

District Court Council

Background

The District Court Council provided for in 3-1-1602, MCA. The voting members of the Council are the Chief Justice, who serves as the presiding officer, and four District Court judges. Nonvoting members include a juvenile probation officer, clerk of District Court, county commissioner, and court reporter.

The current members of the Council are:

- Chief Justice Karla Gray
- District Court Judge Thomas McKittrick - Great Falls- District 8
- District Court Judge Katherine Curtis – Kalispell - District 11
- District Court Judge John McKeon – Malta - District 17
- District Court Judge Greg Todd – Billings – District 13
- Glen Welch, Chief Juvenile Probation Officer - Missoula
- Lori Maloney, Clerk of Court - Butte
- Mike Hutchin, County Commissioner - Polson
- Glenda Travitz, Court Reporter - Hamilton

The District Court Council is required to adopt policies and procedures, subject to review by the Supreme Court, to administer the state funding of district courts. The Office of Court Administrator provides staff support to the Council.

1. Where and how often does your council meet?

The District Court Council meets at least quarterly, and the location of the meetings varies. The Council meets in conjunction with the Montana Judges' Association conferences in the spring and fall. Most of the other meetings are held in Helena.

2. Highlights of the council's activities (i.e. -- publications, recommendations or rulings, or other work products in the last five years or so)?

- After the 2001 Legislature shifted responsibility for funding the District Courts from the counties to the state, the District Court Council developed and adopted policies governing the payment for these expenses. These policies, which covered areas such as general operating expenses, indigent defense, jury and witness fees, and court-ordered examinations, were aimed at creating uniformity in administrative practices across the 22 judicial districts and ensuring a high level of accountability for administrative practices.
- In 2004, the District Court Council began work on developing uniform case filing standards, which were adopted by the Supreme Court and became

effective January 1, 2006. These standards provide a uniform way of accounting for cases thus enabling the Judiciary to evaluate workload and resources needed to match that workload.

- In 2005, the District Court Council adopted a safety and security plan for the District Courts. One of the plan recommendations was to conduct a security review of all 56 courts, which was completed by the Department of Justice in late February 2006.
- In 2006, the District Court Council approved a plan for allocating Youth Court resources. The plan allows for shifting of positions to judicial districts needing additional staff resources. The Council also revised several administrative policies to reflect the shifting of indigent defense costs to the newly created Office of State Public Defender.

3. Current projects and workload?

The District Court Council is now completing a study to measure the workload of the District Courts. This spring, judges participated in time study in which they recorded time spent on judicial activities for a 6 week period. They also participated in an adequacy of time survey. Data generated from these activities, together with case filing numbers, will help the Judiciary identify when and where new resources are needed and to track emerging trends in caseloads.