




Annual Report | FY 25

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NEBRASKA ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
OF THE COURTS & PROBATION
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Photo: Fillmore County Courthouse



Annual Report | FY25

NEBRASKA ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
OF THE COURTS & PROBATION



Photo: Richardson County



Photo: Gage County

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“

I AM TRULY HUMBLLED AND APPRECIATIVE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE
THE CITIZENS OF NEBRASKA AS CHIEF JUSTICE. I PROMISE TO DO SO WITH
ALL MY ENERGY AND ALL MY CONVICTIONS.

”

*Investiture of Chief Justice Jeffrey J. Funke,
November 22, 2024*

On behalf of the Nebraska Supreme Court, I am pleased to present the first Annual Report of the Nebraska Court System under my tenure as Chief Justice, covering fiscal year 2024–2025. This report highlights innovations, achievements, and the dedicated efforts of our Judicial Branch during the past year.

The Annual Report is designed to provide an overview of court operations, acquaint the public with Nebraska’s courts, and promote a greater understanding of the many programs and services we provide. This year’s report emphasizes judicial leadership and program management, reflecting our ongoing commitment to accountability and service.

As I noted in my State of the Judiciary address to the Nebraska Legislature on January 28, 2025: “Over the years, we have collaborated to find new and innovative ways to administer justice. In doing so, the Judicial Branch has expanded its core functions, which has proven to be a benefit to our citizens. The partnerships and cooperation between our branches are vital to maintaining a society where the law is applied fairly and justice is accessible to all. Some of these partnerships include probation, post-release supervision, problem-solving courts, and public guardianships. Our joint efforts have increased public safety and saved taxpayer dollars.”

The Judicial Branch’s partnership with the Legislative and Executive branches continues to make significant progress possible, strengthening the delivery of justice and improving services to Nebraskans statewide.

This report summarizes the contributions of judges, staff, and program partners who work each day to ensure justice is delivered fairly and efficiently for the people of Nebraska.

Respectfully,
Jeffrey J. Funke
Chief Justice





JUSTICES OF THE NEBRASKA SUPREME COURT

Top Row: Justice John Freudenberg, Justice Stephanie Stacy, Justice Jonathan Papik, Justice Jason Bergevin

Bottom Row: Justice Lindsey Miller-Lerman, Chief Justice Jeffrey Funke, Justice William Cassel

CHIEF JUSTICE JEFFREY J. FUNK

Statewide - Chief Justice
Judicial Oath: November 1, 2025

JUSTICE STEPHANIE F. STACY

District 1 - Lincoln
Judicial Oath: September 28, 2015

JUSTICE LINDSEY MILLER-LERMAN

District 2 - Omaha
Judicial Oath: September 1, 1998

JUSTICE WILLIAM B. CASSEL

District 3 - O'Neill
Judicial Oath: May 9, 2012

JUSTICE JONATHAN J. PAPIK

District 4 - Omaha
Judicial Oath: April 11, 2018

JUSTICE JASON M. BERGEVIN

District 5 - Nebraska City
Judicial Oath: February 14, 2025

JUSTICE JOHN R. FREUDENBERG

District 6 - Rushville
Judicial Oath: July 6, 2018

NEBRASKA COURT OF APPEALS



**JUDGE
RIKO
BISHOP**

District 1
Judicial Oath:
August 20, 2013

**JUDGE
DAVID K.
ARTERBURN**

District 4
Judicial Oath:
January 17, 2017

**JUDGE
LAWRENCE E.
WELCH, JR.**

District 5
Judicial Oath:
March 28, 2018

**JUDGE
MICHAEL W.
PIRTLE**

District 2
Judicial Oath:
July 6, 2011

**JUDGE
FRANKIE J.
MOORE**

District 6
Judicial Oath:
January 28, 2000

**CHIEF JUDGE
FRANCIE C.
RIEDMANN**

District 3
Judicial Oath:
August 9, 2012

The Nebraska Constitution

provides that general administrative authority over all the courts in the state is vested in the Supreme Court and shall be exercised by the Chief Justice (Nebraska Const. art. V).

At the local level, trial court judges are responsible for the operation of the court system. They are tasked with providing leadership within their judicial district to enrich the well-being of the court system.

The Court supports a number of commissions and committees consisting of citizens, judges, and lawyers who collaborate to improve the delivery of justice throughout the state. A complete listing of committees and their members can be found on the Judicial Branch website under the Administration section.

Judicial Associations

Each level of the trial court system has an association providing leadership for its judges. Presidents of the associations for the 2024 fiscal year:

- **District Court Judges' Association:**
 - Judge Timothy P. Burns, 4th Judicial District, 10/2024 - 10/2025
 - Judge Jodi L. Nelson, 3rd Judicial District, 10/2023 – 10/2024
- **County Court Judges' Association:**
 - Judge Holly J. Parsley, 3rd Judicial District, 10/2024 - 10/2025
 - Judge Jeffrey M. Wightman, 11th Judicial District, 10/2023 – 10/2024
- **Separate Juvenile Judges' Association:**
 - Judge Jonathon D. Crosby, Sarpy County, 10/2024 - 10/2025
 - Judge Mary M. Z. Stevens, Douglas County, 10/2023 – 10/2024



Justice Jason Bergevin takes his oath of office, 2/14/25

Judicial Selection

Nebraska chooses judges using the merit selection system where nominating commissions solicit judicial applicants, screen, and interview. All judicial vacancies fall under the discretion of a judicial nominating commission.

Each judicial nominating commission is made up of four lawyers and four non-lawyers with a nonvoting Supreme Court Justice acting as chairperson. The judicial nominating commission holds a public hearing to interview candidates who have submitted their names for the open judgeship. The judicial nominating commission submits the names of at least two qualified attorneys to the Governor.

Qualifications

Applicants for positions on all levels of Nebraska courts must meet a number of requirements in order to be appointed to office. Each person must be a U.S. citizen, be at least 30 years of age, and have practiced law a minimum of five years in the State of Nebraska. The person must also be currently admitted to practice before the Nebraska Supreme Court.

New Judges, FY2025

Supreme Court:

Jeffrey J. Funke	Statewide	11/1/24
Jason M. Bergevin	Judicial District 5	2/14/25

District Court:

Timothy E. Hoeft	Judicial District 10	9/5/24
Kane M. Ramsey	Judicial District 9	2/28/25
Ryan M. Lindberg	Judicial District 4	3/28/25
Michael L. Long	Judicial District 7	5/29/25

County Court:

Natalie G. Nelsen-Pacey	Judicial District 10	1/9/25
Tamara T. Mosby	Judicial District 4	2/25/25
Philip K. Kleine	Judicial District 4	3/31/25

“THE LEADERSHIP SHOWN BY THE CHAIRS OF OUR COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES HAS BEEN NOTHING SHORT OF EXCEPTIONAL—BRINGING A CALMING PRESENCE AND A VOICE OF REASON AMID EMERGING AND COMPLEX ISSUES.”

Chief Justice Jeffrey J. Funke, May 8, 2025

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Chief Justice Funke convenes the annual Leadership Conference, comprised of those chairing Supreme Court commissions and committees. The conference enhances the leadership and administrative skills of trial court judges and promotes innovative branch-wide programming.

Photo: Justice William Cassel, Chair of the Technology Committee, provides his update.

Distinguished Judges

County Court Judge Alfred Corey of the 9th District (left) and District Court Judge Derek Weimer of 12th District (right) received the Nebraska Supreme Court's highest honors at its 2024 meeting in LaVista.

Corey was recognized for Improvement of Community Relations, and Weimer for Improvement of the Judicial System. Chief Justice Mike Heavican presented the awards, which honor exceptional contributions beyond regular judicial duties.



Leadership Academy Graduates

At this year's Leadership Conference, Chief Justice Funke recognized the 2024–2025 Leadership Academy judges. This year-long program, part of the Chief Justice's Leadership Conference, develops leadership skills among trial court judges. Each judge leads a project on a key court issue, collaborating with stakeholders and providing recommendations to strengthen the Judicial Branch.

CHIEF JUSTICE'S SUMMER TOUR

Chief Justice Heavican undertook his last Summer Tour in August 2024, visiting courthouses in District One for three days before concluding in District Three for the final day. Throughout the tour, along with members of the Supreme Court and staff, he heard from judges and court and probation staff on their innovative programming and successes. Additionally, the Summer Tour serves as an opportunity to meet with community leaders to strengthen the relationships that make courts work.

Judge Richard Smith welcomed the tour to the Richardson County Courthouse and spoke about his experience working with Problem-Solving Courts, highlighting their role in reducing recidivism, keeping families together, and saving taxpayer money.



In Johnson County, Judge Rick Schreiner demonstrated the new videoconferencing technology with Tecumseh State Correctional Facility that allows for easier court appearances.



The ribbon was cut in Gage County, commemorating the beginning of the THRIVE program in the First District, which connects youth and adults to foster personal growth and long-term stability.





Assistive Listening in the Courts

In courtrooms throughout Nebraska, assistive listening technology is now standard. What started as a small pilot project to install telecoil looping systems in a few courtrooms grew into a project of the Access to Justice Commission to make the assistive listening available statewide.

During the Summer Tour, Crete-area attorney Shaylene Smith demonstrated the usage and benefits of the system for all in attendance, as well as sharing her personal reflections on using it in court.

Encouraging Foster Families

In Seward County, the tour group heard from Judges Lynelle Homolka (left) and C. Jo Petersen on their efforts to expand the roster of foster parents and support children in the process.

Judge Petersen showed the bag of personal items gifted to children to ease their transition. A new video production was screened also, featuring testimonials of foster parents and system workers.



COURTS IN THE COMMUNITIES



Students line up to engage with the Supreme Court after arguments at Wahoo High School.

Each year the Supreme Court visits Nebraska high schools and the state's law schools to hear oral arguments in front of students. The visits are part of a continuing effort by the Nebraska Supreme Court and the legal community to raise awareness of court processes and the importance of civics education to our society.

Justices spend time after the argument sessions talking to students about the appellate process and career opportunities as lawyers. Cases are selected to demonstrate the variety of legal arguments that face the court system on a regular basis.

Additionally, the Court of Appeals annually holds oral arguments on college campuses throughout Nebraska as a way of bringing the judicial branch to young people, inviting students, local schools, and community members.

Court of Appeals Judges Frankie Moore, Francie Riedmann, and Riko Bishop answer questions at Wesleyan University.



NEBRASKA SUPREME COURT - Chief Justice and 6 Justices

Highest Appellate Court:

- Discretionary appeals from the Court of Appeals
- Mandatory appeals in
 - capital cases
 - cases concerning constitutionality of statutes
- May hear cases removed from or that have bypassed the Court of Appeals by a petition of further review
- Original Jurisdiction: Specified Cases

COURT OF APPEALS - 6 Judges (*Panels of 3 judges hear appeals throughout state*)

Intermediate Appellate Court:

- Trial court appeals except those heard by Supreme Court pursuant to:
 - mandatory jurisdiction
 - direct appeal status
 - removal procedures
 - bypass procedure

SEPARATE JUVENILE COURTS -

12 Judges

- Serving 3 counties
(Douglas, Sarpy, & Lancaster)
- Jurisdiction:
 - County Court
 - Juvenile & domestic jurisdiction

DISTRICT COURTS -

58 Judges

- Serving 12 districts
- Trial court of general jurisdiction:
 - Felony cases
 - Domestic relations cases
 - Civil cases not less than \$57,000
- When serving as an appellate court:
 - Some county court appeals
 - Administrative agency appeals

WORKERS' COMPENSATION COURT - 6 Judges

- Hear cases throughout the state
- Jurisdiction:
 - Injuries or diseases caused by work



COUNTY COURTS -

59 Judges

- Serving 12 districts
- Jurisdiction:
 - Misdemeanor cases, including traffic, and municipal ordinance violations
 - Preliminary hearing in felony cases
 - Civil cases - may not exceed \$57,000
 - Small Claims - may not exceed \$7,500
 - Probate, guardianship, conservatorship, adoption, and eminent domain
- Function as juvenile courts except in Douglas, Sarpy, and Lancaster Counties

STATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR

COREY R. STEEL



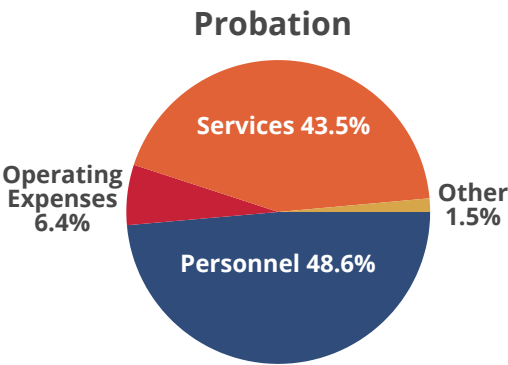
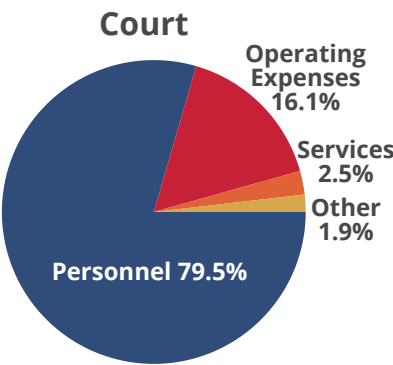
I am pleased to present this year's Nebraska Judicial Branch Annual Report, which reflects the ongoing commitment, adaptability, and excellence demonstrated across our judicial system. This report offers an overview of the accomplishments achieved throughout the past year which are made possible by the unwavering dedication of our judges and court and probation staff.

