thoughtful use of technology, strengthening our workforce, and finding new ways to provide effective and efficient court services.

While the way we deliver justice will continue to evolve, the principles that guide us will not. We remain committed to the rule of law and to maintaining a court system worthy of the trust and confidence of the people we serve. It is both our responsibility and our privilege to continue that work on behalf of all citizens.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Steven R. Jensen". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a prominent "S" and "J".

Steven R. Jensen

Chief Justice, South Dakota Supreme Court

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SOUTH DAKOTA JUDICIARY

Courts At a Glance

The South Dakota Unified Judicial System (UJS) consists of the Supreme Court, circuit courts and State Court Administrator's Office. The Supreme Court is the state's highest court and final decision-maker on South Dakota law. The circuit courts are the state's trial courts where criminal proceedings and civil litigation are handled. The State Court Administrator's Office provides centralized administrative assistance and support services for the South Dakota judiciary.

FY 2026 Case Filing Highlights

SUPREME COURT	
Appeals	352
Intermediate Appeals	21
Original Proceedings	55
Orders, Writs and Judgments	1,251
Bar Applications Submitted	183
Bar Admissions	145

CIRCUIT COURTS	
Criminal*	142,676
Civil	65,972
Domestic Relations	7,534
Search Warrants	7,204
Juveniles	4,399
Drug, Alcohol and Mental Health Commitments	5,367
Probate	2,114

** Includes municipal ordinances and petty offenses.*

Total Circuit Court Case Filings	208,648
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YEAR IN REVIEW

Year in Review: July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026



The Lawrence County Public Safety Center in Deadwood features a new magistrate courtroom.



July 15, 2025 📷 UJS Court Services staff who work with youth in Rapid City took part in an "It Takes a Village" community engagement event hosted by the Rapid City Police Department.



Human Resources Specialist Jade Milli, Pierre, and Court Reporter Tammy Stolle, Fourth Judicial Circuit.

July 2025 📷 Fourth Judicial Circuit began holding magistrate court in the new Lawrence County Public Safety Center in Deadwood. The facility includes a new courtroom and clerk's office.

July 1, 2025 UJS unveiled a new mission, vision and strategic plan to serve as a roadmap to guide the UJS in serving the citizens of South Dakota with fairness, integrity and excellence.

July 24-26, 2025 📷 UJS exhibited at the National Court Reporters Association Conference in Minneapolis to promote and showcase court reporting job opportunities in South Dakota.

Aug. 18, 2025 The Supreme Court's Commission on Parenting Time Guidelines held the first of three public hearings to gather input on potential changes to the standard parenting time guidelines.

Aug. 20, 2025 The South Dakota Supreme Court declared a judicial emergency statewide after a large-scale technical issue impacted the State of South Dakota's network on Aug. 19, 2025.

YEAR IN REVIEW



Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen and Justice Patricia J. DeVaney take part in a Separation of Powers Town Hall.



Second Circuit Judge Jon C. Sogn and Circuit Court Administrator Karl Thoennes speak with journalists.



Beadle Elementary School students attend a mock trial at the Yankton County Courthouse and Safety Center.

Sept. 18, 2025 📹 Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen and Justice Patricia J. DeVaney discussed the role of the judiciary during a Separation of Powers Town Hall held live in the State Capitol Rotunda in Pierre.

Oct. 8-9, 2025 Students and the public were invited to observe oral arguments when the Supreme Court held its October Term of Court at the University of South Dakota Knudson School of Law in Vermillion.

Oct. 10, 2025 📹 UJS partnered with South Dakota News Watch and South Dakota Public Broadcasting to provide a free training for journalists covering the state court system and the public interested in accessing the judicial system.

Oct. 14, 2025 Data released by the UJS reflected the success of the state's treatment courts. 73% of all participants in treatment courts have not committed another felony offense within five years following their involvement in the program.

Oct. 20, 2025 📹 Second graders from Beadle Elementary School visited the Yankton County Courthouse and Safety Center and took part in a Halloween-themed mock trial led by Magistrate Judge Kasey Sorensen.

Nov. 5-6, 2025 UJS hosted the South Dakota RISE25 Treatment Court Conference, a biannual event providing education and networking for public safety and public health leaders working to expand treatment court services.

YEAR IN REVIEW



First and Second Judicial Circuit court staff visit with eighth graders during a career fair in Sioux Falls.

Nov. 18, 2025 📷 During a career fair in Sioux Falls, First Judicial Circuit and Second Judicial Circuit staff had the opportunity to visit with eighth graders about careers in court reporting, court services and clerk of court offices.

Nov. 20, 2025 Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen appointed the Honorable Heidi L. Linngren as presiding judge of the Seventh Judicial Circuit. Judge Linngren replaced Robert Gusinsky, who was appointed to fill a vacancy on the South Dakota Supreme Court.



Second Circuit Presiding Judge Robin J. Houwman administers Judge Ann Hoffman's oath of office.

Nov. 21, 2025 📷 A formal swearing-in ceremony was held for Judge Ann Hoffman at the Minnehaha County Courthouse. She filled a vacancy in the Second Judicial Circuit created by the retirement of Judge Douglas Hoffman.

Dec. 8, 2025 Supreme Court Justice Janine M. Kern retired from the bench following 40 years of public service. Justice Kern was appointed to the Supreme Court in 2014 and previously served as a circuit court judge for 18 years and in the Attorney General's office.



Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen administers Justice Robert Gusinsky's oath of office.

Jan. 7, 2026 The Supreme Court Courtroom in the State Capitol was reopened to public tours as part of a strategic priority to build trust and confidence in the courts. The courtroom had been closed to public tours following the events of Sept. 11, 2001.

Jan. 9, 2026 📷 A ceremonial investiture was held for Supreme Court Justice Robert Gusinsky in the Pennington County Courthouse Rotunda. Justice Gusinsky filled a vacancy on the Supreme Court with Justice Janine M. Kern's retirement.

YEAR IN REVIEW



Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen presents the 2026 State of the Judiciary.

Jan. 12, 2026 Amber D. Whittington took the bench as a magistrate judge for the Second Judicial Circuit.

Jan. 14, 2026 Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen presented the 2026 State of the Judiciary at the State Capitol. He discussed the work of the courts to ensure our nation's liberties, including the UJS' strategic plan, indigent legal defense, probation and treatment courts, judicial security and a strong judicial workforce.



Supreme Court justices and UJS staff visit with legislative pages about legal careers and judicial job opportunities.

Jan. 26, 2026 Supreme Court justices and UJS employees visited with legislative pages about legal careers and employment opportunities in the judicial system.

Jan. 28, 2026 UJS hosted Treatment Court Day at the Capitol to provide state legislators with direct, practical exposure to the operation, impact and value of the state's treatment courts. Included was court observation of a weekly status hearing for Sixth Circuit Treatment Court participants.



Treatment Court Day at the Capitol in the Supreme Court Courtroom.

YEAR IN REVIEW



Sixth Circuit Judge M. Bridget Mayer leads a mock trial for Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) students.



Students observe the Supreme Court at Augustana University in Sioux Falls.

Jan. 29, 2026 📷 Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) students from across South Dakota learned about the judicial branch and the legal profession when they visited the State Capitol. Students also took part in a mock trial led by Judge M. Bridget Mayer and UJS staff.

Feb. 18, 2026 The South Dakota Supreme Court issued an advisory opinion affirming that the South Dakota Constitution empowers the Lieutenant Governor, while serving as President of the Senate, to cast a tie-breaking vote in the Senate on any matter.

Feb. 24, 2026 Treatment court team members visited about the work of the courts with legislators at the State Capitol. Displays in the Senate and House lobbies showcased the achievements, impact and success of treatment courts across the state.

March 18-19, 2026 📷 Augustana University hosted the Supreme Court's March Term of Court in Sioux Falls. Students and the public had the opportunity to observe oral arguments for six cases, and the Court met with Augustana pre-law and government students.

March 31, 2026 The UJS Strategic Planning Committee met in Pierre to discuss accomplishments of the strategic plan, review the six strategic pillars and goals, and discuss operational tasks. The group also began discussing new operational tasks for each pillar.

April 7 and 9, 2026 UJS staff attended virtual training sessions to learn about ADA accessibility requirements and creating ADA-compliant website content. The training was part of UJS' effort to bring UJS websites and content into ADA-accessibility compliance.

YEAR IN REVIEW



The refinished judge's desk and chair in the courtroom at the Potter County Courthouse in Gettysburg.



Fourth Circuit Presiding Judge Michelle K. Comer swears in Judge Chad R. Callahan as a circuit judge.



Brown County Drug & DUI Court participants volunteer at the Brown County Fairgrounds in Aberdeen.

April 2026 📷 What started as a plumbing problem resulted in a renovation of the courtroom in the Sixth Judicial Circuit's Potter County Courthouse in Gettysburg. Improvements were also made to the judge's chambers and gallery outside the courtroom.

May 12, 2026 Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen appointed the Honorable Michelle K. Comer as presiding Judge of the Fourth Judicial Circuit. Judge Comer replaced Judge Michael W. Day, who retired on June 8, 2026.

May 27, 2026 Nine USD Knudson School of Law students in the Public Service Pathway Project were sworn in as members of the South Dakota Bar. This was the first year of a five-year pilot providing an alternative to bar admission in the state and promoting public service.

June 8, 2026 📷 Presiding Judge Michelle K. Comer swore in Judge Chad R. Callahan as a circuit judge for the Fourth Judicial Circuit. Previously a magistrate judge, he filled a vacancy created by Judge Michael W. Day's retirement.

June 25, 2026 📷 Brown County Drug & DUI Court participants volunteered with the Brown County Fair Board on improvement projects at the fairgrounds in Aberdeen. Work included scraping and painting picnic tables and building new benches.

June 25, 2026 Gov. Larry Rhoden appointed Cassidy M. Stalley as a circuit judge in the Seventh Judicial Circuit, a vacancy created by the appointment of Justice Robert Gusinsky to the South Dakota Supreme Court.

SUPREME COURT

South Dakota Supreme Court

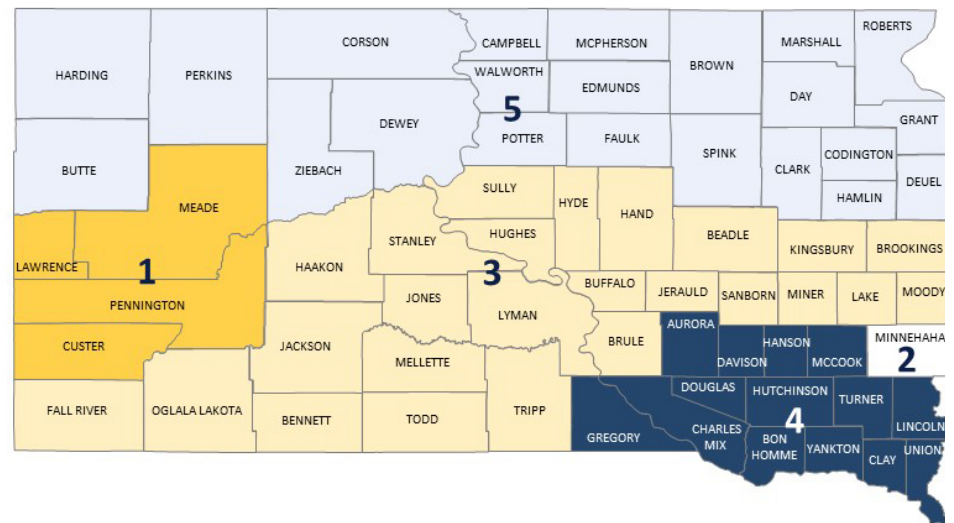
The South Dakota Supreme Court is the state's highest court and the court of last resort for state appellate actions. The Supreme Court is comprised of the Chief Justice, who is the administrative head of the Unified Judicial System, and four justices who are the final judicial authority on all matters involving the legal and judicial system of South Dakota.

Supreme Court justices are appointed by the Governor from a list of nominees selected by the South Dakota Judicial Qualifications Commission. Justices must be licensed to practice law in South Dakota, and permanent justices must be voting residents of the district from which they are appointed at the time they take office.

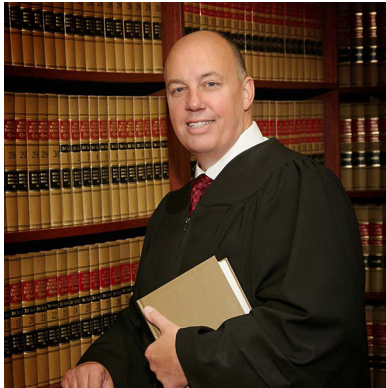
One justice is selected from each of five geographic appointment districts. Justices face a nonpolitical retention election three years after appointment and every eight years after that. The justices select their own chief justice for a four-year term.

SUPREME COURT DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Original jurisdiction in cases involving interests of the state.
- Issues original and remedial writs.
- Renders advisory opinions to the Governor on issues involving executive power.
- Appellate jurisdiction over circuit court decisions.
- Rule-making authority over court practice and procedure.
- Administrative leadership for the legal and judicial system.
- Controls admissions to and disciplines members of the State Bar.



Supreme Court Justices



Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen

Place of Birth: Wakonda

Education: Undergraduate degree Bethel University in St. Paul, Minn., and juris doctor University of South Dakota School of Law

Joined the Supreme Court:

Appointed in 2017, selected as Chief Justice in 2021

Supreme Court District: Fourth

Prior Experience: South Dakota Supreme Court law clerk, private law practice, First Judicial Circuit judge and presiding judge



Justice Mark E. Salter

Place of Birth: Huron

Education: Undergraduate degree South Dakota State University and juris doctor University of South Dakota School of Law

Joined the Supreme Court:

Appointed in 2018

Supreme Court District: Second

Prior Experience: Minnesota State District Court law clerk, U.S. Navy and Naval Reserves, private law practice, U.S. Attorney's Office (appellate), Second Judicial Circuit judge



Justice Patricia J. DeVaney

Place of Birth: Polo

Education: Undergraduate degree University of South Dakota and juris doctor University of Virginia School of Law

Joined the Supreme Court:

Appointed in 2019

Supreme Court District: Third

Prior Experience: South Dakota Attorney General's Office (appellate, litigation, administrative matters) and Sixth Judicial Circuit judge

Supreme Court Justices



Justice Scott P. Myren

Place of Birth: Mobridge

Education: Undergraduate degree University of South Dakota and juris doctor Rutgers University

Joined the Supreme Court:

Appointed in 2021

Supreme Court District: Fifth

Prior Experience: Private law practice, South Dakota Supreme Court staff attorney, Office of Administrative Hearings administrative law judge, Sixth Judicial Circuit magistrate judge, Fifth Judicial Circuit judge and presiding judge

Justice Robert Gusinsky

Place of Birth: Latvia

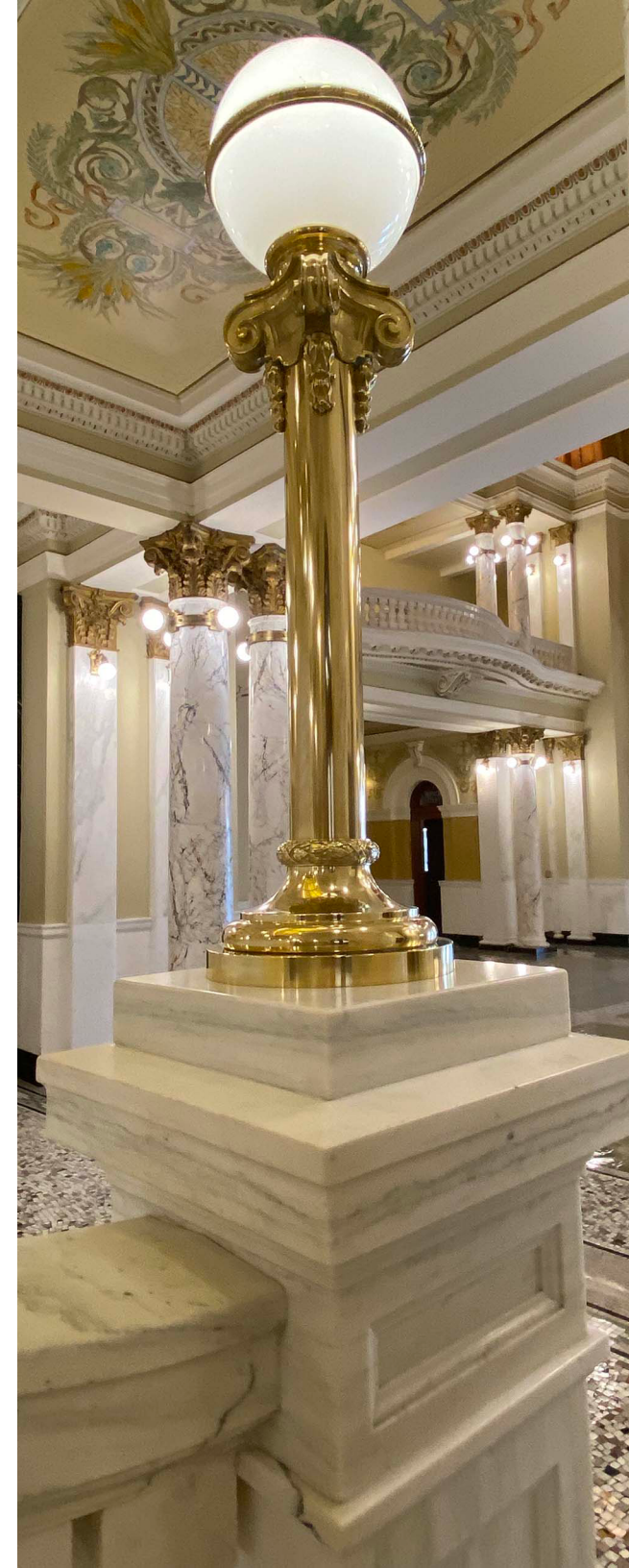
Education: Aeronautical engineering undergraduate degree Embry Riddle Aeronautical University and juris doctor University of South Dakota School of Law

Joined the Supreme Court:

Appointed in 2025

Supreme Court District: First

Prior Experience: Private law practice, U.S. Attorney's Office, Seventh Judicial Circuit judge and presiding judge



Supreme Court Workload

The South Dakota Supreme Court's workload is shown on the next page. The following categories are used within the Supreme Court.

