




Whatcom County Superior and Juvenile Court

Council Presentation May 27, 2025

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Administrator



Purpose of the Court



Promote justice in individual cases

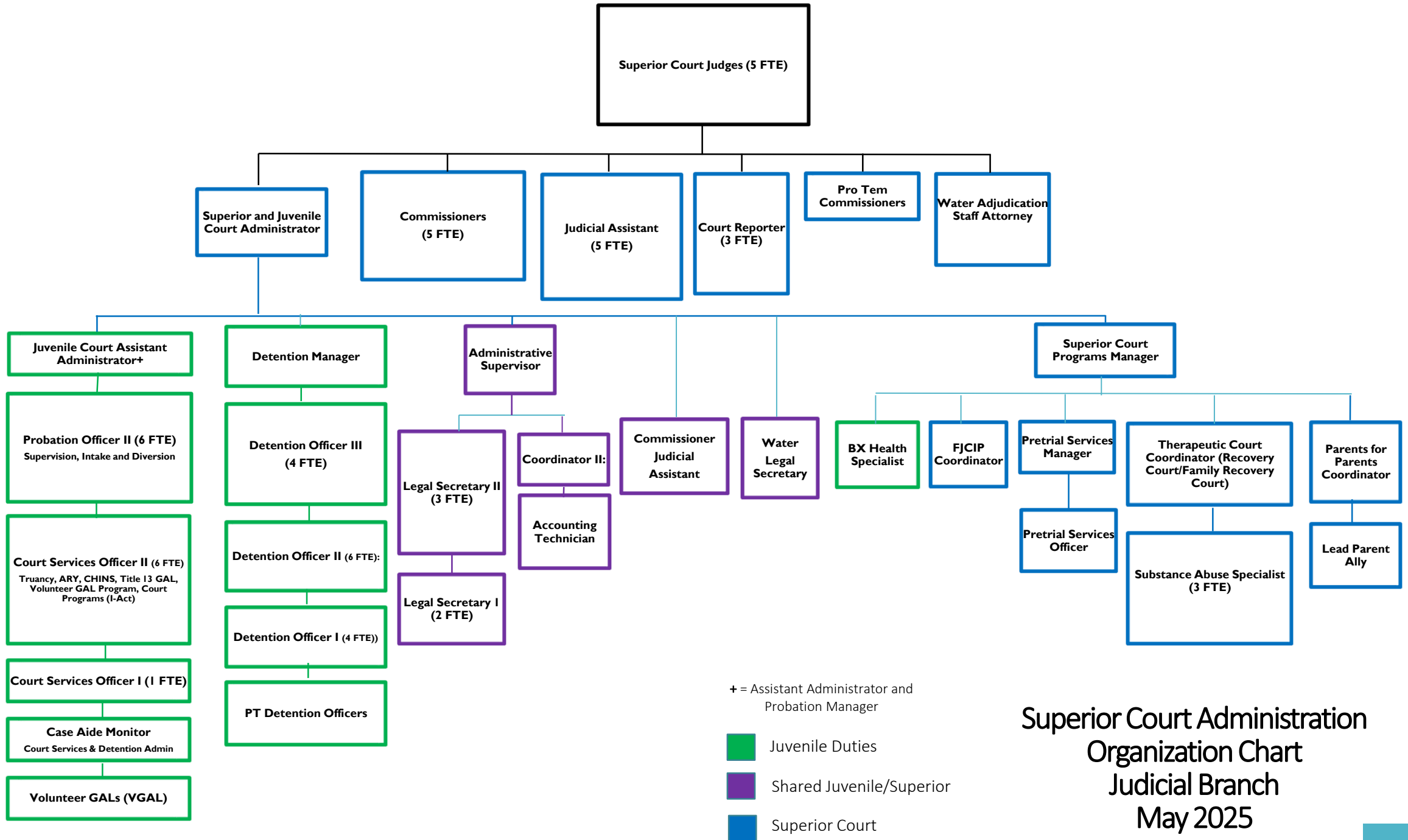
Ensure the public perception of justice in individual cases

