Georgia Court Guide to Statistical Reporting

Georgia Court Guide to Statistical Reporting

A publication of the Judicial Council of Georgia's Administrative Office of the Courts

Published by the Judicial Council of Georgia's Administrative Office of the Courts in compliance with O.C.G.A. §15-5-24 and by Order of the Supreme Court of Georgia dated June 12, 1978. All rights reserved.

Judicial Council of Georgia
Administrative Office of the Courts
244 Washington Street SW, Suite 300
Atlanta, Georgia 30334
404-656-5171 www.georgiacourts.gov

Updated November 2024

Acknowledgments

The *Georgia Court Guide to Statistical Reporting* has existed under various names since the inception of the Judicial Council of Georgia / Administrative Office of the Courts (JC/AOC). While the JC/AOC oversees the collection of data, the efforts of countless state and local officials contribute to the success of annual caseload data collection. These officials include judges, clerks, court administrators, prosecutors, and many others. The Office of Research and Data Analysis is grateful to all who have helped, and we acknowledge their dedication to improving Georgia's judicial data collection.

The annual caseload collection project would not be possible without the leadership of past and present Judicial Council and Judicial Workload Assessment Committee members. Their commitment to the project is crucial to improving Georgia's judiciary through careful research and analysis of court data.

Table of Contents

OVERVIEW 1

GUIDE GOALS 2

SECTION 1 - COMMON DEFINITIONS 3

SECTION 2 - SUPERIOR COURT 6

SECTION 3 - STATE COURT 8

SECTION 4 – JUVENILE COURT 10

SECTION 5 – PROBATE COURT 14

SECTION 6 – MAGISTRATE COURT 17

SECTION 7 – MUNICIPAL COURT 19

SECTION 8 – CIVIL COURT AND RECORDER'S COURT 20

SECTION 9 – ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS 21

SECTION 10 – CREATING AN ACCOUNT, REGISTERING A COURT, AND DATA SUBMISSION 22

SECTION 11 – REPORTING TIMELINE 23

SECTION 12 – CONTACT INFORMATION 24

Overview

The *Georgia Court Guide to Statistical Reporting* (Guide) is a standardized reporting framework for Georgia trial court statistics. The statistics reported through this framework are compiled, analyzed, and published by the Administrative Office of the Courts' Office of Research and Data Analysis (Research).

Since 1976, the JC/AOC has worked with local officials to measure activity in Georgia courts. The ongoing efforts produce statistics for Supreme, Appeals, Superior, State, Juvenile, Probate, Magistrate, Civil, Recorder's, and Municipal courts. Georgia law requires the AOC to "compile statistical and financial data and other information on the judicial work of the courts and on the work of other offices related to and serving the courts, which data and information shall be provided by the courts" (O.C.G.A. §15-5-24 (3)). The AOC serves as the state archive of court statistical information.

The collected data is used to support state and county resource decisions and to assist in policy development. In addition, statewide caseload activity is reported to the National Center for State Courts and other national organizations that inform justice system stakeholders about Georgia's courts. The caseload data serves as a historical description of the courts. The published data is used by judicial branch agencies, state and local executive agencies, project and program managers and grant applicants to support ongoing process and operational improvements. Superior court data is also used in the assessment of judicial workload that can lead to Judicial Council recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly for additional judgeships.

Due to Georgia's non-centralized court system, each class of court and their respective circuits, counties, and cities vary in their administrative structure. Regardless of their organization, the JC/AOC has set for itself the same task: to map caseload data to the reporting framework in this guide. Without common definitions and a standard format for classification, JC/AOC's goal could not be achieved.

The Guide is divided into sections for each class of court in Georgia. Within each section, the Guide contains definitions for how cases should be defined, classified, and counted. Court case management systems should be capable of generating reports that meet the requirements of the Guide. Individual vendors can provide guidance on their specific product capabilities. Research personnel are available to discuss the Guide and assist courts, clerks, and vendors with reporting. Submission instructions can be found in Section 10.

Note that all case categories, case types, case status categories, manners of disposition, and case characteristics are defined as they apply to the Guide. Categories may vary somewhat from other definitions or common usage in any given circuit, county, or municipality.

Guide Goals

As stated previously, the Guide is a standardized framework for accurately reporting caseload data. Though individual practices vary across courts, this guide seeks to establish a uniform language for statistical reporting with the goal of ensuring that Georgia provides the highest data quality possible.

1. To provide caseload elements with unique, mutually exclusive definitions.

2. To write all definitions clearly and concisely, reducing the possibility of confusion among stakeholders.

3. To have a consistent, high-quality aesthetic.

4. To make minimal changes from year to year, adjusting only when necessary to maintain other goals.

Section 1 - Common Definitions

Criminal, civil, and traffic caseloads each have their own units of count which remain standard across all classes of court. In addition, caseload data is reported in three ways: Status Categories, Case Characteristics, and Manner of Disposition. Each caseload section and the elements that comprise each section are outlined below.

Unit of Count

Criminal: The unit of count for criminal cases is determined by defendants. This is defined as a count of the number of individuals that have been charged with a criminal offense. Each defendant is categorized based on the most serious offense regardless of the number of charges on the docket.

Civil: A petition or civil complaint begins a civil case. A civil case with multiple parties or multiple causes of action is counted as one case. The unit of count for civil cases is each complaint/petition that is filed with the clerk of court.

Traffic: The unit of count for traffic cases is by tickets/citations. Each ticket/citation is one case. If a ticket/citation has more than one charge it is still counted as one case and categorized under the most serious offense.

For example, a driver charged with both a DUI and speeding charges under the same citation will only count as one serious traffic filing.