Intermediate Appeals

Appeals made during the progress of a case in circuit court. Intermediate appeals are accepted at the discretion of the Supreme Court.

Notice of Review

Filed by an appellee (party against whom an appeal is taken) seeking review of a judgment or order entered in the same action from which an appeal has been taken. A notice of review is a separate filing but not a separate disposition since it is disposed of as part of the original appeal.

Certificates of Probable Cause

Required before an appeal can be brought in a habeas corpus case.

Summary Dispositions

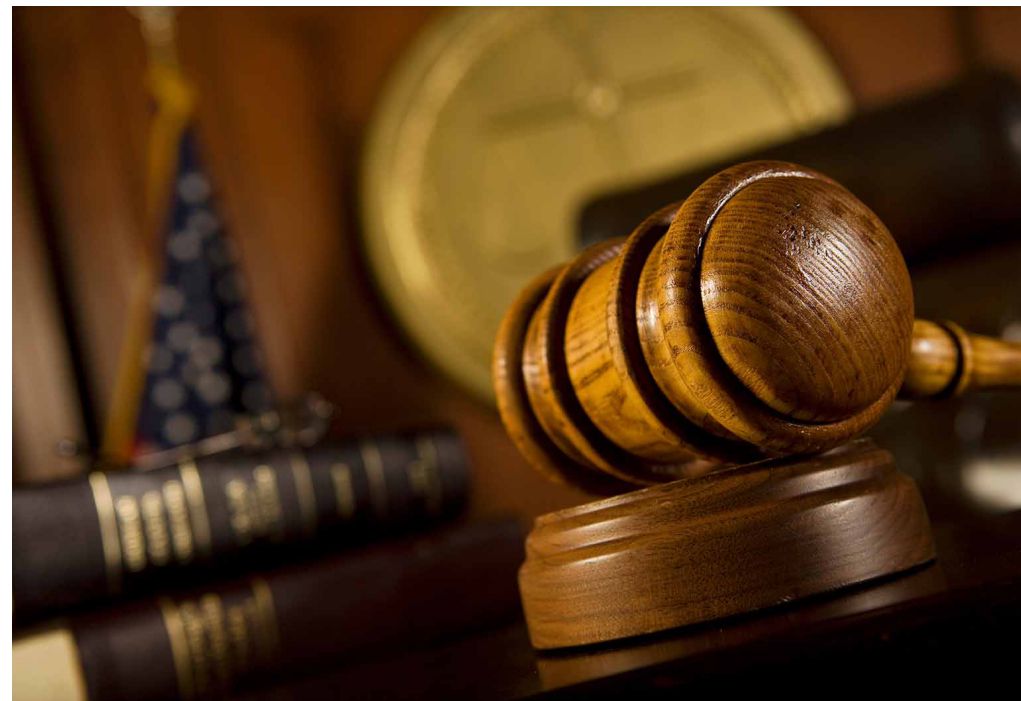
Appeals that have been summarily affirmed or reversed on established grounds set forth in SDCL 15-26A-87.1. In these proceedings the Court, on its own motion, may affirm or reverse the judgment or order from which the appeal is taken. The Court must be unanimous in its decision to render a summary disposition, and the decision is set out in an order or memorandum opinion. The term “expedited appeal” is sometimes used because it usually takes less time to process appeals under this rule.

Pending Cases

Cases which have been filed with the Court but in which no decision has been entered.

Administrative, Judicial, Legal Research, Law Library and Bar Admissions

Part of the workload within the Supreme Court.



SOUTH DAKOTA JUDICIARY

Supreme Court Caseload

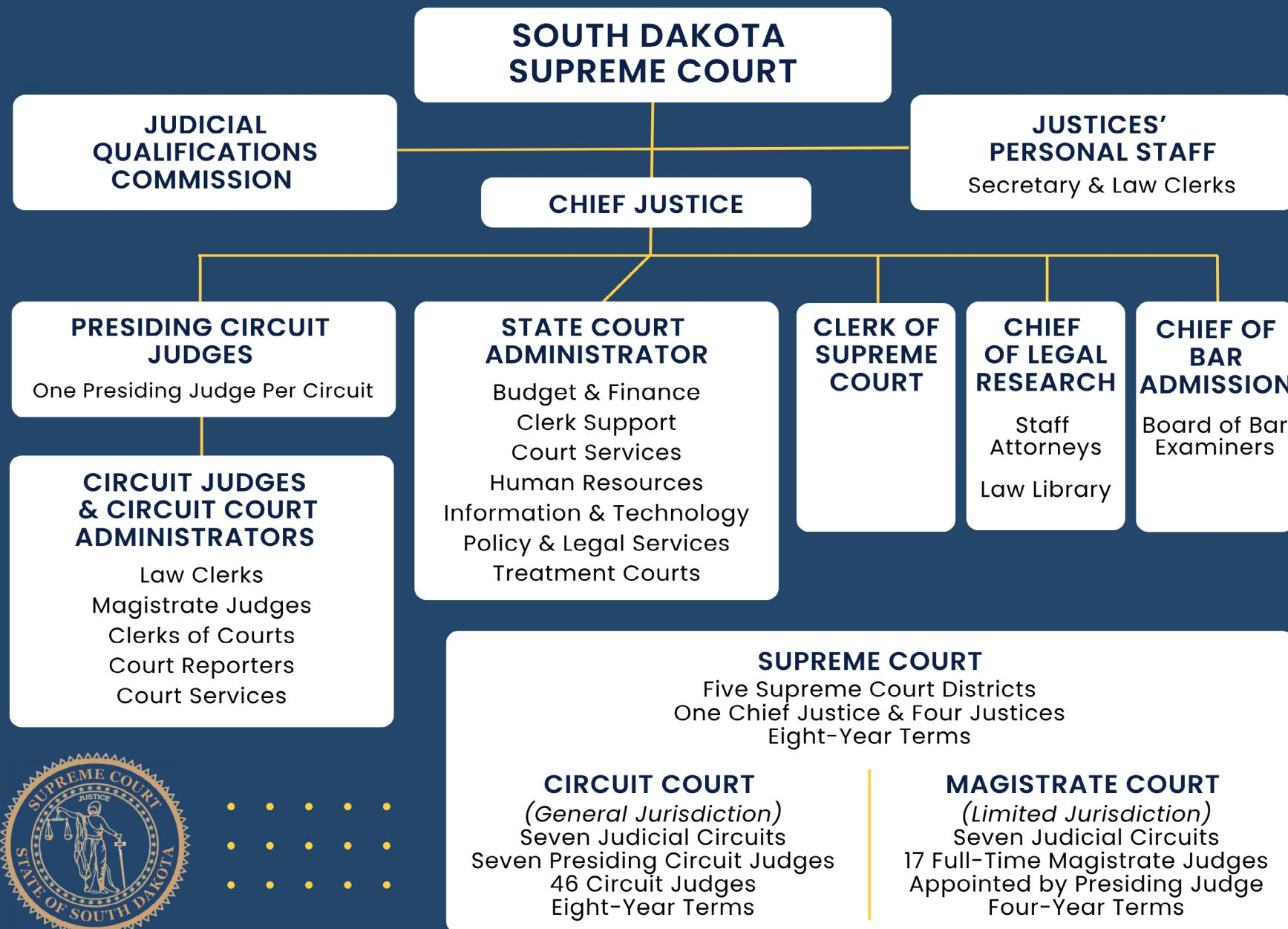
	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Filings					
Appeals	240	255	280	310	352
Intermediate Appeals	40	32	24	20	21
Original Proceedings	44	43	45	37	49
Notice of Review	7	17	15	14	10
Certificates of Probable Cause	9	10	13	6	6
Reinstatements	0	0	0	0	0
Rehearings Granted	0	0	0	0	0
COMBINED FILINGS	340	357	377	387	438
Dispositions					
Appeals/Original Proceedings	78/83	73/84	79/87	80/83	85/105
Orders of Dismissal/Dispositional Remands	119	120	119	127	157
Denial of Intermediate Appeals	26	30	21	14	11
Original Proceedings (by Order)	27	33	32	38	43
Dispositive Remand	0	0	0	0	0
Summary Dispositions	77	76	88	85	100
COMBINED DISPOSITIONS	332	343	347	347	416
Pending Cases					
Submitted and Pending	50	51	54	36	0
Ready for Submission	29	45	22	39	36
Not Ready for Calendar	82	94	106	119	162
Other (in Suspense)	3	4	2	3	1
TOTAL PENDING CASES AT YEAR END	164	194	184	197	199

SOUTH DAKOTA JUDICIARY

Supreme Court Caseload

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Administrative					
Hearings on Rules and Related Matters	3	4	3	3	1
Internal Procedure Rules Adopted or Amended	1	3	5	2	3
Supreme Court Rules Adopted or Amended	16	22	5	27	8
Administrative Conference	25	25	24	22	22
Judicial					
Orders, Writs and Judgments Entered	1,220	1,215	1,248	1,235	1,251
Bar Admissions (includes reciprocity)	121	107	108	114	134
Bar Admissions (pursuant to SDCL 16-18-2)	4	4	8	12	11
Cases for Oral Arguments	35	39	42	37	32
Cases Submitted on Briefs Only	106	102	131	105	103
Case Conference Days	23	24	23	24	26
Legal Research					
Appeals Screened	340	357	377	387	438
Cases that Briefs Were Received In	189	176	195	185	182
Per Curiams Assigned	27	30	29	26	13
Bar Admissions					
Applications Submitted	230	150	161	152	183

SOUTH DAKOTA UNIFIED JUDICIAL SYSTEM



SOUTH DAKOTA JUDICIARY

Staffing and Budget

FY 2026 Staffing (FTEs)	
Supreme Court Justices	5
Circuit Judges	46
Magistrate Judges	17
Supreme Court	16
Clerk of Courts Offices	201
Circuit Administration	34
Official Court Reporters	40
Computer Assisted Court Recorders	9
Court Services (Probation)	174
Treatment Courts	14
State Court Administration	53
Total UJS Staff	609

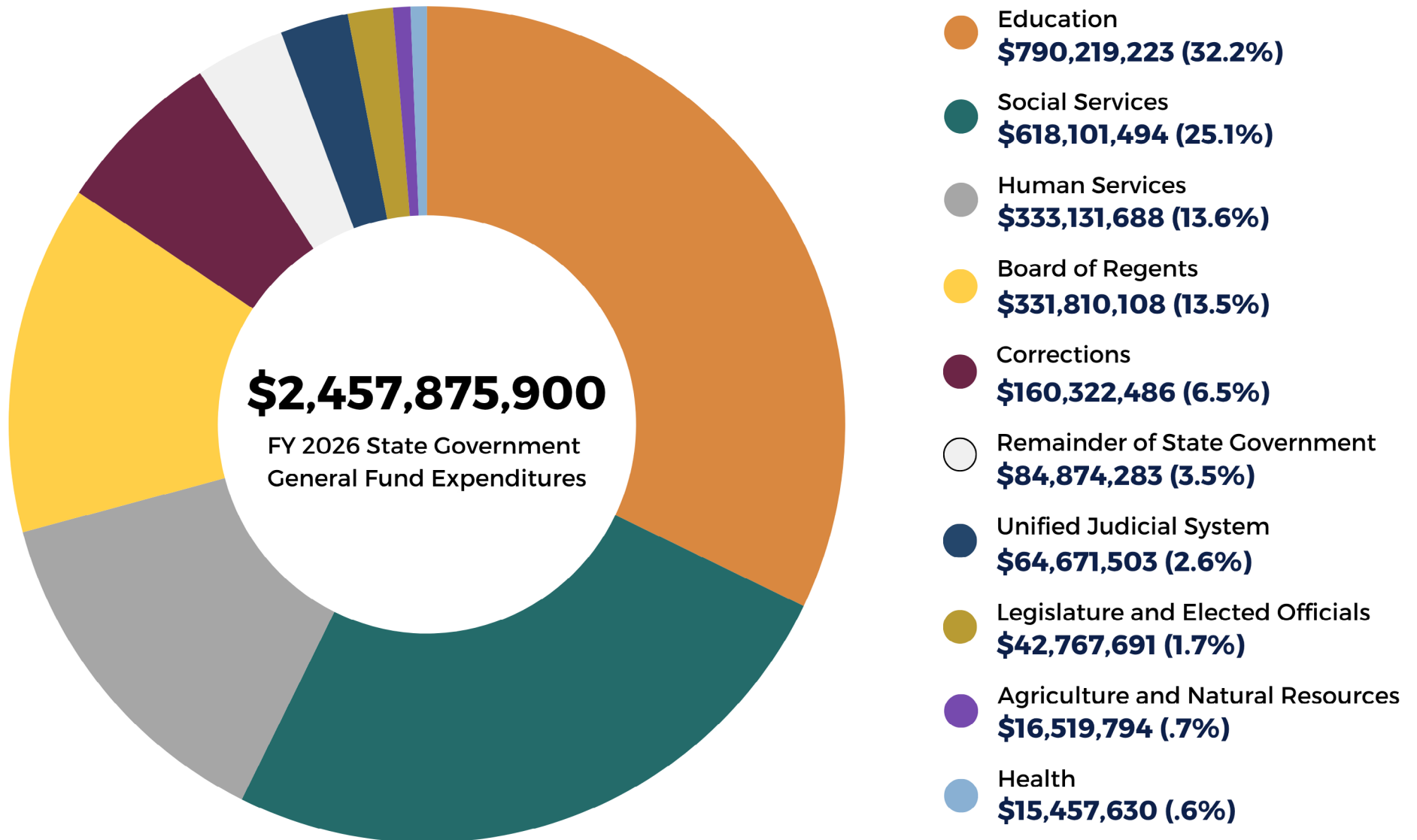
EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAM		
Circuit Court	\$21,861,737	29.6%
Court Services and Treatment Courts	\$19,730,209	26.7%
Clerk of Courts	\$15,674,107	21.2%
Information and Technology	\$6,151,895	8.3%
State Court Administrator's Office	\$4,809,409	6.5%
Supreme Court	\$4,134,894	5.6%
Community-Based Services	\$793,068	1.1%
Training	\$635,585	0.9%
Judicial Qualifications Commission	\$72,186	0.1%

EXPENDITURES BY FUND SOURCE		
General Funds	\$63,325,434	85.7%
Court Automation Fund	\$9,261,460	12.5%
Law Enforcement Officer Training Fund	\$541,030	0.7%
Child Support Referees Fund	\$364,004	0.5%
Federal Funds	\$299,192	0.4%
Drug Screening Fund	\$71,968	0.1%

