



**KING COUNTY
DISTRICT COURT**

ANNUAL REPORT 2023





KING COUNTY DISTRICT COURT MISSION STATEMENT

To serve the public by:

- Providing an accessible forum for the fair, efficient and understandable resolution of civil and criminal cases; and
- Maintaining an atmosphere of respect for the dignity of all individuals.

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CHIEF PRESIDING JUDGE'S MESSAGE

King County District Court (KCDC) has seen a lot of changes these past few years, but I am happy to say that we are continuing to meet the challenges we face.

As Presiding Judge, I am committed to improving communication between the court staff and judges, our partner cities, and other branches of government. Over the last few months, I have been visiting each of our District Court locations and meeting with all of our stakeholders across the County to increase communication and discuss the "State of the Court."

Of note in 2023, we were honored to have four new judges join our bench: Judge Karama H. Hawkins (West Division), Judge Andrea S. Jarmon (South Division), Judge Raul Martinez (West Division), and Judge Peter J. Peaquin (East Division). We bade goodbye to Judge E. Rania Rampersad (East Division), who was appointed to King County Superior Court. Congratulations Judge Rampersad!

This past year, our judges continued working to improve the judiciary and the justice system as a whole, both locally and statewide. KCDC judges serve on the District and Municipal Court Judges' Association (DMCJA) and the Board for Judicial Administration (BJA) in various capacities, as well as hold many other regional and state-wide leadership roles. KCDC judges also make time to engage with diverse communities throughout King County, including participating in community events and delivering informative presentations in dozens of venues.

KCDC is now completely caught up from the COVID-19 backlog of cases. I thank all of our wonderful staff members for working so hard to achieve this important public service milestone.

We have also continued to improve our e-filing and case access system for attorneys and the overall public. This includes simplifying our small claims case initiation online; developing an online tool that enables attorneys to more easily identify available calendars; and creating a simplified way to view defendant bookings and releases.

Like all parts of King County government, King County District Court is facing large budget cuts due to shortfalls in the County's General Fund resulting from the state's 1% revenue growth limit on property taxes. At the same time, we know that the criminal justice system is suffering from chronic staffing shortages with attorneys, police officers, corrections officers, and court staff. KCDC is committed to working with others to help make King County a safer and better place to live. For example, our Probation department has taken on a lot of extra work due to staffing cuts the Court had to make in response to reduced budgets.

Our therapeutic courts continue to thrive. Kenmore joined Community Court in 2023 and Redmond Community Court celebrated 5 years. In 2024, we look forward to celebrating King County Regional Mental Health Court's 25th anniversary!

We are very much looking forward to 2024!

Judge Rebecca C. Robertson
March 2024



COURT SERVICES & LOCATIONS

Summary

King County District Court's 25 elected judges hear a range of civil and criminal cases at locations throughout King County (*see map below*). The Court is one of the busiest courts in Washington, and is a leader in many areas involving public safety and access to justice.

Services provided

As a court of limited jurisdiction, King County District Court is responsible for the following types of matters:

- Gross misdemeanor and misdemeanor criminal cases
- Felony first appearance hearings and felony expedited cases
- Protection orders (anti-harassment, stalking, domestic violence, sexual assault, extreme risk-temporary)
- Civil litigation matters (*up to \$100,000 per claimant*)
- Small claims (*up to \$10,000*)
- Name changes
- Search warrants
- Infractions (traffic, non-traffic and parking)
- Other civil matters (vehicle impound hearings, post judgment execution and post judgment enforcement proceedings, petitions for the return of seized animals)

King County District Court also:

- Is contracted to provide municipal court services for 13 cities across the County (*see map on page 3*)
- Provides judge-supervised probation
- Operates several therapeutic courts, including Regional Mental Health Court, Regional Veterans Court, and Community Courts in Auburn, Redmond and Shoreline-Kenmore
- Accepts applications for U.S. Passports at several courthouse locations

