BUDGET SUMMARY

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Requested Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures					
Personnel Costs	17,369,899	22,146,022	18,271,832	19,163,788	891,956
Operations Costs	12,182,782	13,831,165	14,011,242	13,845,152	(166,090)
Debt & Depreciation	0	0	0	0	0
Capital Outlay	6,200	0	6,000	6,000	0
Interdepartmental Charges	76,456	45,238	118,419	130,147	11,728
Total Expenditures	**$29,635,337**	**$36,022,426**	**$32,407,493**	**$33,145,087**	**$737,594**
Revenues					
Other Direct Revenue	3,695,169	4,619,308	4,094,086	4,369,080	274,994
State & Federal Revenue	9,382,292	12,232,509	9,316,834	9,293,051	(23,783)
Total Revenues	**$13,077,461**	**$16,851,817**	**$13,410,920**	**$13,662,131**	**$251,211**
Tax Levy	**$16,557,876**	**$19,170,608**	**$18,996,573**	**$19,482,956**	**$486,383**
Personnel					
Full Time Pos (FTE)	304.50	284.00	297.00	297.00	0.00
Overtime $	46,991	66,808	0	0	0
Seasonal/Hourly/Pool	0	0	0	0	0

Department Mission:
Milwaukee County's Combined Courts Related Operations advance the constitutional principle of an impartial and independent judiciary by providing administrative, operational, and record-keeping responsibilities in an effective manner that maximizes the public's equal access to justice.

Department Vision:
Milwaukee County's Combined Courts Related Operations envision a court system where all litigants, regardless of identity or representation status, are afforded equal access to procedural justice.

Department Description:
Combined Courts Related Operations ("Combined Courts") administrative and record-keeping responsibilities support the Milwaukee County Circuit Court and the State of Wisconsin Circuit Court Judges and Court Commissioners in District 1.

The department includes the following offices: Office of the Chief Judge of District 1, Office of the Clerk of Circuit Court and its Criminal, Civil, Small Claims, and Children's Divisions; Jury Management; Office of the Family Court Commissioner, including Domestic Violence and Harassment Injunction Court; the Permanency Plan Review Court; and Family Drug Treatment Court. Additionally, the operations include the Milwaukee Justice Center, the self-help civil legal aid center assisting self-represented people with civil cases and questions, and the Eviction Diversion Initiative.

The Chief Judge is responsible for the oversight of administration of judicial activities in the 47 State of Wisconsin Circuit Courts within District 1.

For budgetary planning purposes, Combined Courts functions are grouped as follows:

--Administration: Executive office of the Clerk of Circuit Court, the executive office of the Chief Judge of District 1, Jury Management, and the related personnel. It also includes the state-mandated support for the Milwaukee County Law Library.

--Criminal and Traffic Court: record keeping and administrative functions supporting the felony and misdemeanor court, as well as related personnel and the associated revenues and costs.

--Civil Court: record keeping and administrative functions supporting the family and civil courts, as well as related personnel and the associated revenues and costs.

--Children's Court: record keeping and administrative functions supporting the juvenile courts, as well as related personnel and the associated revenues and costs.

--Family Court: Office of the Family Court Commissioner, supporting Deputy and Assistant Commissioners, clerical staff, and associated revenues and operating costs.

--Probate: Office of the Register in Probate, supporting a Deputy Register in Probate, a Court Commissioner, clerical staff, and associated revenues and operating costs.

--Self-Help: county-funded components of the Milwaukee Justice Center, a public-private collaboration providing civil legal aid to self-represented litigants, including the Eviction Diversion Initiative.

--Permanency Plan Review Court: reimbursable funding for the costs of administering permanency plans in Children's Court cases.

--Family Drug Treatment Court: fund association with the administration of a family-centric judicial approach in Children's Court cases.

