



# **SOUTH DAKOTA**

## UNIFIED JUDICIAL SYSTEM

**2025–2028**

# **STRATEGIC PLAN**



## **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.

## **VISION**

**Justice for All.**



*Welcome to the South Dakota Unified Judicial System (UJS) strategic plan—a roadmap to guide our courts in serving the people of South Dakota with fairness, integrity, and excellence.*

This plan reflects our ongoing commitment to providing a judicial system that not only upholds the rule of law but also earns the trust and confidence of every person who walks through our courthouse doors. It reaffirms our mission to deliver justice that is impartial, accessible, and grounded in the highest ethical standards.

Our vision—Justice for All—speaks to the very heart of our work. It is a reminder that the courts exist for everyone, and our efforts must meet the needs of the people we serve, no matter their background, circumstance, or walk of life. To fulfill this vision, we have identified six strategic pillars that will shape our priorities in the years ahead, addressing the evolving challenges and opportunities within the justice system.

This strategic plan has been developed through a collaborative process involving input from justices, judges, and court staff that make up the UJS. It represents our collective commitment to excellence and

innovation in fulfilling our mandate to administer justice impartially, respectfully, and effectively.

In the sections that follow, you will find an outline of our vision, mission, goals, and strategic priorities. These components form the backbone of our strategic plan and will steer our choices and resource distribution as we work toward our long-term goals. We understand that bringing this plan to fruition demands commitment, teamwork, and continuous review to stay attuned to the needs of those we serve.

This strategic plan is both a promise and a call to action. It is a promise that we, as stewards of justice, will continue striving to meet the highest standards of service and integrity. And it is a call to action for every member of the UJS to work together to bring this vision to life. I am confident that, with this plan as our guide, we will meet the challenges ahead and build an even stronger judicial system for the people of South Dakota.

*Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen*



# STRATEGIC PILLARS

1

## Enhancing Access to Justice for Court Users

*Enhancing access to justice by eliminating barriers and ensuring all court users can access court programs and services.*

GOALS

1. Explore resources and technological innovations to promote access to the courts for all court users.
2. Improve access to quality legal representation as well as services for self-represented litigants and limited-English proficient individuals.
3. Work with internal and external stakeholders to improve physical access to court facilities and services for all court users.

2

## Building Public Trust and Confidence

*Building trust and confidence in the courts through transparency, communication, education, and community engagement.*

GOALS

1. Utilize educational and other opportunities to expand the public and media's understanding of the court's purpose and responsibility.
2. Gather feedback from court users to improve court operations and services.
3. Promote confidence in the courts by enhancing communication, service, and transparency.

3

## Effective Court Operations and Services

*Delivering transparent services responsive to the needs of court users that are based on data-driven decisions to ensure efficient operations.*

GOALS

1. Develop tools to ensure data is efficiently used when making decisions regarding court operations, system improvements, and court programs.
2. Explore existing court programs and pretrial services for potential implementation and expansion.
3. Identify and evaluate new opportunities and processes to centralize the operations of the court.

4

## Improving Courthouse Security, Emergency Preparedness, and Personal Safety

*Enhancing the safety of all who visit, conduct business, and work in court facilities.*

GOALS

1. Develop and provide resources and training to the Unified Judicial System (UJS) employees to protect their personal safety and security.
2. Establish court security committees in collaboration with local stakeholders in each county to promote site assessments and implement security improvements utilizing appropriated funds.
3. Collect and review incident data to identify security gaps.
4. Seek additional resources to address security vulnerabilities.



## 5

### Embracing and Enhancing Technology

*Leveraging technology and technological innovations to improve court operations and court performance.*

#### GOALS

1. Embrace technological innovation and modernization to improve operations and enhance access to justice.
2. Enhance the case management system to meet the needs of the judiciary, court customers, justice partners, and the public.
3. Maintain secure data and information systems to ensure the safety of private and confidential information.

## 6

### Fostering a Strong Workforce

*Attracting, developing, and retaining an engaged, productive, and healthy workforce.*

#### GOALS

1. Pursue creative and innovative strategies to recruit a professional and talented workforce.
2. Encourage a work environment that focuses on employee morale and well-being.
3. Identify training opportunities for UJS workforce that promote employee development and retention while improving court operations and productivity.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen

Justice Patricia J. DeVaney

Presiding Judge Gregory C. Magera

Presiding Judge Christina L. Klinger

Judge Natalie D. Damgaard

Judge Kent A. Shelton

Magistrate Judge Sarah E. Morrison

Gregory Sattizahn

State Court Administrator

Beth Urban

Deputy State Court Administrator

Aaron Olson

Director of Budget & Finance

Marci Stevens

Director of Clerk Support

Charles Frieberg

Director of Court Services

Kent Grode/Kristi Berndt

Director of IT

Noreen Plumage

Director of Treatment Courts

Kim Allison

Circuit Court Administrator

Jenny Hammrich

Circuit Court Administrator

Shawn Sorenson

Circuit Court Administrator

Carrie Fey

Chief Court Services Officer

Amber Watkins

Court Clerk – Magistrate III

