

# SPOKANE COUNTY DISTRICT COURT 2017



Honorable Patti Connolly Walker, Presiding; Honorable Debra Hayes; Honorable Richard Leland;  
Honorable Aimee Maurer; Honorable Vance Peterson; Honorable Jeffrey Smith; Honorable Donna Wilson

# Washington Court System

## THE SUPREME COURT

Six-year terms, staggered

- Appeals from the Court of Appeals
- Administers state court system

## COURT OF APPEALS

Six-year terms, staggered

Division I, Seattle; Division II, Tacoma

Division III, Spokane

- Appeals from lower courts except those in jurisdiction of the Supreme Court

## SUPERIOR COURT

Four-year terms

- Civil matters
- Domestic relations
- Felony criminal cases
- Juvenile matters
- Appeals from courts of limited jurisdiction

## COURTS OF LIMITED JURISDICTION

Four-year terms

District and Municipal Courts

- Misdemeanor criminal cases
- Traffic, non-traffic and parking infractions
- Domestic violence protection orders
- Civil actions of \$100,000 or less
- Small claims up to \$5,000

# COURT ORGANIZATION

## **Courts of Limited Jurisdiction**

Courts of limited jurisdiction include district and municipal courts. District courts are county courts and serve defined territories, both incorporated and unincorporated, within the counties. Municipal courts are those created by cities and towns.

More than two million cases are filed annually in district and municipal courts. Excluding parking infractions, seven out of every eight cases filed in all state courts are filed at this level. This is due primarily to the broad jurisdiction these courts have over traffic violations and misdemeanors.

## **District Courts**

District courts have jurisdiction over both criminal and civil cases. Criminal jurisdiction includes misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor cases that involve traffic or non-traffic offenses. Examples include: Driving while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs (DUI), reckless driving, driving with a suspended driver's license and assault in the fourth degree.

# COURT ORGANIZATION

## **District Courts (Continued)**

Preliminary hearings for felony cases can also be within the jurisdiction of the district courts. The maximum penalty for gross misdemeanors is 364 days in jail and a \$5,000 fine. The maximum penalty for misdemeanors is 90 days in jail and a \$1,000 fine. A defendant is entitled to a jury trial for these offenses. Juries in courts of limited jurisdiction are composed of six people as opposed to superior court juries, which have 12 people.

Jurisdiction in civil cases includes damages for injury to individuals or personal property and contract disputes in amounts of up to \$100,000. District courts also have jurisdiction over traffic and non-traffic infractions, civil proceedings for which a monetary penalty—but no jail sentence—may be imposed. There is no right to a jury trial for an infraction. District courts have jurisdiction to issue civil protection orders and criminal no-contact orders. They also have jurisdiction to hear change-of-name petitions and certain lien foreclosures.

# COURT ORGANIZATION

## **District Courts (Continued)**

Small claims are limited to money claims of up to \$5,000. These are filed and heard in the small claims department of the district court. Generally, each party is self-represented—attorneys are not permitted except with the permission of the judges. Witnesses may not be subpoenaed, but may be allowed to voluntarily testify for a party. Examples of cases heard: Neighborhood disputes, consumer problems, landlord/tenant matters and small collections. The Spokane County District Court clerk can provide information on these procedures or about filing a claim.

## **JUDGES**

District court judges are elected to four-year terms. Municipal court judges may be elected or appointed to a four-year term, depending on state law provisions. All judges are required to attend 45 hours of judicial training every three years.

# COURT ORGANIZATION

## **COURT SUPPORT PERSONNEL**

Courts of limited jurisdiction are served by an administrative support staff. Under the direction of the presiding judge and the court administrator, the staff is responsible for maintaining the court's fiscal, administrative and court records.

## **PROBATION**

Courts of limited jurisdiction have authority to order probation for up to two years, except in DUI convictions where a court can order probation for up to five years. A probation counselor administers programs that provide pre-sentence investigations, supervision and probationary treatment for misdemeanor offenders in a district or municipal court.

# COURT ORGANIZATION

## **PROBATION (Continued)**

Probation counselors can make sentencing recommendations to the court, including appropriate treatment (i.e., drug and alcohol counseling) that an offender should receive. The probation counselor periodically advises the district court judges of an offender's progress while the offender is on supervision.

## **APPEALS FROM COURTS OF LIMITED JURISDICTION**

Cases are appealed from "the record" made in the lower court. The record is made from an electronic recording of the original proceedings and court documents. The cases are appealed to superior court where only legal errors from the proceeding below are argued. There is no additional evidence or testimony presented on appeal. The one exception is an appeal from a small claims case. Small claims cases are heard *de novo* (or *anew*) in superior court on the record from the court of limited jurisdiction.

