Office of the Administrative Director of the Courts
Ke‘ena o ke Po‘o Lawelawe Hana o nā ‘Aha Ho‘okolokolo
THE JUDICIARY • STATE OF HAWAI‘I | KA ‘OIHANA HO‘OKOLOKOLO • MOKU‘ĀINA ‘O HAWAI‘I
ALI‘IŌLANI HALE • 417 SOUTH KING STREET, ROOM 206A • HONOLULU, HAWAI‘I 96813 • (808) 539-4900

JUDICIARY COMM. NO. 32

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HOPE PO‘O LAWELAWE HANA O NĀ ‘AHA HO‘OKOLOKOLO

June 26, 2026

Via electronic submission

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

The Honorable Nadine K. Nakamura
Speaker of the House of Representatives
State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear President Kouchi and Speaker Nakamura:

Pursuant to Section 601-2, Hawai‘i Revised Statutes (HRS), the Judiciary is transmitting a copy of the *Hawai‘i State Judiciary Annual Report*.

In accordance with Section 93-16, Hawai‘i Revised Statutes, we are also transmitting a copy of this report to the Legislative Reference Bureau Library.

The public may view an electronic copy of this report on the Judiciary’s website at the following link: https://www.courts.state.hi.us/news_and_reports/reports/reports. We acknowledge the timing of this transmittal; the report had previously been posted on the Judiciary website.

Should you have any questions regarding this report, please feel free to contact Karen Takahashi of the Judiciary’s Legislative Affairs and Special Projects Division at (808) 539-4896, or via e-mail at Karen.T.Takahashi@courts.hawaii.gov.

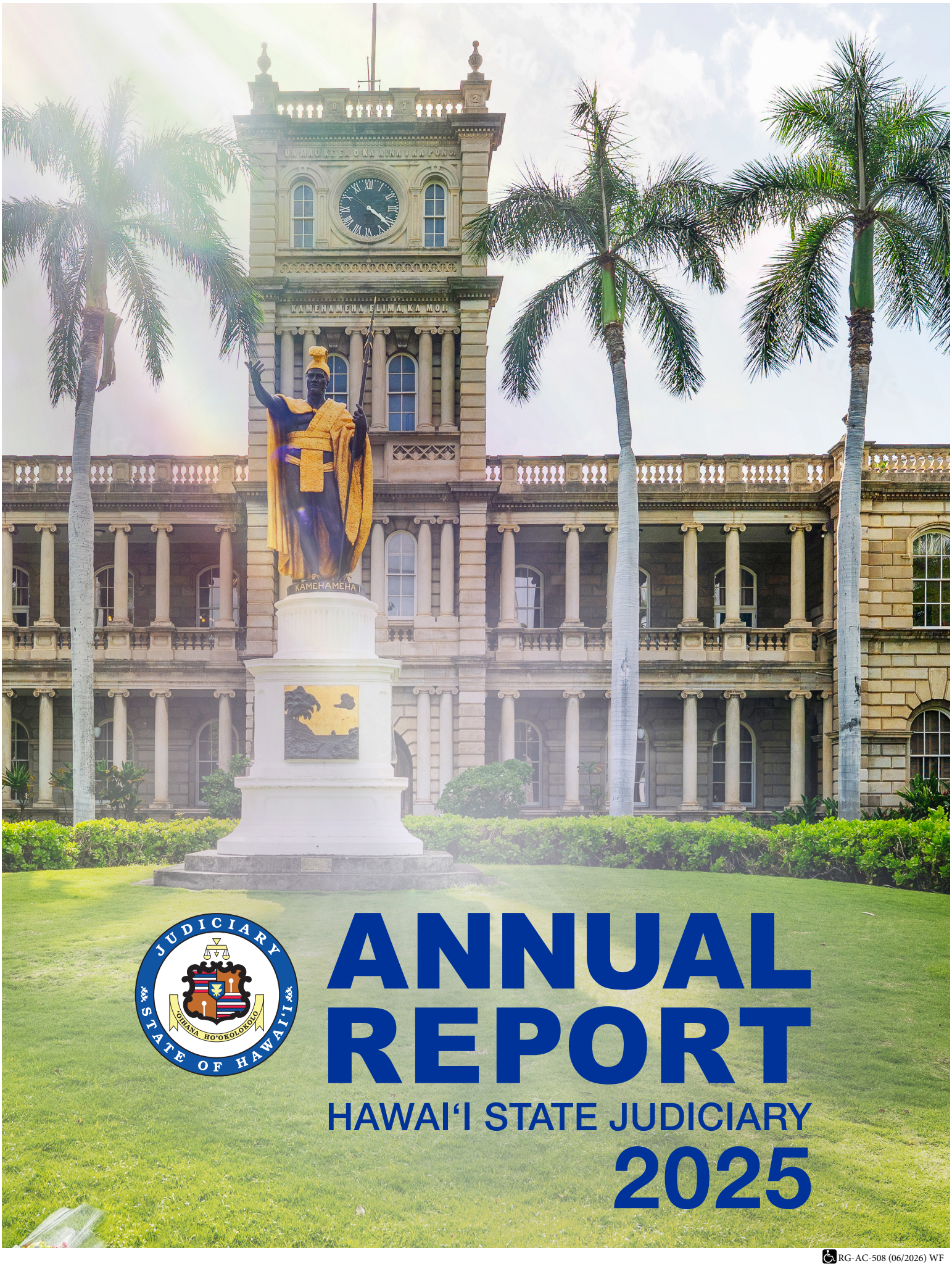
Sincerely,

Brandon M Kimura

Brandon M. Kimura
Administrative Director of the Courts

Attachment

c: Legislative Reference Bureau Library



JUDICIARY
STATE OF HAWAIʻI
ʻOHANA HOʻOKOLOKOLO

ANNUAL REPORT

HAWAIʻI STATE JUDICIARY

2025

RG-AC-508 (06/2026) WF

Cover: Aliʻiōlani Hale in Honolulu, home of the Hawaiʻi Supreme Court.

Hawai‘i State Judiciary Annual Report 2025

This report describes the ongoing efforts of the Hawai‘i State Judiciary to administer justice for the people of Hawai‘i.

The mission of the Judiciary, as an independent branch of government, is to administer justice in an impartial, efficient, and accessible manner in accordance with the law.

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Message from the Chief Justice



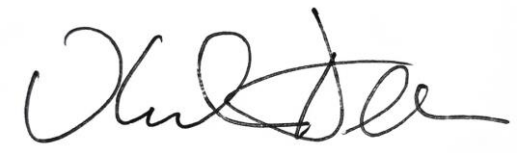
Aloha,

Under the leadership of Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald and Acting Chief Justice Sabrina S. McKenna, 2025 was another very productive year for the Hawai‘i State Judiciary. Guided by the Aloha Spirit and grounded in respect for the dignity of every individual, our mission remains to administer justice in an impartial, efficient, and accessible manner. This Annual Report highlights the accomplishments and concrete steps judges and court staff across the state took to advance that mission, as well as our ongoing efforts to remove barriers and make our courts more accessible to all we serve.

The Judiciary remains firmly committed to upholding the rule of law, judicial independence, and fulfilling the promise of equal justice for all, with fairness, compassion, and integrity. We are deeply grateful to Governor Josh Green and state lawmakers for their strong and continued support as we carry out this important work. Our collaborative efforts in 2025 exemplify how, together with our partners in the legislative and executive branches, the legal community, and others, we can better serve the people of Hawai‘i.

As we look ahead, I am deeply committed to ensuring the Judiciary continues to evolve and innovate to meet the changing needs of our community. I look forward to accomplishing this alongside and together with the more than 1,700 dedicated and hard working Judiciary employees across the state.

Mahalo,



Chief Justice Vladimir P. Devens
Hawai‘i Supreme Court

Leadership Transition and Continuing Commitment to Service

Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald retired from the Hawai'i Supreme Court on September 30, 2025, concluding a distinguished judicial career defined by integrity, innovation, and a steadfast commitment to access to justice for all. His retirement came in accordance with the State Constitution's mandatory retirement age of 70 for judges and justices.



Acting Chief Justice Sabrina S. McKenna and Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald (ret.)

Appointed as Chief Justice in September 2010, Chief Justice Recktenwald guided the Hawai'i State Judiciary through 15 years of growth and transformation. Under his leadership, the courts expanded their reach and accessibility through modernization, innovation, and community-focused programs designed to better serve the people of Hawai'i. His tenure was marked by a clear vision: to make the Judiciary more open, responsive, and equitable while ensuring that every individual, regardless of circumstance, could meaningfully participate in the justice system.

Throughout his tenure, Chief Justice Recktenwald was deeply committed to strengthening Hawai'i's network of access-to-justice initiatives. He supported the establishment of self-help centers and courthouse access to volunteer legal services across the islands, providing free assistance to thousands of self-represented litigants. He also played a key role in the Judiciary's efforts to expand language access, modernize case management systems, and improve

courthouse facilities statewide while maintaining a commitment to fiscal responsibility and transparency.

The Judiciary continued to strengthen programs serving Hawai‘i residents in 2025. For example, Community Outreach Court was made permanent, bringing court services into neighborhoods to support individuals facing homelessness and related challenges. The Rural Paternity Advocate Pilot Project in Hawai‘i County was also extended for three additional years to provide trained paralegal advocates to assist individuals in family court cases involving paternity, custody, and visitation.

As Chief Justice Recktenwald stepped down, he reflected on his years of service and the people with whom he worked throughout his judicial career. “It has been the honor of a lifetime to serve the people of Hawai‘i. I have been humbled to work alongside the more than 1,700 justices, judges, and employees for the past 18 years that I have been at the Judiciary,” he said.



(Left to right) Justice Sabrina S. McKenna and Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald during an oral argument held at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo Performing Arts Center as part of the Courts in the Community program on April 17, 2025.

Following Chief Justice Recktenwald’s retirement, Associate Justice Sabrina S. McKenna assumed the role of Acting Chief Justice, providing steady leadership and continuity for the Judiciary through the remainder of 2025. Acting Chief Justice McKenna brought more than three decades of judicial experience to the role. A graduate of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa and the William S. Richardson School of Law, she began her judicial career in 1993 and served as a judge in District Court, Circuit Court, and as Senior Family Court Judge before joining the Hawai‘i Supreme Court in 2011.

In 2025, Acting Chief Justice McKenna earned an LL.M. in Judicial Studies from Duke University School of Law, where she also delivered the convocation address. Her remarks emphasized the importance of judicial independence and the enduring role of the rule of law in a democratic society.

Throughout the leadership transition, the Judiciary remained focused on innovation, access to justice, community partnership, and service to the people of Hawai‘i. A commitment to fairness, integrity, and the rule of law continued to guide the work of the Hawai‘i State Judiciary.

> "It has been the honor of a lifetime to serve the people of Hawai‘i. I have been humbled to work alongside the more than 1,700 justices, judges, and employees for the past 18 years that I have been at the Judiciary."
>
> **– Mark E. Recktenwald**
>
> Retired Chief Justice



The clock tower at Ali‘iōlani Hale, the Supreme Court building, in downtown Honolulu.

Advancing Access to Justice

In March 2025, the Justices of the Hawai'i Supreme Court issued a statement reaffirming the Judiciary's steadfast commitment to equal justice for all and the rule of law. The statement highlights the court's efforts to ensure fairness, accessibility, and impartiality in Hawai'i's courtrooms, and underscores the enduring importance of eliminating bias, removing barriers to justice, and fostering a judiciary that reflects and serves Hawai'i's diverse population.

Supreme Court – THE JUDICIARY • STATE OF HAWAI'I
417 South King Street • Ali'iōlani Hale • Honolulu, Hawai'i • 96813 • Phone (808) 539-4700 • Fax (808) 539-4703

Mark E. Recktenwald
CHIEF JUSTICE

Sabrina S. McKenna
Todd W. Eddins
Lisa M. Ginoza
Vladimir P. Devens
ASSOCIATE JUSTICES

Statement by the Hawai'i Supreme Court
Affirming Principles of Equal Justice for All

At the Judiciary, we are responsible for ensuring the promise of equal justice for all and upholding the rule of law for the people of Hawai'i. We take that responsibility with the utmost seriousness as we fulfill our mission to administer justice in an impartial, efficient, and accessible manner in accordance with the law.

We strive to ensure that all people receive fair and respectful consideration in our courtrooms. We are guided in this work by the Aloha Spirit law, Hawai'i Revised Statutes § 5-7.5, which establishes that "aloha means mutual regard and affection . . . in which each person is important to every other person." These words define the shared vision for our state that we adopted as a people.

In alignment with this vision, the Judiciary remains resolute in our commitment to increasing access to justice for all. To ensure fairness and provide a level playing field, we have removed barriers to access for individuals who cannot afford a lawyer, who have limited English proficiency, or who have a disability. We have also worked to eliminate bias within our own organization, and collaborated with community partners to address inequities and provide for the fair administration of justice.

Our goal is to maintain a judiciary that has the most qualified judges and staff, who reflect the community they serve. This fosters an environment where persons from all backgrounds know their voices will be heard and their disputes will be resolved fairly.

We reject any suggestion that programs that seek to welcome all people into our courtrooms, and support all members of our workforce, are in any way inconsistent with our national and Hawai'i state civil rights laws. Rather, they protect against bias, allow each individual to be judged on their merits, strengthen our community, and enable us to live up to the promise of equal justice for all.

These principles of justice and servant leadership run deep in Hawai'i. In 1797, King Kamehameha I decreed the Law of the Splintered Paddle: Ke Kānāwai Māmalahoe, that people great and humble should be respected alike, and that all people, including the elderly, women and children, could lie by the pathways in safety. Equality before the law has long been a guiding principle in Hawai'i. It seeks to elevate all people by recognizing their common humanity and eliminating the barriers that keep them from fully participating in society. It is a message that remains as important today as it was in 1797, and will always continue to guide the work we do at the Hawai'i State Judiciary.

DATED: Honolulu, Hawai'i, March 5, 2025.

/s/ Mark E. Recktenwald

/s/ Sabrina S. McKenna

/s/ Todd W. Eddins

/s/ Lisa M. Ginoza

/s/ Vladimir P. Devens

Free Legal Consultations Top 41,500

Navigating the court system can be challenging for those without legal representation. The Hawai'i State Judiciary remains dedicated to ensuring that every person has meaningful access to justice. Through programs and partnerships across the state, we continue to make the courts more understandable, approachable, and responsive to the needs of our communities.

Hawai'i's courthouse Self-Help Centers and Access to Justice Rooms achieved a significant milestone in 2025—more than 41,500 free legal consultations have now been provided to individuals representing themselves in civil legal matters.

Launched as a partnership between the Hawai'i State Judiciary, the Hawai'i State Bar Association, the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i, and the Hawai'i Access to Justice Commission, the initiative began on Kaua'i in 2011 and expanded quickly, with centers opening in Hilo and Wailuku within two years and in Kona in 2013. What started as a single pilot project has evolved into a statewide network of support that now stands as a cornerstone of Hawai'i's Access to Justice movement, strengthening public confidence in the courts and advancing the Judiciary's commitment to ensuring meaningful access to justice for all.

Free Legal Consultations
Self-Help Centers and Access to Justice Rooms
October 2011 through December 2025

Honolulu District Court — 11,077
Kapolei Family Court — 3,315
Wailuku Courthouse — 8,023
Hilo Courthouse — 9,760
Kona Courthouse — 4,526
Lihue Courthouse — 4,879
Total Consultations — 41,580

Each year, thousands of Hawai'i residents appear in court without legal representation. For many, the process can be confusing and intimidating, with real-life consequences affecting families, homes, and livelihoods. To address these challenges, the Self-Help Centers and Access to Justice Rooms rely on the dedication of hundreds of volunteer attorneys from private practice, government agencies, and bar associations, who provide thousands of hours of service each year.

The Self-Help Centers offer free legal information to help self-represented litigants understand court processes, while the Access to Justice Rooms provide limited legal advice from volunteer attorneys for those needing more direct guidance. Together, these resources help participants understand their rights, navigate court procedures, and make more informed decisions about their cases.

The assistance sites are staffed by volunteer attorneys and Legal Aid staff who collectively contribute thousands of hours each year. Their work has resulted in an estimated 20,000 pro bono hours, providing millions of dollars' worth of legal services at almost no cost to the state. Through their dedication, individuals who may otherwise have been unable to afford legal assistance gain valuable guidance on matters such as landlord–tenant disputes, small claims, debt collection, restraining orders, divorce, custody, and other civil matters, as well as assistance with court forms, document review, and understanding court procedures.

Self-Help Center in Wailuku Re-opens for In-Person Service

After several years of suspended in-person services due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Maui Self-Help Center resumed in-person consultations at Hoapili Hale, the courthouse in Wailuku, in August 2025, expanding the ways Maui County residents can receive civil legal assistance. While phone-based support remains available, the return to face-to-face interactions restores an important resource for self-represented litigants who benefit from personal guidance as they navigate District and Family Court matters.

The Maui Self-Help Center is supported by a longstanding partnership among the Hawai‘i State Judiciary, the Legal Aid Society of Hawai‘i, the Hawai‘i State Bar Association, the Maui County Bar Association, and the Hawai‘i Access to Justice Commission.

K. U‘ilani Goods, Managing Attorney for the Legal Aid Society of Hawai‘i’s Maui Branch, emphasized the significance of restoring in-person services: “The reopening is a reflection of the collaboration of partners dedicated to providing access to justice for all. Face-to-face guidance and legal information will make a meaningful difference for Maui County residents.”

Honolulu Access to Justice Room Reopens to In-Person Service

The Judiciary and its partners provide legal advice at Access to Justice Rooms (AJR) at Kauikeaouli Hale (Honolulu District Courthouse) and the Ronald T.Y. Moon Kapolei Courthouse (Family Court) in Kapolei.

> *“On behalf of the Hawai‘i State Judiciary, I extend my deepest appreciation to the Hawai‘i State Bar Association, the Legal Aid Society of Hawai‘i, the Hawai‘i Access to Justice Commission, and the many attorneys and law firms who make this initiative possible,” said* ***Acting Chief Justice Sabrina S. McKenna****. “Their commitment reflects the very best of our profession—service, integrity, and the belief that justice should be accessible to everyone.”*

In April 2025, the Judiciary celebrated the reopening of the Honolulu AJR for in-person services, marking the first time since 2020 that the public could again meet face-to-face with volunteer attorneys in downtown Honolulu. The AJR suspended in-person consultations during the COVID-19 pandemic but continued to offer remote assistance. Restoring in-person access—while maintaining remote options—signals an important move forward in expanding access through a hybrid model of in-person and remote services.

“The reopening of in-person services at the Honolulu Access to Justice Room marks a meaningful step forward in our commitment to ensuring that access to justice remains a reality

for everyone in our community, regardless of their means," said Tiane Inciong, Pro Bono Coordinator for the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i.



From left: Tiane Inciong, Legal Aid Pro Bono Coordinator; Michelle Acosta, Deputy Chief Court Administrator; Hollie Rader, AmeriCorps Advocate; Skyler Chun, AmeriCorps Advocate; Lloyd Lim, Volunteer Attorney, and District Court Deputy Chief Judge Melanie May celebrated the reopening of the Honolulu AJR in April 2025.

Volunteerism remains the foundation of the program's success. Hundreds of attorneys from private practice, government agencies, and bar associations have given their time freely at Self-Help Centers and Access to Justice Rooms.

"On behalf of the Hawai'i State Judiciary, I extend my deepest appreciation to the Hawai'i State Bar Association, the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i, the Hawai'i Access to Justice Commission, and the many attorneys and law firms who make this initiative possible," said Acting Chief Justice Sabrina S. McKenna. "Their commitment reflects the very best of our profession—service, integrity, and the belief that justice should be accessible to everyone."

Self-Help Forms

The Judiciary's partnership with Legal Aid has expanded beyond in-person centers. Since 2013, they have collaborated to develop Hawai'i Self-Help Interactive Forms, a web-based resource that uses plain-language questions to help self-represented litigants complete common civil legal forms. The forms are available at courthouse workstations and through LawHelp.org/HI, extending access to individuals across the islands.

As the number of free legal consultations continues to grow, so too does the network of volunteers who make these services possible. Each hour of their time provides practical help—and hope—to someone navigating the court system alone. Their ongoing service demonstrates the power of collaboration and the enduring commitment of Hawai'i's legal community to advance equal justice for all.

Interested in Volunteering?

Attorneys interested in volunteering at courthouse Self-Help Centers or Access to Justice Rooms—or exploring other pro bono opportunities—can learn more by visiting the Hawai'i Access to Justice Commission's website at:
www.hawaiijustice.org/hawaii-access-to-justice-commission/how-to-help

Honoring Volunteer Attorneys at the 2025 Pro Bono Celebration

The spirit of service shone brightly at the Hawai‘i Access to Justice Commission’s 2025 Pro Bono Celebration, held October 23 in the Hawai‘i Supreme Court courtroom. The annual event honors attorneys and law firms who generously contribute their time and expertise to provide free legal assistance to individuals and organizations in need.



William Hunt (center), a partner at Dentons US LLP, was among the attorneys recognized at the 2025 Pro Bono Celebration for providing free legal services. Pictured with Hunt are retired Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald (left) and Hawaii Justice Foundation Executive Director Robert LeClair.

“Pro bono is an area of emphasis for the Commission. We encourage pro bono service in both the private and public sectors. Thank you to those who have responded to the call. This celebration is one way of emphasizing the importance of your contributions and encouraging others to do the same,” said Commission Chair Judge Joseph Cardoza (ret.), who served as master of ceremonies.

Among this year’s honorees were attorneys recognized for donating their time and expertise to assist Hawai‘i’s civil legal service providers, including: Robert Miyashita and Jeremy O’Steen of Miyashita & O’Steen LLLC, who supported the American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai‘i; William Hunt, who assisted the Hawai‘i Justice Foundation; Lloyd Lim, who served the Legal Aid Society of Hawai‘i; Rhonda Griswold, who aided the Hawai‘i State Bar Association; Marianita Lopez, who partnered with Hawai‘i Friends of Restorative Justice; Javier Garcia, who supported the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation; Hope Bennett, who assisted The Mediation Center of the Pacific; and Shannon Hackett, who volunteered with Volunteer Legal Services of Hawai‘i.

Also honored were volunteer attorneys who staffed Access to Justice Rooms in Honolulu and Kapolei, family law attorneys who served as Settlement Masters at O‘ahu Family Court, and volunteers who supported appellate mediation and pro bono appellate projects. Certificates of appreciation were presented to law firms, individual attorneys, and retired judges for their continued service.

The celebration, held annually during National Pro Bono Week, was sponsored by the Hawai‘i Access to Justice Commission, the Hawaii Justice Foundation, and the Hawaii State Bar Foundation, with support from the Hawaii State Bar Association.

Rural Paternity Advocate Pilot Project: Innovation, Impact, and New National Recognition

The Rural Paternity Advocate Pilot Project continues to demonstrate how innovative approaches can expand access to justice in rural communities. Its early promise—and the positive outcomes seen in its first two years—led the Hawai‘i Supreme Court to extend the project for an additional three years through June 2028. The Court’s decision reflects growing confidence in a model that brings trained, supervised paralegal advocates into the courtroom to assist individuals who cannot afford an attorney in sensitive family law matters.



District Family Court Judge Darien Ching Nagata and LASH Senior Attorney Jaycee Uchida highlighted the Rural Paternity Advocate Pilot Project at the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges’ 88th Annual Conference in Chicago.

Established by the Hawai‘i Supreme Court in May 2023, the pilot project authorizes specially trained and supervised paralegal advocates employed by the Legal Aid Society of Hawai‘i (LASH) to provide full representation for eligible individuals in paternity, custody, and visitation matters in the Third Circuit (Hawai‘i County). For many Hawai‘i Island residents, where fewer attorneys are available and legal needs are high, the project has become a critical resource—one that is now drawing national interest and renewed support from Hawai‘i’s highest court.

The Supreme Court’s order to extend the pilot project followed LASH’s detailed evaluation of the program, which showed strong early outcomes and significant promise for long-term impact. The extension ensures the Judiciary and LASH can continue gathering data, refining procedures, and assessing the model’s potential for permanent implementation.

The program’s early success has also drawn interest beyond Hawai‘i. In June 2025, District Family Court Judge Darien Ching Nagata—who hears all pilot project cases—and LASH Senior Attorney Jaycee Uchida presented the project at the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges’ (NCJFCJ) 88th Annual Conference in Chicago. Their session, *Non-Lawyer*

Initiative to Facilitate Access to Justice in Hawai‘i, introduced judges, court leaders, and legal professionals from across the country to Hawai‘i’s approach and the results achieved to date.

“As our program is one of the first of its kind in the nation, I hope that its success will have other rural courts in our state and our nation consider this type of program as a viable means to provide access to justice in their rural communities,” Judge Nagata said.

The pilot project is designed to address a longstanding need for families on Hawai‘i Island. A disproportionate number of the state’s paternity cases are filed in the Third Circuit, and the vast majority involve self-represented litigants who must navigate complex court processes on their own. Meanwhile, nonprofit legal service providers have limited capacity, and the State Child Support Enforcement Agency—which establishes paternity and child support—does not handle custody or visitation matters. The result: many parents come to court with significant unanswered questions and no legal assistance.

The Rural Paternity Advocate Pilot Project directly addresses that gap. Under the program, qualified paralegals undergo rigorous training before serving as advocates. The curriculum includes classroom instruction on paternity law and civil procedure, case strategy, mediation, courtroom advocacy, ethics, and client interviewing. Training also requires courtroom observation and up to 50 hours of shadowing an attorney. Once certified, advocates meet with clients; gather facts; prepare, file, and serve court documents; participate in negotiation, mediation, and settlement efforts; and—with judicial approval—appear in court to represent their clients. Throughout the process, advocates remain under the close supervision of LASH attorneys who are licensed in Hawai‘i.

LASH began accepting clients in December 2023, and interest has steadily increased. Case outcomes demonstrate the program’s effectiveness: matters that might otherwise have proceeded to court are now often resolved through mediation or private negotiation, and many cases reach resolution more quickly than similar matters without representation. This increased efficiency helps the court serve more families.

With the Supreme Court’s recent extension and growing national interest, the Rural Paternity Advocate Pilot Project stands as a promising model for serving rural communities. As the Judiciary and LASH continue to evaluate the program’s effectiveness through 2028, its early results suggest a powerful new pathway for improving access to justice across Hawai‘i.

Expungement and Bench Warrant Recall Clinics Expand Access to Justice on O‘ahu

In 2025, the Judiciary and its partners continued to reduce legal barriers that prevent individuals from securing employment, housing, education, and financial stability by hosting two Expungement and Bench Warrant Recall Clinics. This year, the events took place in Waimānalo and Kapālama and provided free, same-day legal services for **270** O‘ahu residents.



Judiciary personnel from the First Circuit helped staff the clinic in Waimānalo in January 2025.

The first clinic, held on January 11 at Waimānalo Elementary School, brought together volunteer attorneys from the private bar, the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation, ACLU Hawai‘i, and the Hawai‘i Innocence Project, along with staff from the Office of the Public Defender. Fifty-eight Windward residents received assistance, including **41 expungement applications** and **17 bench warrant recalls**. Former Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald, who visited the event, emphasized the impact of these services: “Those who are eligible to have their bench warrants recalled and arrest records expunged may find relief from the long-term impact these records can have, enabling them to move forward in their lives.”

The second clinic, held on September 20 at the Office of the Public Defender in Kapālama, was the largest to date. More than **200** people attended. Volunteer attorneys processed **143 expungement applications**, while **68 individuals** obtained on-site District Court bench warrant recall orders and new court dates. Over 50 volunteers—including licensed attorneys, law students, Judiciary staff, and community organizations—helped guide participants through intake, processing, and re-engagement with the court system.



The Kapālama clinic was possible thanks to volunteers from the Office of the Public Defender, the Hawai‘i State Judiciary, Volunteer Legal Services Hawai‘i, ACLU of Hawai‘i, the William S. Richardson School of Law, the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation, Project e4, and the Hawai‘i Workers Center.

These clinics demonstrate the Judiciary's ongoing commitment to expanding access to justice and meeting people where they are. By continuing to partner with legal service providers, community groups, and local volunteers, the Judiciary helps hundreds of residents navigate past legal issues and take meaningful steps toward greater stability and opportunity.

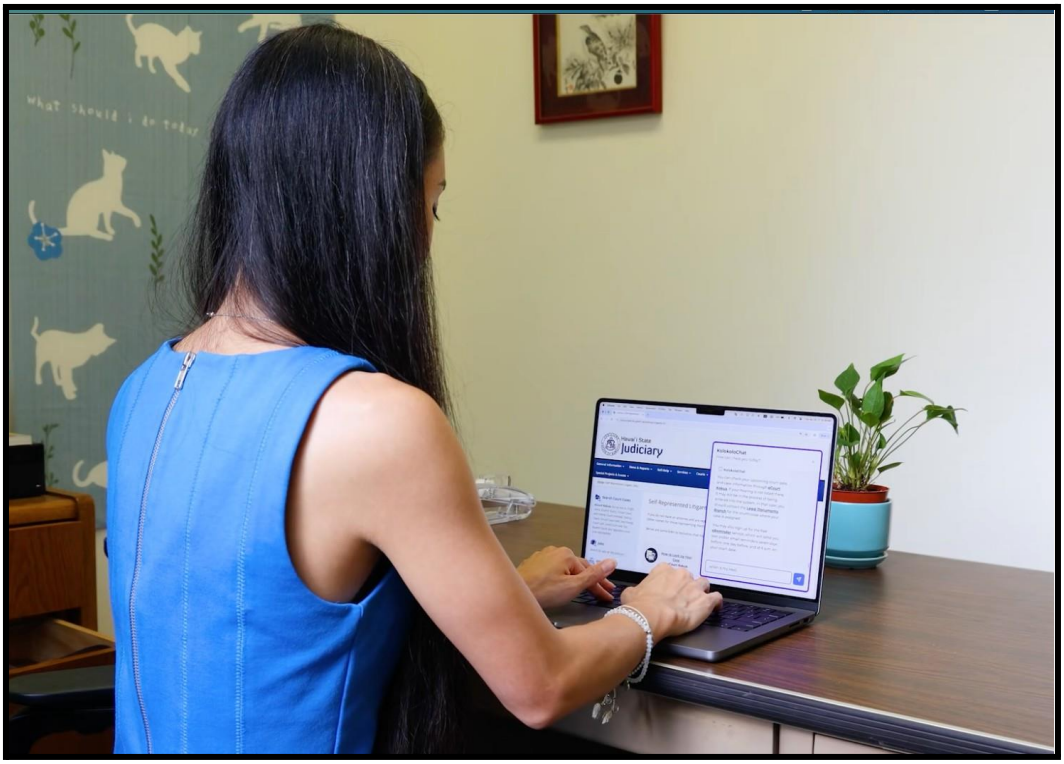


Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald (center) visited the Kapālama clinic to thank the attorneys, Judiciary employees, law students, and community partners who volunteered to staff the clinic in September.

Judiciary Launches AI-Powered KolokoloChat for Law Day 2025

The Hawai‘i State Judiciary commemorated Law Day on May 1, 2025, by launching its artificial intelligence-powered chatbot, KolokoloChat, providing the public with a new way to find court information and resources on its website. This innovative tool streamlines interactions with the court and improves access to justice for all Hawai‘i residents.

