Circuit Court

APPROVED FY27 BUDGET	FULL TIME EQUIVALENTS
$21,779,294	129.50

KARLA N. SMITH, ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Circuit Court is to serve Sixth Judicial Circuit residents in the determination of litigation in serious criminal matters, substantive civil cases, domestic cases, and child support cases in accordance with the United States and Maryland Constitutions while administering justice in an honest, fair, and efficient manner.

BUDGET OVERVIEW

The total approved FY27 Operating Budget for the Circuit Court is $21,779,294, an increase of $1,230,531 or 5.99 percent from the FY26 Approved Budget of $20,548,763. Personnel Costs comprise 86.54 percent of the budget for 128 full-time position(s) and three part-time position(s), and a total of 129.50 FTEs. Total FTEs may include seasonal or temporary positions and may also reflect workforce charged to or from other departments or funds. Operating Expenses account for the remaining 13.46 percent of the FY27 budget.

COUNTY PRIORITY OUTCOMES

While this program area supports all seven of the County Executive's Priority Outcomes, the following are emphasized:

- **Thriving Youth and Families**
- **Safe Neighborhoods**
- **Effective, Sustainable Government**

INITIATIVES

- The Circuit Court is advancing its strategic initiatives by promoting accountability and public trust; improving access to justice; fostering a healthy, diverse, and productive workforce; encouraging a service-oriented approach to court operations; and using technology effectively and responsibly.

INNOVATIONS AND PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENTS

- Launched the Access to Justice Coordinator role to develop and execute strategies for outreach and marketing about court proceedings at local schools.

PROGRAM CONTACTS

Contact Timothy H. Sheridan of the Circuit Court at 240-777-9102 or Derrick Harrigan of the Office of Management and Budget at 240-777-2759 for more information regarding this department's operating budget.

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance measures for this department are included below (where applicable), with multi-program measures displayed at the front of this section and program-specific measures shown with the relevant program. The FY26 estimates reflect funding based on the FY26 Approved Budget. The FY27 and FY28 figures are performance targets based on the FY27 Approved Budget and funding for comparable service levels in FY28.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Adjudication

Adjudication encompasses support staff for the Judiciary, Case Management, and Data Quality. Conceptually, this division monitors case assignments (criminal, civil, and family cases), provides expedited case disposition for incarcerated offenders, and provides supervision consistent with the complexity of each case filed. Adjudication and Case Management improve the efficiency of case processing and reduce the demand for judicial intervention at various stages of litigation. To minimize case delay, each case is assigned to an appropriate track that allows for the performance of pre-trial tasks and allocates the appropriate level of judicial intervention. Tracks are monitored for performance and are evaluated based on established performance measures. The Data Quality department maintains the integrity of the information the Court generates, and improves the quality of the data the Court collects.

FY27 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY26 Approved	**5,123,866**	**36.00**
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	75,230	0.00
FY27 Approved	**5,199,096**	**36.00**

Administration

The Administrative Office of the Circuit Court serves as a conduit for many operations of the Court. The Court Administrator's role is to facilitate the administrative functions of the Court and to develop policies to enhance systems performance, while maintaining the independence of the Judiciary. Basic functions performed by the Court Administrator and staff include the following: fiscal administration of the budget, human resources, case flow management and statistics, technology management, information management, jury management, space management, intergovernmental liaison, and public information.

The Trial Court Researchers, funded in part by the Trial Court Research Partnership Grant, provide research and statistical support for judiciary-wide research projects; prepare reports based on statistics and other data collected from the Montgomery County Circuit Court; establish links to national research/statistical sources relative to courts; and analyze court-wide programs, functions, and organizations to determine whether current management systems accomplish objectives efficiently.

