

Judicial Programs and Services

Mission

To provide support to the courts and court personnel to make their efforts more effective.

Summary of Activities

The **Supreme Court** of Indiana, through its judicial programs and services, seeks to enhance the public's access to justice by implementing programs aimed to increase the efficiency of the state's court system.

The Office of Guardian Ad Litem/Court Appointed Special Advocates administers partial State funding to eighty counties to provide services to victims of child abuse and neglect. In three counties, the Court has instituted Family Courts pilot projects, the goal of which is to integrate all legal proceedings involving the family before a single judge.

The Conference for Legal Education Opportunity, which the Court administers, provides minority and disadvantaged law students with assistance in their transition to and completion of law school. Each year the program admits 30 students.

The Court is seeking to improve the public's access to information about the courts. The Court is now in Phase III of the Automated Information Management System (AIMS) which is intended to provide a blueprint for connectivity of information flow between trial courts of different jurisdictions and outside third parties. By regulating the legal profession through the Disciplinary Commission and the Commission on Judicial Qualifications, the Court encourages attorneys' and judges' compliance with ethical codes of conduct. Finally, the Court ensures that the state's judicial officials are working where they are needed most by using "weighted caseload measures" to apportion the shortage of judicial officials among existing judicial officers. The Commission for Continuing Legal Education accredits educational programs for Indiana attorneys and makes sure that all attorneys in Indiana have complied with their obligation to stay current in their legal educations. The Indiana Disciplinary Commission, financed entirely by attorney's licensing fees, investigates and prosecutes attorneys for violations of their ethical obligations.

The Indiana Judicial Conference, through the **Indiana Judicial Center**, provides a variety of services for judicial officers, court personnel, and the public. The Conference provides continuing legal education for the State's judges, trains probation officers, administers a drug and alcohol abuse program, and maintains a roster of juvenile residential placement facilities. The Conference assists the Supreme Court in the formulation of policies on judicial administration, juvenile justice, drafts books to assist trial judges, prepares legal guidelines, and in cooperation with the Indiana Judges Association, publishes the pattern jury instructions in use in Indiana.

The **Prosecuting Attorneys Council** further assists state judicial officials by providing legal research, training, information technology assistance, and legislative liaison functions to county prosecuting attorneys and their deputies.

External Factors

Judicial services and programs are externally affected by the number of civil laws suits filed and by the number of criminal prosecutions commenced in Indiana. Each new case filed may, for example, directly or indirectly increase the amount of pauper funding needed, the level of resources needed for regulation of the legal profession, or the number of citizens seeking access to or information about the courts. All activities associated with meeting these demands have steadily increased over time.



Growing caseloads have resulted in increased demand for services provided by the Court. For example, total pauper funding has steadily increased over the years, as has guardian ad litem matching funds. Similarly, the senior judge program continues to expand, with senior judges now providing about 2,000 days of judicial service per year.

Evaluation and Accomplishments

The Supreme Court completed an energetic year on lawyer discipline. Eight-seven complaints of ethical violations were examined, with some form of disciplinary sanction imposed in eighty-one cases, the greatest number of sanctions in any single year since the Disciplinary Commission was established. The Court also issued forty disciplinary opinions to help guide Indiana's attorneys.

As a result of the Court's encouragement of alternative dispute resolution to resolve legal disputes without litigation, the number of registered mediators has grown from 345 in 1997 to a current level of 1,055. The registry of mediators will soon be available over the Internet.



The Lake County Courthouse

Plans for the Biennium

The Court seeks to integrate the use of technology in the State's trial courts. It recognizes the need to make the courts accessible to all litigants, even those not represented by attorneys. The existing procedures for seeking, obtaining, and maintaining protective orders will also be examined in detail to explore ways to streamline and improve the process. The Court also seeks to expand its training of court personnel.

Another initiative is an attempt to integrate the use of technology in all the State's courts through the implementation of a uniform Automated Information Management System (AIMS). The Court is seeking provisions for counties that have extraordinary cases which burden local judicial resources. Family Courts will begin to be replicated statewide using the information derived from the three Family Court pilot projects.