Strategic Program Area: Administration

Service Provision: Mandated

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures	4,056,672	4,651,634	4,166,947	4,337,662	170,715
Revenues	689,991	1,186,098	816,125	643,000	(173,125)
Tax Levy	3,366,681	3,465,536	3,350,822	3,694,662	343,840
Full Time Pos (FTE)	36.00	35.00	42.00	39.00	(3.00)

Strategic Overview:
This program area includes the executive office of the Clerk of Circuit Court, the executive office of the Chief Judge of District 1, Jury Management, and the related personnel. It also includes the supporting operations of information technology services, central accounting, invoice processing, budget preparation, contract management, and grant administration.

The Clerk of Circuit Court also provides fiscal support to the functions reporting directly to the executive office of the Chief Judge of District 1 and the Judicial Operations Managers, including staff attorneys supporting the State of Wisconsin Circuit Court Judges, court improvement grant management staff, and court coordinators for several specialty court programs.

Additionally, the Milwaukee County Law Library ("MCLL") is included in this strategic area because it is a state-mandated function per Wis. Stat. Sec. 757.41. On average, the library staff assists people on a walk-in basis, via email, and by phone. The most common services include access court forms, making copies, and accessing Wisconsin Circuit Court Access (WCCA).

Strategic Implementation:
The offices in the administrative strategic area work collaboratively to ensure that all court functions are running as efficiently and effectively as possible. This requires frequent review of staffing patterns and divisions of labor to determine if staffing needs are adequate and implemented appropriately.

Additional Program Details:
There are no changes to staffing or programs in the Administration area and no major changes are anticipated for the 2026 budget.

Strategic Program Area: Criminal Court

Service Provision: Mandated

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures	6,895,317	8,546,398	7,511,081	8,351,609	840,528
Revenues	2,896,702	4,581,145	3,382,927	3,475,765	92,838
Tax Levy	3,998,616	3,965,252	4,128,154	4,875,844	747,690
Full Time Pos (FTE)	79.00	78.00	79.00	93.00	14.00

Strategic Overview:
The Criminal Court program area is responsible for the creation, processing, and management of all felony, misdemeanor, criminal traffic, and county forfeiture cases in Milwaukee County.

The Clerk of Circuit Court's Criminal Division Office provides support to the Criminal Courts through case processing, file management, accounting services, and personnel including Deputy Court Clerks (DCCs). The office also provides customer service in person and over the phone, assists with case searches and certification of court documents, responds to open record requests, and processes payments for court costs, fines, and surcharges.

Included within this program area are all the personnel whose primary functions report to the Chief Judge of District 1. The positions supporting the Chief Judge's responsibilities report to the Judicial Operations Managers for Pre Trial and Children's Court.

Strategic Implementation:
The entirety of the Criminal Division continues to support the Judiciary in addressing the backlog of criminal cases while ensuring procedural fairness in the criminal court process. The division works collaboratively with the State of Wisconsin Circuit Court Judges, both state and county Court Reporters, the Office of the Milwaukee County Sheriff, the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, Justice Point, the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office, the Office of the State Public Defender, and numerous private bar attorneys.

No major changes are anticipated for the 2026 budget.

Additional Program Details:
In 2024, 38,371 cases were filed in the criminal and traffic courts a 13% decrease from 44,030 cases filed in 2023, and a 15% decrease from 45,059 cases filed in 2022.

And, 41,410 were disposed in 2024, a 2% decrease from 43,293 cases disposed in 2023 and an 11% decrease from 46,694 cases disposed in 2022.

Strategic Program Area: Children's Court

Service Provision: Mandated

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures	6,786,784	8,601,761	7,981,359	7,119,662	(861,697)
Revenues	2,937,612	3,925,669	2,691,790	2,696,000	4,210
Tax Levy	3,849,172	4,676,092	5,289,569	4,423,662	(865,907)
Full Time Pos (FTE)	36.00	30.00	38.00	34.00	(4.00)

Strategic Overview:

The Children's Court program area is responsible for the creation, processing, and management of cases involving juvenile delinquency, children and juveniles in need of protective services, termination of parental rights, minor adoptions, guardianship of minors, injunctions, and ordinance violations involving minors.

