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A Message from Chief Justice

Yá'át'ééh. As we reflect on the first quarter of FY2025, we are reminded of the profound significance of this winter season—a time for reflection, renewal, and resilience. The serene beauty of our snow-covered landscapes invites us to pause, consider our collective journey, and embrace the opportunities of the new year. This season also reaffirms the enduring strength of our people and the Navajo Nation's commitment to justice, rooted in Diné values and tradition.

The year 2024 was a remarkable year of progress for the *Hashkééjí Nahat'ajii* (Navajo Nation Judicial Branch). Each of you, from our district and circuit courts to the Supreme Court, Peacemaking Program, and Probation and Parole Program, contributed to ensuring the seamless operation of essential services. Together, we reduced backlogged cases by 31%, achieved a clearance rate of 121%, and continued to honor the Rule of Law and *Diné Bi Beenhaz'áanii*.

Despite these accomplishments, the Judicial Branch faces significant challenges. The FY2025 budget directive reduced our funding request by \$2.8 million, impacting our ability to fill critical judicial positions, including nine judges and an associate justice. These shortages strain resources and delay justice, jeopardizing our ability to serve the Navajo People effectively. We remain committed to addressing these gaps by pursuing Unmet Needs funding and advocating for adequate support to ensure the sustainability of our judicial system.

Infrastructure improvements remain a priority. Projects such as the Window Rock Judicial District modular building and the Kayenta Judicial Complex demonstrate our dedication to providing functional and accessible facilities for all communities. Additionally, we are advancing the Senior Judges Program to alleviate backlogs and mentor newer judges, while partnerships with schools and external jurisdictions enhance cultural education and interjurisdictional cooperation.

Looking forward, the Judicial Branch will embrace innovation to meet evolving needs. Initiatives like the redesign of our website, which will feature e-Filing and a Self-Help Center, reflect our commitment to accessibility and operational efficiency. Our focus on telework policies, case management, and staff wellness underscores our dedication to justice and the well-being of our employees and communities.

In this season of reflection, let us celebrate our achievements while recognizing the work that lies ahead. Together, with unity and resilience, we can honor our traditions, uphold justice, and secure a brighter future for all Diné citizens

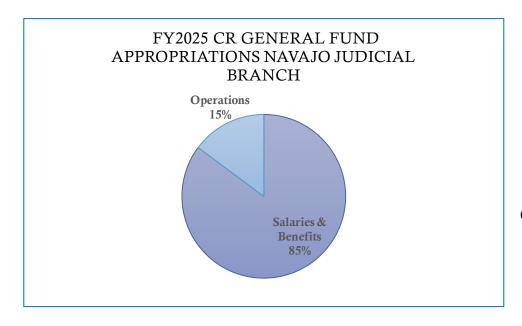
Ahéhee' **JoAnn B. Jayne** Chief Justice of the Navajo Nation

Highlights the 1st Quarter FY 2025

- Gratitude for Council Support: Judicial Branch extends their warmest thanks to the 25th Navajo Nation Council for working diligently on the progress of a FY 2025 comprehensive budget; important for the Judicial to keep tribal courts operational, ensuring that justice continues to be served without any disruptions.
- Permanent Appointment of Judges: On December 13, 2024, Navajo Nation president Dr. Buu Nygren issued his recommendation to the 25th Navajo Nation Council for the permanent appointment of Honorable Letitia M. Stover, Honorable Victor Clyde, and Honorable Malcolm Laughing as a Navajo Nation Judge.
- Judicial Independence: The independence of the Judicial Branch remains vastly important and necessary to ensure that the rule of law is respected. It is essential for fair, impartial decision making based on Diné Fundamental Law, safeguarding Navajo sovereignty.
- Case Management Success: Navajo courts filed 3,011 cases and closed 3,633 cases, achieving a clearance rate of 121%, significantly exceeding the target of 100%.
- Reducing Backlogged Cases: The Judicial Branch reduced its overall backlogged cases by 31% in the past year, demonstrating the Judicial Branch's commitment to resolving backlogs and improving efficiency.
- Infrastructure Improvements: The Window Rock Judicial District modular building will be completed by Spring 2025. Kayenta Judicial complex center will begin construction in March 2025. The AOC central warehouse building, Aneth, and Ramah Judicial complex centers will be designed for their future court buildings.