As we continue to see a steady increase in court activity, our Judicial Branch stands ready to meet these growing demands. Through strategic prioritization, innovation, and collaboration, we are well-positioned to navigate the complex challenges of a modern court system and to respond confidently to evolving legislative priorities.

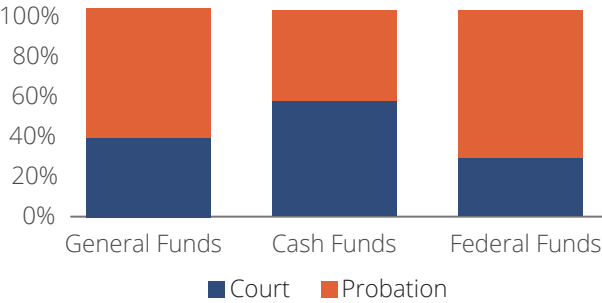
We remain focused on our mission to ensure the public has equal access to justice using leadership, education, technology, and administrative services to implement consistent, efficient, and effective court practices. Guided by the core values of integrity and professionalism, innovation and continuous improvement, accountability, and excellence, we move forward committed to serving the people of Nebraska and strengthening public trust in our judicial system.

Total Expenditures by Major Account Category FY25

	Court	Probation	Total
Personnel	84,404,463	72,641,173	157,045,636
Operating Expenses	17,123,855	9,590,844	26,714,699
Services	2,671,944	65,057,292	67,729,236
Travel	970,291	1,528,186	2,498,477
Equipment/IT Projects	118,060	620,800	738,860
Grant-in-Aid	860,000	-	860,000
Total	106,148,613	149,438,295	255,586,908

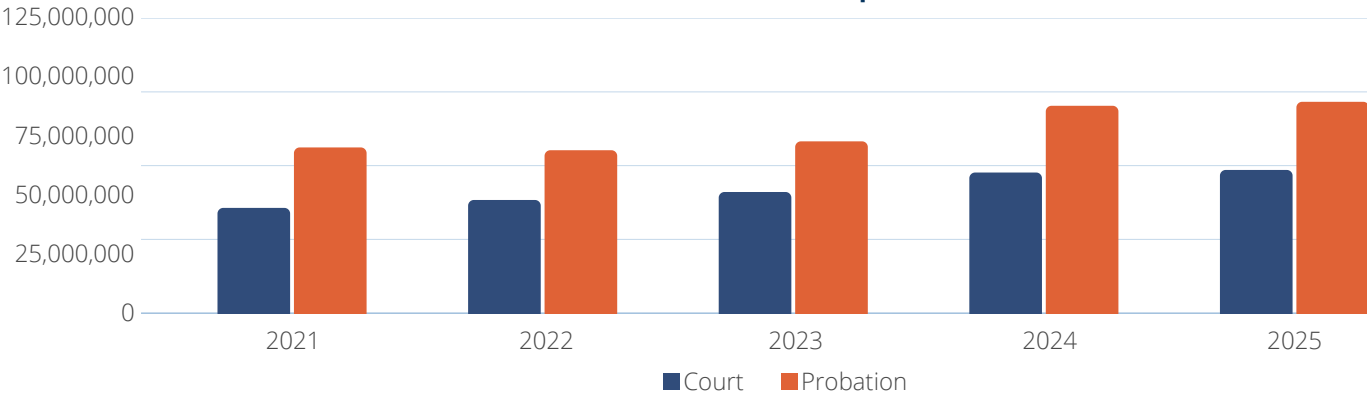


Total Expenditures by Fund Source FY25



	Court	Probation	Total
General Funds	97,074,958	143,272,953	240,347,911
Cash Funds	7,620,638	5,643,278	13,263,916
Federal Funds	1,453,017	522,064	1,975,081
Total	106,148,613	149,438,295	255,586,908

General Fund Expenditures for Judicial Branch Operations



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Sanaz Ahmadi, Chief Information Officer

The **Information Technology Division** is responsible for technological support of the Judicial Branch. Application development of court (JUSTICE/SCCALES) and probation (NPACS) case management systems are also under the purview of the Division.

Technology teams implement improvements to online services (such as those below) to help the Judicial Branch run efficiently in delivering information and services to the public and the legal community.

- eFiling
- ePayment
- Service provider registration
- Voucher submission
- Online calendars
- Court case information searches



Over 9.4 million court case views online

Case information is made available through the internet for all county, district, separate juvenile, and appellate courts. An 8% increase over the last fiscal year.



Over \$33,000,000 in online payments

Electronic payments are accepted statewide for court fines, judgments, filing costs, and probation fees.



220 Judicial Branch offices supported

Court, probation, and administrative staff across Nebraska depend on the Judicial Branch IT Division for assistance with software, hardware, or general technology questions.



22,000+ programming hours

The Judicial Branch case management systems are all custom built, and continually updated to meet with new rule and statutory requirements, as well as automating new processes for courts and probation.

JUDICIAL BRANCH EDUCATION

Kelli Wood, Deputy Administrator

Judicial Branch Education (JBE) provides essential continuing education to maintain and increase professional competence and knowledge to ensure the delivery of the highest quality services to the people of Nebraska. The Supreme Court Rules and the Judicial Branch Advisory Committee standards outline minimum education requirements for all judges, attorneys, and judicial branch staff. JBE also manages continuing education for attorneys in Nebraska.

JBE coordinates new and ongoing education delivered through in-person, online, and distance learning events. The division also assists outside stakeholders, such as Problem-Solving Court team members, probation providers, and attorneys, in meeting mandatory educational requirements to fulfill their roles as part of Nebraska's judicial system.

In FY25, the division devoted resources to reviewing and enhancing orientation and onboarding activities, developing new courses to meet evolving needs of the branch, and various leadership development activities. Additionally, JBE has partnered with Research and Data to identify and measure tangible outcomes of training.

A new subcommittee of the JBE Advisory Committee was formed to identify ways to improve onboarding and orientation for all court staff and judges.

JBE standards were updated and revised to provide greater clarity and include an annual ethics training requirement for all staff and judges. The standards were adopted by the Supreme Court in January, and four new ethics courses were developed and delivered to meet that need.

- Court Leadership Development Cohorts had a total of 18 new participants. JBE also held a reunion for previous cohorts - 20 court leaders attended.
- Partnered with Doane College to award college credit to students completing New Probation Officer Training.
- Provided orientation programs to eight new judges.



**New or
Updated Courses**

For the first time since 2019 a cohort of 11 judges participated in the reimagined Chief's Leadership Academy.



OPERATIONS

Jacey R. Rader, Acting Deputy Administrator

The **Operations Division** performs a wide variety of functions in its support of trial courts and probation operations throughout the state.

Prioritized functions include:

- All elements of human resources
- Internal and external communications, social media, and audio/video productions
- Web development, design, and maintenance
- Interstate transfers of probationers
- Data collection, analysis, and reporting
- Probation performance management
- Community outreach and education



Douglas County Assistant Judicial Administrator of Team Development Kelley Golden, District 4J Probation Specialized Populations Officer Eric Smith and District 4A Probation Specialized Populations Officer Margeaux King, are ready to greet career seekers at the Creighton University All-Majors Spring Career Fair on February 21, 2025, in Omaha.



HUMAN RESOURCES

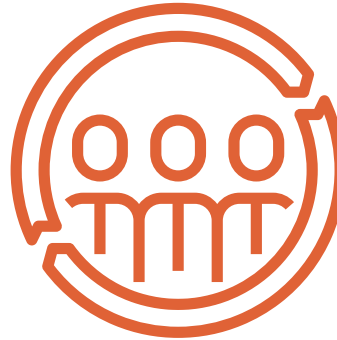
The **Office of Human Resources** provides services to Judicial Branch staff and applicants, including all trial courts and probation offices funded under the Judicial Branch budget. The office is responsible for payroll, recruitment, position classification, compensation, employee relations, benefits, and payroll records. Administrative staff is available to help employees understand the Nebraska Supreme Court Personnel Policies and Procedures, including the processes of hiring, performance management, and disciplinary actions. Administrative staff also provide guidance in an effort to resolve employee conflicts and to address allegations of misconduct.



633 Openings Posted
1,633 Staff on Payroll (avg.)

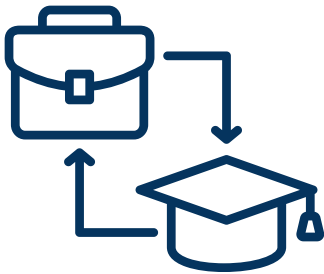
302

New
Employees Processed



262

Employee
Exits Processed



**41 Completed Internships
& Job Shadows**



NEJudicial

INTERSTATE COMPACT

The **Office of Interstate Compact** is responsible for assisting with the facilitation of the transfer of supervision for both adult and juvenile probationers to the state where the client resides, as well as facilitating the safe return of any juvenile who runs (absconds) to another state. Furthermore, the compact office monitors statewide compliance with adult and juvenile compact rules and provides training and resources to field staff, district management, and other justice partners. Additionally, the compact office is charged with reviewing all inter-district transfer and shared supervision cases to ensure adherence to protocol and assist with the seamless transition of supervision within the State of Nebraska.



The Compact Office assisted in facilitating the safe return of 39 out-of-state juvenile runaways.



Public Information & Educational Outreach

The **Office of Public Information and Educational Outreach** manages media inquiries, public information requests, and opportunities for the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals to engage with communities, including students. The Office assists both national and in-state media to facilitate expanded media coverage. Educational materials regarding cameras in courts are produced for both media outlets and judges. Additionally, the Office directs employee communications, creates and distributes press releases, and coordinates messaging on a variety of topics.



In March 2025 Chief Justice Jeffrey Funke welcomed journalists from the state's major news outlets to a roundtable discussion on Judicial Branch administration and appellate courts. The event occurred at the Nebraska State Library, ensuring easy access for statehouse news reporters. The intent of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for open dialogue between the media and judicial administrators.



On May 7, 2025, the Nebraska Supreme Court amended the comments to Neb. Rev. Code of Judicial Conduct § 5-302.10. A key update emphasizes that judges must avoid undermining public confidence in judicial independence, integrity, or impartiality when speaking, writing, or teaching about cases.

New Comments 4 and 5 clarify that judges may:

- Speak publicly about the justice system and civics education.
- Lead efforts to improve public understanding of the courts.
- Identify access-to-justice barriers.
- Support civics education, legal presentations, and justice-related reforms.
- Engage with the media or public to explain court actions and legal principles, including referencing public information from open cases.

The original suggestion for additional comments was made by David Sachar (pictured), Director of the Center for Judicial Ethics for the National Center for State Courts in partnership with the Nebraska State Bar Foundation's Bench Media ON-AIR Working Group.



Digital Communications

The **Office of Digital Communications** manages the primary digital communications channels for the Judicial Branch, including the website and social media accounts. In addition, the Office implements the creation of audio and visual productions, as well as graphic design and branding practices. In coordination with the Office of Public Information & Educational Outreach, the Office is responsible for the strategic public relations activities of the Branch.



>5.6
million

In FY25, the Nebraska Judicial Branch website served over 5.6 million page views to over 812,000 visitors.




390
Stories Published

Bringing the work of the Judicial Branch to the public.



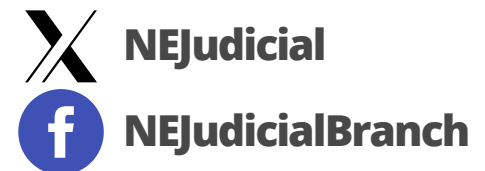
45
Audio/Visual
Productions

Podcasts and videos diving into the work of employees statewide.



3,600+
Photographs taken

Promoting and archiving daily life in the Judicial Branch and special events affecting Nebraskans.





Research & Data

The **Research and Data team** provides data, research, and information to judicial, probation, and administrative leadership. It is responsible for completing a variety of recurring and emergent reports and analyses that are used to help drive day-to-day business decisions. It collaborates with internal divisions to provide pilot study evaluation and support internal research endeavors. Reports are available on the Judicial Branch website publications page.

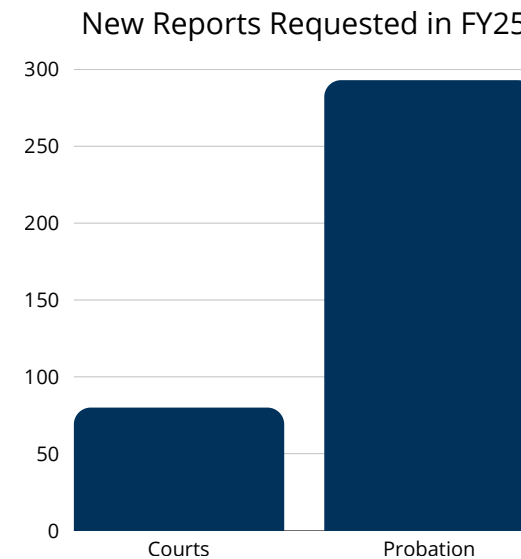
The Nebraska Supreme Court's Research and Data Team received the 2024 Reporting Excellence Award from the National Center for State Courts. This prestigious honor highlights the team's exceptional work in providing accurate state-level Court of Appeals and Supreme Court data to the national Court Statistics Project.



Members of the team (left to right) include: Brandon Holding, Justin Swartz, Todd Koehler, Kristen Nikolai, Rick Hixson, and Hazel Delgado.

Research and Data believes that data isn't just about numbers, it is about helping leaders make informed decisions that drive strategic action and improve outcomes.

In FY2025, the team scheduled 1,035 internal reports to be delivered yearly, monthly, weekly or daily. Additionally, they provided 373 new standalone reports to internal and external stakeholders.



