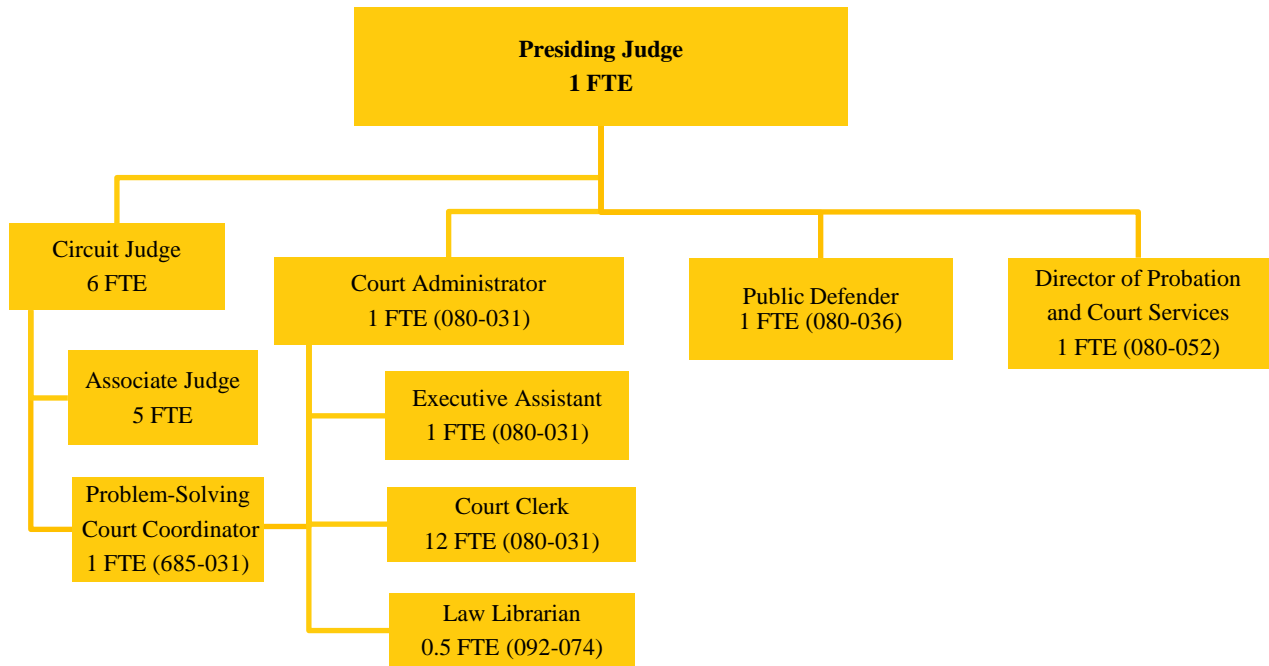


# CIRCUIT COURT

## Fund 080-031



Circuit Court positions: 11 FTE Judges (paid by the State), 15.5 FTE Circuit Court (080-031), 1 FTE Joint Dept Reg (080-031, 092-074, 093-031), 0.5 FTE Law Library Clerk (092-074), and 1 FTE Problem Solving Court Coordinator (685-031).

Article VI – The Judiciary – of the Illinois Constitution vests the judicial powers “in a Supreme Court, an Appellate Court and Circuit Courts.” The Circuit Courts Act (705 ILCS 35/0.01 *et seq.*) created the judicial circuits with Champaign County being part of the Sixth Circuit along with Douglas, Moultrie, Macon, DeWitt, and Piatt counties.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

*To carry out constitutional and statutory responsibilities vested in the Circuit Court, providing trials, hearings, and proceedings in civil and criminal cases.*

### **BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS**

Most of the court’s non-personnel expenditures are for mandated services. The number of cases filed each year fluctuates, and it is not possible to predict how many of those cases will result in jury trials or require the court to appoint counsel, order psychiatric evaluations, retain interpreters, or provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. The remainder of the Circuit Court’s budget is used to

compensate and support the staff who carry out these mandated services, ensuring equal access to justice through the courts.