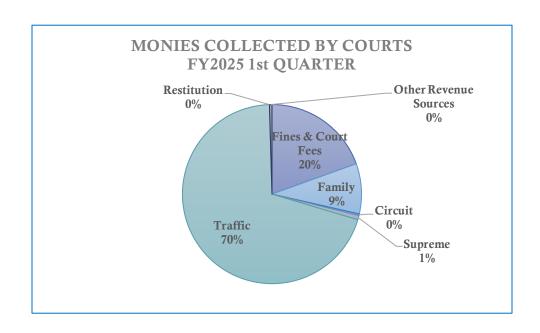
- Critical Staffing Milestones: 15 new hires and 11 employees transitioned from probationary to permanent status; significant progress in filling judicial vacancies and staffing Probation and Parole Services in three districts.
- Judicial Facility Challenges: Despite only having one staff member dedicated to facilities maintenance, AOC has been managing to respond to service requests from all courts and program facilities throughout the Navajo Nation. Council support is crucial for resolving facility challenges, such as the Dilkon district court rooftop, and HVAC units in older court buildings highlighting the importance of infrastructure maintenance.
- **Probation and Parole Staffing Successes:** Four vacant Probation Officer positions were filled, two in Dilkon, one in Tohajiilee, and another in Kayenta, with further interviews scheduled.
- Staff Training Initiatives: Human resources, fiscal unit, and the information technology units continue to provide essential staff training for the Judicial Branch. Training courses are hosted in person and some take place virtually. Some topics that are covered include: P-Card utilization, JustWare system/navigation, new hire orientation, Navajo reading & writing classes, finance and managing budgets within FMIS software.
- Collaborative Court Efforts: The Flagstaff Superior Court will be utilizing the Tuba City districts' courtrooms starting in March 2025, and an agenda will be forthcoming for their future use in our Navajo courts. Aneth District Court staff have been meeting with the Utah Infant Toddler Court Program. Their goal in doing so is to be able to provide services to the Utah Navajo families in the Aneth court system
- Expansion of the Peacemaking Program: Plans for the construction of the new building funding, Hashkééjí Nahat'á Béeso Bá Hooghan (HNBBH), has been approved by the Law and Order Committee, and Budget and Finance Committee. Construction of the new building is on the horizon.

Budget and Operations



The FY 2025
Continuing
Resolution
General Fund
Appropriation for
the Navajo
Judicial Branch
consists of **85**% in
Salaries and
Benefits and **15**%
in Operations.

\$64,060.85 collected in Fines & Fees for FY25 1st Quarter. All funds are deposited into the Navajo Nation General Fund.



Navajo Justice Systems

Original Justice System

Peacemaking is a traditional justice system within the Judicial Branch of the Navajo Nation that can be used instead of or alongside the Navajo Nation court system. Its goal is to provide a non-adversarial forum for resolving disputes, promoting healing, and reestablishing harmony.

Hózhóji Naat'aah (Diné Traditional Peacemaking)

Traditional Diné Peacemaking starts from a place of chaos, hóóchxǫ'/anáhóót'i', within an individual or between people. The Peacemaker guides individuals or groups to confront this chaos and move toward harmonious existence.

Áłchíní BáNdazhnit'á (Diné Family Group Conferencing)

This extension of peacemaking addresses the requirements of the Álchíní Bi Beehaz' áannii Act of 2011. It seeks culturally appropriate methods for family preservation and reunification, facilitating harmony consistent with Navajo Nation statutes and Diné principles.

Nábináhaazláago Áłch'į yáti' (Life Value Engagements)

Life value engagements are traditional services where individuals or groups meet with a Peacemaker to learn how to address problems by opening to hózhǫ. These engagements focus on personal accountability and the willingness to confront and overcome chaos for the benefit of oneself, family, and community.

Navajo Justice Systems

Roles of the Supreme Court of the Navajo Nation

Appellate jurisdiction over trial court decisions.

Original jurisdiction over petitions for extraordinary writs (mandamus, prohibition and habeas corpus and other writs).

Final adjudication of decisions by administrative bodies such as the Tax Commission, Office of Hearings and Appeals and Labor Commission.

Discretionary review of certified questions by trial courts and administrative agencies, and state/federal courts.

Authority over the practice of law and bar membership on the Navajo Nation.

Appellate jurisdiction over certain decisions of the Navajo Bar Association.

Authority to approve all new and revised rules, pleadings, and forms of the Navajo Nation courts.

Roles of the District Courts

Original jurisdiction over crimes, civil causes and other matters under Navajo statutory law, Diné bi Beehaz'áannii, and Navajo Nation Treaties.

Courts of general jurisdiction.

Small claims division within each district court.

Special Division of the Window Rock District Court.

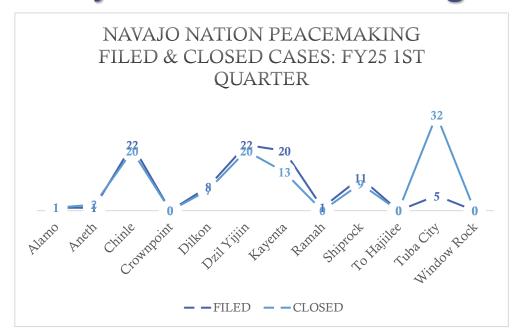
Exclusive jurisdiction to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate and prosecute ethics and corruption cases involving officials of the Navajo Nation government.

Roles of the Family Courts

Original exclusive jurisdiction over:

- Cases arising under the Navajo Nation Álchíní Bi Beehaz'áannii Act
- Domestic relations
- o Probate
- Adoption
- Paternity
- o Custody
- Child support
- Guardianship
- Mental health commitments
- Mental and/physical competency
- Name changes
- Elders

Navajo Nation Peacemaking



Navajo
Peacemaking
remains the
original justice
system of the
Navajo Nation by
providing a nonadversarial forum
for resolving
disputes,
promoting healing,
and reestablishing
harmony.

