



## FISCAL YEAR 2023 CITIZEN-CENTRIC REPORT



### About Us

The Judiciary is the third branch of the Government of Guam and is composed of the Superior Court of Guam and the Supreme Court of Guam. As an equal and independent branch of government, the Judiciary checks and balances the powers of the legislative and executive branches by interpreting the laws of Guam and administers justice by resolving disputes brought before the courts.

The **Supreme Court** is the island's highest court and is composed of the Chief Justice and two Associate Justices. The Supreme Court hears appeals from the Superior Court, as well as cases involving attorney discipline and invoking the Court's original jurisdiction. The Chief Justice holds supervisory authority of the judicial branch, and with the advice of the Judicial Council of Guam, administers the divisions and offices of the Judiciary, which include Court Administrative Services, Courts and Ministerial, Probation, Marshals, and Client Services and Family Counseling.

The **Superior Court** is Guam's trial court, where the vast majority of cases begin in the court system. The judicial officers hear a wide range of cases, from criminal prosecutions to cases arising from civil disputes, juvenile delinquency and neglect, traffic, family, probate, and small claims, as well as specialty treatment courts.

### Mission

Delivering justice fairly and efficiently through transparent, inclusive, and accessible court services.

### Vision

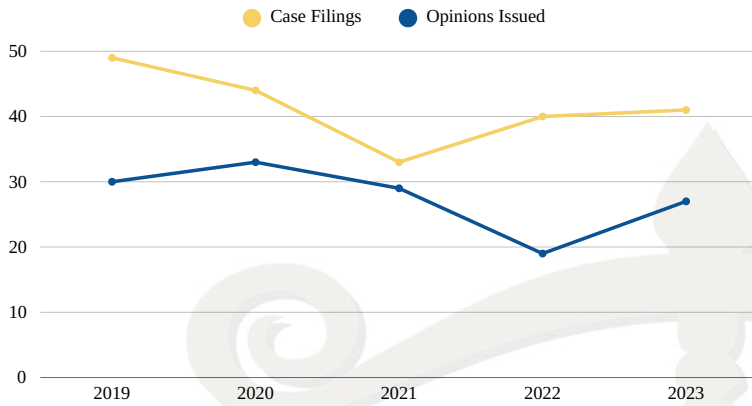
A model of judicial excellence—trusted, innovative, and independent.



(Back row, L-R) Judge John C. Terlaje, Magistrate Judge Jonathan R. Quan, Family Court Referee Linda L. Ingles, Judge Dana A. Gutierrez, Judge Vernon P. Perez, Presiding Judge Alberto C. Lamorena III, Judge Maria T. Cenzone, Judge Elyze M. Iriarte, Judge Alberto E. Tolentino, Administrative Hearing Officer Benjamin C. Sison, Magistrate Judge Sean Edward Brown  
(Front row, L-R) Associate Justice F. Philip Carbullido, Chief Justice Robert J. Torres, Associate Justice Katherine A. Maraman  
Not pictured: Judge Arthur R. Barcinas

## The Supreme Court of Guam

The Supreme Court of Guam has jurisdiction to hear appeals over any cause decided by the Superior Court of Guam or other courts created by Guam law. Additionally, the Supreme Court has supervisory jurisdiction over the Superior Court and all other courts created by Guam law, and it has original jurisdiction over proceedings necessary to protect its appellate jurisdiction and supervisory authority. The Supreme Court also has the authority to make and promulgate rules governing the practice and procedure in the courts of Guam.



## TOTAL CASE FILINGS FIVE-YEAR TREND

CASE TYPE	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Appellate Procedure	0	0	0	0	0
Attorney Discipline	1	1	4	2	3
Certified Question	0	2	0	0	1
Civil Case	25	22	11	18	17
Pro Hac Vice	20	12	15	13	15
Promulgation Order	1	3	1	0	2
Writ of Habeas Corpus	0	1	0	3	0
Writ of Mandamus	0	1	0	0	1
Writ of Prohibition	2	1	1	3	2
Writ of Certiorari	N/A	1	1	1	0
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>CY 4</b>

## TOTAL OPINIONS ISSUED FIVE-YEAR TREND

CASE TYPE	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Civil	15	19	17	6	10
Criminal	15	12	11	13	16
Certified Question	0	0	1	0	1
Writ	0	2	0	0	0
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>17</b>