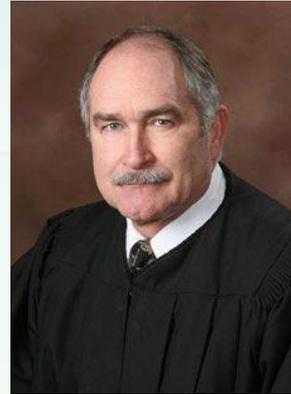
# 2017 DISTRICT COURT JUDGES



Patti Connolly Walker  
Presiding Judge



Donna Wilson



Vance W. Peterson



Debra R. Hayes



Richard M. Leland



Aimee N. Maurer



Jeffrey R. Smith

# INTRODUCTION

## **Spokane District Court handles:**

- Traffic and non-traffic infractions,
- Misdemeanors and gross misdemeanors, and
- Felony reductions and some felony first appearance hearings.

Cases are filed by the Washington State Patrol, the Sheriff's Department, the City of Spokane Police Department, the Liberty Lake Police Department, Animal Control, Fish & Wildlife, Liquor Control and Burlington Northern Railroad.

## **The Court's Civil Department processes countywide :**

- Civil cases up to \$100,000 in value, and,
- Small Claims cases up to \$5,000 in value.



# INTRODUCTION - Continued

**Spokane County District Court contracts to provide court services for the:**

City of Spokane Valley

City of Liberty Lake

City of Deer Park

City of Millwood

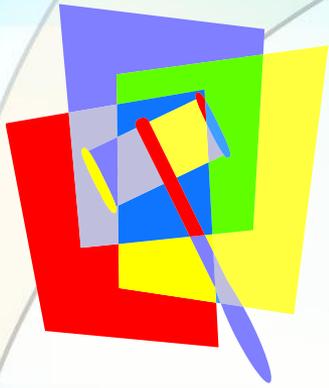
City of Rockford

Town of Fairfield

Town of Spangle

Town of Latah

Spokane County District Court also provides judicial services to the City of Cheney and the City of Medical Lake. Limited judicial services are also provided to the City of Airway Heights.



# MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Spokane County District Court is to serve our citizens through the prompt, courteous, and fair dispensation of justice by adjudicating cases in a timely manner using effective and efficient case management techniques, adhering to the highest standards, monitoring enforcement of judgments and being responsible stewards of public funds.