\$73,863,089 FY 2026 Budget

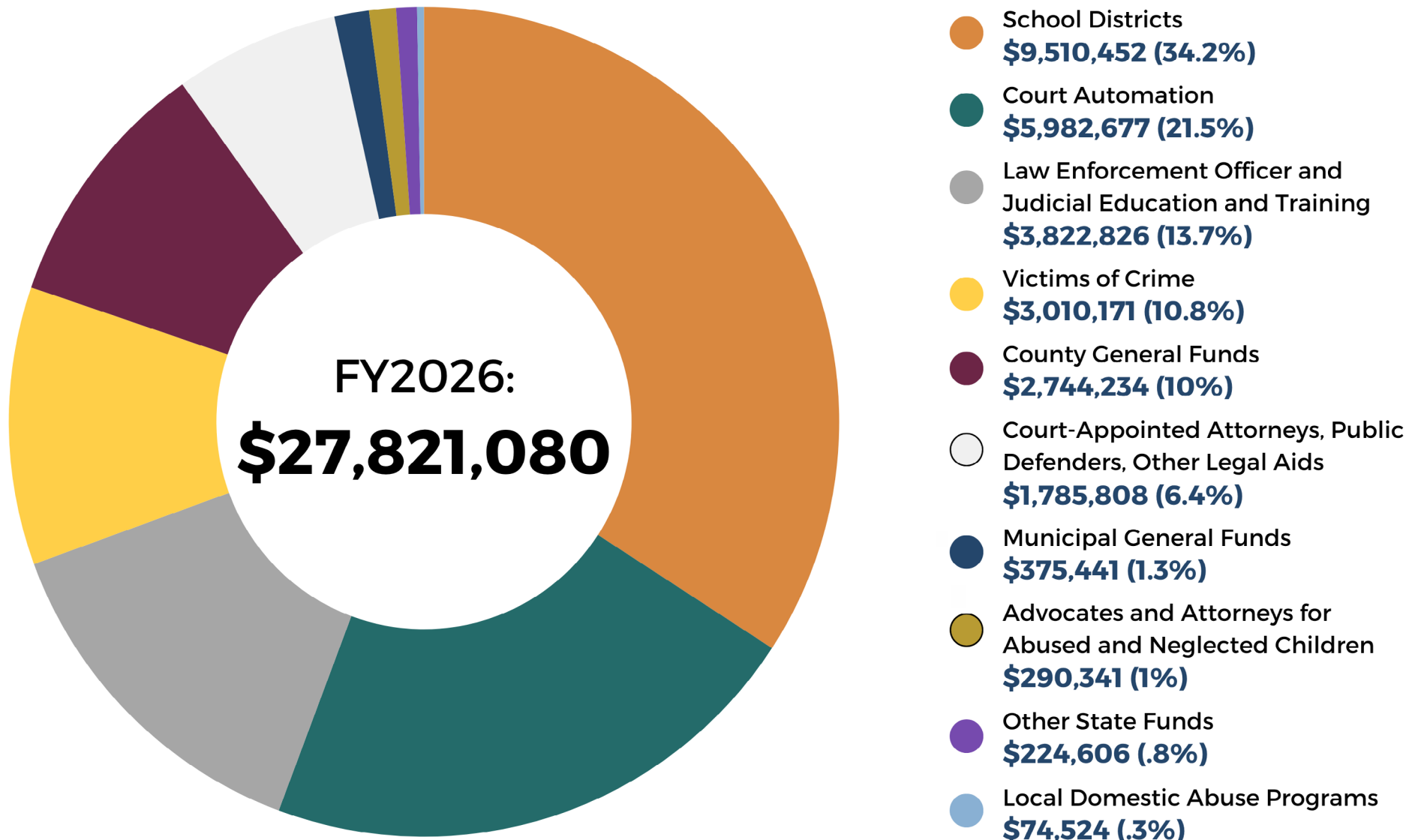
Portion of State Budget

\$64,671,503 (2.6%) UJS Share of FY 2026 State Government General Fund Expenditures
(Includes Equal Access to our Courts, Indigent Legal Services, and encumbrances.)



Collection of Money

It is the responsibility of the court system to take in and distribute fines, fees, penalties and costs owed to victims, cities, counties, school districts and the state. During FY 2026, UJS collected \$27,821,080.



Judicial Qualifications Commission

The authority for creation of the Judicial Qualifications Commission is granted by the South Dakota Constitution.

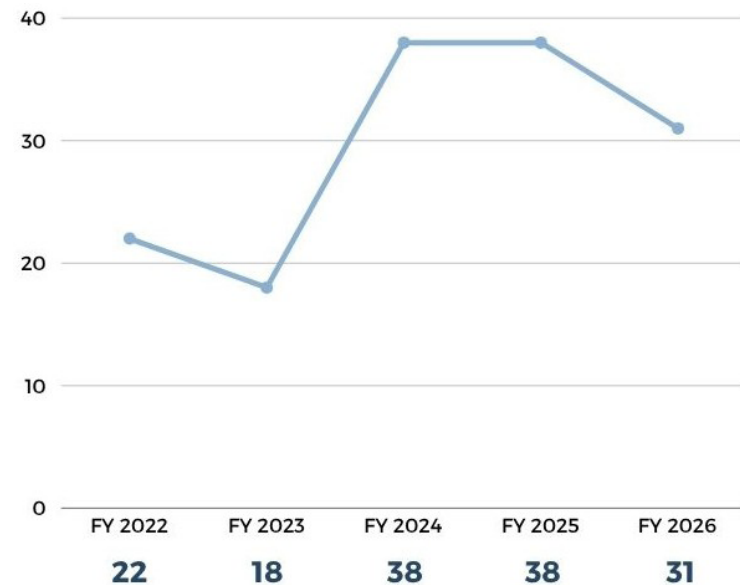
The seven-member commission is comprised of two circuit court judges, elected by the judicial conference; three members of the bar practicing law but no more than two of whom may be of the same political party and who must be appointed by a majority vote of the state bar commissioners; and two citizens, who are appointed by the Governor and who are not of the same political party.

The term of office for a commission member is four years. No person may serve more than two terms as a member of the commission.

COMMISSION DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Receive and investigate complaints against justices or judges.
- Conduct confidential hearings to determine whether complaints are justified.
- Recommend censure, removal or retirement of a judge to the Supreme Court.
- Investigate applicants for vacancies on the Supreme Court or circuit court bench.
- Nominate two or more of the most qualified applicants to the Governor.

Written Complaints Received



Judicial Vacancies in FY 2026

5 Circuit Court Judicial Vacancies

37 Applicants Interviewed for Judicial Vacancies

Justice Janine Kern Retires from the Bench, Robert Gusinsky Appointed to Supreme Court



Justice Janine M. Kern, Justice Robert Gusinsky and Governor Larry Rhoden

After more than 40 years of public service, Supreme Court Justice Janine M. Kern retired from the bench on Dec. 8, 2025. Justice Kern had served on the Supreme Court since 2014, when she was appointed by Gov. Dennis Daugaard.

Justice Kern previously served as a circuit court judge in the Seventh Judicial Circuit for 18 years. Before serving as a judge, she worked in the Attorney General's office in a variety of capacities including the appellate division, drug prosecution unit and as director of the litigation division.

"It is with a heart brimming with gratitude for the trust and confidence placed in me, which gave me the opportunity to serve the people of this great state, that I notify you of my retirement on December 8, 2025, nearly twenty-nine years to the day of my investiture as a circuit court judge," Justice Kern said. "It has been a deep honor and privilege to serve."

To fill the vacancy created by Justice Kern's retirement, Gov. Larry Rhoden appointed Seventh Judicial Circuit Presiding Judge Robert Gusinsky. A ceremonial investiture was held for Justice Gusinsky on Jan. 9, 2026, in the Pennington County Courthouse Rotunda in Rapid City.

Justice Gusinsky was appointed a circuit court judge for the Seventh Judicial Circuit in 2013 and had served as the circuit's presiding judge since 2024. He previously worked as an assistant U.S. attorney with the U.S. Attorney's Office and as a trial lawyer with a Rapid City law firm. Before obtaining his law degree, Justice Gusinsky earned an undergraduate degree in aeronautical engineering and worked as a commercial airline pilot and flight instructor.

"South Dakota prides itself on honoring our constitution and upholding the rule of law," said Gov. Rhoden. "Justice Kern has done a remarkable job serving our state with integrity and fairness, and I have no doubt that Judge Gusinsky will pick up the torch with the same commitment and conviction. He is even-keeled and humble, and his background gives him a unique perspective that will strengthen our Supreme Court."

Supreme Court Courtroom Open for Public Viewing

Visitors to the State Capitol in Pierre are now able to step inside and view the South Dakota Supreme Court Courtroom.

The Supreme Court Courtroom, located southeast of the Rotunda on the second floor of the State Capitol, remains one of the few original Supreme Court courtrooms in the United States that is still used for court proceedings. The courtroom had been closed to public tours following the events of Sept. 11, 2001, which prompted elevated security measures in many government offices across the United States.

The South Dakota Supreme Court made the decision to reopen the courtroom to public tours beginning Jan. 7, 2026, as part of a strategic priority to build trust and confidence in the courts through transparency, communication, education and community engagement.

The Supreme Court Courtroom is dominated by a mahogany bench for the justices. Behind the bench is a mural titled “The Mercy of the Law” by Charles Holloway that dates to the construction of the State Capitol. The painting is also referred to as “Gate of Justice.” The balance of the woodwork and furniture in the courtroom is polished mahogany and is original to the building.



The Supreme Court Courtroom was restored to its original 1910 grandeur in 1989. The walls and furniture were repainted and refinished to match the original brown, tan and gold colors and design of the chamber as closely as possible. The walls and ceilings are typical of the late Victorian period when the building was constructed.

The Supreme Court Courtroom is open for public viewing from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Supreme Court Case Processing Sets New Standard



“The Justices and Court staff have worked hard the past two years to improve our internal case processing. The Court’s aim moving forward is to decide all cases considered during the term year on or near June 30. Each case is different, and some will naturally take longer to decide than others, but the Court recognizes that litigants, attorneys and the public deserve a prompt resolution of cases that also serves to foster public trust and faith in the judiciary.”

— *South Dakota Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen*

With the release of two opinions on July 10, 2026, the South Dakota Supreme Court resolved all cases considered during its court term year that began August 2025.

When the Supreme Court begins its work for its new term year beginning August 2026, this will be the first time the Court has decided all pending cases from the prior term year before beginning a new term year. In prior years, the Court has started its new term with a handful of cases remaining from the previous year.

This improved case processing began more than two years ago when the Court engaged in an internal review of its case processing standards and procedures. The Court’s goal has been to provide more timely and efficient resolution of appeals, while maintaining clear, well-reasoned decisions that apply the rule of law with fairness and consistency.

The Court’s term-year includes seven to eight scheduled conferences, during which the five justices consider cases that have been submitted through the parties’ appellate briefs and, in some cases, following an oral argument. Additionally, the Court resolves other cases throughout the year, which are appropriate for more expedited decision under its existing rules.

The Court conducts an internal conference on all cases based upon the parties’ arguments as well as each individual justice’s research and preparation developed through careful study and the assistance of the Court’s legal staff. The Court resolves each case by majority vote and either writes a published opinion or issues an order setting forth the Court’s decision.

Public Service Pathway Program Participants Sworn in as Members of South Dakota Bar



In back from left are Public Service Pathway Program participants Mayson Coyle, Cassidy Abfalter-Dial, Thomas Potts, Ryan Kroger, Aidan Mullaney, Teagan McNary, Karli Viher, Kylee Van Egdome and Emily Whitney. In front from left are Supreme Court Justice Scott P. Myren, Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen, Justice Patricia J. DeVaney and Justice Robert Gusinsky.

Nine University of South Dakota Knudson School of Law students who participated in the Public Service Pathway Program were sworn in as members of the South Dakota Bar. Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen administered their oath on May 27, 2026, in the Supreme Court Courtroom in the State Capitol in Pierre.

The nine law school graduates have agreed to practice law in South Dakota in public service for two years in exchange for admission to the bar without examination. Participants in the pilot program spent a semester working full time (more than 500 hours) for a host public service entity and were required to provide a portfolio of work demonstrating minimum competence. They also had to pass a character and fitness review.

This was the first year of a five-year pilot program providing an alternative to bar admission in South Dakota and promoting public service. The pilot allows up to 10 students per year from the Knudson School of Law to obtain admission to the bar by successful completion of a different path than the traditional bar examination.

JUDICIAL HIGHLIGHTS

UJS Hosts Treatment Court Day at the Capitol



Rep. Kady Wittman, D-Sioux Falls (above) and Sen. Tamara R. Grove, R-Lower Brule (below) attend Treatment Court Day at the Capitol.



UJS hosted Treatment Court Day at the Capitol on Jan. 28, 2026, to provide state legislators with direct, practical exposure to the operation, impact and value of South Dakota's treatment courts.

While legislators regularly review budget information, few have had the opportunity to observe a live hearing or interact with a multidisciplinary treatment court team. This event was designed to bridge that gap by offering a structured, high-quality learning experience that deepens understanding of treatment court operations, outcomes and the public safety benefits they provide.

UJS offered two identical, one-hour sessions throughout the day. Each session included three components: a brief educational overview, court observation of a weekly status hearing for Sixth Circuit Treatment Court participants, and a question-and-answer period where attendees could interact with treatment court team members. The event was held in the Supreme Court Courtroom in the State Capitol.

Treatment courts are among the most effective tools the state has for reducing recidivism, lowering correctional costs and improving community safety. Research consistently shows that treatment courts outperform traditional probation and incarceration for individuals with high-risk, high-needs profiles. South Dakota Treatment Courts have demonstrated strong outcomes, but the nuances of the model are difficult to fully understand without witnessing a hearing and seeing the team's collaborative approach in action.

Observation of Sixth Circuit Treatment Court's status hearing provided legislators exposure to progress updates, sanctions, incentives and phase promotions.

JUDICIAL HIGHLIGHTS

UJS Promotes Civics Education and Public Engagement

A UJS strategic priority is to build public trust and confidence in the courts through transparency, communication, education and community engagement. To help expand the public's understanding of the court's purpose and responsibility, UJS participated in a civics town hall and state court media training. Both events were organized by South Dakota News Watch and South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Separation of Powers Town Hall

On Sept. 18, 2025, Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen and Justice Patricia J. DeVaney joined representatives from the executive and legislative branches of government for a Separation of Powers Town Hall held live in the State Capitol Rotunda in Pierre. The Justices discussed how the role of the judicial system differs from the other two branches of state government, the importance of an independent and impartial judiciary, the lack of lawyers in some rural areas of the state, and the process to becoming a judge.



From left, Gov. Larry Rhoden, Lt. Gov. Tony Venhuizen, Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen and Justice Patricia J. DeVaney take part in a Separation of Powers Town Hall on Sept. 18, 2025.

State Court Media Training

On Oct. 10, 2025, UJS helped provide free training for South Dakota journalists covering the state courts and the public interested in accessing the judicial system. UJS judges and staff explained how the state court system works, how to access court documents and attend hearings, and answered questions. People attended the training at SDPB studios in Sioux Falls and Rapid City or virtually online.



Seventh Circuit Presiding Judge Robert Gusinsky and Pennington County Clerk of Courts Amber Watkins provide media training in Rapid City.

Rural Attorney Recruitment Program

The Rural Attorney Recruitment Program provides qualifying attorneys an incentive payment in return for five continuous years of practice in an eligible rural county (population of 10,000 or less) or municipality (population of 3,500 or less). Attorneys must enter into a contract with the UJS, State Bar, and the eligible county or municipality. Program participants receive five annual incentive payments of \$12,513.60 per year (equivalent to 90% of one year's resident law school tuition and fees)—a total of \$62,568 over five years. The program was established in 2013.

39 Attorneys have participated in the program.

10 Actively Practicing in Rural Communities

23 Graduates from the Program

6 Contracts Terminated Due to Different Job Opportunities

18 Graduates have stayed in their communities.



Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen, Sixth Circuit Court Judge M. Bridget Mayer, State Court Administrator Greg Sattizahn, and Attorney and Lobbyist Brett Koenecke speak with Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) students about career opportunities in the legal profession.