COURT SERVICES

Amy Prenda, Deputy Administrator

The **Court Services Division** provides administrative support to the trial courts. This division is responsible for communicating Supreme Court administrative policy and providing procedural standards and publications for trial court operations. Intense focus is placed on areas related to working with and educating court staff and interpreters; developing and maintaining court forms and procedures manuals; providing support to the statewide child support referees; and providing support for special interest issues like access to justice, self-represented litigants, and mediation.

The Court Services Division also serves as a liaison to trial court-related associations and committees.

COURT SERVICES DIVISION			
Office of Dispute Resolution	Trial Court Services	Language Access	Access to Justice



Trial Court Services supports the Nebraska Supreme Court in its administrative and supervisory authority as set out by the Nebraska State Constitution, art. V, sec. 1. Specifically, Trial Court Services provides support and resources to district, county, separate juvenile courts and the public.



Court Operations

Providing support to the trial courts to ensure compliance with legislation, rules, and policies that impact court operations, and taking the necessary steps to update and revise court forms, procedures, and processes accordingly.



Education

Providing support to Nebraska Judicial Branch initiatives to ensure outreach to the trial courts and court users so they understand and are aware of new court procedures and processes.



Access

Providing support to ensure services are accessible and equitable to diverse populations both inside and outside the courtroom.



LANGUAGE ACCESS

The **Language Access Program** recruits, trains, and certifies spoken language court interpreters and coordinates the appointment of qualified professionals to ensure meaningful access to court and probation services for Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals, free of charge and regardless of case type. The program is staffed by individuals dedicated to delivering high-quality language services, including in-person, phone, and video interpretation, document translation, and Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART).



FISCAL YEAR HIGHLIGHTS

- A challenging Platte county case involved five protection orders and brought together five American Sign Language and Spanish interpreters. They supported access to justice even with self-represented parties, remote interpreting, and multiple cases.
- For the first time in nearly a decade, Nebraska celebrated a new homegrown certified interpreter. There are now 29 across five languages: Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, Chinese Mandarin, and French.
- Four lending libraries has been put in place, allowing access to training materials for certification exams, providing the opportunity for interpreters to check out material and train at their own pace.
- At the first-ever Interpreter Conference, 44 interpreters gathered for a day of professional development in practices and procedures essential to the delivery of services in the Branch.

Interpreter Certification Pathway

This new initiative has been developed to empower and assist bilingual individuals in pursuing a career as a Nebraska Judicial Branch interpreter. The comprehensive pathway seeks to address the process of certification in its entirety to increase the number and language diversity of certified and provisionally certified interpreters. The multi-faceted pathway includes not only orientation, written and oral exams, but skill building, lending libraries, provisional certification, and continuing education units. A key component of the pathway is offering a large portion of it online which allows the Nebraska Judicial Branch to meet aspiring interpreter partners where they are.

In its first six months, orientation attendance has increased significantly with attendees representing a microcosm of the communities the Nebraska Judicial Branch serves on a daily basis.



BY THE NUMBERS

- **21,041** - Interpreted events (Court and Probation)
- **78,054** - Limited English Proficient Speakers (many appear multiple times)
- **70** - Languages supported, the top five by demand:
 - Spanish
 - Karen
 - Arabic
 - Somali
 - Nuer



ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The mission of the **Access to Justice Commission** is to identify barriers to equal access in Nebraska and to recommend and coordinate effective solutions so that all court users have equal access to swift, fair justice. In FY2025, this mission was advanced through several new and ongoing initiatives of the Commission and its three standing committees--the Self-Represented Litigation Committee, the Committee on Equity and Fairness, and the Consortium of Tribal, State and Federal Courts.

Expanding Public Access to the Court Docket: *The “JUSTICE for All” Initiative:*

A working group of the Access to Justice Commission has launched a pilot project to expand free public access to the electronic case management system for Nebraska’s trial courts (known as JUSTICE) and appellate courts (known as SCCALES). Every day in Nebraska, court users can access case information in JUSTICE and SCCALES at no cost using public kiosks available at the courthouse during regular business hours. The new “JUSTICE For All” initiative will also make JUSTICE and SCCALES available at partner libraries across Nebraska, and at the law libraries at UNL, Creighton, and the State Capitol.

This pilot project, which includes public libraries in each of Nebraska’s 12 judicial districts, does more than just increase the number of locations where the public can access JUSTICE and SCCALES at no cost. It also expands the hours of availability to include evenings and weekends, and it enables trained library staff to support library patrons during their searches. Usage data and user feedback will be collected and analyzed for each pilot location, allowing the Working Group to assess the impact of this initiative on court users statewide and to consider possible expansion to other public spaces.

Statewide Court User Survey:

During a series of community focus groups designed to engage court users and court leaders in an ongoing discussion about equal access in Nebraska’s courts, the Commission heard from court users that they did not have an effective way to provide regular feedback on their court experience. In response to this concern, the Commission worked with the Research and Data Division to develop an online survey that collects regular feedback from court users of all types, including parties in a case, jurors, witnesses, court observers, and those using the courthouse to file documents or pay a fine. Survey data will be collected continuously throughout the year and compiled into an annual report published on the Supreme Court’s website. Survey questions will focus on perceptions of fairness, accessibility, and efficiency, and will include information about video appearances and language interpretation needs. This perpetual court user survey will enable court users to provide timely feedback on their court experience and will help the Commission to identify areas for improvement, measure the effectiveness of ongoing initiatives, and develop future initiatives to advance equal access to swift, fair justice for all court users.



ACCESS TO JUSTICE, continued

Connecting Self-Represented Litigants to Legal Information and Resources: *The Self-Help Center Pilot Project in Douglas County; the Court Navigator Project in Hamilton and York Counties:*

A significant percentage of Nebraska's court users are self-represented litigants (SRLs), and one of the Commission's core strategic principles is that all court users should have access to understandable legal information and resources so they can navigate the court system efficiently and effectively. Two new pilot projects aim to expand access to basic legal information and resources for SRLs in Nebraska.

With the assistance of a grant from the State Justice Institute, the AOCP has collaborated with the Self-Represented Litigation Committee, local trial judges, attorneys, and court staff, to pilot a court-based Self-Help Center in Douglas County. The first of its kind in Nebraska, this self-help center is located in the courthouse and is supported by trained court staff who support SRLs by explaining court rules and procedures, providing public information about case dockets and calendars, and referring litigants to available legal resources when appropriate. Preliminary survey data captured from patrons using the Douglas County Self-Help Center is positive, with 84% responding that they received the help they needed. The most frequent requests involve assistance with court forms, explaining court processes, and printing documents. As part of this pilot project, case packets have been developed for several common case types; the packets include step-by-step instructions, plain language court forms, and information on how to present evidence and testimony. These case packets will be available in both English and Spanish and will be housed on the Nebraska Supreme Court's website where they can be accessed by court users and court staff statewide.

Another new initiative is the Court Navigator Program, proposed by the Self-Represented Litigation Committee and recently approved by the Commission to launch in Hamilton and York Counties. This pilot project combines a specialized SRL docket with on-site volunteer court navigators to assist SRLs. These non-lawyer navigators cannot provide legal advice, but they are trained to provide legal information, explain court processes and forms, and direct SRLs to appropriate resources. Later phases of the court navigator pilot will include expansion to other counties and providing virtual navigator support statewide.



Modernizing *In Forma Pauperis* Procedures:

To ensure that mandatory filing fees and court costs are not a barrier to accessing the trial and appellate courts, Nebraska law has long authorized parties to request leave to proceed in forma pauperis (IFP) under certain circumstances. In FY2025, a working group of the Committee on Equity and Fairness completed a comprehensive study of the statutes, court rules, court forms, and local practices governing IFP status in Nebraska. As a result of that study, the working group prepared a detailed report recommending a series of reforms that included revising and consolidating IFP court forms, creating uniform court rules and standards to govern the IFP process, and improving IFP data collection in JUSTICE and SCCALES to better track trends. These recommendations were recently presented to the full Commission for its further discussion and consideration.



OFFICE OF DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The **Office of Dispute Resolution** (ODR) oversees the development and delivery of court-connected dispute resolution processes available statewide and in partnership with regional non-profit mediation centers. These ODR-approved mediation centers provide Nebraskans' access to court alternatives through various dispute resolution processes for various case types, including small claims and parenting plan mediation, child welfare conferencing, and juvenile and adult restorative justice.

Mediation and restorative justice are guided by the principles of procedural fairness, ensuring transparency at every stage. Participants are given a voice to share and validate their perspectives through a respectful and transparent process. Neutral mediators/facilitators demonstrate understanding and provide guidance, allowing individuals to navigate their challenges and reach meaningful resolutions together.



OFFICE OF PUBLIC GUARDIAN

Marla Fischer, Director

The **Office of Public Guardian** (OPG) is designed to serve as the guardian or conservator for an individual when no other alternatives are available.

In addition to serving as guardian and/or conservator of last resort when no family or suitable individual is available, the OPG provides training, education, and support to guardians and conservators across the state, and recruits individuals to serve as guardians and/or conservators for Nebraska's vulnerable individuals.

The Advisory Council on Public Guardianship guides the work of the OPG. Work began on January 1, 2015, to develop the processes, guidelines, plans, and personnel policies to implement the Public Guardianship Act.



The OPG serves as guardian and/or conservator for **369 incapacitated adults** as of June 30, 2025. The individuals served by OPG have complex co-occurring medical and mental health conditions, with **84% of individuals having severe mental health issues.**

1,571

Private guardians and/or conservators trained



Guardian education went completely online in November 2024 in response to high online registration numbers.

ATTORNEY SERVICES

Joshua Shasserre, Clerk of the Supreme Court & Court of Appeals

Under authority of the Nebraska Supreme Court, the **Attorney Services Division** oversees attorney admissions in the State of Nebraska.

The Division also oversees the attorney license renewal process, providing information to the public regarding attorney license status and malpractice insurance information.

The Attorney Services Division monitors attorney compliance with mandatory annual continuing legal education requirements, as well as assisting attorneys in fulfilling education requirements.



New attorneys await the beginning of the swearing-in ceremony, September 24, 2024.

The Attorney Services Division oversees attorney admissions by administering the bar exam and working with the State Bar Commission to approve potential bar members for character and fitness to practice law. Attorneys may be admitted to the bar by motion after obtaining a license to practice in another state or through the bar exam process.



**229 examinees
sat for the July
2024 exam**

Counsel for Discipline

Mark Weber, Counsel for Discipline & the Unauthorized Practice of Law

The goal of the attorney disciplinary process, through the **Office of the Counsel for Discipline**, is to protect the public, the profession, and our system of justice from the unethical conduct of attorneys.

The conduct of Nebraska lawyers must comport to the standards set forth in the Rules of Professional Conduct as adopted by the Nebraska Supreme Court. The Nebraska Supreme Court has assigned the Office of Counsel for Discipline to investigate and prosecute violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct.



365 Complaints Received

- 201** Rejected Upon Review
- 10** Formal Grievances
 - 1** Formal Charge
 - 4** Diversion
- 16** Unauthorized Practice of Law
- 85** Dismissed after investigation
- 51** Open and pending



4 Supreme Court Ethics Disciplinary Opinions

Resulting in one suspension, and three disbarments.



4 Lawyer's Advisory Committee Ethics Opinions

Nebraska attorneys can request advisory opinions from the Advisory Committee on the Rules of Professional Conduct related to their anticipated conduct.

COURT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Deb VanDyke-Ries, Director

The Nebraska **Court Improvement Project** (CIP) works to positively impact and improve outcomes for children, youth, and families involved with juvenile court through multi-disciplinary, judge-led "Through the Eyes of a Child" teams in every Nebraska county. CIP provides or facilitates education for child welfare and youth justice professionals, distributes data on court-involved youth and families, and collaborates with partner agencies, court professionals, and other stakeholders to improve court processes.

Upstream Initiative

CIP continues to expand the National Center for State Courts' (NCSC) Upstream initiative, which leverages judicial leadership to bring communities together to address family challenges before they lead to court involvement. CIP partnered with Judges Randin Roland (Cheyenne County) and Linda Bauer (Jefferson County) to host 1.5-day Upstream workshops in Sidney and Fairbury. Participants reviewed community supports, learned about the child welfare and youth justice systems, and created action plans to support families early. Local Through the Eyes of the Child teams will monitor progress. With a State Justice Institute grant, CIP will hold four Upstream workshops statewide by mid-2026.

Education

CIP and the Nebraska Department of Education hosted the CIP Regional Conferences in LaVista and Bridgeport, NE. Focused on educational planning for systems-involved youth, the conference was an opportunity to discover strategies to support educational success of young people in the youth justice and child welfare systems. By fostering better alignment, enhancing knowledge, and improving communication, we can create a common vision and improve educational outcomes for systems-involved youth.



CIP hosted eight webinars focused on the 2025 legislative session, TRACKS, the expansion of Bridge to Independence to youth exiting probation, and Tribal Response to Human Trafficking in addition to other topics. All webinars are recorded and can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/@ThroughtheeyesOrg>.

Safe and Together Core training was hosted by Nebraska CIP in Grand Island in April 2025. Forty participants learned about domestic violence informed practices to be implemented in the courts, government and non-profit agencies, law enforcement and the legal community.

NEBRASKA PROBATION

Expanding Opportunities

During the Chief Justice's Summer Tour, the Nebraska Supreme Court visited Doane University to strengthen its partnership with the school. In partnership with JBE, Doane is offering training to students to become probation officers.

Students will be able to earn academic credits for completing a nine-week program and have opportunities for internships with the judicial branch. This initiative aims to attract more students to work within the judicial system while providing valuable hands-on experience.