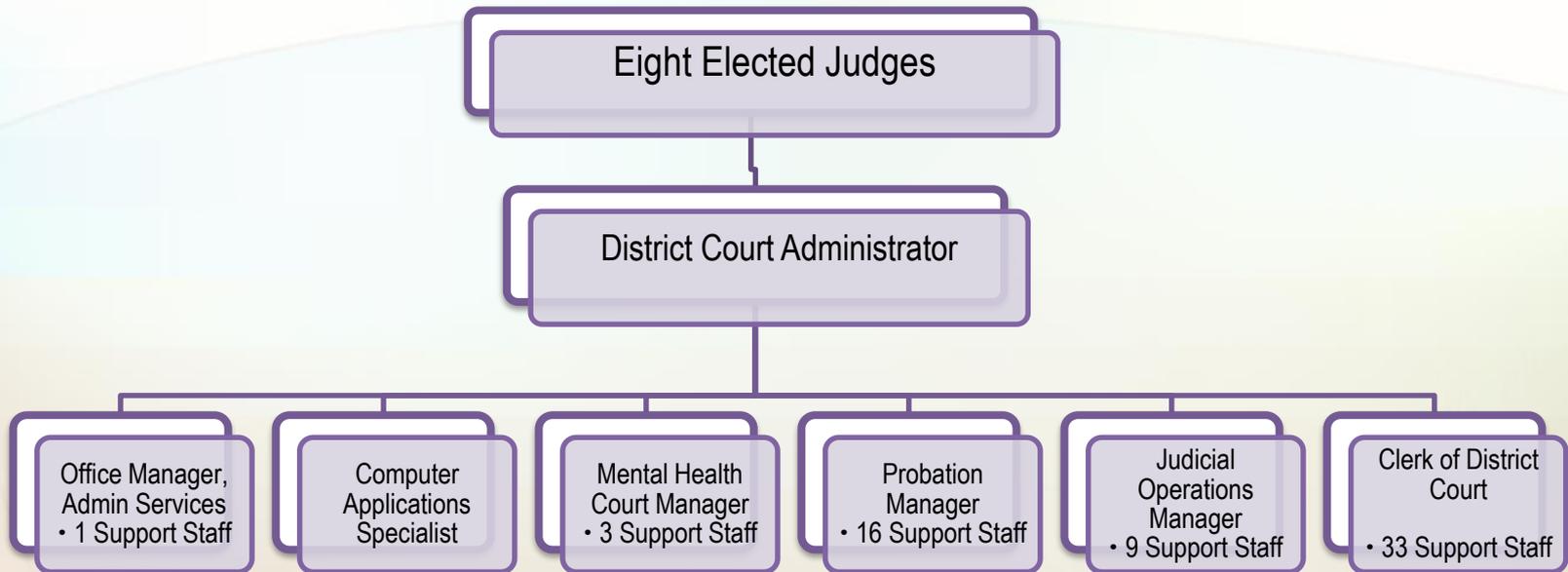


# VISION STATEMENT

## Professionalism, Accountability & Service

- Maintaining a positive and professional work environment;
- Ensuring accountability to the public.
- Continually improving work processes and performance, including the implementation of new technologies and innovative practices; and, providing the highest quality of service to the public.

# DISTRICT COURT ORGANIZATION CHART



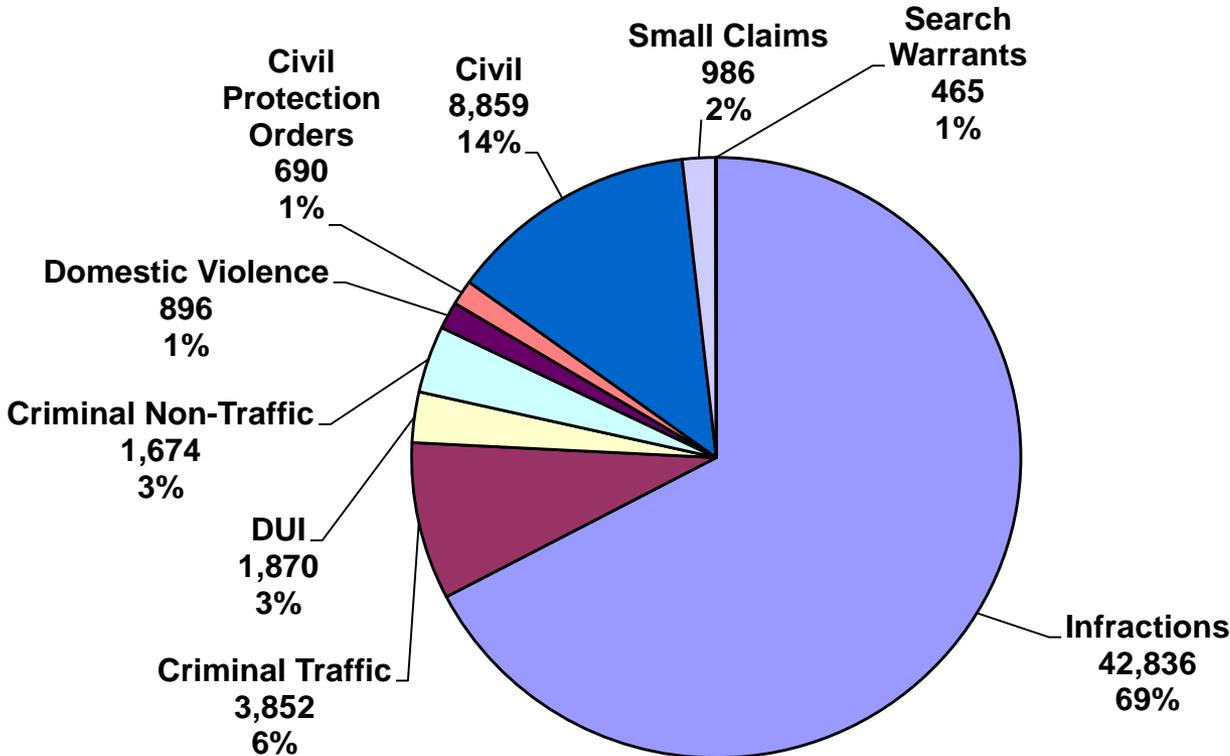
# District Court Hearing Types

- First Appearances
- Arraignments
- Bond Hearings
- Pre-Trial – Civil & Criminal
- Trial-Jury or Bench
- Probation Violations
- Treatment Reviews
- Prosecutor Complaints
- Impounds
- Weekend Jail
- Sealed Search Warrants
- Name Change
- Small Claims
- Infraction Mitigation
- Infraction Contested
- Mental Health Court
- Veterans Court
- Intensive Supervision Therapeutic Court
- Civil Protection Orders
- Felony First Appearances
- Felony Reductions
- Ex Parte
- Relicensing
- Alive @ 25
- Sheriff's Traffic School

