



KING COUNTY DISTRICT COURT

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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

As part of our ongoing work to strengthen diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), two areas of focus for King County District Court in 2024 were to: 1) Enhance effective communication between the court staff and judges, our partner cities, and other branches of government; and 2) Evaluate the Court's current processes, with the goal of improving overall operations.

Enhance communications

A key to the Court's success is ensuring the ongoing support of our stakeholders throughout King County. To that end, we briefed the King County Council and contracting city councils on the Court's operations and challenges several times in 2024. This will become an ongoing practice in the Court. Internally, we also developed more formalized processes to communicate important information to all our judges and staff. We also had several facilitated sessions between the judges and the Senior Leadership Team to build trust among all parties through a DEI lens.

Improve operations

To better serve the public and make the best use of limited resources, we are fiercely committed to exploring ways to improve District Court's operations. In 2024, we started a pilot project to evaluate our existing culture and processes in detail and to develop standard operating procedures. We have also begun the process of reviewing and updating all of our current procedures and rules. A key goal of this work is to help ensure the Court operates smoothly in the coming years as many of our long-tenured judges retire and are replaced by judges who are new to the Court. We seek to provide a foundation for success as new judges step into judicial leadership roles.

Celebrating successes

In 2024, we had the honor of celebrating the 25th Anniversary of King County Regional Mental Health Court (RMHC). Over its 25 years, RMHC has benefited more than 5,000 King County residents, and has been proven to reduce criminal recidivism. I am grateful for the support of so many policy makers and partners who help make RMHC successful.

Strengthening court security

In light of ongoing threats to the judiciary, our Security Committee was very active in 2024 in implementing actions to enhance the safety and security of our judges, staff and court users. We developed detailed security plans for each of our courthouse locations; trained all our judges and staff on surviving lethal events, such as active shooters; and implemented many other security actions and improvements in various courthouse locations.

A budget crisis looms

King County continues to face large funding shortfalls in the County's General Fund, resulting from the state's 1% revenue growth limit on property taxes. Thanks to the tireless work of our judges and staff, and with the support of the King County Executive and Council, we were able to achieve a budget for 2025 that largely retained crucial court services. However, we have reached a point that in future budget cycles, very painful cuts may be necessary to court services, which will have a significant public impact.

In 2025 and beyond, we remain committed to ongoing work with policy makers and stakeholders to provide cost-effective services for the fair and equitable resolution of civil and criminal matters, and to providing all constitutionally mandated District Court services.

Judge Rebecca C. Robertson
February 2025

COURT SERVICES & LOCATIONS

Overview

King County District Court's 25 elected judges hear a range of civil and criminal cases at locations throughout King County. 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
- 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 five courthouse locations

