

BUDGET SUMMARY

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Requested Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures					
Personnel Costs	22,146,022	18,826,228	18,933,162	18,729,837	(203,325)
Operations Costs	13,831,165	12,271,826	13,865,812	14,656,654	790,842
Debt & Depreciation	0	0	0	0	0
Capital Outlay	0	0	6,000	6,000	0
Interdepartmental Charges	45,238	47,026	109,171	156,127	46,956
Total Expenditures	\$36,022,426	\$31,145,081	\$32,914,145	\$33,548,618	\$634,473
Revenues					
Other Direct Revenue	4,619,308	4,521,342	4,369,080	4,101,922	(267,158)
State & Federal Revenue	12,232,509	11,293,246	10,862,408	12,158,388	1,295,980
Total Revenues	\$16,851,817	\$15,814,588	\$15,231,488	\$16,260,310	\$1,028,822
Tax Levy	\$19,170,608	\$15,330,492	\$17,682,657	\$17,288,308	(\$394,349)
Personnel					
Full Time Pos (FTE)	284.00	297.00	297.00	297.00	0.00
Overtime \$	66,808	51,918	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:

This strategic program area provides executive leadership, administrative oversight, and operational support for the Milwaukee County Clerk of Circuit Court and the Chief Judge of District 1. It includes the executive offices of the Clerk of Circuit Court and the Chief Judge, Jury Management, and the personnel responsible for supporting these functions.

The program also delivers the core administrative services necessary to ensure the effective and efficient operation of the courts and Clerk's Office. These services include information technology, financial management, central accounting, invoice processing, budget development and monitoring, contract administration, and grant management.

In addition, the Clerk of Circuit Court provides fiscal and administrative support to functions reporting directly to the Chief Judge of District 1 and the Judicial Operations Managers. These functions include staff attorneys serving Wisconsin Circuit Court judges, court improvement grant management staff, and coordinators who oversee and support several specialty court programs.

This strategic area also includes the Milwaukee County Law Library (MCLL), a state-mandated service pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 757.41. The Law Library provides legal information resources and assistance to attorneys, self-represented litigants, and members of the public. Staff assist patrons in person, by telephone, and by email, with commonly requested services including locating court forms, accessing Wisconsin Circuit Court Access (WCCA), conducting legal research, and making copies of legal materials.

Together, these functions provide the administrative infrastructure, fiscal stewardship, and public-facing services that support the effective administration of justice in Milwaukee County.

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	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures	4,651,634	4,123,470	4,360,630	4,608,538	247,908
Revenues	1,186,098	834,042	2,143,000	2,245,000	102,000
Tax Levy	3,465,536	3,289,429	2,217,630	2,363,538	145,908
Full Time Pos (FTE)	35.00	42.00	39.00	39.00	0.00

Strategic Overview:

The Administrative office includes the Office of the Clerk of Circuit Court, Jury Management, Chief Judge of District 1, and all related personnel. Information technology services, budget preparation, central accounting, grant administration, invoice processing, and contract management are all key functions of the administrative Office of the Clerk of Circuit Court.

The Clerk of Circuit Court also provides fiscal support to the functions reporting to 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.

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.

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.

Strategic Program Area: Criminal Court**Service Provision:** Mandated**How We Do It: Program Budget Summary**

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures	8,546,398	7,108,003	8,400,463	8,003,054	(397,409)
Revenues	4,581,145	4,177,179	3,475,765	3,250,100	(225,665)
Tax Levy	3,965,252	2,930,824	4,924,698	4,752,954	(171,744)
Full Time Pos (FTE)	78.00	79.00	93.00	94.00	1.00

Strategic Overview:

The Criminal and Traffic Court Program Area is responsible for the intake, processing, management, and disposition of all felony, misdemeanor, criminal traffic, and county forfeiture cases filed in Milwaukee County. This program area ensures the timely and accurate administration of criminal case records while supporting the effective operation of the criminal justice system.

The Clerk of Circuit Court's Criminal Division provides comprehensive administrative and operational support to the Criminal Courts through case processing, records and file management, financial and accounting services, and Deputy Court Clerk (DCC) staffing. The division also delivers essential public services by assisting customers in person and by telephone, conducting case searches, certifying court records, responding to open records requests, and processing payments for court costs, fines, fees, and surcharges.

Strategic Implementation:

Through continuous collaboration with judicial officers and criminal justice partners, the division works to improve case flow, enhance operational efficiency, and maintain procedural fairness throughout the criminal court process.

The division partners closely with the Wisconsin Circuit Court judges serving Milwaukee County, state and county court reporters, the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office, the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, JusticePoint, the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office, the Office of the State Public Defender, and members of the private bar. These collaborative efforts are critical to maintaining effective court operations, promoting accountability, and ensuring timely case resolution for the residents of Milwaukee County.