“In the Hawaiian language, Kolokolo is a verb meaning to track, investigate, seek evidence, and the word for “court” or “judiciary” is ho‘okolokolo, which is derived from the root word “kolokolo,” said Innovations Officer Angela Min. “We found it fitting to name the Judiciary’s first chatbot, KolokoloChat.”



KolokoloChat provides easy access to information about Hawai‘i courts 24 hours a day.

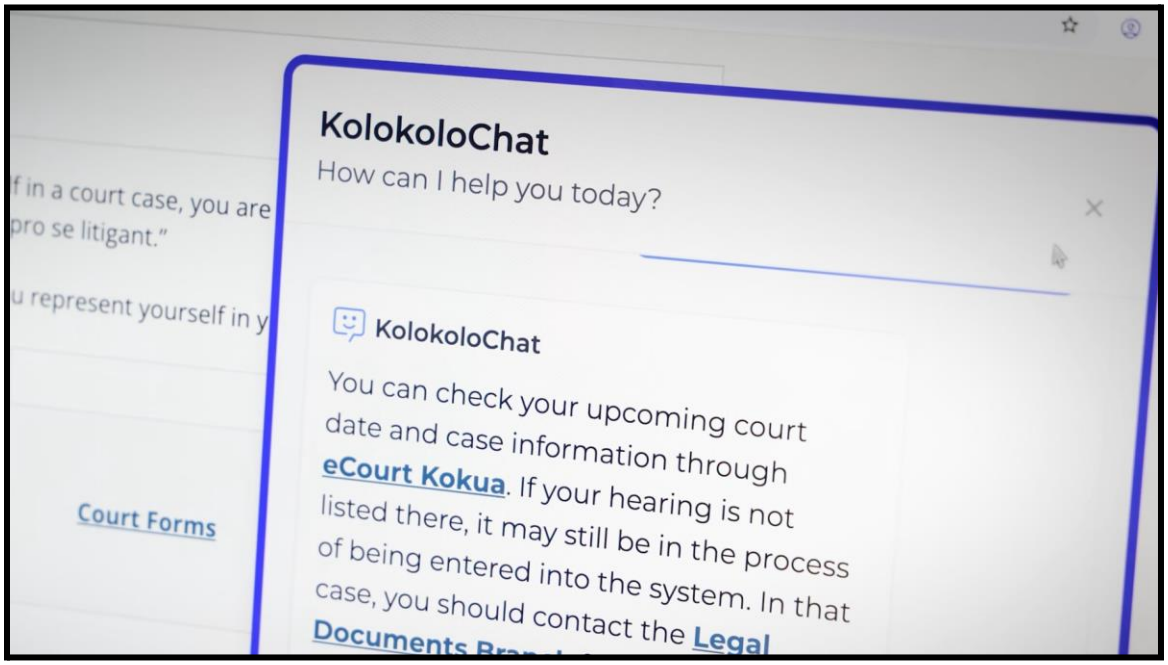
KolokoloChat has been rigorously trained on a vast database of court rules, procedures, and frequently asked questions. It is designed to understand natural language, allowing users to interact in a conversational manner. KolokoloChat features include:

- 24/7 availability
- Instant answers to frequently asked questions
- Access to online forms
- Resources for court patrons including self-represented litigants

“We are committed to modernizing our services and making the judicial system more responsive to the needs of all court users,” said former Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald. “KolokoloChat represents a significant step forward in our ongoing efforts to leverage advancements in

technology that enhance service to our community. By providing quick and easy access to vital information, we are empowering individuals to navigate the legal system with greater ease and confidence."

"We are incredibly grateful to our project partners, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and Mahdi Belcaid, a faculty member in the Information and Computer Sciences Department, for the vital role they played in the chatbot's development," added Min. "This collaboration highlights the value of interagency partnerships in improving state government services. With their expertise in artificial intelligence and software engineering, the Judiciary will continuously enhance the chatbot to improve performance and user experience."



KolokoloChat is available on computers and mobile devices.

Since its initial launch and through November 2025, more than 10,000 questions have been answered through KolokoloChat, with approximately 37% of those questions being answered outside of business hours. The public now can have many of their questions answered without having to wait through the weekend or when the courthouse reopens in the morning. The Judiciary looks forward to our continued relationship with the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and building enhancements to KolokoloChat to make navigating the court process easier. Users will find the KolokoloChat icon in the lower right corner of the Judiciary website.

Keeping Our Communities Safe

Many individuals involved in the criminal justice system face substance use, mental health conditions, or other underlying challenges. Hawai‘i’s treatment courts emphasize accountability, treatment, and support to address the root causes of behavior, helping participants rebuild their lives while reducing recidivism and strengthening community safety.

Women’s Court
Advancing Gender-Responsive Justice in Hawai‘i

In 2025, the Hawai‘i State Judiciary reached a landmark moment in its work to support justice-involved women with the permanent establishment of Mohala Wahine, O‘ahu’s Women’s Court program, and the launch of a new Women’s Court pilot on Hawai‘i Island. These achievements reflect not only the strong support of state lawmakers and Governor Josh Green, but also the proven success of the Mohala Wahine pilot and the dedication of the O‘ahu Women’s Court team, partner agencies, treatment providers, and community organizations, who worked tirelessly to build a model rooted in compassion, accountability, and trauma-informed care.

Women’s Court was created to address a critical need. Women often enter the criminal justice system through pathways shaped by trauma, including domestic violence, substance use disorder, unstable housing, and involvement with the child welfare system. When these underlying challenges are not addressed, traditional processes can fall short. Women’s Court provides a structured and closely supervised alternative that emphasizes safety, stability, treatment, education, and family reunification. The court seeks not only to reduce recidivism but also to help women regain control over their lives, reconnect with their children, and rebuild healthy support networks.

A Milestone Moment: Mohala Wahine’s First Graduating Class

The program’s effectiveness was on display in June 2025, when Mohala Wahine held its inaugural commencement ceremony honoring its first graduating class. Six women were recognized for having completed the court’s multi-phase program that required sustained sobriety, counseling, treatment participation, parenting education, regular court appearances, and demonstrated progress in housing, employment, and family relationships.



Mohala Wahine program graduates share a moment with Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald and Circuit Court Judge Trish Morikawa (far right), who oversees Women's Court, following the program's first-ever commencement ceremony in the Hawai'i Supreme Court courtroom.

For graduates, this milestone marked more than the completion of court requirements. For some, it meant finally achieving stable housing after years of uncertainty. For others, it meant reconnecting with children and rebuilding relationships once strained by addiction or trauma. And for many, it represented freedom from the cycles of violence, substance use, and despair that had defined their lives for far too long.

Former Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald celebrated their accomplishments, stating, "They've made tremendous progress—not only in transforming their own lives but also in strengthening the lives of those who rely on them. Their success shows that the Mohala Wahine program offers an effective path forward for justice-involved women."

These early successes were a driving force behind the decision by lawmakers and Governor Green to make the O'ahu Women's Court permanent in 2025. As O'ahu Women's Court Judge Trish Morikawa expressed, "We are extremely grateful that the governor and the legislature recognize the positive impact the Women's Court has on the participants, their children, and the larger community. We look forward to making these benefits available to many more women in the justice system who are ready to build a new life.

A Story of Transformation

The progress of the first graduates illustrates the potential of Women's Court. One recent graduate entered the program facing long-term addiction, trauma, and separation from her children. Through treatment, therapy, parenting classes, and steady judicial oversight, she secured stable housing, regained employment, rebuilt trust with her family, and achieved reunification with her children. Her journey is just one example of the profound personal change Women's Court is helping to make possible. It is change rooted in structure, empathy, and the belief that healing and accountability can coexist.

A New Beginning on Hawai‘i Island

Encouraged by the success of Mohala Wahine, the Judiciary expanded its commitment to justice-involved women to Kona on the Island of Hawai‘i through the creation of Nā Hulu Wehi, a Women's Court pilot program serving the Third Circuit.

Nā Hulu Wehi enhances the existing Kona Drug Court by adding gender-specific, trauma-responsive, and culturally grounded services for women. By partnering with community providers and practitioners, the program brings together treatment staff, mentors, probation officers, cultural practitioners, and the Women's Court Advisory Committee to create a unified support network for justice-involved women.

Third Circuit Chief Court Administrator and former Chief Judge Robert Kim emphasized the program's purpose and philosophy: "The Kona Women's Court will provide a 'humane justice' and 'compassionate court' approach, with the core objective of providing trauma-informed care, gender-responsive services in mental health, substance use disorder treatment, education, as well as training in domestic violence prevention and life skills."

Looking Forward

The permanency of Mohala Wahine and the launch of Nā Hulu Wehi represent significant progress for the Judiciary and the communities they serve. With continued support from the Legislature and the Governor, these programs are opening doors to safety, stability, and renewed opportunity for women ready to rebuild their lives.

Drug Court

A Treatment-Focused Path to Recovery and Reduced Recidivism

Hawai‘i’s Drug Courts offer a proven, research-supported alternative to incarceration for individuals whose criminal behavior is tied to substance use disorders. These courts blend structured treatment, accountability, and judicial oversight to support sustained recovery while promoting safer, healthier communities.

Drug Court programs operate as intensive, court-supervised outpatient models designed to help participants address addiction, stabilize their lives, and reduce their likelihood of reoffending. Serving primarily felony-level offenders with substance use disorders, participants receive a coordinated network of services tailored to their individual needs. These may include substance abuse counseling, mental health and medical care, frequent and random drug testing, probation supervision, employment and housing assistance, home visits, curfew monitoring, case management, and regular review hearings before a dedicated Drug Court judge.

As participants maintain sobriety, pursue education or employment, and demonstrate stability, they earn incentives and recognition that reinforce positive change. For many, the program serves as a critical diversion from incarceration, providing a treatment-centered path to rehabilitation for individuals who would otherwise occupy limited jail and prison space and have fewer opportunities for recovery.

More than three decades of national research confirm that treatment courts significantly reduce drug use, criminal behavior, relapse, and incarceration costs. Hawai‘i’s outcomes align closely with these findings. More than 2,700 individuals statewide have graduated from the state’s five Drug Court programs since the first court began on O‘ahu in 1996, and the majority remain free of new felony convictions for up to three years after completing the program.

Adult Drug Court Graduation Totals as of Fiscal Year 2024-2025

O‘ahu Drug Court	1,172
Maui Drug Court	773
Moloka‘i Drug Court	42
Big Island Drug Court	430
Kaua‘i Drug Court	287
Total Graduates	2,704

First Circuit – O‘ahu Drug Court



Volunteers and participants from the Judiciary’s specialty courts wade into Maunalua Bay in April to remove invasive algae by hand, partnering with Mālama Maunalua to protect the bay’s marine ecosystem. The service project brought together staff and participants from Adult Drug Treatment Court, Mental Health Court, and Veterans Treatment Court.

Since 1996, 1,172 individuals have graduated from O‘ahu Drug Court (ODC), achieving sobriety, rebuilding family relationships, and working toward stable employment. Under the leadership of First Circuit Drug Court Judge Matthew J. Viola, the program supervised approximately 141 participants and celebrated 35 new graduates during fiscal year 2025.

O‘ahu Drug Court provides intensive outpatient substance abuse treatment, including group and individual counseling, coupled with case management and probation supervision for felony offenders with substance use disorders. The program assists participants in addressing the underlying causes of their substance use while also supporting practical needs that contribute to long-term stability. Services may include mental health referrals, medical care coordination, home visits, curfew checks, and frequent, randomized drug testing.

The program also emphasizes employment readiness. Staff assist participants with resume writing, job applications, interview preparation, and building the digital skills needed to search and apply for jobs — including creating and using email accounts. Participants are referred to the full continuum of care, including residential, day-treatment, and outpatient programs, while maintaining close supervision and support from Drug Court staff.

The overarching goal of O‘ahu Drug Court is to divert individuals who would otherwise be incarcerated into meaningful rehabilitative services, reserving correctional resources for higher-risk offenders. By demonstrating sustained sobriety, accountability, and commitment to positive change, participants work toward rebuilding their lives as safe and productive members of the community.

Second Circuit – Maui/Molokaʻi Drug Court

Maui-Molokaʻi Drug Court follows a structured, multi-phase model designed to help participants achieve lasting recovery. The court places particular emphasis on education and family stability—two factors strongly correlated with improved treatment outcomes. Participants are encouraged to pursue their GED when appropriate and may be referred to family and parenting programs through Maui Family Support Services.

Prior to graduation, participants examine how their crimes have harmed individuals and the community in which they live. Clients then propose and complete a restorative justice plan that focuses on not only identifying those harmed but repairing that wound through active accountability.

Since the program's inception, 773 individuals on Maui and 42 on Molokaʻi have graduated from the intensive treatment program. This year, the Maui/Molokaʻi team continued to expand educational and lifeskills supports while reinforcing evidence-based practices that promote sustained sobriety and long-term success.

Third Circuit – Hawaiʻi Island Drug Court

"Treatment Courts help people change their lives while protecting our community."
– Chief Judge Wendy DeWeese

The Third Circuit puts this principle into practice through Hilo's Adult Drug Court and Veterans Treatment Court, led by Judge Peter Kubota, and Kona's Adult Drug Court, Veterans Treatment Court, and the Nā Hulu Wehi Women's Court Pilot Program, led by Chief Judge Wendy DeWeese. These programs blend accountability with evidence-based treatment, trauma- and gender-responsive practices, and culturally grounded support to help participants stabilize, rebuild, and reduce future justice involvement.

By delivering services to those at high risk for recidivism and high treatment need groups, the Third Circuit improves public safety and reduces long-term system costs.

Outcome measures for 2025:

• Total participants served in 2025: 128
• Total graduates since the beginning of the program: 430
• Graduation Rate: 40%
• Recidivism rate: 24% (Based on a 2019 internal study, tracking all participants 3 years after Drug Court: new Felony Convictions)
• Nā Hulu Wehi first-month enrollment: 16 Drug Court women and 1 non-Drug Court woman

"Lived experience plays a vital role in supporting women on their healing journey, building trust and connection in ways the system alone cannot."
– **Apryl Murata**, Drug Court Graduate and Women's Court Peer Mentor

2025 Program Enhancements:

The Nā Hulu Wehi Women's Court pilot project enhances the Kona Adult Drug Court with trauma-informed, gender-responsive, and culturally grounded best-practice services. It strengthens partnerships with the community and expands the island's capacity to deliver the following services:

• Trauma-responsive mental health treatment and weekly women's therapy groups
• Moral Reconation Therapy (MRT) to strengthen decision-making and accountability
• Peer mentoring provided by trained program graduates
• Culturally grounded healing practices centered on identity, values, and community
• Behavioral health beds for safe and stable housing during treatment
• Gender-specific calendar restructuring to create a safer, more trauma-sensitive setting
• A Women's Court Advisory Committee made up of formerly justice-involved women, ensuring program decisions remain grounded in lived experience and responsive to participant needs

The Big Island is unique, and the Third Circuit's Treatment Court programs reflect the needs of the communities they serve. With limited behavioral-health resources and a largely rural population, the Third Circuit emphasizes combining best practices with trauma responsiveness, cultural grounding, and strong coordination with local providers. These efforts strengthen public safety, promote accountability, and help individuals achieve lasting stability and success.

> "A trauma-informed approach allows for our participants to be seen rather than disregarded, and encouraged rather than judged, so that they can begin to rebuild their lives in a way that is meaningful."
> — **Cathy Okumura,** Hoʻoulu Counseling, Women's Court Mental Health Provider

Fifth Circuit – Kauaʻi Drug Court

Since its establishment in 2003, the Kauaʻi Drug Court (KDC) has supported 287 individuals in overcoming addiction, rebuilding family relationships, and achieving stable housing and employment. In 2025, the program supervised 19 participants, with 8 individuals successfully graduating.

KDC continues to expand its rehabilitative and community-centered practices. Drug Court staff are developing quarterly community service events to help participants reintegrate and contribute positively to their island community. Life-skills workshops are also being implemented

to help clients build practical tools for success beyond their time in the program. Recent trainings have included fentanyl and Narcan education, smoking-cessation support, and wellness-based intimacy guidance.

Graduation ceremonies, which were scaled back during the pandemic, have once again opened to community partners and supporters. Attendees now include county leadership, treatment providers, nonprofit organizations, alumni, and the families and friends of graduates. Current participants played an important role in the ceremony by assisting guests, distributing programs, and presenting lei.

The Friends of the Kauaʻi Drug Court continue to provide invaluable support—financially, logistically, and through their ongoing presence in participants' lives. Their contributions include airfare for clients entering residential treatment, clothing and hygiene supplies, incentives recognizing client achievements, and food and materials for Drug Court events. They also assist in coordinating training opportunities for clients.

KDC maintains strong partnerships with community-based service providers to broaden the network of treatment and support available to participants. Collaborations with CARE Hawaiʻi and Hawaiʻi Health Systems Corporation offer access to substance abuse treatment, mental health case management, and general healthcare. These services complement existing island resources, including Women in Need, Ahu Waiwai, Hoʻola Lāhui Hawaiʻi, and E Ala Hou, ensuring clients receive comprehensive care tailored to their recovery needs.

Training Strengthens Support for Individuals in Recovery

The First Circuit's treatment court team—joined by staff from adult and juvenile probation—traveled to Kissimmee, Florida, to participate in RISE25, the nation's premier conference for treatment courts. The four-day event brought together more than 7,000 professionals from across the country, including judges, probation officers, treatment providers, policymakers, and leaders from recovery and veteran communities. Hosted by All Rise, a national organization dedicated to advancing justice innovation, the conference provided intensive training on the latest evidence-based practices for addressing substance use, mental health challenges, co-occurring disorders, and trauma.

"We look forward to bringing back new evidence-based practices and fresh collaborative approaches to our respective programs," said Derek Sumida, Juvenile Drug Court Probation Supervisor for the First Circuit.

Veterans Treatment Court
Supporting Those Who Served

Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) is a specialized court designed to address the unique needs of justice-involved veterans while holding them accountable for their conduct. When veterans encounter legal challenges after returning to civilian life—often connected to substance use disorders, mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or trauma related to military service—traditional court processes may not fully address the underlying causes of their behavior.

Established in Hawai‘i in 2013, VTC recognizes that veterans often respond differently to structure, supervision, and treatment, and that peer support from fellow veterans can be a powerful catalyst for change. The court operates on a collaborative, team-based model that brings together judges, probation officers, prosecutors, public defenders, treatment providers, and community partners to support participants through intensive supervision and individualized treatment plans.



From left: Michael Peacock (VTC Mentor), Judge Matthew Viola, Jerry Phetsaksith (PO), Ikaika Drummundo-Kaeo, Norman Jones, Adam Nelson (Supervisor), Dr. Gloriann Watson (Deputy Medical Director for the VA), Patricia Sievers (VA Peer Support), Taryn Dean (Veteran Justice Outreach Coordinator), Sarah Uto-Uko (Veterans Outreach Social Worker).

A cornerstone of the program is its partnership with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), along with a wide network of community-based substance abuse treatment providers, mental health professionals, and veteran-specific service organizations. When eligible, participants are assisted in qualifying for and maximizing VA benefits, helping to ensure access to medical care, mental health services, housing support, and other critical resources.

VTC also relies heavily on volunteer veteran mentors representing every branch of the military. These mentors bring lived experience and a shared understanding of military culture, offering guidance, encouragement, and accountability throughout the recovery process. Their involvement strengthens participants’ connection to positive peer support and reinforces pro-social behaviors essential to long-term success.

Accountability is a central feature of VTC. Participants are subject to frequent court appearances, close probation supervision, and clearly defined expectations. They are required to comply with individualized treatment plans, attend scheduled court hearings, submit to drug and alcohol testing as ordered, and demonstrate progress toward stability in areas such as housing, employment, and treatment engagement. The court uses a system of graduated incentives and sanctions to respond swiftly and proportionately to participant behavior while maintaining public safety.

By addressing the underlying factors that contribute to justice involvement, VTC reduces the likelihood of reoffending and supports long-term behavioral change. Intensive supervision, combined with treatment, peer mentoring, and coordinated services, helps participants stabilize their lives and develop the skills necessary to remain law-abiding members of the community. This approach not only improves outcomes for veterans and their families, but also reduces repeat contact with the justice system, conserves correctional resources, and enhances public safety statewide.

O‘ahu Veterans Treatment Court (First Circuit)

O‘ahu Veterans Treatment Court (OVTC) recently began supervising Conditional Release participants who are veterans, as well as probation participants who do not qualify for the OVTC, officially forming the Veterans Treatment Unit. The program also provides in-person peer support groups, and staff continue to recruit and train volunteer veteran mentors.

Active Participants in 2025	22
Veterans Court graduates in 2025	6
All-Time Veterans Court graduates	91

OVTC recently hired a substance abuse treatment counselor to serve all OVTC and Veterans Treatment Unit participants who do not receive veterans’ benefits. The counselor facilitates an Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) group that meets three times a week and provides individual counseling sessions. Additionally, the counselor has begun screening participants for trauma and PTSD and refers them to appropriate external resources as needed.

Maui Veterans Court (Second Circuit)

The Maui Veterans Court (MVC) is an informal program created and operated using existing resources, without state or federal funding. Services provided by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are the cornerstone of the program, and eligibility for VA services is required for admission.

The court operates through a close, collaborative support team that includes a VA case manager, probation officers, volunteer veteran mentors, a deputy prosecuting attorney, a deputy public defender, and the presiding judge.

Second Circuit Judge Kirstin Hamman presides over Maui's Veterans Court, having assumed the role following the retirement of Judge Kelsey T. Kawano in December 2025. The court accepted its first two justice-involved participants in 2022, and admitted an additional participant in March 2025 who has made excellent progress in the program.

MVC participants may access VA community-based outpatient clinic services for medical and mental health care. They also receive substance use disorder treatment through counseling provided by local VA clinicians and intensive group sessions delivered from Oʻahu via telehealth. A Veterans Justice Outreach Program social worker provides case management services and referrals to community-based programs, as needed.

Active Participants in 2025	1
Veterans Court graduates in 2025	0
All-Time Veterans Court graduates	2

Hawaiʻi Island Veterans Treatment Court (Third Circuit)

The Hawaiʻi Island Veterans Treatment Court operates within a landscape shaped by a growing veteran population, limited veteran-specific services, and geographic challenges. Fortunately, Hawaiʻi Island benefits from a community that comes together—across the justice system, service providers, local organizations, and individuals—to support justice-involved veterans.

Under the leadership of the Hawaiʻi Island Veterans Treatment Court, these coordinated efforts are aligned with national best practices and guided by clear expectations and accountability. The result is a court-led approach that removes barriers, restores stability, and allows veterans' character, resilience, and commitment to shine through—in their lives, with their families, and in the community.

Active Participants in 2025	2
Veterans Court graduates in 2025	1
All-Time Veterans Court graduates	26

Kauaʻi Veterans Court (Fifth Circuit)

The Kauaʻi Veterans Court (KVC) operates within the Kauaʻi Drug Court division. Since the program's inception in November 2017, seven justice-involved participants have graduated, and an eighth participant is projected to complete the court's requirements and graduate in spring 2026. Acting Chief Judge Michael K. Soong has served as presiding judge of the KVC since June 2019. The program is supported by two veteran mentors who reside on Kauaʻi, as well as a Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs based on Oʻahu.

Active Participants in 2025	1
Veterans Court graduates in 2025	0
All-Time Veterans Court graduates	7

DWI Court

Accountability, Treatment, Safer Streets



A DWI Court graduate is congratulated during his final hearing.

The First Circuit's Driving While Impaired (DWI) Court continues to demonstrate how a court-led, treatment-focused approach can reduce repeat impaired driving and improve public safety. Established in 2013 in response to an increase in fatal crashes involving alcohol-impaired drivers, the program combines close judicial supervision with evidence-based treatment and monitoring, holding participants accountable while supporting lasting recovery.

Nationally, impaired driving remains a persistent and deadly problem. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), about 34 people in the United States die every day in drunk driving crashes, which is equivalent to one person every 42 minutes. Research has consistently shown, however, that individuals convicted of drunk driving are significantly less likely to reoffend when they participate in structured treatment programs rather than relying on punishment alone.

Honolulu's DWI Court reflects this evidence-based model. Participants appear regularly before a designated DWI Court judge and are supported by a multidisciplinary team that includes treatment providers, prosecutors, defense counsel, law enforcement, and community partners. Each participant follows an individualized treatment plan that may include electronic alcohol monitoring, drug testing, individual and group counseling, attendance at self-help meetings, and access to services that support education, employment, housing, and other stabilizing factors.

The Judiciary continues to track outcomes through quarterly checks of program participants, graduates, and individuals who were eligible but did not enter the program. These long-term evaluations show sustained reductions in recidivism among DWI Court participants compared with similarly situated offenders who did not enroll—demonstrating that accountability paired with treatment can produce lasting public safety benefits.

Recent research further supports this approach. A 2023 study published by Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour found that over a two-year period, recidivism rates were substantially lower for individuals who completed longer-term treatment.

Participants receiving 12 months of treatment had a 12% reoffense rate, compared with 19% for those receiving six months of treatment and 21% for those who received no treatment intervention. The study concluded that extended, structured treatment significantly reduces the likelihood of repeat impaired driving offenses.

Beyond the statistics, DWI Court's impact is reflected in the lives of its participants. Chavez Canite, a 2025 DWI Court graduate, described the program as a turning point:

"If I didn't choose DWI Court, I wouldn't have taken accountability for my issues. I was forced to face sobriety and learn that the choices that I made were a problem."

Stories like Canite's illustrate how the program's structured accountability, combined with consistent support, helps participants rebuild their lives while reducing the risk of future harm to the community.



"Anyone who goes through this program is going to walk out feeling better. If you stick with it, it's 100% guaranteed that you're going to be a better person at the end."
*–**Chavez Canite**, a 2025 DWI Court graduate*

Program Snapshot (as of 2025)

- Total DWI Court graduates since program inception: **97**
- Offenders enrolled during 2025: **6**
- Graduates in 2025: **7**
- Individuals currently in the screening process: **28**

By reducing repeat offenses, improving roadway safety, and lowering costs associated with arrest, prosecution, and incarceration, the Honolulu DWI Court continues to advance the Judiciary's commitment to problem-solving justice and safer communities across Hawai'i.

Special thanks to the Honolulu DWI Court partner organizations

• Hawai'i State Department of Transportation
• Hawai'i State Department of Health, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division
• Honolulu Police Department
• City and County of Honolulu Department of the Prosecuting Attorney
• Hawai'i State Office of the Public Defender
• Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Hawai'i Chapter

Mental Health Court

The Judiciary's Mental Health Courts (MHC) address the unique needs of individuals in the criminal justice system who live with severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI). Defendants with mental illness released to the community on supervision often face challenges in complying with probation and require specialized treatment and support that traditional courts are not designed to provide. Mental Health Courts redirect eligible offenders from incarceration to community-based treatment, combining intensive supervision with access to psychiatric care, psycho-social rehabilitation, substance use treatment, and other individualized supports. By providing these services, Mental Health Courts promote recovery, reduce recidivism, and help participants become productive members of the community.

Oʻahu Mental Health Court

Established in 2005, the Oʻahu Mental Health Court (OMHC) provides intensive supervision and treatment for defendants diagnosed with SPMI. The OMHC team is led by a judge and includes a dedicated public defender, dedicated prosecutor, program staff, and clinical support from the State Department of Health's Adult Mental Health Division. In this collaborative program, community treatment providers offer specialized care tailored to each participant's needs. Participants benefit from probation supervision integrated with treatment, reduced jail sentences, and the possibility of early termination of probation or dismissal of charges.

In fiscal year 2025, the OMHC graduated 11 participants, bringing the total number of program graduates to 104. The Mental Health Unit, which operates alongside the court, supervised 242 conditional release cases in 2025 including individuals on conditional release from the neighbor islands. The court continues to facilitate a peer support group, now meeting in person weekly for participants and alumni. Topics include self-care, coping skills, goal setting, and expressing support during difficult times.

Maui Mental Health Court

Maui Mental Health Court (MMHC), established in 2014, manages participants involved in Circuit Court cases from Maui, Molokaʻi, and Lānaʻi. The court presides over cases where fitness and/or penal responsibility are in question due to mental illness.

- MMHC received 27 new cases in 2025
- As of December 2025, MMHC had 78 defendants on its calendar

The mental health court works closely with the prosecution, defense, and Adult Mental Health Division of the Department of Health and community treatment providers. Court hearings take place every other week. Defendants often appear by zoom from the Hawaiʻi State Hospital or other treatment placements with their case managers.

O‘ahu Post-Booking Jail Diversion Program
A Broader Approach to Public Safety

The Judiciary understands that improving public safety requires more than incarceration alone. It requires addressing the underlying challenges that often bring individuals into the criminal justice system. Individuals who are incarcerated experience significantly higher rates of serious mental illness (SMI) and substance use disorders (SUD) than the general population, with many affected by both. Too often, they cycle in and out of jail without receiving the treatment or support necessary to break this cycle.

In response, the Judiciary has developed a range of programs designed to identify these needs early and connect participants with treatment, services, and resources while they are supervised in the community. Building on the demonstrated success of these initiatives, the Judiciary has continued to expand jail diversion efforts that provide effective, treatment-based alternatives to traditional incarceration.



District Judge Tracy Fukui presents a certificate to a Jail Diversion Program graduate.

The goal of O‘ahu’s Post-Booking Jail Diversion Program (OJDP) is to provide timely, coordinated mental health and substance use disorder treatment for justice-involved individuals with SMI, diverting eligible, non-dangerous arrestees from incarceration into appropriate, community-based behavioral health services. By addressing underlying behavioral health needs at the earliest point of system contact, the program seeks to stabilize participants, support long-term recovery, and reduce the likelihood of future criminal involvement. OJDP balances individualized treatment plans with court requirements and public safety considerations, ultimately improving outcomes for participants, enhancing community safety, and reducing the long-term costs and system strain associated with repeated incarceration or hospitalization without access to adequate treatment.

OJDP was initiated through a collaborative agreement forged by a team of highly motivated representatives from the Judiciary, the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney for the City and County of Honolulu, the State Office of the Public Defender, and the Hawai‘i Department of Health. In 2023, representatives from these agencies traveled to Miami to observe the highly successful Miami-Dade County Criminal Mental Health Project, which diverts individuals with serious mental illness from the criminal justice system into community-based treatment and support. Inspired by what they observed, the team returned to Honolulu to adapt the model to local needs and resources.

Eligible participants in OJDP are individuals approved by the prosecutor who are charged with nonviolent misdemeanors (the district court program) or promoting a dangerous drug in the third degree (the circuit court program). Once screened and assessed for SMI or co-occurring SMI and SUD, participants are placed outside traditional criminal justice pathways, often receiving comprehensive community-based treatment and services. They are provided with individualized transition planning, medical and mental health treatment, housing, and other support, with progress closely monitored by the court and personnel from the State Department of Health Adult Mental Health Division. After participants have stabilized, established vital connections to case managers, housing, and services that support success beyond court supervision, and complied with the diversion plan, their charges may be dismissed.



Deputy Public Defender Jerry Villanueva congratulates a Jail Diversion Program graduate during a ceremony at Honolulu District Court.

