

TRIAL COURT FACT SHEET

Issue #5 - November 2005

Judicial Resource Study: Update Certification Case Weights

Study Background -

In 1998, the Florida Legislature requested that the Judicial Branch develop and validate a Weighted Caseload System as a tool for determining judicial workload. The Office of State Courts Administrator (OSCA) with the assistance of the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) undertook this task in late 1998 and the final project was completed in November 1999 (Florida Delphi-based Weighted Caseload Project Final Report, NCSC, January 2000).

The existing case weights were developed for each of the twenty six case types based on the reasonable, Delphi-based findings. These case weights were subsequently validated by a time study conducted in June and September 1999 and a few weights were modified to reflect these results. The case weights developed by the original study were approved by the Supreme Court in their 2000 Certification of Need opinion and are currently being used to determine judicial workload. Since 2000, adjustments have been made to the case weights in an effort to improve the accuracy of the judge need model; specifically, adjustments were made for dependency cases, drug court cases, evictions and civil traffic infractions. These changes were recommended by the Court Statistics and Workload Committee and approved by the Supreme Court.

Table 1: Existing Judicial Case Weights

Division	Delphi Case Type	Case Weight (in minutes)	Division	Delphi Case Type	Case Weight (in minutes)	
Circuit Criminal	Capital Murder	3,150	Probate	Other Probate	21	
	Serious Felony	358		Guardianship & Trust	68	
	Less Serious Felony	75	Juvenile	Delinquency	29	
	Property Crime	56		Dependency	281	
	Drug Offenses	38		County Criminal	Misdem & Crim Traffic	10
	Drug Court Offenses	102			Muni & County Ord	2
Circuit Civil	Prof Malprac & Prod Lia	200	DUI	88		
	Auto neg & other neg	101	County Civil	Small Claims	15	
	Contracts, real prop	32		Civil < \$15,000	33	
	Eminent Domain & Other Civil	68		Other County Civil	23	
Domestic Relations	Simplified Dissolution	25	Eviction	8		
	Dissolution	60	Civil Traffic	0.34		
	Child Support	36				
	Domestic Violence	37				
	Other Domestic	29				

Of course, judicial workload is not static. Complexity and need change over time in response to new legislative mandates, evolving case precedent and the availability of supporting resources. The original study recommended that there should be "... a systematic update of the case weights approximately every five years."

Judicial Resource Workgroup -

A judicial resource workgroup was formed in August 2005, with members from the State of Florida court system. Co-chairs for the workgroup are Judge Robert Bennett, Jr. (Chief Judge, Twelfth Judicial Circuit) and Michael Bridenback (Trial Court Administrator, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit). The purpose of the study is to update the case weights developed in the original study and to incorporate, insofar as possible, the impact of General Magistrates, Traffic Infraction Hearing Officers, and Title IV-D Child Support Enforcement Hearing Officers into the existing case weight model.

Study Goals -

The primary goals of the study are to: 1) Update the existing judicial case weights shown in Table 1, and 2) Develop a workload measure for General Magistrates, Traffic Infraction Hearing Officers, and Title IV-D Child Support Enforcement Hearing Officers to be incorporated as a component of the weighted caseload model. Table 2 shows the current allocation of supplemental resources. Additionally, the workgroup would like to develop a tool to assist judicial leadership in determining the optimal allocation of judicial and supporting resources. This may replace the existing funding methodologies used for General Magistrates, Child Support Enforcement Hearing Officers and Traffic Infraction Hearing Officers.

Table 2: Judicial & Supplemental Resource Allocations

Circuit	Circuit Judge FTE	County Judge FTE	General Magistrate FTE	Child Support Enforcement Hearing Officer FTE*	Civil Traffic Infraction Hearing Officer Contractual Expenditures
1	22	11	8	4.5	\$58,394
2	16	10	4	3	\$36,496
3	7	7	2	0.5	\$7,299
4	32	19	14	5.25	\$138,687
5	28	11	10	2	\$58,392
6	44	20	16	5	\$145,989
7	26	15	7.5	2	\$109,487
8	13	10	4	4.75	\$89,366
9	40	19	12	7	\$225,430
10	26	11	8	1.5	\$80,293
11	77	42	25	4.5	\$488,000
12	19	10	8	4.5	\$65,694
13	41	17	14	4	\$201,279
14	10	9	4	1	\$30,000
15	35	18	15	4	\$131,390
16	4	4	0	0	\$49,273
17	56	28	20	3	\$204,383
18	25	15	8	4.5	\$109,491
19	18	10	6	1.5	\$61,316
20	23	14	10	1	\$102,189
State	562	300	195.5	63.5	\$2,392,848

* Doesn't include unallocated positions.

Study Timeline -

The initial meeting with the full workgroup was held on November 15, 2005. It is anticipated that the workgroup will complete both goals, updating the existing judicial case weights and developing a workload measure for General Magistrates, Traffic Infraction Hearing Officers, and Title IV-D Child Support Enforcement Hearing Officers, by June 2007.

Trial Court Statistics Webpage

The Florida Trial Court statistics webpage was added to the Florida State Courts website in fall 2004. The webpage was developed by the Court Services Statistics and Evaluation section of the Office of the State Courts Administrator. From this page, users are able to access trial court statistics including filings and dispositions by division of court. These statistics are obtainable for individual circuit and county courts and for the entire state. Statistics are currently available for January 1986 through June 2004. The webpage is updated annually to include the next fiscal year's data. By early 2006, data through June 2005 will be available. The web address to access these statistics is <http://trialstats.flcourts.org/>.

Upcoming Events

- * Release of the 2004-05 Florida Trial Courts Statistical Reference Guide in early 2006.
- * Next Statistics in Brief issue available in Spring 2006.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like more information on the Judicial Resource Study or the Trial Courts Statistics Webpage, contact the Florida Office of the State Courts Administrator, Court Services Unit at 850.922.5094 or visit our web site at www.flcourts.org.

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