Maryland Judiciary
FY 2015 Statewide Caseflow Assessment

Methodology
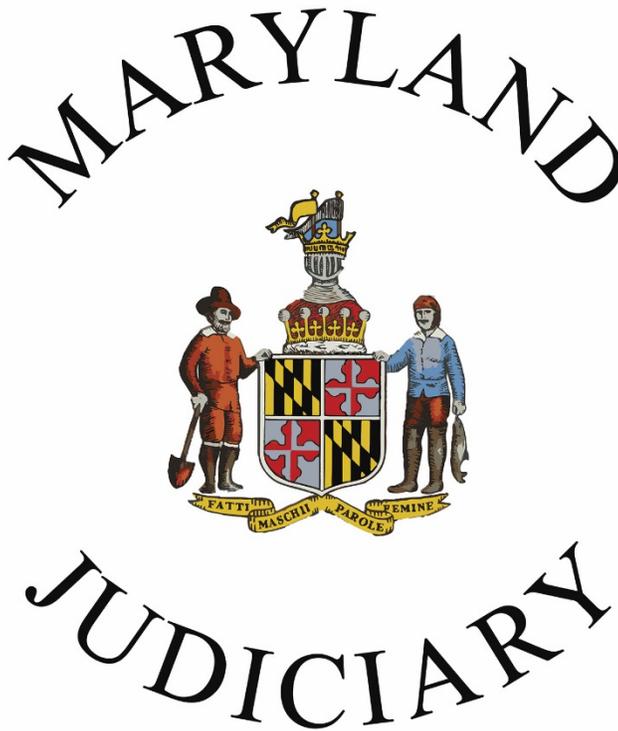
Circuit Courts

Administrative Office of the Courts

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FY 2015 Maryland Judiciary Statewide Caseflow Assessment Methodology

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This analysis describes, (1) the Caseflow Assessment data sampling methods, (2) core performance measures analyzed, (3) the number and types of removed cases, and (4) the extent to which circuit court jurisdictions reviewed sampled cases for data quality purposes.

I: Methodology

Identification of Valid Data

The FY 2015 Statewide Caseflow Assessment in the circuit courts is based on a sample of 39,591 original case terminations during the fiscal year (7/1/2014 to 6/30/2015) reported to the Caseflow Assessment Application.[1] These data were downloaded for analysis from the Assessment Application on December 10, 2015 and, as such, all calculations and analyses contained in this section of the report and the main analysis reflect data current as of that date.

The number of cases (i.e., sampled original terminations) analyzed for the FY 2015 statewide report matches the Assessment Application's official counts of the valid data available from each circuit court jurisdiction in each case type. All references to "valid data" in this section of the analysis, the main analysis, and any supplemental analyses is defined by the official statewide case time standards as those cases that contain a case start date, had the original termination occur during the Assessment fiscal year, and have a positive case processing time (where the case start date occurs prior to the case stop date).

Based on samples of up to 500 original terminations for each of the circuit court case types[2] examined, a total of 39,785 original terminations were initially extracted (sampled) from UCS and county source systems into the Assessment Application for FY 2015. During the month of October, 2015, court personnel conducted user data quality reviews of cases containing potentially incomplete or inaccurate information (using the Assessment Application's filters), as well as a more detailed review of at least 10% of the case sample for each case type (see Section II for a detailed discussion of the data quality review process). During this process, court personnel updated case records in the Assessment Application (adding, removing, or modifying data fields based on the original case record), as well as removed certain cases from the FY 2015 samples if they met the Assessment's removal criteria (see Section II).

Upon download of Assessment data for analysis following completion of the user data quality review phase, a total of 194 cases were excluded from the initial sample of 39,785 cases,

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[1] The Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County was excluded from the FY 2015 analysis of case processing performance.

[2] Eight case type classifications are used in the Caseflow Assessment for the circuit courts: Criminal, Civil General, Family Law (one-year standard), Limited Divorce (two-year standard), Juvenile Delinquency, CINA Shelter, CINA Non-Shelter, and Termination of Parental Rights (TPR).

resulting in a total of 39,591 cases for analysis of case processing performance in the FY 2015 Caseflow Assessment for the circuit courts. Cases were excluded due to having missing start dates (57 cases), negative case processing times (23 cases), and due to manual removal during the data quality review phase (114 cases).

