



# Administrative Office of the Courts

## Mission Statement of the Idaho Courts

*As the Third Branch of  
Government, we provide access  
to justice through the timely, fair,  
and impartial resolution of cases.*

### Values of the Idaho Courts

*Integrity*

*Fairness*

*Independence*

*Respect*

*Excellence*

*Innovation*

### Strategic Goals of the Idaho Courts

*Goal 1: To provide timely, fair,  
and impartial case resolution*

*Goal 2: Ensure access to justice*

*Goal 3: Promote effective,  
innovative services*

*Goal 4: Increase public trust and  
confidence in Idaho Courts*

## We are here to serve you!

The mission of the Idaho Judicial Branch is to provide access to justice through the timely, fair and impartial resolution of cases, thereby promoting the values of integrity, independence, excellence, fairness, respect, and innovation. The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), the Supreme Court/Court of Appeals Clerk of the Court's Office, and the Staff Attorney all play a role in supporting that mission. The following narrative will provide you with information regarding each of the above and the services they provide.

### Administrative Office of the Courts

The Administrative Office of the Courts provides leadership, and administrative and operational support to all Idaho courts, other branches of government and the general public. The AOC is led by the Administrative Director of the Courts. The Administrative Director of the Courts is hired by and reports directly to the Chief Justice and the Idaho Supreme Court. The Administrative Director of the Courts oversees the AOC which is a statutorily created office (I.C. § 1-611) with statutorily defined duties (I.C. § 1-612). The AOC consists of the following divisions:

- ◆ Office of the Administrative Director
- ◆ Governmental Relations
- ◆ Legal Counsel
- ◆ Court Management
- ◆ Community and Family Justice Services
- ◆ Financial and Operations
- ◆ Information Division
- ◆ Human Resources

The **Administrative Director of the Courts** is responsible for assisting the Supreme Court in meeting its constitutional responsibility to administer a unified, integrated court system. The Administrative Director meets regularly with the Supreme Court at Oral Conference and is responsible for many of the day-to-day administrative and support operations of the Judiciary. These responsibilities include intergovernmental relations with the Executive and Legislative branches of state government.

The AOC encourages input from judges and court personnel throughout the state whether through regular direct contact, court committees or the Administrative Conference in order to enhance services provided by the Courts. The AOC, with Supreme Court oversight, sets the leadership agenda of the Court and the Administrative Conference. The Administrative Conference provides an important governance role and is made up of the administrative district judge and trial court administrator from each of Idaho's seven judicial districts, Supreme Court Justices and Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, administrative staff, and officers of the judges' associations.

The AOC and the Administrative Conference take part in long-term strategic planning activities to meet the goals and objectives of the Court and to support the mission statement and values of the Court. As part of the long-term planning process, the AOC and Administrative Conference review current budgets, staffing and resources and determine what resources will be needed to meet the Court's goals and objectives in the future.

Through public outreach, the AOC strives to improve the public's trust and confidence in the Judiciary. AOC staff serves as liaison with other branches of government to promote coordination of services to the public and the success of court operations. The AOC is responsible for communicating with and responding to all inquiries from the media.

## **Governmental Relations**

The Governmental Relations Liaison works closely with the Administrative Director to promote congenial working relationships both within the Idaho Judicial Branch and between the Court and the Legislature and the Court and the Executive Branch. The Governmental Relations Liaison strives to advance justice through the development and implementation of best practices in all areas of judicial administration and court functions. They work closely with the Administrative District Judges and the Administrative Conference to identify and implement best practices. The Governmental Relations Liaison also chairs or serves on Supreme Court committees to achieve Court goals.

The Governmental Relations Liaison works closely with legislative review teams, develops legislative data, and promotes district by district judicial/legislative contacts. The Liaison assists with the drafting and setting of the Judiciary's annual budget and its legislative priorities for the fiscal year. The Governmental Relations Liaison testifies before Legislative Committees and meets with individual legislators to provide information, advocate and advance the Court's interests.

## **Legal Counsel**

Legal Counsel for the Supreme Court and the AOC is primarily responsible for legal consultation and the substantive legal work required by the Judiciary and by committees reporting to the Supreme Court. The Office of Legal Counsel consists of Legal Counsel and Deputy Legal Counsel.