During FY25 1st Quarter, a total of **91** cases were filed with Navajo Peacemaking and **104** cases were closed which resulted in a **114% clearance rate**.

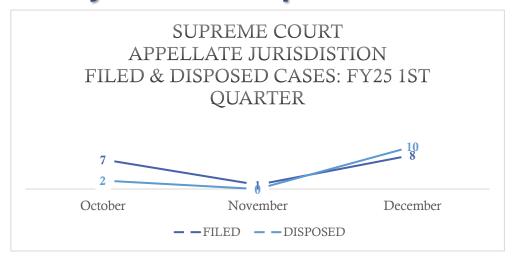
The program has two Traditional Program Specialists who have completed their 90 days introductory period and attained regular status employment, one being at Tuba City and the other at the Window Rock office.

The future Peacemaking Program Administration Building funding, Hashkééjí Nahat'á Béeso Bá Hooghan (HNBBH), has been approved by the Law and Order Committee, and Budget and Finance Committee. Now it waits for the final approved budget from Office of Management and Budget, so that the program can proceed with the building project planning.

In the goal of promoting healing, the program hosted its 2nd Annual Winter Peacemaking Conference in December 2024 at the Window Rock Museum. Attendees consisted of **252** people for two days.

To further expand their mission, the Peacemaking program presented on Diné Fundamental Law and Program services, to the Federal Court and Public Defenders Office in Albuquerque, NM. The program received positive remarks from the 79 federal staff who were in attendance, and 14 virtual attendees.

Navajo Nation Supreme Courts



16 Appellate
cases were filed
with the Navajo
Supreme Court
during the FY25 1st
Quarter.

11 cases reached final disposition.

As the sole appellate court for the Navajo Nation, the Supreme Court reviews lower court records, transcripts, and legal briefs as well as hold oral arguments.

The Navajo Supreme Court continues to serve as the Original Jurisdiction Court for bar members.

There were 7 additional bar members who were sworn in this quarter.

Additionally, Chief Justice had also sworn in a Navajo Nation Council Delegate Arbin Mitchell, Prosecutor Cornelia April Yazzie, and 60 cadets who completed the Navajo Police Training Academy and are now police officers of the Navajo Nation. To add, Associate Justice also swore in three new Commissioners for the Office of the Human Rights Commission.

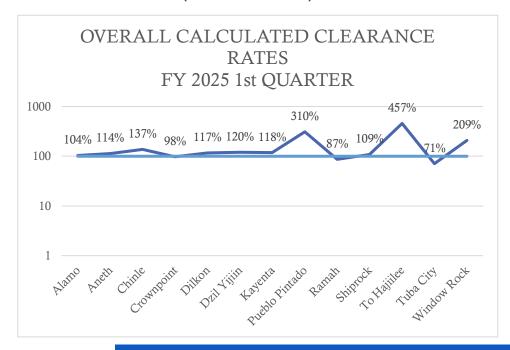
A total of 125 *Pro Bono* Appointments were made in FY25 1st Quarter. The Chinle, Dzil Yijiin, and Shiprock Judicial Districts have the highest need for *Pro Bono* appointments.

The Supreme Court recently welcomed their new Supreme Court Clerk Lakota Long.

Lastly, Chief Justice has been continuing to explore and research options to invite retired judges and justices back as Pro Temp jurists to help assist with reducing caseloads in the courts.

Navajo Nation Courts

Judicial District (Trial Courts)



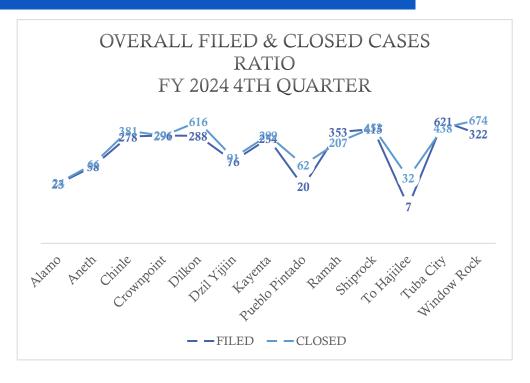
Navajo Judicial District Courts (trial courts) are closing more cases than filed per quarter.

Staying above 100% is crucial to address pending and backlog cases.

Judicial District Courts
Overall, Clearance Rate is 121%.

The overall ratio of filed and closed cases for the trial courts identifies a positive trend.

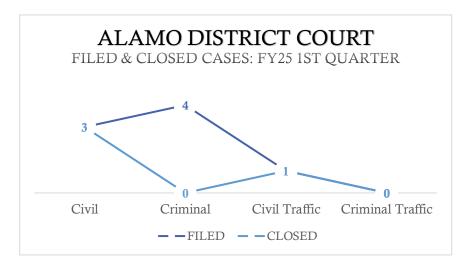
The closed cases protectory should at least



mirror the filed cases to effectively manage caseloads.

