



# YAVAPAI COUNTY COURTS 2024 ANNUAL STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

This document outlines the Yavapai County Courts progress, achievements, challenges and the strategic initiatives planned for the upcoming year. Our commitment to excellence and continuous improvement remains steadfast as we navigate the complexities of the legal landscape.

**Executive Summary:** This past year has been marked by significant achievements and some challenges for Yavapai County Courts. We have successfully advanced several of our initiatives outlined in our 2022-2026 Strategic Plan and 2023 Operational Plan, demonstrating our dedication to delivering accessible, efficient and equitable justice to our community.

## **Key Achievements:**

1. **Website Improvements:** Yavapai County Courts IT worked with a vendor to migrate the website with a new design and a more user-friendly platform. The new website went live on January 9, 2024. Virtual and online access to the courts was expanded with a link available to each Division having virtual hearings on the website. The IT team has been trained to locally manage the website and will have the ability to modify the site to meet our individual needs.
2. **Social Media Presence & Interaction:** We expanded our social media presence by sharing upcoming legal talks, Friday Fun Factoids, Court of the Month articles, highlighting different court activities and providing information on how to contact and access courts through multiple social media platforms. We had previously shared information on Facebook and have now expanded to Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. The Limited Justice Courts now also has a Facebook page to share information related to court services and activities in their jurisdictions.
3. **Consistent Forms & