



The Iowa Judicial Branch...Who We Are

January 13, 2016

The Iowa Judicial Branch has a vital constitutional mission: to administer justice according to law equally to all people.

Iowa's Community-Based Court System

Iowa courts are accessible to all, including your friends and neighbors, to provide fair and impartial solutions to everyday problems. The district court in your county courthouse is where parties bring their disputes, prosecutors file criminal charges, trials take place, attorneys offer evidence, witnesses testify, juries deliberate, and judges enter judgments. Iowa's district courts handle nearly one million cases a year.

Magistrates and Judges

Magistrates and judges serve the public by using their legal expertise and knowledge to apply laws impartially.

- **Magistrates** preside over simple misdemeanors, including traffic violations, county and municipal infractions, and small claims, and they issue search warrants, conduct preliminary hearings, and hear certain involuntary hospitalization matters.
- **Associate juvenile judges** hear juvenile court matters including juvenile delinquency, child in need of assistance, termination of parental rights, and adoptions.
- **District associate judges** have the jurisdiction of magistrates plus authority to hear serious and aggravated misdemeanor cases, certain civil suits, and juvenile cases when the judge is sitting as a juvenile judge.
- **District judges** have the authority to hear any type of case within the district court including felony criminal cases, dissolutions of marriage, personal injury cases, and business disputes.

Court Staff

To accomplish the judicial branch mission, judges, magistrates, and court employees work to provide a broad range of court-related services.

- **Clerks of court** manage and maintain all court records, collect and process fines, fees, and restitution, and transmit court information.
- **Juvenile court officers** work directly with troubled youths and their families to help at risk Iowa youth become good and productive citizens.
- **Court administrators** manage the business side of the courts, such as human resources, accounting, purchasing, case scheduling, and information technology.
- **Court reporters** keep the official record of hearings and court proceedings.
- **Information technology professionals** maintain the Iowa Courts Information System and the Electronic Document Management System for case management and electronic filing.
- **Law clerks and staff attorneys** assist judges and justices in research, case work, and screening cases.
- **Judicial specialists** provide customer assistance to a wide range of court users and oversee the activities of jurors, facilitate courtroom proceedings, and help judges with administrative responsibilities.
- **Other employees** work side-by-side with their colleagues every day to fulfill and serve the needs of all Iowans.