Alamo/Tó Hajiilee Judicial District

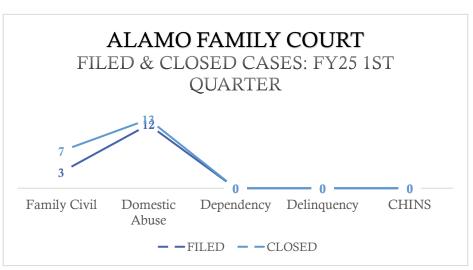
Alamo District Court



23 cases were filed in both the Alamo District and Family courts during the FY25 1st Quarter.

24 cases were closed.

Clearance Rate is 104%

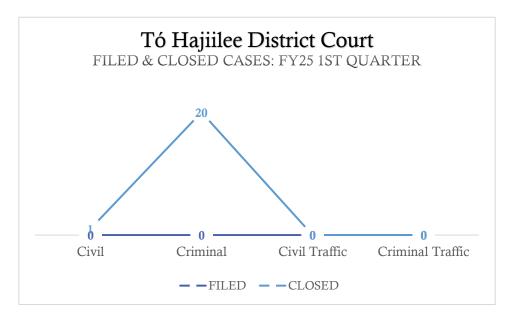


Alamo Court staff members participated and completed two staff development opportunities this quarter. One being located at Tohajilee District Court, and the other took place at Ramah District Court.

The staff have also completed in-depth training sessions on domestic violence and ethics to help enhance their knowledge and expertise in these matters, which were given by the Staff Attorney.

The district court had also participated in the Alamo Indian Day's parade. The staff were able to fulfill the court's outreach objectives which were to make the public aware of the court's history and services.

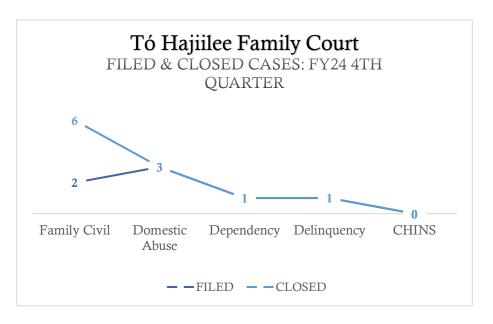
Tó Hajiilee District Court



7 cases were filed in both the Tó Hajiilee District and Family courts during the FY25 1st Quarter.

32 cases were closed.

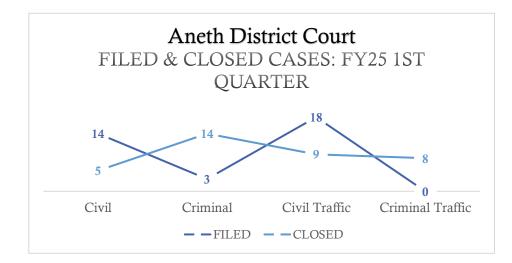
Clearance Rate is 457%



Staff Attorney, Alisha R. Thompson, continues to conduct extensive training for the staff. These training sessions cover the topics: Case Management, Employee Policies and Procedures, and Ethics.

The district court had also hired its new Court Administrator, Ms. Elaine Henderson. Henderson was hired in December 2024 and currently completing her 90-day introduction.

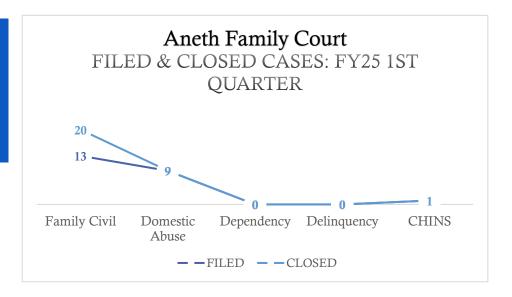
Aneth Judicial District



58 cases were filed in both the Aneth District and Family courts during the FY25 1st Quarter.

66 cases were closed.

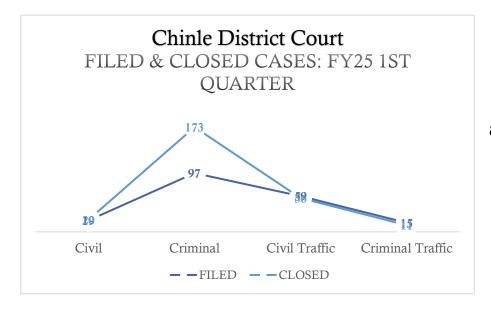
Clearance Rate is 114%



Aneth Judicial District court will begin to execute its expenditure plan for the capital outlay budget now that the *Hashkééji Nahat'á Béeso Bá Hooghan* legislation is passed. Judicial Branch Construction Manager, Andy Thomas will also begin to assist in the process to get this project moving for the new court building development.

The court staff has also been meeting with the Utah Infant Toddler Court Program. Their goal in doing so is to be able to provide services to the Utah Navajo families in the Aneth court system.