Additional Program Details:

In 2025, 37,049 cases were filed in the criminal and traffic courts compared to 38,371 in 2024 which is a 4% reduction in cases filed. Additionally in 2025 there were 5,388 search warrants filed.

Strategic Program Area: Children's Court**Service Provision:** Mandated**How We Do It: Program Budget Summary**

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures	8,601,761	7,192,696	7,132,808	8,151,372	1,018,564
Revenues	3,925,669	3,004,867	2,696,000	2,696,000	0
Tax Levy	4,676,092	4,187,829	4,436,808	5,455,372	1,018,564
Full Time Pos (FTE)	30.00	38.00	34.00	35.00	1.00

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 protection or services (CHIPS/JIPS), termination of parental rights, minor adoptions, guardianships of minors, injunctions, and ordinance violations involving juveniles.

The Clerk of Circuit Court's Children's Court Division provides comprehensive administrative and operational support to the judiciary through case processing, records management, accounting services, and staffing of Deputy Court Clerks (DCCs). The division also delivers customer service to attorneys, litigants, and the public by assisting with case inquiries, document certification, open records requests, and the collection of court costs, fines, and statutory surcharges.

Strategic Implementation:

The division collaborates with numerous justice system and community partners, including Wisconsin Circuit Court Judges, Judicial Court Commissioners, state and county Court Reporters, the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office, the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, Milwaukee Family Intervention Services, Children, Youth and Family Services, the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office, the Wisconsin State Public Defender's Office, and members of the private bar.

The Clerk of Circuit Court also maintains a contractual partnership with the Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee to provide Guardian ad Litem (GAL) services. GALs are appointed to represent the best interests of children in cases involving child welfare concerns, minor parents, disputed parentage matters, child abuse injunction proceedings, and cases where the court determines that a party requires independent representation.

No significant operational or programmatic changes are anticipated for the 2027 budget.

Additional Program Details:

Children's Court filings decreased to 3,231 cases in 2025 representing a 4% reduction from 3,403 cases filed in 2024.

Strategic Program Area: Civil Court**Service Provision:** Mandated**How We Do It: Program Budget Summary**

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures	7,529,067	5,949,267	5,598,276	5,617,709	19,433
Revenues	3,254,846	3,888,178	3,321,700	3,214,700	(107,000)
Tax Levy	4,274,220	2,061,090	2,276,576	2,403,009	126,433
Full Time Pos (FTE)	98.00	95.00	83.00	83.00	0.00

Strategic Overview:

The Civil Court Program Area oversees the processing and management of small claims, large claims, replevin, eviction, and other civil matters heard before the judiciary.

The Clerk of Circuit Court's Civil Division provides essential administrative support through case processing, records management, accounting services, and Deputy Court Clerk (DCC) staffing. The division also assists the public with case inquiries, certified court documents, open records requests, and the collection of court costs, fines, and surcharges.

Strategic Implementation:

The division works in partnership with Wisconsin Circuit Court Judges, Judicial Court Commissioners, state and county Court Reporters, the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office, Sojourner Family Peace Center, Legal Action of Wisconsin, the Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee, the Rental Housing Resource Center, Community Advocates, and members of the private bar to ensure efficient court operations and access to justice.

No significant operational or programmatic changes are anticipated for the 2027 budget.

Additional Program Details:

Civil Division filings reached 68,337 cases in 2025, representing a 13% increase from the 59,682 cases filed in 2024.

Strategic Program Area: Family Court**Service Provision:** Mandated**How We Do It: Program Budget Summary**

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures	3,631,427	4,143,910	4,466,002	4,449,191	(16,811)
Revenues	2,210,589	2,601,228	2,248,298	3,545,535	1,297,237
Tax Levy	1,420,838	1,542,682	2,217,704	903,656	(1,314,048)
Full Time Pos (FTE)	18.00	19.00	27.00	26.00	(1.00)

Strategic Overview:

The Family Court Program Area, through the Family Court Commissioner's Office, is responsible for the creation, processing, and management of cases involving paternity establishment and acknowledgment, divorce, legal separation, annulment, child custody and placement, child support, maintenance, property division, grandparent and third-party visitation, and domestic violence or harassment injunction proceedings.

The Clerk of Circuit Court's Family Division provides administrative and operational support through case processing, records management, accounting services, and Deputy Court Clerk staffing. The division also provides customer service by assisting with case inquiries, document certification, open records requests, and the collection of court costs, fines, and statutory 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. The office just completed negotiations for a five year contract extension.

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 2027 budget.

Additional Program Details:

In 2025, 10,341 Family cases were filed a 1.5% increase from the 10,193 Family cases that were filed in 2024.