Above: Doane University President Dr. Roger Hughes addressing the tour.

Below: Deputy Director for Operations Gene Cotter (now Statewide Probation Administrator) speaks to the group on the unique partnership between the Judicial Branch and Doane University.



OCT. 2024

49

**PROBATION OFFICERS
SWORN-IN**

Forty-nine new Nebraska State Probation officers were sworn in by Supreme Court Chief Justice Michael Heavican on October 24, 2024, in the State Capitol Rotunda, witnessed by distinguished guests, family, and friends. In his remarks to the new officers, Chief Justice Heavican stated, "I want to congratulate you on behalf of the Nebraska Supreme Court and wish you luck in your challenging and rewarding jobs."



Continuing education significantly improves the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of drug courts. Research shows that training reduces recidivism, enhances participant well-being, and boosts graduation rates. Without it, court professionals risk losing vital skills—especially during staff turnover—which can weaken service quality. Regular, structured training aligns teams with best practices, strengthens participant trust, and supports a more effective justice system. Recognizing this, the Nebraska Supreme Court remains committed to providing annual training for judges and stakeholders to ensure compassionate, informed care statewide.



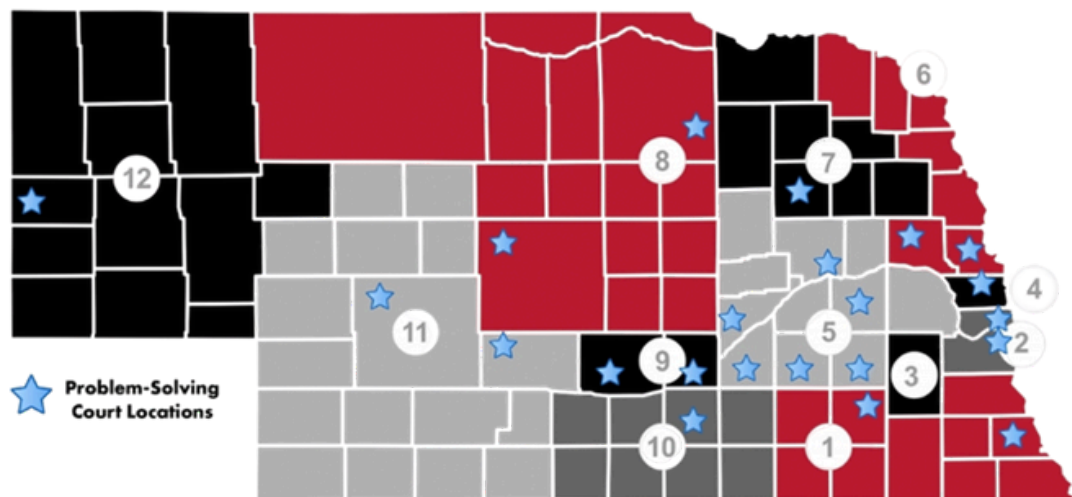
Problem-Solving Courts

In September 2024, the Nebraska Supreme Court hosted a statewide Problem-Solving Courts Education Event in La Vista (above), offering all PSC Team Members a chance to fulfill their 2024 education requirement. The event featured expert-led sessions from All Rise, NHTSA, and PSC professionals, with 257 multidisciplinary attendees from across the state.

In April 2025, the Court held a two-day Judicial Education Event in Lincoln for 31 Nebraska Judges, featuring five national trainers from All Rise at no cost (left). Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 100% of surveyed judges reporting they are likely to apply what they learned to their judicial work.

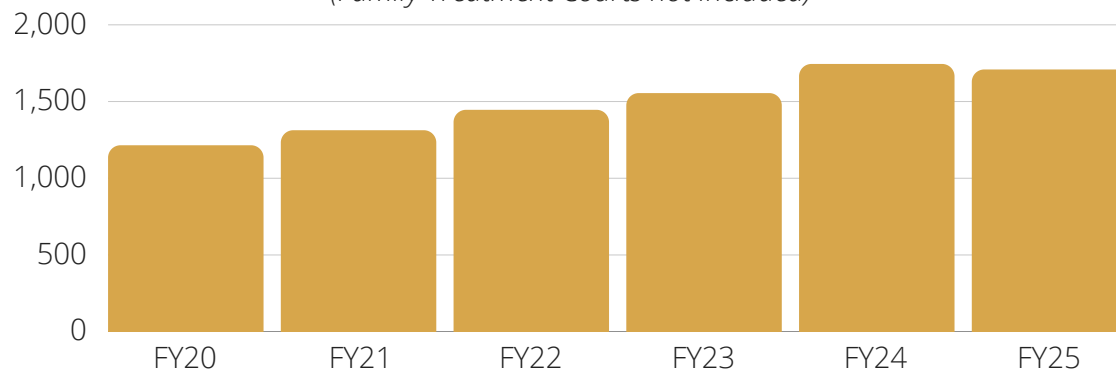


Nebraska Problem-Solving Courts

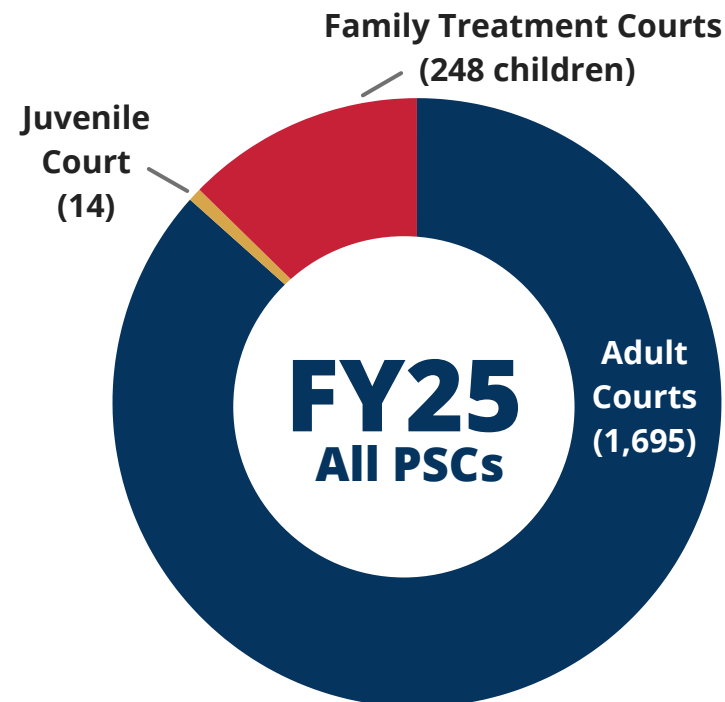


21 Adult Drug Courts	1 Young Adult Court
2 DUI Courts (Pilots)	1 Mental Health Court (Pilot)
4 Veterans Treatment Courts	1 Juvenile Drug Court
3 Reentry Courts	2 Family Treatment Courts

Total Participants Served
(Family Treatment Courts not Included)



- Nebraska's 35 Problem-Solving Courts operate in all 12 Judicial Districts, utilizing 8 unique court models.
- In FY25, Nebraska Problem-Solving Courts served 1695 Adults.
- Between FY09 and FY20, there was a 202% increase in the Adult and Juvenile populations served.



JUVENILE PROBATION SERVICES

Kari Rumbaugh, Deputy Administrator

The **Juvenile Probation Services Division** is responsible for the statewide administration of juvenile detention intake, investigations, supervision, rehabilitative/behavioral health/supportive services, and re-entry. During all stages of the court process, youth and their families are encouraged to be active participants. Supported by research and shown to have a positive impact on recidivism, as well as behavior change, juvenile probation applies a balanced approach tailored to reflect the distinct developmental needs of adolescents.

Juvenile probation's goal is to prevent juveniles from returning to the juvenile justice system or entering the criminal justice system.

Enhancing Statewide Behavioral Health Screening for Youth on Probation

As part of Nebraska's Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Nebraska (JJSEN) Initiative, Juvenile Services Division has been working to enhance juvenile probation's behavioral health screening tools and processes specific to include screening for trauma amongst justice involved youth. Through this work, a practice model was created and branded as TRACKS or Targeted, Responsive Assessment for the Court is Key to Youth Success. This practice model features enhancements to the behavioral health screening utilized by probation officers during the predisposition investigation (PDI). Launch of this practice model across the state is being done in a staged based manner guided by implementation science principles.

A success statement has been created to guide implementation efforts: Successful implementation and sustainability of the TRACKS process will lead to greater engagement of youth and families in the timely identification and follow up of behavioral health needs. Thus, informing a comprehensive picture of the youth's risk, need, and responsivity factors which are integrated into targeted recommendations for the court at disposition.

Additionally, another essential step taken in June of 2025 was to enhance treatment services available for youth by training twenty-seven selected licensed mental health clinicians, who are part of Nebraska Probation's registered service provider network, in an evidence-based trauma treatment modality. The treatment is the Trauma Affect Regulation: Guide for Education and Therapy (TARGET). The Training was facilitated by Dr. Keith Cruise of the Center for Trauma Recovery in Juvenile Justice (CTRJJ). Also in attendance were Juvenile Justice Resource Supervisors from the probation districts who serve as local liaisons for providers and service delivery. Providers from all twelve judicial districts were represented traveling from as far as Scottsbluff. National support will continue over the next year to ensure model fidelity.



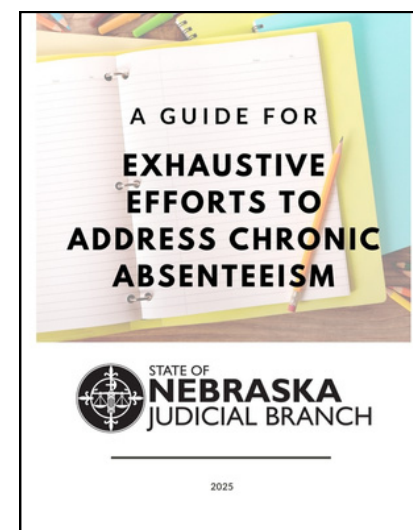
Rethinking Status Youth: Guide to Support Youth with Chronic Absenteeism

In 2021, under the leadership of the Supreme Court Probation Services Committee, the judicial-led Rethinking Status Youth workgroup was formed. The workgroup created the following goal:

- Make the commitment to endorse principles, opportunities and outcomes for status youth in Nebraska to divert from the Juvenile Justice system, by ensuring youth receive effective services in schools and local jurisdictions to provide specific exhausted efforts prior to court involvement.
- Ensure successful practices shown to be effective prior to court involvement are shared with local entities. In rare circumstances when a youth becomes court involved, best practice supervision, programs and services will be implemented to ensure status youth and families receive programming focused directly on the status offense.
- Programming addresses the core cause of the status offense (i.e. truancy). The role of the Court is to serve the specialized needs of families and youth, or secure parental cooperation regarding education. Use of evidence-based practice services and interventions shall include feedback from families and communities. Providing a voice to families and youth is paramount.

To accomplish the goal, with the support of national technical assistance, the workgroup created a guide with the purpose of providing a clear process for Nebraska public schools to utilize when supporting students in reducing chronic absenteeism. The document is titled “A Guide for Exhausted Efforts to Address Chronic Absenteeism.” The guide provides judicial guidance and includes core beliefs of the workgroup, national resources which were consulted, federal and state laws, best practice steps to exhaust efforts, and when a court filing is needed. The guide also includes best practice forms and an example of a collaborative plan, as well as data elements that can be utilized to track progress.

The guide has now been released for feedback from schools and county attorneys and will be utilized as a best practice approach by the Nebraska Department of Education. The Rethinking Workgroup guide was also highlighted on a national level at a Youth Justice Symposium in June 2025.



ADULT PROBATION SERVICES

Robert Denton, Deputy Administrator

The **Adult Probation Services Division** oversees the development, training, and implementation of:

- All statutory requirements for adult investigations and supervision;
- Evidence-based programming for adults;
 - Including individuals being released from incarceration for Class III, IIIA, and IV felony offenses, also referred to as post-release supervision;
- Rehabilitative/behavioral health and supportive services for those under community supervision, creating opportunities for constructive change and enhancing community safety.

Probation strives to provide equitable access to services by reducing financial barriers for individuals and families.

Nebraska Probation: Accountability, Behavior Change, Community Safety

- The foundation of Nebraska Probation is built on highly skilled probation officers engaging justice involved individuals and families within their communities. Probation officers conduct field visits and provide community supervision directed on accountability that supports access to behavioral health services toward reducing an individual's risk to reoffend and increased community safety.
- Probation serves all 93 counties in Nebraska through local probation offices and reporting centers.

Adult Probation Recidivism Rate:

19% 

In spite of a **50% increase in the high to very high risk to reoffend felony probation population** (63% of population) resulting from LB605 passed in 2015, Nebraska Probation's community-based supervision continues to effectively reduce adult recidivism.

Cost-effective community-based supervision
\$2,000 VS. \$41,000

Incarceration costs **\$41,000** per person per year.

Probation supervision costs nearly **\$2,000** per person per year.

Intensive supervision costs approximately **\$3,500** per person per year.



Collected **512,797 drug tests on 17,503 individuals** or an average of 29 chemical tests per adult individual under supervision, helping to enforce court-ordered abstinence and improve community safety.



During FY25, Nebraska Probation Reporting Centers had over **80,381 visits** by probation, post-release supervision, and problem-solving court individuals who accessed services and programming. On average, every day there were 38 unique justice involved individuals starting a new group at one of our 17 reporting centers or service centers across the state.

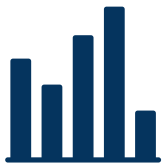


Probation partners with **550+ agencies and over 1100 individual behavioral health providers** across the State to ensure quality services are available for justice-involved individuals that improve positive outcomes.