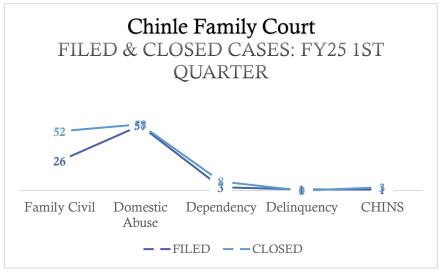
Chinle Judicial District



278 cases were filed in both the Chinle District and Family courts during the FY24 4th Quarter.

381 cases were closed.

Clearance Rate is 137%

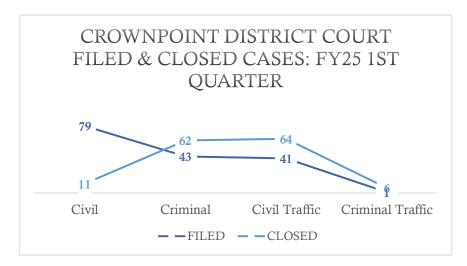


Chinle District Court Judge Thompson and Court Administrator collaborated to plan an Injury Prevention Conference along with other service providers.

Judge Thompson was asked to conduct an Oath of Office for a police sergeant ceremony.

The court was invited to be a part of the career fair at Chinle Unified School District.

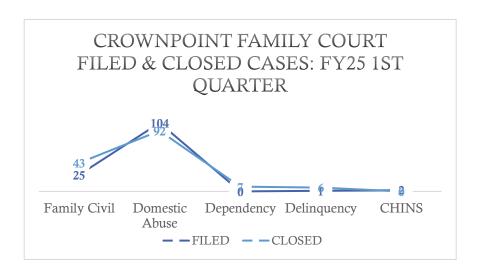
Crownpoint Judicial District



296 cases were filed in both the Crownpoint District and Family courts during the FY25 1st Quarter.

291 cases were closed.

Clearance Rate is 98%



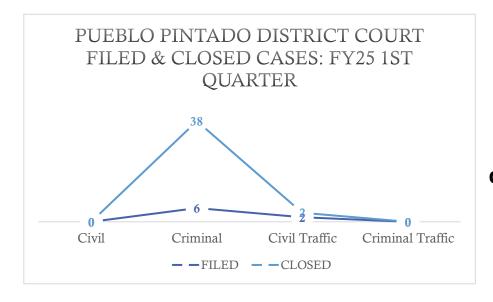
Crownpoint Judicial District court staff continue to complete staff development meetings and training courses, as it is needed to ensure the enhancement of the courts' objectives.

Judicial Hearing Officer continues to provide in-person hearings for domestic violence cases, shelter care hearings, and assisting other districts with similar hearings as well.

Crownpoint district court continues to face the challenge of the necessary demolition of the old courthouse and Judicial housing complex.

Pueblo Pintado Circuit Court

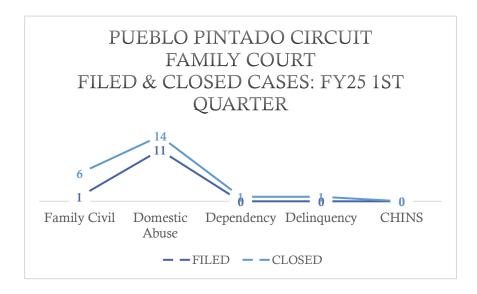
Of the Crownpoint Judicial District



20 cases were filed in both the Pueblo Pintado District Court and Family courts during the FY25 1st Quarter.

62 cases were closed.

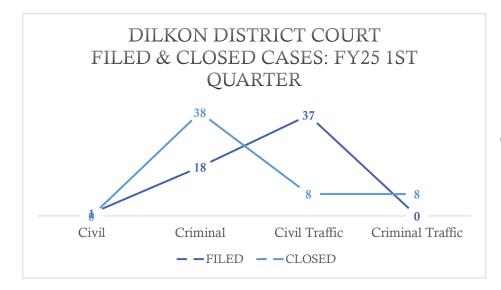
Clearance Rate is 310%



Crownpoint Judicial District Court Administration continues to work vigilantly towards reopening the Pueblo Pintado District Court

Judge Livingston was asked to conduct an Oath of Office ceremony for the Pueblo Pintado Chapter House.

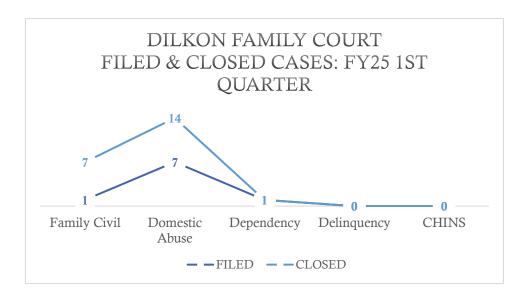
Dilkon Judicial District



65 cases were filed in both the Dilkon District and Family courts during the FY25 1st Quarter.

76 cases were closed.

