

# Michigan Supreme Court 2015 Annual Report



MICHIGAN'S JUDICIARY

## DRIVING CHANGE

TO IMPROVE SERVICE  
TO THE PUBLIC

[courts.mi.gov/drivingchange](http://courts.mi.gov/drivingchange)

# MICHIGAN'S JUDICIARY

## 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY JUSTICE

## 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY SYSTEM

Local funding and a complicated structure make reforming Michigan's judiciary difficult. Despite this challenge, grass-roots reforms have helped drive change and make the gears move more swiftly and smoothly, improving service to the public.

**560** LOCAL  
TRIAL COURT  
**JUDGES**



**243** LOCAL  
**TRIAL**  
**COURTS**



**20** DIFFERENT  
CASE MANAGEMENT  
**SYSTEMS**



**165** LOCAL  
**FUNDING**  
**UNITS**



**150** DIFFERENT  
**COMPUTER**  
**SYSTEMS**



**83** COUNTY  
**CLERKS**  
WHO ARE NOT  
JUDICIAL EMPLOYEES



# A Message From Chief Justice Robert P. Young, Jr.

February 2015

To the People of Michigan:

In courts all across our state, 2015 was a landmark year of reform, innovation, and action to improve service to you. As a result, courts are more accessible and more efficient, while the public is more satisfied with their experiences in our judicial system.

My colleagues and I are proud of judges and court staff who have worked diligently to make Michigan courts a model for the nation. We are measuring performance to improve outcomes; implementing technology to increase access and improve efficiency; and reengineering court operations to be better stewards of public resources.

Our success in 2015 is all the more impressive considering the byzantine structure of Michigan's court system that in the past blocked efforts at reform. The bottom line is that despite a 19<sup>th</sup> century system, we delivered 21<sup>st</sup> century justice.

This report documents some of our achievements over the past year, but words on a page cannot capture the enthusiasm, compassion, and caring of the dedicated professionals who help your courts run smoothly. With their continued assistance, I am confident that 2016 will be another year of reform and progress to improve service.

## Michigan Supreme Court



**Justices of the Michigan Supreme Court:** Front Row, Left to Right: Justice Stephen J. Markman, Chief Justice Robert P. Young, Jr., Justice Brian K. Zahra. Back Row, Left to Right: Justice Richard H. Bernstein, Justice Bridget M. McCormack, Justice David F. Viviano, Justice Joan L. Larsen.

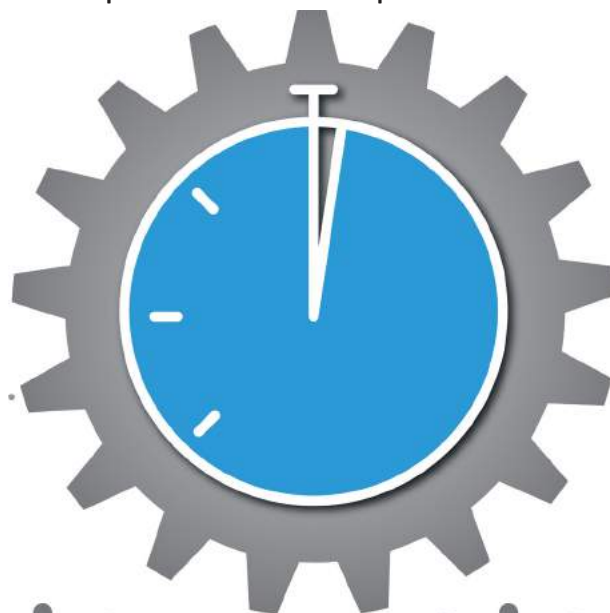


# MEASURING PERFORMANCE TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES

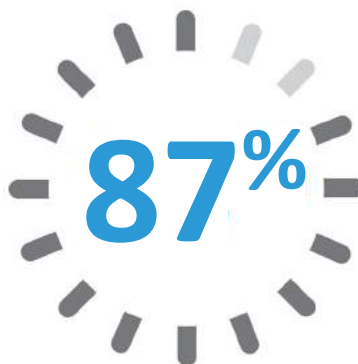
Michigan is leading the nation in measuring performance, analyzing metrics, and using data to drive the adoption of best practices that improve outcomes.