Program Performance Measures	Actual FY24	Actual FY25	Estimated FY26	Target FY27	Target FY28
Case Clearance Rate (includes re-opened cases) - Civil	96.7%	93.0%	93.5%	92.8%	92.3%
Case Filings (includes re-opened cases) - Civil	7,946	9,066	9,969	10,565	11,281
Case Terminations (includes re-opened cases) - Civil (including District Court appeals)	7,680	8,432	9,320	9,802	10,408
Case Clearance Rate (includes re-opened cases) - Criminal	99.3%	99.4%	99.1%	98.5%	98.0%
Case Filings (includes re-opened cases) - Criminal	4,534	4,555	4,760	5,021	5,236
Case Terminations (includes re-opened cases) - Criminal (including District Court appeals)	4,504	4,528	4,718	4,944	5,133
Case Clearance Rate (includes re-opened cases) - Domestic Relations	101.8%	99.1%	97.3%	98.8%	98.7%
Case Filings (includes re-opened cases) - Domestic Relations	11,493	11,608	12,295	12,847	13,373
Case Terminations (includes re-opened cases) - Domestic Relations	11,705	11,506	11,968	12,690	13,204
Case Clearance Rate (includes re-opened cases) - Juvenile	90.5%	98.8%	96.5%	96.6%	96.7%
Case Filings (includes re-opened cases) - Juvenile	1,959	2,321	2,833	3,368	3,876
Case Terminations (includes re-opened cases) - Juvenile (including Delinquency, CINA, and TPR)	1,773	2,294	2,735	3,253	3,748
Case Clearance Rate	99.0%	97.1%	96.3%	96.5%	96.2%
Number of Case Filings [1]	25,932	27,550	29,857	31,801	33,766
Number of Case Terminations	25,662	26,760	28,741	30,689	32,493
Number of Trials	1,954	1,914	1.987	2,081	2,150

[1] *Hearing/trial types presided by judges: Trial-Court, Trial - Jury, Trial - DeNovo Appeal, Hearing - Merits (Family; Merits hearings presided over by a Magistrate are excluded from this count as exceptions may be taken), Hearing-Adjudication (includes those presided over by a juvenile magistrate), and Hearing - Custody (Family). Case Management system hearing/trial codes include: TCOUR; HDNAP; TJURY; HTPR; HTGUN; HADJU; HADDI; HMERT; HCUST. When a given hearing/trial is a multi-day proceeding, only the last concluded/held or concluded/held-plea taken day of the hearing/trial is counted. Hearing-Custody where a judge presided over the hearing and it was concluded/held or concluded or held-plea taken is included. {DF Note, 4/1/2025 - a hearing result referencing 'settled' is not considered concluded/held for the past fiscal years.} Hearing result codes include ONLY: CONC; COHEP. A hearing result referencing 'settled' is not considered a concluded trial. The trial counts are at the hearing record level not the case level. If a case has two concluded Jury Trials (based on hearing results) across two separate hearing records, then they will both be counted in the data. This may reflect a situation where the case had a mistrial or may be an error.*

FY27 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY26 Approved	**3,160,721**	**9.28**
Enhance: Support to Address Funding Gap for Positions in Family, Trial, Problem Solving, Alternative Dispute Resolution, and Access to Justice Grant-Funded Initiatives	391,877	0.00
Increase Cost: Position Adjustment - Part-Time to Full-Time	44,760	0.50
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	76,512	(0.50)
FY27 Approved	**3,673,870**	**9.28**

Case Assignment

The Case Assignment Office schedules and maintains all hearings, trials, and motion dates as well as special event dates for Judges and Family Magistrates of the Court, and ensures that these events are scheduled in accordance with the Court's Differentiated Case Management (DCM) plans. The Case Assignment Office maintains all scheduling information related to criminal indictments and information; criminal jury demands and appeals; civil, juvenile, and family trial assignments; civil, juvenile, and family motions; and bench warrants. The Case Assignment Office also manages all courtroom information sheets, locates all files for assigned calendars, reviews each file, and delivers files.

FY27 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY26 Approved	**1,674,013**	**14.00**
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	51,364	0.00

FY27 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY27 Approved	**1,725,377**	**14.00**

Family Division Services

This program provides a variety of services for children and families, with most services funded by the Family Law Grant. Services include case managers that provide day-to-day management of cases supported by Family Magistrates, Judges, counsel, and litigants; custody mediation involving litigants to obtain a settlement of custody issues before litigation; the Family Law Self Help Center staffed by attorneys to help individuals representing themselves in uncomplicated family law cases involving divorce, custody, and child support; psychological evaluations when psychological testing is necessary as an adjunct to arriving at a decision in the best interest of the children; best interest attorney appointments to specifically represent the interests of children; and operating expenses associated with managing the division.