Within the Judicial Branch, the Office of Legal Counsel spends much time dedicated to providing legal support to the Supreme Court's substantive law and rule making committees. Legal Counsel drafts and prepares court rules, orders, bench guides, and judicial guidance memos on both state and federal laws. The Office of Legal Counsel regularly drafts and review contracts for the AOC. Legal Counsel also provides legal research and analysis in regard to problem-solving courts, family law, domestic violence, child protection and juvenile justice and is available to all divisions within the AOC to provide legal advice.

Legal Counsel provides legislative support work during the year. They maintain an inventory of legislation proposals to be considered for submission by the Supreme Court to the Legislature and they generally draft judicial bills sent to the Legislature. During the legislative session, the office assists the Director in advancing legislation, often testifying before legislative committees. The office works to keep all members of the Judiciary abreast of legislation affecting the courts and provides a summary and analysis of bills seeking input from judges.

The Office of Legal Counsel also serves as liaison with the Attorney General's Office on lawsuits involving judges or other members of the Judicial Branch. Although the Attorney General provides representation to employees of the judicial branch, the Legal Counsel's role is to consult with the Attorney General's office on matters relating to these cases. If any judge or employee of the Judicial Branch is served a summons in a lawsuit, they need to immediately contact Legal Counsel.

## **Court Management Division**

The Court Management Division provides leadership and services at all levels of the Judiciary in the following areas: court business practices and operations, education, and planning and research.

*Court Business Practices and Operations:* The Court Management Division works with judges, trial court administrators, elected clerks of the district court, other county elected officials, and district court personnel to strengthen communication, develop policies and procedures, assist with problem-solving, and identify and secure needed resources. The Court Management Division manages the Supreme Court's Language Access Services Program, which includes the training, testing and certification of court interpreters. They work with the Human Resources Division to administer the senior judge program, including preparation of fiscal year allocations and development of policies relating to the orientation, training and performance evaluation of senior judges.

The Court Management Division is also responsible for coordinating, maintaining, and promoting the use of the Idaho Knowledge Management System (IKMS) an electronic collection of legal materials, policy documents, and training resources for all judges and court personnel. In addition, they have other online legal research subscription services available, as well as technical assistance and training in online legal research.

***Education:*** The Court Management Division is responsible for the continuing education of the Appellate Judges, District Judges, Magistrate Judges and Senior Judges. In addition, they provide educational opportunities for all non-judicial court personnel. The Division secures grant funding to provide training opportunities and monitors compliance with training grant requirements and scholarships awarded to the Idaho Judiciary.

On an annual basis, the Division provides New Judge Orientation, the Magistrate Judges' Conference, the District Judges' Conference, the Judicial Conference, the Idaho Institute for Court Management, and the Court Reporter Conference. In addition, plans are underway to develop a leadership institute. The Division also facilitates and coordinates participation in nationally held programming and conferences.

***Planning and Research:*** Planning and Research staff conduct research and analysis related to strategic planning, budgeting, policy development, business operations, case flow management, performance evaluation, and administration of court services.

The Planning and Research Division identifies issues, problems, and trends affecting the Idaho courts and develops recommendations, solutions and options based on their findings. They consult with court management staff regarding process improvement, work measurement and workflow solutions and they assist with the design, implementation and reporting of court performance measures.

The Planning and Research Division prepares the Supreme Court's Annual Report and coordinates, reviews, and edits annual reports to the Executive and Legislative branches. They track and report all court statistics and compile and coordinate court data to respond to requests for information. Planning and Research staff cultivate good working relationships with other agencies and departments for potential research and data sharing partnerships.

#### **Community and Family Justice Services Division**

The Community and Family Justice Services Division promotes court improvement efforts and services throughout communities in Idaho in the following categories:

- ◆ Children and Family Services
- ◆ Domestic Violence Courts
- ◆ Guardianship and Conservatorship
- ◆ Court Assistance
- ◆ Child Protection and Guardian Ad Litem
- ◆ Problem Solving Courts
- ◆ Sentencing Alternatives

Statewide Coordinators assigned to the above programs provide leadership, consultation and support to District Coordinators, Judges, Trial Court Administrators, Clerks, other court personnel, and the public related to the handling of cases within the justice system. The staff identifies and manages grants funds. They also develop policy and procedures related to their area of focus, conduct research regarding best practices, provide training, and work with various committees to develop and implement services for clients. The statewide coordinators maintain rosters of providers and various other resources and information for clients.