In FY2019, expenditures from multiple line items exceeded requested budgets. After the Court requested a budget amendment for a considerable increase at the close of FY2019, it was suggested that a more realistic budget would account for greater increases in costs at the outset.

Expenditures for professional services (psychiatric evaluations, interpreters, etc.), have exceeded budget projections increasingly since FY2016, which demonstrates the need for an increase to the professional services line item. The need for an increase in juror expenses has been documented in past years but is not expected to be a concern in either FY2020 or FY2021.

The coronavirus pandemic has affected all aspects of court operations. The courthouse was closed for regular business from March 20 through May 29, 2020. During this time, only essential hearings were held. No jury trials were conducted. Most proceedings that had been scheduled in March, April, and May are being rescheduled, and many cases originally scheduled for hearings in June and July are being pushed back to accommodate hearings on more time-sensitive matters. The backlog of cases will likely affect operations into FY2021. Even with the courthouse closed and operations at a minimum, expenditures for professional services from March until the end of May 2020 were higher than expenditures for those services during the same period in FY2019.

Although the Circuit Court’s general fund budget cannot be reduced for FY2021 given the ongoing need to provide mandated services and address the backlog of cases, the reduction in expenditures for juries and attorney fees resulting from the courthouse closure is expected to reduce the Court’s budget by approximately 3% in FY2020. Additionally, reimbursement from the state for the Specialty Courts Coordinator’s salary, paid from one of the court’s special revenue funds, will alleviate the burden on Champaign County’s public safety sales tax fund in both FY2020 and FY2021.

**FINANCIAL**

| Fund 080 Dept 031     |    |                            | 2019            | 2020       | 2020        | 2021            |
|-----------------------|----|----------------------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|-----------------|
|                       |    |                            | Actual          | Original   | Projected   | Budget          |
| 369                   | 90 | OTHER MISC. REVENUE        | \$0             | \$0        | \$25        | \$0             |
|                       |    | MISCELLANEOUS              | \$0             | \$0        | \$25        | \$0             |
| 371                   | 92 | FROM LAW LIBRARY FUND 092  | \$15,000        | \$0        | \$0         | \$15,000        |
|                       |    | INTERFUND REVENUE          | \$15,000        | \$0        | \$0         | \$15,000        |
| <b>REVENUE TOTALS</b> |    |                            | <b>\$15,000</b> | <b>\$0</b> | <b>\$25</b> | <b>\$15,000</b> |
| 511                   | 3  | REG. FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES   | \$571,806       | \$592,656  | \$592,656   | \$620,893       |
| 511                   | 10 | JUDGES' SALARY INCREASE    | \$6,604         | \$6,622    | \$6,622     | \$6,622         |
|                       |    | PERSONNEL                  | \$578,410       | \$599,278  | \$599,278   | \$627,515       |
| 522                   | 1  | STATIONERY & PRINTING      | \$2,110         | \$3,000    | \$3,000     | \$3,000         |
| 522                   | 2  | OFFICE SUPPLIES            | \$6,616         | \$8,000    | \$7,500     | \$8,000         |
| 522                   | 44 | EQUIPMENT LESS THAN \$5000 | \$3,729         | \$0        | \$0         | \$0             |
|                       |    | COMMODITIES                | \$12,455        | \$11,000   | \$10,500    | \$11,000        |