Family Division Services also handles adoption investigations, as well as child custody and visitation evaluations. After the establishment of a Court Order, independent evaluations for child custody and visitation and adoption investigations are conducted by Court staff possessing substantial experience in social science or suitable credentials in the field of social work. The evaluator meets with the litigants and children, and interviews professionals and collateral references to ascertain the appropriate custodial situation for the children.

The Court has an initiative that is allowing litigants to meet with a courthouse-appointed meditator at no cost to the community. This was a response to the pandemic to allow litigants to have a licensed meditator to help them reach an agreement before going to trial.

The Juvenile Division is also a part of Family Division Services and is responsible for oversight of delinquency petitions, Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) petitions, Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) petitions, Voluntary Placement petitions, and Petitions for Peace Orders. These matters, which are governed by strict statutory timeframes, require a high degree of judicial oversight by the Court on a long-term basis.

FY27 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY26 Approved	**1,954,884**	**14.00**
Shift: Operating Expense Realignment - Program Shift from Family Grant to Maryland Department of Transportation Public Service Commission Grant	(72,440)	0.00
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	180,228	0.00
FY27 Approved	**2,062,672**	**14.00**

Family Magistrates

Family Magistrates are qualified individuals appointed by the Judges of the Circuit Court to hear family matters and make reports and recommendations based on testimony and analysis of the testimony received at hearings. Family Division Judges continue to review the recommendations, make rulings, and issue orders based on the recommendations of the Family Magistrates and any exceptions filed. The Juvenile Magistrate is an officer of the Court assigned to conduct proceedings on matters within the Juvenile Court of the Circuit Court for Montgomery County, pursuant to the Annotated Code of Maryland and the Maryland Rules, and in accordance with the Juvenile Differentiated Case Management plan, procedures, and policies. Juvenile Judges continue to review the recommendations and hear immediate reviews and exceptions in addition to other juvenile and CINA matters.

FY27 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY26 Approved	**656,176**	**6.00**
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	41,649	0.00
FY27 Approved	**697,825**	**6.00**

Grants

The Family Law Grant is funded by the State Judiciary and provides services to families to reduce conflict and introduce the parties involved in litigation to problem-solving techniques to help reduce future litigation. See the Family Division Services Program for a description of the services supported by this grant.

The Trial Court Research Partnership Grant supports one Trial Court Researcher assigned to the Administration Program. This individual provides research, analysis, statistical support, and related reports on County and judiciary-wide research projects.

The Montgomery County Adult Drug Court is funded by the State Judiciary through a grant from the Office of Problem Solving Courts. The mission of the Adult Drug Court is to eliminate drug abuse, crime, and their consequences by forging continuing partnerships with the Court, health treatment providers, concerned community organizations, and law enforcement. By leveraging its partnerships and its authority, the Court directs substance-abusing offenders into evaluation and treatment to achieve personal responsibility and productive citizenship.

The Access to Justice Grant is funded by the State Judiciary to support one Access to Justice Coordinator. The employee will raise awareness and support of equity, accessibility, and inclusion values. They will work on enhancing and strengthening system programs to ensure each service, program and activity operated in the Court building is readily accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities.

The Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Grant is funded by the State Judiciary to support ADR programs and projects which benefit our Court and the residents of Montgomery County. The ADR programs and projects will focus on expanding access to justice, enable the resolution of disputes with efficiency and prevent conflicts from escalating into violence or litigation.

FY27 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY26 Approved	**4,227,205**	**28.22**
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	298,978	0.50
FY27 Approved	**4,526,183**	**28.72**

Jury

The Jury Office manages prospective and active jurors for civil and criminal proceedings. In accordance with Maryland Courts and Judicial Proceedings, Title 8, every citizen may serve as a juror and must serve when summoned. The Jury Commissioner and staff dispatch questionnaires to prospective jurors using information gathered from voter registration and Motor Vehicle Administration listings. The Jury Commissioner maintains a qualified jury pool from the individuals who are determined to be qualified as jurors under Maryland Courts and Judicial Proceedings § 8-207.

