



# Advancing Justice

## *Promoting Fair and Timely Case Resolution*

To focus on its constitutional mandates, the Idaho Courts have adopted four strategic goals:

- Provide timely, fair and impartial case resolution
- Ensure access to justice
- Promote effective, innovative services
- Increase public trust and confidence in Idaho Courts

To achieve these goals, the Advancing Justice Initiative was launched in 2011 to conduct an open-ended, top to bottom systems review of the Idaho Courts. A primary component of this review was to conduct a critical evaluation of the existing time frames for processing various case types from filing to case closure, along with an assessment of how judges manage their increasingly demanding caseloads.

To this end, the Supreme Court established a formal standing committee, which has made significant progress towards completion of three primary goals:

1. Conduct a critical review of Idaho's time standards for case processing.
2. Develop a statewide caseload management plan and assist with the development of caseload management plans for individual judicial districts.
3. Review court rules and statutes to identify potential barriers to timely case processing and draft recommendations for new rules and statutory changes addressing those barriers.

### ***Supreme Court Approves Plan to Support Goal-Based, Data-Driven Practice***

Time standards reflect reasonable "timeliness goals against which the delivery of judicial services by courts within the state should be measured."<sup>1</sup> These standards are expressed as the time it takes to process a particular case type from filing to disposition, and are reported in terms of percentage of cases expected to meet a particular standard. Time standards serve multiple purposes, such as, providing a case management tool for judges, clerks and court administrators; helping to identify where backlog may be developing; informing decisions about current judicial resource allocation; and serving as a measure of how well the Courts are meeting the expectations of the public and its funders. Idaho was the first state court in the nation to adopt statewide time standards in the mid-1980's and these are formally expressed in court rule.

A number of factors contributed to the need to reexamine these existing standards. First, the existing standards have been in place for a significant period of time, therefore, a reevaluation of those expectations was prudent to ensure they accurately reflect the current goals and values of the Court and that they sufficiently account for circumstances that impact the ability to achieve them. Second, there have been recent efforts on a national level to reassess time standards. Third, the economic climate of the past few years has provided the Idaho Judiciary with an increased incentive to identify and eliminate inefficiencies that unnecessarily delay case processing. Finally, advances in technology, including Idaho's upcoming transition to a new case management system, will allow for more efficient and effective case management tools and practices.

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<sup>1</sup> Idaho Court Administrative Rule 57, available at [www.isc.idaho.gov/icar57](http://www.isc.idaho.gov/icar57).



Using a variety of methods, the Advancing Justice Committee completed an initial, comprehensive review of Idaho's time standards and recommended modifications to the Supreme Court. These recommendations include improving data collection and reporting, increasing the number of case-types covered, and establishing benchmarks that readily display the progress of a case. Those recommendations were approved by the Supreme Court.

The proposal takes into account the implementation of the Court's new case management system and therefore entails a marked change in the way the data must be measured and reported. As a result, the proposed revisions must first be piloted, reevaluated, and may need to be modified again before they are finalized. The pilot period will begin once the new case management system has been installed statewide.

### ***Caseflow Management Plans Aim to Ensure the Effective and Efficient Administration of Justice***

The Advancing Justice Committee was charged with identifying best practices in the area of caseflow management, developing a statewide caseflow management plan, and assisting with the development of caseflow management plans for individual districts.

Caseflow management can be described as the court supervision of case progress, including the management of time and events necessary to move a case from filing to ultimate disposition -- regardless of the type of disposition. Caseflow management plans lend structure and continuity to those management efforts, increasing the likelihood of their long-term success. The statewide plan aims to:

- ensure fair and timely case resolution by employing strategies that prevent unnecessary delay in case processing;
- ensure that each case receives individual attention that is proportional to need;
- promote judicial leadership and meaningful court supervision over the progression of all cases in the system; and,
- create more consistency and predictability in procedural matters for court users.

The Advancing Justice Committee has nearly completed a comprehensive statewide caseflow management plan to achieve these desired results. Following these efforts, individual judicial district plans will be developed and are intended to assist with local challenges best addressed at the community level, but that are also consistent with the statewide plan.

### ***Rules Subcommittee Formed to Address Barriers to Fair and Timely Case Processing***

The Advancing Justice Committee formed a Rules Subcommittee to review Idaho's civil, criminal, and juvenile court rules to identify barriers to fair and timely case processing and identify opportunities to reduce unnecessary, systematic delays. The Advancing Justice Committee will coordinate with other Supreme Court Committees with subject matter expertise to draft rule amendments and new rules that facilitate statewide caseflow management and generally support efforts to ensure the effective and efficient administration of justice.