The district court OJDP’s first participant was admitted in May 2023, followed shortly by five more. The circuit court OJDP’s first participant was admitted in June of 2023. In August 2023, a moratorium on new admittees was in place to allow procedural concerns to be addressed. That moratorium ended in November of 2023 for the circuit court program and in April of 2024 for the district court program. Once reinstated, the programs continued to grow, assisting individuals with serious mental illness, many of whom also experience co-occurring SUD, in obtaining

community-based treatment, housing, medical, dental, and other social services that continue beyond program graduation.

The District Court's OJDP has proudly produced six graduates, the first in January 2024 and the most recent in December 2025. To date, none have reoffended. The impact of these accomplishments is magnified by the fact that many district court participants were charged with multiple crimes prior to entering the program. The most recent district court graduate went from 18 new criminal charges in the two years before entering OJDP to zero while participating in the program. A previous graduate went from nine criminal cases in the two years before entering the program, one of which resulted in hospitalization at the Hawai‘i State Hospital for nearly a year, to zero criminal charges and/or hospitalizations during her two years in the program. She has had no new criminal charges or hospitalizations since graduating in March of 2025. The circuit court anticipates having its first three graduates in early 2026.

As OJDP has evolved, the number of partner agencies involved has expanded. In addition to the original collaborators, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the Governor's Office, and the State of Hawai‘i Department of the Attorney General now provide valuable input and play an integral role in the program's continued success.

Partner agencies recently met again with The Leifman Group, led by retired Judge Steve Leifman, who developed and implemented the nationally recognized "Miami Model." OJDP plans to continue its collaboration with The Leifman Group in the coming year, and the Judiciary looks forward to working with all partner agencies to further strengthen and expand the program.

Supporting Children and Families

The state's family courts promote the reconciliation of distressed juveniles with their families, render appropriate rehabilitation and punishment to offenders, and reduce juvenile delinquency. The Judiciary also assists families and children in need through a variety of special programs and services.

Girls Court

Girls Court is a unique program under the First Circuit (Oʻahu) Family Court to help address challenges faced by girls involved in the juvenile justice system.

Launched in 2004, Hawaiʻi Girls Court was one of the first gender-responsive courts in the nation. The program was started as a pilot to respond to the growing number of girls entering the justice system. In 2005, the Judiciary received a federal grant from the Office of Youth Services to further develop the program. Girls Court was formally established as a permanent program by the Hawaiʻi State Legislature in 2017.

The program supports moderate- to high-risk girls and their families, including youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC) and are under probation or supervision in the First Circuit. To better meet the needs of CSEC victims, the court shifted from group-based services to personalized, evidence-based care.

Girls Court aims to strengthen the First Circuit Family Court's commitment to providing services that meet the unique needs of young women. Since it began, Girls Court has helped more than 190 girls and their families by using a strength-based, trauma-informed approach that addresses root issues like abuse, family struggles, and challenges in school. Although the needs of participants have changed over time, the program continues to offer its core support through three main components: compressive court supervision and support, therapeutic services, and experiential activities.

Comprehensive Court Supervision and Support

Comprehensive Court Supervision and Support means that girls in the program regularly meet with the Girls Court judge and stay in close contact with their probation officers and staff. Because many families work with multiple agencies such as education, health, and social service agencies, the probation officer acts as the main point of contact. They help families understand each provider's role, coordinate services, and make sure everything is working in concert to meet the girl's needs.

Therapeutic Services

Therapeutic Services are a key part of Girls Court, provided by the program's therapist and community partners. Girls and their families receive individual, couples, and family counseling, along with group sessions that help build peer support and life skills. The therapist also leads family group sessions to strengthen household relationships and is available for support when needed. If families already have therapy services, the Girls Court Therapist works to identify and address any additional needs.

Experiential Activities

Experiential Activities are designed to broaden the girls' perspectives and support their growth beyond the courtroom and therapy sessions. These include retreats, workshops, and community service projects that build life skills, confidence, and connections. Girls Court partners with local organizations like Women Speaking Out (WSO) to offer empowering experiences such as self-defense classes, wellness activities, and creative workshops. All activities are provided at no cost to families, thanks to strong community partnerships.

2025 Highlights

In 2025, Girls Court participants and staff took part in a variety of training and community events, creating meaningful opportunities to connect, learn, and grow together.

Girls Court actively participated in Human Trafficking Awareness Month events in early 2025. Staff and participants joined the Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS) for a "Stop Human Trafficking" sign-waving event. Girls Court staff also distributed blue ribbons to Hale Hilinaʻi and Kapolei juvenile probation staff to raise awareness in January. In February, Girls Court attended DAGS' first annual Candlelight Vigil, held in honor of Human Trafficking Awareness Month.

Girls Court staff, clients, and their families participated in the program's first community service project of the year at Kuʻu Home O Kulaiwi in Haleʻiwa, Hawaiʻi in March. This loʻi (taro patch) site has been a long-standing partner of Girls Court, offering a space for families to bond, engage in meaningful activities, and learn from one another. The day included cleaning the loʻi and surrounding areas, removing invasive fish species like catfish and tilapia, and participating in cultural practices.

Girls Court staff and 3 Girls Court involved minors, visited the Haleakalā National Park, spending three days and two nights at the Haleakalā Summit in July. This was the seventh time that Girls Court has been invited and sponsored to participate in this program. This immersion program opportunity is funded by the Haleakalā National Park Service and Haleakalā Conservancy, and it included travel expenses for the Girls Court staff and the 3 identified youth with round trip travel from Oʻahu, ground transportation, backpacking equipment, lodging and food. It was an opportunity for the girls to be able to experience the beauty of Haleakalā and to give back to the ʻāina.

Looking Ahead: Girls Court Strengthens Its Team and Its Impact

The Girls Court staff underwent notable staffing changes throughout 2024 and into early 2025. In July 2024, Program Specialist Adriane Abe retired after years of dedicated service. In August, Julia Tilton joined the team as the new Social Service Assistant, replacing Myra Taumanupepe. In December 2024, Iwalani Suka stepped into the Clerical position following Johnnie-Mae Perry's departure, and Valerie Lazo was promoted from Program Coordinator to Program Specialist. The Program Coordinator role was then filled by Ranelle Takahashi in January 2025.

Girls Court welcomes new youth, focusing on those with the highest needs, including both CSEC and non-CSEC cases. Between June and November 2025, seven new youth and their families began receiving services. Through its partnership with Establish, Girls Court offers ongoing group and therapeutic support. Staff also remain actively engaged with former participants, helping them stay connected to vital community resources.

In response to the evolving needs of youth in today's complex world, Girls Court continues to grow and innovate. Looking ahead, the vision includes creating community-based spaces that offer comprehensive support—such as education, healthcare, life skills training, and family services—to further empower girls and their families.

Nā Kama Lei

Nā Kama Lei (NKL) Early Childhood Court is a specialized court within the First Circuit Family Court. Its primary goal is to help children under court jurisdiction—those who are either in foster care or at risk of being removed from their homes due to neglect or abuse—achieve permanency quickly through reunification, legal guardianship, or adoption, while also providing trauma-informed care to the whole family. NKL works to strengthen families and prevent future involvement with the child welfare system by supporting parents and caregivers and addressing the developmental and emotional needs of the children.

NKL strives for timely permanency for maltreated infants and toddlers in the child welfare system through a collaborative, team-based approach involving dedicated professionals, caregivers, and service providers. The Court focuses on each individual case, working to instill hope by supporting families, believing in their potential, and providing opportunities that foster positive change. NKL also provides appropriate developmental assessments and interventions, limits the number of foster placements, and engages families voluntarily in the program until permanency is reached.



Celebrating a New Name and Expanded Vision

NKL used to be called Hawai‘i Zero to Three (HZTT) Court, but in 2025, the program expanded its target population from children ages zero to three to children ages zero to five. As a result, the original name was no longer reflective of its broader mission. After thoughtful discussion, the team selected the name Nā Kama Lei, meaning “the beloved children.”

To commemorate the name change and expanded age range, NKL held an intimate kick-off event on May 23, 2025. The celebration brought together judges from the juvenile calendar, the State Department of Human Services – Child Welfare Services division, and key community partners, including the Department of Health, Association for Infant Mental Health Hawai‘i, Lili‘uokalani Trust, and the Violet and Vivian Fund.

NKL operates as a collaborative team effort amongst Judge Jessi L. Hall, the NKL Program Manager, Deputy Attorneys General, Designated Child Welfare Services (CWS) Social Workers, Designated Guardians Ad Litem, and Parents’ counsel.

Although NKL expanded its age range to serve children from birth to age five, the program has served 115 families and 147 infants and toddlers (ages 0–3) since its start in 2009. While no four- or five-year-olds have been enrolled yet, the broader age range was adopted to allow for greater flexibility in meeting family needs. There are children currently in the program who will reach age four or five in the coming years.

NKL is modeled after the Zero to Three Safe Babies Court Team Approach, which is grounded in early childhood science and aims to support the health and well-being of young children and their families.

This is a voluntary court program, and parents must be willing to participate. Once a family is accepted into NKL, the program works closely with them until permanency is achieved. To be eligible, a case must be adjudicated in Family Court, and the family must have at least one child between the ages of 0 and 5. NKL also accepts cases involving abandoned infants, helping to ensure their needs are met while moving them toward permanency as quickly and safely as possible.

Referral Process

Referrals may be initiated by a CWS social worker, guardian ad litem (GAL), parent, or agency partner by contacting the Program Manager via phone or email. Once interest is expressed, the Program Manager reviews the case file and consults with the assigned CWS social worker, GAL, and parent(s).

In addition to the child being between the ages of 0 and 5, key eligibility criteria include an adjudicated case in Family Court and demonstrated parental motivation. NKL accepts the entire family into the program; therefore, if both parents are present and engaged, both must agree to participate.

NKL does not accept cases involving sexual abuse and carefully reviews cases with a history of violence to ensure the safety of all families during group activities.

NKL holds monthly court hearings to ensure judicial oversight and accountability for both the program team and participating families. Before each hearing, the NKL Court Team reviews each case — covering visitation, service progress, concerns, and updates — so the judge can focus on engaging directly with parents, answering questions, and addressing any concerns.

Monthly Gatherings Provide Families with tools, Community, and Encouragement

Family Team Meetings are held regularly — both virtually and in person — for NKL families. These monthly meetings, typically scheduled two weeks after court hearings, help keep cases on track for timely permanency and ensure accountability among all team members. They also give the team time to follow up on tasks before the next hearing. Families facing significant challenges to reunification may be referred to the Effective Planning and Innovative Communication (EPIC) ‘Ohana Inc.’s Family Wrap Hawai‘i program, which provides added support through monthly meetings, a parent partner, navigator, and facilitator.

The Parent Activity is an opportunity for families to develop a support system with other families who participate in NKL. It takes place once a month on court day at the Kapolei Multipurpose Room (MPR), which is arranged with a play area to support family engagement. Families are provided with lunch and can connect in a safe, supportive environment. The program is coordinated by Family Hui, a non-profit, that also facilitates Parent Cafes twice a month for NKL. These Cafes focus on strengthening five protective factors that support families.
To increase accessibility and participation, Family Hui transitioned from hosting virtual Parent Cafes to offering them in person during the monthly Parent Activity. This shift allows more families to attend and engage meaningfully. A Family Hui staff member is present at each in-person event to meet families and distribute activity kits, which include a book and age-appropriate materials for each child.

NKL continues to grow strong community partnerships, which are essential for helping families access services and support.

Existing partnerships:

- **Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Services (CWS)** – Through NKL's partnership with the DHS All State 0–3 Team, CWS's contracted provider, Comprehensive Counseling and Support Services, prioritizes NKL families for parenting education, counseling, domestic violence support, and outreach.
- **Family Programs Hawaii** – Family Strengthening Center (FSC) – FSC prioritizes NKL families for psychological and developmental evaluations, as well as therapeutic services like Parent-Child Attunement Therapy, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, and individual therapy.
- **Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS)** – The NKL Program Manager is part of Team 2: Safe and Nurturing Families. Through this partnership, families received "Aloha at Home" toolkits to promote family bonding.
- **Violet and Vivian Fund (VVF)** – VVF provides essential items (e.g., play yards, strollers, car seats) to NKL families when no other resources are available.
- **Lili'uokalani Trust – Early Childhood Program** – This collaboration offers ongoing support to families, even after their NKL case is closed.
- **Association for Infant Mental Health Hawaii** – NKL works with this organization to refer families for Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP).

Reflective Supervision Strengthens Trauma-Informed Practice

In February 2025, the NKL Court Team did a short-term reflective supervision/consultation (RSC) with Lee Lacerdo, LCSW. The goal was to help the team reflect on their own perspectives and biases to improve decision-making, create more personalized case plans, build resilience, and better support infants, toddlers, and families in the child welfare and court systems through a trauma-informed approach.

New Logo and Brochure Artwork Enhance Program Identity

In April 2025, with support from the William S. Richardson School of Law, NKL received its first official logo and brochure artwork, created by illustrator Ruth Moen.

Big Island Zero to Three (Biz-3) Court

The Big Island Zero to Three (BIZ-3) Court was established by the Hawai‘i State Legislature in 2023 through Act 70. In the months following its enactment, the Third Circuit (Hawai‘i Island) developed program policies and procedures and initiated collaborative efforts with law enforcement, substance use disorder treatment providers, and community service organizations. These informal partnerships were designed to support parents and caregivers participating in the program.

BIZ-3 officially launched in January 2024 as a specialty program within Family Court, with the first participant hearings held in February.

In its first year of operation, the BIZ-3 Court received five case referrals. Three parents and/or caregivers were accepted into the program. Two cases were resolved successfully, allowing children to be reunited with their families. In 2025, the program received three additional referrals.

Participants in the BIZ-3 program have made notable progress, including securing stable housing, gaining employment, and pursuing education and job training. Some have engaged in or attempted re-entry into substance use treatment programs. Despite limited community-based resources in Hawai‘i County compared to other counties, the BIZ-3 team continues to build a reliable network of support through partnerships with government agencies, non-profit organizations, and other community entities.

Cases may be assigned to any Family Court judge and are supported by a social worker with the Third Circuit’s Program Services Branch.

“The program provides critical, early-stage intervention for our most vulnerable children, offering families vital resources to enable healthy development and family strengthening,” said Judge Darien Nagata. “This program is an essential tool that not only promotes child safety but also fosters a path to permanency for the child.”

Fostering Student Education

From truancy court and early intervention education programs to juvenile and family drug courts, the Judiciary works to provide support and resources for individuals in the court system. Through these initiatives, the focus remains on education, rehabilitation, and second chances—helping students and families overcome challenges and build stronger foundations for success.

Oʻahu Truancy Court

The First Circuit (Oʻahu) Truancy Court's mission is to address attendance issues at the school level before the need for the formal court process. This is done through early intervention, multi-agency collaboration, and rewards and incentives.

The court began in 2015 as the "Hawaii Truancy Court Collaboration Pilot Project" at Waiʻanae Intermediate School, targeting some of the most chronically absent students statewide. In its first year, the program achieved significant improvements in attendance, with Waiʻanae Intermediate reaching a daily 91% attendance rate by the 2017-2018 school year. After several years of success at that site, the program expanded during the 2021-2022 school year.

Although the Truancy Court experienced significant service interruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic, that time was used to expand the program throughout Oʻahu. This expansion included (1) screening all standard petitions for possible inclusion in Truancy Court and (2) adding additional participating schools. These efforts aim to identify students whose primary reason for court involvement is truancy. Currently, students enter the program either through petition screenings or referrals from Juvenile Division judges.

During the 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 school years, Truancy Court served four middle/intermediate schools: Waiʻanae Intermediate, Wahiawā Middle, Honouliuli Middle, and Kapolei Middle. Through its island-wide initiative, the program also worked with individual students from other schools, including Pearl Highlands Intermediate, King Intermediate, Washington Middle, ʻIlima Intermediate, Ewa Makai, and Dole Middle. On a case-by-case basis, and with approval from a Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) unit supervisor or the Presiding Judge, the program has continued to monitor students after they enter high school—such as at Castle High School and Waiʻanae High School—and, when appropriate, sixth-grade students still enrolled in elementary schools.

Truancy Court has achieved notable success in improving attendance without requiring formal court intervention. This is made possible through strong partnerships with the Department of Education, participating schools, and a network of support services, including individual and family counseling, substance abuse treatment, and in-school interventions. For cases that do

require court involvement, these partners remain committed to providing the necessary services to support student success.

Persons in Need of Supervision Unit

The PINS Unit, also known as the Status Offense Intake Unit, conducts social investigations for youth referred to Family Court for status offenses. PINS can divert or file petitions on cases referred for runaway, curfew, injurious behavior, beyond parental control, and law violators under the age of 12. PINS will also file law violation petitions when they are received for an open case with a status offense petition already filed.

The unit diverts most status offense referrals from formal court proceedings. When court involvement is necessary, PINS files the petition and provides the Court with disposition recommendations following adjudication.

PINS also oversees two (2) specialty courts— Truancy Court and the Early Education Intervention Program— both focused on addressing chronic absenteeism. These programs aim to divert families from formal court involvement by identifying and addressing barriers to school attendance, in collaboration with the Department of Education, Department of Health, and other agencies.

Impact of Intervention

The following is a chart showing the number of students referred to the program vs. the number of formal court petitions filed for Court.

School Year	Students Referred	Court Petitions Filed
2018/2019	154	13
2019/2020 *only 3qtrs, homeschool 4th qtr	133	9
2020/2021	Pandemic Home Schooling	No data
2021/2022	Pandemic Home Schooling	No data
2022/2023	142	10
2023/2024	297	13
2024/2025	280	9

Early Education Intervention Program

The Early Education Intervention Program (EEIP) was established in 2023 to support parents of elementary school students and to improve how schools and the court system respond to complex cases of educational neglect.

Through this initiative, the Persons in Need of Supervision Unit (PINS) began monitoring elementary school attendance using the EEIP model, which was developed by Judge Jessi L. K. Hall in collaboration with community partners. The program launched at Makakilo Elementary with an initial attendance goal of 80%. By May 2023, participating families had achieved 100% attendance. At Kaimiloa Elementary, another participating school, chronic absenteeism dropped by 53% by April 2023.

Unlike Truancy Court, EEIP focuses on engaging parents and guardians directly. PINS Court Officers visit participating schools weekly to meet with parents or guardians—not the students. When court involvement is necessary, only the parents or guardians are required to appear. The Public Defender's Office is not involved in EEIP proceedings; however, families are still offered the same range of support services. EEIP is committed to helping families overcome barriers to school attendance.

When the program began, EEIP petitions were filed as juvenile cases that named the minors as the subject. However, after working with the Attorney General's office, the process was revised to file petitions in the Judiciary Information Management System (JIMS) under the parent/guardian's name. This change was made to prevent elementary-aged students from having juvenile records solely due to their participation in EEIP. The goal is to support school attendance and ensure children receive an education—not to involve them in the juvenile justice system for truancy-related issues.

During the 2025 legislative session, PINS received funding to expand both Oʻahu Truancy Court and EEIP island-wide. The funding supports the reallocation of three vacant positions to Probation Officers, the lease of a vehicle, three laptops, and the purchase of gift cards for program incentives.

Expansion efforts are expected to begin in the Kalaheo Complex on Windward Oʻahu in late 2025 or early 2026.

EEIP is currently working with families at the following schools:

Aiea Elementary
August Ahrens Elementary
Barbers Point Elementary
Ewa Beach Elementary
Ewa Elementary
Helemano Elementary
Ho'okele Elementary
Holomua Elementary
Honowai Elementary
Ka Waihona Charter
Kaala Elementary
Kaimiloa Elementary
Kaleiopu'u Elementary
Kapolei Elementary
Leihoku Elementary
Makaha Elementary
Makakilo Elementary
Manana Elementary
Mauka Lanai Elementary
Momilani Elementary
Nanaikapono Elementary
Nanakuli Elementary
Pearl Harbor Elementary
Salt Lake Elementary
Wahiawa Elementary
Waianae Elementary
Waipahu Elementary

Kākoʻo Kula (School Support) on Maui

The Kākoʻo Kula Program (KKP) is a voluntary initiative that supports students facing chronic school non-attendance, helping them avoid potential court involvement. Through early intervention both on and off campus, the program connects students and their families with community resources to address barriers impacting school attendance.

Once a student and their legal guardian(s) agree to participate, staff from the Judiciary's Second Circuit Juvenile Client & Family Services (JCFS) meet with them weekly for 30 days to encourage consistent school attendance. Follow-up meetings then occur every other week for an additional 60 days.

2025 Program Expansion and Outcomes

In 2025, the Kākoʻo Kula Program expanded its reach by adding Maui Waena Intermediate School as a second site, alongside Iao Intermediate School, which launched the program in 2023. This expansion reflects ongoing collaboration between the Judiciary's Second Circuit Juvenile Client & Family Services (JCFS) Branch and the Department of Education's Baldwin and Kekaulike Complex District Offices.

This year, services were offered to seven students and their families. Of the seven referrals received:

- No truancy petitions have been filed on behalf of the Department of Education.
- One (1) student successfully completed the program.
- One (1) student declined to participate.
- One (1) student transferred to another school.
- Four (4) students are currently receiving one-on-one mentorship and supportive services.

The program continues to emphasize accessibility and family engagement by conducting intake meetings at school campuses with counselors present, rather than at the courthouse. This approach has helped foster trust and participation among families.

Hawai‘i Island School Non-Attendance/ Truancy Court Diversion Program

The Third Circuit (Hawai‘i island) launched its “Truancy Court” initiative in August 2018 as part of the Chronic Absenteeism Prevention Project (CAPP). The program has since been renamed the School Non-Attendance/Truancy Court Diversion Program (SNA Diversion).

Its mission is to work collaboratively with families, schools, and community organizations to promote consistent school attendance and student engagement. By identifying and addressing the challenges that prevent students from attending school, the program offers constructive support through educational resources, community partnerships, and proactive interventions, while also encouraging accountability and positive participation.

SNA Diversion is comprised of three tiers:

- A watch list where the school works intensively with the families
- Intervention by the court’s Juvenile Probation Department and the Salvation Army; and
- Intensive court intervention involving more frequent contact with the student and family

2024-2025 School Year

During the 2024–2025 school year, the Third Circuit continued its diversion program addressing school non-attendance petitions. A letter was sent to the State Department of Education’s Complex Area Superintendents, as well as principals and directors for all public charter schools to outline how the criteria and interventions would be implemented.

Elementary school cases were automatically directed to an Informal Adjustment Protocol, where probation officers met with the student, their parent(s) or guardian, and school staff to discuss attendance issues and work together to identify and address any barriers to success. For intermediate and high school students, cases were either referred to the Informal Adjustment process or scheduled for an initial adjudication hearing, depending on the circumstances.

If a petition did not meet the criteria for diversion, a summons or notice for a court hearing was issued. For elementary school cases, the summons was sent to the parents, with a copy provided to the school. At the hearing, the parents and a school representative appeared before the judge, who reviewed the student’s attendance plan and discussed concerns related to absenteeism. Based on this discussion, the judge determined whether additional support from the school was necessary and decided if the case should proceed to a follow-up hearing.

For intermediate and high school cases, the court sent a summons to the parents and a hearing notice to the school. A school representative attended the hearing and presented the student’s attendance plan. During the hearing, the judge reviewed the plan and discussed attendance concerns with the parents. Based on the discussion, the court determined whether additional support or intervention was needed and decided if a follow-up hearing should be scheduled.

All cases, except for two, were referred to the Informal Adjustment Protocol. Assigned probation officers met with the student, their family, and school representatives to address attendance concerns and collaboratively identify and resolve any barriers to the student’s success.

All petitions were dismissed within one school year, regardless of whether they were resolved through diversion or a court hearing. Additionally, petitions involving students who advanced to the next grade level during the school year were automatically dismissed.

Hawai‘i Island School Non-Attendance / Truancy Court Diversion Program 2024-2025 School Year

West Hawai‘i – Number of Petitions Received and Diverted						
26	1% Elementary School	23% Intermediate School	73% High School	1% Charter School	Succcessful 43%	Unsuccessful 56%
East Hawai‘i – Number of Petitions Received and Diverted						
44	59% Elementary School	11% Intermediate School	6% High School	6% Charter School	Successful 34%	Unsucessful 65%

Success is defined as those who improved their school attendance during the diversion/intervention period.

Reasons for lack of success: Unable to contact (lack of information from school), illness, parental non-compliance, lack of alternatives to standard education.

All petitions were dismissed as of July 31, 2025.

Conclusions

- Informal adjustment protocol showed success for cases that court staff were able to make contact. A significant number of unsuccessful cases were due to lack of contact information from the school and uncooperative parents.
- East Hawai‘i had a significant number of elementary school petitions (49%). West Hawai‘i had one.
- Court intervention for the 11 cases: eight were successful, three were unsuccessful.
- For the 2025-2026 school year, program staff will continue with the informal adjustment protocol as well as schedule for court if necessary.

Kauaʻi Early Intervention Collaboration

The Kauaʻi Early Intervention Collaboration (EIC) program brings schools, courts, and community partners together to tackle chronic absenteeism before it becomes a legal issue. Launched by Judge Gregory Meyers and the Fifth Circuit Family Court in February 2024, the initiative focuses on early, coordinated support for students and families to help keep youth engaged in school and out of the courtroom.

Five schools currently participate in the program: Kalāheo, Kapaʻa, and Kekaha Elementary Schools, Chiefess Kamakahelei Middle School, and Waimea High School. For the 2025–2026 school year, 14 meetings were scheduled, and families attended 13 of them. These early interventions eliminated the need for formal petitions, showing the program's strong potential to keep youth out of deeper court involvement.

The court partnered with the State Department of Education (DOE), Child & Family Services (CFS), and the Office of Youth Services' Positive Alternative Learning (PAL) program to deliver coordinated, community-based support to families across the island.

The initiative began with elementary schools in the DOE's Kapaʻa-Kauaʻi-Waimea Complex Area and expanded to include middle and high schools that requested assistance. The court brought CFS into the collaboration, which now connects families to a range of services, including:

- Personalized support from a CFS PAL coordinator
- Modified school schedules for students in need
- Bus passes and transportation assistance
- Home and school visits by probation officers
- Mentorship and guidance from community providers

Before filing a court petition, school staff contact the Family Court's probation department to schedule a meeting with the student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s), a probation officer, and school representatives. During the meeting, the team discusses the student's attendance issues, emphasizes the importance of regular attendance, and outlines possible legal consequences if absences continue.

In 2025, the Fifth Circuit Family Court continues to lead this collaborative effort, working to expand its reach and ensure that every student on Kauaʻi has access to the support they need to stay engaged in school and thrive.

School Year	# of meetings scheduled	# of meetings attended by families/minors	# of new petitions received after the meetings
2023-2024	34	29	4
2024-2025	59	47	9
2025-2026	16	14	0

Hoʻokanaka Cultural Diversion Pilot Program

The Hoʻokanaka Cultural Diversion Pilot Program is a collaborative pilot initiative developed by the First Circuit (Oʻahu) Family Court in partnership with Partners in Development Foundation (PIDF) – Kupa ʻĀina, the Consuelo Foundation, the Queen Liliʻuokalani Trust, and the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation. Launched in 2024, this innovative program offers youth with first-time, low-level law violations an opportunity to engage in healing and personal growth through cultural reconnection and hands-on farming.

Hoʻokanaka is grounded in the belief that meaningful change begins with self-reflection and a strong sense of identity. Over the course of six weeks, participants meet once a week for four hours at PIDF's Kupa ʻĀina farm. There, they cultivate not only the land but also a deeper understanding of themselves, their families, and their cultural values.

Unlike traditional probation, Hoʻokanaka operates as a pre-petition diversion program. Youth are informed that successful completion may lead to the expungement of their arrest record, offering a powerful incentive for engagement and transformation. The program's structure allows youth to avoid formal court adjudication while receiving support in a culturally grounded environment.



Participants at Kupu ʻĀina Farm in Kailua. The farm serves as the learning ground for the Hoʻokanaka Cultural Diversion Program, where participants explore traditional Hawaiian practices and deepen their connection to ʻāina (land).

Judge Jessi Hall and the juvenile diversion team were instrumental in designing the program, with each partner organization contributing funding and resources to bring the pilot to life. PIDF has played a particularly active role, providing logistical support such as $20 gas cards for families and even covering Uber rides for participants without transportation.

Feedback from participants emphasized the importance of maintaining the full six-week duration, with many youth noting that it took several weeks to truly connect with the ʻāina and experience the program's benefits. Hoʻokanaka held a graduation for its 10th cohort in November 2025.

Looking ahead, the First Circuit Family Court is committed to expanding Hoʻokanaka's reach. With its culturally rooted approach and early signs of success, the program holds great promise as a model for supporting justice-involved youth across Hawaiʻi.



Front Row (left to right): Dayle Liu, Windward Unit Supervisor; Celeste Andres, Project Director, Kupu ʻĀina Farms; Tanya Barcarse, Court Operations Specialist, Juvenile Probation Section; Boni Grimmel, Project Director, Kawailoa Campus. Second Row (left to right): Amanda Ishida-Norton, Probation Officer, Windward Unit; Matthew Palafox, Juvenile Probation Section Administrator; Steven Ige, Probation Officer, Windward Unit; Jin Chang, Assistant Vice President of Operations, Partners in Development.

Family Drug Court

Family Drug Court (FDC) is a specialty court of the First Circuit Family Court and has been in operation for the last 23 years. Its mission is to ensure child safety by helping participants become safe, sober, and protective parents. Each family gets a personalized plan that includes proven treatment options and support services that respect their culture and needs. FDC works closely with Child Welfare Services (CWS) to help families heal and grow stronger, which also benefits the whole island community.

The primary function of FDC is to ensure that children are safe and that their parents can provide a safe, protective, nurturing, and drug-free home environment. FDC is a voluntary program, and participants are referred by CWS and/or other community-based programs. Once participants are admitted into FDC, they collaborate with the FDC Team to establish a service plan that addresses the needs of the whole family.

The FDC Team consists of a Program Manager, two FDC Case Managers, a Judicial Clerk, three Child Welfare Services Social Workers, two Guardians ad Litem, a Deputy Attorney General, a Court Clerk, and Judge Andrew T. Park. The FDC Team collaborates with other community-based programs who provide services that include substance use treatment, psychological evaluations, mental health assessments, Parent-Child Attunement Therapy, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, ‘Ohana Conferences, parenting education, hands-on parenting, counseling, domestic violence intervention, and emergency housing services.

Process to Enroll and Get Admitted in FDC

Parents must go through a screening and assessment process to qualify for FDC. This process determines the risks and needs of each family. The FDC Team uses the information it gathers to create an individualized service plan for each parent. The service plan may include substance use treatment services, weekly check-ins with FDC case managers, random drug screens, hands-on parenting or parenting education services, domestic violence intervention services, psychological evaluations, individual/couples/family therapy, and emergency housing services.

Once a parent is admitted into the FDC their progress is tracked at four levels:

- Level I: Choice (parents attend weekly court hearings)
- Level II: Challenge (parents attend bimonthly court hearings)
- Level III: Change (parents attend monthly court hearings)
- Level IV: Maintain (parents only attend review hearings that are held every five months)

Recovering from substance use takes time and happens in steps. Each step has small goals to make the process feel less overwhelming and to help parents move toward being reunited with their children. On average, each step takes about 3 to 4 months, and the whole FDC program usually takes around 12 to 16 months to finish.

Reunification with children can occur at any step, depending on whether the parent has shown they can stay sober, are actively participating in services, and can provide a safe home.

Once parents complete the first three levels, they may be considered for graduation and have their case closed.