The Office of Children and Family Services supervises and provides a wide range of services facilitating the protection of children and the prevention of domestic violence. They also maintain guardianship and conservatorship services for the Idaho Judiciary. The Court Assistance Office provides resources, court forms, document review and legal information to self-represented litigants primarily in the area of family law. Services vary by county and judicial district; however resources generally include public access to computers, assistance with child support calculations, pre-filing divorce workshops, and attorney workshops. A high priority of the Court Assistance Office is to help connect self-represented litigants with a lawyer. Court Assistance Officers cannot provide legal advice, however they can make people aware of the risks and responsibilities of representing themselves in court.

The Child Protection Office works with committees and provides recommendations to the Idaho Supreme Court to strengthen the role of the Judiciary and improve outcomes for children and families in the child welfare system. The mission of the Guardian Ad Litem Service is to optimize the ability of all Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs in Idaho to serve abused and neglected children.

The Alternative Sentencing and Problem-Solving Court's Office supervises and coordinates services involving Drug and Mental Health Courts and Juvenile Justice. The Office also provides trial courts with sentencing alternatives in both felony and misdemeanor cases.

### **Financial and Operations Division**

The Financial and Operations Division consists of the Financial and Operations Division Director, Financial Manager, three Senior Financial Specialists, a Financial Support Technician as well as a Building Supervisor, Lead Custodian and a Custodian. The Financial and Operations Division is responsible for Judicial Branch budget and allocation, collections, fiscal operations, grant management, contracts and revenue monitoring. Division staff perform multiple, complex accounting, auditing and budgeting processes and systems at the statewide level for the Judiciary and at the county level if necessary. They also process all invoices and travel reimbursements for judicial staff.

The Financial and Operations Division prepares and submits the annual budget to Department of Financial Management and Legislative Budget Office. They oversee the daily financial operations; prepare budgets for judicial trainings, conferences and committees, coordination of all internal and external audits, and oversight and completion of financial reviews of the annual accountings for the guardianship/conservatorship fund.

The Financial and Operations Division works with Court Management Division and Human Resources to administer the Senior Judge program, including preparation of fiscal year allocations, tracking all Senior Judge and Plan B days, and tracking of statutory caps of Senior Judges.

The Financial and Operations Division manages Federal grant records, expense and draws, as well as all monthly, quarterly, and annual financial reports required by the grantor. They calculate the annual federal indirect cost rate, provide accounting support for the 44 counties, and complete 13 county audits each year.

Finally, the Finance and Operations Division ensures security and emergency preparedness of the Supreme Court Building, processes all threats statewide, and supervision of the Statewide Judicial Security Officer assigned to the Judicial Branch by the Idaho State Police. They are the liaison between Law Library staff and operations with University of Idaho. They are also responsible for custodial maintenance and print shop operations as well as coordinating and supervising special projects and construction within the building.

### **Information Division**

The Information Division is responsible for the completeness, accuracy and integrity of the information upon which the Judicial Branch, as well as other governmental agencies, the bar and the general public, depends. The Information Division directs the planning and implementation of all information and technology systems, services, projects, and functions to support the operations of the Idaho Judicial Branch. They are involved in long-range planning, development and maintenance of the Judicial Branch's automation infrastructure, integrated case management system, and all other technology applications.

The Information Division ensures all information systems are operational and that the security and integrity of information is maintained. It manages all information services and technology support activities for the Idaho Courts and coordinates those activities with committees, management, vendors and consultants.

In addition, the Information Division leads the Judicial Branch IT development and implementation strategy to provide the best solutions and performance for Idaho State Courts and local governments. They work with court leaders, committees, and AOC divisions to develop standards and business practices to ensure the consistency of data. The Information Division works to maintain effective working relationships and communications with justices, judges, clerk of the appellate courts, county clerks of the court, and all other internal and external stakeholders.

The Division leads and supports the Standing Committee on Court Technology to ensure a strategic focus, assist team members to understand technical issues, and make sound decisions. They oversee the procurement of IT services, as well as the award and management of IT contracts.