Courthouse Security Grant Program

The UJS' Courthouse Security Grant Program allows counties to address courthouse security measures to improve the safety and security of the public, litigants, witnesses, attorneys and courthouse staff. Grants provide a 75% UJS match for approved projects, with counties responsible for the remaining 25% of the costs.

- Tier-One Grants: UJS match up to \$10,000
- Tier-Two Grants: UJS match more than \$10,000

A courthouse security committee must be in place to be eligible for tier-two grants. Grant applications must identify projects and equipment that are essential to enhance security measures at the courthouse location.

In 2022, the Legislature appropriated \$5 million for the Courthouse Security Grant Program. In 2026, the Legislature approved an additional **\$1.5 million in one-time funding** to continue the work of the Courthouse Security Grant Program.



\$4,050,630 in grants

More than \$4 million in Courthouse Security Grants have been awarded for projects since July 1, 2022. Of this amount, \$1,286,916 in grants was awarded during FY 2026.



63 site assessments

Sixty-three site assessments have been completed since July 1, 2023. During FY 2026, seven site assessments were completed, which were second assessments of courthouse locations.



58 security committees

Fifty-eight court security committees have been formed in the 63 counties where courthouses are located across South Dakota.



51 threats/incidents

Fifty-one new threats or incidents were reported by UJS judges and employees during FY 2026, with 99 ongoing incidents.

CIRCUIT COURTS

Circuit Courts

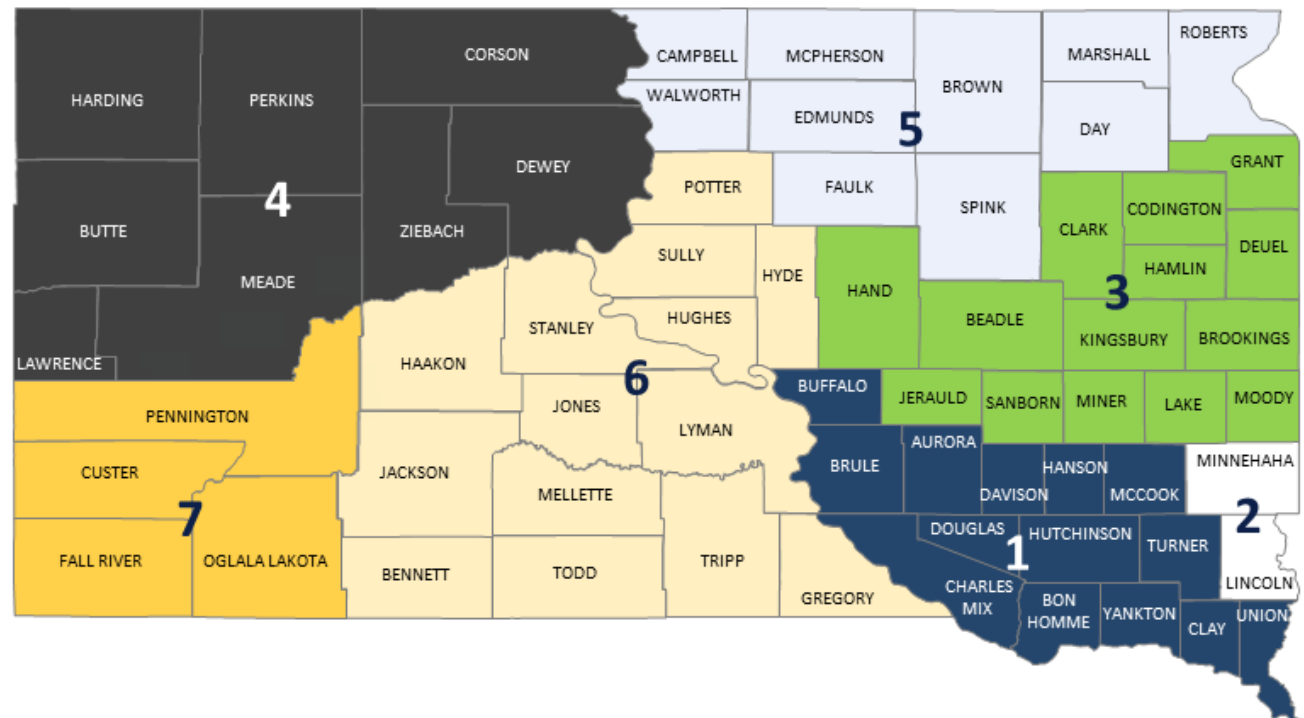
Circuit courts are the state's trial courts of general jurisdiction through which the bulk of criminal proceedings and civil litigation are processed. South Dakota has seven judicial circuits, 46 circuit judges and 17 magistrate judges. Circuit court judges are elected by the voters within the circuit where they serve. The judges must be voting residents of their circuit at the time they take office. In the event of a vacancy, the Governor appoints a replacement from a list of nominees selected by the Judicial Qualifications Commission.

7 Presiding Judges | **46** Circuit Court Judges | **7** Circuits

South Dakota Judicial Circuits

CIRCUIT COURT DUTIES

- Original jurisdiction in all civil and criminal actions.
- Exclusive jurisdiction in felony trials, arraignments and all types of civil actions except areas of concurrent jurisdiction shared with magistrate courts.
- Appellate jurisdiction over magistrate court decisions.
- Appellate jurisdiction over final decisions, rulings or actions of administrative agencies.



CIRCUIT COURTS

Miles Traveled by Circuit Court Judges

South Dakota is an expansive state at 77,116 square miles. As they conduct the Court's business, circuit court judges must travel to the counties that they serve. South Dakota circuit court judges traveled a total of **171,988 miles** in FY 2026. To put this into perspective, this is almost **seven times around the world**.

40,413 First Circuit

15,163 Second Circuit

37,068 Third Circuit

17,701 Fourth Circuit

19,626 Fifth Circuit

34,551 Sixth Circuit

7,466 Seventh Circuit

171,988 STATEWIDE TOTAL

CIRCUIT COURTS

Presiding Judges and FY 2026 Caseloads



FOURTH CIRCUIT

Judge Michelle K. Comer

Criminal Filings: 11,467

Civil Filings: 4,638

Population: 84,181



FIFTH CIRCUIT

Judge Gregory C. Magera

Criminal Filings: 13,318

Civil Filings: 4,882

Population: 79,423



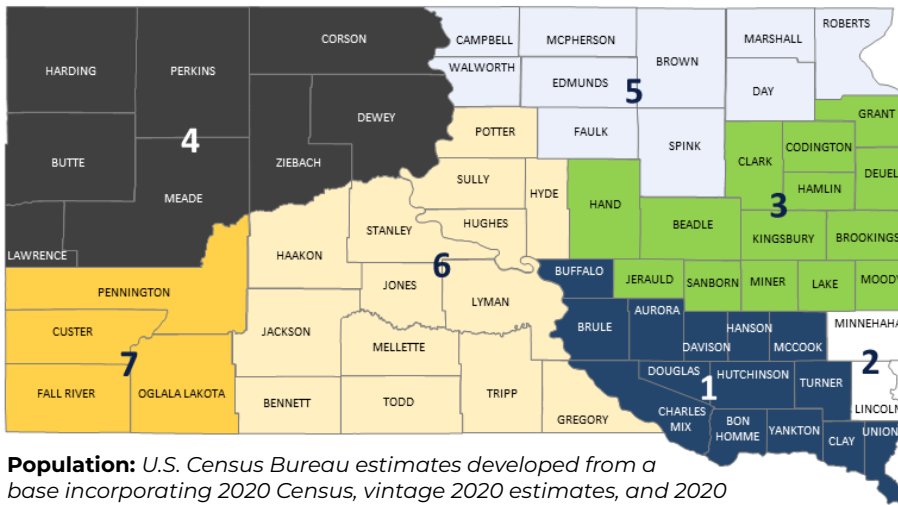
THIRD CIRCUIT

Judge Patrick T. Pardy

Criminal Filings: 20,627

Civil Filings: 8,675

Population: 137,784



Population: U.S. Census Bureau estimates developed from a base incorporating 2020 Census, vintage 2020 estimates, and 2020 demographic analysis estimates.



SECOND CIRCUIT

Judge Robin J. Houwman

Criminal Filings: 47,730

Civil Filings: 25,201

Population: 274,958



FIRST CIRCUIT

Judge Cheryle Gering

Criminal Filings: 20,408

Civil Filings: 8,522

Population: 130,140



SEVENTH CIRCUIT

Judge Heidi L. Linngren

Criminal Filings: 20,821

Civil Filings: 10,715

Population: 144,356



SIXTH CIRCUIT

Judge Christina L. Klinger

Criminal Filings: 8,305

Civil Filings: 3,339

Population: 58,982

Magistrate Courts

Magistrate courts assist the circuit courts in disposing of misdemeanor criminal cases and minor civil actions. These courts have limited jurisdiction but make the judicial system more accessible to the public by providing a means of direct court contact for the average citizen. The jurisdiction of the magistrate court varies depending on whether a magistrate judge or a clerk magistrate presides. Clerk magistrates are not attorneys but are clerks who receive specialized training. They provide functions that need to be handled expeditiously. Both magistrate judges and clerk magistrates are appointed by the presiding judge and approved by the Supreme Court.

17 Full-Time Magistrate Judges | **7** Circuits

MAGISTRATE JUDGES

Committing magistrates for all courts

Magistrate judges conduct:

- Preliminary hearings for all criminal prosecutions
- Trials of criminal misdemeanors
- Trials of civil actions if the debt, damage, claim or value of the property does not exceed \$12,000
- Small claims proceedings if the debt, damage, claim or value of the property involved does not exceed \$12,000

CLERK MAGISTRATES

Specially trained

Concurrent jurisdiction with magistrate courts to:

- Receive depositions
- Issue warrants
- Conduct certain preliminary hearings
- Set bail
- Appoint counsel
- Accept pleas for Class 2 misdemeanors
- Conduct hearings for petty offenses
- Render judgments for uncontested small claims
- Perform marriages

CIRCUIT COURTS

Bench Personnel by Judicial Circuit (as of June 30, 2026)

FIRST JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Presiding Judge: Cheryle W. Gering *(appointed 2011)*

Circuit Judges:

Bruce V. Anderson *(appointed 2006)*
Tami A. Bern *(appointed 2017)*
Chris S. Giles *(appointed 2017)*
David D. Knoff *(appointed 2018)*
Patrick T. Smith *(appointed 2012)*

Magistrate Judges:

Donna L. Bucher Kasey J. Sorensen

SECOND JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Presiding Judge: Robin Jacobson Houwman *(appointed 2009)*

Circuit Judges:

Douglas P. Barnett *(elected 2023)*
Jeffrey C. Clapper *(appointed 2024)*
Natalie D. Damgaard *(appointed 2016)*
Sandra Hoglelund Hanson *(appointed 2018)*
Ann Hoffman *(appointed 2025)*
Eric C. Johnson *(appointed 2024)*
Jennifer D. Mammenga *(appointed 2021)*
Mandi A. Mowery *(appointed 2024)*
John R. Pekas *(elected 2015)*
James A. Power *(appointed 2018)*
Rachel R. Rasmussen *(appointed 2019)*
Susan M. Sabers *(appointed 2013)*
Jon C. Sogn *(appointed 2015)*

Magistrate Judges:

Jonathan R. Leddige Andrew T. Robertson
Alison D. Nelson Amber D. Whittington
Sara T. Pokela

THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Presiding Judge: Patrick T. Pardy *(appointed 2015)*

Circuit Judges:

Dawn M. Aman-Elshere *(appointed 2017)*
Abigail A. Howard *(appointed 2024)*
Carmen A. Means *(appointed 2015)*
Kent A. Shelton *(appointed 2018)*
David K. Wheeler *(appointed 2025)*

Magistrate Judges:

N. Bob Pesall Gary W. Schumacher

FOURTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Presiding Judge: Michelle K. Comer *(elected 2015)*

Circuit Judges:

Chad R. Callahan *(appointed 2026)*
Eric J. Strawn *(appointed 2017)*

Magistrate Judges:

Francy E. Foral

FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Presiding Judge: Gregory C. Magera *(appointed 2021)*

Circuit Judges:

Julia Dvorak *(appointed 2024)*
Marshall C. Lovrien *(elected 2023)*
Richard A. Sommers *(appointed 2014)*

Magistrate Judge:

Cullen P. McNeece

SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Presiding Judge: Christina L. Klinger *(appointed 2019)*

Circuit Judges:

M. Bridget Mayer *(appointed 2019)*
Margo D. Northrup *(appointed 2019)*
Bobbi J. Rank *(appointed 2016)*

Magistrate Judge:

Tara L. Adamski

SEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Presiding Judge: Heidi L. Linngren *(elected 2015)*

Circuit Judges:

Matthew M. Brown *(appointed 2015)*
Jeffrey R. Connolly *(appointed 2017)*
Joshua K. Hendrickson *(appointed 2019)*
Eric Kelderman *(appointed 2024)*
Scott A. Roetzel *(appointed 2024)*
Stacy L. Vinberg-Wickre *(appointed 2021)*

Magistrate Judges:

Scott M. Bogue Sarah E. Morrison
Todd J. Hyronimus Janki W. Sharma

Caseloads At a Glance

There is much more to the work of the courts than the occasional high-profile case that attracts public attention. The bulk of work involves everyday issues that affect South Dakotans.



EVERYDAY ISSUES

In FY 2026, South Dakota’s courts handled:

2,657	Divorce and annulment cases
856	Child support modification proceedings and Uniform Interstate Family Support Act actions
281	Drug/alcohol committals
5,086	Mental illness cases
454	Adoption and termination of parental rights
4,021	Protection orders

To assist families, UJS provides self-represented litigants with UJS-approved forms, including divorce and parenting time implementation and enforcement forms.

ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN

South Dakota courts play a life-altering role for abused and neglected children.

They decide whether to:

- Remove a child from a parent
- Place a child in foster care
- Reunite a child and parent or terminate parental rights
- Allow adoption of a child

There is no greater responsibility of the judiciary than determining the best interest of a South Dakota child.

In FY 2026, South Dakota courts presided over:

583 New juvenile abuse and neglect case filings.



1,089 Children involved in the new case filings.

Caseloads At a Glance



JUVENILE JUSTICE

South Dakota's court services officers (CSOs), staff and judges continuously work with youth and their families to:

- Ensure community safety
- Hold young people accountable for their actions, including paying restitution to victims
- Influence behavioral changes
- Provide resources to assist families

In FY 2026, South Dakota courts worked with the following youth to address their conduct:

648 Youth supervised on formal probation

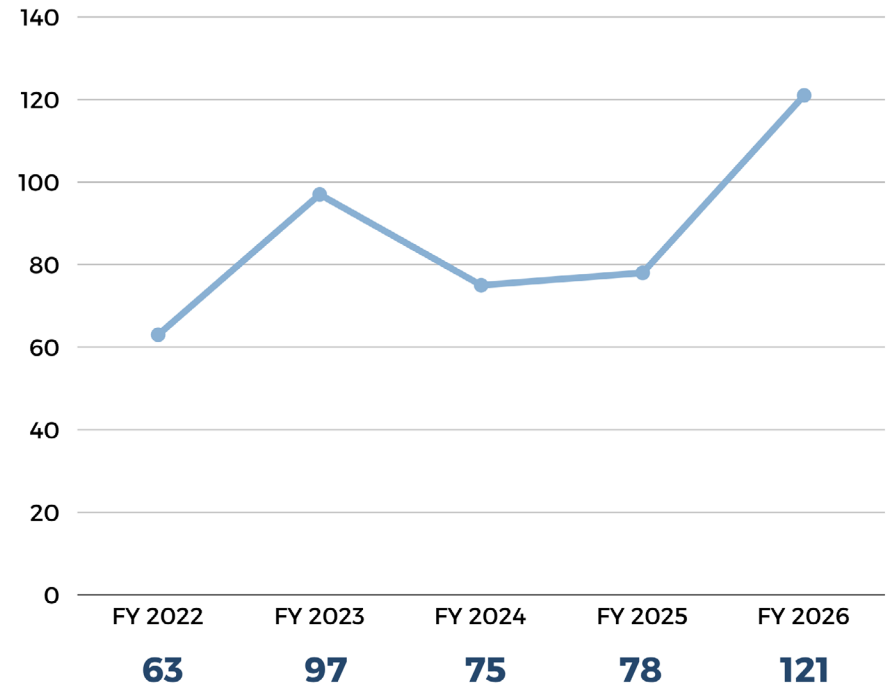
109 Youth receiving informal supervision (diversion cases)

41 Youth case service monitoring *

In total, South Dakota courts handled **769** juvenile citations, **2,334** juvenile delinquencies, **666** child in need of supervision (CHINS) cases, and **39** CHINS and delinquencies.