Status Categories

Caseload reporting captures information about case status during the calendar year reporting period. These case status categories are consistent for each trial court.

Cases Open: A count of cases that were filed in any previous year and at the start of the current reporting year and are awaiting disposition.

Cases Filed: A count of cases that have been filed with the court for the first time within the current reporting year.

Cases Disposed: A count of cases for which an original entry of judgment has been entered during the current reporting year. For cases involving multiple parties/issues, the disposition should not be reported until all parties/issues have been resolved.

Case Characteristics

Introduction

The data on case characteristics captures information related to key policy interests on disposed cases. This data provides additional details about cases that have already been counted in the court's disposed caseload. Data is collected on the number of cases with self-represented litigants and cases with interpreters.

Unit of Count

A count of the number of disposed cases that included self-represented litigants and interpreters at any time during the life of the case. The unit of count is the case, not the litigant(s).

- A case should be counted at the point of disposition
- A case with self-represented litigant(s) should be counted as a single case, whether that case has one or more self-represented litigants.
- A case with interpreter(s) should be counted as a single case, whether that case has one or more interpreters.

Cases with Self-Represented Litigants:

A self-represented litigant is a person who

advocates on his or her own behalf before a court rather than being represented by an attorney. These litigants are also known as "pro se" or "pro per" litigants if, during the life of the case, one or more parties was self-represented.

For plaintiffs/petitioners, the life of the case is from filing to disposition. For defendants/respondents, the life of the case is from arraignment/answer to disposition. While arraignment procedures may vary, the assumption is that the arraignment is the first opportunity that defendants have to provide the court with their representation status (i.e., to tell the court that an attorney has been retained, to request that the court appoint an attorney, or to inform the court of the defendant's wish to be self-represented). Therefore, in criminal cases the arraignment (or an equivalent hearing) is considered to be the start of the case for the defendant.

Cases in which the defendant appears at arraignment without defense counsel but requests a court-appointed attorney during the arraignment proceedings should only be included in the self-represented tally if the self-representation continues after arraignment.

Self-represented litigants can take advantage of limited scope legal assistance (also known as limited assistance representation or unbundled legal services) to assist with the preparation of specific documents or to argue certain legal issues in a hearing before a judicial officer. While these self- represented litigants have representation for a specific and limited purpose, they remain fundamentally self-represented.

Thus, cases in which self-represented litigants have obtained limited scope legal assistance are still counted as cases with self-represented litigants.

If a case is disposed by default, do not assume that the non-responding defendant/respondent was self- represented. If the plaintiff/petitioner was self- represented, the case can be correctly counted as one with a self-represented litigant. However, if the plaintiff/petitioner was represented and the defendant/respondent was at default due to a failure to respond at any point during the life of the case, the case is not to be counted as one with self-represented litigants.

Cases with Interpreters:

A case with an interpreter is a case in which an interpreter is appointed by the court to provide interpretation services in any or all three modes of interpretation (consecutive interpretation, simultaneous interpretation, and sight translation) for a Limited English Proficient (LEP) party from that person's native language to English and vice versa. Sign Language interpretation is included.

Interpreter services can be provided in person, via telephone, or through other audio/visual technologies. The distinction here is between interpretation as ordered by the court and interpretation that may be provided on an ad hoc basis by a family member or friend.

Interpretation ordered by the court may be provided by anyone the court deems qualified (e.g. certified interpreter, registered interpreter); the underlying assumption is that the court has formally taken note of the need for interpreter services and provided them.

Any interpreter ordered by the court, regardless if for a party, witness, etc., would be counted for a case with an interpreter.

Manner of Disposition

Introduction

Manner of Disposition classifies disposed cases as trial and non-trial. Understanding trial rates and how they vary by case type is of policy interest to court management and the legal profession.

Unit of Count

For each case type, count the number of disposed cases that were disposed by the disposition type. For cases involving multiple parties/issues, the manner of disposition should not be reported until all parties/issues have been resolved. When there is more than one type of dispositive action in a case, count as the disposition the action requiring the most judicial involvement. Prioritize actions as follows: jury trials, bench/non-jury trials, non-trial dispositions.

Notes Specific to Manner of Disposition

Cases that are deferred to diversion or accountability court dockets (e.g. Drug Court) are not counted as dispositions until they return for final adjudication (e.g. imposition of sentence or dismissal).

Definitions for Manner of Disposition

Jury Trial: Cases in which a jury is impaneled to determine the issues of fact in the case. A jury trial should be counted when the jury has been sworn, regardless of whether a verdict is reached.

Bench/Non-Jury Trial: Cases in which a judge or judicial officer is assigned to determine both the issues of fact and law in the case. A bench/non-jury trial should be counted when the first evidence is introduced, regardless of whether a judgment is reached.

Non-Trial: Cases in which the disposition does not involve either a jury trial or bench trial. This includes but is not limited to:

- Summary judgment
- Settlement
- Alternative Dispute Resolution: If a case was disposed of via a non-trial disposition, and the method of disposition was alternative dispute resolution. Only check if the whole case was resolved via alternative dispute resolution
- Default judgment
- Dismissal
- Transfer to another court
- Bind Over: Transfers (of a case or defendant) to a trial court after a finding of probable cause at a preliminary hearing. Note: include all bind overs, even if the offense is not a felony. **(Currently collected by the Municipal Courts only)**
- Guilty plea/stipulation
- Nolle Prosequi
- All delinquency and dependency non- trial hearings

Section 2 - Superior Court

Introduction

Georgia's 159 superior courts are general jurisdiction trial courts exercising both civil and criminal jurisdiction. Superior court judges hear all felony cases, domestic relations cases, equity cases, and other civil matters. Superior courts have jurisdiction to hear appeals from lower courts as provided by the Georgia Constitution, including appeals of judgments from the probate and magistrate courts that are handled as de novo appeals. The superior courts are organized into 51 judicial circuits made up of one or more counties. Superior court judges are constitutional officers who are elected to four-year terms in circuit-wide nonpartisan elections.