King County District Court Courthouse Locations



CONTRACTING CITIES

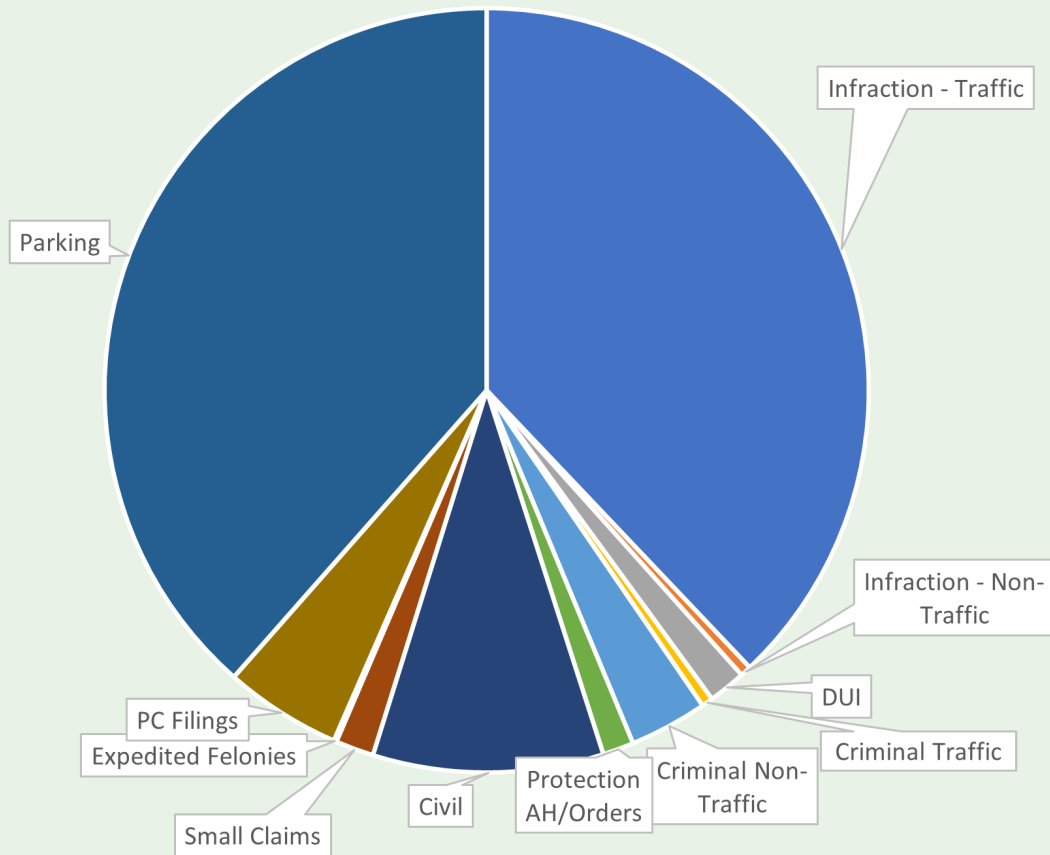
Thirteen cities throughout King County contract with King County District Court to provide their municipal court services.



