

# CLERKS OF CIRCUIT COURT

## WISCONSIN COURT SYSTEM

Clerks of circuit court are elected every four years in each of Wisconsin's 72 counties and are statutorily responsible for various recordkeeping functions of the courts. As the custodians of court records, clerks of circuit court play a significant role in Wisconsin's judicial system.

### CUSTODIAN OF THE RECORD

Recordkeeping for the courts is governed by state statutes and Wisconsin Supreme Court Rule. These orders require clerks to:

- maintain records of all documents filed with the courts;
- keep a record of court proceedings;
- keep records of liens and money judgments;
- and collect fees, fines, and forfeitures that are either court-ordered or specified by statute.

Clerks of circuit court must allow reasonable access to court records while maintaining confidentiality.

Court recordkeeping practices are refined and updated on an ongoing basis by the Wisconsin Court Records Management Committee (RMC), which has been in existence since 1984. RMC has three subcommittees, the members of which are appointed by the Director of State Courts:

The **Forms Subcommittee** focuses on the development, design, and maintenance of court and legal forms used in Wisconsin.

The **Procedures Subcommittee** focuses on developing and maintaining court recordkeeping procedures for the clerks of circuit court.

An **RMC Records Retention Subcommittee** is also convened when necessary to review issues of record retention.

### COURT AUTOMATION

Clerks of circuit court have been key players in the implementation of court automation. Through Consolidated Court Automation Programs (CCAP), clerks of circuit court are provided equipment, software, and training that allows

them to both enhance the efficiency of their offices and increase public access to the courts.

Many clerks — or their deputies — serve on various design and policy committees that influence how court automation proceeds. Clerks also help educate the public and the state Legislature on the importance of court automation.

Advances in technology have been utilized by clerks around Wisconsin and include the addition of such features as file tracking, remote access, court calendar kiosks, public access terminals, online juror questionnaires, and the ability to accept electronic payments and electronic filings (eFilings).

### JURY MANAGEMENT

Through CCAP, automation has made the process of selecting and notifying potential jurors much more efficient, and clerks work with the Director of State Courts and the Legislature to continue to improve jury management. The most noticeable improvement has been the decrease in the time jurors are required to serve: no more than one month of jury service in a four-year period.

### COURT FINANCES

Millions of dollars in fees, fines, and forfeitures are paid through clerks' offices annually. Clerks of circuit court work to meet this fiscal responsibility with accurate, methodical, and effective accounting practices. CCAP financial software — designed in accordance with widely accepted accounting principles — assists clerks in efficiently handling this money.

### COURT ADMINISTRATION

As local court administrative personnel, clerks of court are at the center of an enormous variety of activities and work daily with many different people — law enforcement; the legal community; local, state, and federal agencies; businesses; and the general public depend upon the office of the clerk of circuit court to solve a wide range of problems. The administrative responsibilities at the circuit court level involve a variety of tasks, including budgeting; administering trial court resources; developing effective policies and procedures; and recruiting and maintaining skilled staff.