

2019-2024 Term Report



JeffersonKyCourtClerk.com



@OfficeofJeffersonCircuitCourtClerkDavidL.Nicholson



@LouKyCourtClerk



@LouKyCourtClerk

Our Mission

The Mission of the Jefferson County Office of the Circuit Court Clerk is to accurately and efficiently process, provide and maintain judicial information and records.

Our Vision

The Jefferson County Office of the Circuit Court Clerk will provide the highest quality service through a professionally trained and diverse customer-focused staff, utilizing accessible, automated and integrated technology.

Our Values

At the Jefferson County Office of the Circuit Court Clerk, we will:

- Operate a transparent organization with integrity and accountability.
- Demonstrate professionalism, courtesy and compassion with every person.
- Seek continuous improvement by driving creativity in everything we do.
- Execute with quality by understanding and measuring our performance.

Printed with state funds, January 2025. Administrative Office of the Courts, Frankfort, Ky.

2019-2024 TERM REPORT

Office of the Circuit Court Clerk



Message from the Clerk

As I begin my fourth term as Jefferson County Circuit Court Clerk, I am deeply grateful for the privilege of continuing to serve our community in this vital role.

The past six years have been very productive for our office as we have accomplished all of our major objectives. These include:

- Historic renovation and modernization of our District Criminal Division (our largest office)
- Expansion into new office space within the Hall of Justice
- Continued growth of electronic court records (eCourts), eWarrants, eFiling and eSearch Warrants
- Transition of driver's licensing to the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, as mandated by the General Assembly

While I am proud of the many significant achievements that we have made during this past term, I am excited for the future. I look forward to continuing to lead our TEAM as we take on several major projects on the horizon, including the migration to a brand-new case management system for all court records – from the dated "KyCourts II" system to "Enterprise Justice," a robust, modern digital platform.

I am pleased to provide this Term Report, which is a snapshot of the past six years. In it, you will find data points and information about our accomplishments, initiatives, community engagement and a look ahead.

The Circuit Court Clerk's Office, a constitutional office that is part of the Kentucky Court of Justice, is the "custodian of the record," processing and managing all Circuit, Family and District Court records in Jefferson County. Our 276 hardworking and dedicated Deputy Clerks serve the largest jurisdiction in Kentucky's unified court system. Our office is the only Court Clerk's Office in the Commonwealth that operates 24x7x365.

Despite challenges, such as budget constraints, judicial turnover, workforce changes and the pandemic, our office has remained focused on results, leveraging data-driven strategies to enhance customer service, streamlining operations and adopting new technologies.



Mr. Nicholson spoke with Kentucky Supreme Court Justice Angela McCormick Bisig and Kentucky Association of Counties Executive Director Jim Henderson at a 2024 KACo event.

From 2019-2024, our office processed 684,876 new Circuit, Family and District Court cases, 119,378 of them in 2024. Additionally, revenue for the term was approximately \$170 million.

These achievements would not be possible without our conscientious and committed Deputy Clerk TEAM, and our collaborative efforts with judicial partners and stakeholders.

We remain committed to excellence, continually improving to provide outstanding service to the citizens of Jefferson County each and every day.

It is an honor to lead this extraordinary TEAM. Together, we will continue fulfilling our mission with dedication, integrity and compassion to all those we serve.

David L. Nicholson



Every OCCC Deputy Clerk took the oath of office for the new term on Jan. 8, 2019, at the Judge Benjamin F. Shobe Jury Pool Assembly Hall in the Jefferson County Judicial Center.

Advisory Committee comprised of business litigators, and the OCCC dutifully attended and contributed to these meetings throughout 2019. The committee developed eligibility criteria for the Business Court Docket, drafted its guiding rules, and the Supreme Court adopted them in November 2019.

Officially beginning on Jan. 1, 2020, Kentucky's first Business Court Docket pilot project started here in Jefferson County. It provides specialized attention for complex commercial cases, improves court efficiency for all litigants, and creates a more attractive forum for doing business in Kentucky. We join approximately 24 other states that have adopted such a model. The OCCC has continuously processed these cases since 2020, and it is a shining example of innovation. Another instance of Jefferson County leading the way!