2023 CASELOAD

175,240

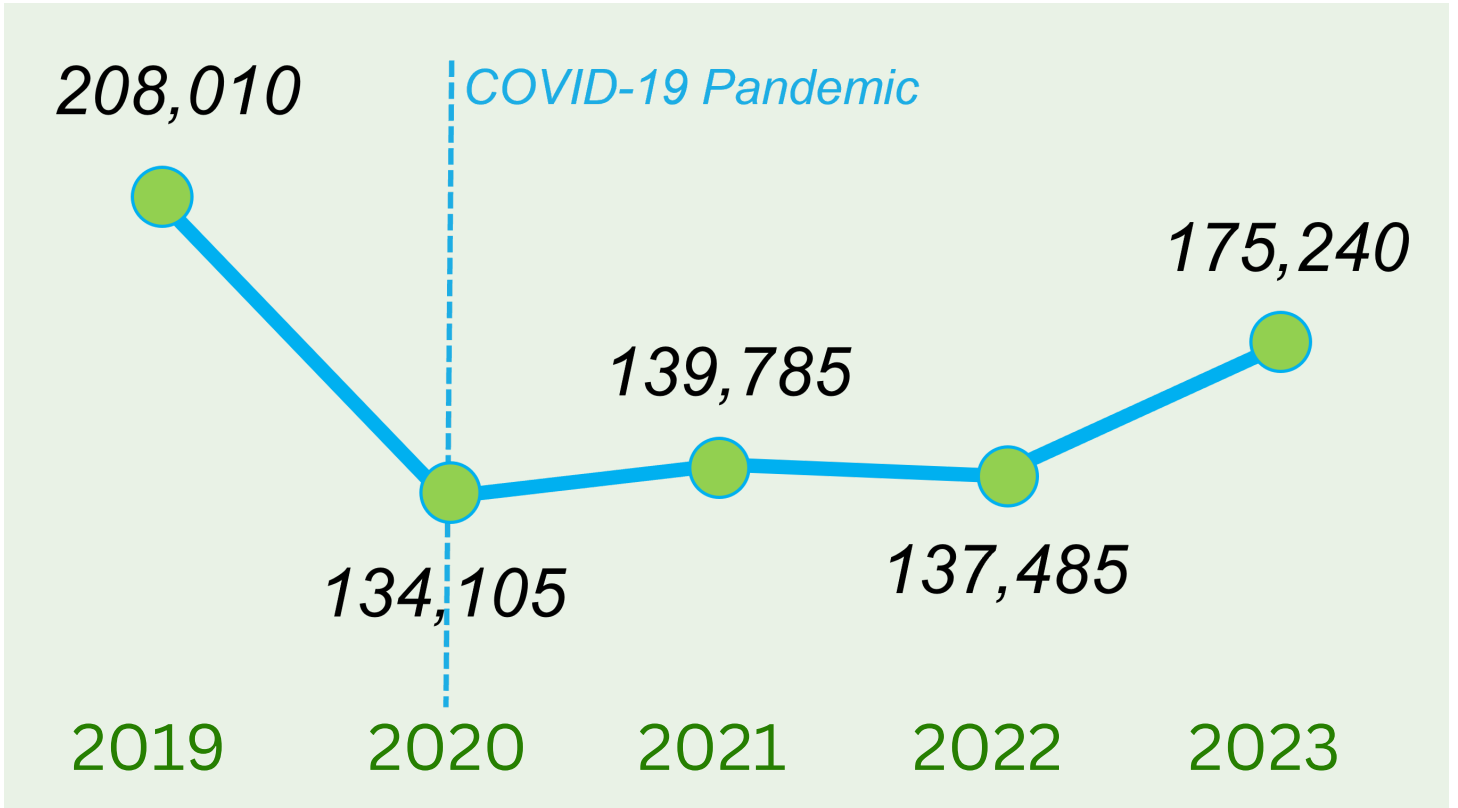
Total cases filed



2023 Court Filings by Case Type

Case type	# of cases	Percent of total
Infraction - Traffic	66,435	37.9%
Infraction - Non-Traffic	811	0.5%
DUI	2,781	1.6%
Criminal Traffic	837	0.5%
Criminal Non-Traffic	5,787	3.3%
Protection AH/Orders	2,311	1.3%
Civil	17,090	9.8%
Small Claims	2,839	1.6%
Expedited Felonies	204	0.1%
PC Filings	8,682	5.0%
Parking	67,463	38.5%
TOTAL	175,240	100.0%

FIVE-YEAR CASELOAD HISTORY

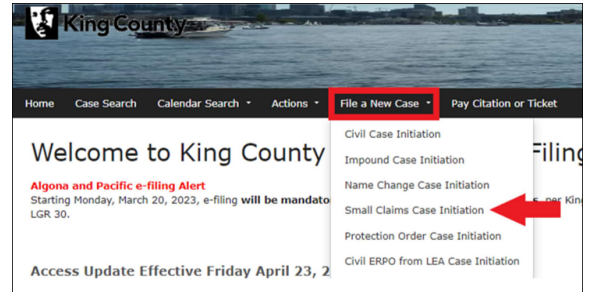


SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS & RESTORATION

In 2023, King County District Court completed several initiatives to enhance access to justice and better serve court users and King County residents.

Small Claims filing simplified

The Court developed an easier way for people to file small claims cases within its e-filing and case access system. Now, people seeking to recover money owed to them can answer a few simple questions online and have the necessary Notice of Small Claim form automatically generated and filed with the Court. The ability to file a Small Claims case is a key judicial service District Court offers to help people resolve disputes. The new guided online interview automates a process that can sometimes seem overwhelming to people who are not familiar with the law or the court system.