Supervised **10,397 high-risk to reoffend individuals** on probation within their communities, focused on their successful rehabilitation and improved community safety.

Supervised **1,257 individuals on post-release supervision**, addressing their critical needs, such as housing and employment, and treatment for substance use and mental health.

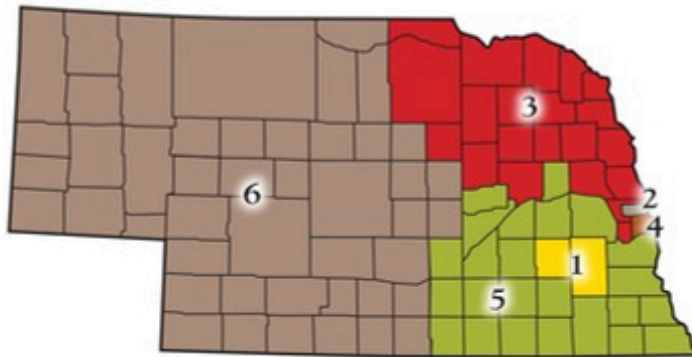


Nebraska Court Case Filings

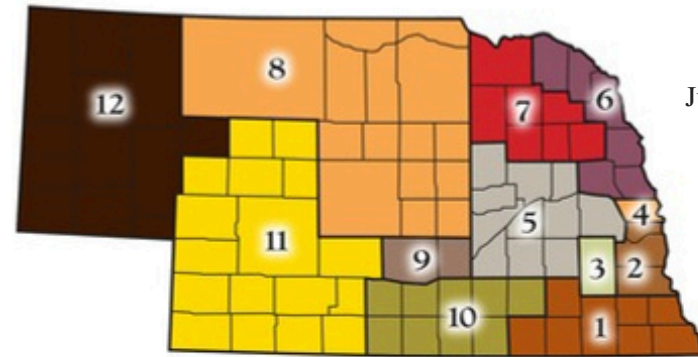
DISTRICT INFORMATION

The Constitution of the State of Nebraska distributes the judicial power of the state among the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, district courts and county courts. All state courts operate under the administrative direction of the Supreme Court.

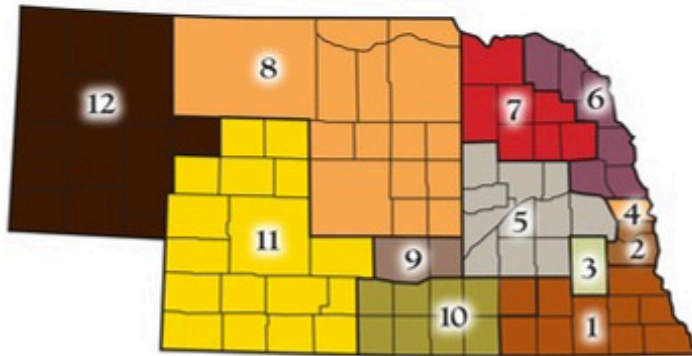
Supreme Court &
Court of Appeals
Judicial Districts



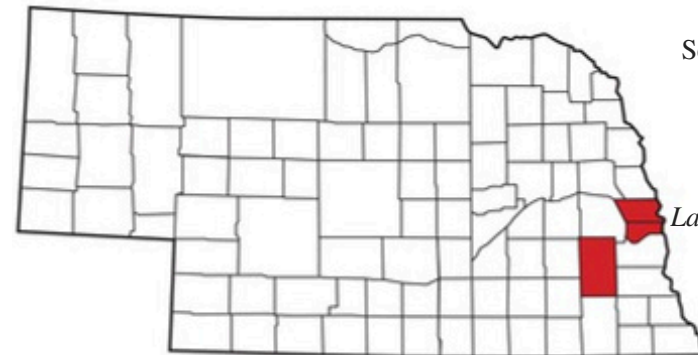
County Court
Judicial Districts



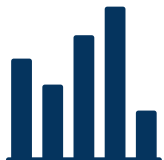
District Court &
Probation Judicial
Districts



Separate Juvenile
Courts



*Note: Sarpy,
Douglas, and
Lancaster Counties*



Nebraska Court Case Filings

APPELLATE COURT CASELOAD INFORMATION

Arguments in the Nebraska Supreme Court Courtroom are streamed live and preserved on the Oral Argument Archive of the Nebraska Judicial Branch website. Additional available arguments include the court sessions held at the University of Nebraska College of Law and Creighton University School of Law.

Court of Appeals arguments heard at the State Capitol in Lincoln are streamed live and archived.

When Appellate Courts hear arguments in communities across the state, the audio recording is archived on the website.

Caseload - Nebraska Supreme Court

New Cases Docketed

- Petitions to Bypass Filed
- Petitions to Bypass Granted
- Petitions to Bypass Denied

Cases Transferred from Court of Appeals

- Petitions for Further Review Filed
- Petitions for Further Review Granted
- Petitions for Further Review Denied

Cases Disposed by Opinion
Cases Disposed Without Opinion
Total Cases Disposed

FY24 *FY25*

61 **80**

35 24

23 17

9 12

105 **88**

178 164

15 14

168 142

130 129

39 34

169 **163**

Caseload - Nebraska Court of Appeals

New Cases Docketed

- Transferred to the Supreme Court
- Petitions to Bypass Granted

Cases Disposed by Opinion
Total Cases Disposed

FY24 *FY25*

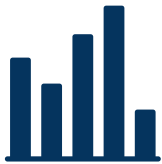
987 **910**

105 88

23 17

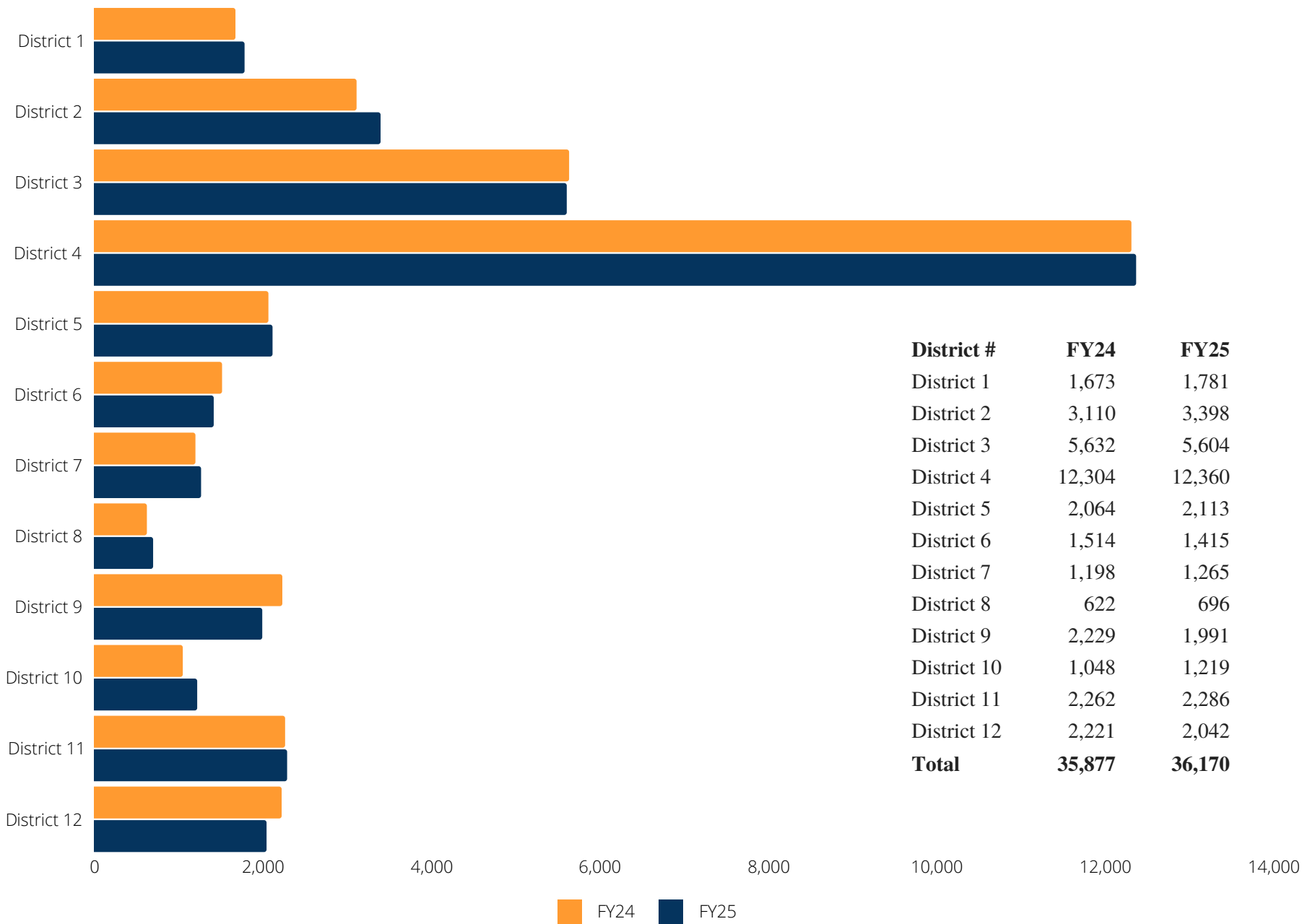
353 359

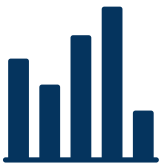
845 **830**



Nebraska Court Case Filings

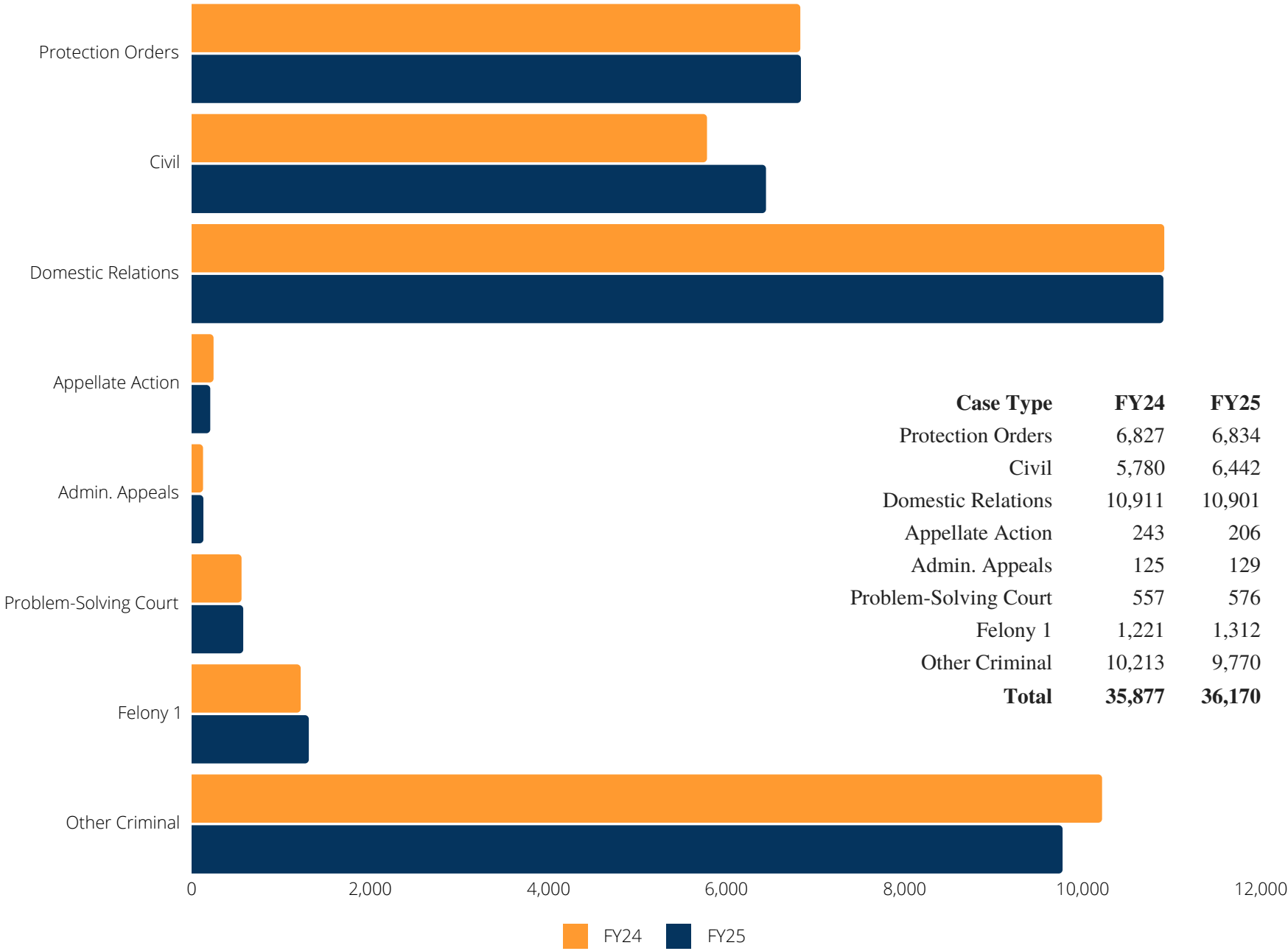
DISTRICT COURT CASE FILINGS BY DISTRICT FY25