The Business Court Docket is an early success of the Supreme Court of Kentucky's Civil Justice Reform Commission, which was launched to address concerns about the cost, delay and complexity of civil litigation. The commission consisted of judges from all four levels of the court system, legislators from the Kentucky House and Senate, attorneys from the plaintiff's and defense bars, a circuit court clerk and support staff from the Administrative Office of the Courts. As a result, the commission recommended the development of a Business Court pilot project in one or more jurisdictions. After analyzing the data, it was determined that Jefferson County was the ideal jurisdiction for this pilot project.

The Supreme Court created a Business Court

2020

Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)

A Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) is a necessary part of any business. It is no different with the OCCC.

In May 2020, amid the COVID crisis, our city saw significant social unrest. As a result, the courthouse complex was inaccessible for periods of time. Therefore, we had to pivot quickly to perform our constitutional duties, such as posting of bonds 24 hours a day, accepting domestic violence petitions, and staffing arraignment court.

The OCCC's Bowman Field Driver's License Branch became the alternate site to conduct these important functions over weekends and when the courthouse downtown was closed.

This allowed the OCCC to provide continuous operations and serve the public even during the most difficult of times. Living our mission, vision and values of collaborating with our partners, we worked with the Jefferson County Attorney's Office, public defenders, judges and judicial partners to conduct this business



During pandemic-related courthouse closures, the OCCC pivoted, moving operations to the Bowman Field Driver's License Branch as part of its Continuity of Operations Plan.

remotely, when needed.

This was not the only example of COOP implementation in 2020. The OCCC also collaborated with the Commonwealth Attorney's office to establish a location in Middletown, Ky., to complete grand jury proceedings.

All are examples of good government, multitasking, emergency planning and pivoting to provide access to justice and continuity of services.

Pandemic & Pivoting

Any OCCC report covering 2020 would be incomplete without mentioning the impact that COVID had on the courts (and, ultimately, society as a whole).

As was stated by national pundits, it was not a crisis that courts wanted, but it was a crisis that was needed to inspire deep discussions about how to modernize court systems, improve infrastructure, and utilize technology more fully (i.e., remote hearings, eFiling expansion and electronic records).

Many of the changes that have been implemented in the subsequent years were born out of this

crisis that we all navigated.

The OCCC remained open and operational throughout the pandemic, offering services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and all 365 days of the year. This was accomplished by implementing 50/50 staffing and a myriad number of other requirements as outlined by Administrative Orders promulgated by the Supreme Court to guide the courts every step of the way. Locally, this included opening a Continuity of Operations (COOP) location to ensure services were uninterrupted. (See COOP article). It impacted every aspect of our operations and

required us to "pivot" to address the issues at hand, which included remote dockets, zoom hearings, mail-in driver's license processing, canceled case and docket rescheduling, strengthening social media communication for notices and announcements, all the while keeping the work environment safe and my TEAM healthy. As a result, we explored options to change the very core of how we do business, and we implemented those that were viable. It didn't come easy, it didn't come without costs, but it allowed the courts to self-reflect and make improvements for the future.

eSearch Warrants

The OCCC processes more search warrants than any other county in Kentucky.

As such, we have been involved in discussions regarding electronic search warrants (eSW) for quite some time.

Specifically, Mr. Nicholson was a member of the Kentucky Attorney General's (AG) Search Warrant Task Force that was created by AG Executive Order in January 2021. Mr. Nicholson, representing the Kentucky Association of Counties (KACo), attended many months of meetings that culminated in final recommendations being approved on Dec. 9, 2022. (Information concerning the Task Force and its final report can be found on the AG's website: ag.ky.gov.)

Recommendation No. 1 stated: "All state and local agencies with the authority to execute search warrants should utilize an electronic platform maintained by the Administrative Office of the Courts for handling those warrants." To accomplish this end, AOC began the process of developing and

piloting an eSW system. Initially, the pilot project (called "proof of concept") went "live" in six counties, which included Harrison, Nicholas, Pendleton, Robertson, Scott and Woodford counties.