FY27 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY26 Approved	**1,027,207**	**4.00**
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	24,111	0.00
FY27 Approved	**1,051,318**	**4.00**

Law Library

The Law Library supports the research activities of the Court, the Bar, and the public, and is the only law library open to the public in Montgomery County. The Library has a comprehensive collection of law, including U.S. statutes and the codes of Maryland, Washington D.C., Virginia, and local ordinances. It has a complete collection of judicial opinions and a variety of subject treatises and reference materials. The Law Library also offers free access to the major online legal databases. Library staff are available to answer questions regarding the library and its collection but cannot give legal opinions or advice. The staff will provide limited assistance over the telephone and by e-mail.

FY27 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY26 Approved	**560,624**	**3.00**
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	25,569	0.00
FY27 Approved	**586,193**	**3.00**

Technical Services

Technical Services is responsible for every aspect of the Court's information systems. The duties of, and services performed, range from installing and maintaining server/PC hardware and software applications to designing and troubleshooting complex computer networks and information databases. The department manages the electronic recording of all courtroom and hearing room proceedings. All video conferencing between the Circuit Court, District Court, Montgomery County Detention Center, and Montgomery County Correctional Facility is handled through this division. This equipment is used on a daily basis in order to conduct bond hearings via a video connection. Copies of court transcripts are purchased through this division. The Court's website and internal servers for the Court and Clerk's Office are administered by Technical Services.

FY27 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY26 Approved	**1,800,366**	**12.00**
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	78,339	0.00
FY27 Approved	**1,878,705**	**12.00**

Trust and Guardianships

The Trust Office administers the case files for fiduciary entities (primarily guardianships) who are required to comply with the reporting requirements set forth in the Maryland Court Rules, Title 10, Guardians and Other Fiduciaries. The reports required to be filed include the Inventory and Information Report and Annual Fiduciary Report for guardianships of the property of a minor or disabled person, and the Annual Report of the guardianship of the person. The Trust Clerk examines the Annual Fiduciary Reports filed and prepares the Report of Trust to the Court.

FY27 Approved Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY26 Approved	**363,701**	**2.50**
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	14,354	0.00
FY27 Approved	**378,055**	**2.50**

BUDGET SUMMARY

	Actual FY25	Budget FY26	Estimated FY26	Approved FY27	%Chg Bud/App
COUNTY GENERAL FUND					
EXPENDITURES					
Salaries and Wages	9,764,705	10,433,529	10,375,269	11,168,990	7.1 %
Employee Benefits	3,124,987	3,380,583	3,143,774	3,547,982	5.0 %
County General Fund Personnel Costs	**12,889,692**	**13,814,112**	**13,519,043**	**14,716,972**	**6.5 %**
Operating Expenses	2,479,244	2,507,446	2,036,516	2,536,139	1.1 %
County General Fund Expenditures	**15,368,936**	**16,321,558**	**15,555,559**	**17,253,111**	**5.7 %**
PERSONNEL					
Full-Time	99	99	99	99	—
Part-Time	4	3	3	3	—
FTEs	101.28	100.78	100.78	100.78	—
REVENUES					
State Jury Fee Reimbursement	839,200	1,165,570	1,165,570	1,165,570	—
Miscellaneous Revenues	54,286	55,230	55,230	55,230	—
County General Fund Revenues	**893,486**	**1,220,800**	**1,220,800**	**1,220,800**	**—**
GRANT FUND - MCG					
EXPENDITURES					
Salaries and Wages	2,787,713	2,865,758	2,865,758	3,088,432	7.8 %
Employee Benefits	967,778	965,948	965,948	1,042,252	7.9 %
Grant Fund - MCG Personnel Costs	**3,755,491**	**3,831,706**	**3,831,706**	**4,130,684**	**7.8 %**
Operating Expenses	198,714	395,499	395,499	395,499	—
Grant Fund - MCG Expenditures	**3,954,205**	**4,227,205**	**4,227,205**	**4,526,183**	**7.1 %**
PERSONNEL					
Full-Time	27	28	28	29	3.6 %
Part-Time	1	1	1	0	-100.0 %
FTEs	27.22	28.22	28.22	28.72	1.8 %
REVENUES					
State Grants	3,950,804	4,227,205	4,227,205	4,526,183	7.1 %
Grant Fund - MCG Revenues	**3,950,804**	**4,227,205**	**4,227,205**	**4,526,183**	**7.1 %**
DEPARTMENT TOTALS					
Total Expenditures	**19,323,141**	**20,548,763**	**19,782,764**	**21,779,294**	**6.0 %**