# 2014 – 2016 District Court Filings

|                            | <u>2014</u> | <u>2015</u> | <u>2016</u> |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Infractions                | 40,389      | 42,243      | 42,836      |
| Criminal Traffic           | 4,394       | 4,816       | 3,852       |
| DUI                        | 2,077       | 1,809       | 1,870       |
| Criminal Non-Traffic       | 1,749       | 1,783       | 1,674       |
| Domestic Violence-Criminal | 906         | 966         | 896         |
| Civil Protection Orders    | 666         | 716         | 690         |
| Civil                      | 9,270       | 9,880       | 8,859       |
| Small Claims               | 866         | 910         | 986         |
| Search Warrants            | 519         | 503         | 465         |
| Total Filings              | 60,836      | 63,626      | 62,128      |

# 2016 District Court Filings



# 2015 Interpreter Usage

| <u>Language</u>              | <u>District/Criminal</u> | <u>Civil/Small Claims</u> | <u>TOTAL</u> |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Amharic                      | 7                        |                           | 7            |
| Arabic                       | 45                       | 15                        | 60           |
| ASL (American Sign Language) | 28                       | 2                         | 30           |
| Bosnian                      |                          | 1                         | 1            |
| Bulgarian                    | 1                        |                           | 1            |
| Burmese                      | 8                        |                           | 8            |
| Chinese – Cantonese          | 6                        |                           | 6            |
| Chinese – Mandarin           | 2                        |                           | 2            |
| Chuukese                     | 21                       |                           | 21           |
| Croatian                     |                          |                           | 0            |
| Czech                        |                          |                           | 0            |
| Dinka                        |                          |                           | 0            |
| Etree (Ethiopian)            |                          | 1                         | 1            |
| Farsi                        |                          |                           | 0            |
| French                       |                          |                           | 0            |
| Hindu                        |                          |                           | 0            |
| Hmong                        |                          | 1                         | 1            |
| Icelandic                    |                          |                           | 0            |
| Japanese                     |                          |                           | 0            |
| Italian                      |                          |                           | 0            |
| Korean                       |                          | 1                         | 1            |

| <u>Language</u>     | <u>District/Criminal</u> | <u>Civil/Small Claims</u> | <u>TOTAL</u> |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Laotian             |                          |                           | 0            |
| Listening Equipment |                          |                           | 0            |
| Marshallese         | 97                       |                           | 97           |
| Punjabi             | 9                        |                           | 9            |
| Romanian            |                          |                           | 0            |
| Rundi               | 3                        |                           | 3            |
| Russian             | 105                      | 29                        | 134          |
| Somali              | 3                        |                           | 3            |
| Serbian             |                          |                           | 0            |
| Spanish             | 200                      | 13                        | 213          |
| Swahili             | 39                       |                           | 39           |
| Tagalog             |                          | 1                         | 1            |
| Tigrigna            | 2                        |                           | 2            |
| Thai                |                          |                           | 0            |
| Turkish             |                          |                           | 0            |
| Ukrainian           |                          |                           | 0            |
| Vietnamese          | 6                        |                           | 6            |
| Yoruba              |                          |                           | 0            |
| <b>TOTALS</b>       | <b>611</b>               | <b>64</b>                 | <b>675</b>   |

*Note: Zeros indicate languages used in prior years but not in 2015.*

# DISTRICT COURT OVERVIEW

- Customer Service
- Early Case Resolution
- Therapeutic Courts
- Employee Training
- Efficient Use of Jail Alternatives
- Statewide Committees/Commissions
- Pro Tem Judge Usage
- Grant Funding
- Imaging (Electronic Access)
- Electronic Tickets
- Electronic Court Orders
- Electronic Warrants
- Receivables Management
- District Court Search Application
- Text Message Reminders
- Courtroom Technology Systems Upgrade
- Interpreter Services
- Electronic Court Forms
- Collaboration
- Community Outreach