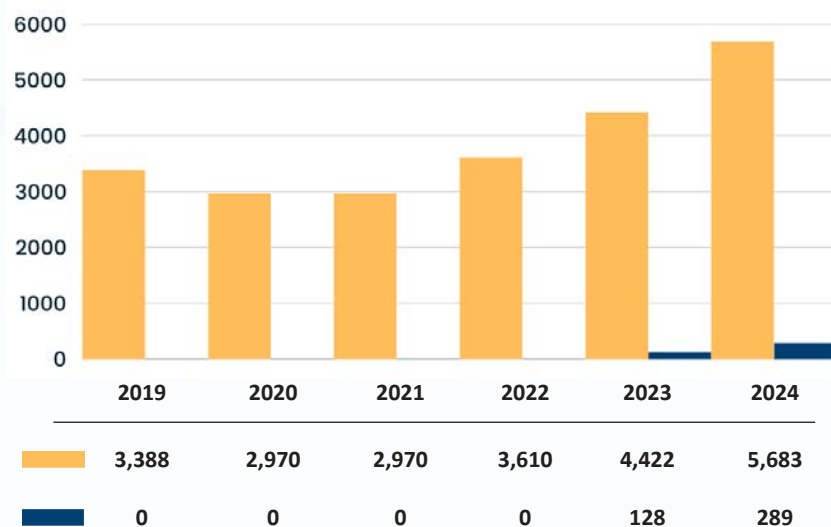
The OCCC has worked diligently with the AOC to request improvements that are needed here, especially as the number of search warrants continues to grow year after year. On Sept. 21, 2023, we began piloting the initial product with three law enforcement agencies: Jeffersontown, Shively and St. Matthews police departments.

Further, we are communicating with Louisville Metro Police Department to ensure the eSW system collects the data that they need, especially in light of the U.S. Department of Justice's federal consent decree.

As of the end of 2024, the AOC is in the process of determining its statewide roll-out, including enhanced functionality. Ultimately, we are looking forward to eSW being fully implemented here in the largest urban court system in the state.



Jefferson County Search Warrants (Conventional v. Electronic)



End of an Era

For many decades, our office issued driver's licenses to the citizens of Jefferson County.

However, 2021 was a year that brought dramatic changes to the OCCC and the citizens of Kentucky regarding the issuance of driver's licenses. To achieve compliance with the Federal Real ID Act, and pursuant to KRS 186.490 passed by the Kentucky Legislature, the Circuit Court Clerks statewide were directed to transition these duties to the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC). We were required to cease issuing such credentials by June 30, 2022, at the latest, thus, allowing Clerk's offices to return to focusing solely on court business (that is, our constitutional duties).

As our office prepared to be replaced by a network of KYTC Driver Licensing Regional Offices, a multitude of logistical efforts were coordinated throughout 2021 between the OCCC, KYTC and AOC to meet the deadlines.

This included a series of closures and consolidation of branches. As part of these discussions, Mr. Nicholson wanted to ensure all citizens of Jefferson County would continue to be adequately served at the remaining locations, but also to hold firm on his promise



Community activist Deborah Stallworth spoke at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Nia Center Driver's License Branch when it officially transitioned to KYTC.

to offer access to the historically under-served citizens residing in West Louisville.

He specifically opened the NIA Center Driver's License Branch in West Louisville during his first term in office (2012) for this purpose, and the Governor and KYTC agreed that this invaluable location would be sustained moving forward.

The OCCC ceased its licensing services on January 12, 2022, and officially transferred all duties to the

KYTC, ending an era of service to our community.

The elected Circuit Court Clerk was there at Bowman Field to issue the final Jefferson County driver's license that would bear his signature, noting it was truly an honor and privilege to perform this function for so many years.

For questions about KYTC's locations, appointments, mail-in renewals and other options, please visit drive.ky.gov. KYTC is moving in new directions with more choices and modernized services.



Mr. Nicholson issued the last driver's license by the Circuit Court Clerk's Office on Jan. 12, 2022, at the Bowman Field Branch.

Award-Winning Domestic Violence Intake Center



Domestic violence – also called domestic abuse or intimate partner violence – is aggression committed by someone in the victim's domestic circle. This includes current and former spouses and dating partners, immediate family members, other relatives and family friends.

Jefferson County's Domestic Violence Intake Center (DVIC) offers assistance and advocacy for those seeking protection from domestic violence and abuse, dating violence and abuse, stalking and sexual assault. It is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year and is located on the first floor of the Louis D.

Brandeis Hall of Justice, 600 W. Jefferson Street.

The center is jointly operated by the Circuit Court Clerk's Office and the Jefferson County Attorney's Office. The DVIC assists individuals seeking civil protective orders or criminal complaints. Staff can identify the type of protection for which victims are eligible, assist with asking the court for that protection and provide information about community resources.