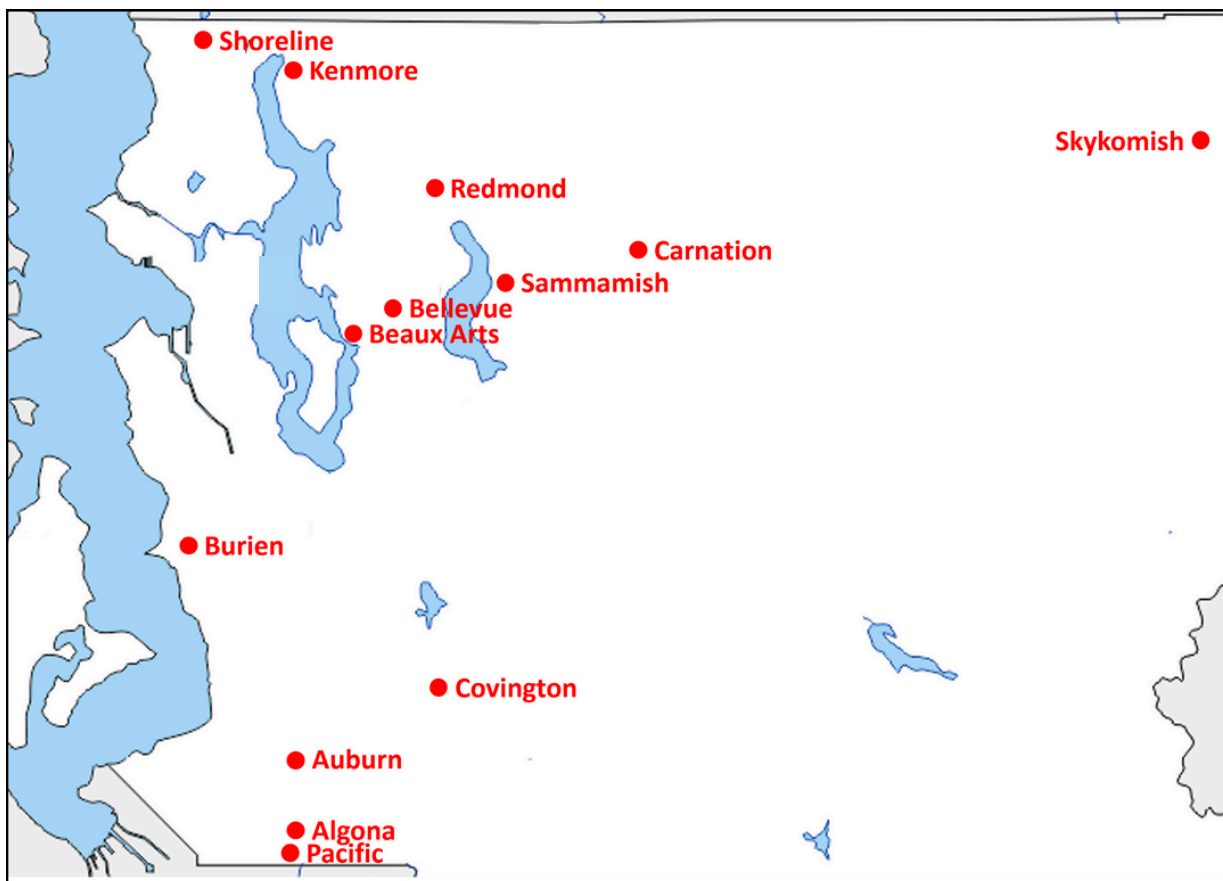
Courthouse locations



Base map provided by: https://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=44190&lang=en

CONTRACTING CITIES

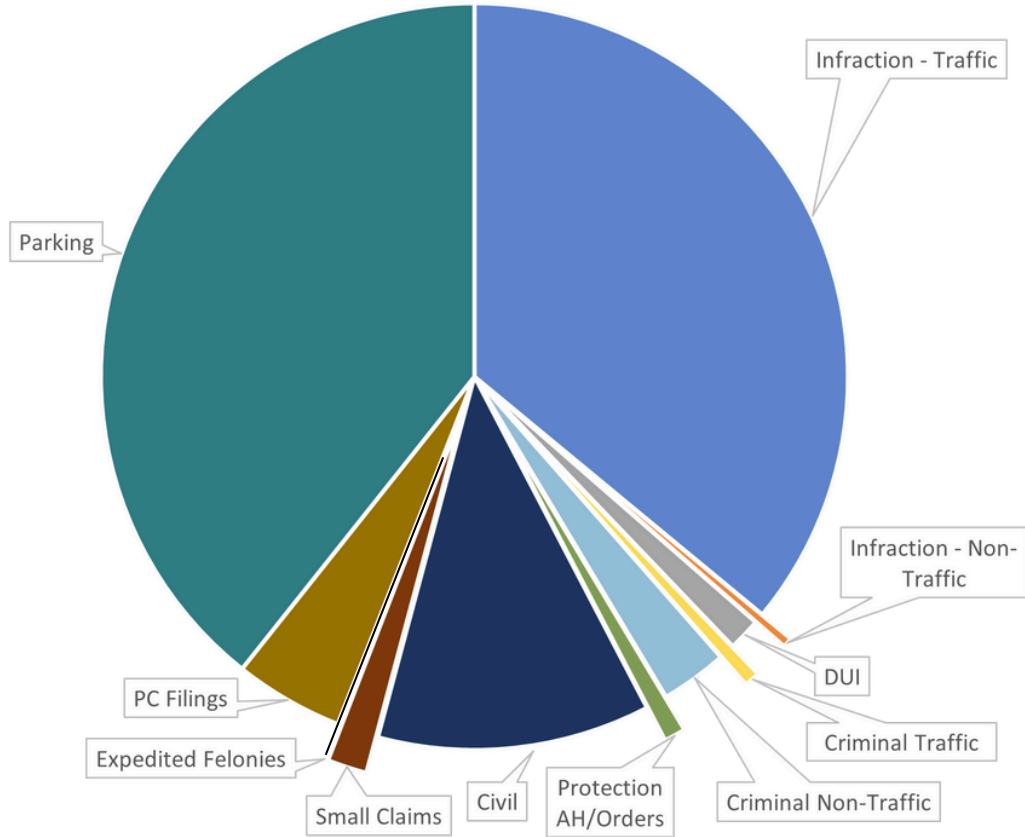
Thirteen cities throughout King County contract with King County District Court to provide their municipal court services.