FDC also helps parents build strong support systems in their communities so they can stay on track even after their time in court is over. Before graduating, parents create a recovery support plan and a family safety plan. These plans list people, groups, and local resources they can turn to for help in the future.

FDC believes that staying connected to positive people and activities focused on recovery helps parents stay sober long-term and reduces the chances of needing to return to court.

Program Reach & Outcomes

July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

21 families served (25 parents, 24 children)

14 new parents admitted

5 parents graduated with 7 children reunified

3 families achieved permanency through legal guardianship

Since 2002

553 total participants served

330 graduates

Program Enhancements and Expanded Support

Last year, FDC made a meaningful change by expanding its eligibility criteria to include minor parents as young as 17½-years-old, provided they have guardian consent. This update allowed FDC to serve two minor-parent families, both of whom successfully completed the program and achieved reunification with their children.

In addition, emergency housing contracts continued to play a critical role in supporting family stability. These contracts provided safe and sober housing for three parents and four children, helping prevent homelessness and supporting reunification efforts. To ensure continued access to this vital resource, three existing contracts were renewed, and one new contract was added for the upcoming fiscal year.

Transformative Journeys and Family Reunification

This year, FDC celebrated the remarkable progress of five graduates who entered the program while facing significant challenges, including homelessness and substance use. Through their commitment and the support of the FDC team, all five parents achieved stable employment, financial independence, and the ability to safely care for their children. Their journeys reflect the heart of FDC's mission—restoring families and building brighter futures.

In one case a 2023 graduate and single father of a child with special needs was honored during National Reunification Month for his continued dedication to parenting and community service.



Family and Juvenile Drug Court staff at the RISE25 Conference in Kissimmee, Florida in May 2025. Left to right: Derek Sumida (JDC), Matthew Palafox (JPS), Jana Leyh (JDC), Christopher Soria (JDC), Rachel Kaneshige (FDC), Andrew Diggs (FDC), Judge Andrew T. Park, Judge Matthew Viola.

Training & Community Engagement

FDC staff engaged in professional development throughout the year, including participation in the RISE25 national conference and training sessions on domestic violence and trauma-informed care. The program also relaunched its alumni engagement efforts, hosting a well-received Alumni Coffee Hour in March 2025 with eight alumni families. Plans are in place to hold three to four alumni events annually to foster ongoing support and mentorship.

Looking Ahead

FDC aims to expand alumni engagement, increase emergency housing capacity, and explore partnerships to become a practicum site for peer support specialists. These efforts reflect FDC's commitment to long-term recovery, family stability, and community healing.

O‘ahu Juvenile Drug Court

The Juvenile Drug Court (JDC) program strengthens Hawai‘i’s support for justice-involved youth struggling with substance abuse. Established in 2001 under the First Circuit Family Court, the program focuses on early support to keep youth out of jail or prison, personalized assessments to understand each youth’s drug use, better access to a range of treatment options, and close monitoring by judges. Youth are rewarded for progress and held accountable for setbacks.

Youth in the program receive intensive probation services including four to five visits from a probation officer each week, as well as drug testing as needed, weekly court check-ins, and intensive substance abuse treatment. The program also uses GPS and electronic monitoring, maintains daily phone contact, and offers family therapy, support groups, and youth activities to encourage positive development.

The goal is to intervene early and consistently to help youth overcome substance abuse and avoid deeper involvement in the juvenile or criminal justice system. By addressing issues before they escalate, the program aims to create safer communities and healthier futures for youth and their families.

JDC supports both youth and their families with care that is gender-specific, culturally sensitive, and appropriate for young people in the justice system. The program recognizes addiction as a chronic, relapsing disease and emphasizes accountability. It provides comprehensive services that promote respect, opportunity, personal wellness, and public safety. All interventions are tailored to the youth’s risk level to ensure community protection is never compromised.

2025 Program Updates

The JDC continues to strengthen its partnerships and expand services to better support youth and families affected by substance use.

Service Providers

JDC maintains contracts with the YMCA of Honolulu for outpatient adolescent substance abuse treatment and with the Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawaii for family therapy services. These organizations serve as JDC’s primary in-house providers. Additional treatment support is available on an as-needed basis from Hina Mauka, Child and Family Services (CFS), and CARE Hawaii. For residential treatment and out-of-home placements, JDC utilizes Ke Kama Pono, Youth Challenge, and the Bobby Benson Center.

Funding and Staffing

In early 2024, JDC submitted a proposal to the Hawai‘i Department of Health’s Alcohol & Drug Abuse Division (ADAD) to secure funding for a dedicated substance abuse counselor, a position lost in 2021. ADAD approved the proposal, and a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was enacted for three years, from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2027. This agreement provides $65,000 annually, totaling $195,000, and allows JDC to contract the YMCA for outpatient and intensive outpatient services for the program for the next three years.

Fishbowl and “3 for 3” Incentives Return to JDC

JDC reinstated its Fishbowl and “3 for 3” incentive programs to encourage youth to stay engaged and follow through with their responsibilities.

Each week, youth are assigned tasks such as attending school or work, completing drug tests, or meeting with their therapist or counselor—based on their court orders. When a youth successfully completes three tasks, they qualify for the “3 for 3” incentive and their name is entered into a fishbowl—literally a bowl used to collect entries.

The more tasks a youth completes, the more entries they earn, increasing their chances of winning a prize when names are drawn from the fishbowl every week. Prizes have included basketballs, footballs, makeup kits, hair-care products, curling irons, hairdryers, and gift cards to local restaurants and stores.

This simple but effective system motivates youth to stay on track with their goals. Many participate enthusiastically just to earn more entries into the fishbowl, reinforcing positive behavior and accountability in a fun and rewarding way.



Judge Robert J. Brown sits with the prizes for JDC’s Fishbowl and “3 for 3” incentive programs.

Juvenile Intake and Diversion Section

As part of a strategic reorganization completed in 2024, the First Circuit Family Court established the Juvenile Intake and Diversion Section (JIDS) to streamline and strengthen its response to youth involved in the justice system. JIDS brings together three key units—Law Violations Intake, Diversion, and Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS)—to provide a coordinated, youth-centered approach that emphasizes early intervention, accountability, and access to supportive services. Each unit plays a distinct role in addressing the needs of youth and families while working to reduce formal court involvement and promote long-term positive outcomes.

Law Violation Unit

Located at Hale Hilinaʻi, the home to Youth Treatment Courts on Adler Street, this unit handles youth referred to Family Court for law violations. It conducts social investigations and provides the Court with disposition recommendations following adjudication.

Diversion Unit

The First Circuit Family Court established the Diversion Unit in 2023 as part of its efforts to prevent the filing of Petitions and reduce the number of youth entering the juvenile justice system. With strong support from the Prosecutor's and Public Defender's offices, the court developed an extensive list of eligible offenses for first-time, low-level offenders.

Since its inception, the unit has received 550 referrals. The most common referral has been for Assault in the Third Degree. In September 2025, the unit launched Phase 2 of its rollout, expanding to include a limited number of status offenses. As a result, referrals increased significantly—from 119 in 2024 to 326 during the first ten months of 2025.

The Diversion Unit is staffed by Probation Officers who work with youth who meet specific program criteria. Instead of proceeding through the formal court process, eligible youth are referred to supportive services and complete a Spark project—a strengths-based approach rooted in research from the Search Institute. A spark is a special quality, skill, or interest that brings a young person joy, energy, and a sense of purpose. When youth identify and express their spark—and have supportive adults who champion it—they are more likely to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally, and are less likely to experience depression or engage in violence.

The Diversion Unit collaborates with community partners to identify positive, structured programs for youth participants. Each youth is given 90 days to complete the diversion program, with extensions available for good cause. Upon successful completion, youth may be eligible to have their record expunged.

Probation Officers across the Juvenile Client Services Branch (JCSB)—including those in the Juvenile Probation Section, Juvenile Intake and Diversion Section, Girls Court, and Juvenile Drug Court—have been trained in the spark framework by Social Services Manager Kristin

Davidson. Officers act as “spark champions” by affirming and encouraging each youth’s spark, modeling it, providing opportunities for expression, and showing up to support it.

Victim Impact Class

The Juvenile Victim Impact Class is a 1.5-hour session designed for youth ages 13–17 who have committed offenses such as theft, vandalism, assault, or other actions that cause harm to individuals or the community. Participation may be court-ordered or assigned as a condition of diversion.

The class aims to help youth understand the real and lasting effects of their actions on victims, families, and the broader community. Through guided discussions and interactive activities, participants are encouraged to develop empathy, take accountability, and build a sense of personal responsibility.

Held every other month at Hale Hilinaʻi, the class is currently facilitated by the PINS Supervisor and the JIDS Administrator. The long-term goal is to train all JIDS staff to facilitate the class, allowing for increased frequency and broader reach.

Since its launch in July 2025, two sessions have been held with a total of 12 participants and a 91% completion rate.
in violence.

Hawai‘i Children’s Justice Centers

The Judiciary’s Hawai‘i Children’s Justice Centers (CJCs) provide safe, child-friendly, fair and neutral settings where children who may be victims of abuse or witnesses to crime are forensically interviewed by specially trained professionals. The Centers serve children who are alleged victims of physical abuse, sexual abuse, child sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation; witnesses to crimes, including domestic violence; and other forms of maltreatment.

Each CJC coordinates a multidisciplinary team of professionals—including representatives from child welfare services, law enforcement, prosecutors’ offices, victim-witness and advocate programs, medical and mental health providers, and community partners—to ensure a coordinated response that addresses the unique needs of each child. Non-offending caretakers and child victim’s siblings are also provided with important services. The Centers aim to prevent unnecessary trauma while supporting the investigation and legal processes, ensuring that children’s voices are heard and that justice is pursued in a developmentally appropriate manner.

These centers are geographically dispersed to meet the needs of children statewide:

- O‘ahu
- East Hawai‘i island
- West Hawai‘i island
- Maui
- Kaua‘i
- Satellite interview sites at Kapolei Courthouse on O‘ahu; and on Lāna‘i and Moloka‘i.

Fiscal Year 2024-2025 CJC Case Statistics

Children’s Justice Centers (CJC)	Total Cases Tracked for Fiscal Year 2024–2025	Total Children Tracked for Fiscal Year 2024–2025	Total Number of Child Interviews for Fiscal Year 2024–2025
CJC O‘ahu	604	1062	497
CJC East Hawai‘i	179	249	163
CJC West Hawai‘i	116	202	95
CJC Maui	186	361	91
CJC Kaua‘i	33	88	43
Total	1118	1962	889

A blueprint for other jurisdictions

Hawai‘i’s CJCs have drawn international interest from child-protection professionals seeking to strengthen their own systems. In August 2025, a delegation from Japan’s Ministry of Criminal and Supreme Justice, prosecutors, and a representative from the Embassy of Japan in Washington, DC. spent three days in Honolulu meeting with CJC leadership, Hawai‘i Supreme Court Justices, state lawmakers, and others to study the program firsthand. Their visit reflected growing recognition that Hawai‘i’s multidisciplinary, trauma-informed model offers valuable lessons for jurisdictions working to improve outcomes for child victims.

The delegation was interested in learning about the structure and day-to-day operation of Hawai‘i’s Children’s Justice Centers and how they integrate with the broader court system and Multi-Disciplinary Teams of professionals. They sought information about the expertise and qualifications required of professionals who work with child victims and how the Centers are situated organizationally within the Judiciary. They were also curious about the types of crimes most commonly affecting children in Hawai‘i and how judges and courts handle child victimization cases—both inside and outside the courtroom.

The delegation further explored Hawai‘i’s procedural innovations designed to reduce trauma for children, and practices that minimize the emotional burden on children involved in legal proceedings. Finally, they sought insight into judicial training on the unique needs of child victims and the factors that position Hawai‘i’s approach as a potential model for other jurisdictions.

In November 2025, a delegation from Hawai’i traveled to Tokyo to meet with their Ministry of Criminal and Supreme Justice as well as partners including their law enforcement, prosecutors, child welfare, medical and mental health to engage in conversations and sharing of information regarding both Hawai’i and Japan’s systems of response to child abuse.

There Is No Place Like Home

The Victorian house in Nu‘uanu that has been the home of the O‘ahu Children’s Justice Center since 1988 has supported thousands of children and families during some of the most difficult moments of their lives. While the historic home has served the community well, increasing demand and the need for a larger, more modern, specialized facility has made it clear that the time has come for a new chapter.

With the support of the Hawai‘i State Legislature, funding was appropriated for a new Center in East Honolulu. Construction is projected to begin in summer 2026. Completion of the building is anticipated in summer–fall 2027.

The new O‘ahu CJC will be fully accessible to individuals with disabilities and equipped to respond to urgent cases beyond regular business hours. It will provide private, trauma-informed spaces where children and families can meet confidentially with the many professionals involved in these sensitive and complex cases. The facility will include three dedicated child forensic interview rooms, a non-acute medical exam room, a shared workspace for partner agency personnel, and an expanded conference room to support the frequent meetings and trainings central to the Center’s multidisciplinary work. Additional office space will be available for volunteers and interns from fields such as social work, law enforcement, law, medicine, and mental health—further strengthening the Center’s capacity and reach.

Neighbor Island CJCs

CJCs on the neighboring islands also continue to provide an important array of services to their respective communities.

CJC Friends (Public-Private Partnership)

The Children's Justice Centers benefit from strong public-private partnerships that bring together the Judiciary and the local community. They are supported by nonprofit organizations known as the Friends of the Children's Justice Center, as well as by Kid's Matter, which serves West Hawai'i. These organizations provide vital resources to the Centers, assist the professionals who work with child victims, and support the children and families who rely on these programs.

Partner Agencies

The Children's Justice Centers work in collaboration with numerous organizations, including:

- State of Hawai'i Department of Human Services – Child Welfare Services
- State of Hawai'i Department of the Attorney General
- United States Attorney's Office
- County police departments
- The Armed Forces
- The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Homeland Security Investigations (HSI)
- County offices of the prosecuting attorneys
- Hawai'i State Judiciary
- Victim witness assistance programs
- Victim advocacy & crisis counseling programs
- Medical services
- Mental health/clinical services
- Community volunteers

Training & In-Services

The Children's Justice Centers also work in partnership with the Hawai'i State Chapter of Children's Justice Centers (HSCCJCs) and the Hawai'i Children's Justice Act Grant Task Force to coordinate numerous trainings and in-service sessions on topics related to child abuse and child maltreatment. Over the 2025 fiscal year, hundreds of professionals from across the islands participated in both in-person and online sessions. One session focused on the topic of starvation and torture of children, prompted by cases that have been identified in Hawai'i.
Community volunteers

Families celebrate ‘Ohana Day in Hilo

The Third Circuit held its eighth annual ‘Ohana Day at Hale Kaulike, the Hilo courthouse, in November 2025, celebrating permanency for fourteen families from across Hawai‘i Island. ‘Ohana Day, known nationally as Adoption Day, is held each year during the week before Thanksgiving, when courts across the country finalize adoptions and guardianships. The event marked the beginning of new chapters as keiki officially joined their “Forever Families.”

The families gathered in Family Court as adoptions and guardianships were made official, surrounded by loved ones and members of the court community. While Family Court proceedings often involve difficult decisions, ‘Ohana Day highlights a different side of the court’s work, one centered on hope, healing, and permanency for keiki. ‘Ohana Day has become a special tradition at Hilo Family Court, celebrating the collective role families and extended ‘ohana play in helping children grow and thrive.



Pictured: From left, Judge Darien Ching Nagata, the Kawakami family, and Guardian Ad Litem Martin Bento on Adoption Day.

For the occasion, the courtroom was accented in shades of purple, silver, and white, creating a vibrant amethyst backdrop for a day filled with emotion and joy. Tears and laughter marked the proceedings as families, social workers, attorneys, and court staff reflected on the journeys that led to this milestone.

‘Ohana Day underscores the Judiciary’s commitment to children and families, transforming legal proceedings into lasting beginnings.

Courthouse Companions Bring Comfort to Family Court

Tuukka and Kawelo are golden retrievers enjoying full, playful lives. Six-year-old Tuukka enjoys swimming at the beach, digging in the sand, and collecting a variety of stuffed animals, while one-year-old Kawelo thrives as a dock diving enthusiast, boasting a personal best jump of 22 feet 6 inches. Yet when they arrive at the Ronald T. Y. Moon Judiciary Complex in Kapolei, their energy shifts to a calm and reassuring presence, offering comfort and support to children, families, and courthouse staff.

Alongside their dedicated owners, Jackie Hugger and Toni Sardillo, Tuukka and Kawelo have been serving as therapy dogs at the courthouse since 2025, helping visitors navigate the emotional challenges of Family Court. Visiting approximately once per month, the two golden retrievers quietly make a meaningful difference, bringing moments of relief, joy, and connection to everyone they encounter.



Tuukka with (from left) District Judge Courtney N. Naso, District Judge Elizabeth Paek-Harris, trainer / owner Jackie Hugger, Senior Family Court Judge Dyan M. Medeiros, and District Family Judge Natasha R. Shaw.

Tuukka is a registered therapy dog through Pet Partners. Hugger began training him as a puppy to handle unpredictable environments, from busy stores to medical settings. “We went to Home Depot a lot when he was young,” Hugger explained. “It was a great way to get used to different sounds, floor textures, and the general public. I also exposed him to medical equipment so he’d be comfortable interacting with people with other abilities.” Tuukka brings a reassuring presence to the Family Court hallways, whether he is sitting patiently beside a nervous child or waiting quietly to greet families before or after hearings.



Tuukka's day off at the beach.

Kawelo, though younger, has quickly joined Tuukka in bringing smiles and comfort to the courthouse. Certified with the Alliance of Therapy Dogs, Kawelo combines natural athleticism with an affectionate temperament, allowing him to engage with children and adults alike.

"Emotions often run high, given the very difficult circumstances that bring people to Family Court," said District Family Court Judge Natasha Shaw. "Tuukka and Kawelo offer a calm and comforting presence for families and children as they face challenging moments at court. These very friendly dogs help create a space where families can feel safe, heard, and supported. Their presence is a gentle reminder that compassion belongs everywhere, even at a court."

Both dogs and their owners are volunteers who provide moments of relief and normalcy in a setting often filled with tension, worry, and uncertainty. They approach children and families gently, never forcing interaction, yet always inviting connection.

As Judge Shaw put it, "Their presence reminds us that court is not only a place for legal resolution—it's also a place for healing. And sometimes, healing begins with a wagging tail and a quiet moment of connection."

Stewardship in our Communities

The Hawai‘i State Judiciary provides services that promote justice for members of our community who have extraordinary challenges.



Community Outreach Court convenes at two locations on O‘ahu’s Windward side, including the Waimānalo Hawaiian Homestead Association Hālau.

Community Outreach Court

The Community Outreach Court (COC) is a mobile, community-based court designed to help individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness resolve low-level, nonviolent criminal and traffic offenses that often serve as barriers to employment, housing, and stability.

Established in 2017, COC brings justice system services into O‘ahu’s rural and underserved communities, reducing obstacles such as transportation challenges, intimidating courtroom environments, and confusion about legal processes.

COC participants frequently face multiple barriers beyond their court cases, including mental health or substance use challenges, limited access to healthcare, and unstable housing. Individuals are referred to COC through the Office of the Public Defender, and they work toward completing the program and “graduating” from court by meeting the requirements set for their cases. Participants are typically sentenced to perform community service or engage in

alternative programs, such as the Learning Empowerment Action Program (LEAP), which provides life skills and educational opportunities. Throughout the process, COC eases the burden on the Judiciary by clearing thousands of cases from the court calendar, recalling outstanding bench warrants, and removing drivers' license stoppers, helping participants fully reintegrate into the community.

Statistics from January 2017 to November 2025:

Individuals graduated/completed the program: **724**

Cases were cleared and are no longer active: **10,836**

Community service hours were completed: **7,629**

Bench warrants were recalled: **959**

Driver's license stoppers were lifted: **7,826**

By holding court in welcoming community spaces and connecting participants with social service partners, COC pairs accountability with access to essential resources, including housing, healthcare, treatment services, and food assistance. This approach not only helps participants resolve their cases and achieve stability, but also strengthens public safety and reduces systemic strain on the courts.



Family Court Judge Thomas Haia presides over a Community Outreach Court hearing in Waimānalo.

Community Outreach Court Expands Services

Community Outreach Court (COC) continued to broaden its reach in 2025 with the opening of a new location in Wahiawā, bringing the total number of COC sites on Oʻahu to six. This Central Oʻahu expansion improves access for individuals living in an area experiencing some of the island's highest levels of homelessness. Held at Wahiawā United Methodist Church, the new

site gives participants a nearby, community-based option to resolve their cases and connect with needed services.

Across the island, COC now convenes at six locations—Kakaʻako, Kāneʻohe, McCully–Mōʻiliʻili, Waiʻanae, Waimānalo, and Wahiawā—meeting people where they live and in settings that are familiar and welcoming. The court relies on a network of community partners who provide space and support, including libraries, community centers, churches, and service hubs. The Judiciary's longstanding partnership with the Hawaiʻi State Public Library System remains vital, offering safe and accessible venues for hearings in Waiʻanae and McCully–Mōʻiliʻili. Additional partners such as C.O.R.E., the Institute for Human Services, Waimānalo Health Center, Legal Aid Society of Hawaiʻi, Helping Hands Hawaiʻi, Poʻailani, and others help ensure participants receive wraparound support. Together, these partnerships strengthen COC's ability to deliver justice in the community and expand opportunities for individuals seeking stability and a fresh start.

Meeting People Where They Are

As part of its mission to meet people where they are, Community Outreach Court (COC) social workers regularly visit parks, shelters, and homeless camps to share information about the opportunities the court offers and screen potential participants. These outreach efforts help ensure that individuals who may face barriers to the traditional court system are aware of an accessible, community-based option for resolving their cases.

Consistent outreach has proven critical to building trust and rapport among individuals experiencing homelessness. When visits are predictable, people learn to expect COC staff and are more likely to engage with the court and its services. Regular in-person contact provides an opportunity to explain the court process, offer guidance, and connect individuals to supportive resources in a way that feels safe and approachable.

COC staff are also available on-site to answer questions about outstanding court matters and assist individuals with applying to the program. By meeting participants where they live, the court strengthens relationships, increases access to justice, and helps participants take meaningful steps toward stability and resolution.

Support for Participants with Physical Limitations

The Learning Empowerment Action Program (LEAP), created in partnership with the Adult/Juvenile Community Service and Restitution Unit (A/JCSRU), continued to offer an alternative for participants unable to perform traditional community service due to physical limitations. LEAP courses cover résumé writing, budgeting, financial literacy, basic computer skills, stress management, SNAP application assistance, and driver/pedestrian education. Time spent in LEAP counts toward court-ordered community service obligations.

Partner Agencies

COC continues to work closely with a broad range of partners that provide essential services to participants. These partnerships allow court participants to access resources immediately following hearings.

COC partners include:

• Achieve Zero • Affordable Housing and Homeless Alliance • Aloha United Way • American Job Center • Angel Network Charities • Catholic Charities Hawai‘i • Child & Family Services • City & County of Honolulu’s C.O.R.E. • Gregory House • Hale Kipa • Hawai‘i CARES / Crisis Line • Hawai‘i Foodbank • Hawai‘i Health & Harm Reduction Center • Hawai‘i Office of the Public Defender • Hawai‘i State Judiciary Driver Education Unit • Helping Hands Hawai‘i • Honolulu Office of the Prosecuting Attorney • Housing Solutions • Hui Mahi‘ai ‘Āina • Institute for Human Services (IHS) • Kalihi-Palama Health Care for the Homeless Project • Ke Ahou Shelter Kealahou West O‘ahu • Kealahou West O‘ahu • KEY Project • Kuewa Project, Inc. • Legal Aid Society of Hawai‘i • Lili‘uokalani Trust – Kīpuka Ko‘olau Poko • Lifeline Program (Cell Phones) • Mā‘ili Land • McCully–Mō‘ili‘ili Public Library • ‘Ohana Ola O Kahumana • Partners in Care (O‘ahu CoC) • Partners in Development • Po‘ailani • Power House Church – Wai‘anae • Pūnāwai Rest Stop • Restore, Reconnect, Revive (R3) Wai‘anae • River of Life Mission • Safe Haven • Salvation Army Family Services • St. Augustine by the Sea Church • Sunset Beach Christian Church • U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – Healthcare for Homeless Veterans • U.S. VETS — Barber’s Point • Volunteer Legal Services Hawai‘i • Wai‘anae Public Library • Waikīkī Health • Waimānalo Health Center • Waimānalo Homestead Association • Weinberg Village Waimānalo • Windward Community College •

One-Stop Resource Fair for COC Participants

In May 2025, COC held a Service Fair at Kauikeaouli Hale (Honolulu District Court) exclusively for COC participants. The event brought together approximately 290 attendees and 25 community organizations offering services to support participants’ needs. The fair aimed to make critical resources easily accessible in one location, helping participants overcome barriers they may face in connecting with employment, housing, legal, and health services.



Close to 300 people attended the COC service fair in May 2025.

A wide range of services were represented, with community organizations staffing tables and booths to share information about available programs and resources. Providers offered guidance on medical and mental health support, housing assistance, legal services, job

placement resources, and more. In addition, COC participants were able to receive free haircuts, which drew a line of participants eager to take advantage of this service. Attendees were encouraged to engage with multiple providers, learn about available programs, and schedule follow-up appointments as needed to support their personal and program goals.



From left: Claudine Dougherty, Sophia Placourakis, and Fiona Weatherwax work the registration table at the COC resource fair

The event also featured a donation initiative coordinated by COC staff, providing participants with essential items for free such as clothing, shoes, toiletries, bedding, and towels.

Challenges

Like prior years, the program continued to face operational challenges inherent in working with a mobile court model and a highly transient population.

- Maintaining consistent contact with participants remains difficult. Staff continued efforts to improve communication strategies and re-establish contact with individuals who became unresponsive.
- Security is essential to safe court operations. COC requires the presence of sheriffs or security officers at all sites, and dedicated funding is necessary to ensure this coverage.

Program Goals for 2026

Looking ahead to 2026, COC is preparing to introduce a new educational course designed to help participants reflect on the circumstances that led to their court involvement. The course will focus on introspection, personal accountability, and informed decision-making. By offering a structured and supportive environment, COC aims to help participants better understand the choices that brought them into the justice system and equip them with greater self-awareness as they work toward long-term stability.

In addition, COC plans to expand its reach by strengthening its presence in Wahiawā and the North Shore. Building on partnerships established in recent years, the program intends to continue developing relationships with local service providers while increasing outreach events in these communities. These efforts will help identify individuals who may benefit from COC's services and ensure the program remains accessible to unsheltered and low-income individuals across O'ahu.

Office of the Public Guardian

The Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) serves as a court appointed guardian for incapacitated adults when there are no friends or family members willing to serve as guardian, or appropriate.

As guardian, OPG becomes the legal decision maker in a client's life to assist with managing their personal affairs. The guardian's responsibility entail careful considerations of a ward's background, history, personal and professional relationships, and honoring their personal needs and wishes when appropriate and feasible. Part of OPG's mission is safeguarding the rights, dignity, humanity, and quality of life of each protected person entrusted to OPG's care.

Guardians must navigate the benefits and entitlement systems so that these government services may be appropriate for clients. OPG collaborates with government and private agencies such as social security, Veteran Affairs, pensions, other income sources, bank accounts, placement options, insurances, medical services, caregivers, long-term care facilities, case management services and other entities on behalf of each client. OPG monitors changes to systems ensuring the guardianship makes necessary adjustments and follows up promptly to fulfill the needs of each person's unique situation without any lapse in coverage of services.

Experts are occasionally retained to handle matters such as ownership of properties, business dealings, trusts, civil and criminal matters, and inheritance. Obtaining personal information is necessary for OPG to make informed decisions about a person's health care and overall welfare. The issues in question are often interconnected with other aspects of a person's life situation, and untangling webs of information within the context of situations and comprehending them as presented is a vital part of understanding a client's needs and risks when setting up and rendering appropriate care.

OPG Accounting

OPG manages the financial affairs of several hundred clients. Securing client funds involves justification of the client's identity with current identification before financial institutions and government entities release the funds. OPG accounting consults with the guardians and offers expertise in finance handling to assist the guardians in decision-making. Finance handling is a vital part of the program that manages assets of clients. OPG makes simple forecasts of the future of client accounts to ensure there is continued continuity of government benefits. The OPG guardian and accountant determine each client's short-term and long-term options for appropriate placement and care. The cases that require the most discussion are new intake cases and when OPG wards pass away. OPG provides regular updates of client account balances, disbursements, and income to the guardians for monthly monitoring of liquid assets. Chart 1 indicates the number of cases handled by OPG. Since 2024, OPG accounting showed an increase of 41 cases; currently there are 426 active cases.

Chart 1: Count of Finance Handling of OPG Cases

	2024	2025
Finance Handler for OPG Cases		
OPG Accounting	375 cases + new cases	426 cases + new cases
Small Estate Guardianships Branch (public conservator)	Oʻahu, 181 Maui County, 8 cases Hawaiʻi County, 6 cases Kauaʻi, 7 cases	Oʻahu, 166 cases Maui County, 7 cases Hawaiʻi County, 7 cases Kauaʻi, 7 cases
Other: private conservator, trustee, representative payee, or private finance handler	135 cases	72 cases

OPG Client Care

The most frequently seen categories of diagnoses are 1. Developmental Disabilities, 2. Mental Illnesses, 3. Elderly/Memory Loss and Dementias, and 4. Other - including Medical Issues and Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI). The correct diagnoses are not always apparent or available to the guardian, which presents challenges finding appropriate care. See Chart 2 for the case count by diagnoses.

Chart 2: Case Count by Diagnoses

	Developmentally Disabled	Elderly/Dementia and Memory Loss	Mental Illness	Other, Medical, TBI	Total cases
Year 2024	367	193	96	35	691
Year 2025	349	205	96	34	684

Guardianship Working Group

For the past few years, OPG has participated in a guardianship uniform law working group with stakeholders from various state departments, hospitals, agencies and other professionals. The working group, initiated by legislators, helped identify systemic gaps and feasible solutions for improving guardianships in the State of Hawaiʻi. OPG took the opportunity to share and educate the stakeholders of the intricacies and complexities of OPG's role as public guardian. The national trend is to explore services and resources that help in developing alternatives to guardianships to create options that are as least restrictive for the wards as possible. Three areas under discussion: court scheduling of guardianship cases; grievance procedures for protected persons; and training/education for guardians. The progress is being reported to the legislature by a working group representative.

Expanding Court Access Through Dignity and Equity

With support from Maʻi Movement Hawaiʻi, the Judiciary expanded access to free menstrual products across the state, reinforcing its commitment to inclusion for all who seek court services.

In 2025, the Judiciary expanded access to free menstrual products at its facilities, reinforcing its commitment to equity and inclusion. Staff installed menstrual product dispensers at two additional locations, increasing the total to eight Judiciary sites across Hawaiʻi where individuals seeking legal services can access these essential items at no cost.

The most recent installations included Hale Hilinaʻi in Honolulu, which houses Juvenile Client Services programs such as Girls Court and Juvenile Drug Court, and the Ronald T. Y. Moon Judiciary Complex in Kapolei, home to Family Court on Oʻahu.