The Clerk of Circuit Court's Children's Court Office provides support to Children's Court through case processing, file management, accounting services, and personnel including Deputy Court Clerks (DCCs). The office also provides customer service in person and over the phone, assists with case searches and certification of court documents, responds to open record requests, and processes payments for court costs, fines, and surcharges.

Strategic Implementation:

The division works collaboratively with the State of Wisconsin Circuit Court Judges, Judicial Court Commissioners, both state and county Court Reporters, the Office of the Milwaukee County Sheriff, the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, Milwaukee Family Intervention Services, Children Youth and Family Services, the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office, the Office of the State Public Defender, and numerous private bar attorneys.

The Clerk of Circuit Court has a contractual relationship with the Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee to provide Guardian ad Litem (GAL) services at Children's Court. This contract is in year 4 of 5. GALs are appointed to represent the best interests of minor children where the judicial officer has special concerns regarding the welfare of a child. GALs also are appointed when a parent is a minor, when a child born during a marriage is alleged to be a non-marital child, in child abuse injunction hearings, and when the court has concerns as to the competency of a party.

No major changes are anticipated for the 2026 budget.

Additional Program Details:

In 2024, 3403 cases were filed in Children's Court, a 4% increase from 3269 cases in 2023 and almost identical to the 3404 cases filed in 2022.

And, 2687 cases were disposed in 2024, an 8% decrease from 2905 cases disposed in 2023 and a 19% decrease from 3332 cases disposed in 2022.

Strategic Program Area: Civil Court

Service Provision: Mandated

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures	5,726,220	7,529,067	6,213,277	5,546,665	(666,612)
Revenues	2,921,174	3,254,846	2,973,457	3,321,700	348,243
Tax Levy	2,805,047	4,274,220	3,239,820	2,224,965	(1,014,855)
Full Time Pos (FTE)	95.00	98.00	95.00	83.00	(12.00)

Strategic Overview:

The Civil Court program area is responsible for the creation, processing, and management of small claims, large claims, replevin, eviction, and family cases heard in front of the judiciary.

Included within this program area are all the personnel whose primary functions report to the Chief Judge of District 1.

The Clerk of Circuit Court's Civil Court Office provides support to the Civil Courts through case processing, file management, accounting services, and personnel including Deputy Court Clerks (DCCs). The office also provides customer service in person and over the phone, assists with case searches and certification of court documents, responds to open record requests, and processes payments for court costs, fines, and surcharges.

Strategic Implementation:

The division works collaboratively with the State of Wisconsin Circuit Court Judges, Judicial Court Commissioners, both state and county Court Reporters, the Office of the Milwaukee County Sheriff, Sojourner Family Peace Center, Legal Action of Wisconsin, Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee, the Rental Housing Resource Center, Community Advocates, and numerous private bar attorneys.

No major changes are anticipated for the 2026 budget.

Additional Program Details:

In 2024, 59,682 cases were filed in the Civil Division (consisting of Civil and Small Claims cases), a 36% increase from 43,753 cases filed in 2023 and 48% increase from 40,380 cases filed in 2022.

And, 47,650 cases were disposed in 2024, a 13% increase from 42,216 cases disposed in 2023 and a 50% increase from 31,751 cases disposed in 2022.

Strategic Program Area: Family Court

Service Provision: Mandated

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures	3,531,325	3,631,427	3,492,496	4,677,013	1,184,517
Revenues	2,196,642	2,210,589	2,333,113	2,248,298	(84,815)
Tax Levy	1,334,684	1,420,838	1,159,383	2,428,715	1,269,332
Full Time Pos (FTE)	24.00	18.00	19.00	27.00	8.00

Strategic Overview:

The Family Court program area is responsible—through the Family Court Commissioner's Office-- for the creation, processing, and management of cases involving paternity establishment and acknowledgement, divorce, legal separation, annulment, and the orders to establish or change custody, placement, child support, maintenance, and property division. The Family Court Commissioner's Office also responds to cases involving grandparent or third-party visitation requests and restraining orders/injunction hearings related to domestic violence and harassment.