For reporting in the Georgia framework, superior court caseload is divided into three major categories: criminal, domestic relations, and general civil. The superior court reporting framework described in the Guide is used for reporting superior court caseload data.

Superior Court Definitions

Criminal

Death Penalty: A count of cases in which the prosecuting attorney intends to seek the death penalty and has filed with the clerk of court the necessary written notice. These cases are only to be counted for the year in which they are filed.

Serious Felony: Any serious violent felony as defined in O.C.G.A § 17-10-6.1. Specifically:

- Murder or felony murder, as defined in O.C.G.A. § 16-5-1;
- Armed robbery, as defined in O.C.G.A. § 16-8-41;
- Kidnapping, as defined in O.C.G.A. § 16-5-40;
- Rape, as defined in O.C.G.A. § 16- 6-1;
- Aggravated child molestation, as defined in subsection (c) of O.C.G.A § 16-6-4, unless subject to the provisions of paragraph (2) of subsection (d) of O.C.G.A. § 16-6-4;
- Aggravated sodomy, as defined in O.C.G.A. § 16.6.2; or
- Aggravated sexual battery, as defined in O.C.G.A. § 16.6.22.2;
- Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization (R.I.C.O.) cases as defined by O.C.G.A. § 16-143;
- Home Invasion, as defined in O.C.G.A §16-7-5-b.

Felony: A count of cases where the offense is punishable by incarceration for one year or more, excluding cases counted as serious felonies.

Serious Traffic: Cases including misdemeanor DUI, reckless driving, homicide by vehicle, aggressive driving, and fleeing, or attempting to elude a police officer.

Misdemeanor: Any offense punishable by incarceration for less than one year, and/or community service, and/or maximum fine of $1,000.

Probation Revocations: Number of probation revocation petitions filed by either private or public probation officers, including waivers signed by defendants and first offender adjudications.

Domestic Relations

Adoption: Cases involving a request for the establishment of a new, permanent relationship of parent and child between persons not so biologically related.

Contempt: Any case alleging failure to comply with a previously exiting court order.

Dissolution/Divorce/Separate Maintenance:

Any case involving the dissolution of a marriage or the establishing of alimony or separate maintenance.

Family Violence Petition: Any case in which a family violence or stalking protective order from a family member or domestic partner is requested.

Modification of Custody: Any case seeking to change the terms of any previously existing court order concerning custody, parenting time, or visitation. This category also includes petitions for third-party custody and equitable caregiver status.

Paternity/Legitimation: Any case not brought by the Department of Child Support Services that involves a determination of biological offspring.

Support- IV-D: Cases filed by the Georgia Department of Human Services to request maintenance of a minor child by a person who is required, under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act of 1973, to provide such maintenance.

Support- Private (non-IV-D): Cases filed to request or modify maintenance of a parent/guardian or a minor child by a person who is required by law, but who is not under the auspices of Title IV-D of the Social Security Act of 1973, to provide such maintenance.

Other Domestic Relations: Domestic relations cases that do not adequately fit into any of the other case types.

General Civil

Automobile Tort: Any tort case involving personal injury, property damage, or wrongful death resulting from alleged negligent operation of a motor vehicle.

Civil Appeal: Any case disrupting the finding of a limited jurisdiction trial court, department, or administrative agency.

Contract: Any case involving a dispute over an agreement between two or more parties.

Garnishment: Any case where, after a monetary judgment, a third party who has money or other property belonging to the defendant is required to turn over such money or property to the court.

General Tort: Any tort case that is not defined or is not attributable to one of the other torts.

Habeas Corpus: Any case designed to test the legality of the detention or imprisonment of an individual, not the question of guilt or innocence.

Injunction/Mandamus/Other Writ: Cases involving a written court order directed to a specific party, requiring that party to perform or refrain from performing a specific act.

Landlord/Tenant: Any case involving landlord/tenant disputes wherein the landlord removes a tenant and his/her property from the premises or places a lien on tenant property to repay debt.

Medical Malpractice Tort: Any tort case that alleges misconduct or negligence by a person in the medical profession acting in a professional capacity, such as doctors, nurses, physician's assistants, dentists, etc.

Product Liability Tort: Cases alleging that injury is caused by the manufacturer or seller of an article due to a defect in, or the condition of, the article sold or an alleged breach of duty to provide suitable instructions to prevent injury.

Real Property: Any case involving disputes over the ownership, use, boundaries, or value of fixed land.

Restraining Petition: Any petition for a restraining order that does not result from a domestic altercation or is not between parties considered to be in a domestic relationship.

Other General Civil: Any case in which a plaintiff requests the enforcement or protection of a right or the redress or prevention of a wrong but does not fit into one of the previously defined case categories.

Section 3 - State Court

Introduction

Georgia's 73 State Courts are county-based courts that exercise limited jurisdiction. State court judges have criminal jurisdiction over misdemeanor offenses, felony preliminary hearings, traffic violations, and application and issuance of search and arrest warrants. Civil matters not reserved exclusively to the superior courts can be adjudicated in state courts. Appeals of judgments from the magistrate courts may be sent to the state court and handled as a de novo appeal. The General Assembly creates state courts by local legislation establishing the number of judges and their status as full-time or part-time. State court judges are elected to four-year terms in countywide, non-partisan elections.