With support from Maʻi Movement Hawaiʻi, a nonprofit dedicated to ending period poverty, the Judiciary now provides menstrual product dispensers at facilities in all four counties. In addition to the two new locations, products are also available at the following Judiciary facilities:

- Aliʻiōlani Hale (Supreme Court Building) in Honolulu
- Hoapili Hale in Wailuku and Lahaina District Courthouse on Maui
- Keahuolū Courthouse in Kona and Hale Kaulike in Hilo on Hawaiʻi Island
- Puʻuhonua Kaulike in Līhuʻe on Kauaʻi



A menstrual product dispenser located in the public restroom of Hale Hilinaʻi.

Language Assistance Services

Many people who come before the courts need language support to meaningfully participate in court proceedings, access services, or comprehend critical legal information. Providing meaningful access to court services for individuals who do not speak English fluently—or who have speech or hearing disabilities—remains a core responsibility of the Hawai‘i State Judiciary. The Judiciary continues to prioritize these services to ensure equitable participation.

Office on Equality and Access to the Courts

Hawai‘i’s population reflects a rich mix of languages and cultures. Migration trends and demographic changes have contributed to new linguistic communities, particularly among Asian and Pacific Island populations. Recent Census data shows that approximately 1 in 4 (25%) Hawai‘i residents speak a language other than English at home, with 1 in 10 (10.7%) considered limited-English proficient (LEP), ranking Hawai‘i seventh among all states.2 These statistics reinforce the need for robust language assistance services.

Language barriers can hinder individuals from accessing benefits or services, understanding rights, fulfilling responsibilities, or engaging with federally and state-funded programs, including the Judiciary. Interpreter services are provided at all points of public contact with the Judiciary—courtrooms, Self-Help Centers, Access to Justice Rooms, filing counters, and telephone communication.

For individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, the Judiciary provides sign language interpreters or computer-assisted real-time transcription (CART) services, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA).



Jordan Kotani, an American Sign Language interpreter, provides interpretation during a trial overseen by Judge Tracy Fukui in District Court.

The Judiciary's Office on Equality and Access to the Courts (OEAC) coordinates statewide programs, staff training, interpreter recruitment, registration, testing, and policy development to ensure access for LEP individuals and those with disabilities.

Language Interpreting in the Courts

Court interpreters are essential to the administration of justice. Interpreters assist defendants, parties, witnesses, and other court users with a substantial interest in a case who cannot read, write, speak, or understand English well enough to meaningfully participate in court proceedings.

OEAC continues to expand the pool of qualified freelance interpreters to meet the needs of high-demand languages, ensuring efficient and effective court operations.

Most requested interpreted languages (FY2024–2025)

1. Chuukese
2. Spanish
3. Ilokano
4. Marshallese
5. Tagalog
6. Korean
7. Mandarin
8. Japanese
9. Vietnamese
10. Cantonese
11. Samoan
12. Pohnpeian
13. Tongan
14. Russian
15. Kosraean

The Court Interpreter Certification Program

The Court Interpreter Certification Program promotes equal access to justice by ensuring that interpreters meet professional, ethical, and language proficiency standards. The program coordinates screening, training, and testing, including written exams, ethics evaluations, and oral interpreting skills tests for certain languages.

As of June 30, 2025, the Court Interpreter Registry included 368 interpreters speaking 53 languages. Among them, 13 were certified or certified master interpreters in French, Laotian, Mandarin, and Spanish.

During FY2025, 55 new applicants completed the Basic Orientation Workshop, the first mandatory step toward becoming qualified state court interpreters.

Interpreter Recruitment and Community Engagement

OEAC continues to recruit bilingual individuals through partnerships with community organizations, language groups, and educational institutions. Outreach focuses on high-demand language communities to raise awareness about the availability of language services at the Hawai‘i State Courts and to recruit new interpreters to build the Judiciary's pool of qualified court interpreters.

Through ongoing engagement, OEAC made 16 trips to neighbor islands to meet with community leaders and organizations, resulting in 19 individuals attending free, two-day interpreter workshops in Kona and Maui in December 2024. Interpreters who successfully completed the interpreter workshop and entered the Court Interpreter Certification Program

received credit for the Basic Orientation Workshop for new court interpreters, which is the first mandatory minimum requirement for all state court interpreters.

Based on the success of the project, the State Office of Language Access (OLA) committed another year of support for the community engagement project in 2025, with community meetings and workshops planned statewide in Fall 2025.

Interpreter Recruitment – Schools and Colleges

Bilingual students at Kealakehe High School, Konawaena High School, Waipahu High School, UH Hilo and UH Mānoa learned about interpreting as a way to earn income while using their language skills to help their community. OEAC staff made presentations to students in the Interpreting and Translation Club, English Language Learners, Seal of Biliteracy, Pacific Island Student Center and AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) programs, among others.

These presentations were made in response to schools seeking to benefit bilingual students. With support from school administrators, students from Konawaena and Kealakehe High Schools attended the two-day Basic Orientation Workshop for new court interpreters as a school field trip.

Legal Interpreter Course

When Kapiʻolani Community College (KCC) sought a partnership with OEAC to develop a legal interpreting course, the resulting collaboration was a successful, 16-week pilot course taught by OEAC staff in 2023-2024. Based on the success of the initial pilot course, KCC invited OEAC to teach a second course in June-July 2024. A third course was offered in January-February 2025. Taught by staff from the OEAC and an interpreter trainer, the course provided students with an overview of court interpreter ethics, interpreting skills and the interpreter's role in the Hawaiʻi State Court system. These hybrid courses consisted of six online evening classes and three, half-day in-person Saturday classes. A total of 14 Oʻahu students successfully completed the legal interpreting course in 2024-2025.

Through a Good Jobs Hawaiʻi grant to KCC, the students were provided with tuition waivers, loaner laptops and portable hotspot devices for mobile internet access. Students who passed the course and entered the Court Interpreter Certification Program received credit for the Basic Orientation Workshop for new court interpreters.

Multilingual Resources

OEAC develops multilingual court materials, including forms, instructions, and information sheets to help LEP individuals navigate the judicial system. Translated materials are posted on language-specific webpages, accessible by clicking on language names listed on the left sidebar of the Judiciary's homepage. Refresher training on language access policies and procedures was provided to Judiciary employees across all islands.

Papa Hana ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi Hoʻokolokolo

Papa Hana ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi Hoʻokolokolo, the Judiciary Hawaiian Language Program, was established in 2022 to support court users and the Judiciary in the use of ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi throughout the court system. ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi is one of the state's two official languages. Article XV, Section 4 of the Hawaiʻi State Constitution establishes, "English and Hawaiian shall be the official languages of Hawaiʻi." The constitution also provides for the preservation and promotion of Hawaiian culture, history, and language in various provisions, including Article X, Section 4, "The State shall promote the study of Hawaiian culture, history and language." The Judiciary continues to carry that constitutional kuleana through Papa Hana ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi Hoʻokolokolo.



Here, the Justices of the Hawaiʻi Supreme Court and Judiciary administration present their lei during the 2025 King Kamehameha I lei draping ceremony, accompanied by an oli delivered by Johanna Chock-Tam, director of Papa Hana ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi Hoʻokolokolo, underscoring the Judiciary's commitment to Hawaiian language and cultural grounding.

ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi ma ke Kahua Pūnaewele o ka ʻOihana Hoʻokolokolo • ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi on the Judiciary Public Website

The Judiciary launched its Hawaiian Language Program page on its public website. This section contains the core content found in other language access pages including guidance on requesting, using, and becoming a court interpreter, and expands upon it with resources unique to Hawaiian language users. These include the Judiciary's ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi Policy; full translations of English-language court interpreter content from the broader Language Access section; the newly initiated ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi Attorney Registry; and curated links to legal resources in Hawaiian. The webpage will continue to grow as additional materials and services are developed.

Papa Inoa Loio ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi • ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi Attorney Registry

Papa Hana ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi Hoʻokolokolo initiated the development of a registry for attorneys proficient in the Hawaiian language, aiming to support language access and cultural grounding in legal representation. While no registrants were received during the reporting period, the registry lays the groundwork for future outreach and visibility. This initiative reflects a long-term vision of building a network of legal professionals who can serve clients in Hawaiian.

Papa ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi • Hawaiian Language Training

Judiciary staff participated in a foundational Hawaiian language session focused on basic ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi skills. The session introduced pronunciation, greetings, and basic conversational phrases, helping staff build confidence in respectfully engaging with court users who speak Hawaiian. A multi-session course is currently in development to offer Judiciary employees deeper learning opportunities in ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi. This initiative aims to strengthen the Judiciary's ability to serve court users who wish to engage in ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi, while also normalizing the presence of Hawaiian language in professional and institutional settings.

Papa Hoʻoponopono • Hoʻoponopono Information Training

In tandem with language learning, Papa Hana ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi Hoʻokolokolo also introduced Judiciary employees to the cultural practice of hoʻoponopono through an informational training session. Hoʻoponopono is a traditional Hawaiian method of resolving conflict and restoring balance within families. The training emphasized values of collective responsibility, and reconciliation. The session drew upon teachings passed down from Hawaiian scholar Mary Kawena Pukui to cultural practitioner Lynette Paglinawan, and shared with Judiciary staff through Papa Hana ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi Hoʻokolokolo's director. By learning about hoʻoponopono, employees gained insight into a Hawaiian approach to conflict resolution that honors relationships and emphasizes restoration over division. This training not only broadened staff understanding of Hawaiian cultural practices, but also underscored the Judiciary's role in fostering culturally informed approaches to justice.



Together, these initiatives reflect the Judiciary's commitment to revitalization, normalization, and education. Papa Hana ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi Hoʻokolokolo continues to expand services in court interpretation, translation, and cultural education, ensuring that Judiciary staff are equipped with both linguistic and cultural knowledge to serve the public with dignity and respect.

Pictured left: Ahukini Fuertes, Special Assistant to the Administrative Director and Hawaiian cultural practitioner, delivers an oli during an event in the Hawaiʻi Supreme Court courtroom.

Commitment to Language Access

In March 2025, the Hawai‘i Judiciary issued the following statement, in both English and ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, reaffirming its commitment to language access and meaningful participation in the courts for all residents. The statement emphasizes the Judiciary’s dedication not only to supporting speakers of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i but also to providing interpreters and language services for individuals with limited English proficiency, striving to ensure that everyone can fully participate in the justice system.

Hawai‘i Judiciary Reaffirms Commitment to Providing Language Access to the Courts

On March 1, 2025, a presidential Executive Order designated for the first time English as the official national language. The Executive Order rescinds a former mandate that required federal agencies and recipients of federal funding to provide language assistance to non-English speakers.

The Executive Order does not impact Hawai‘i’s recognition of both English and ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i as the state’s official languages. The Judiciary reaffirms its policy of allowing people to communicate with the courts in either language.

“Respect for ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i is a core value of the Hawai‘i Judiciary,” Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald said.

Additionally, one in ten Hawai‘i residents have limited English proficiency. Without recognizing and accommodating these language needs, a great number of people appearing before the courts or receiving Judiciary services would not be able to meaningfully participate in the justice system.

The Judiciary has dedicated many resources to enhancing language access services for court users. “We are proud to provide such services, including court interpreters for all parties, witnesses, and persons with a substantial interest in a case and language services at all points of contact with the Judiciary, whether in person or over the telephone,” Recktenwald said.

“We assure court users, interpreters, and the public that the Hawai‘i State Judiciary remains fully committed to providing court interpreters to persons with limited English proficiency or speech or hearing impairments,” added Recktenwald. “We continue to see this as a critical service to assure meaningful access to the courts.

Hōʻoia Hou ka ʻOihana Hoʻokolokolo o Hawaiʻi i Kuleana i ka Hoʻolako ʻAna i Kokua ʻŌlelo i nā ʻAha Hoʻokolokolo

Ma Malaki 1, 2025, akahi nō a hoʻonoho kekahi Kauoha Hoʻokō i ka ʻōlelo Pelekania ma ke ʻano he ʻōlelo kūhelu aupuni. Hoʻopau ke Kauoha Hoʻokō i kekahi ʻōlelo kēnā mua i koi ka hoʻolako ʻana o nā keʻena pekelala a me nā mea nāna e loaʻa i nā kālā pekelala i ke kokua ʻōlelo no nā poʻe ʻōlelo ʻole i ka ʻōlelo Pelekania.

Mea ʻole ke Kauoha Hoʻokō i kō Hawaiʻi hoʻonoho ʻana i nā ʻōlelo Pelekania a me Hawaiʻi i nā ʻōlelo kūhelu o ka mokuʻāina. Hōʻoia hou ka ʻOihana Hoʻokolokolo i kāna kulekele no ka ʻae ʻana i nā poʻe e hoʻokaʻaʻike me nā ʻaha hoʻokolokolo i kekahi ʻōlelo o nā mea ʻelua.

"He manaʻo kahua o ka ʻOihana Hoʻokolokolo o Hawaiʻi ka mahalo no ka ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi," mea mai ʻo Luna Kānāwai Kiʻekiʻe Mark E. Recktenwald.

Eia hou aʻe, mākaukau ʻole hoʻokahi o ʻumi mau kānaka noho Hawaiʻi i ka ʻōlelo Pelekania. Me ʻole ka hoʻomaopopo ʻana a me ke kokua ʻana i kēia mau nele ʻōlelo, nui hewahewa nā poʻe e kū ana i mua o nā ʻaha hoʻokolokolo a i ʻole e loaʻa ana ka lawelawe ʻOihana Hoʻokolokolo hiki ʻole ke komo pono i ke kahua kaulike.

Hoʻokaʻawale ka ʻOihana Hoʻokolokolo i nā pono he nui no ka hoʻomāhuahua ʻana i ke lawelawe kokua ʻōlelo no nā mea hoʻohana i ka ʻaha hoʻokolokolo. "Haʻaheo mākou i ka hoʻolako ʻana i ia mau lawelawe ʻana, e like me ka mahele ʻōlelo ʻaha hoʻokolokolo no nā ʻaoʻao a pau, nā mea ʻike maka, a me nā poʻe me ke kuleana koʻikoʻi i kekahi hihia, a me ka lawelawe kokua ʻōlelo i nā hoʻopili ʻana a pau me ka ʻOihana Hoʻokolokolo, i ka holo kino ʻana a i ʻole ma ke kelepona," mea mai ʻo Recktenwald.

"E haʻi hoʻākāka leʻa mākou i nā mea hoʻohana i ka ʻaha hoʻokolokolo, nā mahele ʻōlelo, a me ke lehulehu e kūpaʻa mau ka ʻOihana Hoʻokolokolo o Hawaiʻi i ka hoʻolako ʻana i mahele ʻōlelo ʻaha hoʻokolokolo i nā kānaka mākaukau ʻole i ka ʻōlelo Pelekania, a i ʻole pilikia ka haʻi waha ʻana, a i ʻole pilikia ka lohe ʻana," haʻi maila ʻo Recktenwald. "Hoʻomaopopo mau mākou, he lawelawe kokua koʻikoʻi loa kēia no ka hōʻoia ʻana i ke ala māhuahua i nā ʻaha hoʻokolokolo."

Settling Disputes Without Going to Court

Settling disputes outside of court can lessen the emotional and financial burdens of litigation while promoting mutual understanding and voluntary compliance with agreements. Such approaches support efficient use of judicial resources and access to justice.

Center for Alternative Dispute Resolution

The Center for Alternative Dispute Resolution (CADR) expands access to fair, efficient, and cost-effective conflict resolution across the state. By prioritizing early, party-driven solutions, CADR champions processes for resolving disputes without the delay, financial and emotional burdens of litigation, while helping preserve relationships and build public confidence in the judicial system.

To fulfill its mission, CADR:

- Designs and administers a range of education, training, and outreach programs for state and county government, and for the general public;
- Administers the Appellate Mediation Program;
- Manages the Judiciary's purchase of services contract for mediation and related dispute resolution services; and
- Mediates and facilitates public policy disputes referred by elected or appointed government officials.

Highlights: Fiscal Year 2025

In FY 2025, with the help of community mediation centers around the state and other ADR partners, CADR helped meet the demand for alternative dispute resolution, including mediations, training, education, and outreach.

Hawai‘i Appellate Mediation Program

The Hawai‘i Appellate Mediation Program (AMP) was established in 1995 pursuant to the Hawai‘i Rules of Appellate Procedure. Through AMP, parties on appeal work with experienced mediators to resolve their cases by mutual agreement – thereby avoiding the added cost, emotional toll, and delay of litigation.

From inception in 1995 to the end of FY 2025, 835 cases entered the program. Of the 32 active cases in FY 2025, 12 settled or partially settled; 7 were returned to the ICA docket; 1 was

withdrawn prior to mediation, and 11 cases carried over to the new fiscal year. The AMP achieved an overall settlement/partial settlement rate of 50 percent.

Appellate Mediation Program Volunteers

The AMP relies heavily on volunteer mediators – retired justices, judges, and retired or semi-retired attorneys. Their time and expertise is invaluable, saving litigants time and money, and allowing the Intermediate Court of Appeals to address other cases.

During FY 2025, five new mediators were added to the panel. Volunteer mediators cumulatively provided over 290 hours of mediation services for 20 cases that closed during that period. Numerous hours were also spent on cases still active going into the new fiscal year.

The Access to Justice Commission annually recognizes the AMP Mediators at the Pro Bono Awards Celebration for their service to the courts and the community. The event is part of the American Bar Association's National Pro Bono week to recognize outstanding mediators, attorneys, and law firms who have given time and expertise to make a difference in their community. The awards support the continued growth of access to justice in Hawai'i.

FY 2025 Appellate Mediation Program Volunteer Mediators

Hon. Simeon R. Acoba, Jr. (ret.)
Hon. Riki May Amano (ret.)
George B. Apter, Esq.
Hon. Joel E. August (ret.)
Sidney K. Ayabe, Esq.
J. William "Ned" Busch, Esq.
Robin K. Campaniano, Esq.
Thomas W. Cestare, Esq.
Corlis J. Chang, Esq.
Louis L.C. Chang, Esq.
Charles W. Crumpton, Esq.
William C. Darrah, Esq.
Hon. James E. Duffy (ret.)
Jacqueline L.S. Earle, Esq.
David H. Franzel, Esq.
Hon. Max W.J. Graham (ret.)
Gary G. Grimmer, Esq.
Hon. Mahilani E.K. Hiatt (ret.)
Jerry M. Hiatt, Esq.
Hon. Douglas H. Ige (ret.)
Sidney Kanazawa, Esq.
Hon. Walter S. Kirimitsu (ret.)
Hon. Rosalyn Loomis (ret.)
Stanley Majka, Esq.
Georgia K. McMillen, Esq.
Hon. Douglas S. McNish (ret.)
Hon. Marie N. Milks (ret.)
Richard C. Mosher, Esq.
Hon. Rhonda A. Nishimura (ret.)
Hon. Maura M. Okamoto, (ret.)
Patricia Kim Park, Esq.
Barbara A. Petrus, Esq.
Justice Richard W. Pollack (ret.)
Hon. Shackley F. Raffetto (ret.)
Hon. Karl K. Sakamoto (ret.)
Hon. Sandra A. Simms (ret.)
Hon. Leland H. Spencer (ret.)
Hon. Elizabeth A. Strance (ret.)
Hon. Allene K. Suemori (ret.)
Owen K. Tamamoto, Esq.
Hon. Michael A. Town (ret.)
Arne Werchick, Esq.
Hon. Andrew P. Wilson (ret.)



Among AMP Mediators recognized at the 2025 Pro Bono Celebration were (from left) George Apter, Justice Simeon Acoba (ret.), Bill Darrah, and Gary Grimmer, photographed here with AMP Administrator Anne Marie Smoke.

Mediator Training and Professional Development

An advanced skills symposium, “Strategies for Balancing Legal and Emotional Components of Disputes,” developed and delivered in partnership with the Mediation Center of the Pacific (MCP), was held over Zoom in June 2025. The symposium, led by MCP Executive Director Tracey Wiltgen and AMP Administrator Anne Marie Smoke, featured a keynote address by Lee Jay Berman, President of the American Institute of Mediation. The symposium also hosted a panel of renowned local mediators; Judge Riki May Amano (ret.), Judge Mahilani Hiatt (ret.), and Judge Michael Town (ret.).

Thirty-seven advanced mediators attended the half-day event.

Family Court, First Judicial Circuit Volunteer Settlement Master Program

CADR continues to provide assistance with the Volunteer Settlement Master Program, which provides divorcing or separating parents an alternative to litigation before the Family Court of the First Circuit. Nine of the 11 active cases during FY 2025 closed for a 67 percent settlement rate.

Workplace Dispute Resolution Program

The Workplace Dispute Resolution Program is administered by CADR to provide mediation and facilitation as an option for Judiciary employees in workplace disputes. Since the program’s expansion in 2019 to the end of FY 2025, 26 cases have been reviewed and 8 referred for mediation.

Training, Education, Research, & Outreach

CADR annually offers the following workshops free to government employees throughout the state:

- CADR 100: Working it Out - Skills for Managing Conflict
- CADR 110: Handling Difficult Behaviors at Work
- CADR 200: Communicating with Empathy – The Path to Seeing More Deeply
- CADR 300: Hot Buttons
- CADR 400: Facilitating Effective Meetings
- CADR 500: Collaborative Workplace: Skills for Cultivating Collaboration
- CADR 510: Collaborative Workplace: Giving Productive Feedback

Training by Special Request

CADR provides training by invitation within the Judiciary, the Office of the Governor, numerous state agencies, and departments within the City and County of Honolulu.

- July 2024 "Collaborative Leadership: Giving Productive Feedback" for third cohort of mentors and mentees in the Judiciary's Supervisor Mentorship Program
- Nov. 2024 "Hot Buttons" webinar for Ku'ikahi Mediation Center's Brown Bag Lunch Series
- Sept. & Oct. 2024 CADR workshops for City and County of Honolulu Leadership Honolulu Advanced Management Mastery Program

Continuing Legal Education (CLE)

CADR develops programs to deliver quality continuing legal education to the legal community. Three of the training and outreach events in FY 2024-2025 offered free CLE Credits.

Public Seminars, Lectures and Community Forums

- July 2024 presented "Attorney Preparation for Mediation" webinar to HSBA—Appellate Section
- Sept. 2024 presented "Empathetic and Inclusive Language" webinar to Judiciary Employees for Judiciary's Diversity and Inclusivity Working Group
- Oct. 2024 co-sponsored with ADR partners a presentation for Advocacy for Social Justice Talk Story Series "Healing in Divided Times"
- Nov. 2024 delivered a guest lecture "Multi-Stakeholder Processes—Dialogue and Communication" to advanced conflict studies class, Matsunaga Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, UH Mānoa
- Jan. 2025 hosted special guest trainer presentation "Taking Stock: Conflict Goals"
- March 2025 hosted special guest trainer presentation "Navigating Power and Culture in Conflict"
- April 2025 co-sponsored with ADR partners the 15th Annual Cyber Conference "Peace Engineering and Dispute Systems Design"
- April 2025 presented "Essentials for Attorneys Representing Clients in Appellate Mediation" to HSBA—Appellate Section, co-hosted with HSBA
- May 2025 co-sponsored with ADR partners "Beyond Resolution," for professional development series

- June 2025 presented advanced mediator symposium “Strategies for Balancing Legal and Emotional Components of Disputes,” co-hosted with MCP

ADR Partners

In 2025, CADR collaborated on outreach programming with these organizations: Ceeds of Peace; Conflict Resolution Alliance; Hawai‘i Friends of Restorative Justice; Hawai‘i State Bar Association – ADR Section; Kaua‘i Economic Opportunity, Inc., Mediation Program; King Kamehameha V Judiciary History Center; Ku‘ikahi Mediation Center; Matsunaga Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa; Maui Mediation Services; Provost Office, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa; The Mediation Center of the Pacific; West Hawai‘i Mediation Center.

Hawai‘i Guidelines for Mediators

To ensure that mediator guidelines remain ethical and effective relative to fast-paced technological changes, as well as evolving social norms, mediation organizations across the state of Hawai‘i created a working group to revise and update the guidelines for Hawai‘i mediators. Two representatives from CADR were part of the working group. In May 2025, the Revised Guidelines for Mediation were endorsed by the Hawai‘i Supreme Court. In addition to upholding standards of professionalism among ADR practitioners, the revised guidelines ensure compliance with the Uniform Mediation Act [HRS Chapter 658H] mandates.

Community Mediation Centers

CADR administers a purchase of services contract for mediation and related dispute resolution services with Mediation Centers of Hawai‘i, Inc. (MCH). MCH serves as an umbrella organization for the five community mediation centers throughout the state.

In FY 2025, the mediation centers opened 4,201 cases and served 11,083 clients.

Act 202: Pre-eviction Mediation Involving the Maui Wildfires

Following the 2024 legislative session, CADR received $410,000 under Act 202 for pre-eviction mediation services for those impacted by the Maui wildfires. Since the program began in February 2025, Maui Mediation Services and Mediation Center of the Pacific have received over 500 cases and have a 79 percent agreement rate.

Act 278: Statewide Pre-eviction Mediation Program

The Act allocates $2.5 million to the Judiciary for a pre-eviction mediation pilot program for the entire state. The program aims to encourage landlords and tenants to engage in conversations early and provide more options to help prevent tenants from becoming homeless. The mediation program will run from February 2026 through February 2028.

Leveraging Technology for Greater Access and Understanding



Enhancing Court Operations with Artificial Intelligence

As artificial intelligence (AI) has advanced at an unprecedented pace, it has increasingly found its way into the legal profession and the courts, offering powerful tools for legal research, document review, case management, and improved access to justice for self-represented litigants. At the same time, the rapid adoption of AI has raised serious concerns regarding accuracy, ethical responsibility, transparency, and the integrity of the judicial process. Instances of AI-generated false legal citations, risks to confidentiality, and the potential for bias underscore the need for careful oversight and informed governance.

In response to these opportunities and challenges and to ensure the Judiciary remains informed and prepared for the continued development of artificial intelligence, the Hawai‘i Supreme Court established the Committee on Artificial Intelligence and the Courts in 2024.

The Committee’s final report, published in December 2025, concluded that artificial intelligence offers significant opportunities to improve court operations, expand access to justice, and increase efficiency, provided that clear policies and ethical safeguards are in place.

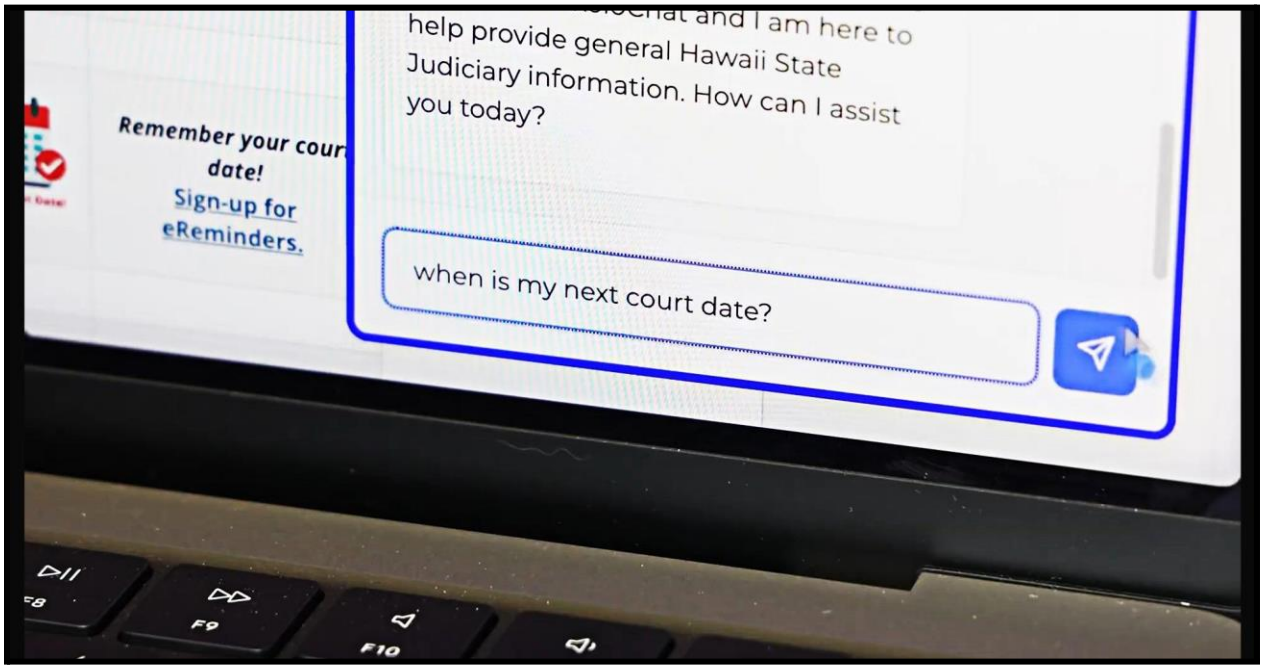
The Committee’s key recommendations include creating formal guidelines for judges, attorneys, and court staff; requiring disclosure when artificial intelligence is used in legal filings; and providing ongoing education on AI ethics to prevent misuse. The Committee also urged the Judiciary to explore tools such as automated document processing and transcription services to

reduce backlogs, as well as to leverage AI for plain-language explanations and translation services to assist self-represented litigants.

The Committee was co-chaired by Associate Justice Vladimir P. Devens and Circuit Court Judge John M. Tonaki and included judges, court administrators, and legal professionals. Its members worked through four subcommittees to examine AI's impact on judicial processes and ethical standards.

The Committee will continue its work as a standing committee to monitor developments and guide the Judiciary's approach to artificial intelligence. Its efforts reflect the Judiciary's commitment to innovation, transparency, and equitable access to justice.

The committee's full report can be found on the Reports page of Hawai'i State Judiciary website.



A screenshot of KolokoloChat on the Judiciary website.

AI Chatbot

The Judiciary launched KolokoloChat in 2025, its first artificial intelligence–powered chatbot, providing 24/7 access to court information, online forms, and resources for self-represented litigants. It understands natural language, allowing users to interact conversationally to quickly find answers to frequently asked questions. For more details on KolokoloChat's features and development, see page 18.

Criminal Justice Research Institute

The Criminal Justice Research Institute (CJRI) was established in 2019 under Hawai`i Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 614, within the office of the chief justice. CJRI is dedicated to examining all aspects of the criminal justice system – including Hawai`i's criminal pretrial system. The Institute assists the state government with understanding the criminal justice system in a more comprehensive way, and helps ensure the protection of individual rights, increase efficiencies, and control costs.

The CJRI is charged with managing the creation of a centralized statewide criminal pretrial justice data reporting and collection system. Through Act 147 in 2023, the State Legislature appropriated funds to establish this system. CJRI estimated this endeavor would take three years to develop and implement. It was created in two years and was used for the first time to produce metrics in this year's annual report.

The pretrial database centralizes pretrial data from three statewide agencies – the Hawai'i Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR), the Judiciary, and the State Department of the Attorney General's Hawai'i Criminal Justice Data Center (HCJDC) – in a centralized data warehouse. The pretrial database and reporting system gives CJRI research staff the capacity to develop and report on pretrial performance metrics in accordance with HRS § 614-3. The unified dataset increases the efficiency of reporting on metrics and answering research questions.



This system has been designed to extract, link, and merge data from these agencies' existing databases into a centralized data warehouse. The project was designed to modernize data sharing and analysis by leveraging technology to ingest and transform data for research more efficiently. The new system addresses key barriers which currently limit capacity to conduct research across the State's criminal pretrial system, including issues with combining data from different agencies' databases, the need to reformat operational data collected by different agencies so that it can be utilized in research, and transforming text data for use in quantitative analysis.