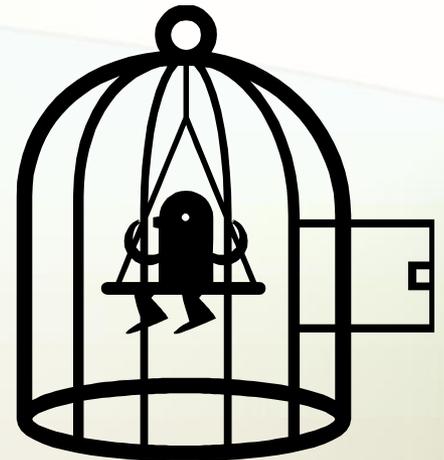
# DISTRICT COURT OVERVIEW - Continued

- **Customer Service** – Website access to case and court date information; credit card payments accepted online, telephonic, and on-site; court hearing text message reminders; direct phone lines; customer service evaluation cards; and personal service to the public.
- **Early Case Resolution** – Law enforcement officer sets the arraignment date and defendant comes in to apply for public defender at the arraignment. Prosecutor has the offer ready or the case is moved to regular dockets.
- **Therapeutic Courts** – Spokane County District Court has a long standing Domestic Violence Court, DUI Intensive Supervision Court and Veterans Court. The Mental Health Court is a collaboration with the City of Spokane.
- **Employee Training** – The court is implementing a training program for all employees. Employees will be expected to obtain a minimum of 20 hours per year of in-house and/or online training in related subjects such as ethics, safety, diversity awareness, campus security, recording system and motivational leadership .

# ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION

## Efficient Use of Alternatives to Incarceration

- Pre-trial Assessments (Pre-Trial Services)
- Alcohol & Drug Monitoring
  - SCRAM (Secure Continuous Remote Alcohol Monitor)
  - UA Testing
  - Ignition Interlock
  - PBT's (Portable In-Home Breath Tester)
- EHM (Electronic Home Monitoring/House Arrest)
- Drug & Alcohol Treatment (Inpatient/Outpatient)
- Mental Health Evaluations (Counseling & Medication)
- Co-Occurring Disorders – Drug/Alcohol & Mental Health Treatment
- Probation Supervision



# Alternatives to Incarceration - Continued

## Efficient Use of Alternatives to Incarceration

- Theft Awareness Classes
- DVPP Classes
- Anger Management Classes
- DUI Victim Impact Panel
- Relicensing Program
- Additional Programs
  - Community Service/Friendship Diversion
  - Alive @ 25 (defensive driving course for 15-24 year olds)
  - Treatment Monitoring
  - Intense Supervision for Therapeutic Courts

# Alternatives to Incarceration - Continued

## Efficient Use of Alternatives to Incarceration

- Geiger
  - Work Crew
  - Work Release
  - Partial Confinement
  - In-Custody Drug/Alcohol Treatment
  - AA Classes
  - Community Service
  - Alcohol/Drug Evaluations
  - Treatment Placement
  - Screening for Benefits (DSHS)
  - 24-Hour Jail Alternative for DUI

# INVOLVEMENT & INNOVATIONS

- **Statewide Committees & Commissions** – In order to have consistent and up-to-date court information, involvement in the State Court organizations is necessary. Judges have been Presidents of the District & Municipal Court Judges' Association (DMCJA), Board Members, Officers, Committee Chairs, Therapeutic Court Committee, Diversity Committee, Court Security Committee, Regional Courts Committee, Committee members for Legislative, Education, Long Range, Technology, Gender & Justice and Minority & Justice Commissions, Legal Foundation of Washington, Access to Justice Board and BJA (Board for Judicial Administration), among others.
- **Pro Tem Judge Usage** – Spokane County District Court offers accredited training on an annual basis to attorneys who wish to become pro tems judges. Pro tems are brought in to serve temporarily as a judge.
- **Grant Funding** – The court actively seeks grant funding to adapt to a changing environment. Grants play a crucial role by meeting needs that are not, or cannot be, met through other financial resources.

# INNOVATIONS - Continued

- **Technology (Imaging)** – Spokane County District Court has worked closely with the Information Technology department (IT) to develop an imaging program tailor-made for our processes. The court has made steady progress in expanding the use of the system and in adding additional document types. Currently, there are projects either started or pending to incorporate electronic document generation and workflow management into this system/application. The result of these projects provides the court and related parties with increased efficiency, reduced effort and time savings.
- **SECTOR (E-Tickets)** – The Washington State Patrol (WSP) and other law enforcement agencies (LEAs), to varying degrees, have been using this system to electronically transmit criminal and infraction violations to the court. Processing these citations decreases the amount of time required to file cases. Spokane was one of the beta test sites for this project in 2006. Currently, 84% of Spokane County District Court filings are received electronically.