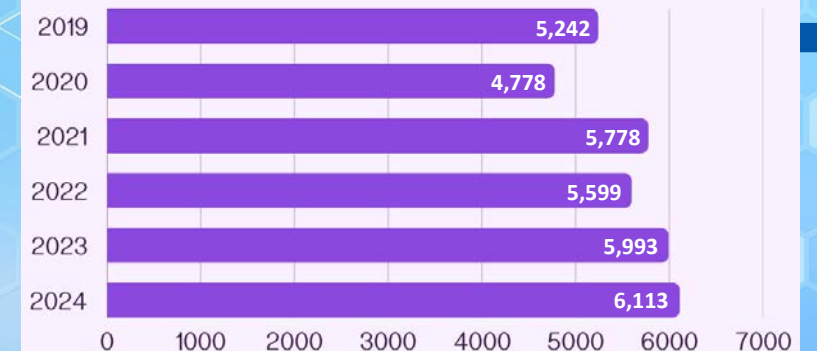
Since the DVIC opened in 2009 in a collaborative effort between public and private organizations, it has received national acclaim and has served as a model for similar centers across the nation. The National

Association of Counties (NACo) recognized it with a prestigious Achievement Award as an initiative that enhances service for citizens. On October 15, 2024, the DVIC celebrated its 15th anniversary of serving the community. It provides service to approximately 6,000 survivors each year.

If you need assistance, visit the DVIC to learn about the resources available, call (502) 595-4697 or visit jeffersonkycourtclerk.com/domestic-violence-intake-center.

Graph of DV Petitions Submitted Per Year (below)

Each October, as part of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the OCCC supports the vital work of the Center for Women and Families by participating in their ceremony remembering those who tragically lost their lives to domestic violence during the year.



2023

Technology Expansion

Expansion of technology has always been a primary goal of my administration, and it continues to be so. When the first court document was electronically filed (eFiled) in Jefferson County on October 21, 2015, it marked the beginning of a new age.

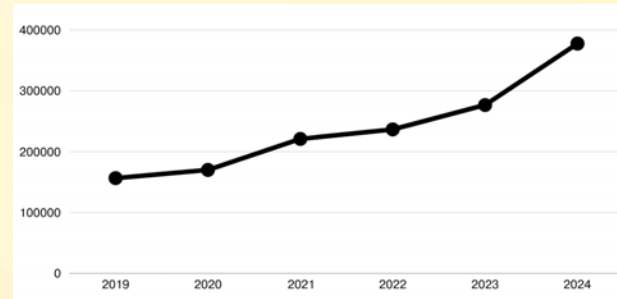
It was the beginning of the effort to move to a completely electronic record. Since then, eFiling has flourished.

As the Kentucky Supreme Court moved from permissive to mandatory eFiling for attorneys through a series of Administrative Orders starting in May of 2022, more and more categories were added throughout 2023. It progressed even further when the judiciary was directed to utilize electronic orders in civil cases in the spring of 2024.

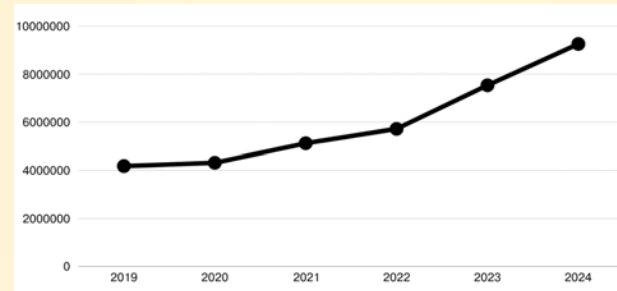
As displayed in the charts adjacent and below, eFiling has grown every year in Jefferson County and statewide. It is important to note that Jefferson is just one of our 120 counties, but as the largest urban court system in the Commonwealth, we currently represent 17% of all electronic filings statewide; and further, we also represent 21% of all dollars processed via the eFiling system.

Our Deputy Clerks process these documents, along with numerous other functions involved in keeping the courthouse running. Truly, Jefferson County is the “power user” of the eFiling system. As such, we stand ready for the next phase of technological innovations of the Kentucky Court of Justice.