Protect individuals against the arbitrary use of governmental power

Provide impartial forum for the resolution of legal disputes

Deter criminal behavior

Rehabilitate individuals convicted of crimes



Superior Court Administration
Organization Chart
Judicial Branch
May 2025

Superior Court Caseload

	Criminal	Civil	Domestic	Probate/ Guardianship	Adoption/ Parentage	Mental Illness/ Alcohol	Juvenile Dependency	Juvenile Offender	Total Filings for Year
2018	1,721	2,277	769	631	132	221	657	311	6,719
2019	1,542	2,364	835	714	131	224	660	229	6,699
2020	1,626	1,306	700	664	87	222	340	167	5,112
2021	1,270	1,316	726	1,029	84	252	398	133	5,238
2022	1,463	1,617	686	1,233	91	270	602	166	6,128
2023	1,483	1,894	788	1,204	80	252	448	192	6,341
2024	1,486	2,283	748	1,165	155	225	599	201	6,862
2025* (Jan. through March)	377	789	210	337	43	57	178	54	2,045

Numbers reflect new cases filed for the calendar year. They do not account for cases that were filed in previous years and have not yet been resolved. This count does not reflect the claims filed in the WRIA 1 Water Adjudication. As of the week of May 19th, there were approximately 500 of the 35,000 potential claims filed.

Court Administration Duties

- Public Trust and Confidence
- Strategic Planning
- Court Governance
- Caseflow and Workflow Management
- Operations Management
- Public Relations
- Educational Development
- Workforce Management
- Ethics
- Budget and Fiscal Management
- Accountability and Court Performance

Superior & Juvenile Court Programs

Superior Court (Criminal)	Juvenile Court (Criminal)	Superior Court (Civil)	Juvenile Court (Civil)
Administrative Services (GAL Registries, Settlement Conferences, Interpreters, Reception etc.)			
Pretrial Services	Diversion	Family Recovery Court	Becca: Truancy, At Risk Youth, Child in Need of Services
Recovery Court	Pre Adjudication (Intake) Supervision	Family and Juvenile Court Improvement Program (FJCIP)	Volunteer GAL (VGAL) Program
	Post Adjudication Supervision	Family Law Mediation (contract with WDRC)	Title 13 (Dependency) GAL
	Evidence Based Programming (I-Act, Community Links)	Water Adjudication Outreach & Court Development	Parents for Parents (P4P)
	Detention Services	Supervised Visitation (contract with WDRC)	Behavioral Health Outreach
	Behavioral Health Outreach		

Superior and Juvenile Court Program Highlights

Recovery Court

- 13 graduations in 2024 and another 8 graduations so far this year.
- Participants are averaging 18 months in the program.
- On track to surpass 40 admissions for the year. There are currently 52 participants.

Evidenced Based Programs

- Community Links near perfect attendance of youth and connected adult. High model fidelity and accolades for program among juvenile courts.
- I-Act (Individual Alternative Choice Training) has had six new starts since January.

Pretrial Services

- AOC grant has allowed the program to have concrete goods such as protein or hygiene items available for clients.
- Purchased I-Pads for clients to use to support connecting individuals to services.
- Risk Assessment is currently going through the validation process (report expected by June 30, 2025).

Family and Juvenile Court Improvement Program (FJCIP)

- Regularly scheduled cross system collaborative meetings.
- Starting to look at data to inform system change.
- Planning Family Reunification Day (June 26).

Volunteer GAL (VGAL) Program

- Graduated 4 new volunteers so far this year.
- Volunteers are currently advocating for 46 youth.

Juvenile Behavioral Health Outreach

- Averages 45 unique individual contacts each month.
- No delay for court involved youth to receive behavioral health case management support and referral to services.
- Provides weekly outreach group in detention on topics such as identifying emotions, behavior chain analysis, stages of addiction and DBT skills.

Detention Programming

- Expanded programming available to include: music group (youth play instruments), poetry, AA, Church Group, Bible Study, Conflict Resolution and skill building groups (ex. communication, healthy relationships, emotion regulation).
- School does weekly cooking class.
- PE daily.