For reporting in the Georgia framework, state court caseload is divided into two major categories: civil and criminal. The state court reporting framework described in the Guide is used for reporting state court caseload data.

State Court Definitions

Civil

Automobile Tort: Any tort case involving personal injury, property damage, or wrongful death resulting from alleged negligent operation of a motor vehicle.

Civil Appeal: Any case disrupting the finding of a limited jurisdiction trial court, department, or administrative agency.

Contract: Any case involving a dispute over an agreement between two or more parties.

Garnishment: Any case where, after a monetary judgment, a third party who has money or other property belonging to the defendant is required to turn over such money or property to the court.

General Tort: Any tort case that is not defined or is not attributable to one of the other torts.

Landlord/Tenant: Any case involving landlord/tenant disputes wherein the landlord removes a tenant and his/her property from the premises or places a lien on tenant property to repay debt.

Medical Malpractice Tort: Any tort case that alleges misconduct or negligence by a person in the medical profession acting in a professional capacity, such as doctors, nurses, physician's assistants, dentists, etc.

Product Liability Tort: Cases alleging that injury is caused by the manufacturer or seller of an article due to a defect in, or the condition of, the article sold or an alleged breach of duty to provide suitable instructions to prevent injury.

Other General Civil: Any case in which a plaintiff requests the enforcement or protection of a right or the redress or prevention of a wrong, but does not fit into one of the previously defined case categories.

Criminal

Serious Traffic: Cases including misdemeanor DUI, reckless driving, homicide by vehicle, aggressive driving and fleeing, or attempting to elude a police officer.

Non-Traffic Misdemeanor: Cases involving an offense punishable by incarceration for less than a year and/or fines. Use this case type for misdemeanor cases that are not attributable to one of the other previously defined misdemeanor case types, or when all misdemeanor cases are reported as a single case type.

Other Traffic: Criminal cases involving a violation of statutes and local ordinances governing traffic, parking, and violations involving operation of a motor vehicle. Use this case type for cases of unknown specificity when motor vehicle cases are not attributable to one of the other previously defined motor vehicle case types.

Probation Revocation: Number of probation revocation petitions filed by either private or public probation officers, including waivers signed by defendants.

Post-Judgment

Contempt/Modification: Any case seeking to change the terms of a previously existing final court order.

Section 4 – Juvenile Court

Introduction

Jurisdiction of the juvenile courts extends to individuals under the age of 18 alleged to be dependent, alleged to be a child in need of services (CHINS), or alleged to have committed a juvenile traffic offense. Jurisdiction also extends to individuals alleged to have committed a delinquent act who is under the age of 17. Individuals up to the age of 23 may also be subject to juvenile court jurisdiction under certain circumstances. OCGA § 15-11-2(10).

In addition to matters alleging delinquency, dependency, CHINS, and the commission of a juvenile traffic offense, juvenile courts also have exclusive original jurisdiction over so-called special proceedings including proceedings for obtaining judicial consent to the marriage, employment, or enlistment in the armed services of any child if such consent is required by law; for permanent guardianship brought pursuant to provisions of the juvenile code; for the termination of parental rights when brought pursuant to provisions of the juvenile code; for emancipation; and for obtaining a waiver of the requirement of parental notice of abortion. OCGA § 15-11-10.

Juvenile courts have concurrent jurisdiction with superior courts in certain matters involving legitimation; child custody and support; temporary guardianship when properly transferred from probate court; and any criminal case properly transferred from superior court for the purpose of facilitating a parent's participation in a family treatment court division program. OCGA § 15-11- 11 and § 15-11-15(d).

Certain specified violent offenses when committed by an individual under the age of 17 are within the exclusive jurisdiction of the superior court. Other specified offenses or combination of offenses otherwise under the exclusive jurisdiction of the juvenile court may be transferred under certain circumstances for prosecution in the superior court.

As required by Georgia law, detailed information regarding minor abortion petitions is also collected. The juvenile court reporting framework described in the Guide is used for reporting juvenile court caseload data.

Juvenile Court Definitions

Unit of Count

- For delinquency, CHINS, emancipation, traffic, and special proceeding cases count the juvenile and all allegations involved in a single incident as a single case. If the filing document contains multiple juveniles involved in a single incident, count each juvenile as a single and separate case.
- For dependency cases and termination of parental rights, count the petition as a single case. A dependency case that contains multiple parties (e.g. children/siblings) or multiple causes of action is counted as one case.

Children in Need of Services (CHINS):

(A) A child adjudicated to be in need of care, guidance, counseling, structure, supervision, treatment, or rehabilitation and who is adjudicated to be:

(i) Truant;

(ii) Habitually disobedient, or a child who places himself or herself or others in unsafe circumstances;

(iii) A runaway;

(iv) A child who has committed a status offense;

(v) A child who wanders or loiters about the streets of any city or in or about any highway or any public place between the hours of 12:00 Midnight and 5:00 A.M.;

(vi) A child who disobeys the terms of supervision after adjudication as a child in need of services; or

(vii) A child who patronizes any bar where alcoholic beverages are being sold, unaccompanied by his or her parent, guardian, or legal custodian, or who possesses alcoholic beverages; or

(B) A child who has committed a delinquent act and is adjudicated to be in need of supervision but not in need of treatment or rehabilitation. OCGA § 15-11-2(11)

Delinquency - Class A Designated Felony: A delinquent act committed by a child 13 years of age or older, which if committed by an adult, would be one or more of the following crimes:

- Aggravated Battery- certain offenses
- Aggravated Assault - certain offenses
- Armed Robbery (without a firearm)
- Arson in the first degree
- Attempted Murder
- Escape – certain circumstances
- Hijacking a motor vehicle in the first degree
- Kidnapping
- Home invasion in the first degree
- Gang activity – certain circumstances such as violent felonies
- Drug trafficking - certain substances
- Specified offenses in combination with a prior record of felony offenses OCGA § 15-11-2(12)