While the pretrial database and reporting system has been established, CJRI continues collaborating with DCR, Judiciary, and HCJDC staff to develop additional pretrial metrics and address data limitations that hinder reporting for some metrics.

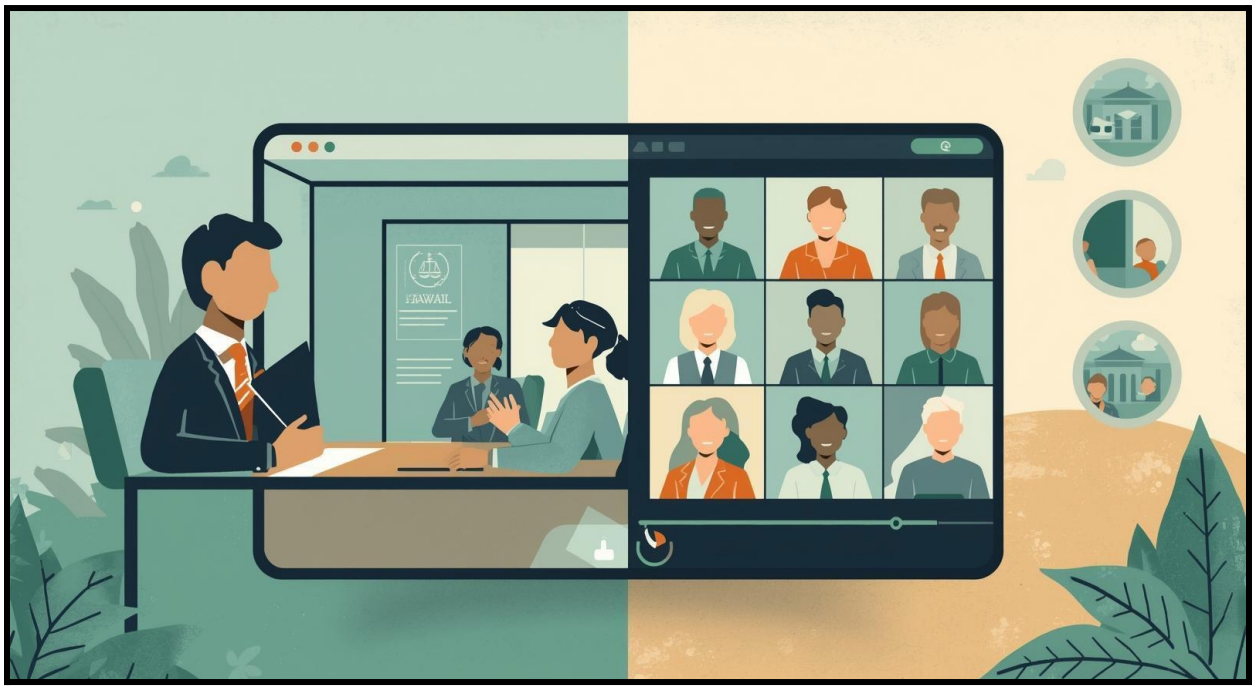
In addition to the work establishing a pretrial database and reporting system, CJRI staff engaged with stakeholder groups across the State's criminal justice system on several other research efforts. CJRI has collaborated with several state and county partners. The Institute is reviewing pretrial data to map out metrics the State can use to monitor statewide diversion efforts, and CJRI staff are partnering directly with local diversion policy initiatives to help strategize data collection and evaluation. Additionally, CJRI research staff are collaborating with DCR's Intake Services Centers division to collect data on assessment to inform evidence-based practices in pretrial monitoring. CJRI continues to collaborate with a range of agencies to use research in understanding the criminal justice system.

More information on the CJRI can be found in the "Criminal Justice Research Institute 2025 Annual Report" on the Hawai'i State Judiciary's "Reports" web page, as well as www.cjrihawaii.com.

Criminal Justice Research Institute
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Remote and Hybrid Hearings: Over One Million and Here to Stay



Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, remote proceedings have fundamentally changed how Hawai‘i’s courts operate. What began as an emergency measure has evolved into a permanent feature of the Judiciary’s commitment to accessibility, transparency, and convenience.

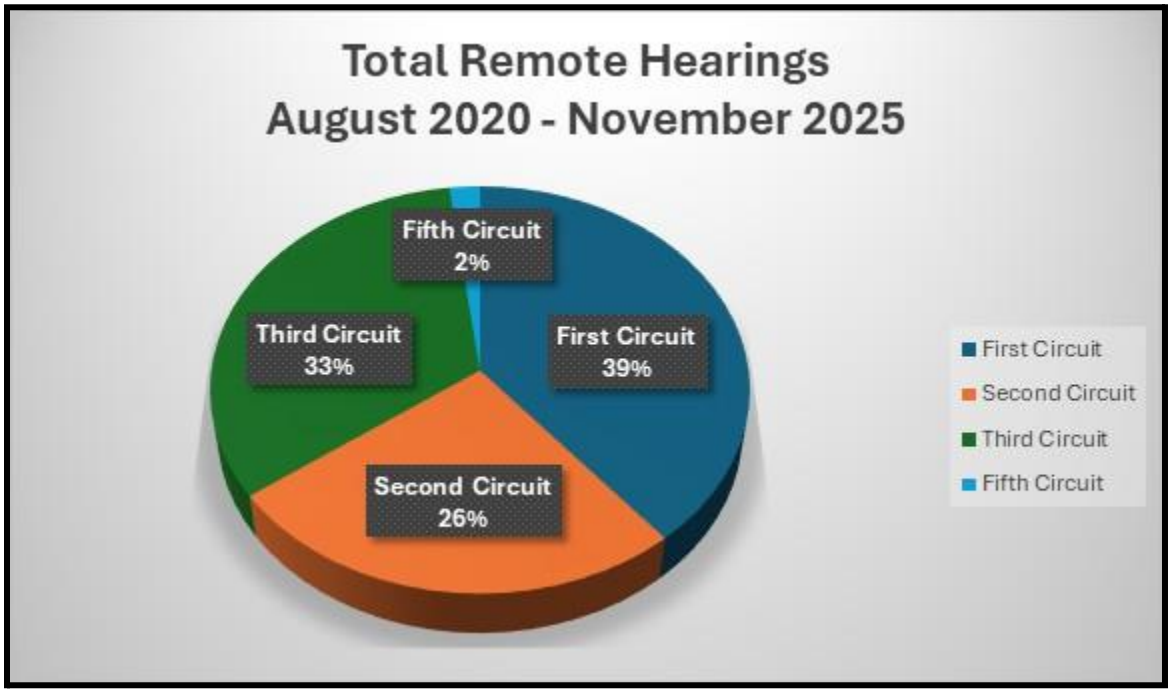
From August 2020 through late 2025, Hawai‘i’s district, circuit, and family courts have conducted more than one million remote hearings statewide. It is a milestone that underscores how the Judiciary strives for accessibility. While some proceedings, such as trials and foreclosure confirmation hearings, still require in-person attendance, many cases offer parties the flexibility to appear remotely or in-person.

Remote hearings are here to stay. Feedback from attorneys and the public consistently highlights the benefits: increased participation, reduced travel time, and greater accommodation for individuals with diverse needs and circumstances.

While the Judiciary celebrates these successes, it remains mindful of challenges. Not all court users have the knowledge needed to navigate remote platforms or access to reliable technology. To address this, the Judiciary continues to enhance resources and education for litigants. The Self-Represented Litigants page on the Hawai‘i State Judiciary website offers practical tools, including “Tips on Going to Court” and a short YouTube video on the Do’s and Don’ts of Remote Zoom Hearings, often shown in virtual waiting rooms before hearings begin.

Additionally, there are laptop access stations at the Supreme Court Law Library and at the Lahaina District Court house available for the public to use at no cost.

As technology and user needs evolve, the Judiciary will continue enhancing its approach to ensure fairness and efficiency.

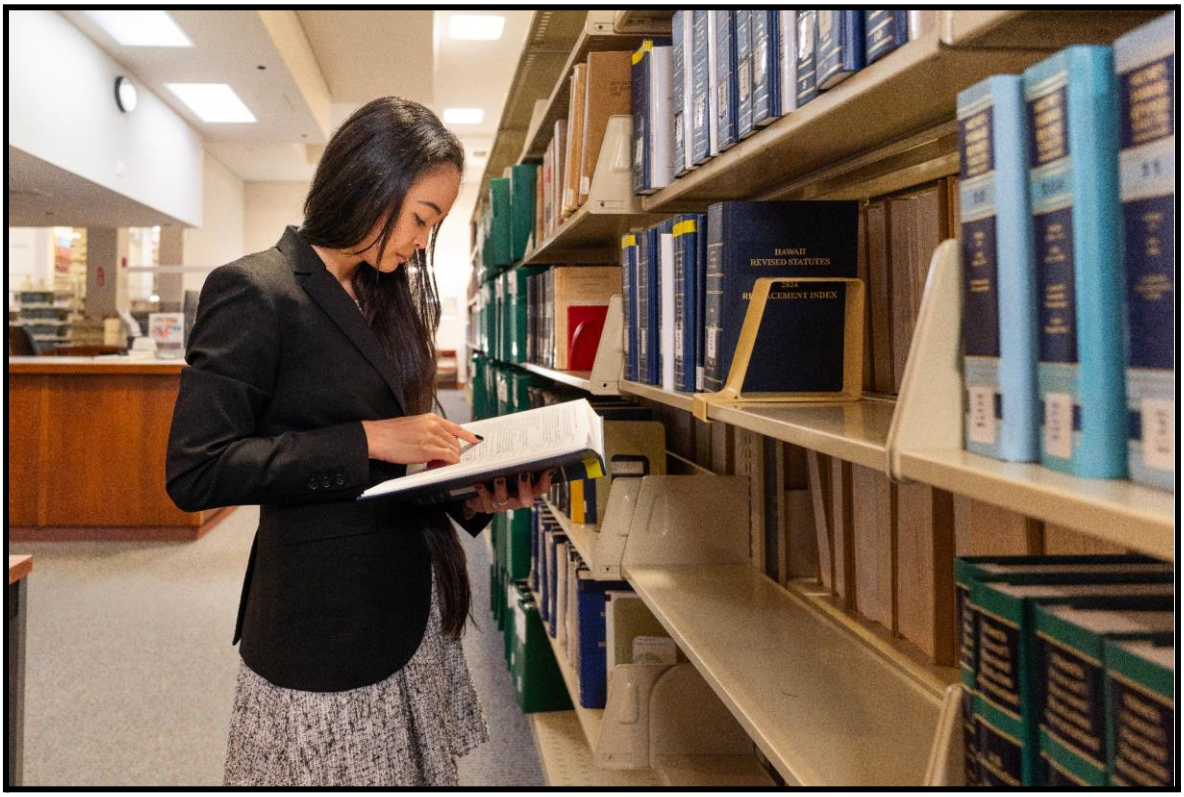


Law Library: A Community Resource

The Hawai‘i State Law Library System collects, organizes, and disseminates information and materials related to legal research and judicial administration. The library system makes these resources available to the general public for legal research and study.

The Hawai‘i State Law Library System (HSLLS) comprises the Supreme Court Law Library (O‘ahu) and its satellite libraries located in the Second (Maui County), Third (Hawai‘i Island), and Fifth (Kaua‘i) Circuits. HSLLS is a primary legal resource for the courts, legal community, and the public. The system houses more than 295,000+ volumes of legal materials relating to Hawai‘i, the United States, and foreign countries, and provides electronic resources and databases for legal research. The Supreme Court Law Library (SCLL) in Honolulu serves as the administrative headquarters of HSLLS.

SCLL performs budgeting, planning and purchasing for the entire Hawai‘i State Law Library System and is responsible for furnishing primary and secondary legal resources for the judges’ chambers and administrative offices throughout the Judiciary.



An attorney reviews volumes of the Hawai‘i Revised Statutes at the Supreme Court Law Library.

Services

HSLLS libraries are used for legal research, with selected materials available for check out. SCLL provides document delivery and certification as well as Hawai‘i legislative history research services at a nominal cost, and library personnel assist users with basic legal reference needs.

Attorneys and their staff members, government agency personnel, legislators, and the general public are invited to use law library facilities on all islands, Monday – Friday, during state business hours excluding holidays. For information on how to access the law libraries, please visit our web site here.

SCLL receives referrals from court service centers regarding family court, district court, and even appellate matters, especially when it comes to legal information pertaining to separation, annulment, service by publication, agency appeals, and more. SCLL staff have put together informational packets for the public that include pertinent court rules, sample forms, and secondary legal materials. SCLL staff will provide interlibrary loan to neighbor island circuit court branch locations.

Materials Available

The collections of the libraries include materials in print, microfilm, microfiche, and electronic formats. These include rare books – such as historical pre-statehood laws, codes, constitution, and treatises. These materials cover primary law for all federal and state jurisdictions, as well as practice materials for all major areas of law. The HSLLS also subscribes to a variety of electronic resources available on public access computers and the internet, including Westlaw, Lexis, Bloomberg Law, Wolters Kluwers' VitalLaw, HeinOnline, Lexis Digital Library and more.

The HSLLS's collections meet the standards of the American Association of Law Libraries for Appellate Court Libraries and State Law Libraries. These professional standards formally recognize that access to justice is a fundamental right of every citizen in the United States, and that access to meaningful legal information is an essential element of this right.



The Supreme Court Law Library is a selective depository for federal documents distributed through the United States Government Publishing Office.

The Supreme Court Law Library is located on the Diamond Head side entrance of Ali‘iōlani Hale in Downtown Honolulu.

2025: New Resources for the Public

Legal Information Access for Incarcerated or Detained Individuals

In response to the American Library Association's revised Standards for Library Services for the Incarcerated or Detained that was issued in 2024, the Supreme Court Law Library began offering free limited Document Delivery services to incarcerated or detained individuals to facilitate access to legal information, court forms, or case documents. Copies of appropriate legal materials that are available through the library collection and resources are sent via USPS mail. The library will also provide references to other organizations or government agencies that might be better suited to assist with the legal needs of those that are incarcerated or detained. To bring awareness to this new service, the library partnered with the Hawai‘i State Library and Hawai‘i Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to distribute informational bookmarks and fliers. This service is both a benefit for locally incarcerated/detained individuals, as well as for those that are housed at mainland facilities with less access to Hawai‘i specific legal materials and information.

Renewal of Westlaw Remote Patron Access

The Supreme Court Law Library reinstated their subscription for Westlaw, a legal database comprised of annotated primary sources of law for all 50 states and federal jurisdictions, and select secondary sources of law. Access is intended to support expanded public or pro se (self-represented litigant) access to the law and legal research. Users are required to register directly with Westlaw using a special link made available on the Database web page of the library's website: https://histatelawlibrary.com/legal-research/databases/

Law Day 2025: The Constitution’s Promise – Out of Many, One

Each year, the American Bar Association (ABA) celebrates Law Day on May 1. The ABA website states that Law Day "is a national day set aside to celebrate the rule of law. Law Day provides an opportunity to understand how law and the legal process protect our liberty, strive to achieve justice, and contribute to the freedoms that all Americans share." To commemorate Law Day 2025, the Supreme Court Law Library staff put together a special edition newsletter where they ask members of the Judiciary about their relationship to the Law Day theme, including Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald (ret).

URL: https://histatelawlibrary.com/lawday/law-day-2024/

Ongoing Community Resources

District Court Remote Hearing Laptop Station

As a result of district court hearings moving online, the Supreme Court Law Library used COVID-19 grant funding to create a laptop hearing station on O‘ahu. This is available to members of the public who do not have access to technology, so they can still appear at their hearings. When hearing notices are sent out, information about utilizing the library’s Remote Hearing laptop is included. For more information, please see: https://www.courts.state.hi.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Laptop-Access-Station.pdf

Self-Help Station

The Supreme Court Law Library makes available a self-help work station for self-represented individuals to draft court forms for filing. Printing is available at the self-help station. Pages printed are charged at $.15 (fifteen) cents per page and payments can be made at the Circulation/Reference Desk.

SCLL Meeting Space

The Supreme Court Law Library continues to offer the use of a meeting space on the basement level of the library. Hawai‘i State Judiciary staff, other Hawai‘i government agencies, non-profit, and for-profit organizations are welcome to reserve the space. There is a nominal fee charged to non-profit and for profit-organizations based on their status. Applications for use of the Meeting Space are subject to approval and availability on a first-come, first-served basis. More details about the Meeting Space (https://histatelawlibrary.com/services/scll-meeting-space/) are available on the Hawai‘i State Law Library System website.

Zine Collection

The Supreme Court Law Library launched a Zine Collection that provides access to information from a variety of viewpoints. The hope and intent is for library patrons to broaden their perspective and knowledge of legal and legal related matters. Zines are often self-published original works of alternative literature that are disseminated in a magazine-like format. The majority of zines are printed in noncommercial tiny runs, usually “cut and pasted” text and images merged into a story, and are made by people known as “Zinesters.”

Hawai‘i Supreme Court Law Library – Nā Hoa Kānāwai

To keep connected and up-to-date on the library and its services and activities throughout the year, we welcome you to peruse our quarterly newsletter that is made available through the Hawai‘i State Law Library System website at https://histatelawlibrary.com/newsletter/.

Investing in Future Generations

The Judiciary is committed to shaping Hawai‘i’s future by connecting with students and the community through outreach programs and events that promote understanding of the judicial system. These efforts emphasize core democratic principles such as individual rights, the rule of law, and the vital protections these principles ensure.

PACE Commission: Promoting Civic Education in Hawai‘i

The Commission to Promote and Advance Civic Education (PACE), established by the Hawai‘i Supreme Court in 2021, seeks to enhance civic knowledge and engagement across Hawai‘i. The Commission’s vision is to create, implement, and amplify sustainable programs, resources, and practices that provide place-based, constitutionally informed, and culturally sensitive civic education. PACE promotes understanding of democratic institutions, encourages active citizenship, and reduces barriers to civic education through collaboration with schools, community organizations, and legal professionals. Its initiatives also leverage the expertise of Hawai‘i attorneys to contribute pro bono toward civic education programs.



Kaua‘i Law and Justice Academy

In October 2025, sixteen high school students from across Kaua‘i participated in the Kaua‘i Law and Justice Academy at Pu‘uhonua Kaulike, the Kaua‘i courthouse. Hosted by PACE in partnership with the Hawai‘i State Judiciary, the United States District Court, the Federal Bar Association, the William S. Richardson School of Law, and the Kaua‘i Bar Association, the Academy immersed students in hands-on learning about the legal system and civic responsibility. Participants engaged in workshops, explored courtroom procedures, and concluded the Academy with a mock trial. The program also incorporated field trips to the Kaua‘i Museum and Makauwahi Cave, connecting lessons in law and civic engagement to the island’s culture and history. Volunteer judges, attorneys, and educators guided students, helping them develop advocacy skills, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of their role in democracy.



Students and some of the faculty at the Kaua‘i Law and Justice Academy in October 2025.

Hawai‘i Schools of Democracy

The PACE Commission continued to play a key role in supporting Hawai‘i Schools of Democracy (HISOD), a program implemented in recent years by the Hawai‘i State Department of Education (HIDOE). PACE joined HIDOE and other community organizations to celebrate excellence in civic education.

In 2025, Kailua High School and Kalani High School earned the designation of Hawai‘i Schools of Democracy, joining a growing list of high schools committed to preparing students to be active and informed participants in a democratic society. Modeled after a national program and tailored to Hawai‘i’s unique educational landscape, the designation is awarded to schools that provide extensive evidence of exemplary civic learning, student engagement, and democratic practices. Building on the success of Mililani and Maui High Schools, the first schools to receive the designation, the HISOD program will expand in 2026 to engage intermediate and elementary schools, creating a K–12 continuum for civic education across Hawai‘i.



Photo: Fifth Circuit Court Judge Greg Meyers (second from right) and U.S. District Court Judge Micah Smith (far right), talk with students during the Kaua‘i Law and Justice Academy.



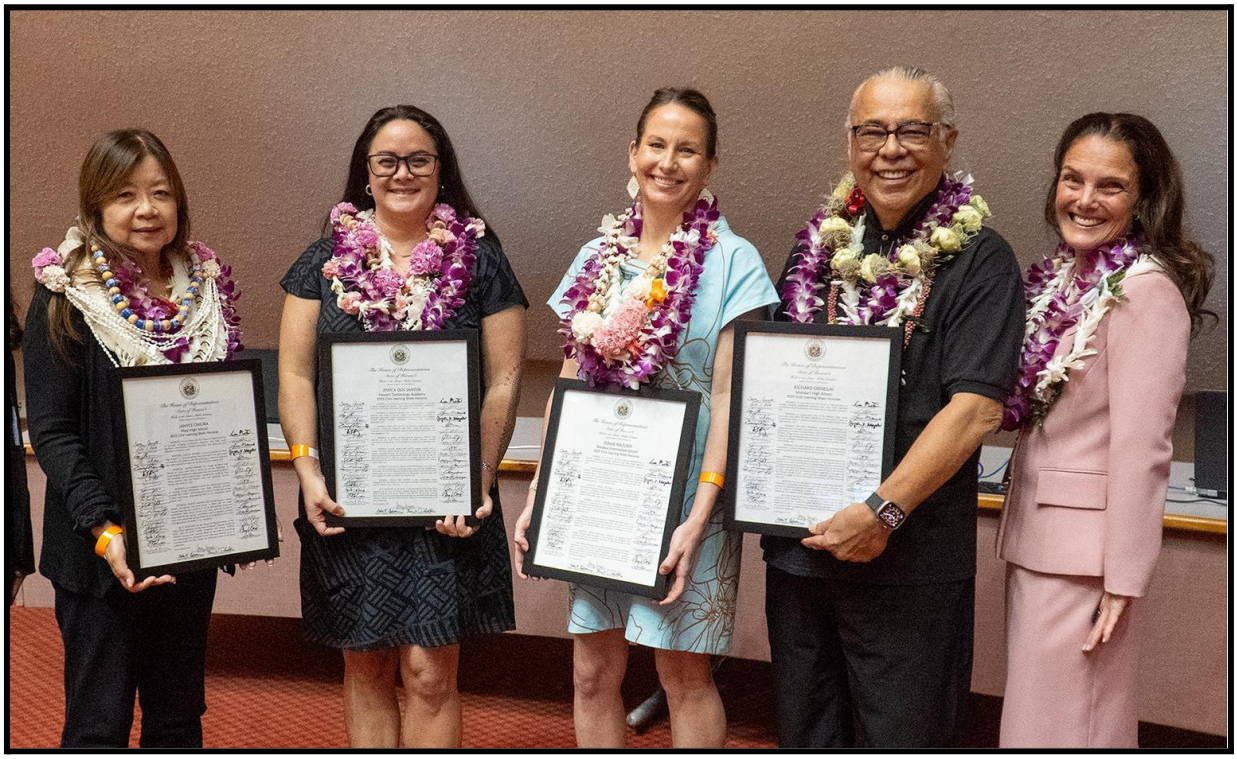
Judge Jeffrey Crabtree (retired), State Law Librarian Jenny Silbiger, former State Senator Maile Shimabukuro, and Judge Gary Chang (retired) led the "Laws Make a Difference" forum at the University of Hawai'i West O'ahu.

"Laws Make a Difference" Forum at UH West O'ahu

In March 2025, PACE partnered with the Hawai'i Library Association to host the "Laws Make a Difference" forum at the University of Hawai'i West O'ahu. Nearly 50 students and community members attended in person and online to explore how laws are created, how government functions, and the impact of civic participation. Presenters, including retired judges and a former state legislator, emphasized the importance of education, voting, jury service, and active engagement in a democratic society.

Recognition of Teachers

That same month, in celebration of National Civic Learning Week, PACE and the Hawai'i House of Representatives honored five exemplary educators—Jessica dos Santos, Denise Mazurik, Janyce Omura, Richard Ornellas, and 'Īmaikalani Winchester—for integrating civic education into their classrooms and inspiring students to engage as informed citizens. The recognition highlighted the crucial role teachers play in cultivating the next generation of civic leaders across Hawai'i.



Honorees on the House floor with Rep. Amy Perruso. From left to right – Janyce Omura, Jessica dos Santos, Denise Mazurik, Richard Ornellas, and Amy Perruso. ʻĪmaikalani Winchester not pictured.

Honors for Volunteers

PACE also acknowledged volunteers who have contributed to the Commission's mission, including a local marketing firm and individuals who helped design the PACE logo, letterhead, and website and the co-chairs of PACE's civic engagement committee, who lead the organization of engagement programs statewide. Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald recognized their efforts during a ceremony in the Hawaiʻi Supreme Court courtroom, emphasizing that volunteer engagement is vital to expanding civic awareness and fostering community participation.

Education Materials for Teachers

PACE expanded its educational outreach this year by developing a comprehensive collection of K-12 civic education lesson plans, available at no cost to public and private school educators statewide on the PACE website, civicshawaii.org. Created through a collaborative partnership with the American Judicature Society, these resources were developed by Hawaiʻi-based teachers who brought practical classroom experience to address essential civics topics including democratic participation, governmental functions, and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Each lesson plan is aligned to Hawaiʻi Department of Education Core Standards, ensuring seamless integration into existing curricula while preparing students to become informed and engaged members of their communities. This practitioner-driven initiative reflects PACE's ongoing commitment to strengthening civic knowledge and engagement throughout the islands by providing educators with high-quality, locally relevant instructional resources.

Courts in the Community
Expanding Civic Education Statewide

Courts in the Community seeks to educate youth about Hawai'i's judicial system by providing firsthand experiences with real Supreme Court proceedings, fostering civic understanding, and promoting transparency and trust in the rule of law.



From left: Hawai'i Supreme Court Associate Justice Lisa M. Ginoza, Associate Justice Sabrina S. McKenna, Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald, Associate Justice Todd W. Eddins, and Associate Justice Vladimir P. Devens listen as Hawai'i County Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Frederick M. Macapinlac presents his arguments during Courts in the Community at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo Performing Arts Center, on April 17, 2025.

For many youth in Hawai'i, the judicial system can seem distant, something discussed in textbooks but rarely encountered in person. The Hawai'i State Judiciary created Courts in the Community to change that. The program takes real cases out of the courtroom and directly to students on campus around the state.

Launched in 2012, Courts in the Community showcases actual Supreme Court sessions in which attorneys present their arguments, the justices question them, and participants gain firsthand insight into how the appellate process works.

"It gets our court into various parts of the community engaging with young people so they can actually see what the rule of law looks like in person as opposed to just hearing about it in the abstract," said Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald.

The program's purpose is to strengthen civic understanding by providing high school students with an opportunity to see how the judicial system functions and why it is essential to a democratic society.

The Courts in the Community Program has visited high schools on O'ahu, Maui, Hawai'i Island, and Kaua'i. "Providing students across the state with access to the Supreme Court is a vital part of our commitment to public education and transparency," Chief Justice Recktenwald added.

In the weeks before each event, volunteer attorneys visit participating classrooms to help prepare students by explaining the facts of the case, reviewing relevant law, and answering questions about the court system.

More than 6,850 students have taken part in Courts in the Community since the first session at Farrington High School in 2012. The program has become one of the Judiciary's most important public education efforts because it provides experiences that deepen understanding and build trust in the judicial process.

> ***"It is wonderful to see that our courts here in Hawai'i are so interested in the community and the upcoming generations."***
> ***– Case Carrillo, a student at the Hawai'i Academy of Arts and Science.***

Courts in the Community goes to Hilo

On April 17, 2025, the Hawai'i Supreme Court convened at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo's Performing Arts Center to hear oral argument in State of Hawai'i v. Charles Zuffante. It was the fifth time the Court held a Courts in the Community session on Hawai'i Island.

A total of 263 students from five East Hawai'i schools attended the event. The participating schools were Hilo High School, Waiākea High School, Hawai'i Academy of Arts and Science Public Charter School, Connections Public Charter School, and Laupāhoehoe Community Public Charter School. Students observed arguments involving questions about the voluntariness of a defendant's statements to police and the effectiveness of legal counsel during trial. These issues offered a strong example of how constitutional protections are considered and applied in real cases.

Following oral argument, students participated in a question-and-answer session with the justices. These sessions are a central part of the program because they give students direct access to the Court and allow them to discuss the judicial process, legal careers, and the responsibilities of the Judiciary.

"I thought that it was a very good experience. It is wonderful to see that our courts here in Hawai'i are so interested in the community and the upcoming generations," said Case Carrillo, a student at the Hawai'i Academy of Arts and Science.

"It teaches kids about law. They may have never known they have an interest in law but now they might want to pursue that (as a career)," added Brandon Goehring, also a student at the Hawai'i Academy of Arts and Science.

Volunteer attorneys from the Hawai‘i State Bar Association and the East Hawai‘i legal community visited classrooms before the session to help students understand the case and the appellate process. The program would not have been possible without contributions from the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo and the teachers, attorneys, and community partners who volunteered their time.

A Program Built on Experience and Collaboration

Courts in the Community has continued to grow since its first session more than a decade ago. Nearly 400 students at Mililani High School observed oral argument in Bell v. Hawai‘i Public Housing Authority in December 2024. Previous visits to Kealakehe High School on Hawai‘i Island, Baldwin High School on Maui, and McKinley High School and Waipahu High School on O‘ahu were attended by more than 450 students.

Chief Justice Recktenwald highlighted the importance of these meaningful civic experiences during the Mililani session. “Courts in the Community is one of the Judiciary’s foremost programs to educate students and the public about the rule of law and the role of the courts in resolving disputes in a democratic society,” he said. “This program takes them beyond the textbooks and enables them to see for themselves that the courts provide a process with integrity, one that’s designed to get to the truth.”

Semester/Year	Host School	Participating Schools	Number of Students
Spring 2012	Farrington High School (O‘ahu)	2	200
Fall 2012	Baldwin High School (Maui)	7	450
Fall 2013	Waiākea High School (Hawai‘i Island, Hilo)	7	200
Spring 2014	Kealakehe High School (Hawai‘i Island, Kona)	7	475
Fall 2014	Mililani High School (O‘ahu)	7	350
Spring 2015	Kaua‘i High School (Kaua‘i)	7	300
Fall 2015	Wai‘anae High School (O‘ahu)	5	350
Fall 2016	McKinley High School (O‘ahu)	9	470
Spring 2017	Baldwin High School	9	503
Fall 2017	Waiākea High School (Hawai‘i Island, Hilo)	5	191
Winter 2017	Castle High School (O‘ahu)	5	220
Spring 2018	Kealakehe High School (Hawai‘i Island, Kona)	6	418
Spring 2019	Kaua‘i Community College (Kaua‘i)	7	337
Spring 2020	Postponed due to COVID-19	-	-
Fall 2020	Postponed due to COVID-19	-	-
Spring 2021	Virtual: Konowaena High School (Hawai‘i Island, Kona), Lahainaluna	3	110

	High School (Maui), and Waipahu High School (Oʻahu)		
Fall 2021	Virtual: Aiea and Moanalua High School (Oʻahu), Molokaʻi High School	3	157
Spring 2022	William S. Richardson School of Law's "Law & Justice Summer Program" Campbell, Kalani, McKinley, Nanakuli, Waiʻanae, and Waipahu High School (Oʻahu)	6	12
Fall 2022	Lahainaluna High School (Maui)	6	315
Spring 2024	Kailua High School (Oʻahu)	5	307
Fall 2024	Mililani High School (Oʻahu)	6	357
Spring 2025	Waiākea High School (Hawaiʻi Island, Hilo)	5	263
Total			**6,857**

A Continuing Commitment to Civic Education

As Courts in the Community enters its second decade, the Judiciary remains committed to expanding civic education and ensuring that youth throughout Hawaiʻi are given opportunities to see the judicial process in action. Each session demonstrates the Judiciary's dedication to transparency, fairness, and public understanding. These values are essential to the future of Hawaiʻi's democracy and will continue to guide the program as it reaches new schools and communities in the years ahead.