The 194 cases excluded from the FY 2015 analysis was a reduction of 119 cases (38%) from the 313 cases excluded from the FY 2014 analysis. The Assessment team (comprised of the AOC Court Operations Department, JIS, and pilot testers in the circuit courts) follows-up and investigates incidences of cases with missing start dates and negative case processing times in an effort to identify underlying reasons for these occurrences and potential corrective action to minimize their recurrence in future samples (such as programming changes to the Assessment Application).

Performance Measures

Performance measures calculated on a statewide basis or aggregated by jurisdiction size (small, medium, medium-large, and large) in the FY 2015 analysis are weighted in order to accurately reflect each jurisdiction's contribution to statewide case processing performance. Weights are calculated based on the total number (i.e., population) of cases originally terminated within the fiscal year in each circuit court, by case type.

The analysis also provides the median case processing times by case type, which is the middle value in the distribution of all case processing times in the sample for each case type. Unlike the average, the median is not affected by values that deviate markedly from the rest of the sample (such as particularly short or long case times).

All FY 2015 jurisdiction-specific case time standards reports submitted to the AOC were reviewed by the research team. Recommendations (both internal to each court and proposed changes to the case time standards) and challenges reported by jurisdictions in the reports were noted. As part of a continuous process improvement approach, the Maryland Judiciary is committed not only to documenting all jurisdiction-specific challenges and recommendations related to the completion of the Assessment, but also completing timely follow-up with jurisdictions, when appropriate.

Other measures, such as the number of "valid" and "invalid" suspensions, are defined and explained in the main analysis.

II. Data Quality

Analysis of Removed Cases

During the data quality review phase, court personnel are permitted to remove sampled cases for any of the following reasons: 1) Reopen, 2) Waiver for Fee Denied, 3) No Case Really Opened, 4) Records Removed, Belongs to Another Jurisdiction, 5) Change Case Type, and 6) Transfer for Supervision Only. The Assessment Application also provides for the removal of cases for an "Other" reason. Jurisdictions are required to provide an accompanying explanation for all removals for an "Other" reason.

Certain case types and subtypes are excluded from the Assessment case samples, as determined by the Judicial Council. Court personnel are updated annually on these and other changes to the Assessment's sampling criteria, such as the inclusion or exclusion of certain case data fields.

For analytical purposes, removed cases are identified as either "valid" or "invalid." Removed, valid cases are defined as those cases that should have been included in the Assessment Application because, on initial review, the cases contained start and stop dates, as well as a positive case processing time. Removed, invalid cases are defined as those cases that had either a missing case start date or a negative case time, and would be excluded by the Assessment Application in any calculations of case processing performance.

The number and percentage of cases manually removed by circuit court jurisdictions from the FY 2015 Assessment are shown in Table 1, by case type and delineated by valid versus invalid removals.

Of the 114 cases removed from the FY 2015 sample, 93 (82%) were valid removals and 21 (18%) were invalid removals. While the number of cases removed declined in FY 2015 compared to FY 2014 (in which 194 cases were removed), the valid (82% in FY 2015/81% in FY 2014) and invalid (18% in FY 2015/19% in FY 2014) proportions were almost the same between the two fiscal years.

The highest proportion of all removed cases in FY 2015 were in the area of Family Law, at 22% of all removed cases. The second highest proportion of removed cases was found in the Juvenile Delinquency category, at 19% of all removed cases. The majority of total removed cases (by case type) were valid removals, except for the CINA Non-Shelter case type, in which five of the eight removed cases (63%) were invalid removals (cases missing a start date or having negative case processing times).

The 114 cases removed by circuit court personnel in FY 2015 equated to less than 1% of all cases initially extracted in the circuit court samples, and was 41% lower than the 194 cases removed in the FY 2014 Assessment.

Table 1. Number and Percentage of Removed Cases by Case Type, Circuit Courts, FY 2015

Case Type	Removed Cases				Total
	Valid		Invalid		
	N	%	N	%	
Criminal	17	81%	4	19%	**21**
Civil General	16	100%	0	0%	**16**
Family Law	25	100%	0	0%	**25**
Limited Divorce	2	100%	0	0%	**2**
Juvenile Delinquency	14	64%	8	36%	**22**
CINA Shelter	14	78%	4	22%	**18**
CINA Non-Shelter	3	38%	5	62%	**8**
TPR	2	100%	0	0%	**2**
Total	**93**	**82%**	**21**	**18%**	**114**

Valid Removals

Removals for an "Other" reason were the most prevalent among all removed cases in FY 2015 (among "valid" removals), at 42% of all removed cases, occurring most frequently in the Criminal and Civil General areas. One of the most common reasons cited under this removal classification were due to cases being closed in error and/or still pending.