# INNOVATIONS - Continued

- **Electronic Court Orders** – In May 2012, the court implemented electronic orders—a new system using electronic forms during dockets. Judges utilize a pre-populated form containing case information, release conditions and future court dates utilizing electronic signature pads. The document is transmitted electronically and uploaded to the imaging system. This process saves time and eliminates the scanning of paper documents.
- **eWarrants** – Spokane County District Court reviews and signs search warrants for all jurisdictions in Spokane County. Through new technology, the court can review search warrants after working hours and on weekends.
- **eHearings** - Customers can submit electronic requests for mitigation hearings, good cause hearings, deferrals, and motions to remove cases from collections.

# INNOVATIONS - Continued

- **Receivables Management** – In 2010, the Spokane County District Court contracted with PAR Acceptance to manage time pay accounts. This was a result of severe staff reductions resulting from budget cuts. PAR offers convenient payment methods including phone payments, mail or electronic transfer, online payments or in person at the PAR office (just blocks away from the court). There are no costs to the court. Administrative costs are paid entirely by PAR.
- **District Court Search Application** – Court date and case information can be accessed on the Spokane County District Court website. Searches can be made using a specific case number or by name.
- **Text Message Reminders** – Customers can “opt-in” with Spokane County District Court to receive text message reminders of future court hearings.

# INNOVATIONS - Continued

- **Courtroom Technology Upgrade** – During 2012 and into 2013, the court undertook a project to upgrade all audio systems in courtrooms located in the Public Safety Building (PSB). All microphone cabling was replaced, existing microphones were replaced with models more suited for courtrooms, new amplifiers were added and audio mixing boards were upgraded. Courtroom no. 2 (video jail courtroom) was remodeled to utilize electronic services. Additionally, each courtroom is equipped with a security camera operating 24 hours per day.
- **Interpreter Services** - The court's judicial operations manager (JOM) arranges in-court interpreters utilizing independent contractors and interpreter agencies. The JOM coordinates and shares interpreter information with superior court & municipal court.

# COLLABORATION & COMMUNITY

- **Collaboration**: Spokane Mental Health Court is a collaboration between Spokane County and the City of Spokane. Spokane County District Court partners with the Spokane County Sheriff's Office and District Court Probation to offer two traffic safety programs: The Alive @ 25 Defensive Driving Program sponsored by the National Safety Council and the Sheriff's Traffic Safety Program. In addition, Spokane County District Court collaborates with the City of Spokane for the Community Relicensing Program.
- **Community Outreach** – Spokane County District Court judges have been guest speakers and/or have participated with Kiwanis, Rotary, Exchange Club, Hugh O'Brien Youth Leadership Program, High Schools (East Valley, Lewis & Clark High, Rogers, Mead), Glover Middle School, Havermale Alternative School, Big Brothers & Sisters, Opportunity Elementary Congressional Hearing, GU, EWU, WSU Moot Court Competition, League of Women Voters Panelist, Cheney Student Court, Domestic Violence Task Force, EWU Phi Kappa Phi Keynote Speaker, U.S. Military Special Forces, Honorary Commander/Eagle Program, FAFB and Visiting Judge Program, among other organizations.



# THERAPEUTIC COURTS

## MENTAL HEALTH COURT

- Accountability with compassion
- Created in 2007 and funded by sales tax
- Reduce recidivism & increase public safety
- Meet the needs of offenders with mental illness
- Treatment, community resources & supervision
- Incentives and sanctions
- Five phase program
- Graduation





# VETERAN'S COURT

- Created in 2011
- Mentoring through Spokane Veteran's Forum
- Reduce recidivism and increase public safety
- Incentives and sanctions
- Treatment, community resources and supervision
- Collaborates with Veteran's Affairs, Goodwill Industries and the Veteran's Task Force
- Complete phases and graduate
- Initially funded by 2012 federal grant





# DUI INTENSIVE SUPERVISION COURT

- Created in 2009
- Reduce DUI fatalities and injuries
- Address drug and alcohol dependent offenders
- Comprehensive supervision and treatment
- Graduated incentives and sanctions
- Initially funded by the Washington Traffic Safety Commission
- Mandatory for repeat offenders with three or more DUI offenses within 10 years



# DISTRICT COURT

## Statutory Basis & Court Rules

- Revised Code of Washington – Title 3
- Washington State Court Rules
- Spokane County Local Rules