Screenshot of simplified online filing for Small Claims cases

Courtroom Calendar Schedule online tool launched

To make it easier for attorneys to find available criminal hearing dates and times in King County District Court, the Court developed a Courtroom Calendar Schedule online tool. Available from the Court's website homepage, the tool provides a simple way to research various criminal hearing types by courtroom across all King County District Court courthouse locations.

Passport acceptance re-started

Following a pause due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, in 2023 King County District Court resumed accepting applications for U.S. Passports. As of March 2024, the public can schedule passport acceptance appointments at the following District Court courthouse locations: Bellevue, Burien, King County Courthouse in downtown Seattle, Maleng Regional Justice Center (MRJC) in Kent, and Shoreline.

Interpreter Program adjustments

King County District Court continues to work with the Administrative Office of the Courts, the Washington State Supreme Court, and the Interpreter and Language Access Commission to provide credentialed and qualified interpreters to court users.

DVMRT (Domestic Violence Moral Reconciliation Therapy) classes

In 2023, King County District Court completed foundational work to begin offering DVMRT classes in 2024 to people on probation. To help enhance community safety, DVMRT classes focus on moral reasoning and conscious decision-making to help domestic violence perpetrators make better choices. Research by the Washington Supreme Court Gender and Justice Commission (GJC) found that, "in the year following treatment, DV-MRT participants had a significantly lower rate of reconviction for a domestic violence offense than the comparison group (8.4% vs. 12.5%)."

JUDICIAL CHANGES

New Judges

Four new judges joined the King County District Court bench in 2023.



Judge Karama H. Hawkins
Shoreline Electoral District



Judge Andrea S. Jarmon
Southwest Electoral District



Judge Raul Martinez
Shoreline Electoral District



Judge Peter J. Peaquin
Northeast Electoral District

Departing Judge

Judge E. Rania Rampersad (*appointed to King County Superior Court in July 2023*)

JUDICIAL STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP & COMMITTEES

King County District Court judges are actively engaged in the statewide judicial community. In 2023, this included leading and/or participating in a wide variety of boards and committees.

Statewide leadership

Chief Presiding Judge Rebecca C. Robertson

- Board for Judicial Administration

Judge Michael Finkle

- Chair, AOC Pattern Forms Subcommittee on Forensic Mental Health Forms
- President, Washington State Association of Youth Courts

Judge Michelle Gehlsen

- Board of Governors, DMCJA
- Co-Chair, DMCJA Public Outreach Committee

Judge Rhonda Laumann

- Chair, DMCJA Conference Activities Committee

Board and committee membership

- Alternative to Incarceration Task Force
- Anti-Racist Courtroom Task Force
- Bellevue Probation Advisory Board
- Board for Judicial Administration (BJA) Trial Court Security Committee
- Bothell Youth Court, Community Advisory Board
- District & Municipal Court Judges Association (DMCJA) Diversity Committee
- DMCJA Education Committee
- DMCJA Executive Committee
- DMCJA Legislative Committee
- DMCJA Representative to the BJA
- DMCJA Therapeutic Courts Committee
- Joint Minority Mentorship Program
- Judicial Assistance Services Program
- King County Bar Association Anti-Racism & Equity Committee
- King County Bar Association MLK Luncheon Committee
- King County Community Partnership Transition Solutions
- Outpatient Competency Restoration Program Workgroup
- Pathway Advisory Committee – Issaquah School District
- Trueblood General Advisory Committee
- Washington State Supreme Court Commission on Gender and Justice

JUDICIAL AWARDS & PRESENTATIONS

King County District Court judges are recognized throughout King County and Washington state for their service and expertise. In 2023, this included:

- Receiving several awards for leadership and service
- Delivering numerous informative presentations and keynote addresses
- Serving as faculty members in a variety of local and national educational forums
- Administering oaths of office to local elected officials
- Participating in local service groups; volunteering in the community; and mentoring others