## The Superior Court of Guam

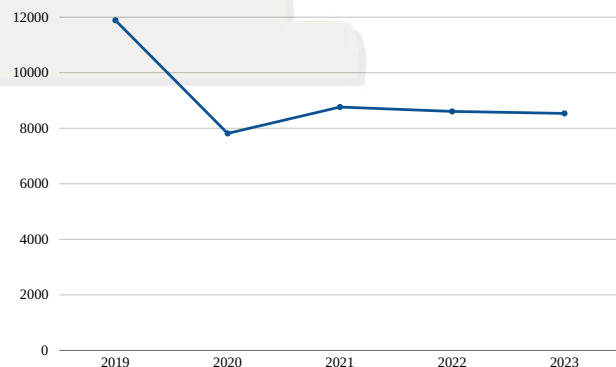
The Superior Court of Guam, our island's court of general jurisdiction, has eight judges, two magistrates, a Family Court Referee, and an Administrative Hearings Officer. The eight judges preside over a variety of cases at the Hagåtña Court and the Northern Court Satellite, from felony and misdemeanor cases, juvenile matters, civil matters, divorce and custody cases, to probate and special proceedings. The magistrates have jurisdiction over certain proceedings in criminal and civil cases, uncontested divorces, and matters heard before the Small Claims Court and Traffic Court. The Family Court Referee presides over juvenile, domestic custody, and child support matters. The Administrative Hearings Officer presides over child support cases.

### FIVE-YEAR COMPARATIVE CASES FILED

CASE TYPE	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Adoption	47	23	30	21	24
Child Support	273	88	138	112	144
Civil	1,481	1,087	929	723	751
Criminal Felony	720	623	674	754	847
Criminal Misdemeanor	588	514	511	469	444
Domestic	720	458	534	459	437
Foreign Order	21	0	2	1	2
Juvenile Delinquency	202	126	88	173	182
Juvenile Proceedings	355	259	305	328	310
Land Registration	5	0	4	3	4
Probate	202	168	240	239	228
Special Proceedings	216	238	210	176	163
Protective Orders	141	126	138	109	119
Restitution (Collection)	160	159	187	116	95
Small Claims	1,610	576	765	709	711
Traffic	5,167	3,369	4,008	4,214	4,073
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>11,888</b>	<b>7,814</b>	<b>8,763</b>	<b>8,606</b>	<b>8,534</b>

## CRIMINAL JURY TRIALS

PRIMARY CRIMINAL CHARGE	NO. OF TRIALS
Criminal Sexual Conduct	10
Aggravated Assault/ Assault	6
Robbery	2
Family Violence	3
Murder	3
Possession of a Schedule II Controlled Substance	6
Advanced Stalking	3
Burglary	4
Terrorizing	2
Theft	2
Animal Cruelty	1
Possession of Unregistered Firearm	1
Kidnapping	1
Complicity to Possession	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45</b>



## General Fund Appropriation

In FY 2023, approximately 88% of the Judiciary’s total revenue was derived from local appropriations designated for general operations and other Judiciary programs. The total allocation of \$37.74 million represented roughly 5.15% of the total General Fund available for appropriation in FY 2023, as reported in Public Law 37-3. This amount reflects a 15.46% increase compared to the prior fiscal year. The notable increase is primarily attributed to the implementation of adjustments to the Judiciary’s pay plans, aligned with similar compensation adjustments enacted across other Government of Guam entities.

A substantial portion of the Judiciary’s local appropriation for FY 2023 was allocated to personnel services. Of the total local fund expenditures, 84.67% was expended on salaries and fringe benefits for more than 400 Judiciary employees. Personnel service costs rose by approximately 12.10% compared to the previous year, largely due to the implementation of compensation adjustments aimed at maintaining competitiveness in employee retention and recruitment.

## Federal Grants & Other Collections

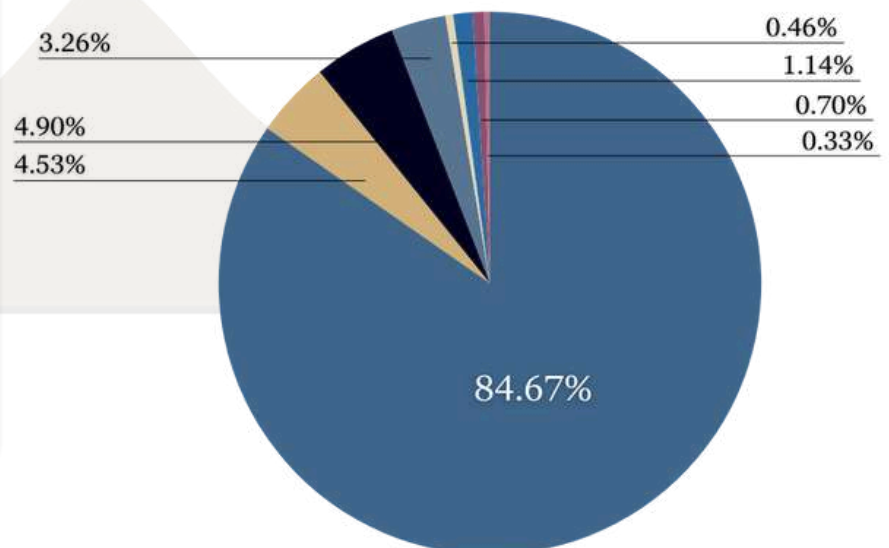
In FY 2023, federal grants and other special collections accounted for approximately 12% of the Judiciary’s total recorded revenue. These funds are earmarked for specific programs and must be expended in accordance with the respective grant or initiative objectives.