Strategic Program Area: Probate

Service Provision: Mandated

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures	2,050,694	1,686,756	1,926,931	1,708,459	(218,472)
Revenues	522,333	386,609	392,205	373,100	(19,105)
Tax Levy	1,528,360	1,300,147	1,534,726	1,335,359	(199,367)
Full Time Pos (FTE)	15.00	15.00	12.00	11.00	(1.00)

Strategic Overview:

The Probate Program Area is responsible for the administration, processing, and management of estate administration, adult guardianship, and mental health commitment matters heard before the Register in Probate, Deputy Register in Probate, and Court Commissioners.

Strategic Implementation:

The Probate Program Area works collaboratively with Wisconsin Circuit Court Judges, Judicial Court Commissioners, Court Reporters, and other justice system partners. The two judicial branches assigned to this program area serve dual roles, presiding over both probate and civil matters.

No significant operational or staffing changes are anticipated for the 2027 budget. Existing resources are expected to support the program's ongoing responsibilities and service levels.

Additional Program Details:

In 2025, Probate recorded 4,268 new case filings, representing a 1% increase from 2024.

The program also disposed of 4,523 cases in 2025, a 3.7% increase from 2024.

Strategic Program Area: Family Drug Treatment Court**Service Provision:** Mandated**How We Do It: Program Budget Summary**

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures	(75,207)	(56,539)	11,160	4,000	(7,160)
Revenues	75,000	97,614	75,000	75,000	0
Tax Levy	(150,207)	(154,152)	(63,840)	(71,000)	(7,160)

Strategic Overview:

The Family Drug Treatment Court (FDTC) is a family-centered problem-solving court that promotes stability and improved outcomes for families affected by substance use disorders. The program assigns a single judge to oversee a family's related Children's Court and Family Court matters, fostering consistency, continuity, and timely decision-making while minimizing trauma for children involved in the court process.

Strategic Implementation:

The program administers the Family Drug Treatment Court, Healthy Infant Court, and Unified Family Court initiatives. Each program is designed to implement evidence-based practices that strengthen families, reduce trauma for participants, and promote outcomes that serve the best interests of children.

The program collaborates with Wisconsin Circuit Court Judges, Judicial Court Commissioners, state and county Court Reporters, the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office, 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 Wisconsin Office of the State Public Defender, and private bar attorneys.

Family Drug Treatment Court is primarily grant funded. In addition, Combined Courts receives funding from Children, Youth and Family Services to support one full-time (1.0 FTE) Court Commissioner position and partial funding from Milwaukee County Child Protective Services for an additional 1.0 FTE Court Commissioner position.

No significant programmatic or staffing changes are anticipated for the 2027 budget.

Additional Program Details:

Strategic Program Area: Permanency Plan Review**Service Provision:** Mandated**How We Do It: Program Budget Summary**

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures	782,807	728,421	729,520	705,875	(23,645)
Revenues	934,789	660,163	729,520	700,875	(28,645)
Tax Levy	(151,983)	68,258	0	5,000	5,000
Full Time Pos (FTE)	6.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	0.00

Strategic Overview:

The Permanency Plan Review Program Area provides the administrative and operational support necessary to facilitate judicial oversight of permanency planning for children involved in Children's Court proceedings.

Strategic Implementation:

Funding for this program area is provided through revenue shared by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families and Milwaukee County Child Protective Services to Combined Courts.

No significant operational or staffing changes are anticipated for the 2027 budget. Existing funding levels are expected to support continued delivery of permanency plan review services.

Strategic Program Area: Self Help

Service Provision: Discretionary

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures	303,847	269,096	288,355	300,420	12,065
Revenues	161,348	164,709	150,000	160,000	10,000
Tax Levy	142,499	104,387	138,355	140,420	2,065
Full Time Pos (FTE)	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	0.00

Strategic Overview:

The Self-Help program area supports the Milwaukee Justice Center (MJC), a partnership between the Milwaukee County Clerk of Circuit Court, Marquette University Law School, and the Milwaukee Bar Association. The MJC provides free civil legal assistance to individuals who cannot afford private legal counsel but do not qualify for free legal representation, improving access to justice for Milwaukee County residents.

Strategic Implementation:

Combined Courts funds Milwaukee County's share of MJC operations, including one attorney, one paralegal, one legal assistant, one eviction court coordinator, and one clerical specialist. The department also provides office space, technology, office supplies, copier maintenance, and furnishings necessary to support program operations. Marquette University Law School and the Milwaukee Bar Association continue to provide support through personnel, clinical services, and grant administration, maximizing services while leveraging community partnerships.

No significant program or staffing changes are proposed for the 2027 budget.

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