Hawai‘i Students Shine in Law Day Art Contests

Students from across Hawai‘i showcased their creativity and civic understanding in the 2025 Law Day Art Contests held by the First and Fifth Circuit Courts, celebrating the national theme: The Constitution’s Promise: Out of Many, One.



From left: Chiefess Kamakahelei Middle School eighth grade students Araceli Ringor (third place), Logan Manibog (second place), Naomi Gallagher (first place), Kaua‘i High School Grade 9 students Pagiel Ramirez (third place) and Czamantha Tabil (first place) (missing: Morgan Bolton (second place)) are congratulated by Fifth Circuit District Court Judge Greg Meyers.

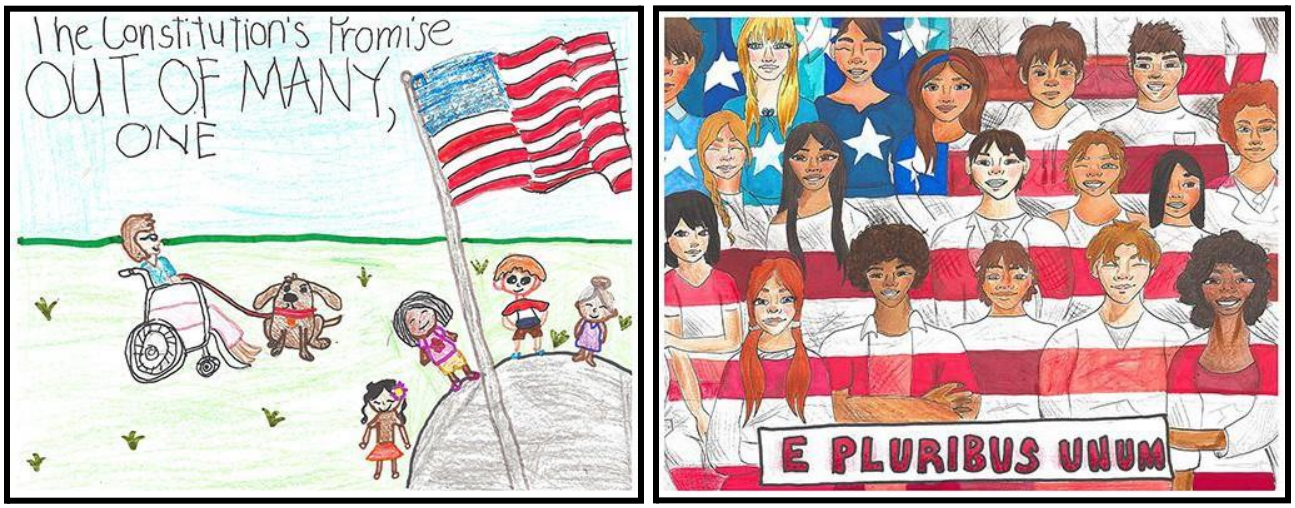
On Kaua‘i, the Fifth Circuit’s Second Annual Law Day Art Contest drew 170 student entries. Winners were honored at Pu‘uhonua Kaulike courthouse on May 13, where Fifth Circuit District Court Judge Gregory H. Meyers congratulated students and their families.

The contest was part of the Fifth Circuit’s broader National Judicial Outreach Week efforts, which included Judge Meyers speaking to nearly 450 eighth-grade students and 300 ninth-grade students, visiting Kaua‘i Community College’s business law class, and presenting to Department of Education social studies teachers.

Kaua‘i’s winners included:

Eighth Grade First Place: Naomi Gallagher, Chiefess Kamakahelei Middle School

Ninth Grade First Place: Czamantha Tabil, Kaua‘i High School



First place artwork by Third to Fifth Grade winner Lilinoe Wong (left) and Sixth to Eighth Grade winner, Hailey Tellyer (right).

Meanwhile, on O‘ahu, the First Circuit Court invited students in grades 3–8 to submit artwork interpreting the Law Day theme. Students explored the Constitution’s role in unifying the nation through historical events like the Civil Rights Movement and Reconstruction. Judges evaluated entries based on originality, creativity, and visual impact.

Top honors went to:

- Fifth Grade First Place: Lilinoe Wong, St. Andrew’s Schools – The Priory
- Seventh Grade First Place: Hailey Tellyer, ‘Ewa Makai Middle School

Law Day, first envisioned in 1957 by American Bar Association President Charles Rhynes and officially recognized by Congress in 1961, continues to inspire young minds across Hawai‘i to reflect on the importance of the Constitution and the Rule of Law.

King Kamehameha V Judiciary History Center



Guests walk into the King Kamehameha V Judiciary History Center, where exhibits trace Hawai‘i’s journey from the Kapu system to modern democracy.

The King Kamehameha V Judiciary History Center is the permanent education facility and history museum of the Hawai‘i State Judiciary. Its mission is to interpret and inform the public about the judicial process and Hawai‘i’s legal history from ka wā kahiko (the past) through kēia au (the present). JHC promotes civic education and engagement by providing learning opportunities about the history of Hawai‘i through the lens of law, public policy, and the courts, serving as a vital link between the courts and the community. JHC’s work is supported financially by the Friends of the Judiciary History Center of Hawai‘i, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Civic Education

The Center is located in Ali'iōlani Hale, Hawai‘i’s Supreme Court building, and provides a wide range of civic education programs that strengthen understanding of the justice system and promote informed participation in civic life. It features five different sections: Orientation Theater, Monarchy Court Gallery, 1913 Courtroom, Martial Law Gallery, and Makai Hallway Exhibit. These galleries and exhibits explore topics such as the Kapu system, foundations of democracy, land, labor, and economy, the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, and martial law during World War II.

School group tours are offered to help students explore Hawai‘i’s legal history and gain an understanding of how the courts function. Virtual tours and videos are also available.

In 2025, 2,890 students participated in guided, standards-aligned tours designed for grades 2–12, grounded in the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework.

The Center invites school groups, community organizations and individuals to schedule in-person or virtual tours at jhchawaii.net/group-tours/



This model inside the Judiciary Center depicts Honolulu in the 1850s as the bustling seat of government and a maritime hub, where hale pili (grass houses) stood alongside Western-style buildings.

Beyond tours, the Center facilitates mock trials and other civic education programs that help students analyze information, improve discussion skills, and collaborate on community-based projects.

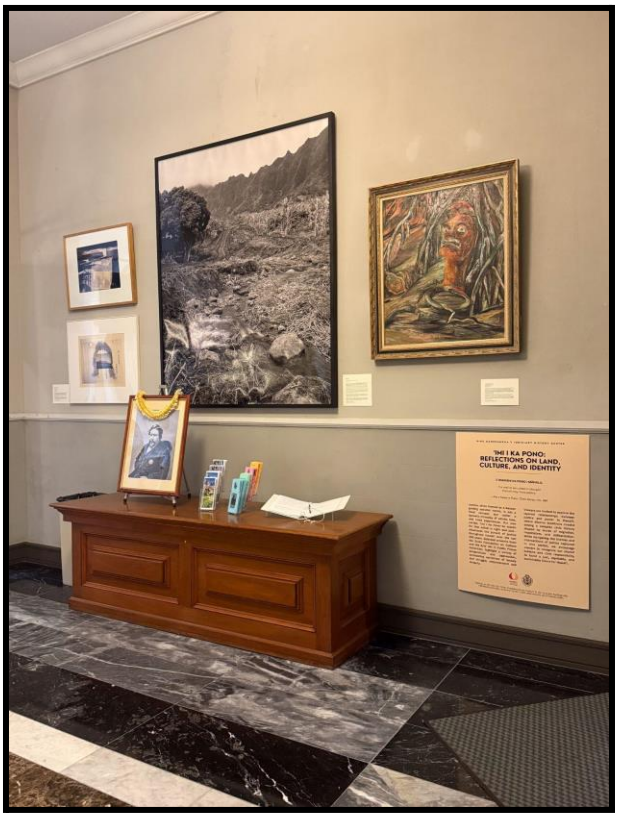
Additionally, the Center coordinates the **Judiciary's Speakers Bureau**, connecting judges with classrooms and community groups and supplying teachers with supporting curriculum materials. Last year, judges engaged with approximately 2,250 students through these presentations.

The **Courts in the Community** program brings the Hawai'i Supreme Court directly to students by convening oral arguments at public schools once each semester. See page 100 for more information on the Courts in the Community program.

Lastly, the Center is a participating partner in ***We the People: Civics that Empowers All Students (CEAS)***, a three-year study funded by the U.S. Department of Education and led by the Center for Civic Education and Georgetown University. The program evaluates the impact of the We the People curriculum in high-needs schools and includes partnerships with educators in Hawai'i and California. The final year of the grant began with a week-long teacher institute in Monterey, California, where participating teachers from five Hawai'i schools studied the U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights, and the We the People program with support from scholars and mentor-teachers. These teachers will implement the curriculum throughout the 2025-26 school year.

Exhibits

From April 2024 to July 2025, the Judiciary History Center proudly displayed its first curated art exhibition, 'Imi i Ka Pono: Reflections on Law, Culture, and Identity, in honor of the 150th anniversary of Ali'iōlani Hale. ***'Imi i Ka Pono***—to search for that which is right and just—showcased the pursuit of justice throughout Hawai'i over the last 250 years. In partnership with the Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (SFCA), more than 20 artworks from SFCA's Art in Public Places Collection showcased a variety of perspectives and artistic approaches exploring themes of environment, immigration, militarization, ethnicity, culture, and the economy. The exhibit invited visitors to consider how justice is defined differently across time and status, emphasizing that justice is not a linear path, but a negotiated and ongoing process with lasting impact. The exhibition called on viewers to recognize our shared kuleana or civic responsibility to build a just, equitable, and sustainable future for Hawai'i.



Part of the 'Imi i Ka Pono: Reflections on Law, Culture, and Identity exhibition at the Judiciary History Center.

Relics of War: Justice, Culture, and Community in Times of Conflict opened in December 2025 and will remain on display through November 30, 2026. The exhibit commemorates the 10th anniversary of Honouliuli National Historic Site. It highlights art, artifacts, and historical records from Japanese immigrants detained during World War II; displays on Hawai‘i’s Supreme Court and Territorial Attorney General J. Garner Anthony; modern works from the State Foundation’s Art in Public Places Collection; and a National Park Service exhibit on Honouliuli and the history of Japanese in Hawai‘i.



The Judiciary History Center displayed No Nā Mea A Pau: Toward Queer Justice in Hawai‘i — a traveling exhibit exploring Gender, sexuality, and the resilience of Hawai‘i’s LGBTQ+ Māhū community.

Kaulike No Nā Mea A Pau: Toward Queer Justice in Hawai‘i is a traveling exhibit created by the Judiciary History Center (JHC) in collaboration with Lei Pua ‘Ala: Queer Histories of Hawai‘i and funded by the Mellon Foundation. The exhibit opened in October 2024 to coincide with Honolulu Pride Month and remained on display through September 2025. It celebrates the journey toward marriage equality for all within Hawai‘i’s uniquely multicultural community.

The exhibit features eight 7-foot-tall banners that explore the intersection of law, gender, and sexuality prior to Western colonization, as well as the present-day protections and challenges facing Hawai‘i’s LGBTQ+ Māhū community. The banners are available for offsite loan and were displayed in October 2025 at the Hawai‘i State Public Library’s main branch in downtown Honolulu as part of Honolulu Pride.

Museum Redesign & Renovation

In 2025, the Judiciary History Center, in partnership with the Friends of the Judiciary History Center of Hawai‘i, advanced its multi-year redesign project. Supported by a $250,000 grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the project progressed from 10% to 30% design completion. Key deliverables included an 83-page Exhibit Matrix featuring updated floor plans, full-color renderings, and interpretive diagrams for six galleries, outlining the vision for new permanent exhibits and enhanced visitor experiences.

Archives & Acquisitions

The Center showcased a new Digital Archive to provide free public access to its historic collections. This initiative, developed in partnership with the Permanent Legacy Foundation, was supported by volunteers and interns who scanned, organized, and published archival materials online. Contributions included territorial-era land transaction journals from the legal collection of William R. Castle and the creation of a digitization workflow to sustain future efforts.



Panelists for ‘Kaulike No Nā Mea A Pau: Toward Queer Justice in Hawai‘i’ at Ali‘iōlani Hale, from left to right: Professor Troy J.H. Andrade (UH), Acting Chief Justice Sabrina S. McKenna, former Associate Justice Steven H. Levinson, former Associate Judge and Civil Rights Attorney Daniel R. Foley, and Dean Hamer, Co-Director of Lei Pua Ala Queer Histories of Hawai‘i. The discussion explored Hawai‘i’s journey toward marriage equality and the landmark Baehr v. Lewin decision, reflecting on its impact and the future of queer justice.

Public Programs

- **Through Our Grandfathers’ Eyes: American World War II Internment from Sand Island, Hawai‘i to Santa Fe, New Mexico, by Dr. Gail Y. Okawa** (February 19, 2025), was a historical presentation about Japanese internment during WWII, featuring research from Dr. Okawa’s book that tells the internees’ stories through firsthand

accounts, letters, poetry, and official documents, chronicling their arrests, imprisonment, and return. The presentation was held in the Supreme Court Courtroom.

- **A Constitution in the Making: Power. Reform. And the Road to 1978** (May 22, 2025) was a panel discussion hosted at the JHC in partnership with the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. The panel examined the political and legal forces that shaped Hawai‘i’s 1978 Constitutional Convention.
- **The 2025 Equitable & Sustainable Futures Speaker Series** was follow-up programming to the Hawai‘i State Judiciary’s Committee on Equality and Access to the Court's (CEAC) 2021 Racial Equity Series in partnership with the Judiciary History Center, cosponsored by the Hawaii State Bar Association Civic Education Committee. It brought together in conversation 25 leaders and advocates from across the legal field, corrections, and social services to explore practical, culturally grounded approaches for creating a more responsive and compassionate justice system in Hawai‘i. The in-person and virtual series featured five panel discussions and one culminating workshop.
- **Hawai‘i Reentry Simulation: Addressing Barriers to Life After Incarceration** (June 13, 2025): This workshop held in the Supreme Court Courtroom provided an experiential learning environment for 100 participants to examine systemic barriers and advance strategies for enhancing support structures for individuals transitioning from incarceration to community life. Originally designed by the U.S. Department of Justice to create awareness of the challenges returning citizens face, the simulation has been modified by the Penn State Restorative Justice Initiative (RJI) with support from the American Institute for Research Technical Assistance Grant. The workshop was co-sponsored by RJI, CEAC, JHC, Hawai'i Friends of Restorative Justice, and Hawaii State Bar Association Civic Education Committee.

Recordings for past programs can be viewed at the Center’s YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/@jhchawaii/videos.



Author Jane Marshall Goodsill speaks at the 1913 Courtroom in Ali‘iōlani Hale during ‘Voices of Hawai‘i, Vol. 3: Talk Story,’ session in July 2025. Her acclaimed oral history series shares untold stories of Hawai‘i’s people, capturing the islands’ journey from World War II into the 21st century.

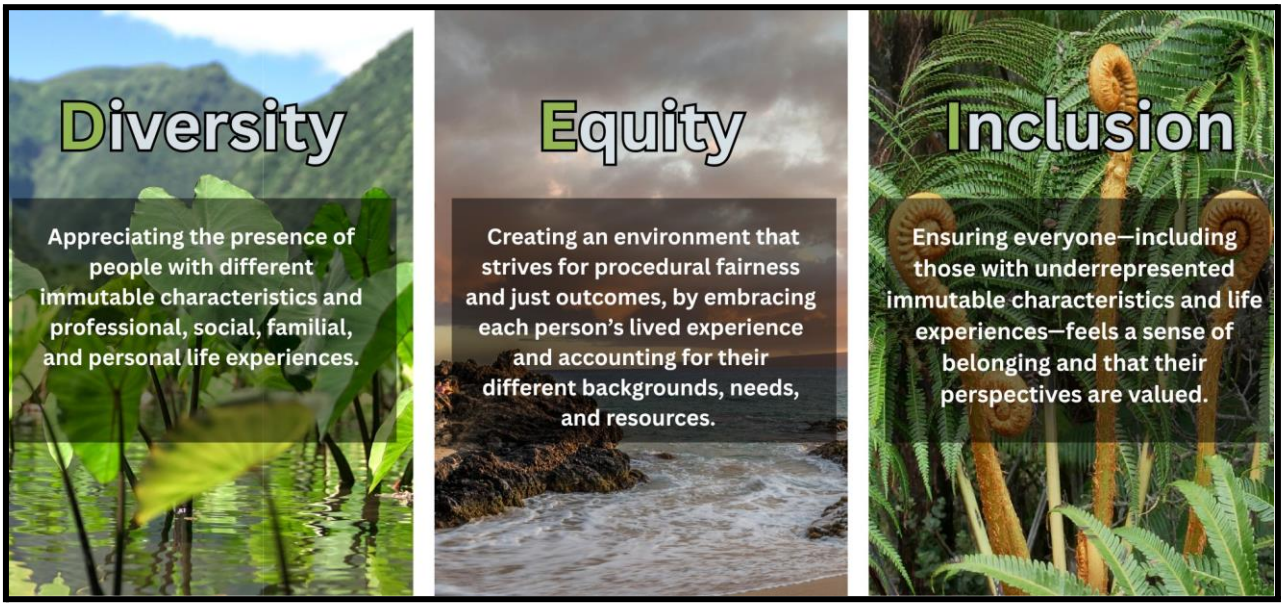
Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Hawai'i State Judiciary actively fosters diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) throughout the organization.

In 2022, Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald supported the creation of the DEI Working Group, which brings together employees from across the state to build an inclusive workplace culture grounded in DEI principles.

In 2025, the group shared several webinars on DEI in courts and kicked off a Pilina Tour of the circuits on Kaua'i in November, with a focus on how we can create a sense of aloha and belonging among our workforce. The group also prioritized language access in courts, mental health awareness, and employee engagement through surveys.

Moving forward, the DEI Working Group hopes to expand the Pilina Tour to other locations, conduct new training courses and encourages employees to share their experiences, ideas, and feedback as they consider how the Judiciary's policies, practices, and culture can better support everyone.



Developing Future Leaders

The Judiciary's Supervisor Mentorship Program continues to grow and strengthen leadership statewide, pairing new supervisors with experienced mentors to build skills, foster collaboration, and prepare future leaders to effectively serve the people of Hawai'i.



Mentors and mentees participating in the 2025 Supervisor Mentorship Program held their first session together at the Hawai'i Supreme Court.

In 2025, the Hawai'i State Judiciary continued its commitment to developing future leaders through its annual Supervisor Mentorship Program, now in its third year. Designed to support employees who have recently transitioned into supervisory roles, the program focuses on building leadership capacity through education, relationship-building, and the sharing of real-world supervisory experiences. By connecting supervisors across courts, divisions, and islands, the program strengthens professional networks and promotes collaboration throughout the Judiciary.

The 2025 program brought together 14 mentor-mentee pairings, the largest cohort to date, reflecting the program's steady growth since its launch in 2023. Participants engaged in monthly trainings and regular one-on-one meetings with assigned mentors between May and September. A total of six sessions were held both in person and virtually, with convenings on O'ahu and Maui to support statewide participation. Training topics emphasized practical skills and resources for supervisors, including leadership development, workplace well-being, crisis management strategies, and labor relations.

Through its structured yet flexible format, the Supervisor Mentorship Program continues to empower new supervisors while fostering a culture of shared learning and service. As the program evolves, lessons learned from each cohort are used to refine its approach, ensuring it remains responsive to the needs of the Judiciary and prepares supervisors to lead effectively in support of the Judiciary's mission to serve the people of Hawai'i.

New Facilities

New courthouses coming to Wahiawā and South Kohala.



The new Wahiawā Civic Center and District Courthouse is scheduled to open in Summer 2026.

Wahiawā Civic Center and District Courthouse

Construction of the Wahiawā Civic Center, home to the new Wahiawā District Courthouse, is on track to finish in 2026 with Judiciary scheduled to begin operations in the new courthouse sometime in the summer.

The courthouse will feature modernized facilities, including a second courtroom and dedicated spaces for programs that support individuals under court supervision. These programs include probation services, Hoʻokele (self-help station), community service coordination, driver education referrals, and areas for Sheriff's and custody operations.

Locating these services in Wahiawā will significantly reduce the time and expense residents currently incur traveling to Honolulu for mandatory appointments.

Beyond the courthouse, the Civic Center will serve as a centralized hub for essential government services. It will house a satellite city hall, a driver's license customer center, and state offices for health and human services, creating a convenient one-stop location for residents of Wahiawā, the North Shore, and Central Oʻahu.

The building will also be fully accessible for people with disabilities, meeting all current ADA standards.

Parking and transportation have been planned with convenience in mind: 71 parking stalls will be available for Judiciary staff and the public, and the new complex is located right next to the Transit Center, making it easy to reach by city bus.

In 2020, lawmakers set aside $76 million to design and build the project. Thanks to competitive bids and cost savings, the actual construction price is now about $48.7 million. In 2023, an additional $425,000 was approved to help furnish the inside of the courthouse.

The Judiciary remains deeply appreciative of this support, which ensures that the new Civic Center will deliver improved access to justice and essential services for the surrounding communities.



Judiciary team during a site walk of the Wahiawā Civic Center and future District Courthouse in 2025. Pictured on the rooftop and in front of the building: Dwight Sakai, Michelle Acosta, Estrella Gazmen, John Hausler, Kaili Soon, Matthew Alvena, Alicia Plummer, Saifoli Aganon, and Tina Ann Heatherly.

State Allocates Funds for New South Kohala Courthouse

Plans for a new and improved courthouse on the Big Island took a major step forward in 2025 when the State Legislature allocated $4 million for the design of the new South Kohala District Courthouse. This funding marks the beginning of the next phase of development for a project that was initiated in 2023 to address the growing needs of the Third Judicial Circuit.

According to 2020 census data, the population of the North and South Kohala Districts has grown by 230% since 1980, resulting in an increase in court hearings and cases. The South Kohala District Court building, which was constructed in 1982, currently sees between 9,000 and 10,000 cases annually while operating in a 3,000-square-foot facility with only one courtroom, limited office space, and no meeting rooms or waiting areas. Consequently, as many as 50 individuals must often wait for hearings outside in uncovered areas or in their vehicles. In addition, the building does not comply with ADA standards, creating significant accessibility challenges.

Security concerns compound these challenges. The existing courthouse lacks secure waiting areas for opposing parties in sensitive cases such as temporary restraining orders (TROs). There are no holding areas for in-custody defendants, forcing them to remain in jail vans until their cases are called—often requiring defense attorneys to meet clients in the van.

The new courthouse will address these concerns. It will be constructed on the Waimea Civic Center grounds, the same state-owned parcel where the current facility is located, eliminating additional land acquisition costs. The design includes expanded office space, secure holding areas, separate waiting areas for opposing parties, and ADA-compliant restrooms. Client services currently located off-site will be integrated into the new facility, and modern infrastructure and energy-efficient systems will ensure sustainable operations. Importantly, the existing courthouse will remain operational throughout construction.

People Making a Difference



From left: Administrative Director Rod Maile (ret.), Judge Trish K. Morikawa, Chief Judge Peter T. Cahill, and Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald (ret.)

2025 Jurists of the Year

In every strong democracy, judges serve as quiet stewards of the rule of law—interpreting it, applying it, and ensuring that every person who enters a courtroom is treated with fairness and dignity. The recipients of the 2025 Jurists of the Year awards—Second Circuit Chief Judge Peter T. Cahill and First Circuit Judge Trish K. Morikawa—embody these ideals with distinction, consistently meeting the high expectations of judicial service while setting a standard of excellence that inspires their colleagues and strengthens the communities they serve.

Former Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald, who presented the awards on September 19, praised both honorees for their leadership, resilience, and deep commitment to improving the lives of the people they serve. “Judges Cahill and Morikawa have not only demonstrated exceptional judicial competence throughout their tenure, but they have gone above and beyond in their roles to be innovative and ensure that the Judiciary continues to improve its services,” he said.

Judge Cahill has long been a stabilizing force on Maui, guiding the Second Circuit through some of its most complex challenges. Recktenwald highlighted his steady leadership during the pandemic and, more recently, in the aftermath of the Maui wildfire, noting that he “ensured that the Judiciary on Maui would continue to provide justice without interruption to a community that desperately needed stability, while extending grace and support to all those who were impacted.”

Judge Morikawa's career reflects a rare blend of compassion, creativity, and determination. She has presided over criminal, HOPE, environmental, mental health, and drug court calendars, and now serves as presiding judge of Women's Court (Mohala Wahine)—a program she helped develop from pilot to permanency. Recktenwald described her as "a transformative leader" who was instrumental in transforming "the dream of having a women's court into a reality."

Together, Judges Morikawa and Cahill exemplify the integrity, dedication, and compassion that sustain public trust in Hawai'i's courts.

The Jurist of the Year is selected annually by the Chief Justice from nominations submitted by Hawai'i attorneys and Judiciary personnel. The award recognizes a full-time trial judge who exhibits exceptional judicial competence, evidenced by decisional quality; significant extra-judicial contributions to the administration of justice; and active participation in public service to the community at large.

The Judiciary also presented individual and group awards to employees who have distinguished themselves through exceptional service and accomplishments. The recipients of this year's awards are:

- **Distinguished Service Award** (the Judiciary's highest employee award): Jaye Atiburcio, Executive Secretary to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.
- **Meritorious Service Award:** Michele "Maile" Holt, Circuit Court Clerk Traffic-Criminal Section (ret.), Honolulu District Court.
- **Group Meritorious Service Award:** Program Services Branch, Client Services Division Family Court, Third Circuit: Hilo Unit – Shelley Carter, Glen Lefiti, Jendi Saldana, Shannon Savage; and Kona Unit – Al-Qawi Lebarre, Wendy Opiopio.
- **Spirit of the Judiciary Award:** Rebekah Lee, Court Operations Specialist Communications Technology & Court Operations Unit First Circuit; and Darla Requelman, Estate & Guardianship Specialist Estate & Guardianship Branch, Third Circuit.
- **Certificate of Commendation:** Wade Hiraishi, Human Resources Manager (ret.), Human Resources Department; and Jacqueline Raquel, Supervisor, Clerical Section, Office of the Chief Court Administrator, Fifth Circuit.
- **Group Certificate of Commendation:** Facilities Management Branch – Kona Section Keahuolu Courthouse, Third Circuit: Chelsea Kane, Richard Blihmen, Christopher Ching, Morgan Dacalio, Criston Kam, Neal Matsumura, Jamie Morrissey, Betty Jean Naeole, Martin Orlando, Joanie Perreira; and Legal Documents Branch Court & Operational Support Services Division, Second Circuit: Sandra Roman, Grace Cabaccang-Sajor, Sheri Lee Chong, Chelsea Lynn Clarke, Molly Fernandez-Kahakauwila, Nadine Gomes, Stacey Hoeft, Amanda Kaili, Charlene Pinheiro, Clarence Respicio, Kara Rusho, Lisa Texeira, Cheylah-Marie Uyeda.

Acting Chief Justice McKenna Champions Judicial Independence at Duke Law Ceremony



Hawai'i Supreme Court Associate Justice Sabrina McKenna addresses graduates and others gathered for the convocation ceremony at Duke University on May 10, 2025.

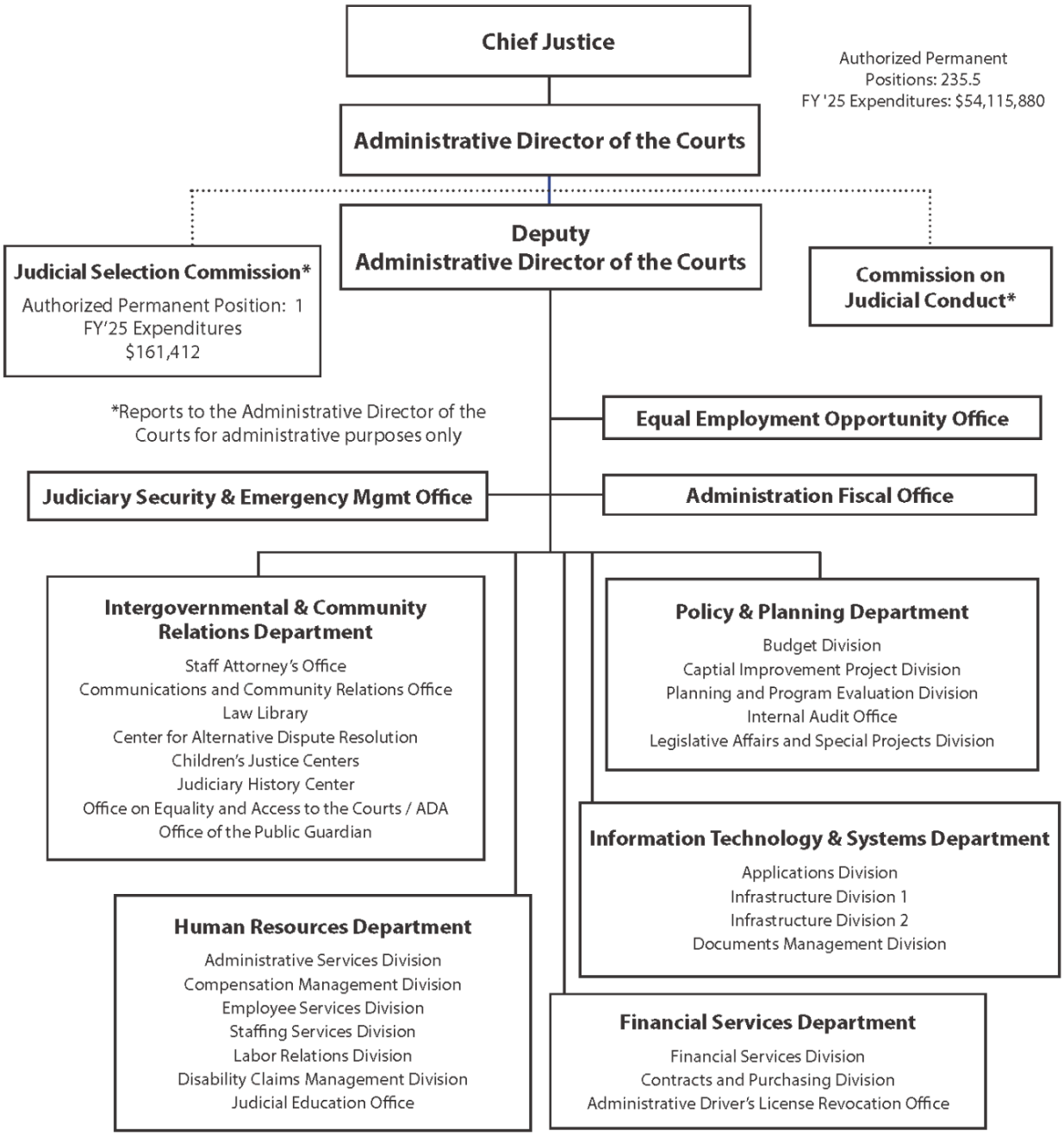
Hawai'i Supreme Court Acting Chief Justice Sabrina McKenna earned a Master of Laws (LL.M.) in Judicial Studies from Duke University School of Law's Bolch Judicial Institute and was selected to serve as class speaker at Duke Law's convocation ceremony on May 10, 2025, in Durham, North Carolina.