The Clerk of Circuit Court's Civil Office provides support to the Family Court Commissioner's Office through case processing, file management, accounting services, and personnel including Deputy Court Clerks (DCCs). The office also provides customer service in person and over the phone, assists with case searches and certification of court documents, responds to open record requests, and processes payments for court costs, fines, and surcharges.

Strategic Implementation:

The division works collaboratively with Family Court Commissioners, State of Wisconsin Child Support Services, both state and county Court Reporters, the Office of the Milwaukee County Sheriff, Sojourner Family Peace Center, and numerous private bar attorneys.

As noted in the Children's Court program area, the Clerk of Circuit Court has a contractual relationship with the Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee to provide Guardian ad Litem (GAL) services for parents who are unable to pay court fees in Family Court. This contract is in 4 of 5.

Additionally, the Clerk of Circuit Court has entered into a yearly cooperative agreement with the State of Wisconsin through Child Support Services ("CSS") in which the State reimburses a percentage of costs back to the Clerk of Circuit Courts through the Social Security Act, Title IV, Section D ("Four-D"). This legislation directs the State's operations for paternity and child support establishment as well as child support collection. The reimbursement helps to fund Court Commissioners, DCCs, clerical specialists, services in the Milwaukee Justice Center, the state-mandated support of the Milwaukee County Law Library, and other administrative/supporting roles in the Clerk of Courts office.

No major changes are anticipated for the 2026 budget.

Additional Program Details:

In 2024, 10,193 Family cases were filed, a 3% decrease from 10,499 cases filed in 2023 and a 3% increase from 9923 cases filed in 2022.

And, 10,680 cases reached disposition, a 47% increase from 7325 cases disposed in 2023 and a 67% increase from 6402 cases disposed in 2022.

Strategic Program Area: Probate

Service Provision: Mandated

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures	1,573,842	2,050,694	2,064,411	1,919,160	(145,251)
Revenues	313,354	522,333	364,977	392,205	27,228
Tax Levy	1,260,488	1,528,360	1,699,434	1,526,955	(172,479)
Full Time Pos (FTE)	20.00	15.00	15.00	12.00	(3.00)

Strategic Overview:
The Probate program area is responsible for the creation, processing, and management of estate administration, adult guardianships, and mental health commitments cases heard in front of the Register in Probate, Deputy Register in Probate, and a court commissioner.

In 2022, this program area was separated from the Office of the Clerk of Circuit Court by order of the Chief Judge of District 1 and is now an autonomous entity within Combined Courts with responsibility for its own personnel and service management.

Strategic Implementation:
This area works collaboratively with the State of Wisconsin Circuit Court Judges, Judicial Court Commissioners, Court Reporters, and others. The two judicial branches assigned to this area are dual functioning, hearing both probate cases and civil cases.

No major changes are anticipated for the 2026 budget.

Additional Program Details:
In 2024, 4225 cases were filed in Probate court, a 17% increase from 3597 cases filed in 2023 and a 14% increase from 3704 cases filed in 2022.

And ,4362 cases were disposed in 2024, a 11 % increase from 3934 cases disposed in 2023 and a 59% increase from 2750 cases disposed in 2022.

Strategic Program Area: Family Drug Treatment Court

Service Provision: Mandated

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures	(72,092)	(75,207)	10,000	11,160	1,160
Revenues	18,750	75,000	75,000	75,000	0
Tax Levy	(90,842)	(150,207)	(65,000)	(63,840)	1,160
Full Time Pos (FTE)	6.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Strategic Overview:
The Family Drug Treatment Court ("FDTC") program area is a family-centered program to support families with specific needs by assigning one judge to the family for cases that may be heard in children's court or in family court. The program area's goal is to improve consistency and continuity while reducing trauma for children in the court processes.

Strategic Implementation:
This program area operates the Family Drug Treatment Court, Healthy Infant Court, and Unified Family Court all with similar goals of implementing best practices for families, reducing trauma for parties in the courts, and upholding the best interests of the children involved.