The majority of federal funding was awarded through the U.S. Department of Justice and supported a variety of Judiciary programs focused on public safety, rehabilitation, and justice system enhancements. Major federally funded initiatives included the National Criminal History Improvement Program, Drug Court Discretionary Grant Program, Adult Reentry Demonstration Program, Support for Adam Walsh Act Implementation Grant Program, Swift, Certain, and Fair Sanctions Program. Additionally, through sub-recipient arrangements with the Department of Administration, the Judiciary received funding under Violence Against Women Formula Grants, Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program, and the State and Community Highway Safety Program. Further support was provided through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Adult Drug Court Enhancement Project, Child Support Hearing Services, and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA).

REVENUE	FY 2023	%
Local Appropriation	\$37,740,858	88%
Federal Grants	\$4,550,686	11%
Other Collections	\$537,819	1%

EXPENDITURES	LOCAL APPROPRIATION	FEDERAL GRANTS	OTHER COLLECTIONS
Personnel Services	22,116,697	1,401,885	45,957
Fringe Benefits	9,181,691	581,929	-
Contractual Services	1,675,757	1,117,317	309,911
Capital Outlay	1,810,086	347,650	-
Utilities & Communication	1,206,785	30,729	2,343
Equipment - Non Capital Items	170,467	559,131	14,863
Jury stipend and other related costs	422,588	-	-
Supplies and Materials	258,035	101,785	16,969
Miscellaneous	122,914	457,929	127,932
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36,965,01</b>	<b>4,598,536</b>	<b>517,975</b>

- Personnel Services & Fringe Benefits
- Contractual Services
- Utilities
- Equipment - Non Capital Items
- Jury stipend and other costs
- Supplies & Materials
- Capital Outlay
- Miscellaneous



## Indigent Legal Services

Everyone has the right to legal representation, regardless of income. Guam's current system relies on public defenders, alternate public defenders, and private attorneys appointed by the courts. But a recent report from the Sixth Amendment Center found areas where Guam needs improvement—especially when it comes to independence and oversight. Through new legislation, the Guam Public Defender Service Corporation will take the lead in managing indigent legal services across the island—helping to ensure consistent, quality representation for those who need it most.



## Juvenile Reform Efforts

The Juvenile Justice Reform Collaborative, first launched in 2014, was brought back last year to address the rising number of youth in the system. Five subcommittees, led by a juvenile judge, worked with agencies across the island to address the gaps identified in our juvenile justice system. In its final report, the Collaborative presented both immediate and long-term strategies that aim to improve coordination, compliance, and overall effectiveness.



## Strategic Plan 2024-2027

Over the years, the Judiciary has used its strategic plans to bring direction to its priorities and initiatives. For Strategic Plan 2024-2027, the Judiciary identified four pillars of justice to guide the Judiciary:

- Improving Court Operations and Services
- Increasing Public Trust and Confidence
- Embracing and Enhancing Technology and
- Promoting a Wellness-Driven Court Culture and Workforce

Each pillar, chaired by a Judicial Officer and comprised of court managers and employees, has identified goals and objectives and developed projects aligned to each strategic focus area.

## Technological Updates

Under Chief Justice Torres, the Judiciary is investing in new tools to make court services easier to access and more efficient:

- **eCourt**, launching later in 2025, will allow the public to look up case information online without ever needing to visit the courthouse
- **eSupervision** will provide probation officers a digital platform to track progress, monitor compliance, and reduce paperwork—freeing up more time to work directly with clients.
- **Mobile Protective Orders** will soon allow individuals to request protective orders online by answering a few guided questions. This will help people who feel unsafe or face barriers getting to court in person.

## Judicial Security

Across the country, judges are facing increased threats—and Guam is no exception. While federal judges receive protections under national law, local judicial officers do not currently have the same legal safeguards. The Judiciary supports statutory protections to address this gap. Judges must be able to serve without fear, and protecting them helps protect the integrity of the justice system.

### WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Do you like this report? Is there any other information you would like to see included? Please let us know by contacting Sarah G. Elmore-Hernandez at [sehernandez@guamcourts.gov](mailto:sehernandez@guamcourts.gov). To see previous Citizen Centric Reports, visit [guamcourts.org/Citizen-Centric-Report/Citizen-Centric-Report.asp](http://guamcourts.org/Citizen-Centric-Report/Citizen-Centric-Report.asp).