In her remarks, Justice McKenna spoke about the central role of the judiciary and legal profession in safeguarding democratic institutions. "It is your responsibility to stand up for and protect the rule of law, which includes the independence of the judiciary," she told graduates, families, and friends.

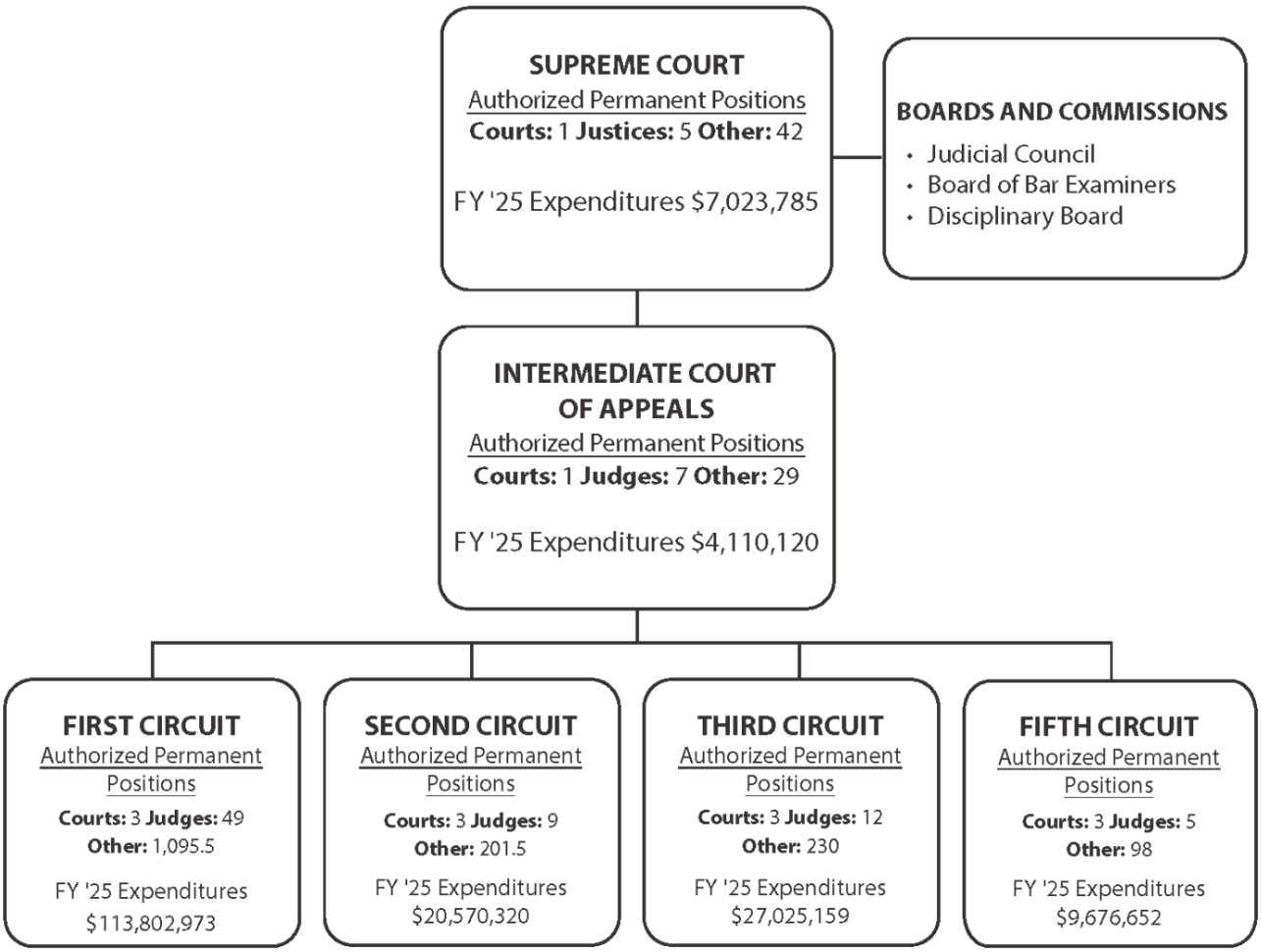
The LL.M. in Judicial Studies is a specialized graduate program designed exclusively for sitting judges, focusing on judicial decision-making, ethics, court administration, and the role of courts in democratic systems. Duke Law's program is nationally and internationally recognized and enrolls approximately 20 judges every other year.

The 2025 Duke Law convocation honored 334 graduates, including 226 Juris Doctor recipients, 88 LL.M. graduates, and 20 judges who completed the LL.M. in Judicial Studies. Justice McKenna's class included judges from Chile, South Korea, and a range of state and federal courts across the United States.

Office of the Administrative Director of the Courts



Structure of the Court System



Hawai'i's Courts of Appeal are comprised of the Supreme Court and the Intermediate Court of Appeals. Hawai'i's trial level is comprised of Circuit Courts and District Courts. Family Courts are included in the District and Circuit Courts. Hawai'i's trial courts function in four circuits that correspond approximately to the geographical areas served by the counties.
The First Circuit serves the City and County of Honolulu.
The Second Circuit serves the County of Maui, which includes the islands of Maui, Moloka'i, and Lāna'i.
The Third Circuit, divided into the districts of Hilo and Kona, serves the County of Hawai'i.
The Fourth Circuit is no longer used as a circuit designation. The Third and Fourth Circuits merged in 1943.
The Fifth Circuit serves the County of Kaua'i, which includes the islands of Kaua'i and Ni'ihau.

Courts of Appeal

Supreme Court

The Supreme Court of Hawai‘i is the state’s court of last resort. It hears appeals brought before the court upon applications for writs of certiorari to the Intermediate Court of Appeals and applications for transfer from the Intermediate Court of Appeals, as well as original proceedings and direct appeals from agencies.

Each appeal is decided on the basis of the written record. In some cases, the court may hear oral arguments. The court takes no evidence, except in original proceedings. Each justice participates in every substantive matter before the court.

The Supreme Court is composed of a chief justice and four associate justices. Justices are appointed by the governor from a list of not less than four and not more than six names submitted by the Judicial Selection Commission.

A justice’s appointment is subject to confirmation by the State Senate. Each justice is initially appointed for a 10-year term. To be considered for appointment, a person must be a resident and a citizen of the state and of the United States and licensed to practice law by the Supreme Court of Hawai‘i for not less than 10 years preceding their nomination. After initial appointment, the Judicial Selection Commission determines whether a justice will be retained in office. Per the Hawai‘i State Constitution, a judge may not serve beyond age 70.

The Supreme Court also hears:

- Reserved questions of law from the circuit courts, the Land Court, and the Tax Appeal Court;
- Certified questions of law from federal courts;
- Applications for writs to judges and other public officers;
- Complaints regarding elections.

In addition, it:

- Makes rules of practice and procedure for all state courts;
- Licenses, regulates, and disciplines attorneys; and
- Disciplines judges

Supreme Court Justices and Their Current Terms

Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald
September 14, 2020 - September 30, 2030
Retired September 30, 2025

Associate Justice Sabrina S. McKenna
March 3, 2021 - March 2, 2031
Acting Chief Justice eff. October 1, 2025

Associate Justice Todd W. Eddins
December 11, 2020 - December 10, 2030

Associate Justice Lisa M. Ginoza
January 12, 2024 – January 11, 2034

Associate Justice Vladimir P. Devens
January 12, 2024 – January 11, 2034



From left: Associate Justice Sabrina S. McKenna (Acting Chief Justice eff. 10/1/25), Associate Justice Lisa M. Ginoza, Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald (Retired 9/30/25), Associate Justice Vladimir P. Devens, Associate Justice Todd W. Eddins

Intermediate Court of Appeals

The Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA) hears almost all appeals from trial courts and some agencies in the state of Hawai‘i.

The ICA has discretionary authority to entertain cases submitted without a prior suit if there is a question of law that could be the subject of a civil action or a proceeding in the circuit court or Tax Appeal Court, and the parties agree upon the facts upon which the controversy depends.

Cases in the ICA may be transferred to the Hawai‘i Supreme Court upon application to the Supreme Court under circumstances set out in the Hawai‘i Revised Statutes. The ICA’s judgments on appeal and dismissal orders are subject to the Supreme Court’s discretionary review by way of an application for a writ of certiorari.

The ICA is composed of a chief judge and six associate judges who sit on panels of three. Judges are appointed by the governor from a list of not fewer than four and not more than six nominees submitted by the Judicial Selection Commission. All appointees are subject to confirmation by the State Senate. Each judge is initially appointed for a 10-year term. After initial appointment, the Judicial Selection Commission determines whether a judge will be retained in office. Per the Hawai‘i State Constitution, a judge may not serve beyond age 70.

Intermediate Court of Appeals Judges and Their Current Terms

Chief Judge Karen T. Nakasone
July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2035

Associate Judge Katherine G. Leonard
January 30, 2008 - January 29, 2028
Acting Chief Judge January 13, 2024 - June 30, 2025

Associate Judge Keith K. Hiraoka
November 19, 2018 - November 18, 2028

Associate Judge Clyde J. Wadsworth
October 21, 2019 - October 20, 2029

Associate Judge Sonja M.P. McCullen
October 1, 2021 - September 30, 2031

Associate Judge Kimberly Tsumoto Guidry
May 31, 2023 - May 30, 2033



Chief Judge Nakasone *Chief Judge Leonard* *Judge Hiraoka*



Judge Wadsworth *Judge McCullen* *Judge Tsumoto Guidry*

Circuit Court

The mission of the Circuit Court is to expeditiously and fairly adjudicate or resolve all matters within its jurisdiction in accordance with the law.

All jury trials are held in the Circuit Courts, which have general jurisdiction in civil and criminal cases. It also has exclusive jurisdiction in probate, Circuit Court guardianship, and criminal felony cases, as well as civil cases where the contested amount exceeds $40,000. Circuit Courts share concurrent jurisdiction with District Courts in civil non-jury cases that specify amounts between $5,000 and $40,000.

Additional cases dispensed by the Circuit Courts include mechanic's liens and misdemeanor violations transferred from the District Courts for jury trials.

Circuit Court Judges are appointed by the governor from a list of not fewer than four and not more than six names submitted by the Judicial Selection Commission. All appointees are subject to confirmation by the State Senate. Each judge is initially appointed for a 10-year term. After initial appointment, the Judicial Selection Commission determines whether a judge will be retained in office. Per the Hawai'i State Constitution, a judge may not serve beyond age 70.

Circuit Court Judges and Their Current Terms

First Circuit - O'ahu

Paul B.K. Wong
1st Division
December 20, 2017 -
December 19, 2027

Catherine H. Remigio
2nd Division
April 7, 2017 -
April 6, 2027

Dyan M. Medeiros
3rd Division
Deputy Chief Judge / Senior Family Court Judge (Effective September 27, 2024)
September 27, 2024 –
September 26, 2034

John M. Tonaki
4th Division
October 28, 2019 –
October 27, 2029

Jeannette H. Castagnetti
5th Division
Chief Judge (Effective January 1, 2024)
September 30, 2020 –
September 29, 2030

Brian A. Costa
6th Division
September 27, 2024 –
September 26, 2034

Dean E. Ochiai
7th Division
February 15, 2023 –
May 31, 2033
(Retired May 31, 2025)

Taryn R. Tomasa
7th Division
June 3, 2025 –
June 2, 2035

Kevin T. Morikone
8th Division
December 16, 2021 –
December 15, 2031

Lisa W. Cataldo
9th Division
January 6, 2020 –
January 5, 2030

James H. Ashford
10th Division
Deputy Chief Judge – Civil (Effective January 1, 2024)
April 24, 2018 –
April 23, 2028

Kevin A. K. Souza
11th Division
October 28, 2019 –
October 27, 2029

Shirley M. Kawamura
12th Division
December 17, 2025 –
December 16, 2035

Matthew J. Viola
13th Division
December 20, 2017 –
December 19, 2027

Rebecca Ann Copeland
14th Division
September 27, 2024 –
September 26, 2034

Clarissa Y. Malinao
15th Division
December 16, 2021 –
December 15, 2031

Jordon J. Kimura
16th Division
January 8, 2024 –
January 7, 2034

Ronald G. Johnson
17th Division
Deputy Chief Judge - Criminal (Effective December 18, 2023)
October 28, 2019 –
October 27, 2029

Steven R. Nichols
18th Division
September 27, 2024 –
September 26, 2034

Fa‘auuga To‘oto‘o
19th Division
October 7, 2020 –
October 6, 2030

Trish K. Morikawa
20th Division
October 28, 2019 –
October 27, 2029

James S. Kawashima
21st Division
November 30, 2022 –
November 29, 2032

Karin L. Holma
22nd Division
May 30, 2025 –
May 29, 2035

Rowena A. Somerville
23rd Division
December 20, 2017 –
December 19, 2027

Second Circuit - Maui

Kirstin M. Hamman
1st Division
December 17, 2021 -
December 16, 2031

Peter T. Cahill
2nd Division
Chief Judge / Senior Family Court Judge (Effective January 1, 2022)
September 17, 2022 –
September 16, 2032

Kelsey M. Kawano
3rd Division
December 20, 2019 –
December 19, 2029
(Retired December 31, 2025)

Michelle L. Drewyer
4th Division
June 13, 2023 –
June 12, 2033

Third Circuit - Hawai‘i

Peter K. Kubota
1st Division
May 15, 2020 -
May 14, 2030

Henry T. Nakamoto
2nd Division
October 30, 2017 -
October 29, 2027

Kauanoe A.D. Jackson
3rd Division
June 2, 2025 –
June 1, 2035

Wendy M. DeWeese
4th Division
Chief Judge (Effective July 1, 2024)
December 2, 2021 -
December 1, 2031

Fifth Circuit - Kaua‘i

Randal G. B. Valenciano
1st Division
Chief Judge / Sr. Family Court Judge (Effective June 15, 2017)
June 14, 2017 –
June 13, 2027
(Retired September 30, 2025)

Kathleen N.A. Watanabe
2nd Division
August 17, 2015 –
August 16, 2025
(Retired August 14, 2025)

Michael K. Soong
District Court Judge Temp. Assigned to Circuit Court and Designated as Chief Judge/Senior Family Court Judge effective October 1, 2025
January 3, 2023 –
January 2, 2029

Stephanie R. S. Char
District Family Court
Judge Temp. Assigned to Circuit Court effective October 1, 2025
December 17, 2020 –
December 16, 2026

Family Court

The mission of the Family Court is to provide a fair, speedy, economical, and accessible forum for the resolution of matters involving families and children.

The Family Courts were established by statute in 1965 to hear all legal matters involving children, such as delinquency, waiver, status offenses, abuse and neglect, termination of parental rights, adoption, guardianship and detention. The Family Court also hears traditional domestic relations cases, including divorce, nonsupport, paternity, uniform child custody jurisdiction cases, and miscellaneous custody matters.

District Family Court judges are appointed by the chief justice from a list of not fewer than four and not more than six names submitted by the Judicial Selection Commission. Each judge is initially appointed for a 6-year term. All appointees are subject to confirmation by the State Senate. After initial appointment, the Judicial Selection Commission determines whether a judge will be retained in office. Per the Hawai‘i State Constitution, a judge may not serve beyond age 70.

Family Court Judges and Their Current Terms

First Circuit - O‘ahu

Dyan M. Medeiros
Circuit Court Judge / 3rd Division
Deputy Chief Judge / Senior Family Court Judge
(Effective September 27, 2024)
September 27, 2024 –
September 26, 2034

Jessi L.K. Hall
December 20, 2023 –
December 19, 2029

Lesley N. Maloian
August 30, 2021 – August 29, 2027

John A. Montalbano
November 30, 2022 –
November 29, 2028

Courtney N. Naso
November 2, 2020 –
November 1, 2026

Robert J. Brown
October 9, 2023 - October 8, 2029

Elizabeth Paek-Harris
November 2, 2020 –
November 1, 2026

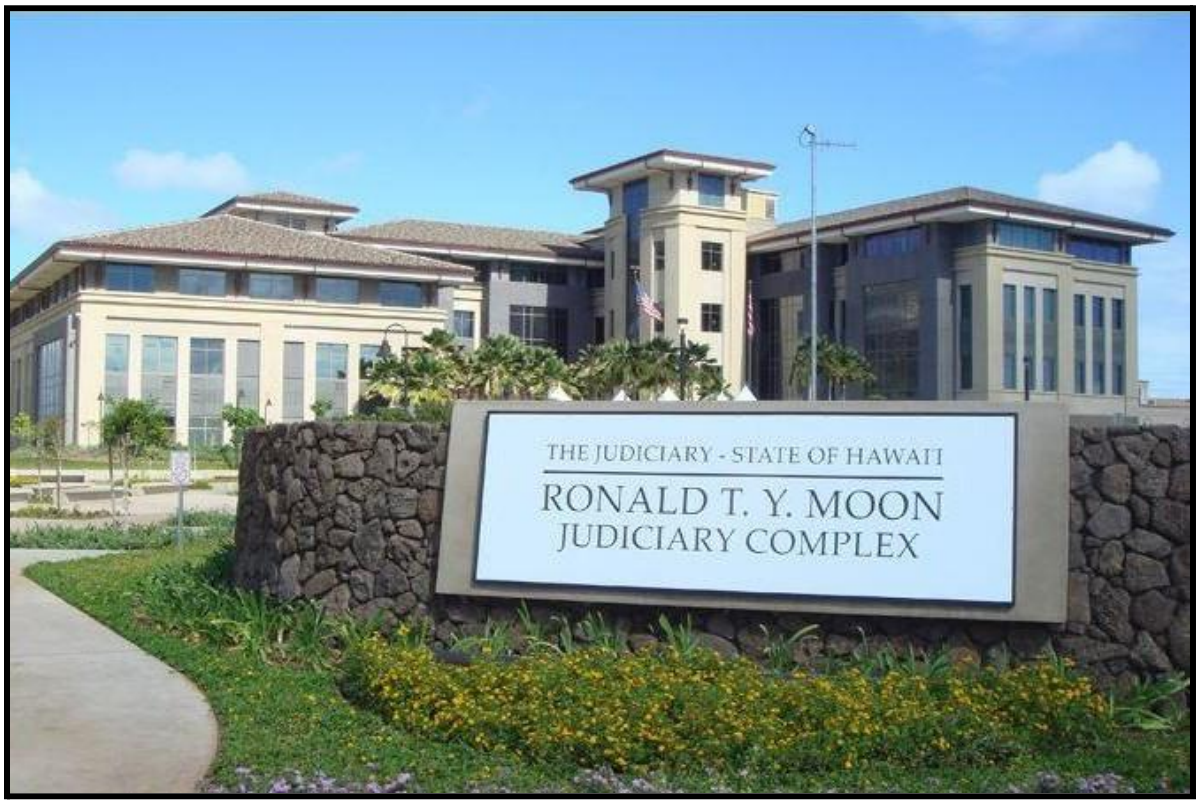
Andrew T. Park
November 16, 2020 -
November 15, 2026

Maria F. Penn
August 14, 2025 – August 13, 2031

Natasha R. Shaw
June 9, 2022 – June 8, 2028

Wilson A. Unga
June 5, 2025 – June 4, 2031

Rochelle I. Vidinha
June 5, 2025 – June 4, 2031



The Ronald T.Y. Moon Judiciary Complex in Kapolei on Oʻahu, home of the First Circuit Family Court

Second Circuit - Maui

Peter T. Cahill
Circuit Court Judge / 2nd Division
Chief Judge / Senior Family Court Judge
September 17, 2012 -
September 16, 2032

James R. Rouse
March 25, 2021 - March 24, 2027

Sonya H. Toma
May 23, 2025 – May 22, 2031

Fifth Circuit - Kauaʻi

Stephanie R.S. Char
Deputy Chief Judge
(Effective October 1, 2025)
December 17, 2020 -
December 16, 2026

Gregory H. Meyers
August 16, 2022 – August 15, 2028

Third Circuit - Hawaiʻi

Wendy M. DeWeese
Circuit Court Judge / 4th Division
Chief Judge / Administrative Judge / Senior Family Court Judge
December 2, 2021 - December 1, 2031

Darien W.L. Ching Nagata
May 20, 2022 – May 19, 2028

Jill M. Hasegawa
July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2028

Jeffrey W.S. Ng
May 5, 2021 - May 4, 2027

Joanna E. Sokolow
August 3, 2022 - August 2, 2028

District Court

The mission of the District Court is to serve the people of Hawai‘i through the fair and efficient adjudication and resolution of cases and controversies brought before it.

The District Courts have exclusive jurisdiction over traffic infractions and summary possession or ejectment proceedings (landlord-tenant), regardless of the claim amount. The District Courts also have jurisdiction over non-jury trial civil cases where the debt, amount, damages, or value of the property claimed does not exceed $40,000, or where the remedy sought is specific performance valued under $40,000, criminal offenses punishable by fine or by imprisonment not exceeding one year, cases arising from violations of a county ordinance, and petitions for restraining orders for relief from and for injunctions against harassment.

District Court judges are appointed to six-year terms by the chief justice from a list of not less than four and not more than six names (previously a list of at least six names) submitted for each opening by the Judicial Selection Commission, subject to confirmation by the State Senate. After initial appointment, the Judicial Selection Commission determines whether a judge will be retained in office. A judge may not serve past age 70.

District Court Judges and their Current Terms

First Circuit - O‘ahu

Melanie Mito May
Deputy Chief Judge
June 23, 2023 - June 22, 2029

Michelle N. Comeau
July 3, 2024 – July 2, 2030

Tracy S. Fukui
November 16, 2020 -
November 15, 2026

Thomas A.K. Haia
November 2, 2020 -
November 1, 2026

David M. Hayakawa
October 23, 2023 – October 22, 2029

Timothy E. Ho
November 30, 2022 -
November 29, 2028

Erika E. Ireland
October 9, 2023 - October 8, 2029

Summer M.M. Kupau-Odo
November 29, 2024 -
November 28, 2030

Shellie K. Park-Hoapili
June 9, 2022 - June 8, 2028

Kenneth J. Shimozono
August 30, 2024 - August 29, 2030

Kristine Yoo
August 30, 2024 – August 29, 2030

Bryant G.F.Y. Zane
November 16, 2020 -
November 15, 2026

Alvin P.K.K. Nishimura
December 10, 2025 -
December 9, 2031

Second Circuit

Blaine J. Kobayashi
Deputy Chief Judge (Effective December 20, 2019)
October 12, 2022 - October 11, 2028
(Retired June 30, 2025)

Christopher M. Dunn
Deputy Chief Judge (Effective June 11, 2025)
March 25, 2021 - March 24, 2027

Annalisa M. Bernard Lee
October 28, 2022 - October 27, 2028

Third Circuit

M. Kanani Laubach
Deputy Chief Judge (Effective June 26, 2020)
August 10, 2022 - August 9, 2028

Jeffrey A. Hawk
November 4, 2025 - November 3, 2031

Kimberly B.M. Tsuchiya
December 2, 2021 - December 1, 2027

Fifth Circuit

Michael K. Soong
January 3, 2023 - January 2, 2029

Stephanie R.S. Char
December 17, 2020 - December 16, 2026

Gregory H. Meyers
August 16, 2022 - August 15, 2028



Exterior of Kauikeaouli Hale, home to the First Circuit District Court Courthouse in downtown Honolulu.

Support Services

The mission of the Office of the Administrative Director of the Courts is to promote the administration of justice in Hawai‘i by providing professional, responsive administrative support to the Chief Justice, the courts, and Judiciary programs. These support services play a vital role in advancing and strengthening the Judiciary's overall mission.

Administration

The **Office of the Administrative Director of the Courts** oversees the day-to-day operations of the statewide court system. The Administrative Director—appointed by the Chief Justice with the approval of the Supreme Court—works in partnership with the Deputy Administrative Director to manage Judiciary functions and initiatives.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Officer and the Judiciary Security Emergency Management Office are attached to the *Office of the Deputy Administrative Director.*

The Judiciary's administrative support structure is organized into five departments:

• **Intergovernmental and Community Relations Department**
This department encompasses the Staff Attorney's Office, King Kamehameha V Judiciary History Center, Children's Justice Centers, Law Library, Center for Alternative Dispute Resolution, Communications and Community Relations, Equality and Access to the Courts, and the Office of the Public Guardian.

• **Information Technology and Systems Department**
The department includes the Applications Division, Infrastructure Support Services Division 1, Infrastructure Division 2, and the Documents Management Division.

• **Policy and Planning Department**
This area comprises the Budget Division, Capital Improvement Project Division, Planning and Program Evaluation, Reporting and Statistics Office, Internal Audit, Special Projects/Legislative Coordinating Office, and the Capital Improvement Repair and Maintenance Office.

• **Human Resources Department**
This department includes Administrative Services, Compensation Management, Employee Services, Disability Claims Management, and Judicial Education.

• **Financial Services Department**
The department consists of the Fiscal Services Division, Contracts and Purchasing Division, and the Administrative Drivers' License Revocation Office.

Financial Resources

Appropriations for the Hawai‘i State Judiciary are made by the Legislature on a statewide basis, with each fiscal year beginning July 1 and ending June 30. Both the operating and capital improvements budgets of the Judiciary are legislatively determined each biennium with operating monies allocated from the State General and Special Funds, and capital improvement monies from the State Capital Project Fund.

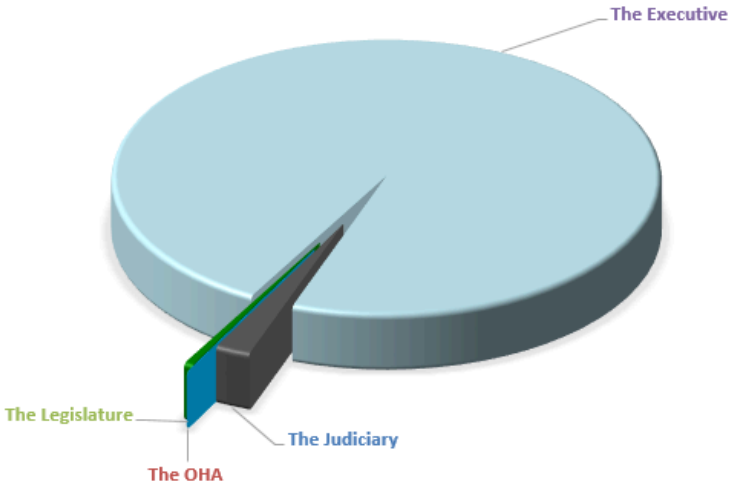
The Legislature appropriated $235,328,489 from the State General Fund for Judiciary operations during Fiscal Year 2024–2025. The Judiciary's appropriations constitute 2.08% of the total state general fund appropriations. Other operating monies come from federal funds, trust funds, and special funds such as the Driver Education and Training Fund.

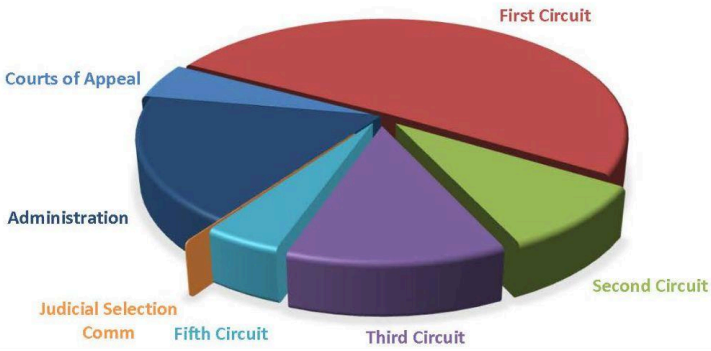
State General Fund
Expenditure By Court / Element
Fiscal Year 2024–2025

Courts of Appeal	5.09%	$11,133,905
First Circuit	50.75%	$111,058,323
Second Circuit	9.40%	$20,570,320
Third Circuit	12.35%	$27,025,159
Fifth Circuit	4.42%	$9,676,652
Judicial Selection Comm	0.07%	$161,412
Administration	17.91%	$39,189,785
Total		**$218,815,556**

Total State Government
Appropriations
From State General Fund
Fiscal Year 2024–2025

The Judiciary	2.08%	$235,328,489
OHA	0.03%	$3,000,000
The Legislature	0.51%	$57,989,548
The Executive	97.38%	$11,011,553,820
Total		$11,307,871,857



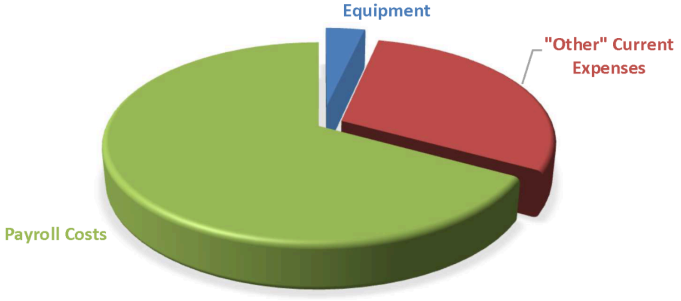


Program		FY 2024 Actual Expenditures	FY 2025 Actual Expenditures	Biennium Budget Appropriations* FY 2026	Biennium Budget Appropriations * FY 2027
JUD 101	*Courts of Appeal*				
	General Fund	9,682,112	11,133,905	9,592,659	9,962,313
JUD 310	*First Circuit*				
	General Fund	93,122,954	111,058,323	98,130,866	100,168,607
	Special Fund	2,381,682	2,744,650	4,309,568	4,261,273
JUD 320	*Second Circuit*				
	General Fund	17,608,144	20,570,320	20,093,034	20,331,034
JUD 330	*Third Circuit*				
	General Fund	23,125,975	27,025,159	24,912,1040	25,274,522
JUD 350	*Fifth Circuit*				
	General Fund	8,220,642	9,676,652	9,159,756	9,291,556
JUD 501	*Judicial Selection Commission*				
	General Fund	137,481	161,412	114,074	114,074
JUD 610	*Administration*				
	General Fund	33,167,457	39,189,785	39,723,183	40,842,308
	Special Fund	5,926,071	4,830,975	8,241,219	8,178,123
	Revolving Fund	11,642	13,557	343,261	343,261
Totals					
	General Fund	185,064,765	228,815,556	201,725,6767	205,984,414
	Special Fund	8,307,753	7,575,625	12,502,492	12,439,396
	Revolving Fund	11,642	13,557	343,261	343,261

** Subject to final legislative review.*

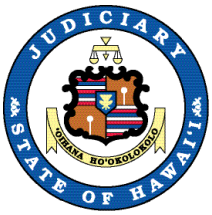
State General Fund Expenditures
By Cost Category
Fiscal Year 2024–2025

Equipment	3.53%	$7,725,501
"Other" Current Expenses	29.52%	$64,598,288
Payroll Costs	66.34%	$146,491,767
Total		**$218,815,556**



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Produced by the
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