*Case service monitoring is used when the judge does not order formal probation supervision and wants any conditions monitored or any other type of supervision that is not considered formal supervision.

Youth Committed to Department of Corrections



CIRCUIT COURTS

Caseloads At a Glance

CIVIL JUSTICE



South Dakotans from every walk of life, whether in their private or business relationships, rely on the courts to resolve their civil legal problems. Providing a forum for the effective resolution of these disputes is an essential part of the courts' mission.

During FY 2026, circuit courts handled:

18,696	Small Claims Cases
13,404	Civil Litigation Cases
2,114	Probate Cases
895	Guardianship and Trust Cases

Civil cases can take anywhere from months to years before they are resolved, leading to an overlap in cases from year to year.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE



Criminal cases dominate court time and resources. Judges and court staff spend more time on criminal cases than on any other type of case. Clerk of courts offices are responsible for case processing and ensuring a sufficient pool of jurors are available for trials.

During FY 2026, circuit courts heard:

11,636	Felonies
20,359	Class I Misdemeanors
23,459	Contested Class 2 Misdemeanors (includes municipal ordinances and petty offenses)
87,222	Non-Contested Class 2 Misdemeanors (includes municipal ordinances and petty offenses)

Court services officers formally supervised **5,667** cases in felony matters, **319** cases on misdemeanor matters, plus informally supervised another **128** cases via case service monitoring.

Employers, landlords, media and the public rely on clerk of courts offices for accurate information about criminal defendants, sentencing histories and money owed on judgments. During FY 2026, UJS performed:

349,762 Record Searches | **7,204** Search Warrants

CIRCUIT COURTS

Statewide Case Workload: FY 2026 by Circuit

CASES	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Statewide
Class 2 Misdemeanor Non-Contested Filings	14,496	25,673	14,734	7,441	9,739	6,327	8,812	87,222
Class 2 Misdemeanor Contested Filings	2,023	10,706	2,097	1,041	1,037	671	5,884	23,459
Class 1 Misdemeanor Filings	2,552	6,443	2,722	2,149	1,716	902	3,875	20,359
Felony Filings	1,337	4,908	1,074	836	826	405	2,250	11,636
Total Criminal Filings	20,408	47,730	20,627	11,467	13,318	8,305	20,821	142,676
Divorce & Annulment Filings	314	914	324	242	210	123	530	2,657
Protection Order Filings	422	1,440	445	289	209	216	1,000	4,021
Modification Proceedings/UIFSA Filings	98	256	80	42	75	43	262	856
Juvenile Dependency & Neglect Filings	34	234	34	27	39	24	199	591
Juvenile Delinquency & CHINS Filings	211	1,433	347	167	247	149	485	3,039
Juvenile Citations	65	210	164	112	62	118	38	769
Adoptions & Termination of Parental Rights	56	156	57	49	26	24	86	454
Guardianships & Trusts	108	389	82	50	83	46	137	895
Miscellaneous	3	18	6	3	1	3	28	62
Probate (Informal) Filings	357	356	324	172	233	146	280	1,868
Probate (Formal) Filings	45	30	44	30	38	14	45	246
Mental Illness & Drug & Alcohol Commitment Filings	1,166	3,047	285	114	245	392	118	5,367
Civil Filings	2,362	8,011	2,105	1,439	1,368	793	3,021	19,099
Small Claims Filings	2,373	7,031	3,334	1,083	1,420	926	2,529	18,696
Search Warrants	884	1,630	1,029	805	617	305	1,934	7,204
Administrative Appeals & Expungements	24	46	15	14	9	17	23	148
Total Civil Filings	8,522	25,201	8,675	4,638	4,882	3,339	10,715	65,972
Total Criminal and Civil Filings	28,930	72,931	29,302	16,105	18,200	11,644	31,536	208,648

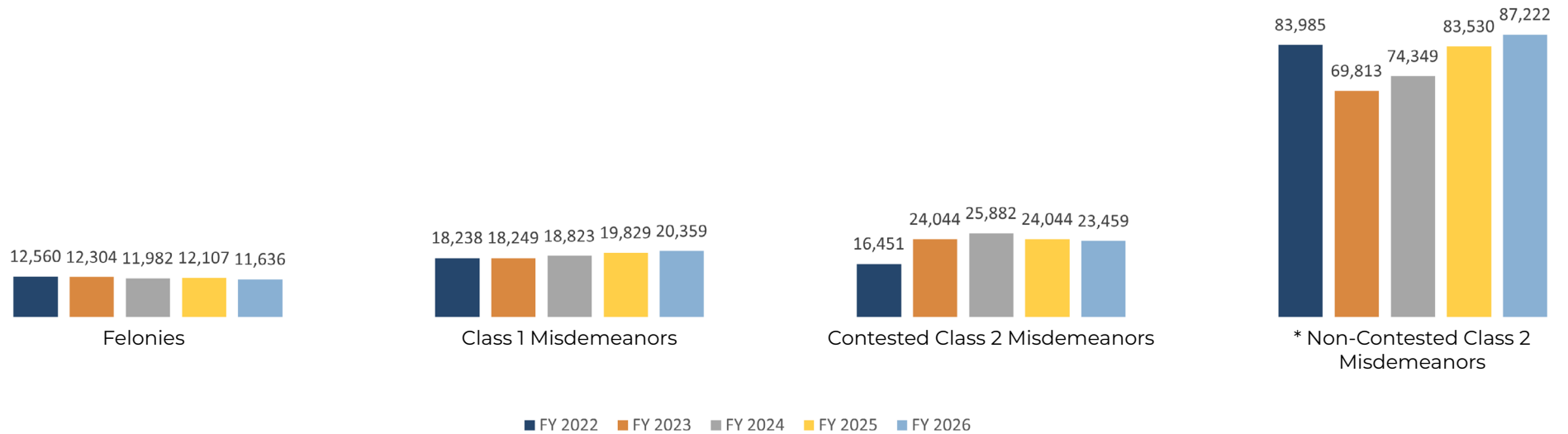
CIRCUIT COURTS

Statewide Case Workload: Comparison by Year

CASES	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Class 2 Misdemeanor Non-Contested Filings	83,958	69,813	74,349	83,530	87,222
Class 2 Misdemeanor Contested Filings	16,451	24,044	25,882	24,044	23,459
Class 1 Misdemeanor Filings	18,238	18,249	18,823	19,829	20,359
Felony Filings	12,560	12,304	11,982	12,107	11,636
Total Criminal Filings	131,207	124,410	131,036	139,510	142,676
Divorce & Annulment Filings	3,729	2,542	2,638	2,443	2,657
Protection Order Filings	4,205	3,987	4,018	3,958	4,021
Modification Proceedings/UIFSA Filings	4,432	1,076	1,153	1,129	856
Juvenile Dependency & Neglect Filings	525	532	541	531	591
Juvenile Delinquency & CHINS Filings	3,213	3,487	3,538	3,109	3,039
Juvenile Citations	1,088	1,157	995	814	769
Adoptions/Guardianships/Trusts/Termination Parental Rights	1,337	1,337			
Adoptions & Termination of Parental Rights			409	430	454
Guardianships & Trusts			881	936	895
Miscellaneous			35	52	62
Probate (Informal) Filings	2,439	2,247	2,029	2,080	1,868
Probate (Formal) Filings	313	272	234	266	246
Mental Illness and Drug & Alcohol Commitment Filings	4,373	4,570	4,496	4,801	5,367
Civil Filings	11,786	11,888	13,820	17,793	19,099
Small Claims Filings	20,425	18,244	18,409	18,872	18,696
Search Warrants	5,108	5,325	5,828	5,741	7,204
Administrative Appeals & Expungements	199	167	121	124	148
Total Civil Filings	63,172	56,831	59,145	63,079	65,972
Total Criminal and Civil Filings	194,379	181,241	190,181	202,589	208,648

Criminal Caseload Five-Year Comparison

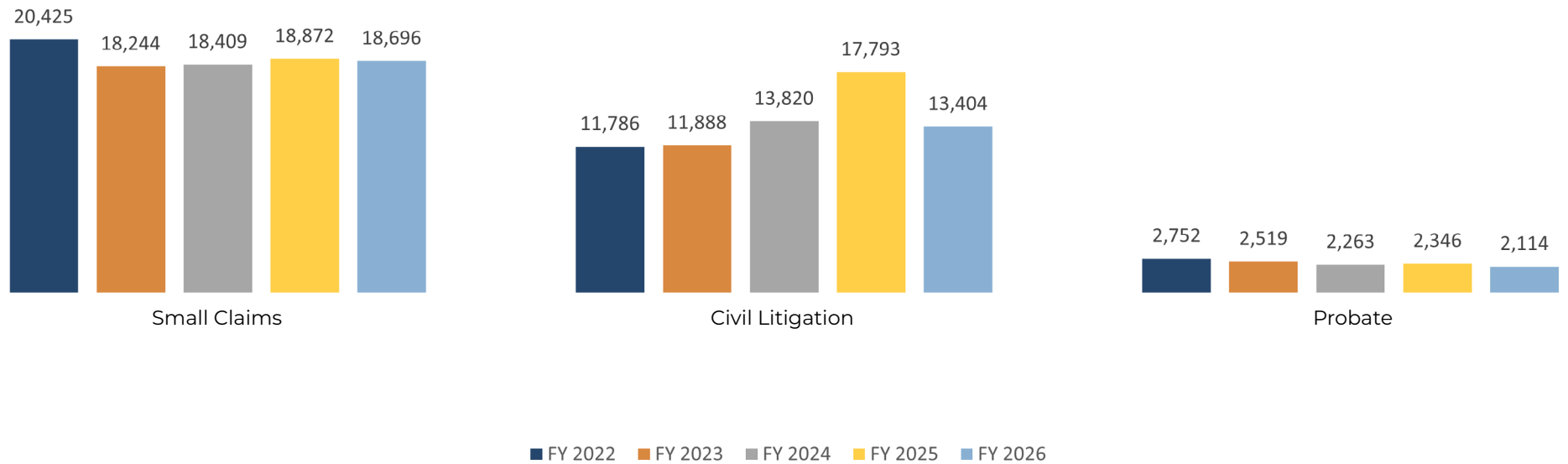
Criminal Caseload



** Includes municipal ordinances and petty offenses.*

Civil Caseload Five-Year Comparison

Civil Caseload



CIRCUIT COURTS

Court and Jury Trials

FY 2026

	Court Trials	Jury Trials	Total Trials
First Circuit	222	15	237
Second Circuit	1,007	131	1,138
Third Circuit	290	11	301
Fourth Circuit	208	9	217
Fifth Circuit	202	8	210
Sixth Circuit	115	2	117
Seventh Circuit	443	38	481
Statewide Total	2,487	214	2,701

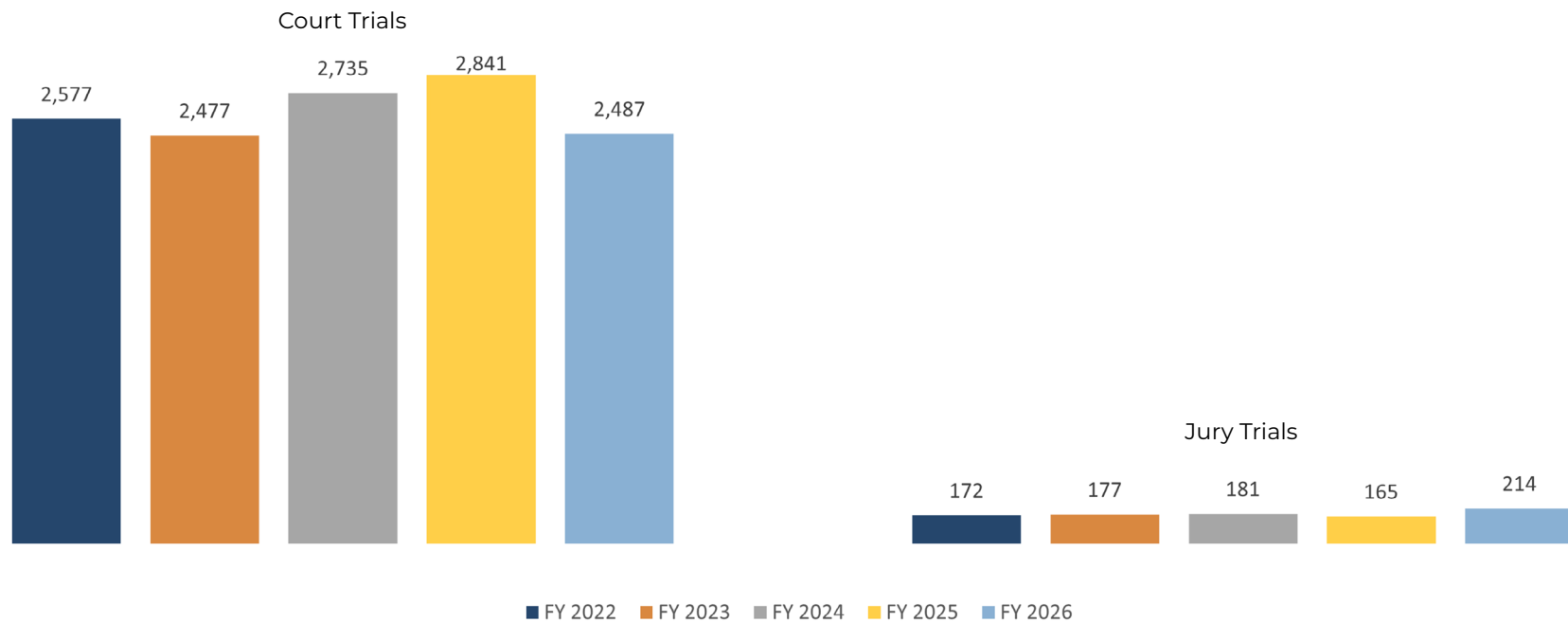
	Criminal	Civil	Total
Court Trials	457	2,030	2,487
Jury Trials	162	52	214

CIRCUIT COURTS

Court and Jury Trials

Statewide Five-Year Comparison

	Court Trials	Jury Trials	Total Trials
FY 2022	2,577	172	2,749
FY 2023	2,477	177	2,654
FY 2024	2,735	181	2,916
FY 2025	2,841	165	3,006
FY 2026	2,487	214	2,701



Language Access in the Courts

If someone has limited English proficiency, interpretive and translation services are provided at no charge. In FY 2026, interpreters were used in the courtroom 6,112 times. Seventy-one percent of the requests came from Minnehaha County in the Second Judicial Circuit.

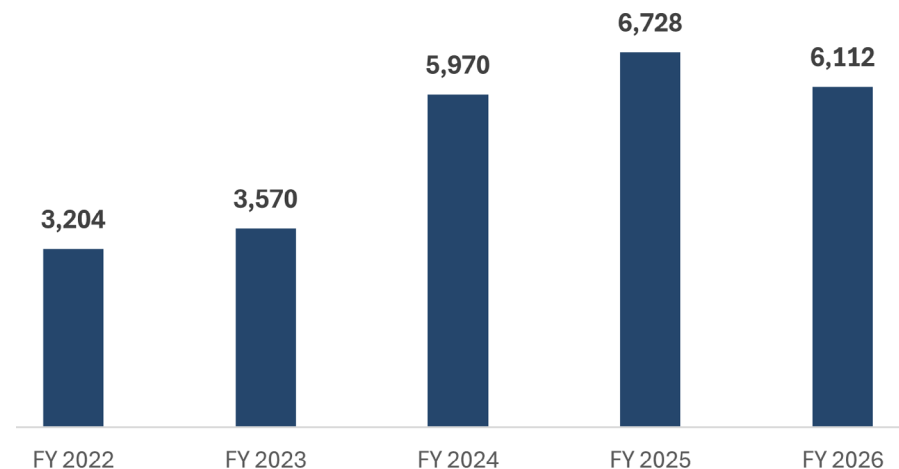
Sixty-five different spoken languages were requested in FY 2026. Spanish remains the most requested language.