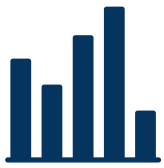




Nebraska Court Case Filings

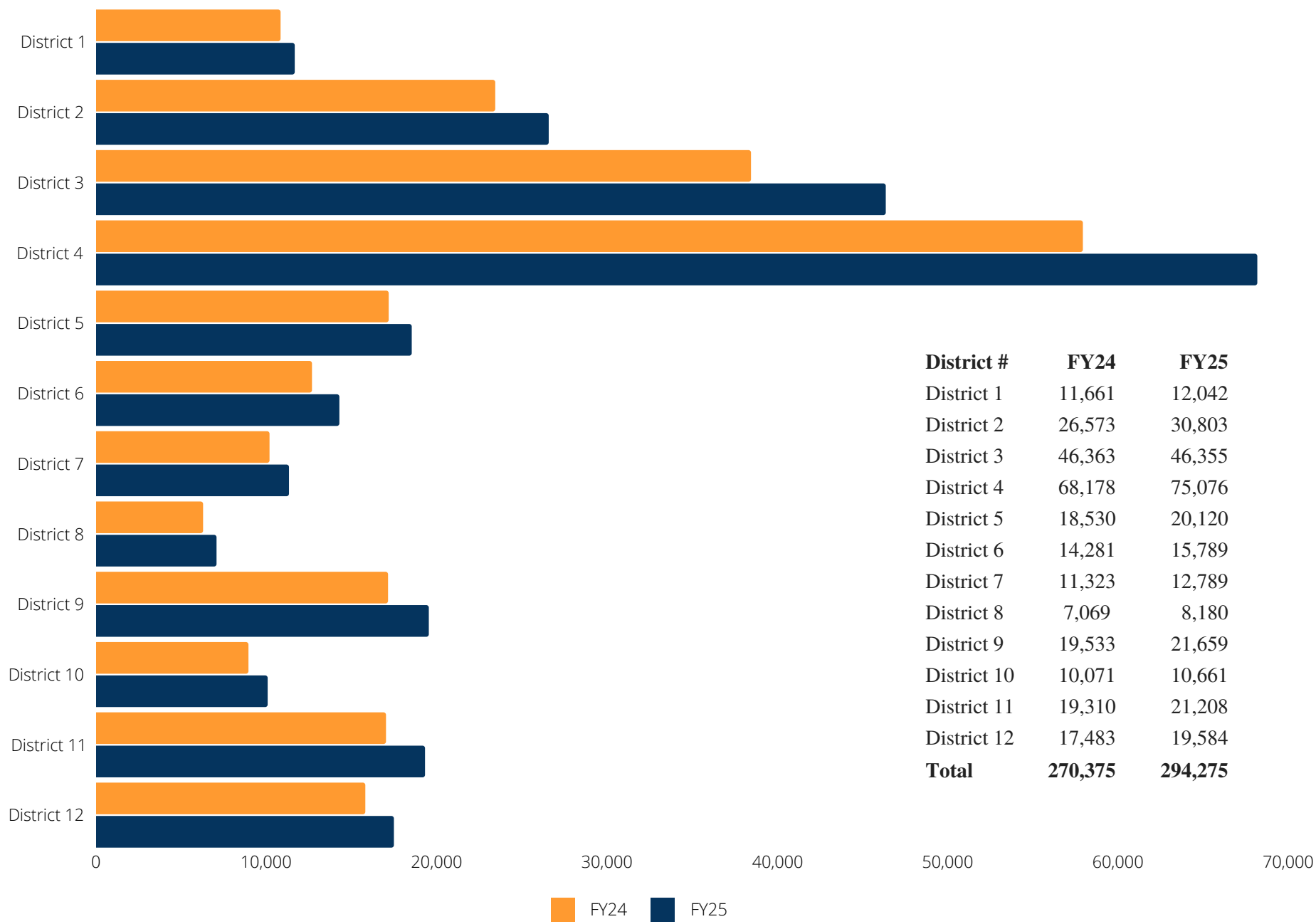
DISTRICT COURT CASE FILINGS BY CASE TYPE FY25

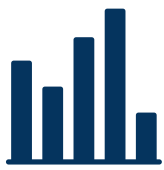




Nebraska Court Case Filings

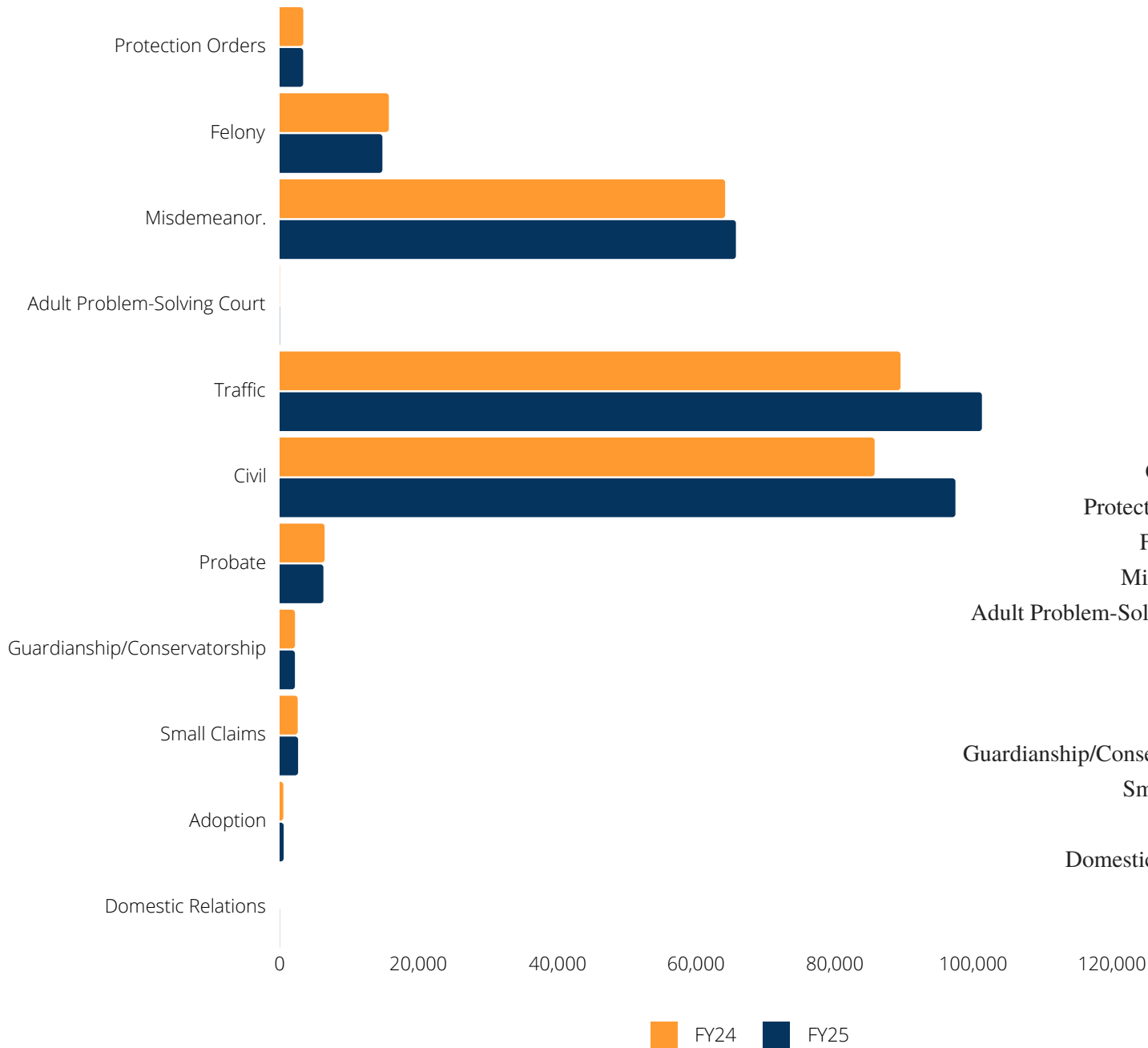
COUNTY COURT CASE FILINGS BY DISTRICT FY25



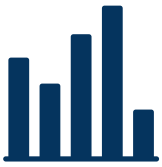


Nebraska Court Case Filings

COUNTY COURT CASE FILINGS BY CASE TYPE FY25

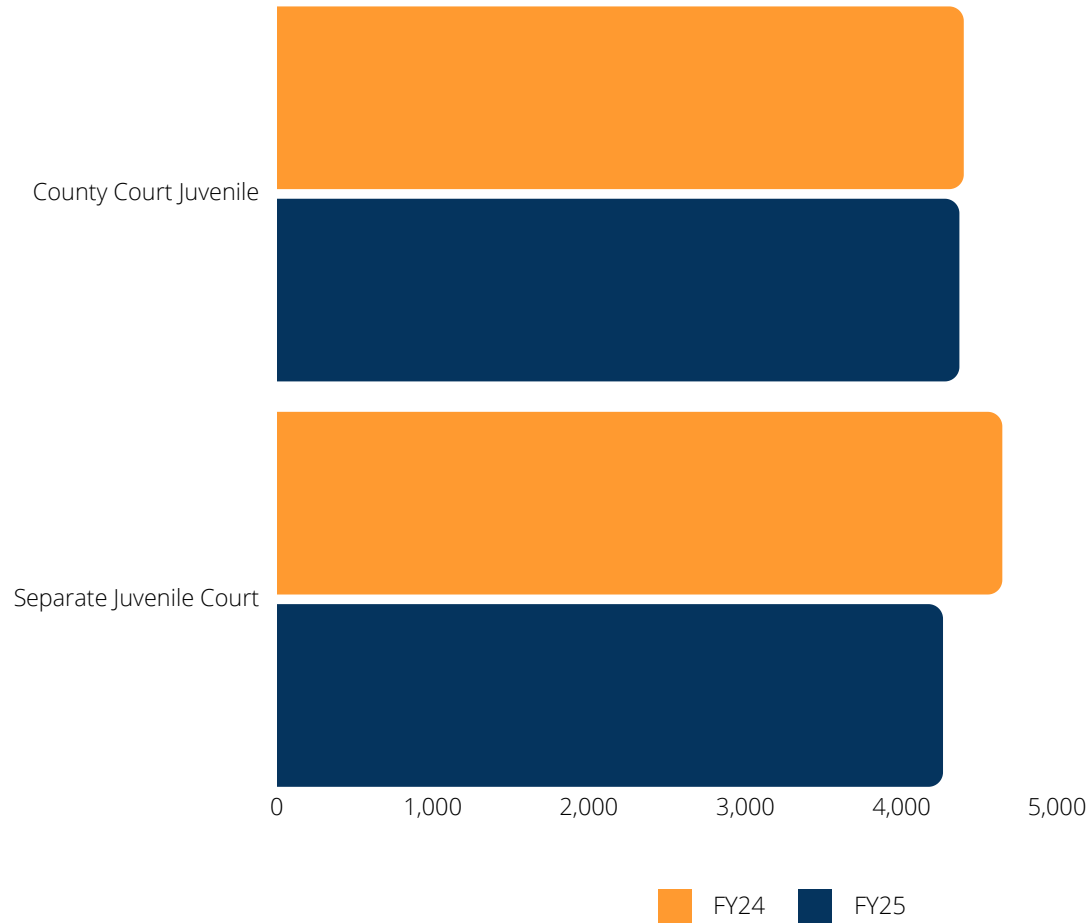


Case Type	FY24	FY25
Protection Orders	3,407	3,389
Felony (all)	15,737	14,805
Misdemeanor	64,189	65,742
Adult Problem-Solving Court	24	23
Traffic	89,459	101,189
Civil	85,727	97,373
Probate	6,482	6,305
Guardianship/Conservatorship	2,213	2,200
Small Claims	2,604	2,658
Adoption	530	581
Domestic Relations	1	10
Total	270,375	294,275