|     |    |                             |                    |                    |                    |                    |
|-----|----|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 533 | 3  | ATTORNEY/LEGAL SERVICES     | \$67,253           | \$70,000           | \$55,000           | \$70,000           |
| 533 | 5  | COURT REPORTING             | \$24,395           | \$19,000           | \$14,000           | \$19,000           |
| 533 | 7  | PROFESSIONAL SERVICES       | \$135,424          | \$98,000           | \$110,500          | \$120,000          |
| 533 | 29 | COMPUTER/INF TCH SERVICES   | \$0                | \$0                | \$500              | \$500              |
| 533 | 42 | EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE       | \$1,114            | \$0                | \$0                | \$0                |
| 533 | 62 | JUROR MEALS                 | \$5,483            | \$5,425            | \$2,100            | \$5,000            |
| 533 | 63 | JUROR EXPENSE               | \$111,449          | \$121,000          | \$92,100           | \$121,000          |
| 533 | 72 | DEPARTMENT OPERAT EXP       | \$1,000            | \$1,000            | \$1,000            | \$1,000            |
| 533 | 85 | PHOTOCOPY SERVICES          | \$0                | \$0                | \$267              | \$0                |
| 533 | 93 | DUES AND LICENSES           | \$585              | \$585              | \$585              | \$0                |
| 534 | 37 | FINANCE CHARGES,BANK FEES   | \$5                | \$0                | \$0                | \$0                |
| 534 | 74 | CONTRACT ATTORNEYS SERVICES | \$191,400          | \$191,400          | \$191,400          | \$191,400          |
|     |    |                             | \$538,108          | \$506,410          | \$467,452          | \$527,900          |
|     |    | <b>EXPENDITURE TOTALS</b>   | <b>\$1,128,973</b> | <b>\$1,116,688</b> | <b>\$1,077,230</b> | <b>\$1,166,415</b> |

*Note: The judges are not county employees and are not included in county personnel appropriation.*

#### **ALIGNMENT to STRATEGIC PLAN**

*County Board Goal 1 – Champaign County is committed to being a high-performing, open and transparent local government organization*

- The Circuit Court continues to work with other justice-related departments to develop processes and explore new technologies that will allow the public easier, more efficient access to the court system.

*County Board Goal 2 – Champaign County maintains high-quality public facilities and highways and provides a safe rural transportation system and infrastructure*

- The Circuit Court will continue to work with the Physical Plant to ensure compliance with state and federal laws governing equal access to courthouse programs and services for persons with disabilities.
- The Circuit Court will work with the Sheriff, Physical Plant, and other courthouse officials to ensure the health and safety of all who must come to the court facility.

*County Board Goal 3 –Champaign County promotes a safe, just and healthy community*

- The Circuit Court will continue to support programs designed as alternatives to incarceration and will continue its representation on the Champaign County Reentry Council.
- The Circuit Court will continue to promote access to justice through staffing and programming initiatives, including the pursuit of grant funding where feasible.
- The Circuit Court will continue to provide the citizens of Champaign County a transparent, effective, and efficient venue for the redress of grievances.

*County Board Goal 4 – Champaign County is a county that supports balanced, planned growth to balance economic growth with preservation of our natural resources*

- The Circuit Court will work with the County Board and the County Executive to maximize efficiencies and operate a fiscally responsible court system.

**DESCRIPTION**

The Champaign County Circuit Court is a state court of general jurisdiction that adjudicates civil and criminal cases. Presiding Judge Thomas J. Difanis has administrative authority over court operations in Champaign County, including overall supervision of the Court Services and Public Defender departments. The eleven judges (six elected circuit judges and five appointed associate circuit judges) handle approximately 30,000 cases annually. The court is in session from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday (excluding holidays).

The circuit court currently employs fourteen full-time employees (twelve court clerks, one court administrator, and one executive secretary). Additional positions that fall under the court’s authority include a full-time Problem-Solving Court (aka Drug Court) Coordinator, a part-time Law Librarian, and a temporary part-time Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Program Coordinator. These positions are funded from special revenue funds. The court administrator is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the court, including personnel, budgeting, ADA compliance and other administrative responsibilities, and provides legal research assistance to the judiciary.

**OBJECTIVES**

1. To provide the judiciary with the personnel, facilities, technology, materials, and other support necessary for the administration of justice in Champaign County
2. To equip court personnel with training and materials necessary to support judicial functions, provide quality service to the public, and cooperate with other justice-related departments
3. To increase public confidence in the Champaign County justice system by providing timely access to court-related information and services

**PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

| <b>Indicator</b>  | <b>FY2019<br/>Actual</b> | <b>FY2020<br/>Projected</b> | <b>FY2021<br/>Budgeted</b> |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Cases Filed   | 33,811                   | 24,000                      | 30,000                     |
| Jury Trials   | 42                       | 20                          | 50                         |
| Non-English Language Interpreters (incl. sign language) | 1,917                    | 1,450                       | 2,000                      |