Clearance Rate is 117%

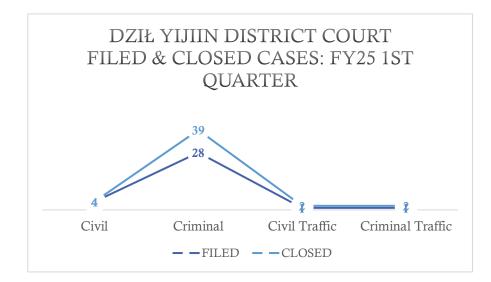


Dilkon Judicial District Court staff continue to utilize proactive case management for positive efforts in improving case management numbers as directed by the Chief Justice.

The district court's security contract project is now complete with the system installed and being used.

The court also hired a new court clerk which will help with the load of managing cases.

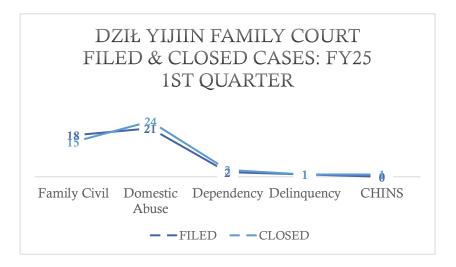
Dził Yijiin Judicial District



76 cases were filed in both the Dził Yijiin District and Family courts during the FY25 1st Quarter.

91 cases were closed.

Clearance Rate is 120%

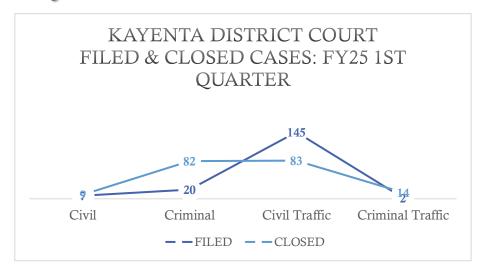


Dził Yijiin Judicial District courts' new bailiff, Mr. Derran Yazzie, has successfully competed his 90-day introductory period. Within that timeframe he has demonstrated valuable skills, knowledge, and expertise making an efficient impact.

Judge Thompson continues to oversee two court districts conducting hearings in person, telephonically, or virtually.

The court staff continues to receive specialized training that focuses on legal procedures, case management, and effective communication skills.

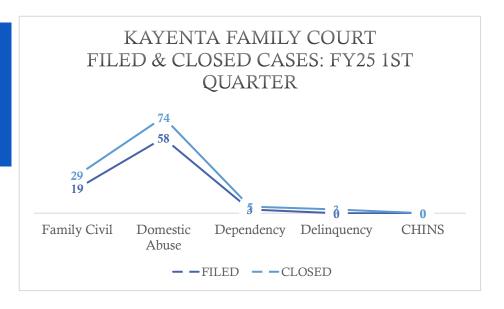
Kayenta Justice District



254 cases were filed in both the Kayenta District and Family courts during the FY25 1st Quarter.

299 cases were closed

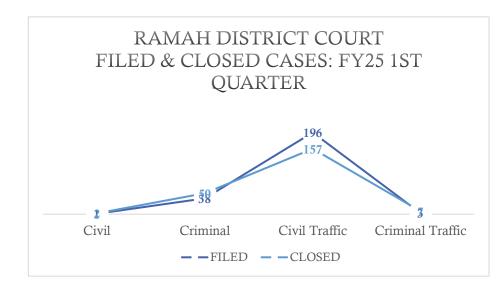
Clearance Rate is 118%



The Law and Order committee finally approved legislation 0259-24. This allows Kayenta District Court to begin expenditure plans in utilizing *HashkééjÍ Nahat'á Béeso Bé Hooghan* funds on the district Mobile Court and branch Court Clerk Training.

The Kayenta Judicial District Court was able to issue a Request for Proposal inviting general contractors to submit their bids for general construction of the Kayenta Judicial Complex. This complex will be 16,937 square feet and estimated to be completed by July 2026.

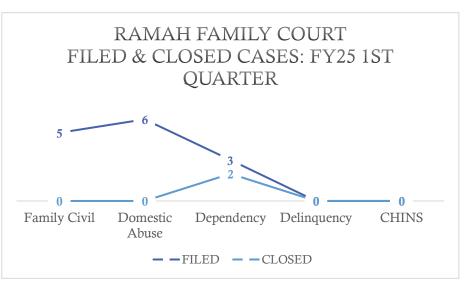
Ramah Judicial District



252 cases were filed in both the Ramah District and Family courts during the FY25 1st Quarter.

218 cases were closed.

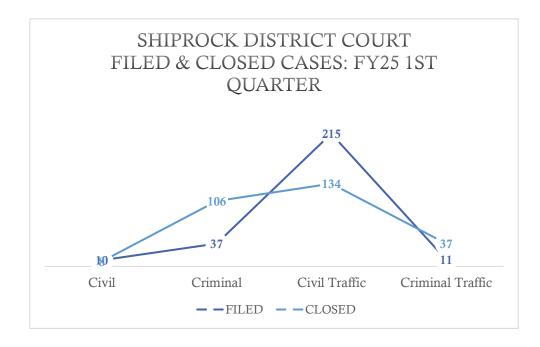
Clearance Rate is 87%



Ramah Judicial District Courts' two hires, Document Technician and an Office Technician, have both completed their 90-day introductory period. They have also completed all the necessary requirements and training that are needed.