The second most frequent removal reason among valid removals in FY 2015 was due to cases being in reopened status, at 20% of all valid removals, and was most heavily concentrated in the Family Law and Civil General case types.

Table 2. Number and Percentage of Removal Reasons by Case Type ('Valid' Removed Cases), Circuit Courts, FY 2015*

Removal Reasons	Statewide Totals N (%)	Case Type							
		Criminal	Civil General	Family Law	Limited Divorce	Juvenile Delinquency	CINA Shelter	CINA Non-Shelter	TPR
		N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Belongs to Another Court	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Change Case Type	16 (17%)	0 (0%)	2 (13%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	7 (50%)	6 (43%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Waiver for Fee Denied	13 (14%)	0 (0%)	3 (19%)	10 (40%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Case Not Opened	6 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (7%)	5 (36%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Reopen	19 (20%)	0 (0%)	4 (25%)	9 (36%)	2 (100%)	2 (14%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)
Transfer for Supervision Only	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Other	39 (42%)	17 (100%)	7 (44%)	5 (20%)	0 (0%)	4 (29%)	3 (21%)	3 (100%)	0 (0%)
Total**	93 (100%)	17 (100%)	16 (100%)	25 (100%)	2 (100%)	14 (100%)	14 (100%)	3 (100%)	2 (100%)

*Removed, 'valid' cases are defined as those cases that, if not removed, would have been included in the assessment application because (on initial review) the cases had valid start and stop dates, as well as a positive case processing time.
**Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Number of Cases Reviewed

As part of the data quality review phase, court personnel are advised to complete a review of at least 10% of sampled cases for each case type examined in the Assessment. This is completed after or in conjunction with the "initial" data quality review, in which court personnel utilize the Assessment Application's filters to review cases with missing or potentially erroneous data (e.g., missing case start dates, negative case processing times, or missing suspension start or stop dates).

In the 10% review, courts are requested to compare values in key data fields appearing in the Assessment Application with values in the original case file and then correct and/or update the Assessment case record, as needed. Users were requested to denote cases that received the 10% review by checking the "Record Reviewed" data field (appearing as a check box) in the Assessment Application. [3] The present analysis examines the extent to which Assessment data was subjected to the 10% review by jurisdictions in the FY 2015 Assessment.

Even though some courts have implemented data quality review as part of their routine operating procedures, both the 10% data quality review and initial data quality review are vitally important to ensure that no data errors occurred during the extraction of the data from the source systems to the Assessment Application. In addition, this more intensive review may further inform court officials on case attributes and characteristics that contribute to overall case processing

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[3] For more detailed information regarding the 10% data review, see the *FY 2015 Circuit Courts Caseflow Assessment Application Training Manual.* The manual is available for download from the Maryland Judiciary's *CourtNet* website (http://courtnet/caseflowassessment/index.html).

performance and, in turn, result in management discussions and process improvements related to the same.

As mentioned, records are only classified as "reviewed" if the "Record Reviewed" check box is selected and the changes are saved in a case record in the Assessment Application. It is possible that some jurisdictions performed the 10% review and failed to check the "Record Reviewed" box. It is also possible that some court personnel may have checked the "Record Reviewed" box without fully completing the review.

Calculations of the percentage reviewed for each county and case type are based upon the number of cases initially extracted (sampled) to the Assessment Application. This includes cases with missing start dates, negative clock times, and (subsequently) removed cases. Comparisons across the two levels of trial court (i.e., circuit vs. District Court) and jurisdictions within the same trial court level should be approached with caution as data is not collected on the quality of the review being performed.

Extent of Data Quality Reviews

Table 3 provides the extent to which circuit court jurisdictions reviewed cases as part of the 10% data quality review phase in the FY 2015 Assessment. It is important to note that the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County was exempted from the data quality review phase for the FY 2015 Assessment cycle.