**96%**  
OF TRIAL COURT CASES  
ARE CONCLUDED WITHIN TIME GUIDELINES

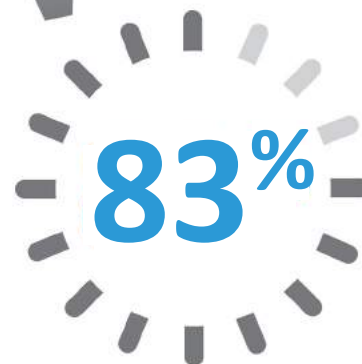
.....  
AND OF **25,000**  
COURT USERS SURVEYED...



SAID THEY WERE TREATED WITH  
**COURTESY AND RESPECT**



WERE ABLE TO GET THEIR  
BUSINESS DONE IN A  
**REASONABLE AMOUNT OF TIME**



THOUGHT THEIR CASE WAS  
**HANDLED FAIRLY**

Measuring performance provides courts with information needed to make management decisions to share what is working and to target areas where service to the public can be improved.

Every court in Michigan has adopted performance measures and has an online dashboard with updated information about timeliness and public satisfaction. For example, trial courts cleared 96 percent of cases within Michigan Supreme Court time guidelines. Over the past three years, nearly 75,000 court users have been surveyed regarding their level of satisfaction with Michigan's trial courts. Clearly, the public is very satisfied. Find more information at [courts.mi.gov/drivingchange](http://courts.mi.gov/drivingchange).





# MEASURING PERFORMANCE TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES

# 164

DRUG, SOBRIETY, VETERANS,  
AND MENTAL HEALTH COURTS REACH

**97%** OF MICHIGAN'S  
POPULATION  
SAVING LIVES  
AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES



Drug, sobriety, mental health, and veterans treatment courts provide strict supervision and treatment focused on making sure that offenders don't get in trouble again. The result? Fewer repeat offenders and safer communities. For example, Michigan's 22 veterans treatment courts help men and women who have served our country access needed services to address their problems and avoid costly incarceration. In addition, the use of ignition interlock devices is cutting in half the number of convicted drunk drivers who reoffend after being on probation.



MICHIGAN LEADS  
THE NATION WITH  
**22 VETERANS**  
TREATMENT COURTS



PARTICIPANTS IN SOBRIETY &  
MENTAL HEALTH COURTS ARE  
**3 TIMES LESS**  
LIKELY TO REOFFEND



PARTICIPANTS IN  
DRUG COURTS ARE  
**2 TIMES LESS**  
LIKELY TO REOFFEND



# REENGINEERING COURTS TO STREAMLINE OPERATIONS & SAVE MONEY

The goal of Michigan's judiciary is to be the best possible steward of tax dollars by reengineering court processes, sharing resources, and balancing workloads to cut costs and improve service.

Virtually all Michigan counties plan to streamline their court systems through the adoption of concurrent jurisdiction plans. These plans allow courts to share resources, balance judicial workloads, and cooperate to increase efficiency and improve service to the public.

**ALL MICHIGAN COURTS**  
**ARE STREAMLINING**  
**& REFORMING OPERATIONS**  
TO IMPROVE SERVICE  
AND USE OF RESOURCES

**REGIONALIZING**  
**TREATMENT COURTS**  
IS **EXPANDING ACCESS**  
TO MORE COMMUNITIES

Authorized by the Legislature in 2013, there are now 17 business courts statewide that have already produced more than 550 opinions. The result? Case processing time has been cut in half and decisions are more consistent.

**17 BUSINESS COURTS**  
IMPROVED **CONSISTENCY**  
AND **TIMELINESS** OF  
CASE OUTCOMES



# REENGINEERING COURTS

## TO STREAMLINE OPERATIONS & SAVE MONEY



**RIGHTSIZING  
THE JUDICIARY**  
IS TRIMMING  
**40 JUDGES & WILL  
SAVE \$175,000,000**

Rightsizing the judiciary to balance workloads will result in the reduction of 40 judicial seats and has already saved taxpayers more than \$10 million. As of the end of 2015, 26 seats have been eliminated while no other state has reduced more than a handful. In 2015, the State Court Administrative Office made recommendations for a net reduction of six more judicial seats. When all the reductions are completely implemented, taxpayers will have saved \$175 to \$200 million.