Protein for All

- Recognizes the importance of protein and its impact on various aspects of life, including legal engagement and decision-making.
- High protein food items available for all youth.
- Reduced emotional dysregulation.

PROJECT UPDATE: COURTROOM 5C

- Construction was completed in January 2025.
- JAVS installed in February.
- Started having hearings in the courtroom in February.
- First fully ADA accessible courtroom for Superior Court.



PROJECT UPDATE: HCA REENTRY

- Juvenile Detention is part of cohort 1.
- Milestone 2 was approved in April. This included a rough estimated budget and project plan.
- Juvenile Detention has obtained an NPI number which will enable Medicaid billing further into the project.
- Completed the process to obtain our own ProviderOne access, which allows detention to look up whether or not a youth has insurance.
- Currently in the process of completing milestone 3, a readiness assessment.
- Anticipated go live date of Sept 1, 2025. We must provide reentry case management, 30 day supply of medication, and medication for alcohol and opioid use disorder.
- Funding for project goes through July 31, 2028. Funds to build capacity to provide reentry services. They augment existing services, enhance technology, and facility updates to ensure services are available and easily accessible to youth.
- Challenges: constant changes with regard to what HCA will provide sites (ex. HCR system), clarification as to what services will be billable to Medicaid, HCA does not understand the short term nature of Juvenile Detention facilities, and time/staff resources to complete project elements.

PROJECT UPDATE: NEW 3RD FLOOR COURTROOM

- Design plan was approved. The courtroom will be fully ADA accessible, be set up for jury trials, add offices/judicial officer space, create attorney client meeting room, and an e-file station.
- IT relocated to new building.
- Some preparation work, such as moving files in clerks office to expand the floorplan into that space has already begun.
- Official work to begin within the next month.
- To maximize use of funding ending June 30th, purchased the JAVS system for the new courtroom, furnishing for the offices, computers for the courtroom/offices, chairs for lobby etc.
- Anticipated completion September 2025.

PROJECT UPDATE: WRIA 1 WATER ADJUDICATION

- Claim period officially began in March 2025.
- Steering Committee is meeting weekly to provide feedback to the Court regarding procedure and case management.
- Working with IT and RiteTrack on an electronic internal case management system. The system will allow judicial officers and water support staff to closely monitor how claims are moving through court, outcomes, tracking, note taking etc. Anticipated completion is June 30.
- Creating tools/resources to provide technical support for claimants. For example, putting court order in plain language or explaining how to read the docket sheet.
- Participating with the County Clerk in two outreach events this week.
- Setting up e-file stations in the courthouse to help with facilitating electronic claim filing.
- Over 500 claims have been filed.

Accomplishments

- Separated duties, budget and staffing between Superior Court Administration and the Superior Court Clerk's Office.
- Increased collaboration and cross-training among staff.
- Two courtrooms with updated JAVS systems. Systems provide enhanced tools for digital evidence, better microphones, and additional technological features such as monitors at the attorney tables that will display zoom.
- Nearing completion of case management system upgrade for Juvenile Court. This will replace the 20 year old program currently being used.
- Website updates to help promote accessibility, information, and better support the community. There are more changes and updates on the horizon as we transition to providing information in plain language where possible.
- Program staff have been able to connect with, visit, and build collaboration with various community organizations. This has also provided an avenue to provide education about the court.
- Secured some additional reimbursement funding for the increased number of protection orders being heard by the court.
- Had three jury trial going on at the same time. Our 5th judge has helped to support cases moving through the court system more quickly.

CHALLENGES

- Increased requirements and expectations of the court. Often trying to do more with equal (or often less) resources. Greatly impacts our ability to adapt to change.
- Unfunded Legislative Mandates.
- Data.
- Acuity (high risk, high need) of youth and adults coming in contact with our system
- Backlog of cases and availability of attorneys, interpreters etc.
- Access to behavioral health services, including crisis services, residential treatment/support services and intensive wrap around services.
- Housing for Recovery Court participants.
- Need to utilize technology to be more efficient where the technology is not currently in place.
- Supporting staff through continued change (in organization, process, job duties, law changes etc.) and working to maintain morale.