

Justice in the Balance: Courts Work for South Dakotans

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

<p>Abused and Neglected Children</p> <p>Our courts play a life-altering role in the lives of abused and neglected children. They decide whether to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>There is no greater responsibility of the judiciary than determining the best interest of a South Dakota child. In FY19, South Dakota's courts presided over 607 Juvenile Abuse and Neglect cases.</p>	<p>Victims Seeking Protection</p> <p>By issuing no-contact and protective orders, South Dakota's courts help shield victims of violence, abuse, and harassment from further harm. The majority of these are handled by parties representing themselves (without help from lawyers). In FY19, South Dakota judges processed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,244 petitions for protection orders which included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2,355 domestic actions ○ 1,889 stalking actions <p>Clerk of Court offices then notify local law enforcement officials and the Department of Public Safety of every order.</p>
<p>Troubled Youth</p> <p>South Dakota's court services officers, staff, and judges continuously work with thousands of troubled youth and their families to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure community safety • Hold young people accountable for their actions, including paying restitution to victims • Influence behavioral changes • Provide resources to assist families <p>During FY19, CSOs worked with 416 youth to address their conduct without formal delinquency or CHINS petitions being filed. They also supervised 2,406 youth on formal probation and supervised another 204 juveniles via case service monitoring. In totality, the court handled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,557 juvenile delinquency and CHINS cases 	<p>Families in Turmoil</p> <p>The problems of families in crisis demand a significant amount of court time and resources. In FY19, South Dakota's courts handled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,104 divorce cases • 6,140 child support modification and foreign child support cases • 4,896 mental health and drug and alcohol commitment cases • 1,487 adoption, guardianship and trust cases <p>To assist these families, the UJS provides self-represented litigants with UJS approved forms, which include divorce and parenting time implementation and enforcement forms.</p>

Justice in the Balance: Courts Work for South Dakotans (Cont.)

<p>Civil Justice</p> <p>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 mission of the courts. In FY19, our courts handled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26,949 small claims cases • 13,079 contract cases, liability and malpractice cases, employment issues, law and equity matters, and tort claims • 2,341 probate cases • 204 judicial review of agency action cases and expungement filings <p>Civil cases can take anywhere from months to years before they are resolved, depending on a variety of factors. As a result, the courts experience an overlap in civil cases from year to year.</p> <p>The clerks of court offices are responsible for case processing and ensuring a sufficient pool of jurors are available for any trials.</p>	<p>Criminal Justice</p> <p>Criminal cases dominate court time and resources. South Dakota’s judges and court staff spend more time on criminal cases than on any other type of case. During FY19, our courts heard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12,527 felony and extradited cases • 20,827 aggravated or serious misdemeanor cases, of which 43.1% (8,975) were 1st and 2nd offense (Class 1 Misdemeanor) DUI cases • 26,605 contested Class 2 misdemeanor cases. • 77,821 uncontested Class 2 misdemeanor matters were processed by clerks of court <p>In addition, court services officers formally supervised 10,085 cases in felony matters, and 775 cases on misdemeanor cases, plus informally supervised another 568 cases via case service monitoring.</p>
<p>Collection of Money</p> <p>While the court system does not generate revenue for its own sustainability, it is responsible for taking in and distributing fines, fees, penalties, and costs owed to victims, cities, counties, school districts, and the state. In FY19, clerks of court receipted (along with other amounts) the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$3,305,942 for victims of crime • \$8,444,326 for school districts • \$76,217 for local domestic abuse programs • \$274,081 for advocates and attorneys for abused and neglected children • \$2,276,965 for court appointed attorneys, public defenders, and other legal aid • \$404,016 for municipal general funds • \$3,802,648 for county general funds • \$276,323 for other state funds • \$6,523,806 for court automation • \$2,832,175 for law enforcement officer and judicial education and training 	<p>Case History Information and Other Services</p> <p>South Dakota’s employers, landlords, media, and the public rely on our clerks of court for accurate information about criminal defendants, sentencing histories, and money owed on judgments. In FY19, there were 230,176 record search requests, 4,228 search warrants and 26,949 small claims filings processed.</p> <p>In addition, the circuit clerks of court handled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 933 passport applications • 483 weddings <p>The Clerk of the Supreme Court processed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 276 appeals • 31 intermediate appeals • 60 original proceedings • 1,200 orders, writs, and judgments <p>The Board of Bar Examiners processed 174 applications from those seeking admission to practice law in South Dakota.</p>