

State Court Administration



Purpose of the Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA)

To assist the chief justice in the administrative supervision of appellate and trial courts. The OSCA also supports the chief judges of the trial and appellate courts in their role as managers of their respective courts by providing professional expertise and guidance to promote a justice system that is effective, efficient, equitable, and accountable to court users and the public.

Why We Need State Court Administration

As the chief administrative officer of Florida's Judicial Branch, the chief justice is constitutionally responsible for the administrative supervision of the State Courts System. The non-adjudicatory functions necessary to govern the judicial branch are often referred to as "judicial administration" functions. It is vital for judges to focus, as much as possible, on the adjudication of disputes, and it is more cost effective to delegate administrative responsibilities to full-time, specially trained professionals. Professional administrative staff have become increasingly necessary as the modern court system becomes more complex, fundamental constitutional rights become more well-defined, case filings increase, and the number of judges continues to grow. State court administration and circuit court administration play critical and unique roles that complement one another in working to align court practice with court policy, provide accountability mechanisms at the state and local levels, oversee resource acquisition and management, and promote the administration of justice.

Supporting the State Courts System

The OSCA provides policy, technical assistance, and administrative support on system-wide issues to:

- The chief justice and the Supreme Court,
- Policy advisory commissions, committees, task forces, and workgroups established by the chief justice,
- Appellate and trial court judicial officers,
- Trial court administrators, and
- Appellate court marshals and clerks.

Examples of Activities Staffed by the OSCA

Statewide Administrative Structure and System Support

- Develop statewide policies and procedures on budget, personnel, financial matters, and procurement
- Manage judicial branch budget
- Process state courts financial transactions and personnel transactions
- Prepare legislative budget request and long range program plan for the state courts
- General counsel support
- Development of information technology standards
- Electronic filing policies and procedures
- Management and support of statewide court network and video networks
- Management and support of the appellate court case management systems and 27 other software applications developed in-house
- Centralized preparation of statutorily required financial reports for the legislative and executive branches

Support Supreme Court-appointed commissions, committees, and task forces in developing the Judicial Branch administrative policy and direction

- Research system-wide emerging issues
- Formulate statewide policy recommendations and standards for programs, operations, and technology
- Long-range strategic and operational plans
- Statewide initiatives (e.g., appointment and assignment of senior judges, appellate court organization, fairness in the courts, Revision 7 implementation, access to electronic records, jury innovations)

Promoting Competence and Professionalism in the Judicial Branch

- Over 900 curriculum hours of in-state judicial education programs annually
- Summits for judges, court staff, and stakeholders in areas of specialty practice (e.g. dependency, family court, pro se litigation, and drug courts)
- Training for court interpreters, general masters, hearing officers, and staff attorneys
- Qualification, certification and training of more than 6,000 mediators

Statewide Judicial Operations

- Studies and reports on Supreme Court workload, district courts of appeal case processing, trial court criminal case processing, and the effective use of court resources
- Zero-based budgeting review
- Jury management project
- Court improvement initiatives in dependency, domestic relations, domestic violence, child support, and delinquency
- Data and statistical support for certification of additional judges
- Development of a Statistical Reference Guide
- Statistical analysis
- Funding methodology for court resources
- State level emergency preparedness planning for the courts

Communication on Behalf of the State Courts System

- Intra-branch communication
- Inter-governmental relations, including serving as liaison between the judicial branch and the executive and legislative branches of government
- Public information
- State level court publications (e.g., State Courts System Annual Report, Full Court Press newsletter)
- Maintain Florida Courts web site
- Publish reports of court committees and commissions

Currently, the larger urban circuits have sufficient workload to require full-time staff to perform the necessary services and duties listed above. Other circuits rely on the Office of the State Courts Administrator for direct support in some or all of these areas. Revision 7 implementation is expected to create sufficient additional administrative work within each circuit to necessitate staff to perform those functions.