**SINGLE COURT  
CHIEF JUDGES  
REDUCED BY  
TWO-THIRDS**

In the past, district, probate, and circuit courts all had their own chief judges and related support staff. Now, multicourt chief judges are charged with cutting bureaucracy, eliminating duplication, and improving service to the public. Up from only 9 in 2010, by the end of 2015, the Michigan Supreme Court had appointed 50 multicourt chief judges.



# IMPLEMENTING NEW TECHNOLOGY TO INCREASE & IMPROVE ACCESS

Implementing technology helps Michigan courts increase access and convenience while improving efficiency and service to the public.



FUTURE STATEWIDE  
**CASE E-FILE**  
WILL OFFER IMPROVED  
**CONVENIENCE**

In 2015, the Michigan Legislature and Governor approved plans for Michigan's judiciary to move ahead with statewide e-filing. When this initiative is fully implemented, the public will be able to file court documents anywhere, any-time, without having to stand in line. E-filing will reduce the need to receive and file paper documents, increasing efficiency and streamlining court operations.



**611 VIRTUAL  
COURTROOMS**  
SAVE **\$3,000,000**  
ANNUALLY IN TRANSPORT COSTS

Videoconferencing equipment has now been installed in at least one district, circuit, and probate court in all 83 counties (every courtroom in 78 counties; all counties by the end of 2016). With more than 600 courtrooms now equipped to allow for video arraignments from jail or testimony from prison, jurisdictions at all levels are saving time and resources while reducing risk. The Michigan Department of Corrections saved more than \$12 million over the past five years (\$3 million in 2015 alone) because they were able to conduct more than 15,000 "video" transports.



IMPROVED AVAILABILITY OF  
**CURRENT CASE  
INFORMATION**  
PROTECTS THE PUBLIC

Virtually every court in Michigan now provides data to supplement the more than 44 million records in the Judicial Data Warehouse. In 2015, this database was accessed more than 510,000 times by courts, law enforcement, and state agencies. Access to this information ensures judges and other public safety officials have important information needed to make decisions and protect the public.



**MiCOURT CASE  
MANAGEMENT**  
INITIATIVE WILL  
**INCREASE EFFICIENCY**

Based on input from users, trial courts statewide will be gaining increased functionality, more automated functions, and centralized, secure data storage through the MiCOURT initiative. New case management features will help clerks be more efficient and improve service to the public. At the same time, updates will be implemented in real time when court rules and statutes change.





# IMPLEMENTING NEW TECHNOLOGY TO INCREASE & IMPROVE ACCESS



**MICHIGANLEGALHELP.ORG**  
HAS ASSISTED NEARLY  
**1,400,000 PEOPLE**  
WITH A VARIETY  
OF LEGAL QUESTIONS

Since 2012, nearly 1.4 million visitors have accessed michiganlegalhelp.org, viewing more than 6.5 million pages. The site, supported by the Michigan Supreme Court, helps Michigan residents address legal problems without having to use an attorney.