Awards

Judge Michelle Gehlsen

- Judge Steiner Leadership Award

Judge Andrea S. Jarmon

- President's Award, Washington Women Lawyers, King County Chapter
- Leadership (Re) Defined, Center for Women and Democracy

Judge Elizabeth D. Stephenson

- William O. Douglas Judicial Service Award, Washington State Association for Justice

Presentations

Among the dozens of presentations made by KCDC judges throughout Washington and the U.S. in 2023 were presentations to the following groups and events:

- All Rise Conference
- Arts Resource Fair
- Community Court Conference in Birmingham, Alabama
- Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts, Sammamish
- District & Municipal Court Judges Association (DMCJA) "You've Been Served" Event
- DMCJA Spring Judicial Conference
- Echo Lake Neighborhood Association
- Judge Charles V. Johnson Youth and Law Forum
- Law Society and Justice student forum at University of Washington
- Lawyers Helping Hungry Children
- Mock trials (numerous)
- Muslim Association of Puget Sound, Youth Career Fair
- Muslim Housing Services, Annual Housing Event
- Muslimahs Against Abuse Center
- National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in Courts
- Pacific Islander Law Student Association
- Skyline High School Civics Class
- Washington Equity Now Alliance
- Washington State Youth Court Conference

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION (DEI)

King County District Court continues working to create a diverse, engaged court in which a persistent commitment to diversity, inclusion and belonging are core values. The Court's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee comprised of judges, directors, managers, court staff and probation staff advanced this cause in many ways in 2023.



2023 DEI Highlights

Community outreach – King County District Court judges and staff engaged with diverse communities at community events throughout King County:

- Arts Resource Fair (Rainier Valley, Seattle)
- B-Town Fiesta (Burien)
- Celebrate Shoreline (Shoreline)
- Day of Dignity (South Seattle)
- Pakistan Independence Day Celebration (Bellevue)
- Paws & Pride Dog Walk (Bellevue)
- Redmond Derby Days (Redmond)
- Umoja Fest (Judkins Park, Seattle)

Microaggressions awareness training – The Court in 2023 completed foundational work to provide mandatory microaggressions training for all management and staff in the first half of 2024 (judges previously completed part 1 of the training and will complete part 2 in spring 2024). The training helps Court personnel to develop greater sensitivity to the experiences of marginalized groups living in King County.

Customer service survey – To help enhance the Court's service to diverse people throughout the County, the DEI Committee in 2023 undertook scoping to conduct a customer service survey in 2024.

Forms translation – Providing court forms in the many languages King County residents speak, is essential for advancing equitable access to justice. The Court in 2023 completed an inventory of forms that need updated translations and developed an audit process to ensure translated forms are kept current.

THERAPEUTIC COURTS

King County District Court operates several therapeutic courts, including King County Regional Mental Health Court; King County Regional Veterans Court; and Community Courts in Auburn, Redmond and Shoreline-Kenmore. These innovative courts help people address the challenges in their lives that can contribute to criminal behavior. The goal is improved well-being for individuals and a safer King County overall.

Regional Mental Health Court (RMHC)

RMHC’s mission is to engage, support and facilitate the sustained stability of individuals with mental health disorders within the criminal justice system, while reducing recidivism and increasing community safety. In 2024, RMHC will celebrate its 25th anniversary of service to the community.

RMHC has been proven to reduce criminal recidivism by 26% and increase participation in substance use disorder treatment by 37 percentage points, according to an in-depth study conducted by the Washington State Dept. of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

2023 RMHC statistics

- * 29 participants graduated from the program
- * 85 active participants were continuing in the program, as of Dec. 31, 2023

Regional Veterans Court (RVC)

King County District Court recognizes that veterans in the justice system may be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other service-related disabilities. RVC seeks to increase effective cooperation between federal, state, and local veterans service agencies and the criminal justice system in order to address the issues that resulted in the veteran being referred to the criminal justice system.

2023 RVC statistics

- * 10 participants graduated from the program
- * 19 active participants were continuing in the program, as of Dec. 31, 2023

Community Courts

Community courts provide services and accountability for people who are eligible and choose to participate. An assessment is conducted for all community court participants to identify their challenges and strengths. The assessment provides information to help determine what follow-up steps an individual community court participant will be required to take, such as community service. King County District Court operates three Community Courts: Auburn, Redmond and Shoreline-Kenmore. Community Resources Centers that are part of each Community Court offer a wide range of social services to community court participants, as well as anyone in the community who needs help.