The staff of the district court also participated in staff development that was conducted by Staff Attorney Alisha R. Thompson, and Traditional Peacemaking Specialist, Ruby Frank.

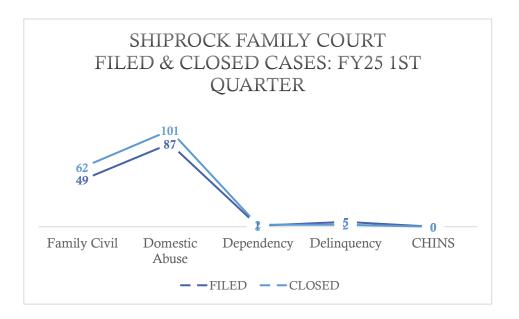
Shiprock Judicial District



415 cases
were filed in
both the
Shiprock
District and
Family courts
during the
FY25 1st
Quarter.

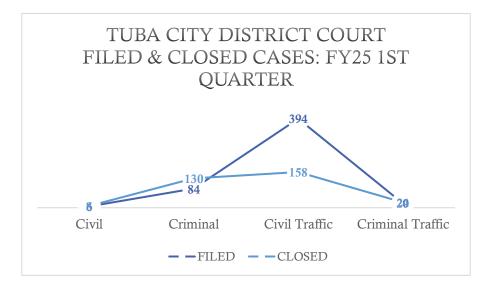
452 cases were closed.

Clearance Rate is 109%



Shiprock Judicial District Court continues to collect fines and fees and bonds posted. The district court continues to make their staff's needs a priority to ensure they are successful in performing their duties and serving the public. Bailiffs and custodians received First Aid, CPR, and AED recertifications to keep their training up to date.

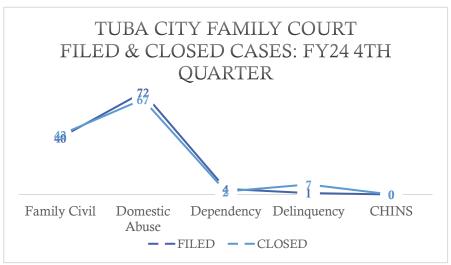
Tuba City Judicial District



621 cases were filed in both the Tuba City District and Family courts during the FY24 3rd Quarter.

438 cases were closed.

Clearance Rate is 71%

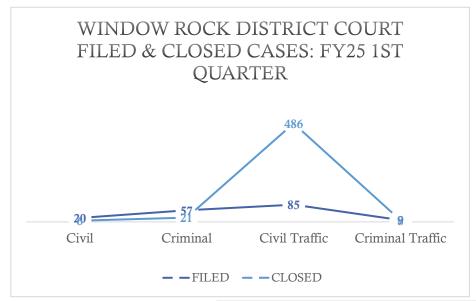


Tuba City Judicial District Court hired new Court Administrator Sheila Begishie who started her role on Monday, January 13, 2025.

The Tuba City District court staff had a "Meet and Greet" with the Flagstaff Superior Court. This meeting was able to happen with the help of Lena Fowler. The discussions from this meet consisted of tribal courts and services like integrated family services, juvenile division for troubled children to name a few.

The Flagstaff Superior Court will be utilizing the districts' courtrooms starting in March 2025, and an agenda will be forthcoming for their future use in our Navajo courts.

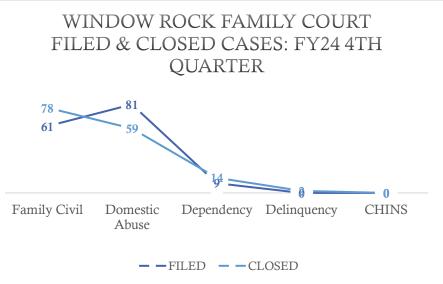
Window Rock Judicial District



322 cases were filed in both the Window Rock District and Family courts during the FY25 1st Quarter.

674 cases were closed.

Clearance Rate is 209%



Window Rock Judicial District Court, with the Administrative Office of the Courts, continue to meet monthly for the Tsehootsoi Judicial Public Safety Center building. This project is forecasted to begin construction in 2027 north of the Navajo Utility Authority complex in Fort Defiance.

The Window Rock Modular Building team continues to meet weekly on the progress of the building. The fencing contractor has set up fencing to enclose the new building. Delivery of the modular building has begun. Once the building is set up and completes its final inspection, it can then be open to the public immediately.