Delinquency – Class B Designated Felony: A delinquent act committed by a child 13 years of age or older, which if committed by an adult, would be one or more of the following crimes:

- Aggravated Assault – certain offenses
- Arson in the second degree
- Attempted Kidnapping
- Battery of a teacher or other school personnel
- Racketeering
- Robbery
- Home invasion in the second degree
- Gang activity – certain offenses such as graffiti or tagging
- Smash & Grab Burglary
- Certain offenses involving destructive devices or hoax destructive devices
- Obstruction of a law enforcement officer
- Possession of a handgun by an individual under the age of 18
- Possession of a weapon on school property or at school sponsored event OCGA § 15-11-2(13)

Delinquency Not Designated: A count of cases not designated as either Class A or Class B felonies.

Dependency: Dependency cases are a subcategory of juvenile cases in which it is alleged that a child has been abused or neglected or is otherwise without proper parental care and/or supervision.

Emancipation: The release of a minor from his or her parents, which entails a complete relinquishment of the right to the care, control, custody, services, and earnings of such child and a repudiation of parental obligations.

Special Proceedings: A child who is the subject of a filing or disposition that does not fall within any of the above case types, e.g. request for permission to marry or join the armed services, notification of abortion, proceedings relating to mental illness, legitimation, guardianship, transfer from probate court, transfers from superior court, and superior court referrals for custody investigations.

Traffic: An individual under 17 years of age who violates any motor vehicle law or local ordinance

governing the operation of motor vehicles on the streets or highways or upon the waterways of the state of Georgia, excluding specified offenses deemed to be delinquent offenses as described by O.C.G.A. §15-11-630.

Termination of Parental Rights: An action on behalf of a child to end the rights and obligations of a parent on the grounds listed in O.C.G.A. §15-11-310.

Parental Notification of Abortion Total Petitions Filed: A count of petitions filed requesting the waiver of the requirement for parental notification of abortion.

Appointed Guardian Ad Litem: A count of cases involving a petition for waiver of parental notification of abortion in which the juvenile court appointed a guardian ad litem for the minor. Court Appointed Counsel: A count of cases involving a petition for the waiver of parental notification of abortion in which the juvenile court appointed an attorney for the minor.

Without Notification: Cases in which the petitioner was granted a waiver of the parental notification requirement after notification was attempted but the parent or legal guardian of the minor could not be located.

Denied: A count of cases in which the court denied the petition to waive parental notification of abortion.

Appealed: A count of cases in which the petitioner appealed the juvenile court's denial of the petitioner's request for waiver of parental notification of abortion.

Affirmed: A count of cases appealed in which the juvenile court's denial of a petition for waiver of parental notification of abortion was affirmed.

Reversed: A count of cases appealed in which the juvenile court's denial of a petition for waiver of parental notification of abortion was reversed.

Juvenile Manners of Disposition

Delinquency or CHINS Dispositions

Adjudicated: A count of cases in which the court finds the child committed the offense (by admission or after trial).

Dismissed: A count of cases in which the complaint or petition is dismissed for any reason prior to trial or the court finds at trial that the child is not delinquent or a CHINS.

Examples: (1) If the court found the child delinquent but found that the child was not in need of rehabilitation and dismissed the case. (2) If the court held the disposition open for a period of time and eventually dismissed the case. (3) If the court diverted the case.

Transferred to Another Juvenile Court: A count of cases in which the court transfers the case to another juvenile court for trial.

Transferred to Superior Court: A count of cases in which the court transfers the case to superior court for trial

Informal Adjustment: A count of cases in which the offense is disposed of informally. If this option is selected, the "case disposition" will also be "informally adjusted."

CHINS Protocol: A count of cases in which the offense is handled through the CHINS protocol and no petition is filed. If this option is selected, the "case disposition" will also be "CHINS protocol."

Dependency Dispositions

Adjudicated: A count of cases in which the court finds the child is dependent.

Dismissed: A count of cases in which the court dismisses the case for any reason prior to trial or finds that the child is not dependent at trial.

Order entered: A count of cases in which the court enters an order following any hearing, other than the adjudication hearing, on a dependency case.

Special Proceedings, Termination of Parental Rights, and Emancipation Dispositions

Granted: A count of cases in which the court grants the petition.

Denied: A count of cases in which the court denies the petition.

Dismissed: A count of cases in which the court dismisses the case for any reason prior to trial or finds that the child is not dependent at trial.

Order entered: A count of cases in which the court enters an order following any hearing, other than the adjudication hearing, on a dependency case.

Juvenile Case Characteristics

Dependency Case Characteristics

Case Entries Filed (Number of Juveniles): A count of the separate case entries and case numbers that are assigned for each child. Though some of the children are listed on the same petition, each child will count separately here.

Section 5 – Probate Court

Introduction

Probate courts exercise exclusive, original jurisdiction in the probate of wills, administration of estates, appointment of guardians, and involuntary hospitalization of incapacitated adults and other individuals. Probate court judges are constitutional officers who are elected to four-year terms. All probate court judges administer oaths of office and issue marriage licenses. In some counties probate judges may hold habeas corpus hearings or preside over criminal preliminary hearings. Unless a jury trial is requested, a probate court judge may also hear certain misdemeanors, traffic cases, and violation of state game and fish law in counties where there is no state court. In counties with a population of 90,000 or greater, the probate judges must be an attorney meeting the qualifications of a superior court judge. In those counties, jurisdiction is expanded or enhanced to include the right to a jury trial, with appeals directly to the Court of Appeals or Supreme Courts. When authorized by local statute, probate judges serve as election supervisors and make appointments to certain local public offices.