6,112 Interpreter Requests in FY 2026 | **65** Different Spoken Languages Requested

FY 2026 Top 10 Languages Requested

1.	Spanish, Castilian: 55%
2.	Dinka: 5%
3.	Arabic: 5%
4.	Kunama: 4%
5.	Swahili: 3%
6.	Tigrinya: 3%
7.	Kirundi: 2%
8.	Sign Languages: 2%
9.	Amharic: 2%
10.	Somali: 2%

Interpreter Requests: Five-Year Comparison



State Court Administrator's Office

Under supervision of the Chief Justice, who is the administrative head of the Unified Judicial System, State Court Administrator Greg Sattizahn is the non-judicial officer who implements the rules and policies of the Supreme Court as they apply to the operations and administration of the courts.



The State Court Administrator serves as the liaison between the judicial branch and the other branches of state and local government.

To ensure efficient and responsive operation, the State Court Administrator's Office (SCAO) provides centralized administrative assistance and support services to the entire UJS. The office also provides support to various committees in the UJS, media information and legislative direction during session.



Budget and Finance Division

The Budget and Finance Division assists the Unified Judicial System with fiscal questions and budgets. The Division manages travel regulations and processes travel reimbursements for employees. The Division also assists clerk of courts staff with end-of-month processing and financial questions.



Clerk Support Division

The Clerk Support Division provides statewide oversight, direction and training to clerk of courts staff. The Division reviews legislative changes impacting clerks of courts and develops necessary procedure changes accordingly. Staff process record searches for large group entities such as landlords and assist merge and search centers. Staff also maintain and update the clerk of courts procedural manual and forms.



Court Services Division

The Court Services Division provides statewide oversight, direction and training to court services staff. The Division interprets legislative changes impacting court services and creates and interprets statewide probation services-related policies and protocols. Staff maintain and update the court services manual, provide guidance and direction on interstate compact issues for both adult and juvenile programs, and provide guidance on diversion programs.

State Court Administrator's Office



Human Resources Division

The Human Resources Division oversees human resources for the Unified Judicial System. The Division's roles include:

- Answering paycheck and benefit questions.
- Staff training and development.
- Assisting the circuit courts and the State Court Administrator's Office with security and emergency preparedness.
- Assisting applicants in the recruitment process.
- Maintaining and implementing UJS personnel rules, policies and procedures.
- Assisting UJS employees and supervisors with employment law issues.
- Managing employee compensation and classification structure.
- Assisting with worker's compensation claims.



Information & Technology Division

The Information and Technology Division oversees IT training and the Unified Judicial System Help Desk, network services and development. The Division purchases, manages and supports computer hardware, software, security, data retention and networking needs. Staff also manage security and disaster standards for UJS systems.

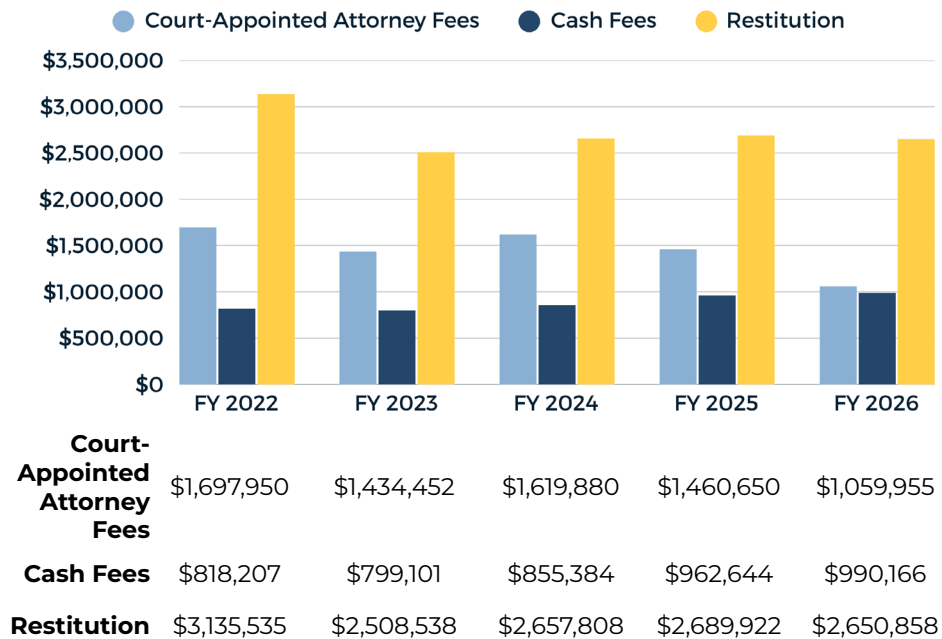


Treatment Courts Division

The Treatment Courts Division is responsible for overseeing treatment courts statewide to include monitoring, oversight, training and data collection in compliance with Adult Treatment Court Best Practice Standards. Staff create partnerships and provide representation with outside agencies on the treatment courts teams. The Division identifies and coordinates training and technical assistance needs for all treatment courts team members. Staff also compile and interpret statewide data and statistics.

Court-Appointed Attorney Fees, Cash Fees, Restitution Receipts

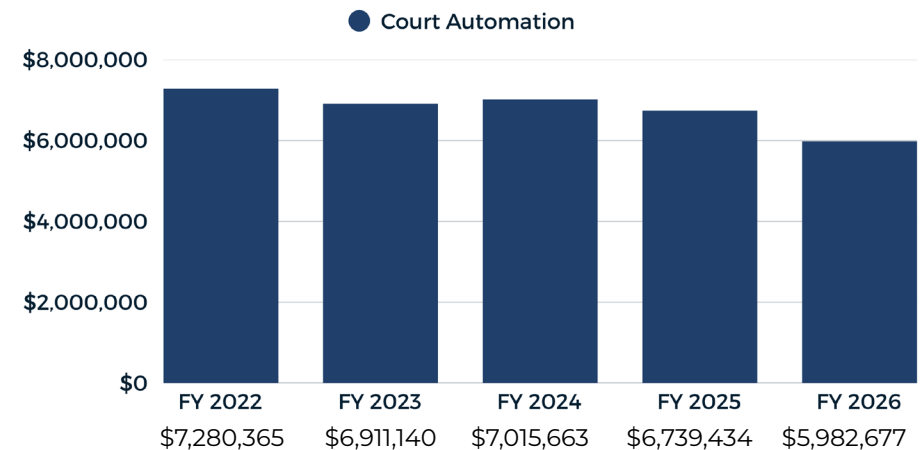
Clerk of courts offices take in fines, fees, penalties and costs owed to victims, cities, counties, school districts and the state. For FY 2026, receipts for court-appointed attorney fees was \$1,059,955, cash fees was \$990,166, and restitution was \$2,650,858.



* For definitions of receipt categories, see the Appendix.

Court Automation Receipts

Court automation is a surcharge assessed on all criminal prosecutions and civil actions to fund court automation costs. Court automation surcharge receipts for FY 2026 was \$5,982,677.



State, County and City Disbursements

State Disbursements

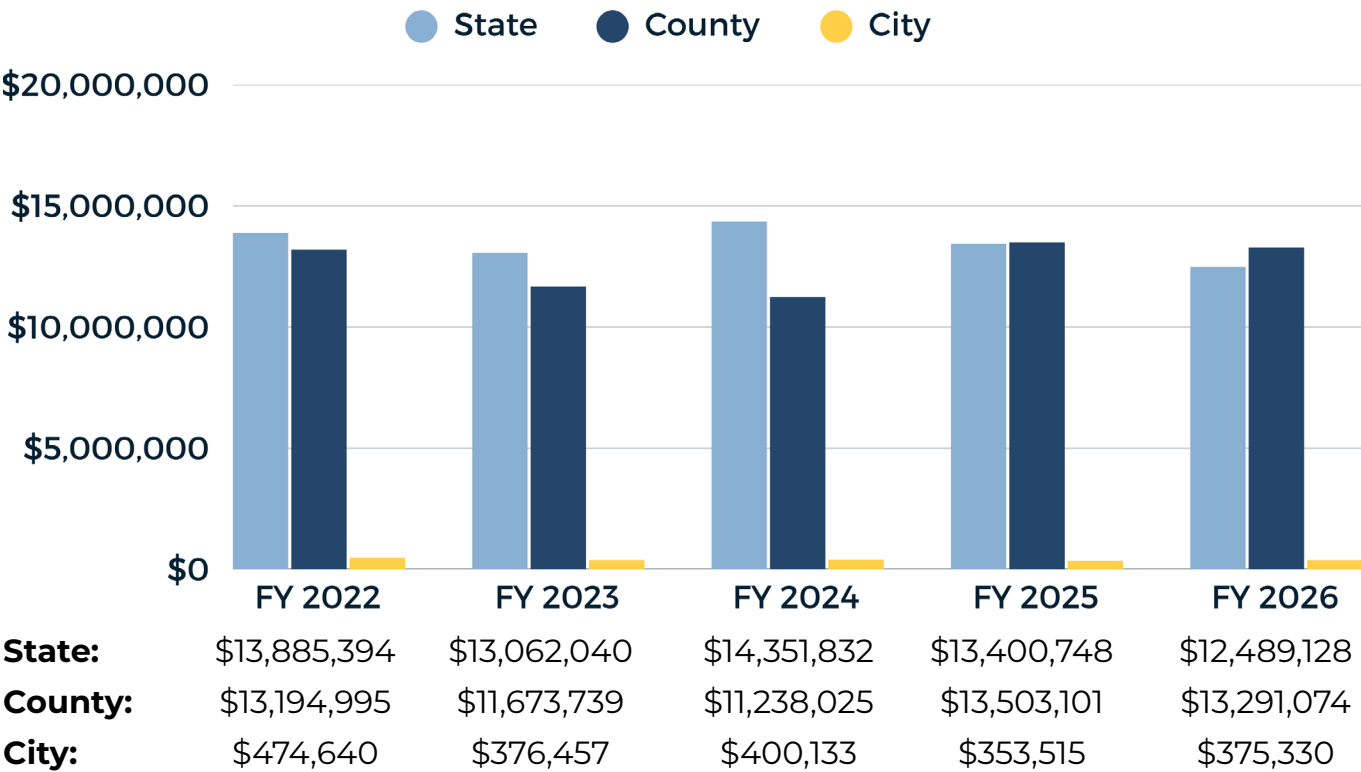
Disbursements to the state include liquidated costs and 35% of city fines.

County Disbursements

Disbursements to counties include state fines—including funds returned to school districts in accordance with Article VIII, § 3 of the South Dakota Constitution—costs, forfeitures and various fees for civil filings.

City Disbursements

Disbursements to cities are primarily city fines collected by the court system. The amount remitted to the cities is 65% of the total city fines, forfeitures and penalties and 100% of city costs. The remaining 35% is remitted to the state general fund.



Court Improvement Program (CIP)

By fostering collaboration among courts, child welfare agencies, tribes and community partners, the Court Improvement Program (CIP) ensures compliance with state and federal child welfare laws while prioritizing the safety, permanency and well-being of children and families.



New Indian Child Welfare Community of Practice Work Group Formed

The Indian Child Welfare Community of Practice Work Group is striving to develop a platform for tribal members and professionals that work in tribal child welfare to learn, share and assist each other in providing services to children and families.

Spearheaded by the CIP Committee, the Indian Child Welfare Community of Practice Work Group held a planning meeting on March 12, 2026, in Sioux Falls. The goal is the creation of a platform for tribal members and professionals that work in tribal child welfare to meet, discuss, share and learn from each other.



Guidelines for Judicial Process in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases Reviewed and Updated

The CIP Committee regularly reviews and updates the Guidelines for Judicial Process in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases. The 2025 edition includes online fillable forms which state's attorneys can tailor to meet the specific needs of the counties they serve.

The CIP Committee hosted an informational booth at the South Dakota Bar Convention on June 24–26, 2026, in Sioux Falls and provided complimentary copies of the Guidelines for Judicial Process in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases and educational materials highlighting South Dakota's treatment courts.

Making Self-Help Court Forms Easier to Use

UJS is making it easier for South Dakotans to navigate the court system when they do not have an attorney.

UJS' pro se (self-help) forms are designed to help people handle certain court matters without an attorney. Improvements to these forms during FY 2026 focused on removing unnecessary steps, using clearer language, and making forms more accessible and easier to complete.

Notarization: One significant change eliminated the need to have many pro se forms notarized. Under a change to court rules, individuals can now sign a declaration confirming that the information they provided is true rather than signing the form in front of a notary or clerk of court. This removes the extra step of finding a notary or waiting to sign paperwork at the courthouse.

Divorce Forms: Divorce forms and instructions were updated with an emphasis on plain language and clearer directions. The goal is to help people better understand what information is being requested and what they need to do as they move through the process.

Court Filing Fee Waiver: Another improvement significantly simplified the process for people who cannot afford a court filing fee. Previously, someone

requesting a waiver of the fee was required to complete three separate forms providing extensive information about their financial situation. The process has been condensed into one form that can be completed and filed with the clerk of courts office.

Child Custody Forms: Previously, child custody forms were primarily designed for plaintiffs and for cases in which the parties agreed on the issues. The updated forms now include documents for defendants so they can properly respond to a custody action. The forms also accommodate both contested and uncontested child custody matters, making them useful to more people and in a wider range of situations.

ADA Accessibility: All pro se forms available through UJS were updated to meet accessibility requirements for people with disabilities. The forms were also converted to fillable PDFs, allowing users to enter their information electronically before printing them.

Quick Reference Guides: UJS is developing quick-reference guides for clerk of courts offices to help staff process paperwork received from people representing themselves and provide a consistent resource for offices across the state.

Together, these improvements are making court forms more accessible, understandable and convenient for people to use.

STATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

Probation Services

120 Court Services Officers | **648** Juvenile Cases Under Supervision | **6,892** Adult Cases Under Supervision

* Numbers as of June 30, 2026

Standard Probation Supervision Costs
(Personal, Operating, Community-Based
Services)

Total Cases Under Supervision: 7,540

FY 2026 Expenditures (actual)

Personal Services:	\$15,749,724
Operating Services:	\$677,323
Community-Based Services:	\$533,102
TOTAL:	\$16,960,149

Cost of Court Services Officer per Hour: \$67.94

- **275 Juvenile Social Histories** (11 hours each):
\$747.34 per social history = \$205,518.50 total
- **2,217 Adult Felony Pre-Sentence Investigations**
(11 hours each):
\$747.34 per investigation = \$1,656,852.78 total
- **37 Misdemeanor Pre-Sentence Investigations**
(3 hours each):
\$203.82 per investigation = \$7,541.34 total

Total Cost of Prepared Reports: \$1,869,913

FY 2026 Cost for Supervision: \$15,090,236

Standard Probation Supervision Average Daily Cost

JUVENILE	
Intensive Probation	\$27.18
High Supervision Probationer (2.89 hours per month)	\$9.06
Medium Supervision Probationer (2.45 hours per month)	\$7.68
Low Supervision Probationer (.91 hours per month)	\$2.85
Administrative Supervision Probationer (.32 hours per month)	\$.97
Informal Diversion Case (.36 hours per month)	\$1.00
Case Service Monitoring Case (.23 hours per month)	\$.72
ADULT	
Intensive Probation	\$21.74
High Supervision Probationer (1.81 hours per month)	\$5.68
Medium Supervision Probationer (1.27 hours per month)	\$3.98
Low Supervision Probationer (.60 hours per month)	\$1.88
Administrative Supervision Probationer (.08 hours per month)	\$.25
Case Service Monitoring Case (.08 hours per month)	\$.25
AVERAGE DAILY COST SUPERVISION ALL CATEGORIES	\$6.40

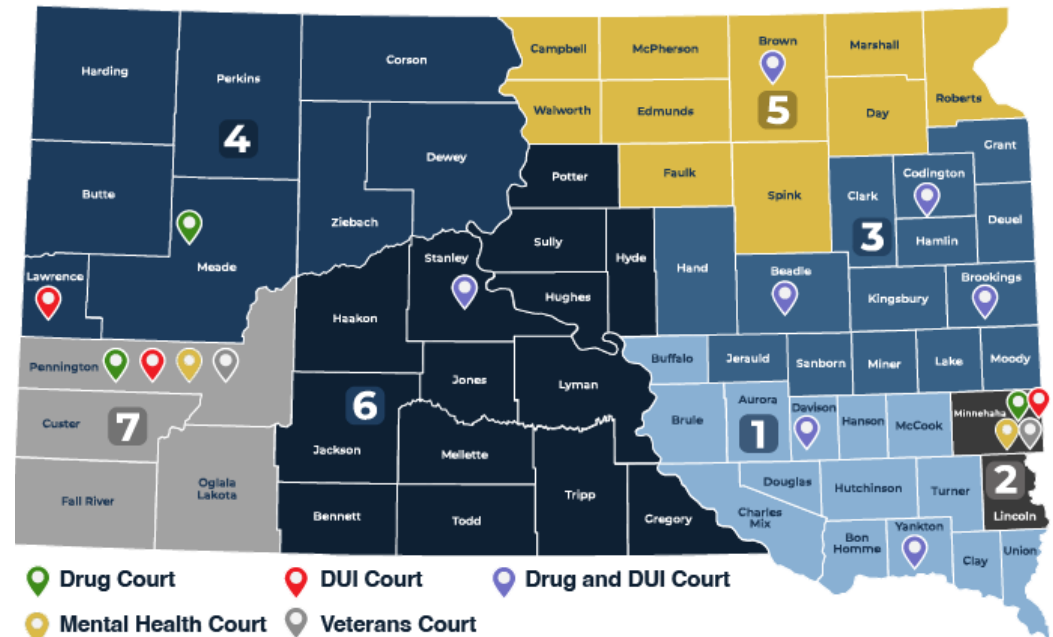
Treatment Courts

Changing Lives, Improving Communities

Treatment courts provide an innovative approach to rehabilitating those substantially impacted by a substance use disorder or mental health disorder who are likely to continue to commit crimes without intervention. These courts have proven that a combination of supervision, treatment and support can lead people with substance use and/or mental health disorders into lives of stability, wellness and recovery.