The program area works collaboratively with the State of Wisconsin Circuit Court Judges, Judicial Court Commissioners, both state and county Court Reporters, the Office of the Milwaukee County Sheriff, the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, Milwaukee Family Intervention Services, Children Youth and Family Services, Milwaukee County Child Protective Services, the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office, the Office of the State Public Defender, and numerous private bar attorneys.

This program area is a grant-funded initiative. Additionally, Combined Courts receives funds from Children Youth and Family Services for the entire cost of one 1.0 FTE Court Commissioner and from Milwaukee County Child Protective Services for partial costs for one 1.0 FTE Court Commissioner.

The Court Coordinators in this program area report directly to the executive office of the Chief Judge of District 1.

No major changes are anticipated for the 2026 budget.

Additional Program Details:
Family Drug Treatment Court served 61 individual participants in 2024, and a total of 121 children/cases. Of those 61 participants, 7 completed successfully, 4 withdrew of their own choice (usually after reunification occurred), 19 discharged and 27 are still active in the program. Successful completion averages around 19 months to reach. The shortest time to complete the program successfully is 12 months based on our phase structure, which is why a number of 2024 cases are still active in FDTC.

Strategic Program Area: Permanency Plan Review

Service Provision: Mandated

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures	790,560	782,807	658,408	896,494	238,086
Revenues	842,063	934,789	658,408	660,163	1,755
Tax Levy	(51,502)	(151,983)	0	236,331	236,331
Full Time Pos (FTE)	6.50	6.00	5.00	5.00	0.00

Strategic Overview:
The Permanency Plan Review program area is responsible for the administrative and operational services supporting judicial oversight of permanency plans in Children's Court.

Strategic Implementation:
All funding for this program area is through the revenue shared by the State of Wisconsin Department of Children and Families' Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services to Combined Courts.

No major changes are anticipated for the 2026 budget.

Strategic Program Area: Self Help

Service Provision: Discretionary

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures	346,708	303,847	309,514	285,662	(23,852)
Revenues	261,174	161,348	115,123	150,000	34,877
Tax Levy	85,534	142,499	194,391	135,662	(58,729)
Full Time Pos (FTE)	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	0.00

Strategic Overview:

The Self-Help program area is responsible for the Milwaukee Justice Center ("the MJC"), a collaborative partnership between Milwaukee County Clerk of Circuit Court, Marquette university Law School, and the Milwaukee Bar Association to provide free civil legal aid to Milwaukee County residents or those with Milwaukee County cases. The MJC serves those who cannot afford to hire a lawyer for their civil issue, yet do not qualify for free legal representation, to help further people's access to justice in Milwaukee County.

Strategic Implementation:

Combined Courts is responsible for the County's portion of MJC funding, including one 1.0 FTE attorney, one 1.0 FTE paralegal, one 1.0 FTE legal assistant, and one 1.0 FTE clerical specialist. Additionally, Combined Courts funds the space for the MJC and the AmeriCorps Courthouse Navigator Program, office supplies, internet and informational technology services, copier maintenance, and furniture for professional staff.

For informational purposes, both Marquette University Law School and Milwaukee Bar Association provide significant support in the form of personnel, clinical infrastructure services, and grant management operations.

No major changes are anticipated for the 2026 budget.

Additional Program Details:

In 2025, the AmeriCorps Courthouse Navigator program was terminated by the federal government in April resulting in the program ending. The Clerk of Circuit Court supported the program by identifying a Clerical Specialist role that could be assigned to staff the Courthouse information desk on a permanent, full-time basis. This change did not add to the department's personnel budget because it was an already established position in the Civil division.

In 2024, the Milwaukee Justice Center provided 6658 in-person client visits in all services and the Civil Legal Helpline answered 2748 calls. The AmeriCorps Courthouse Navigators answered 32,189 questions at the Information Desk on the Ground Floor and assisted 951 people in their filing process.

In addition, the Milwaukee Justice Center "How-to-Complete Family Forms" YouTube videos had 23,974 views and the www.milwaukee-justicecenter.com website received 33,037 unique views in 2024.

The AmeriCorps Courthouse Navigator Program will return in fall of 2025.