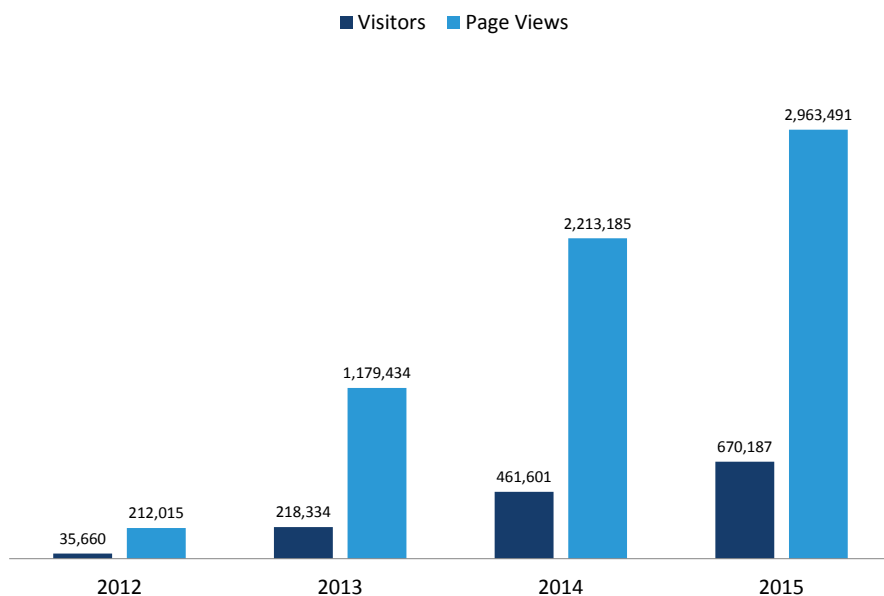
Michigan is one of the top three states nationwide in providing online access to a wide range of legal resources, ranging from divorce to landlord-tenant disputes. In addition, Michigan Legal Help Self-Help Centers are open in Oscoda, Allegan, Oakland, Wayne (2 centers), Macomb, Muskegon, Monroe, Marquette, and Calhoun counties.



**ONLINE TICKET  
PAYMENTS  
AND TICKET REVIEW**  
GIVE THE PUBLIC MORE OPTIONS

Virtually every Michigan citizen has access to online ticket payment. In 2015, contesting a ticket became more user-friendly and convenient as online ticket review became available in Bay County, East Lansing, Lansing, Grand Rapids, Highland Park, Washtenaw County, and Wayne (city). With online ticket review, the public can resolve certain tickets and outstanding fines online, any time, without missing work. You can even use your smart phone. No court date is needed and cases are resolved in about a week instead of a month or more, saving courts, prosecutors, and police valuable time.

## Traffic to [www.michiganlegalhelp.org](http://www.michiganlegalhelp.org) Soars



# OUTREACH & EDUCATION

The Michigan Supreme Court is committed to outreach and education initiatives that raise public awareness about critical court functions. For example, **Adoption Day** is held the Tuesday before Thanksgiving each year and more than 100 children are adopted in public ceremonies statewide. The event highlights the thousands of children in foster care who need permanent, loving homes. **Court Community Connections** takes the Court on the road, bringing oral argument and information about the appellate process to high school students twice a year in the spring and fall. Graduation ceremonies for **problem-solving courts** (drug, sobriety, mental health, and veterans treatment) help graduates tell the story of how these court programs can transform lives and strengthen communities.



Washtenaw County grandmother Donna Davis adopting 13-year old Anya Taylor Fuller alongside adoption worker Desiree Mendaizabal.



Justice Richard Bernstein talks with high school teacher Karla Hitchcock during the Michigan Supreme Court's Court Community Connections outreach event held at Ann Arbor Pioneer High School.



Van Buren County Family Treatment Court Judge Kathleen Brickley congratulates Shanna Grubaugh on overcoming addiction and graduating the program in August 2015.



# OUTREACH & EDUCATION



MSC Chief Justice Robert P. Young, Jr. and Justice Bridget M. McCormack answer questions about the Court from students at Dicken Elementary School in Ann Arbor during an April 2015 visit.



High school students participating in the 2015 Careers in the Law day pose in the Hall of Justice near the portrait of former Justice Mary S. Coleman, the first female to serve on the Michigan Supreme Court. Events like this are held year round at the Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center.



At the 2015 Judicial Conference, more than 500 Michigan judges gathered in Grand Rapids to learn about improving service. In this photo, Justice Joan Larsen (right) and Justice David Viviano (center) talk with Judge Robert Columbo, Chief Judge of the Wayne Circuit Court.





# ONLINE INFORMATION & SOCIAL MEDIA

**ONE COURT OF JUSTICE WEBSITE**  
[courts.mi.gov](http://courts.mi.gov)

**STATE COURT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE  
STAFF DIRECTORY**  
[courts.mi.gov/scaostaff](http://courts.mi.gov/scaostaff)

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**You Tube**  
[youtube.com/michigancourts](https://youtube.com/michigancourts)

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