Base map provided by: https://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=44190&lang=en

2024 CASELOAD

202,233
Total cases filed



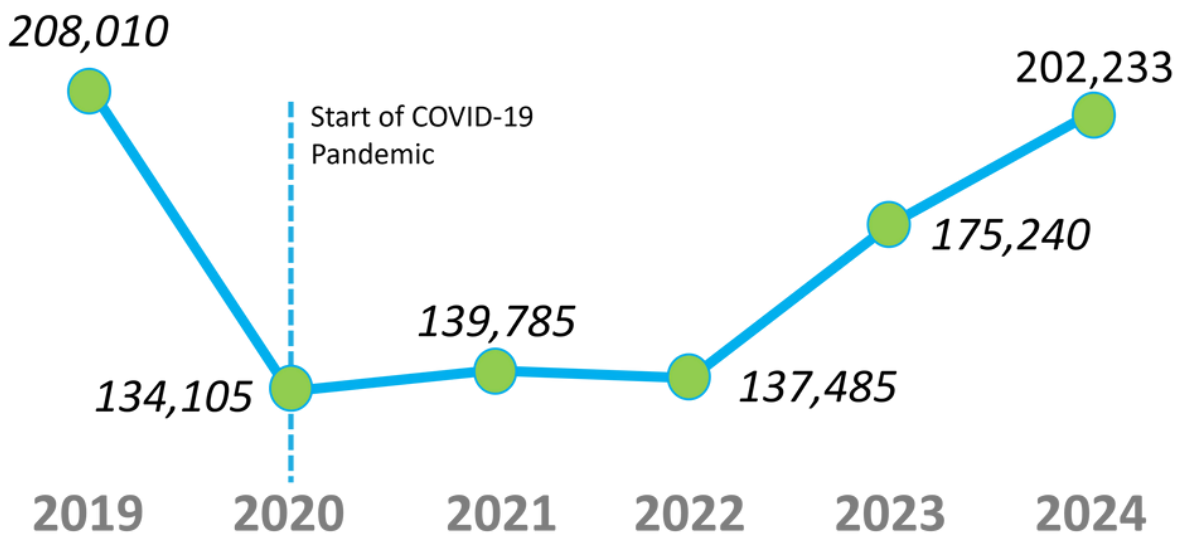
2024 Court Filings by Case Type

Case type	# of cases	Percent of total
Infraction - Traffic	72,799	36.0%
Infraction - Non-Traffic	872	0.4%
DUI	2,872	1.4%
Criminal Traffic	1,386	0.7%
Criminal Non-Traffic	5,846	2.9%
Protection AH/Orders	1,893	0.9%
Civil	23,862	11.8%
Small Claims	3,469	1.7%
Expedited Felonies	193	0.1%
PC Filings	9,540	4.7%
Parking	79,501	39.3%
TOTAL	202,233	100.0%

SIX-YEAR CASELOAD HISTORY

SIX-YEAR CASELOAD HISTORY

Case filings in King County District Court in 2024 surpassed 200,000 for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic.



INITIATIVES

As a public entity, King County District Court (KCDC) is committed to providing essential court services as efficiently and cost effectively as possible, while also keeping our judges, staff and court users safe. The Court's 2024 initiatives to better serve the public included:

Enhancing court security

We developed detailed security plans for each of our courthouse locations. These plans provide guidance to our judges and staff on how to respond to threats ranging from active shooters to earthquakes, bomb scares, and more. We also have increased our internal communications and training on security matters, with the goal of creating an organizational culture in which security discussions are common and welcome.

Operational improvements and court performance metrics

To make the best use of limited resources, in 2024, we started a pilot project to evaluate our existing culture and processes in detail and to develop Court performance metrics. This work initially started with multiple Judicial and Senior Leadership Team coordination sessions and will be expanded in 2025.

New website launched

As part of a multi-year, County-wide effort to refresh the kingcounty.gov website, KCDC in May 2024 launched a new website. Benefits of the Court's new website include:

- Making it easier for court users to find the tasks and topics they need, both on the site itself and via search engines
- Providing a better experience for people who access the Court's website via a mobile device (approximately half of all users)
- Centralizing court forms in one place to aid attorneys and pro se users in locating forms more quickly
- Incorporating various other content and functional improvements to enhance access to justice

Student Law Day

To educate and generate excitement among high school students for the law and the legal profession, KCDC hosted Law Day events at its Redmond and Maleng Regional Justice Center (MRJC) locations in May. Students from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds participated in mock trials; undertook a mock juvenile sentencing exercise; and learned about careers in the court system from panels of judges, attorneys and court staff.