This is a public health approach to justice reform in which treatment providers partner with probation, defense, prosecution, law enforcement and the judge to ensure individuals before the courts receive personalized and evidence-based treatment, ongoing support and recovery services.

Treatment courts include drug court, DUI court, veterans court and mental health court. There are 17 treatment courts operating in South Dakota.



Numbers from inception of treatment courts in South Dakota through June 30, 2026.

* Recidivism measured at three and five years post sentencing to treatment court and includes felony convictions.

Data Reflects Success of State's Treatment Courts

UJS data released on Oct. 14, 2025, highlighted the success of the state's treatment courts since their beginning in 2008: **73% of all participants in treatments courts did not commit another felony offense within five years following their involvement in the program**—breaking the cycle of addiction and incarceration for thousands of participants since the courts' inception.

Recidivism is a return to criminal activity after a participant enters a criminal justice program and is a key measure used to assess the program's effectiveness. UJS tracks convictions both within three and five years after an offender has been sentenced to treatment court. The overall recidivism rate considers any felony conviction (Felony Class 1-6 and Felony Class A-C) against persons, property and society.

"After graduation, our natural focus is on those who reoffend, but we often fail to appreciate and celebrate those we never see again. Those we don't see again are the success stories—they're employed, paying taxes, living in stable homes, reunited with their families and contributing positively to their communities. The transformation in the lives of these individuals is truly remarkable. It's a powerful reminder that treatment courts truly make a difference in public safety and in people's lives across South Dakota." — *Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen*

RISE25 Treatment Court Conference Held in Pierre



Pennington County Drug Court team members with Judge Matthew M. Brown (center), who received the Albert Award in the Judge Category.

Gov. Larry Rhoden and Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen opened the South Dakota RISE25 Treatment Court Conference held Nov. 5-6, 2025, in Pierre. Hosted by the UJS, this biannual event provides education and networking for public safety and public health leaders working to expand treatment for people with substance use and mental health disorders who become involved in the justice system.

One highlight of the conference was the unveiling of the Albert Awards, which celebrate the work of treatment court team members who rise above in their contributions to their treatment courts.

UJS Works to Ensure Website Content Accessibility

Communicating effectively is essential to providing services to the public. Public entities offer many services on their websites and mobile devices and have the responsibility to ensure services are accessible to everyone.

During FY 2026, the State Court Administrator's Office identified UJS web designs and content that did not meet ADA accessibility standards. This included the structure of UJS websites and all documents linked on UJS websites such as PDFs, forms, reports and handbooks. UJS held virtual training sessions for staff to learn about creating ADA-compliant documents.

State Court Administrator's Office staff have made website accessibility improvements, archived hundreds of older non-compliant documents and have begun updating approximately 400 non-compliant documents and 200 pro se forms/documents. An accessibility widget was also added to the UJS website, allowing users to manage accessibility settings.

All content on UJS websites will meet web content accessibility standards as outlined by the State Court Administrator's Office by April 26, 2027.



An accessibility widget was added to the UJS website.

Appendix

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JUDICIAL QUALIFICATIONS COMMISSION STATISTICS

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Commission Complaints					
Written Complaints Received ¹	22	18	38	38	31
Complaints Disposed of ²	15	18	37	31	30
Type of Cases					
Prisoner Complaints (includes Habeas Corpus)	1	0	1	1	0
Divorce/Child Custody/Child Support Issues	5	4	5	5	5
Protection Order Cases	1	3	4	8	5
Civil Trial Issues (includes decisions)	5	1	12	2	6
Criminal Trial Issues (includes sentencing)	3	8	15	16	11
Personal Conduct	3	0	0	0	0
Small Claims	2	1	0	2	2
Guardianship/Conservatorship	0	1	0	2	1
Other	2	0	1	2	1
Nature of Claims in Complaints					
Inappropriate Conduct/Abuse of Position	7	4	4	4	1
On Bench Abuse of Authority	4	1	9	4	9
Lack of Demeanor/Decorum	1	0	1	0	0
Bias/Appearance of Bias	5	5	10	18	10
Unhappy with Result	5	8	14	12	11

¹Written Complaints Received, Type of Cases and Nature of Claims in Complaints reflect complaints received in that fiscal year.

²Complaints Disposed of and Commission Dispositions reflect some complaints received in that fiscal year but not disposed of until the following fiscal year and some complaints that were both received and disposed of in this fiscal year.

JUDICIAL QUALIFICATIONS COMMISSION STATISTICS

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Commission Dispositions					
1. Dismissal due to:					
a. Insufficient Evidence to Proceed (unsigned complaint and/or complainant uncooperative)	2	1	0	0	0
b. Lack of Jurisdiction ³	0	0	0	0	2
c. Resigned Due to JQC Investigation	0	0	0	0	0
d. Unsubstantiated	0	0	0	0	0
e. No Violation Found	15	17	37	30	28
2. Private Reprimand	0	0	0	0	0
3. Deferred Disciplinary Agreement	0	0	0	1	0
4. Public Censure	0	0	0	0	0
5. Recommendation for Suspension	0	0	0	0	0
6. Recommendation for Removal/Retirement	0	0	0	0	0
Judicial Qualifications Commission Applicants					
Judicial Vacancies	1	0	4	6	5
Applicant Interviews	0	0	33	52	37

³JQC does not have the authority to direct a judge to take legal action or to review a case for judicial error, mistake or other legal grounds. Those functions are for the State Supreme Court. Therefore, allegations stemming from a judge's ruling or exercise of discretion do not provide a basis (jurisdiction) for JQC action.

RECEIPT CATEGORY DEFINITIONS

Adult Compact Fees: A fee of \$50 charged to all South Dakota supervised felony and applicable misdemeanor cases/clients who request a transfer of their probation supervision to another state.

Alimony Payments: An allowance for support made under court order to a legally separated or divorced person by the former provider. Monies received are receipted and disbursed to the person as provided by the court order.

Cash Fees: Fees charged for filing various civil actions. This money is paid into the county general fund.

Child Support: Payments ordered by the court from one party in a divorce action to the other party as financial support for the children involved. Child support payments are processed through the South Dakota Department of Social Services.

Civil Pass Through: Payments ordered by the court from one party to be paid to the court for the benefit of another or a third party in a civil action.

Child Support Modification Fees: A \$50 fee for any petition or motion to modify a child support order. This fee is deposited into the "equal access to our courts" fund to be awarded as grant funds to legal services entities.

City/County Fines/Penalties: Fines/penalties collected for city/county ordinance violations. City/county fines/penalties are paid into the city/county general fund (65%) and state general fund (35%) for services provided by the Unified Judicial System.

City/County Costs: Costs levied in conjunction with city/county fines as reimbursement to the city/county for an identifiable amount spent by the city/county in prosecuting a case. These funds are paid into the city/county general fund.

City/County Forfeitures: Forfeitures of bail bonds posted for violations of city/county ordinances. These funds are paid into the city/county general fund (65%) and state general fund (35%).

Collection Agency Pass Through: Payments received from a party that is passed through the courts to the Obligation Recovery Center.

Court-Appointed Attorney Fees: Costs recovered from defendants to reimburse the county general fund for payment of the defendant's court-appointed attorney. The money is paid to the county treasury.

Digital Forensic Fund: A fee not to exceed \$95 assessed to any defendant convicted of a felony or misdemeanor to reimburse the cost of any digital forensic examination performed on any personal electronic device designed for and capable of wireless communication or electronic data retrieval, including a cellular telephone, tablet, laptop, computer, or two-way messaging device). Fees collected are deposited in the Internet Crimes Investigation Fund.

Divorce Fees: A fee of \$95 charged for filing a divorce action. Half of the fee is deposited in the county domestic abuse program fund and the remaining half in the county general fund.

Domestic Abuse Surcharge: A fee of \$25 assessed to any defendant convicted of a crime involving domestic violence or domestic abuse. Costs are remitted to the county to deposit into the county domestic violence program fund.

Draw Down Accounts: Deposit accounts created by law firms, businesses and other individuals to pay for filing fees, small claims fees, postage, record searches and other miscellaneous charges.

Drug Control Fee: Fees paid to the Attorney General to be deposited in the Drug Control Fund for the purpose of assisting local law enforcement agencies in drug control and drug offender apprehension efforts.

Drug Testing and Monitoring Fees: Fees charged to probationers to cover the cost of drug testing or monitoring while on probation.

RECEIPT CATEGORY DEFINITIONS

DUI Costs (32-12-48): If a defendant is convicted driving under the influence, at the conclusion of the period of revocation ordered by the court and if future proof is filed with the Department of Public Safety as required by chapter 32-35, the defendant may submit an application for a driver's license, accompanied by a fee of \$75 if revocation of the license was for a conviction under § 32-23-2, \$125 if revocation of the license was for a conviction under § 32-23-3, or \$175 if revocation of the license was for a conviction under § 32-23-4, 32-23-4.6, or 32-23-4.7.

Interest-Bearing Trust Funds: Interest-bearing money deposited with a clerk pending a decision regarding ownership.

Law Library Fee: A fee of \$2 or \$5 charged in addition to the civil case filing fee and used to support the county law library.

Liquidated Costs (23-3-53: Collection by clerk of courts-Transmittal to State Treasurer-Disposition): After a determination by the court of the amount due, the clerk of courts shall collect the amount due and transmit monthly to the State Treasurer. The State Treasurer shall place \$37 of the \$50 fee into the Law Enforcement Officers Training Fund, \$7.50 of the \$50 fee into the Court-Appointed Attorney and Public Defender Payment Fund, \$2 of the \$50 fee into the Court-Appointed Special Advocates Fund, \$2.50 of the \$50 fee into the 911 Telecommunicator Training Fund, and \$1 of the \$50 fee into the Abused and Neglected Child Defense Fund.

Marriage Fees: Fees collected for processing marriage license applications. These funds are paid into the state general fund.

Modification Petitions and Motions Fees (except Title 28 benefits): A fee of \$50 for child support modification filings. These funds are paid into the state general fund.

NSF Check Charges: A fee of \$40 charged to a person who issues to the state or a political subdivision a check or other draft that is not honored by the person's bank.

Other-Overpayments: Collections that do not fit any of the foregoing categories.

Passport Fees (16-2-27.1. Fees collected for processing U.S. passport applications): These funds are paid into the state general fund.

Petty Offense Judgment: A judgment of \$25 assessed for minor state violations designated as petty offenses. The money is deposited in the county treasury.

Postage-Small Claims: Postage fees charged for processing small claims actions.

Posted Bonds: Bonds are posted in conjunction with a criminal case. This money is either forfeited, used to pay subsequent fines and costs, or returned to the defendant or depositor. Undertakings are posted in civil cases and appeals. Non-interest trusts are posted until the legal owner is determined or located. Court appointed attorney fees are posted as pre-payment for future CAAF costs incurred.

Restitution: Money which the court collects from a defendant to reimburse the victim for monetary loss caused by the crime. The money is paid to the victim.

State Costs: Money which the court collects from a defendant to reimburse the victim for monetary loss caused by the crime. The money is paid to the victim.

State Fines/Penalties: Fines/penalties collected for violation of state laws. These fines and penalties are paid to the county treasury for eventual transfer to the school district of the county in which the violation occurred.

State Forfeitures: Forfeitures of bonds posted for violations of state law. This money is paid into the county general fund.

RECEIPT CATEGORY DEFINITIONS

Surcharge-Court Automation Fund (16-2-39): A fee on all criminal prosecutions and civil actions to fund court automation costs. The following is the court automation fee schedule (updated June 30, 2015):

- **Civil Actions, Probate Proceedings or Other Judicial Proceedings:** \$40
- **Small Claims:**
 - amount in controversy is less than \$4,000: \$6
 - amount in controversy \$4,000 to \$12,00: \$8
- **Felony Criminal Cases:** \$61.50
- **Class 1 Misdemeanors:** \$41.50
- **Class 2 Misdemeanors (violation of state law):** \$23.50
- **Violations of County or Municipal Ordinances:** \$17.50
- **Violations of Administrative Rules with Criminal Penalties:** \$17.50
- **Appeals, Original Actions or Other Actions Filed with Supreme Court:** \$50

Electronic Filing Fees: A fee of \$1 per page (\$10 minimum) for incoming fax filings. A fee of \$1 per page (\$5 minimum) for outgoing electronic transmission of any opinion, record or paper from an active or inactive file in the clerk's custody.

Record Searches (16-2-29.5): A fee of \$20 for each name search of court records if the search is requested by a person who is not a party named in a state or federal action. \$15 of the \$20 fee goes to the court automation fund, and \$5 goes to the law enforcement officers training fund. A fee of \$5 for each name search of court records if the search is being conducted in conjunction with a state or federal court action and the person making the records search request so certifies.

Web Judgment Searches: A fee of \$4 for each name or date search for civil judgments and \$1 per judgment card.

Non-Resident Attorney Admissions: A \$100 portion of the \$200 admission fee is paid to the Supreme Court, and the remaining \$100 is paid to the State Bar.

Surcharge-Victims Compensation Fund: A fee of \$5 assessed in any criminal action for a violation of state law or county or municipal ordinance, in addition to any other liquidated cost, penalty, assessment, surcharge or fine provided by law; it shall be levied a crime victims compensation surcharge on each Class 2 misdemeanor, Class 1 misdemeanor or felony conviction.