For reporting in the Georgia framework, probate court caseload is divided into four major categories: general probate, mental health, criminal, and administrative actions. The probate court reporting framework described in the Guide is to be used for reporting probate court caseload data.

Unit of Count

The unit of count for general probate cases is by petitions. General probate petitions are categories by case type and filing categories.

General Probate Case Categories

Estates: Cases that deal with managing the assets, liabilities, and property of decedents.

Guardianship Minor: Cases that involve establishing a temporary or permanent legal guardian for a child.

Conservatorship Minor: Cases that appoint a person to manage a minor's property.

Guardianship/Conservatorship Adult: Cases that involve either the establishment of a guardian for an adult ward or for a manager/conservator of an adult ward's property.

Trusts: Cases that create a legal entity that allows one person to hold legal title to property for the benefit of another person.

Other Filings: Any case that does not fall within the previous categories.

General Probate Filing Categories

Initial Petition: The petition or other document that creates an entirely new case. All initial petitions must be disposed before other petitions can be filed.

Secondary Petition: Any subsequent petition that is filed in the same case created by an initial petition.

Motion: A written application for an order.

Objection/Caveat: Pleading to the court and petitioners opposing the performance of certain acts requested in a petition (may be in response to an initial or secondary petition).

Discharge (Uncontested): A petition that seeks final closure of a case and is not contested by any relevant party.

Discharge (Contested): Any discharge that is contested by a relevant party and requires adjudication.

Set to Review: A count of cases that, following an initial Entry of Judgment and at the end of the reporting period, are awaiting regularly scheduled reviews involving a hearing before a judicial officer. For Example, a Guardianship case is filed with the court (counted as a New Filing), and the court makes its initial finding to appoint the guardian, thus disposing the case through this judgment (counted as an Outgoing case in the Entry of Judgment column). At that time, the court schedules a review 6 months in the future and an additional review 12 months in the future. This case gets counted in the Set for Review column, and not as part of the court's End Pending–Active caseload. In some states reviews of Guardianship or Conservatorship cases do not require a judicial hearing and may only call for a hearing if there is a concern after staff or clerks first review case files. For guardianship and conservatorship cases ONLY, if cases are scheduled for administrative or audit reviews, count in the Set for Review section, even if they do not always result in a judicial hearing.

Other General Probate Actions

Inventory and Asset Management Plan: A description of all assets and liabilities of the decedent, including a list of all personal and real property owned by the decedent at the time of death that is subject to administration of an estate's personal representative or in the event of a conservatorship of a minor or adult, a list of personal and real property owned by the ward and subject to management by a conservator, which includes a plan to manage the property and income for the following year.

Personal Status: A report pertaining to the status of an adult ward or a minor child.

Annual/Final Return: Accounting, under oath, of the receipts and expenditures on behalf of a decedent's estate or adult or minor conservatorship during the year preceding the anniversary date of appointment, together with a statement of all other assets or transfers of assets which are necessary to show the true condition of the Estate. The final return is due with a petition for discharge or petition for dismissal.

Bond: A count of the number of surety bonds issued.

Guardian ad Litem (GAL): A count of the number of times a court has to appoint someone to investigate and represent the best interest of a minor child, alleged incapacitated adult, or missing or unknown heirs at law with regard to a particular matter pending before the court.

Indigent Affidavit: A count of the number of times an affidavit of indigence is filled in which a court waives filing fees for citizens unable to afford the fees.

Mental Health

Involuntary Treatment: Petitions that order a person, or drug addiction to be committed into a treatment facility. This category includes both inpatient and outpatient treatment orders.

Order to Apprehend: A legal order allowing law enforcement officers to apprehend a person who is suffering from mental illness or drug addiction.

Other Mental Health: Any mental health petitions or orders that are not included in the previous two categories.

Criminal

Unit of Count: The unit of count for criminal cases heard by the probate court is by defendant.

Serious Traffic: The following cases are considered misdemeanor serious traffic offenses: DUI, reckless driving, aggressive driving, and evading a police officer.

Non-Serious Traffic: All traffic cases other than the ones included in the serious traffic category.

Other Criminal Citations: All non-traffic misdemeanor cases handled by the probate courts.

Manner of Disposition

Transfer: A case disposed by sending it to a higher court.

Bench Trial: A trial held in front of a judge without a jury.

Non-Trial: Any form of disposition that does not involve a formal trial.

Administrative Actions

Firearms: A count of all the weapons carry permits filled in a probate court along with a count of all the permit denials and revocations.

Vital Records: Certificates or reports of birth, death, and data related thereto.

- Birth Certificates- A count of all the birth certificates issued by a probate court.
- Death Certificate- A count of all the death certificates issued by a probate court.

Marriage: A count of all marriage licenses issues by a probate court.

- License Issued- A count of all original marriage licenses issued by the probate court.
- Certified Copies-All certified copies of marriage licenses issued by the probate court.

Passports: A count of all passport applications processed by a probate court.

Elections: First, indicate whether or not the court oversees elections by selecting "yes" or "no". If a court does handle elections, it will then show the number of voting precincts found within the county along with the number of election cycles handled in that calendar year. An election cycle refers to the number of election rounds not the number of candidates or offices being voted upon. For example, a county that experiences a primary, general, and runoff election in a single calendar year would be considered to have three election cycles regardless of the number of candidates or offices involved.

Miscellaneous Administrative: All other administrative actions that do not fall within one of the previous categories.