Digital evidence submittal pilot project

To make it easier for court users to submit evidence in their case, the Court developed an online evidence submittal tool. A proof-of-concept / pilot of the tool launches in early 2025, and will be expanded later to more case types and courthouse locations.

JUDICIAL CHANGES

SIX-YEAR CASELOAD HISTORY

Judges elected in 2024

King County voters elected the two District Court judges who were on the ballot in November 2024, following their appointment to the bench by the King County County Council in 2023.



Judge Raul Martinez
Shoreline
Electoral District



Judge Peter J. Peaquin
Northeast
Electoral District

Departing judges

There were no judicial retirements or other departures from King County District Court in 2024.

JUDICIAL STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP & COMMITTEES

King County District Court judges are actively engaged in the statewide judicial community, including leading 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

- Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) Pattern Forms Subcommittee
 - Behavioral Health Forms – Chair
 - Protection Orders – Chair
- Washington State Association of Youth Courts – President
- Washington State Bar Association, Well Being Task Force, Judicial Subcommittee – Chair

Judge Michelle Gehlsen

- District & Municipal Court Judges Association (DMCJA)
 - Board of Governors
 - Public Outreach Co-Chair

Board & committee membership

- District & Municipal Court Judges Association (DMCJA)
 - Diversity Committee
 - Education Committee
 - Legislative Committee
 - Rules Committee
 - Therapeutic Courts Committee
 - DMCJA liaison to the Washington State Access to Justice Board
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council
- Joint Minority Mentorship Program
- Judicial Assistance Services Program
- Pathways Advisory Committee, Issaquah School District
- Washington State Administration Office of the Courts (AOC), Person Business Rules Committee
- Washington State Alternatives to Incarceration Task Force
- Washington State Anti-Racism Training Task Force
- Washington State Bar Association
 - DEI Pathways Summit Committee
 - Well Being Task Force
- Washington State Bench Bar Committee
- Washington State Judges Foundation
- Washington State Supreme Court Gender and Justice Commission

JUDICIAL AWARDS & PRESENTATIONS

King County District Court judges are recognized throughout King County and Washington state for their service and expertise. In 2024, 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
- Participating in local service groups; volunteering in the community; and mentoring others

Awards

Judge Michelle Gehlsen

- District & Municipal Court Judges Association (DMCJA) Presidential Award

Judge Andrea S. Jarmon

- Washington Women Lawyers, President's Award
- International Women's Day, Ayesha & Team, Award of Recognition

Judge Fa'amomoi Masaniai

- Seattle University School of Law, Asian American/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Organization, Trailblazer Award

Presentations

Among the dozens of presentations made by King County District Court judges throughout King County and Washington were presentations to the following groups and events:

- City Council meetings (numerous)
- Community service agencies (numerous)
- District and Municipal Court Judges Association (DMCJA)
 - Annual Conference
 - "You've Been Served" event
- High schools and middle schools (numerous)
- Joint Minority Mentorship Program
 - Seattle University School of Law
 - University of Washington School of Law
- Law schools (numerous)
- Mock Trial Programs (numerous)
- Moot Court Competitions (numerous)
- Office of Public Defense, Families Stronger Together Conference
- Service clubs and organizations (numerous)
- Washington State Judicial College
- Washington State Youth Court Conference

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI)

King County District Court's (KCDC) ongoing commitment to enhancing diversity equity and inclusion is enshrined in the Court's Local Rules. KCDC Local Rule LARLJ 0.8, *Committees*, established a standing DEI Committee comprised of judges, directors, managers, court staff and probation staff. The DEI Committee is charged with developing DEI policies that affect the Court; the communities we serve; the people working in our three Divisions; other courts and public and private sector entities.

Community outreach – KCDC judges and staff engage with diverse communities at community events throughout King County. To make it easier for event sponsors and others to request the Court's participation in community events, in 2024 the KCDC Executive Committee of judges adopted Community Engagement Guidelines and a Community Event Request Form.