** Most receipts collected according to SDCL 16-2-29, unless otherwise noted.*

STATEWIDE CASH RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS

RECEIPTS	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Adult Compact Fees	\$16,250	\$13,805	\$16,470	\$17,588	\$14,071
Alimony	\$774	\$0	\$1,074	\$0	\$124
Cash Fees	\$818,207	\$799,101	\$855,384	\$962,644	\$990,166
Child Support	\$7,720	\$17,900	\$35,411	\$22,550	\$7,200
City Costs	\$7,489	\$9,575	\$8,649	\$9,380	\$14,634
City Fines	\$618,808	\$561,307	\$559,189	\$537,973	\$547,440
City Forfeitures	\$408	\$0	\$49	\$98	\$82
City Penalties	\$2,341	\$1,205	\$3,700	\$3,487	\$7,566
Civil Pass Through	\$3,695	\$86,025	\$186,364	\$5,204	\$3,370
Civil Penalties	\$4,212	\$2,655	\$1,855	\$4,800	\$3,901
Collections Agency Pass Through	\$18,638	\$12,890	\$14,278	\$11,357	\$13,059
County Costs	\$659,103	\$2,316	\$1,173	\$69	\$357
County Fines	\$9,190	\$6,273	\$10,107	\$7,399	\$7,636
County Forfeitures	\$500	\$0	\$1,500	\$19,850	\$0
County Penalties	\$1,158	\$3,125	\$208	\$779	\$109
Court-Appointed Attorney Fees *	\$1,697,950	\$1,434,452	\$1,619,880	\$1,460,650	\$1,059,955
Court Costs	\$0	\$594,078	\$647,234	\$749,637	\$748,038
Digital Forensic Fund				\$285	\$5,418
Divorce Fees	\$117,600	\$115,770	\$121,300	\$108,331	\$115,350
Domestic Abuse Surcharge	\$15,873	\$18,781	\$16,856	\$17,010	\$16,849
Draw Down Accounts	\$7,400,086	\$6,744,383	\$6,736,025	\$6,157,312	\$4,674,603
Drug Control Fee	\$96,162	\$79,341	\$91,633	\$85,795	\$88,206
Drug Test Fees and Monitoring Fees	\$10,952	\$8,309	\$11,698	\$10,853	\$9,419
DUI Cost	\$205,232	\$192,575	\$204,579	\$211,315	\$202,596
Interest-Bearing Trust Funds	\$37,385	\$352	\$127,325	\$243,798	\$26,319
Law Library Fees	\$122,983	\$132,329	\$132,522	\$184,654	\$224,906
Liquidated Costs	\$4,413,186	\$4,023,239	\$4,419,008	\$4,718,502	\$4,839,020
Marriage Fees	\$8,760	\$8,770	\$8,740	\$11,100	\$12,600
Child Support Modification Fees	\$102,725	\$98,064	\$104,290	\$102,505	\$106,827
NSF Check Charges	\$2,143	\$1,745	\$2,739	\$2,123	\$944
Other - Overpayments	\$38,093	\$19,975	\$25,341	\$50,462	\$10,196
Passport Fees	\$14,175	\$19,225	\$7,105	\$0	\$0
Petty Offense	\$340,450	\$296,406	\$296,825	\$300,386	\$278,659
Postage (Small Claims)	\$198,890	\$207,478	\$211,205	\$242,638	\$262,136

STATEWIDE CASH RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS

RECEIPTS	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Posted Bonds	\$12,443,134	\$14,478,176	\$12,510,787	\$13,343,103	\$12,360,561
Restitution	\$3,135,535	\$2,508,538	\$2,657,808	\$2,689,922	\$2,650,858
Search Fee - Law Enforcement Officer Training Fund	\$1,383,315	\$1,331,613	\$1,266,163	\$1,077,593	\$785,013
Sioux Falls Police Department Drug Fee	\$22,585	\$18,579	\$20,591	\$17,781	\$20,111
State Costs	\$77,257	\$99,169	\$52,231	\$42,358	\$50,513
State Fines	\$7,633,263	\$6,886,185	\$7,550,181	\$8,092,480	\$8,136,737
State Forfeitures	\$540,612	\$459,372	\$524,008	\$290,468	\$180,871
State Penalties	\$918,748	\$640,252	\$878,362	\$947,928	\$1,373,716
Surcharge - Court Automation	\$7,280,365	\$6,911,140	\$7,015,663	\$6,739,434	\$5,982,677
Surcharge - Victims Compensation	\$435,464	\$394,936	\$434,769	\$464,374	\$477,831
Trust Fund	\$25,475	\$2,433,425	\$383,585	\$38,959	\$1,522,080
STATEWIDE TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$50,886,888	\$51,672,833	\$49,773,862	\$50,004,933	\$47,832,723

DISBURSEMENTS	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Alimony	\$762	\$12	\$1,074	\$0	\$124
Bond Refunds (Converted Bonds, Odyssey)	\$7,137,457	\$11,819,978	\$9,876,807	\$10,452,456	\$9,908,954
Child Support	\$7,720	\$17,900	\$35,411	\$21,550	\$8,700
Civil Pass Through	\$3,695	\$86,025	\$186,364	\$4,026	\$5,323
Collection Agency Pass Through	\$17,624	\$14,072	\$11,912	\$12,567	\$13,013
Draw Down Accounts	\$7,329,095	\$6,716,554	\$6,617,839	\$6,020,120	\$4,650,577
Interest-Bearing Trust Funds	\$37,383	\$0	\$0	\$127,278	\$263,153
Overpayments	\$34,723	\$16,673	\$26,354	\$47,687	\$14,209
Remitted to Sioux Falls Police Department	\$23,126	\$18,633	\$20,378	\$18,647	\$18,635
Remitted to Attorney General (Drug Fund)	\$97,425	\$77,447	\$64,644	\$90,922	\$86,318
Remitted to City	\$474,640	\$376,457	\$400,133	\$353,515	\$375,330
Remitted to County	\$13,194,995	\$11,673,739	\$11,238,025	\$13,503,101	\$13,291,074
Remitted to State	\$13,885,394	\$13,062,040	\$14,351,832	\$13,400,748	\$12,489,128
Restitution	\$3,047,879	\$2,595,642	\$3,275,439	\$2,659,139	\$2,532,339
Small Claims Postage	\$201,998	\$190,344	\$482,222	\$240,470	\$255,123
Trust Fund	\$65,652	\$64,073	\$384,253	\$114,449	\$3,482,818
TOTAL DISBURSED	\$45,559,568	\$46,729,588	\$46,972,686	\$47,066,676	\$47,394,819

* Court-appointed attorney fees include only those amounts collected by UJS and do not include payments made directly to county auditors or treasurers, city collection agents, or sums recovered by counties pursuant to a statutory lien.

COURT-APPOINTED ATTORNEY CASES

Misdemeanor 1 and Felony Dispositions

First Circuit Counties	Appointment Cases
Aurora	29
Bon Homme	72
Brule	196
Buffalo	2
Charles Mix	392
Clay	234
Davison	594
Douglas	8
Hanson	36
Hutchinson	61
McCook	76
Turner	92
Union	329
Yankton	810
First Circuit Total	2,931

Second Circuit Counties	Appointment Cases
Lincoln	1,568
Minnehaha	9,221
Second Circuit Total	10,789

Third Circuit Counties	Appointment Cases
Beadle	292
Brookings	491
Clark	36
Codington	1,181
Deuel	36
Grant	43
Hamlin	51
Hand	36
Jerauld	3
Kingsbury	20
Lake	186
Miner	7
Moody	124
Sanborn	13
Third Circuit Total	2,519

Fourth Circuit Counties	Appointment Cases
Butte	291
Corson	39
Dewey	24
Harding	2
Lawrence	758
Meade	749
Perkins	23
Ziebach	0
Fourth Circuit Total	1,886

* Appointments include public defender cases. Data for misdemeanor 1 and felony dispositions is by disposition date.

COURT-APPOINTED ATTORNEY CASES

Misdemeanor 1 and Felony Dispositions

Fifth Circuit Counties	Appointment Cases
Brown	953
Campbell	7
Day	97
Edmunds	26
Faulk	5
Marshall	39
McPherson	4
Roberts	553
Spink	44
Walworth	203
Fifth Circuit Total	1,887

Sixth Circuit Counties	Appointment Cases
Bennett	170
Gregory	38
Haakon	7
Hughes	502
Hyde	7
Jackson	51
Jones	32
Lyman	53
Mellette	49
Potter	21
Stanley	74
Sully	11
Todd	10
Tripp	110
Sixth Circuit Total	1,135

Seventh Circuit Counties	Appointment Cases
Custer	75
Fall River	180
Oglala Lakota	8
Pennington	5,075
Seventh Circuit Total	5,338
Statewide Total	26,485

*Appointments include public defender cases. Data for misdemeanor 1 and felony dispositions is by disposition date.

COURT-APPOINTED ATTORNEY CASES

Abuse and Neglect Cases

First Circuit Counties	Total Abuse and Neglect Cases Filed	Number of Children Involved in Cases Filed	Number of Attorneys Involved in Court-Appointed and Public Defender Cases
Aurora	1	1	2
Bon Homme	2	2	2
Brule	2	5	6
Buffalo	0	0	0
Charles Mix	3	6	4
Clay	7	8	11
Davison	6	8	17
Douglas	0	0	0
Hanson	1	2	3
Hutchinson	2	4	3
McCook	0	0	0
Turner	1	3	2
Union	0	0	0
Yankton	6	9	14
First Circuit Total	31	48	64

Second Circuit Counties	Total Abuse and Neglect Cases Filed	Number of Children Involved in Cases Filed	Number of Attorneys Involved in Court-Appointed and Public Defender Cases
Lincoln	15	30	28
Minnehaha	218	426	309
Second Circuit Total	233	456	337

COURT-APPOINTED ATTORNEY CASES

Abuse and Neglect Cases

Third Circuit Counties	Total Abuse and Neglect Cases Filed	Number of Children Involved in Cases Filed	Number of Attorneys Involved in Court-Appointed and Public Defender Cases
Beadle	5	11	13
Brookings	6	8	14
Clark	0	0	0
Codington	11	23	25
Deuel	0	0	0
Grant	1	1	2
Hamlin	1	1	4
Hand	0	0	0
Jerauld	1	1	2
Kingsbury	2	2	3
Lake	2	4	6
Miner	0	0	0
Moody	4	6	13
Sanborn	1	6	4
Third Circuit Total	34	63	86

Fourth Circuit Counties	Total Abuse and Neglect Cases Filed	Number of Children Involved in Cases Filed	Number of Attorneys Involved in Court-Appointed and Public Defender Cases
Butte	9	17	21
Corson	3	9	7
Dewey	0	0	0
Harding	0	0	0
Lawrence	3	5	10
Meade	9	13	14
Perkins	1	1	3
Ziebach	0	0	0
Fourth Circuit Total	25	45	55

COURT-APPOINTED ATTORNEY CASES

Abuse and Neglect Cases

Fifth Circuit Counties	Total Abuse and Neglect Cases Filed	Number of Children Involved in Cases Filed	Number of Attorneys Involved in Court-Appointed and Public Defender Cases
Brown	11	19	29
Campbell	3	9	11
Day	3	6	6
Edmunds	2	6	7
Faulk	2	3	5
Marshall	0	0	0
McPherson	0	0	0
Roberts	0	0	0
Spink	0	0	0
Walworth	17	24	39
Fifth Circuit Total	38	67	97

Sixth Circuit Counties	Total Abuse and Neglect Cases Filed	Number of Children Involved in Cases Filed	Number of Attorneys Involved in Court-Appointed and Public Defender Cases
Bennett	0	0	0
Gregory	0	0	0
Haakon	0	0	0
Hughes	20	38	53
Hyde	0	0	0
Jackson	0	0	0
Jones	0	0	0
Lyman	2	2	3
Mellette	0	0	0
Potter	1	2	3
Stanley	0	0	0
Sully	0	0	0
Todd	1	1	0
Tripp	0	0	0
Sixth Circuit Total	24	43	59

COURT-APPOINTED ATTORNEY CASES

Abuse and Neglect Cases

Seventh Circuit Counties	Total Abuse and Neglect Cases Filed	Number of Children Involved in Cases Filed	Number of Attorneys Involved in Court-Appointed and Public Defender Cases
Custer	2	4	4
Fall River	1	2	4
Oglala Lakota	0	0	0
Pennington	195	361	473
Seventh Circuit Total	198	367	481
Statewide Total	583	1,089	1,179

** Data for abuse and neglect cases is by file date.*

COURT-APPOINTED ATTORNEY CASES

Juvenile Delinquency and CHINS Cases

First Circuit Counties	Total Juvenile Cases	Court-Appointment and Public Defender Juvenile Cases
Aurora	4	0
Bon Homme	3	1
Brule	22	12
Buffalo	7	4
Charles Mix	36	25
Clay	7	3
Davison	29	14
Douglas	0	0
Hanson	3	1
Hutchinson	12	0
McCook	9	4
Turner	7	4
Union	14	8
Yankton	50	21
First Circuit Total	203	97

Second Circuit Counties	Total Juvenile Cases	Court-Appointment and Public Defender Juvenile Cases
Lincoln	140	54
Minnehaha	1,288	794
Second Circuit Total	1,428	848

COURT-APPOINTED ATTORNEY CASES

Juvenile Delinquency and CHINS Cases

Third Circuit Counties	Total Juvenile Cases	Court-Appointment and Public Defender Juvenile Cases
Beadle	88	40
Brookings	30	18
Clark	0	0
Codington	179	77
Deuel	2	0
Grant	10	0
Hamlin	5	4
Hand	3	0
Jerauld	0	0
Kingsbury	4	1
Lake	2	1
Miner	0	0
Moody	13	0
Sanborn	2	0
Third Circuit Total	338	141

Fourth Circuit Counties	Total Juvenile Cases	Court-Appointment and Public Defender Juvenile Cases
Butte	71	42
Corson	2	0
Dewey	0	0
Harding	0	0
Lawrence	52	30
Meade	33	12
Perkins	6	3
Ziebach	0	0
Fourth Circuit Total	164	87

COURT-APPOINTED ATTORNEY CASES

Juvenile Delinquency and CHINS Cases

Fifth Circuit Counties	Total Juvenile Cases	Court-Appointment and Public Defender Juvenile Cases
Brown	146	77
Campbell	0	0
Day	8	1
Edmunds	3	1
Faulk	3	3
Marshall	3	0
McPherson	0	0
Roberts	49	32
Spink	12	2
Walworth	15	10
Fifth Circuit Total	239	126

Sixth Circuit Counties	Total Juvenile Cases	Court-Appointment and Public Defender Juvenile Cases
Bennett	11	9
Gregory	4	2
Haakon	2	0
Hughes	91	75
Hyde	1	0
Jackson	1	1
Jones	0	0
Lyman	12	4
Mellette	7	2
Potter	2	1
Stanley	3	3
Sully	0	0
Todd	0	0
Tripp	15	11
Sixth Circuit Total	149	108

COURT-APPOINTED ATTORNEY CASES

Juvenile Delinquency and CHINS Cases

Seventh Circuit Counties	Total Juvenile Cases	Court-Appointment and Public Defender Juvenile Cases
Custer	1	1
Fall River	41	8
Oglala Lakota	0	0
Pennington	441	255
Seventh Circuit Total	483	264
Statewide Total	3,004	1,671

** Data for juvenile cases is by file date.*

COURT SERVICES ACTIVITIES

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY2025	FY 2026
JUVENILE SERVICES					
Pre-hearing Social Case Studies	199	342	255	247	275
Informal Diversion Services Added	330	265	205	163	109
Placed on Probation During Fiscal Year	1,054	1,219	1,309	1,121	1,095
Active Probation Cases at End of Fiscal Year	600	772	822	644	647
CASE SERVICES MONITORING					
Placed in Program During Fiscal Year	73	175	193	196	161
Active Cases at End of Fiscal Year	48	95	51	80	42
Interstate Compact Cases-In	17	7	13	10	6
Interstate Compact Cases-Out	16	18	17	23	17
INTENSIVE PROBATION					
Placed In Program During Fiscal Year	78	84	80	80	57
Transferred In	0	0	0	0	0
Transferred Out	0	0	0	0	0
JIPP Unavailable	10	0	1	2	0
Successfully Completed Program	31	29	43	48	34
Failed Program and Sent to DOC	15	27	17	16	23
Failed Program (Other)	19	18	24	30	8
Active Cases at End of Fiscal Year	63	73	68	52	40
ADULT SERVICES: MISDEMEANOR					
Pre-Sentence Investigation Reports	18	18	33	24	47
Placed on Probation During Fiscal Year	170	157	229	164	295
On Probation at End of Fiscal Year	299	287	297	202	319
ADULT SERVICES: FELONY					
Pre-Sentence Investigation Reports	3,001	2,980	2,896	2,673	2,217
Placed on Probation During Fiscal Year	3,363	3,499	3,477	3,404	3,070
On Probation at End of Fiscal Year	6,034	6,304	6,031	5,805	5,667
CASE SERVICES MONITORING PROGRAM (Felony & Misdemeanor)					
Placed in Program During Fiscal Year	4	18	48	47	43
Active Cases at End of Fiscal Year	84	106	128	123	128
ADULT INTERSTATE COMPACT CASELOAD (Felony & Misdemeanor)					
Total Placed on Probation - In & Out	253	232	213	258	248
On Probation at End of Fiscal Year	913	839	771	904	778



State Fiscal Year 2026

SOUTH DAKOTA UNIFIED JUDICIAL SYSTEM ANNUAL REPORT

Compiled by the

State Court Administrator's Office

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The South Dakota Unified Judicial System FY 2026 Annual Report is only available online.
Questions or comments regarding this report should be directed to the State Court Administrator's Office at 605-773-3474.