“Because of my part in community court, there are resources for me and a team of people who have worked very hard to help me get off the streets and have continually had my back, and my best interest at heart. I established a support network and now have healthy people in my corner.”

~ Megan, 2023 Redmond Community Court Graduate

Continued on next page...

THERAPEUTIC COURTS (CONTINUED)

2023 Community Court highlights

- * City of Kenmore joined Shoreline Community Court, forming Shoreline-Kenmore Community Court
- * Redmond Community Court celebrated its 5th anniversary
- * Auburn Community Court expanded its referrals to include in-custody cases from the South Correctional Entity (SCORE Jail)
- * The Therapeutic Courts Team received a grant for July 2023-June 2024 to assist community court program participants with access to additional services such as food and clothing resources, treatment evaluations, and transportation services. This grant also will allow the team to attend national training through All Rise (formerly NADCP – The National Association of Drug Court Professionals) to keep up to date with best practices for therapeutic courts and to help ensure the proper technology is in place to best run the community courts and resource centers.

2023 Community Court statistics

Total for Auburn, Redmond and Shoreline-Kenmore

- * 49 participants graduated from the program
- * 131 active participants were continuing in the program, as of Dec. 31, 2023

Redmond Community Court 5th Anniversary Open House September 6, 2023



Redmond Mayor Angela Birney thanks King County District Court and the Redmond Library for their partnership in Community Court



King County District Court Judge Kevin Peck, Redmond Community Court Presiding Judge, congratulates Michael for graduating from the program

JUDGES & COURT LEADERSHIP

Judicial Leadership

- Judge Rebecca C. Robertson, Chief Presiding Judge
- Judge Corinna Harn, Assistant Chief Presiding Judge
- Judge Lisa O'Toole, East Division Presiding Judge
- Judge Kristin Shotwell, West Division Presiding Judge
- Judge Brian Todd, South Division Presiding Judge

Staff Leadership

- Othniel Palomino, Chief Administrative Officer
- Tina Gill, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
- Yanna Filippidis, Operations Director - Cities
- Patrick Wells, Operations Director - State
- Regina Alexander, Probation Director
- Heather Dean, Budget Director
- Enrique Kuttemplon, Inf. Tech. Director
- Kevin Whitley, Central Services Director

Judges

- Judge Virginia M. Amato
- Judge Kuljinder Dhillon
- Judge Michael Finkle
- Judge Michelle Gehlsen
- Judge Laurel Gibson
- Judge Nathaniel Green
- Judge Corinna Harn
- Judge Karama H. Hawkins
- Judge Gregg Hirakawa
- Judge Andrea S. Jarmon
- Judge Jill Klinge
- Judge Rhonda Laumann
- Judge Raul Martinez
- Judge Fa'amomoi Masaniai
- Judge Marcus Naylor
- Judge Lisa O'Toole
- Judge Lisa Paglisotti
- Judge Peter J. Peaquin
- Judge Kevin Peck
- Judge Rebecca C. Robertson
- Judge Kristin Shotwell
- Judge Elizabeth D. Stephenson
- Judge Leah Taguba
- Judge Brian Todd
- Judge Matthew York



Pictured left to right: Judge Raul Martinez, Judge Corinna Harn, Judge Lisa Paglisotti, Judge Fa'amomoi Masaniai, Judge Kristin Shotwell, Judge Rebecca C. Robertson, Judge Peter J. Peaquin, Judge Jill Klinge, Judge Lisa O'Toole, Judge Kevin Peck, Judge Matthew York, Judge Leah Taguba, Judge Brian Todd, Judge Elizabeth D. Stephenson, Judge Kuljinder Dhillon, Judge Marcus Naylor, Judge Karama H. Hawkins, Judge Nathaniel Green

Not pictured: Judge Virginia Amato, Judge Michael Finkle, Judge Michelle Gehlsen, Judge Laurel Gibson, Judge Gregg Hirakawa, Judge Andrea S. Jarmon, Judge Rhonda Laumann