Section 6 – Magistrate Court

Introduction

Magistrate court jurisdiction includes: civil claims of $15,000 or less, certain minor criminal offenses, distress warrants, dispossessory writs, county ordinance violations, deposit account fraud, preliminary hearings, summonses, arrest, and search warrants. A chief magistrate, who may be assisted by one or more magistrates, presides over each of Georgia's 159 magistrate courts. Chief magistrates are elected in partisan and non-partisan, countywide elections to four-year terms. Terms for other magistrate judges run concurrently with that of the chief magistrate.

For reporting in the Georgia framework, the magistrate court caseload is divided into four major categories: criminal, civil, warrants, and hearings. The magistrate court reporting framework described in the Guide is to be used for reporting magistrate court caseload data.

Magistrate Court Definitions

Criminal

Ordinance Violations: Cases alleging violations of local regulations passed by county, city, or other local governing bodies.

Misdemeanors: A count of violations of state laws that include: Possession of less than one ounce of marijuana (O.C.G.A. §16-13-2), Theft by shoplifting (O.C.G.A. §16-8-14), Furnishing alcoholic beverages to and purchase and possession of alcoholic beverages by a person under 21 years of age (O.C.G.A. §3-3-23.1), Criminal trespass (O.C.G.A. §16-7-21), Refund fraud (O.C.G.A. §16-8-14.1), Deposit account fraud/issuance of bad checks (O.C.G.A. §16-9-20).

Civil

Abandoned Motor Vehicles: a count of cases where abandoned and unclaimed vehicles from public rights of way and private or public property.

Claims: Any cases where the amount demanded or the value of the property claimed does not exceed $15,000.

Dispossessory and Distress Warrants: Proceedings involving landlords and tenants either for removal of the tenant from the property or for seizure of the property for non-payment of rent.

Garnishments: A proceeding in which the property or money in possession or control of another person are applied to pay a debt or judgment to a third person. This is most commonly an action in which a creditor garnishes a person's wages from the employer.

Foreclosures and Attachments: A means of enforcing payment of a debt by selling the property upon which the debt is owed.

Attachment is a process in which the court is asked to have property seized in order to satisfy a debt (to satisfy the court judgment in post-judgment actions).

Warrants

Felony Arrest: A type of arrest warrant that authorizes the arrest of a person suspected of committing a felony crime.

Misdemeanor Arrest: A type of arrest warrant that authorizes the arrest of a person suspected of committing a misdemeanor crime.

Good Behavior: A type of warrant against a person whose conduct indicates that the safety of another person may be at risk.

Search: A type of warrant that authorizes law enforcement officers to conduct a search of a person, location, or vehicle for evidence of a crime and to confiscate evidence if it is found.

Hearings

Warrant Application: This is a hearing to determine if there is probable cause for issuance of an arrest warrant when application has been made by a person other than a peace officer or law enforcement officer and for commission of an offense against the penal laws.

First Appearance: The purpose of this hearing is to inform the defendant of the charges, the defendant's rights, and to set a bond to guarantee the defendant's appearance at court for the next proceeding.

Commitment: This is a pre-trial or preliminary hearing to determine if there is sufficient evidence (probable cause) for the case to proceed to trial.

Good Behavior: The purpose of this proceeding is to determine if there is sufficient cause to require the defendant to post a good behavior bond and to set the amount of the bond.

Section 7 – Municipal Court

Introduction

Georgia's municipal courts hear traffic and ordinance violation cases in towns and cities. Municipal court judges hear municipal ordinance violations, issue criminal warrants, conduct preliminary hearings, and sometimes have concurrent jurisdiction over shoplifting cases and cases involving possession of one ounce or less of marijuana.

For reporting in the Georgia framework, municipal court caseload is divided into eight major criminal categories: traffic, ordinances, serious traffic, drugs/marijuana, misdemeanors, and bindovers. The municipal court reporting framework described in the Guide is used for reporting municipal court caseload data.

Municipal Court Definitions

Criminal

Serious Traffic (DUI): Cases alleging driving a motor vehicle while intoxicated, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or driving while impaired.

Serious Traffic (Other): All fingerprintable criminal traffic offenses except driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs (e.g. reckless driving, and operating a commercial vehicle without a CDL).

Misdemeanor Traffic: Criminal traffic violations involving the operation of a motor vehicle. Use this case type for motor vehicle cases that are not attributable to one of the other previously defined case types (e.g. speeding, failure to obey stop sign, failure to use turn signal, and seat belt violations).

Misdemeanor Drugs: Any drug-related misdemeanor criminal charges (e.g. possession of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia).

Misdemeanor (Other): Any criminal violations punishable by a maximum fine of $1,000 or 12 months confinement. Also includes any violations that do not fit within aforementioned categories (e.g. vandalism and shoplifting valued less than $300).

Parking Violation: Cases alleging parking a motor vehicle in violation of a state statute or local ordinance.

Ordinance: Cases alleging violations of local regulations passed by county, city, state, or other local governing bodies (e.g. animal control violations, solid waste violations, solicitation without a permit, and zoning violations).

Civil

Non-Criminal Traffic Violations: Non-criminal cases involving operation of a motor vehicle (e.g. Red light camera violations and School bus camera violations).

Section 8 – Civil Court and Recorder's Court

Introduction

For reporting in the Georgia framework, civil court and recorder's court caseloads are divided into criminal and civil categories. The civil court and recorder's court reporting framework described in the Guide is used for reporting civil court and recorder's court caseload data.

Definitions

Criminal

Serious Traffic (DUI): Cases alleging driving a motor vehicle while intoxicated, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or driving while impaired.

Serious Traffic (Other): All fingerprintable criminal traffic offenses except driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs (e.g. reckless driving, and operating a commercial vehicle without a CDL).

