
Iowa Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Judicial Department's Data Sharing Initiatives

ISSUE

A review of the Judicial Department's initiatives to share Court information with other State agencies.

AFFECTED AGENCIES

Judicial Department

CODE AUTHORITY

Chapter 602, Code of Iowa

BACKGROUND

Functions of Operation. The Judicial Department's functions of operation include: Appellate Courts (Supreme Court and Court of Appeals); Central Administration; Iowa Court Information System (ICIS); District Court Administration; Court Reporters; Judges & Magistrates; Juvenile Court Services; and District Court Services.

- **Supreme Court** reviews and decides cases appealed from the Iowa District Courts; exercises administrative and supervisory powers over lower courts; regulates lawyer licensing; exercises rule making powers; and transfers cases to the Court of Appeals.
- **Court of Appeals** reviews and decides appeals as assigned by the Supreme Court and cases appealed from the Iowa District Court.
- **Central Administration** screens appeals and assists with appellate reviews; provides fiscal and personnel management; and manages State administration of departmental policies and procedures for the Judicial Department.
- **ICIS Management System is a computerized information system which is designed to support all aspects of Appellate and District Court administration** including accounting, case management, data collection, case processing, and child support.

- **Court Reporters** - Pursuant to Section 602.6603, Code of Iowa, each district judge is appointed a Court Reporter. Court Reporters are responsible for making verbatim records in shorthand of District Court testimony and proceedings.
- **Judges and Magistrates** have general and original jurisdiction over all actions and proceedings including civil, criminal, probate, and juvenile matters.
- **Juvenile Court Services** includes a Chief Juvenile Court Officer, Juvenile Court Officers, and support staff for each of the eight Judicial Districts. Juvenile Court Services is responsible for making recommendations to the Juvenile Court regarding temporary custody and detention; preparing juvenile investigations; appearing in Court on behalf of children and communities; implementing all Juvenile Court orders and dispositions; coordinating services provided by various agencies; and monitoring custodial arrangements and services provided by public and private social agencies.
- **District Court Services** - In each county seat, there is a Clerk of District Court office that is responsible for providing, managing, and maintaining document processing activities of civil, probate, criminal, juvenile, traffic, child support, small claims, involuntary hospitalization, vital statistics, and jury selection functions of the unified trial court; maintaining systems of case processing, indexing, microfilming, filing, storing and retaining or destroying all Court records and materials; and collecting, disbursing, depositing, and accounting for all fees and other monies paid to the Clerk of Court office.

After the Judicial Department was reorganized into a unified Court System in 1983, a number of State and local agencies, private entities, and citizens at large began relying heavily upon the various services and data Iowa's Judicial Branch of government provides and maintains.

A unified Court System was established primarily to give the Supreme Court the power to manage and control the various components of the System. Counties are now required to submit revenue and expenditure reports to the eight Judicial District offices. All administrative procedures are defined and implemented by the Supreme Court. Revenue allocations to the Court of Appeals, State Court Administration, and the eight Judicial District offices are approved by the Supreme Court. County Clerk of Court offices no longer function independently. As a result of court reorganization, the Department has managed to eliminate duplication of services; and coordinate, and share court information with other State and local agencies. (See **Attachment I** - Organizational Chart of the Judicial Department)

CURRENT SITUATION

Statutory Requirements. The 75th General Assembly enacted HF 2350 (Justice System Appropriations Bill), requiring the Judicial Department to implement several legislative mandates during FY 1995 with regard to sharing Court information with other State agencies. The legislative mandates include:

- **Monthly Financial Statements:** The Judicial Department is required to submit monthly financial statements to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) and the Department of Management (DOM). The financial reports are to include all appropriated accounts in the same manner as provided in the monthly financial status reports and personal services usage reports of the Department of Revenue and Finance.
- **Recommendations of the Equality in the Courts Task Force:** The Judicial Department is required to expend a maximum of \$150,000 of the FY 1995 General Fund appropriation

for educational purposes in implementing the recommendations of the Equality in the Courts Task Force, in cooperation and consultation with the Prosecuting Attorney Training Coordinator of the Department of Justice.