Statewide, more than 10% of sampled cases for each circuit court case type in the Assessment were reviewed in FY 2015. The highest statewide rate of review was observed among TPR cases (65%), followed by CINA Non-Shelter cases (58%). Criminal, Civil General, Family Law, and Juvenile Delinquency cases were reviewed at similar statewide rates in FY 2015 (between 28% and 37%). Limited Divorce and CINA Shelter cases were reviewed at somewhat higher rates statewide in FY 2015, at 49% and 45%, respectively.

Within case types, jurisdiction-specific rates of review varied in FY 2015. Consistent with recent years, the child welfare-related case types (CINA Shelter, CINA Non-Shelter, and TPR) had the most incidences of 100% of samples being reviewed by individual jurisdictions (11 jurisdictions each for CINA Shelter and CINA Non-Shelter cases, and 13 for TPR cases). In total, there were 54 instances (across case types) in which a circuit court jurisdiction reviewed 100% of sampled cases of a particular type in FY 2015. Conversely, there were 21 instances across case types in which a circuit court jurisdiction did not review at least 10% of sampled cases of a particular type.

6

Table 3. Percentage and Number of Cases Reviewed by Jurisdiction and Case Type, Circuit Courts, FY 2015*

Jurisdiction	Criminal		Civil General		Family Law		Limited Divorce		Juvenile Delinquency		CINA Shelter		CINA Non-Shelter		TPR	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Allegany	495	100%	69	14%	65	13%	0	0%	134	96%	41	100%	30	100%	10	100%
Anne Arundel	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡
Baltimore City	191	38%	491	100%	491	100%	156	100%	60	12%	182	37%	-	-	63	50%
Baltimore County	77	16%	44	10%	80	18%	125	31%	30	5%	22	9%	15	18%	8	38%
Calvert	95	19%	63	13%	93	19%	9	30%	93	99%	15	100%	1	100%	18	100%
Caroline	154	31%	103	27%	188	38%	10	100%	46	92%	8	100%	-	-	-	-
Carroll	70	14%	105	21%	27	5%	11	14%	27	18%	19	100%	4	100%	2	100%
Cecil	486	99%	499	100%	364	73%	73	100%	139	98%	52	100%	-	-	12	100%
Charles	136	30%	86	17%	23	5%	0	0%	59	17%	0	0%	2	8%	0	0%
Dorchester	30	12%	46	11%	64	13%	5	28%	23	26%	1	50%	4	100%	1	100%
Frederick	99	20%	115	23%	10	2%	0	0%	54	20%	8	19%	1	5%	4	25%
Garrett	11	11%	19	11%	49	15%	3	43%	5	23%	5	26%	2	100%	1	100%
Harford	52	10%	57	11%	51	10%	33	100%	62	21%	50	56%	21	100%	24	100%
Howard	40	8%	25	5%	15	3%	0	0%	42	9%	6	30%	0	0%	2	67%
Kent	193	96%	233	100%	208	100%	8	100%	19	100%	3	100%	-	-	-	-
Montgomery	500	100%	500	100%	500	100%	306	100%	500	100%	128	100%	48	100%	27	100%
Prince George's	84	16%	78	15%	76	15%	33	12%	83	17%	25	20%	25	38%	2	13%
Queen Anne's	56	11%	52	10%	49	14%	4	15%	13	43%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Somerset	19	10%	32	10%	35	10%	2	13%	8	23%	3	23%	1	25%	1	50%
St. Mary's	69	15%	102	20%	45	9%	4	8%	59	42%	13	31%	-	-	10	100%
Talbot	112	50%	94	27%	56	18%	2	18%	11	34%	6	100%	2	100%	3	100%
Washington	493	100%	274	55%	331	66%	16	43%	305	75%	53	100%	39	100%	20	100%
Wicomico	52	10%	51	10%	54	11%	14	100%	52	19%	6	100%	6	100%	6	100%
Worcester	85	17%	60	12%	47	10%	1	6%	36	23%	7	100%	23	100%	3	100%
Total	**3,599**	**37%**	**3,198**	**31%**	**2,921**	**28%**	**815**	**49%**	**1,860**	**35%**	**653**	**45%**	**224**	**58%**	**217**	**65%**

"-" Denotes a jurisdiction for which there were no sampled cases of a particular type in FY 2015.

‡The Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County was exempted from the data quality review phase for the FY 2015 Assessment cycle.

*Cases Reviewed as of December 10, 2015.