
BUDGET UNIT BRIEF – FY 2021

Fiscal Services Division

July 1, 2020



Ground Floor, State Capitol Building

Des Moines, Iowa 50319

515.281.3566

Judicial Branch

Background

Iowa has a unified trial court system consisting of the Supreme Court (the highest court), the Court of Appeals, and District Court. The major components are described as follows:

- **Supreme Court:** Consists of one chief justice and six justices. The Court has general appellate jurisdiction for criminal and civil cases and exercises supervisory and administrative control over the court system pursuant to the Constitution of Iowa, Article V. Appeals are made directly to the Supreme Court in Iowa. The Iowa Supreme Court has original jurisdiction or authority to hear evidence in a limited number of cases. The Iowa Supreme Court may transfer a case to the Iowa Court of Appeals for consideration.
- **Court of Appeals:** Consists of a chief judge and eight associate judges. The Court of Appeals hears cases referred by the Supreme Court. Litigants may request further review of the rulings of the Court of Appeals by the Supreme Court.
- **District Court:** Consists of five types of judgeships, including:
 - **Magistrates:** Issue search warrants and emergency hospitalization orders; hold preliminary hearings; and preside at trials of small claims (\$5,000 or less), simple misdemeanors, and forcible entry and detainer actions.
 - **District Associate Judges:** Have the same jurisdiction as magistrates in addition to hearing indictable misdemeanors, civil actions involving \$10,000 or less, Operating While Intoxicated (OWI) felonies, and some juvenile cases.
 - **Associate Juvenile Judges:** Handle only juvenile matters, including delinquency proceedings, children in need of assistance, abuse and neglect, and termination of parental rights proceedings.
 - **District Judges:** Have general trial court jurisdiction (civil, criminal, domestic relations, and probate).
 - **Associate Probate Judges:** Handle probate issues.

State and district court administrators are responsible for managing the daily activities of the Judicial Branch and administering appropriated funds. Administrative functions include preparing, submitting, and revising budget requests; accounting and disbursement of funds; purchasing supplies and equipment; collecting information and statistical data; administering the Judicial Retirement System; and providing

More Information

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support staff at all levels. The Iowa Court Information System (ICIS) is located within the State Court Administration Office. The ICIS is a computerized network that links all 99 counties and is designed to automate case scheduling and court data processing.

Electronic Document Management System (EDMS)

The Judicial Branch has implemented the Electronic Document Management System (EDMS), which allows attorneys and citizens to electronically file court documents with the Judicial Branch via the Internet. The EDMS integrates with the ICIS, enabling electronic access to authorized parties via the Internet to the court docket and documents 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In addition, court notices can be emailed to lawyers, litigants, and officials.

Related Statutes and Administrative Rules

Iowa Code chapter [602](#)
[Iowa Court Rules](#)

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