- **Access to ICIS:** The Judicial Department is required to expend a maximum of \$20,000 of the FY 1995 General Fund appropriation for the development of a computer software program to allow State agencies to gain access to data in the ICIS. The results of the software development are to be included in the Department's final report, which is to be submitted to the members of the Justice System Appropriations Subcommittee and the LFB by January 15, 1995.
- **Fines, Fees, Surcharges, Court Costs:** The Judicial Department is required to submit a report to the Justice System Appropriations Subcommittee and the LFB specifying the amounts of fines, fees, surcharges, and other court costs collected using the ICIS. The report is to include information which relates to how the ICIS is used to improve the collection process.
- **Automated Data System: The Judicial Department, Department of Corrections (DOC), Parole Board, and Judicial District Departments of Correctional Services are required to develop an automated data system for use in the sharing of information between departments. The information to be shared is to pertain to any individual who may, as a result of an arrest or infraction of any law, be subject to the jurisdiction of the DOC and Judicial District Departments of Correctional Services. A final report is to be submitted to the Justice System Appropriations Subcommittee and the LFB by January 15, 1994.**
- **Indigent Defense Costs:** The Judicial Department is required to submit two reports to the Public Defender, DOM, and LFB. The first report is to include the amount of funds collected by all Clerks' of Court offices for the recovery of indigent defense costs and is due by January 1, 1995. The second report is to include the actual number of criminal and juvenile filings which occur in each Judicial District and will be used to estimate indigent defense on a quarterly basis. The report is due quarterly.

ALTERNATIVES

The Legislature or the Legislative Council may wish to require the Judicial Department to establish a Commission to conduct a comprehensive study, examining the current structure of the Judicial System and providing recommendations and strategies for developing a more flexible and responsive System. The study may be a two-year examination of the Judicial System modeled after the California Supreme Court 2020 Vision Project. In December 1993, the Commission on the Future of the California Courts completed a comprehensive 2020 Vision Project. The Project was an in-depth study which outlined the strengths and weaknesses of the California Judicial System and provided strategies and alternative solutions for improvement. The 43-member Commission, established in 1991 to lead the California courts toward a preferred vision of the future, was comprised of representatives from business, academia, law, government, and the community at large. Grants to fund the Project were provided by the State Justice Institute, private foundations and organizations, and individuals committed to public interest.

The Judicial Department should continue working jointly with other State agencies in pursuing funding sources other than the General Fund to fund new and existing projects. In 1990, the Departments of Public Safety, Corrections, Human Rights (Criminal Juvenile Justice Planning Agency), and Judicial Department were successful in securing a federal grant of \$416,000 through the U.S. Department of Justice to design and implement computer system changes to interchange criminal history data.

BUDGET IMPACT

Court Initiatives. The Judicial Department is in the process of implementing several Court data sharing initiatives with other State agencies. The list of initiatives, estimated costs, and benefits associated with each are:

- The Department has selected AT&T to study the functionality of the ICIS in relation to the needs of Clerk of Court offices and other Court administrators; review the database technology and underlying operating systems upon which the ICIS foundation applications are built; and determine whether the technology will meet the current and long-range (eight to ten years) needs of the Court System.
 - **Cost:** \$68,000
 - **Benefit:** The Supreme Court will receive an independent report of the usefulness of the functionality of the ICIS applications for the three functional components of the System which are developed thus far. They include Clerk of Court Administration, Juvenile Court Services, and District Court Administration. The report will also include recommendations relating to the ICIS relational database and whether the relational database will be appropriate for the next eight to ten years; current goals and objectives established for the ICIS; current and expanded use of fiber optics; and present and future staffing requirements for the ICIS.
- The Judicial Department recently selected International Business Machines to install new computer hardware platforms in six counties. The counties to receive the new systems are Pottawattamie, Dubuque, Clinton, Johnson, Webster, and Des Moines.
 - **Cost:** \$700,000
 - **Benefit:** The existing platforms, which are currently operating in the six counties designated to receive the new hardware platforms, will be transferred to six smaller counties which are not on line with the ICIS. The primary purpose for installing the new platforms in the larger counties is to increase information storage and user capacity.
- On May 25, 1994, the ICIS Public Access Committee held a public hearing to receive comment on proposed rules and fees related to public use of the ICIS.
 - **Cost:** \$0
 - **Benefit:** *The purpose of the rules is to establish procedures and fees for providing computer-generated information and for direct public connection to the ICIS. Information which is immediately retrievable such as information contained in files and dockets will still be available to the public at no cost. Public access terminals have been planned for each courthouse.*
- The Judicial Department is in the process of developing a generic interface to transfer information to the Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA).
 - **Cost:** \$12,000

- **Benefit:** Permits the transfer of indigent defense data to the DIA. The DIA may be able to use the information to predict trends in rising indigent defense costs.
- For several years, the Judicial Department, Department of Public Safety, and DOC have been working on the development of a computer interface to share criminal history data.
 - **Cost:** \$120,000
 - **Benefit:** Exchange criminal history information more efficiently and potentially eliminate duplication of certain data entry functions.
- The Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Judicial Department continue to have discussions about an interface between the Departments to electronically process information relating to traffic violations and delinquent fines and fees.
 - **Cost:** \$113,000
 - **Benefit:** Improves the exchange of information relating to felony dispositions by eliminating costs incurred by the Judicial Department to mail dispositions and other relevant information to the DOT; reduces duplication of data entry services; decreases the DOT's backlog in processing dispositions (currently four to five months processing lag); and increases the DOT's administrative control over suspension of licenses.

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IOWA JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT

