

SPOKANE SUPERIOR COURT
2009 ANNUAL REPORT
February 5, 2010

2009 Accomplishments:

1. The Court and its administrative staff conducted two budget retreats and held numerous meetings to wrestle with a projected budget reduction of 12%. The final result of these meetings was to reduce our 2010 target budget by \$659,000 without the permanent loss of any positions, but with significant changes to our case management practices, jury management procedures and policies regarding use of pro tem judicial officers, coverage of dockets, educational travel and supply procurement.
2. Superior Court was able to utilize grant funds to develop a professional instructional video on dissolution of marriage, to be viewed by pro se litigants. The Family Law Dissolution Video is available on our website and is the most viewed of all links on the county's website. The DVD is also available for purchase for a nominal fee of \$5.00 at the Bar Association Office.
3. Our Therapeutic Court Coordinator was successful in securing federal funding for a 3-year grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (SAMHSA/CSAT) for \$900,000 to expand and enhance our treatment options for drug offenders. The grant monies support the Drug Court's implementation of Evidence-Based Practices while allowing us to expand the numbers of participants who can receive services.
4. Court Administrative Staff spearheaded a joint effort with ISD and District Court's Mental Health Court to use some of the County's Byrne/JAG funding in creating a computer-based recidivism tracking program. The project is estimated to take at least 2 years, due to changes and updates in the computer programs throughout the county.
5. Superior Court implemented an Early Case Resolution (ECR) program, whereby final disposition on low level felony cases may be accomplished in less than 30 days.



Judge Maryann Moreno presides over Early Case Resolution dockets

Superior Court Annual Report

6. As a part of the ECR program, the Superior Court assumed responsibility for conducted all felony first appearances. As of April 2009, this change has dramatically increased our workload, however criminal charges are now being filed faster, failures to appear for court have decreased and defendants are being held accountable to a greater degree than in past years.

7. With the help of the Information Systems Department, Superior Court is now able to computer-generate release conditions at the video first appearance. These conditions are automatically transmitted electronically to the jail upon completion of the hearing, thereby speeding up the release process.

8. The Jury Assembly Room underwent the final phase of a 3-year project to upgrade the audio/visual system. We were able to use “court improvement” funds to purchase flat screen monitors, a ceiling-mounted projection system, and other improvements to our camera and sound system. These same funds were also used to purchase 180 new chairs to replace the aging mismatched chairs which jurors had found so uncomfortable.



Judy Ottoson, Jury Coordinator, conducting Juror Orientation

9. The Guardianship Monitoring Program trained 170 new guardians. 2 1/2 full time employees along with 14 trained volunteers monitored 1800+ active guardianship cases. Staff updated the website forms.

2010 Goals

1. 2010 presents several special challenges to Superior Court, not the least of which is to continue to fulfill our constitutional and statutory mandate to adjudicate all cases coming before the court in a timely manner. We have been advised that judicial workload measures from AOC support the addition of a 13th judge. While we recognize that this is not feasible in the current economic climate, we are also mindful of the adage that “justice delayed is justice denied”. Budget reductions have presented a unique challenge for the court’s ability to handle its dockets without the use of pro tem judicial officers. The Court will continue to do its utmost to resolve all cases within time standards, while realizing that this goal may be especially difficult to achieve in this year.
2. Our goal is to continue to develop diversion programs, such as expanded treatment programs through Drug Court, including such dockets as Co-Occurring/Mental Health Disorders, Medically Assisted Treatment (MAT) for Drug Abusers, and possibly a Veteran’s Treatment Court model
3. Continue to expand the Early Case Resolution program, working with Pre-Trial Services to develop risk assessment tools and supervision of defendants.
4. We will complete work on a project to computer-generate release conditions at arraignment in addition to the first appearances.
5. The Juvenile Court Judge will unveil a Juvenile Criminal Docketing System, aimed at better administrative control over the case management of offender cases, including tracking and docketing of cases.
6. Our Family Law department will continue to update all online instructions and family law packets.
7. The Guardianship Monitoring Program will recruit new volunteers, continue to train potential guardians, and update forms all to assist in protecting Spokane County's vulnerable adults.

Submitted by,

Ron Miles
Superior Court Administrator