The Information Division leads the planning, design, and implementation efforts of a statewide, high bandwidth network to facilitate a reliable infrastructure for the courts' information needs. The network will improve capacity and redundancy across the state, into each county, and provide for flexible expansion to meet the courts' growing network needs. The network will support the centralized architecture of the new case management system and enable expanded use of videoconferencing capabilities for remote training, interpreters, expert witnesses, and arraignments.

Finally, the Information Division provides day-to-day support for technology solutions ranging from servers and databases to document management and printers through the efforts of the Help Desk. The Division continues to expand server capabilities and administers over 150 virtual servers running the Judiciary's databases (ISTARS), file storage, e-mail services, digital recording (FTR), SharePoint, WestKM, and user security.

## **Human Resources Division**

The Human Resources Division is responsible for ensuring the Judiciary's compliance with state and federal employment laws. They provide resources and guidance in matters related to personnel policies and procedures, Family Medical Leave Act, Fair Labor Standards Act, Equal Employment Opportunity, Americans with Disabilities Act, Worker's Compensation Laws, USERRA and other employment laws. They also counsel employees and supervisors regarding performance management.

Human Resources staff supports the Idaho Courts by facilitating the recruitment and selection of all employees. They assist with posting and advertising positions, screening applications, development of interview questions, conducting interviews, reference and background checks, and preparation of all new hire paperwork. Human Resources provides classification and compensation services to the Judicial Branch. They work with employees and managers to develop and review job descriptions, conduct salary surveys, maintain salary structure and recommend employee salaries.

Human Resources also facilitates the enrollment in employee benefits and responds to employee inquiries regarding benefits. They maintain vacation, sick and bereavement leave programs and process timecards and payroll for Judicial Branch employees. They also track salary affidavits for judges, co-administer the Senior Judge program, and assist PERSI with administration of the Judges' Retirement Fund.

When employees choose to exit the organization, Human Resources will serve as a resource for employees regarding their benefits. HR will also conduct an exit interview with the employee to assess strengths and weaknesses of employment with the Judicial Branch for future retention purposes.

## **Supreme Court/Court of Appeals Clerk's Office**

The Idaho Supreme Court appoints the Clerk of the Court who hires and directs the Clerk's Office. The Clerk of the Court reports to the Chief Justice. The Clerk's Office processes all appellate filings for the Idaho Supreme Court and the Idaho Court of Appeals. The Office is also responsible for maintaining appellate court dockets and publishing and distributing appellate court opinions. The distribution of opinions includes publishing Idaho Reports and providing a summary of each published Supreme Court and Court of Appeals opinion to the trial judges in the court e-news.

All orders from the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals are issued by the Clerk's Office. The Office also processes all orders for disqualification pursuant to IRCP 40(d) (5), as well as change of venue, IRCP 40(e). In addition, all orders involving the Idaho State Bar, including licensing and discipline, are distributed by the Clerk's Office. The Clerk of the Court administers the oath of admittance to incoming attorneys.

The Clerk's Office is the repository of records for the Idaho Supreme Court. The Office maintains copies of all rules adopted by the Supreme Court, including civil, criminal, and administrative rules.

## **Office of the Staff Attorney**

The Staff Attorney works directly for the Supreme Court and reports to the Chief Justice. The primary responsibilities of the Staff Attorney involve the Court's motion practice, petitions for review, and case assignments between the two appellate courts. Upon review of all motions, original petitions, and petitions for review, the Staff Attorney develops written summaries and recommendations to the Court.

As each case comes at issue, the Staff Attorney prepares a summary of the nature of the case and its main issues. From that analysis, the Staff Attorney recommends whether the case should be retained by the Supreme Court or assigned to the Court of Appeals. A list of those cases and the issue involved is also sent to the Idaho State Bar for publication monthly in the Advocate.

The Staff Attorney serves as the reporter for several Supreme Court Rules Committees. As the reporter, the Staff Attorney prepares the agenda and minutes for all meetings, circulates committee proposals to the Administrative Conference and the State Bar, presents proposals to the Supreme Court for approval, and oversees the preparation of any resulting orders. From time to time, as the Supreme Court establishes ad hoc committees to handle administrative rule matters within the trial courts, the Staff Attorney is often assigned as reporter for the committee or as a participant on the committee.