BUDGET SUMMARY

	Actual FY25	Budget FY26	Estimated FY26	Approved FY27	%Chg Bud/App
Total Full-Time Positions	**126**	**127**	**127**	**128**	**0.8 %**
Total Part-Time Positions	**5**	**4**	**4**	**3**	**-25.0 %**
Total FTEs	**128.50**	**129.00**	**129.00**	**129.50**	**0.4 %**
Total Revenues	**4,844,290**	**5,448,005**	**5,448,005**	**5,746,983**	**5.5 %**

FY27 APPROVED CHANGES

	Expenditures	FTEs
COUNTY GENERAL FUND		
FY26 ORIGINAL APPROPRIATION	**16,321,558**	**100.78**
Changes (with service impacts)		
Enhance: Support to Address Funding Gap for Positions in Family, Trial, Problem Solving, Alternative Dispute Resolution, and Access to Justice Grant-Funded Initiatives [Administration]	391,877	0.00
Other Adjustments (with no service impacts)		
Increase Cost: FY27 Compensation Adjustment	565,998	0.00
Increase Cost: Annualization of FY26 Compensation Increases	152,696	0.00
Increase Cost: Printing and Mail	28,867	0.00
Decrease Cost: Motor Pool Adjustment	(174)	0.00
Decrease Cost: Retirement Adjustment	(6,944)	0.00
Decrease Cost: Annualization of FY26 Personnel Costs	(200,767)	0.00
FY27 APPROVED	**17,253,111**	**100.78**

	Expenditures	FTEs
GRANT FUND - MCG		
FY26 ORIGINAL APPROPRIATION	**4,227,205**	**28.22**
Federal/State Programs		
Add: New Maryland Department of Transportation Public Service Commission Grant to fund Reallocation of Operating Expenses from the Family Grant	72,440	0.00
Other Adjustments (with no service impacts)		
Increase Cost: Annualization of FY26 Personnel Costs	254,218	0.00
Increase Cost: Position Adjustment - Part-Time to Full-Time [Administration]	44,760	0.50
Shift: Operating Expense Realignment - Program Shift from Family Grant to Maryland Department of Transportation Public Service Commission Grant [Family Division Services]	(72,440)	0.00
FY27 APPROVED	**4,526,183**	**28.72**

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Program Name	FY26 APPR Expenditures	FY26 APPR FTEs	FY27 APPR Expenditures	FY27 APPR FTEs

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Program Name	FY26 APPR Expenditures	FY26 APPR FTEs	FY27 APPR Expenditures	FY27 APPR FTEs
Adjudication	5,123,866	36.00	5,199,096	36.00
Administration	3,160,721	9.28	3,673,870	9.28
Case Assignment	1,674,013	14.00	1,725,377	14.00
Family Division Services	1,954,884	14.00	2,062,672	14.00
Family Magistrates	656,176	6.00	697,825	6.00
Grants	4,227,205	28.22	4,526,183	28.72
Jury	1,027,207	4.00	1,051,318	4.00
Law Library	560,624	3.00	586,193	3.00
Technical Services	1,800,366	12.00	1,878,705	12.00
Trust and Guardianships	363,701	2.50	378,055	2.50
Total	**20,548,763**	**129.00**	**21,779,294**	**129.50**

FUNDING PARAMETER ITEMS

CC APPROVED ($000S)

Title	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30	FY31	FY32
COUNTY GENERAL FUND						
EXPENDITURES						
FY27 Approved	**17,253**	**17,253**	**17,253**	**17,253**	**17,253**	**17,253**
No inflation or compensation change is included in outyear projections.						
Elimination of One-Time Items Approved in FY27	**0**	**(392)**	**(392)**	**(392)**	**(392)**	**(392)**
Items recommended for one-time funding in FY27, including replacing a projected funding gap for grant funded initiatives, will be eliminated from the base in the outyears.						
Labor Contracts	**0**	**125**	**125**	**125**	**125**	**125**
These figures represent the estimated annualized cost of general wage adjustments, service increments, and other negotiated items.						
Subtotal Expenditures	**17,253**	**16,986**	**16,986**	**16,986**	**16,986**	**16,986**

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