Navajo Nation Probation & Parole Services

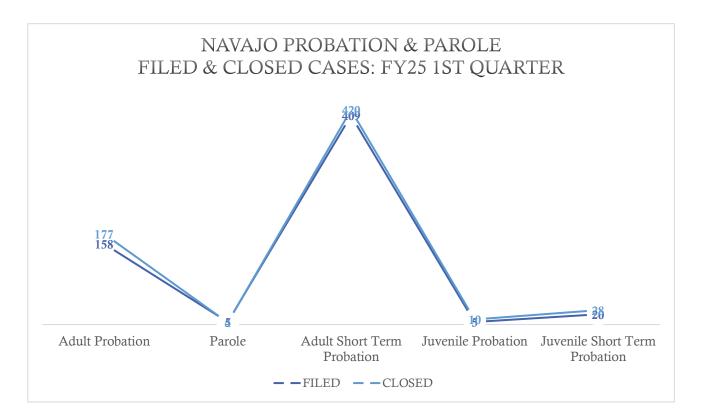
Probation and Parole Services of the Navajo Nation is committed to enhancing community wellness and fostering *hozho* restoration. We achieve this through community-based supervision aimed at rehabilitating client-offenders. We prioritize the involvement of families, communities, and relevant agencies.

Restoration of *hozho*, accountability, personal responsibility, and community wellness are fundamental principles of traditional restorative justice. In Navajo justice, "restorative justice" literally means restoring justice in accordance with these principles. It involves engaging client-offenders, victims, and affected communities in seeking solutions that promote restoration and rebuilding.

Our justice system holds the responsibility of restoring *hozho* by providing necessary resources to rehabilitate offenders and reintegrate them into their communities, following traditional principles. This includes active communication with victims and advocates.

Probation and Parole Services offers programs designed to help client-offenders, their traditional support structures, and communities achieve crime-free and successful reintegration. Our approach emphasizes accountability, personal responsibility, and supports competence, self-worth, and self-improvement. Through rigorous risk assessment and supervision, we ensure public safety and facilitate client-offenders' compliance with court-imposed conditions and obligations.

Probation and Parole staff continue to be proactive in participating in Dine Action plan meetings as sub committees. The meetings consist of identifying solutions and recommendations to combat Nayee' (current day monsters) such as alcohol/drugs, domestic violence, mental health, and suicide. They have represented the Judicial Branch and PPS's direct services' efforts.



Probation and Parole Services are long-term services based on court ordered services and not all cases should be cleared within one quarter.

597 cases were filed with Probation and Parole Services during the FY25 1st Quarter.

Clearance Rate is 107%

639 cases were closed or completed.

Chief probation officer, Lucinda Yellowhair and staff have all completed the final four of progressive training. This training was provided by Navajo Staff and Training Development.

Chief Yellowhair had also filled four vacant probation officer positions. Two of them being at Dilkon, one in the Kayenta and Tohajilee Districts.

The Probation management team were able to provide effective and efficient orientations for their new probation staff.

Administrative Office of the Courts

The primary purpose of the Judicial Branch Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) is to be able to provide administrative support for all Navajo Nation Courts, Peacemaking system, and Probation and Parole Services. AOC is the centralized support to ensure that the entire branch operates smoothly by providing support in managing budgets, human resources personnel, information technology, facilities maintenance, and construction/project management.

Administrative Director, Bennie Francisco, continues to oversee six essential units: fiscal, human resources, information technology, facilities, construction management, and probation and parole services. Under the Directors leadership, there has been restructure within internal units to better meet the growing needs of the district courts, programs, and the public.

Construction Project Manager, Andy Thomas, has completed his 90-day introductory period and earned his permanency. Mr. Thomas continues to administer all construction-related work for the entire Judicial Branch. This includes ensuring that all projects are completed from start to finish, on time completion, within budget, and meets design specifications that fit the court's facility's needs. Currently, he has 6 key projects moving forward under his management which are: 1) Window Rock Judicial Modular building in its final fabrication process, 2) Kayenta Judicial Complex center, 3) Window Rock Peacemaking building, 4) Aneth Judicial Complex, 5) Ramah Judicial Complex, 6) AOC Central Warehouse building.

Human Resources Director, Cheron Damon and staff, work diligently to advertise vacant positions through many platforms. These platforms include law school websites, social media sites, local newspapers, radio stations, local/state organizations, and national tribal organizations. In doing this, the HR team was successful in filling 15 positions and transitioning 11 employees from 90 day introductory to regular status. Additionally, HR was able to provide multiple 3-day new training courses, and one P-card training session for all the Judicial Branch staff.

Acting Information Technology Manager, Larry Hoskie and staff, continues to be extremely active in fulfilling 634 IT requests throughout the entire Judicial branch across the Navajo Nation. The AOC IT staff plays a crucial role in the district courts and all Judicial Branch entities by ensuring all equipment is up to par and maintaining the technological support for court operations. The staff also provide in-person training, when necessary, at districts courts, who requests further assistance in learning how to operate certain equipment and software.

Acting Financial Service Manager, Sandra Dalgai and staff are essential in AOC and are highly active every day assisting in managing the court systems budget. This includes overseeing financial operations, getting budget proposals prepared, tracking district courts expenses, and ensuring compliance with financial regulations. The finance staff also work very closely with district business unit managers by providing one-on-one training sessions to help Court Administrators with their budgets, and they also provide P-card training as well. To help further accommodate the districts, some staff members will make trips to the districts to host inperson training sessions.