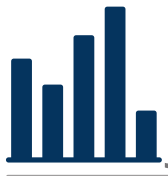


Nebraska Court Case Filings

JUVENILE CASE FILINGS BY COURT TYPE FY25

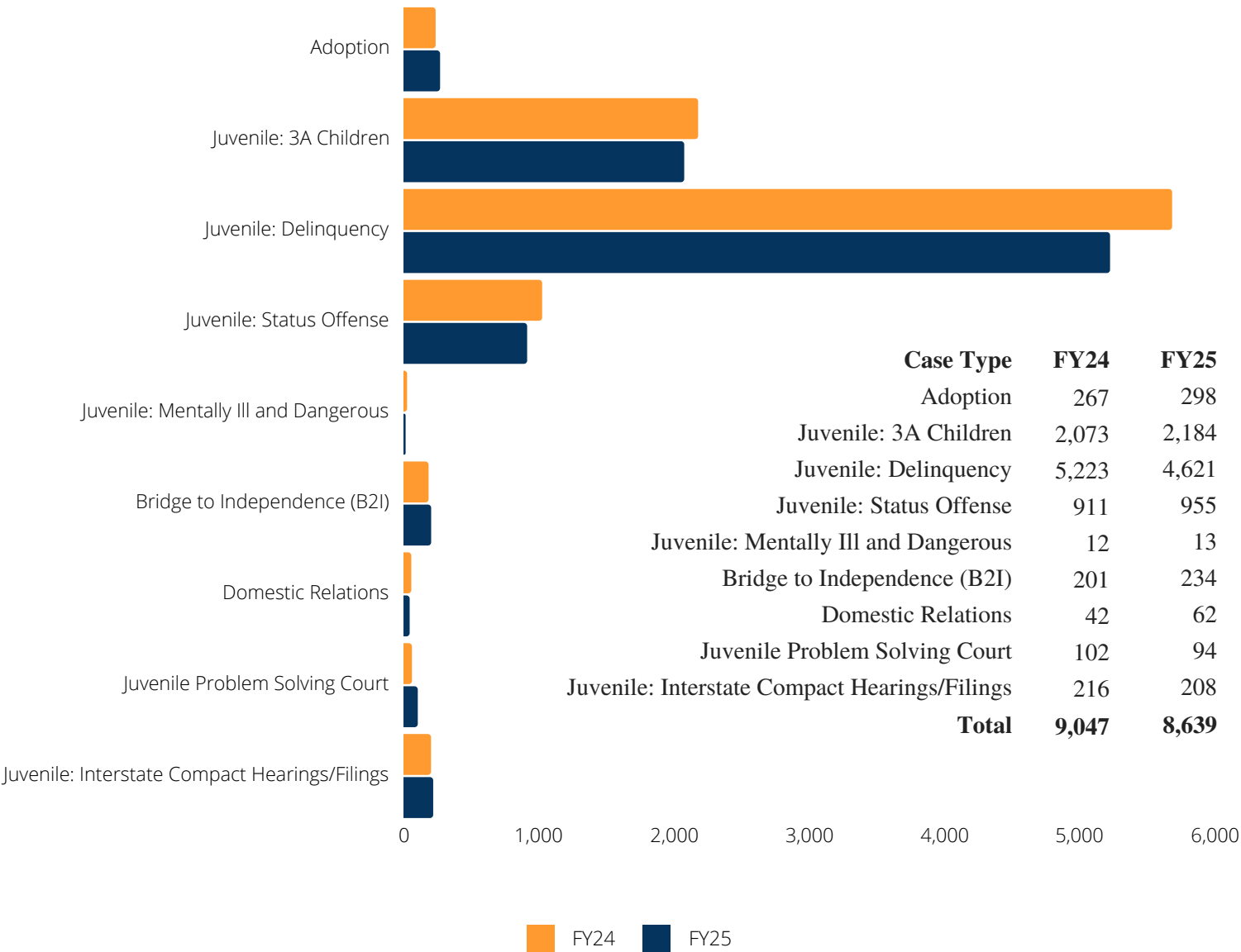


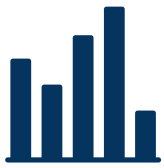
Court Type	FY24	FY25
County Court Juvenile	4,400	4,372
Separate Juvenile Courts	4,647	4,267
Total Juvenile Cases	9,047	8,639



Nebraska Court Case Filings

JUVENILE CASE FILINGS BY CASE TYPE FY25

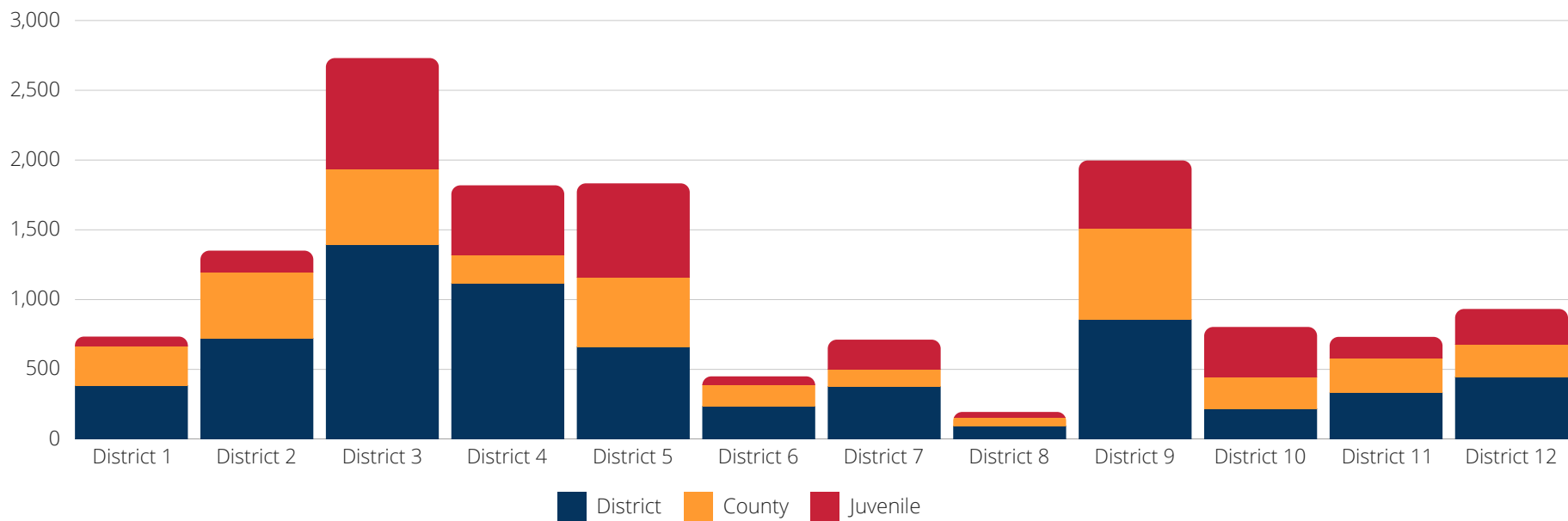




Nebraska Probation Case Statistics

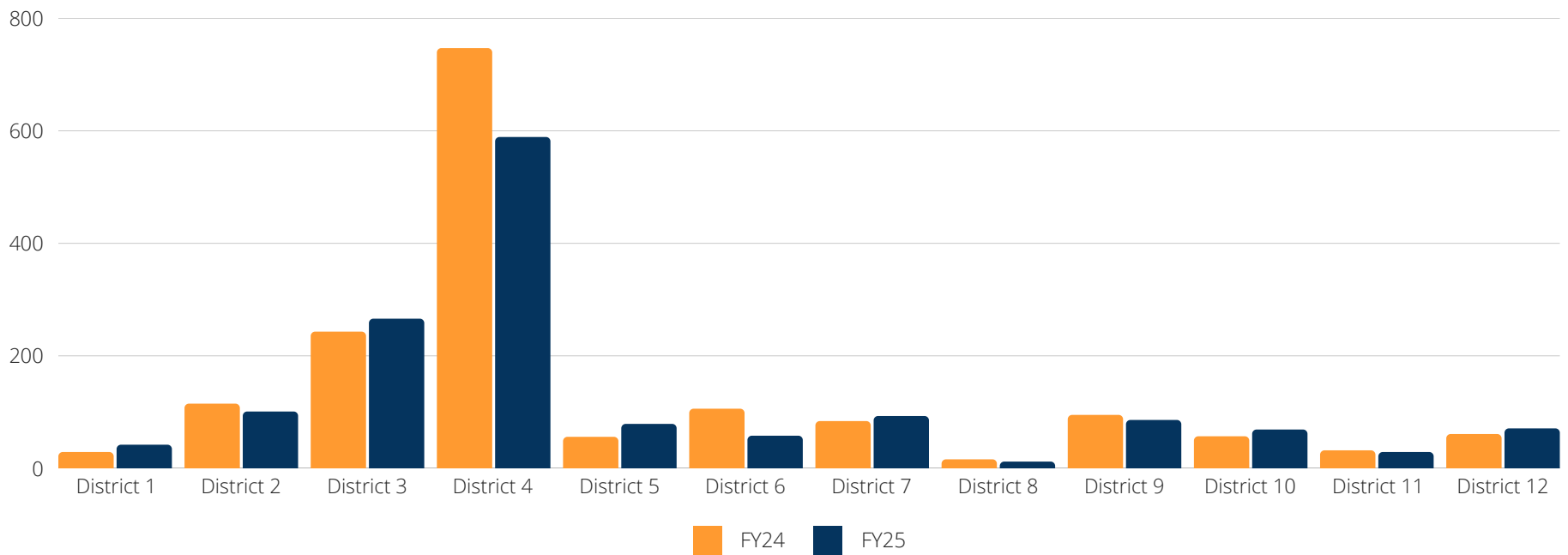
INVESTIGATIONS BY COURT TYPE FY25

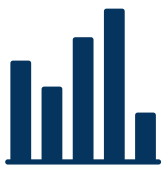
District #	District	County	Juvenile	Total
District 1	384	284	67	735
District 2	721	479	151	1,351
District 3	1,393	545	793	2,731
District 4	1,120	198	501	1,819
District 5	661	498	674	1,833
District 6	236	153	61	450
District 7	376	123	214	713
District 8	92	61	42	195
District 9	858	653	486	1,997
District 10	216	232	356	804
District 11	333	249	151	733
District 12	444	233	256	933
Total	6,834	3,708	3,752	14,294