Student Law Day at the Maleng Regional Justice Center in Kent

The Court participated in the following events in 2024:

- Student Law Day (Kent and Redmond) – May
- Kenmore Night Out – August
- Celebrate Shoreline – August
- Brothers United in Leadership Development (BUILD) Back 2 School Kickball Classic (Genesee Park, Seattle) – September
- B-Town Fiesta (Burien) – September
- Judge Charles V. Johnson Youth and Law Forum (Tukwila) – November



KCDC information booth at the B-Town Fiesta in Burien

Training and development

- **Microaggressions Training**, facilitated by Dr. Caprice Hollins, Co-Founder of Cultures Connecting
 - All KCDC judges and staff participated in two half-day sessions designed to develop greater sensitivity to the experiences of marginalized groups.
- **The Antiracist Courtroom & Reducing Disparity Through Nontraditional Diversion**, hosted by the National Judicial College
 - Six KCDC judges attended this intensive five-day course in Montgomery, Alabama
 - The course “combines embodied experience and jurisprudence to create a deep emotional and intellectual understanding of racial bias in the courts and reducing disparities through nontraditional community-based diversion and other practices.”

THERAPEUTIC COURTS

To help reduce criminal recidivism and enable people to better their lives, King County District Court (KCDC) operates several therapeutic courts. These specialty, problem-solving courts are:

- King County Regional Mental Health Court
- King County Regional Veterans Court
- Auburn Community Court
- Redmond Community Court
- Shoreline-Kenmore Community Court

Coinciding with World Mental Health Day, **King County Regional Mental Health Court (RMHC)** celebrated its 25th anniversary on October 10, 2024. RMHC graduates, their friends and family, RMHC team members and local dignitaries were honored by special guest speakers U.S. Congressman Adam Smith and King County Councilmember Jorge Barón. RMHC has served more than 5,000 King County residents throughout its 25 years. It has been proven to reduce criminal recidivism by 26% and increase participation in substance use disorder treatment by 37 percentage points, according to a rigorous study conducted by the Washington State Dept. of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

The KCDC Therapeutic Courts Team secured a grant from the Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) that funded the hiring of a **Community Court Case Manager**. This new position works closely with Community Court participants to connect them to the resources they need in the community – such as substance use treatment, housing, food, and more.

	2024 Graduations	Active participants continuing as of 12/31/24
Regional Mental Health Court	29	83
Regional Veterans Court	6	24
Community Courts <i>(combined total for Auburn, Redmond and Shoreline-Kenmore)</i>	47	100

“*My experience here has saved my life. Not only am I off the drugs and staying clean by taking the healthy steps to live life clean, I also have been able to get myself back in a healthy structured living situation. Community court is the most awesome program. I am so blessed to have the honor to be a part of this program.*

- Redmond Community Court graduate



King County Councilmember Jorge Barón congratulates RMHC on its 25th anniversary



U.S. Representative Adam Smith shares his story at the RMHC 25th anniversary celebration

JUDGES



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 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

East Division

- Judge Michael Finkle
- Judge Michelle Gehlsen
- Judge Jill Klinge
- Judge Marcus Naylor
- Judge Lisa O'Toole
- Judge Peter J. Peaquin
- Judge Kevin Peck

South Division

- Judge Virginia Amato
- Judge Laurel Gibson
- Judge Nathaniel Green
- Judge Corinna Harn
- Judge Andrea S. Jarmon
- Judge Rhonda Laumann
- Judge Fa'amomoi Masaniai
- Judge Elizabeth D. Stephenson
- Judge Leah Taguba
- Judge Brian Todd
- Judge Matthew York

West Division

- Judge Kuljinder Dhillon
- Judge Karama H. Hawkins
- Judge Gregg Hirakawa
- Judge Raul Martinez
- Judge Lisa Paglisotti
- Judge Rebecca C. Robertson
- Judge Kristin Shotwell

COURT LEADERSHIP

Judicial leadership



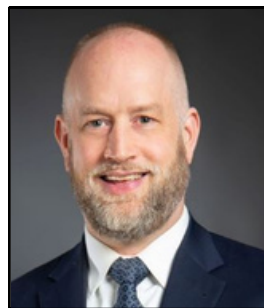
Judge Rebecca C. Robertson
Chief Presiding Judge



Judge Corinna Harn
Assistant Chief Presiding Judge



Judge Lisa O'Toole
East Division
Presiding Judge



Judge Brian Todd
South Division
Presiding Judge



Judge Kristin Shotwell
West Division
Presiding Judge

Senior Leadership Team

- Othniel Palomino, Chief Administrative Officer
- Tina Gill, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
- Regina Alexander, Probation Director
- Heather Dean, Budget Director
- Kim Howells, Operations Director - Cities
- Enrique Kuttemplon, Information Technology Director
- Patrick Wells, Operations Director - State
- Kevin Whitley, Central Services Director