Misdemeanor Traffic: Criminal traffic violations involving the operation of a motor vehicle. Use this case type for motor vehicle cases that are not attributable to one of the other previously defined case types (e.g. speeding, failure to obey stop sign, failure to use turn signal, and seat belt violations).

Misdemeanor Drugs: Any drug-related misdemeanor criminal charges (e.g. possession of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia).

Misdemeanor (Other): Any criminal violations punishable by a maximum fine of $1,000 or 12 months confinement. Also includes any violations that do not fit within aforementioned categories (e.g. vandalism and shoplifting valued less than $300).

Parking Violation: Cases alleging parking a motor vehicle in violation of a state statute or local ordinance.

Ordinance: Cases alleging violations of local regulations passed by county, city, state, or other local governing bodies (e.g. animal control violations, solid waste violations, solicitation without a permit, and zoning violations).

Civil

Claims: Any cases where the amount demanded or the value of the property claimed does not exceed the limit set by local legislation.

Dispossessory and Distress Warrants: Proceedings involving landlords and tenants either for removal of the tenant from the property or for seizure of the property for non-payment of rent.

Garnishments: A proceeding in which the property or money in possession or control of another person are applied to pay a debt or judgment to a third person. This is most commonly an action in which a creditor garnishes a person's wages from the employer.

Foreclosures and Attachments: A means of enforcing payment of a debt by selling the property upon which the debt is owed.

Attachment is a process in which the court is asked to have property seized in order to satisfy a debt (to satisfy the court judgment in post-judgment actions).

Non-Criminal Traffic Violations: Non-criminal cases involving operation of a motor vehicle (e.g. Red light camera violations and School bus camera violations).

Section 9 – Accountability Courts

Introduction

For reporting in the Georgia framework, the accountability court caseload includes accountability and parental accountability court data. The accountability court data described in the Guide is used for reporting new participants in Adult Felony Drug Courts, Adult Mental Health Courts, and Veterans Treatment Courts programs. The parental accountability court data described in the Guide is used for reporting new participants in parental accountability court programs.

Definitions

Accountability Court: A count of new participants enrolled in Adult Felony Drug Courts, Adult Mental Health Courts, and Veterans Treatment Courts programs.[1]

Parental Accountability Court: A count of new participants enrolled in a parental accountability court program designed to help non-custodial parents avoid incarceration.[2]

[1] Accountability Court data is reported by Council of Accountability Court Judges staff.

[2] Parental Accountability Court data is reported by the Department of Human Services Division of Child Support Services.

Section 10 – Creating an Account, Registering a Court, and Data Submission

Creating an Account

If you have not previously registered as a caseload reporting site user, follow the instructions below:

1. Enter https://casecount.georgiacourts.gov/ into your web browser.
2. Select "Register" to create an account.
3. Enter your "Email, First and Last name, Phone Number, and Role."
4. Next, enter a password.
5. Then, click "Sign Up".
6. Once you sign up, you will receive an email acknowledging your account creation. Our Analysts will review your account and confirm. Once confirmed, you will receive an email confirmation, and you will then be able to log into your account.

Registering a Court

Now that your account is confirmed, you are now able to register your court. Follow the instructions below:

1. Enter https://caseload.georgicourts.gov/aocportal/ into your web browser.
2. Select "Login" and enter your email address and password.
3. Once logged in, select your name at the top right corner, and it should bring you to "Your Profile".
4. Select "Register New Court". This should appear towards the bottom of the screen in blue. To register a court, you will be asked to input the Court Type, Court Name, and your Title related to the specified court. Once all fields are answered, select "Register".

Data Submission

1. Now that your court is registered, you can now submit your caseload data by following the instructions below:
2. Enter https://casecount.georgiacourts.gov/ into your web browser.
3. Select "Login" and enter your email address and password.
4. You will land on the Casecount home page and your registered court should be visible.

If you experience any technical issues with the portal, please contact the Office of Research and Data Analysis via email at casecount@georgiacourts.gov.

Please note: Mailed, emailed, and faxed forms will no longer be accepted.

Data Verification

The Research staff will review all data submitted through the caseload reporting site for completeness and compare it with data from prior years to identify potential questions and issues addressing data reliability. Clerks are notified of any questions or concerns to allow editing or additional verifications before data is certified as final. It is important that data is submitted during the collection period to ensure the integrity of the data published.

Section 11 – Reporting Timeline

Below are the dates of various events in the caseload reporting process. Please be mindful of these dates to allow ample time for verification and subsequent analysis.

All dates are in 2025.

January 2nd	Caseload reporting begins.
February 24th	15-day reminder sent to courts that have not submitted.
March 3rd	10-day reminder sent to courts that have not submitted.
March 10th	5-day reminder sent to courts that have not submitted. Status report sent to council presidents, judges, court administrators, and clerks
March 13th	2-day reminder sent to courts that have not submitted.
March 17th	On-time reporting ends. Portal closes.
March 18th	Caseload data is past due. First late notice is sent to courts that have not submitted.
March 21st	Second late notice sent to unresponsive courts.
April 17th	All submitted data are final. Any submissions after this date must be submitted through JWAC with a written letter from the chief judge.

Section 12 – Contact Information

If you have any comments, questions, or concerns, please contact the staff below by phone at 404-463-3808 or by email at casecount@georgiacourts.gov.

Andres Bosque	Lead Data Analyst
Mitchell Redd	Data Analyst II
Dylan Long	Research Analyst I
Kate Heidenreich	Research Analyst I
Eric Miner	JCIP Analyst
Shimike Dodson	Assistant Director of Research
Stephanie Hines	Judicial Services Division Director