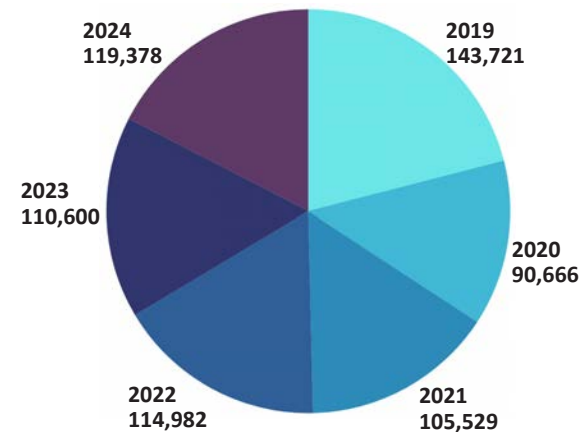
Jefferson County eFiling Submissions



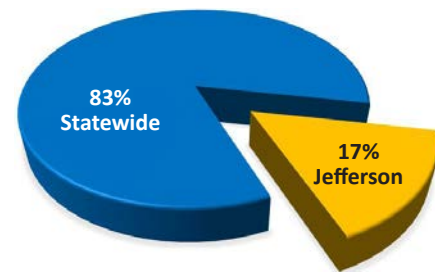
Jefferson County eFiling Dollars Processed



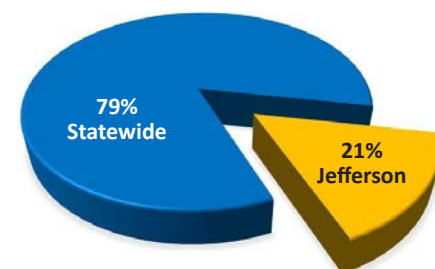
New Case Filings



eFiling Submittals



eFiling Fees



Revenue

2019: \$33.2 M
2020: \$25.9 M
2021: \$32.7 M
2022: \$26.8 M
2023: \$23.6 M
2024: \$27.4 M

2024

Partnerships & Collaboration

Mr. Nicholson has long been a champion of collaboration and cooperation with public and private entities to move our community and Commonwealth forward.

On Oct. 10, 2024, he was pleased to join with other justice partners in support of a new Violent Crime Reduction Partnership, which strives to reduce gun violence in our community. The Kentucky Attorney General's Office spearheaded the project.

A member of the OCCC Deputy Clerk TEAM who lost a son to gun violence and whose daughter survived a shooting also spoke at the press conference to announce the initiative.



A longtime advocate of collaboration and cooperation with public and private entities, Mr. Nicholson spoke at the launch of a new Violent Crime Reduction Partnership.



Community Engagement



The generosity of our Deputy Clerks stands as a testament to their commitment to improving the lives of others and reinforcing the value of service beyond the workplace. Throughout the years, our TEAM has supported and contributed to a number of local charities and nonprofits. Additionally, our office is proud of its longstanding partnership with Central High School, which offers a law and government magnet program. A group of selected seniors annually participate in our program, shadowing our Deputy Clerks who interact daily with the public, judiciary, law enforcement, attorneys and other judicial partners. This opportunity, also open to college students, affords them valuable insight into a possible career in the legal field.



A newly renovated state-of-the-art District Criminal Division was unveiled Oct. 24, 2024. This renovation represents a significant investment in the largest of the OCCC's 18 divisions, which processes over 50,000 cases annually. The upgraded office now boasts modern amenities, including micro-PCs with dual monitors, cubicles and ergonomic swivel chairs, enhancing efficiency and productivity.

Positioned for the Future

The Office of the Circuit Court Clerk plays a vital role as the custodian of the records of Circuit, Family and District courts in the administration of justice.

To deliver top-quality service to the citizens of Jefferson County, we utilize data-driven decision-making to optimize resources, staffing and technology. By continuously monitoring key metrics and evaluating throughput, we align our strategies to plan for the future.

A key focus of our office is the ongoing implementation of electronic court records (eCourts), the expansion of eFiling and, during the next several years, the implementation of a brand-new case management system statewide.

During the 2019-2024 term, our office achieved measurable efficiencies by emphasizing workflow analysis and process improvements.

As Mr. Nicholson enters his fourth term, making him the longest-serving Circuit Court Clerk in Jefferson County's modern era, our office will continue to adapt to an ever-evolving court system while serving the needs of our citizens and stakeholders.