Nebraska Probation Case Statistics

JUVENILE INTAKES FY25

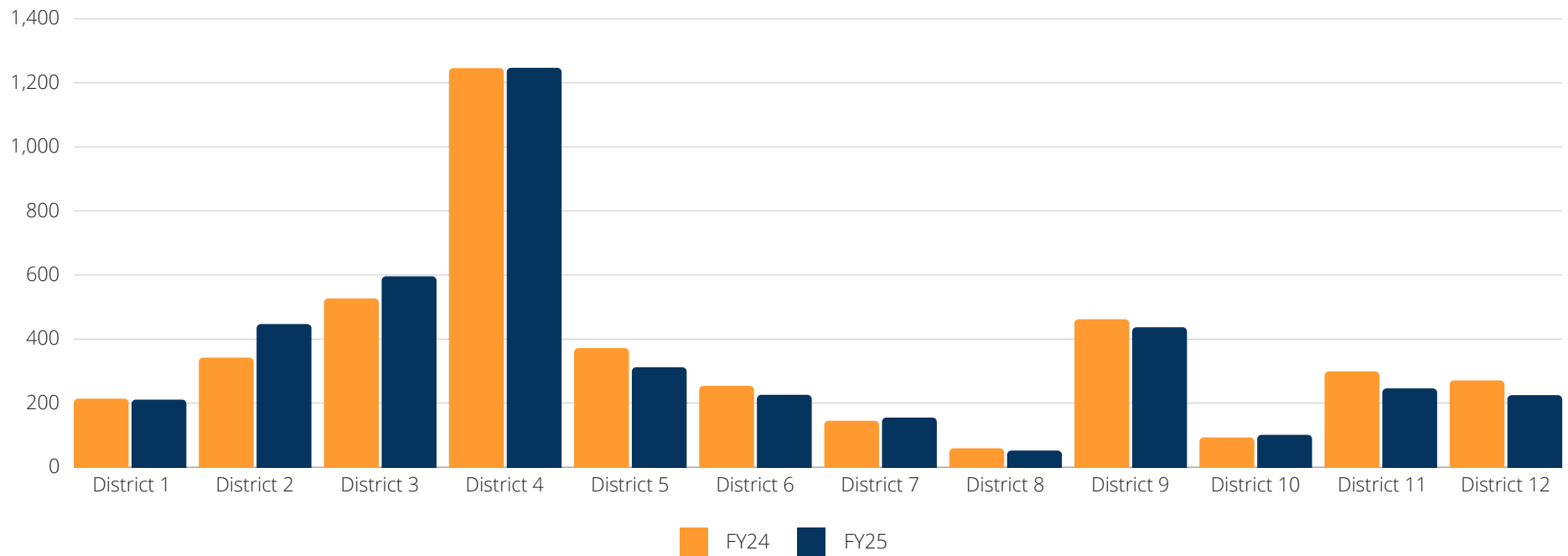


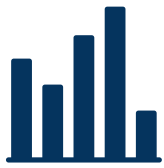


Nebraska Probation Case Statistics

DISPOSITION OF PROBATION FY25

District Court Cases with a Disposition of Probation or Post-Release Supervision

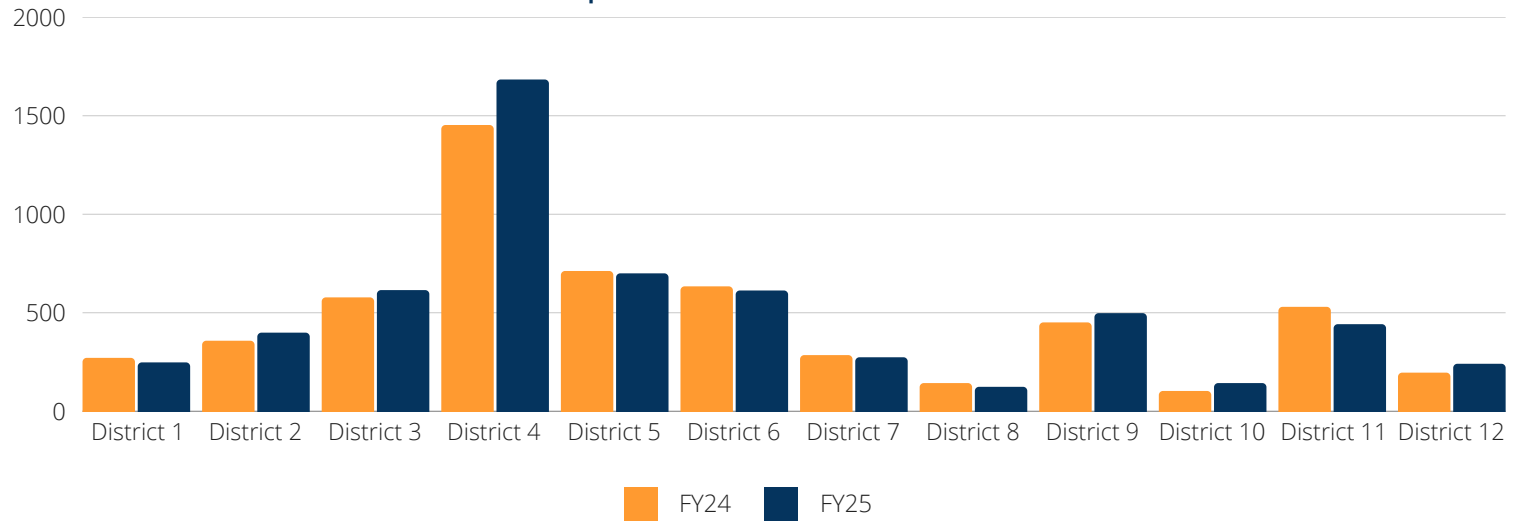




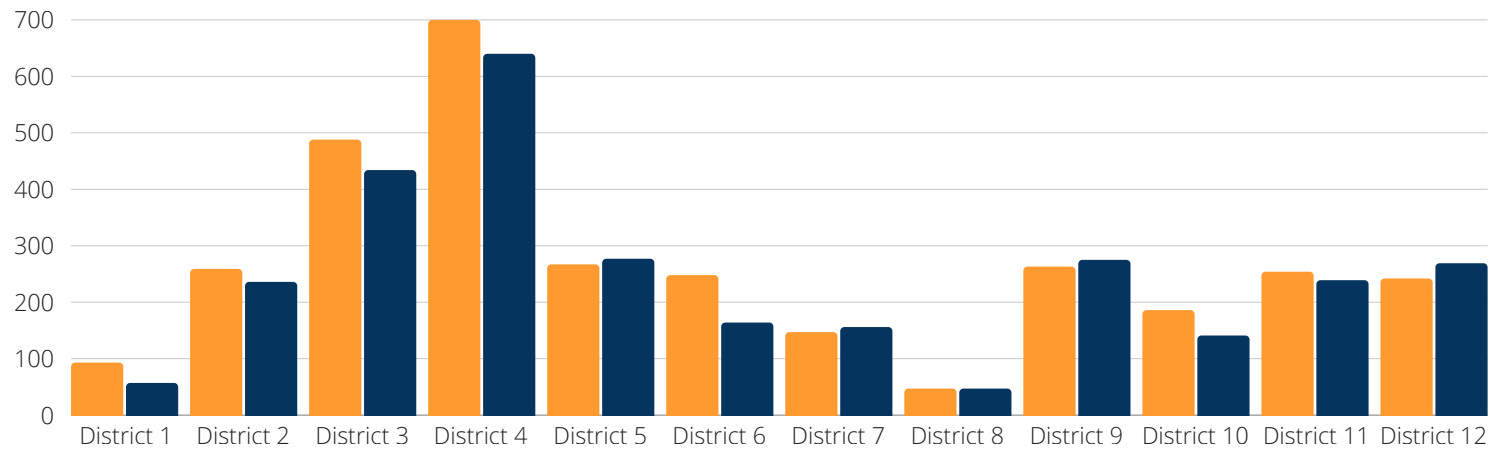
Nebraska Probation Case Statistics

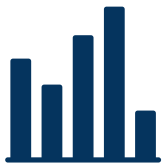
DISPOSITION OF PROBATION FY25

County Court Cases with a Disposition of Probation



Juvenile Court Cases with a Disposition of Probation

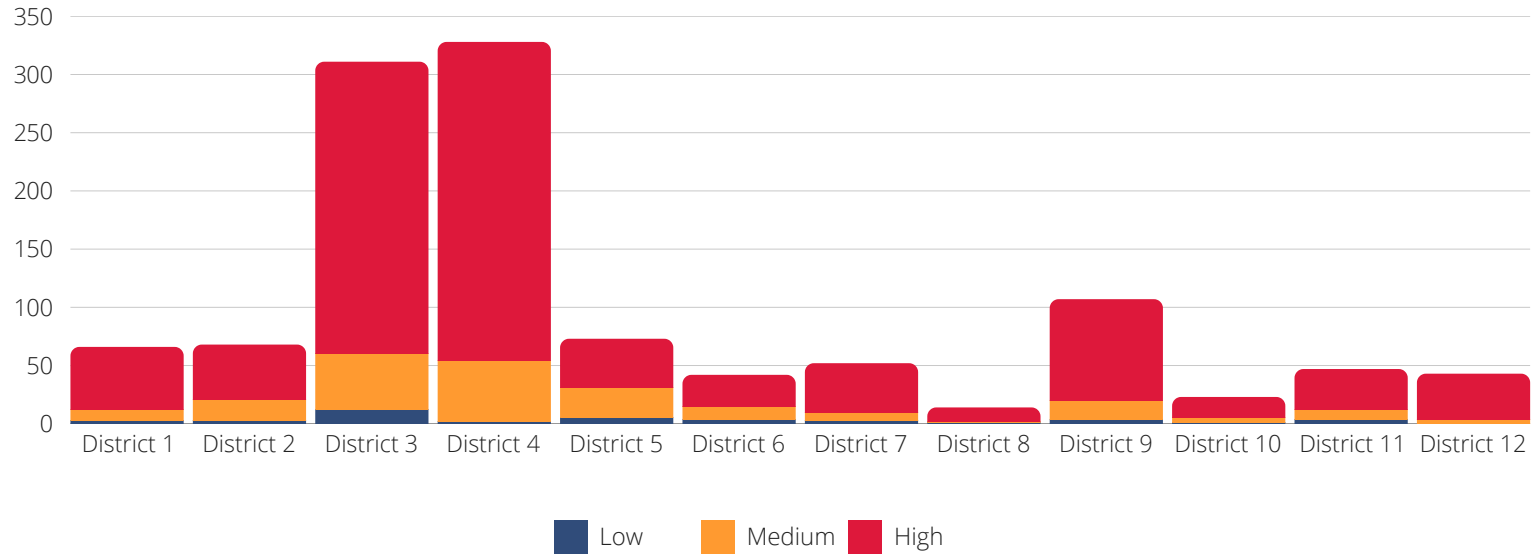




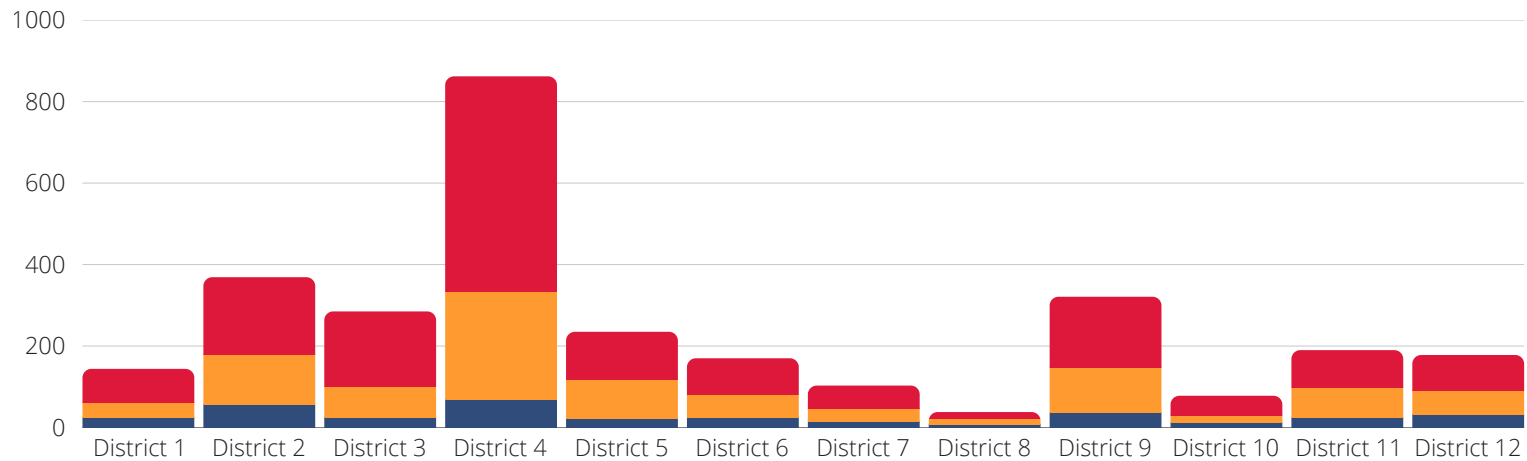
Nebraska Probation Case Statistics

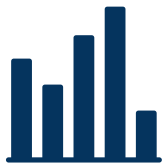
RISK TO REOFFEND FY25

Post-Release Supervision Cases and Risk to Reoffend FY25



District Court Cases and Risk to Reoffend FY25

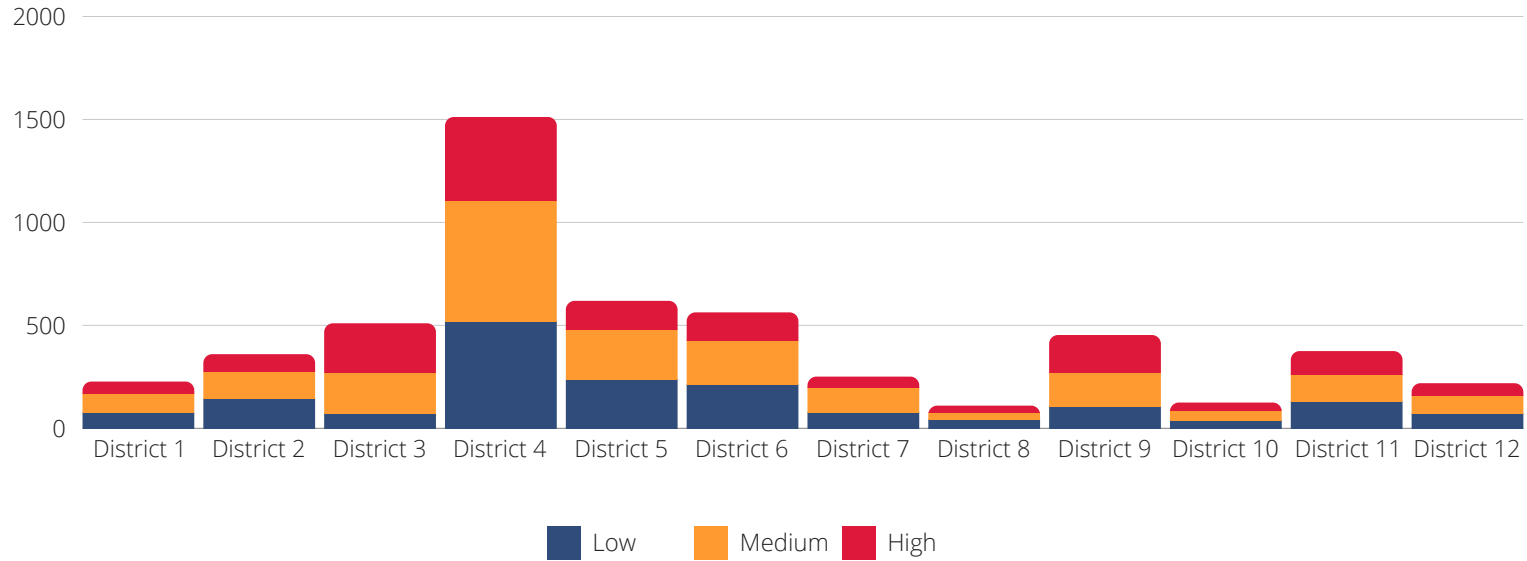




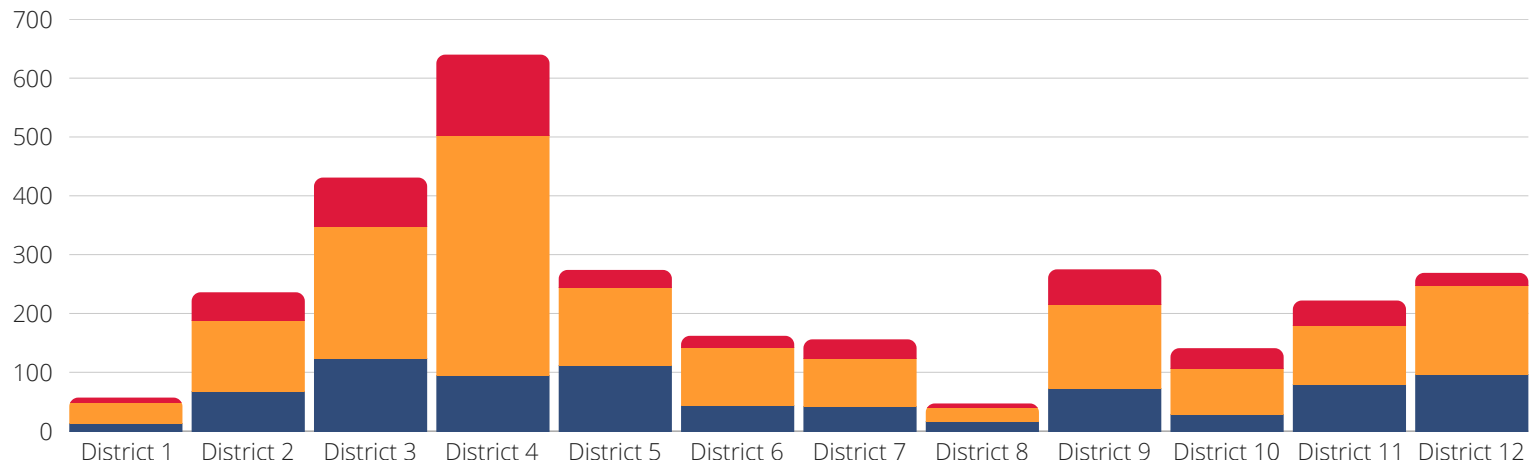
Nebraska Probation Case Statistics

RISK TO REOFFEND FY25

County Court Cases and Risk to Reoffend FY25



Juvenile Court Cases and Risk to Reoffend FY25





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