OVERVIEW ALASKA COURT SYSTEM

1/12/01

PROFILE OF THE ALASKA COURT SYSTEM
July 1, 1999 - June 30, 2000

INTRODUCTION

There are four levels of courts in the Alaska Court System, each with different powers, duties and responsibilities. Alaska has a unified, centrally administered, and totally state-funded judicial system. Municipal governments do not maintain separate court systems.

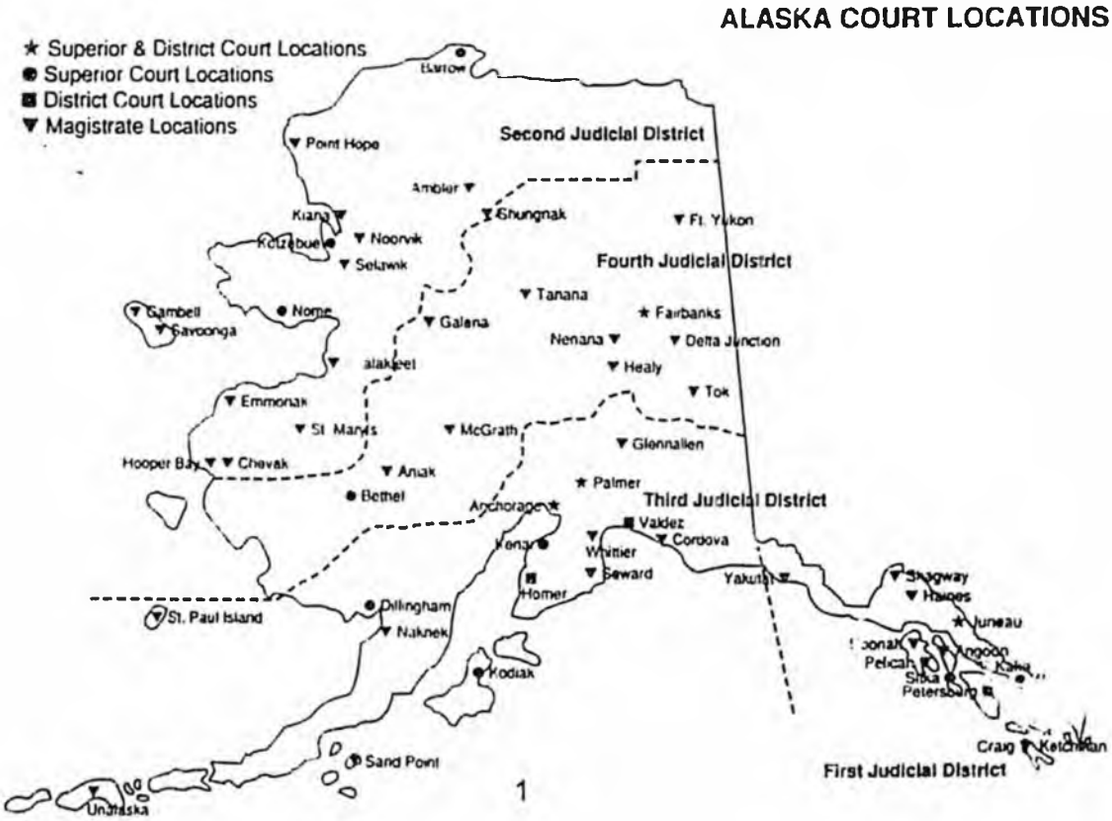
The four levels of courts in the Alaska Court System are the supreme court, the court of appeals, the superior court and the district court. The supreme court and court of appeals are appellate courts, while the superior and district courts are trial courts. Jurisdiction and responsibilities of each level of court are set out in Title 22 of the Alaska Statutes.

The supreme court and the superior court were established in the Alaska Constitution. In 1959, the legislature created a district court for each judicial district and granted power to the supreme court to increase or decrease the number of district court judges. In 1980, the legislature created a court of appeals.

The chief justice of the Alaska Supreme Court is the administrative head of the Alaska Court System. An administrative director is appointed by the chief justice with concurrence of the supreme court. The director supervises the administration of all courts in the state.

Rules governing the administration of all courts and the rules of practice and procedure for civil and criminal cases are promulgated by the supreme court.

ALASKA COURT LOCATIONS



ALASKA COURT SYSTEM ORGANIZATION

ALASKA SUPREME COURT

The supreme court is the appellate court of final authority in Alaska. It consists of a panel of five justices.

COURT OF APPEALS

The court of appeals hears appeals in criminal and quasi-criminal cases (such as juvenile delinquency cases.) It consists of a panel of three judges.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

The supreme court is charged with the responsibility of administering the statewide system. The supreme court delegates most of the administrative matters to the administrative director.

SUPERIOR COURT

The superior court is the trial court of general jurisdiction. It has appellate jurisdiction over district court appeals and appeals from administrative agency decisions. There are 32 superior court judgeships.

DISTRICT COURT

The district court has limited civil and criminal jurisdiction. The district court consists of 17 district court judges and 60 authorized magistrate positions.

ALASKA COURT SYSTEM
(Information as of June 30, 2000)

Fiscal Year:	July 1 - June 30	
Geographical Area Served:	586,413 square miles	
Number of Judges:	5	supreme court judges
	3	court of appeals judges
	32	superior court judges
	17	district court judges
	60	magistrates
Number of Court Locations:	16*	combined superior and district court
	42	district courts only (judge and/or magistrate)
Number of Authorized Positions:	655	permanent full-time
	50	permanent part-time
	21	non-permanent
	726	total

*Includes three locations without resident superior court judges: Wrangell, Petersburg and Valdez.

FIVE LARGEST TRIAL COURTS
(by number of permanent full-time employees)

Anchorage	210
Fairbanks	82
Juneau	30
Palmer	25
Ketchikan	22

Subject: Judicial Council Follow-up to Court Overview
Date: Fri, 12 Jan 2001 15:24:14 -0900
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CC: "Christensen, Chris" <cchristensen@courts.state.ak.us>,
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I am writing to provide you with a bit of follow-up material following the court overview before House Judiciary today. Please feel free to call me with any questions. Also, there is a wealth of information about Judicial Council activities on our Internet site at www.ajc.state.ak.us . I note the I would be happy to provide you with printed copies of any of the reports.

Mediation. The Council has completed several Mediation/ADR consumer publications and reports since the legislature assigned us to do a child custody mediation project in the early 90s.

1. Mediation. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and the Alaska Court System (December 1999). A guide for attorneys, judges, and persons who are considering using alternative dispute resolution (ADR) to help them resolve a dispute. This Guide explains the benefits and differences among mediation, arbitration, and other ADR processes. It offers resources to contact for more information, and it provides information on the Alaska court System's free ADR programs.
2. A Consumer Guide to Selecting a Mediator (July 1995). A sixteen-page brochure describing how to find and select a mediator to help resolve a dispute. The guide incorporates current research and policy information on mediator qualifications into a five-step process for lawyers, judges, litigants, and other consumers of mediation services. Spanish version: http://www.ajc.state.ak.us/Reports/medguideSPframe.htm

3. Report to the Alaska Legislature: Alternative Dispute Resolution in the Alaska Court System (December 1997). The 1997 "Tort Reform" legislation required the Council to work with the Alaska Court System to design an alternative dispute resolution project which can be implemented in the summer of 1998.

4. Alaska Child Visitation Mediation Pilot Project (February 1992). Describes the pilot program established by the legislature to offer mediation for parents with visitation disputes. Recommends expansion of the project and continuation in another agency.

Youth Court. A 1999 Council report provided information on youth court activities statewide at that time:

A Directory of Dispute Resolution in Alaska Outside Federal and State Courts (March 1999). An overview of Alaska dispute resolution entities other than state and federal courts.

Drug Court/Mental Health Court/DWI Court. Council staff is working with the court system to complete evaluations of these projects. Teri Carns of my staff has been in contact with Representative Rokeberg's office. Also, the Council staffed the Criminal Justice Assessment Commission (and its follow-up group) which made extensive recommendations in this and other areas.

Final Report of the Alaska Criminal Justice Assessment Commission (May 2000). Governor Tony Knowles, Chief Justice Warren Matthews, Senate President Mike Miller, and House Speaker

Gail Phillips established the Criminal Justice Assessment Commission to review, develop, and implement strategies within the criminal justice system so that all offenders are held appropriately accountable for their conduct. The Judicial Council provided staff support for the Commission.

Criminal Justice Computer Coordination. The Council has worked with the criminal justice agencies to encourage efforts to coordinate their computer systems since (and actually before) the Legislature assigned the Council of setting out a starting blueprint to coordinate the justice system computers in 1993:

Plan for the Integration of Alaska's Criminal Justice Computer Systems and the Creation of a Comprehensive Criminal History Repository. (May 1994). Makes recommendations to Alaska's criminal justice agencies and the legislature for upgrading and coordinating criminal justice computer information systems. Executive Summary at http://www.ajc.state.ak.us/Reports/integframe.htm .

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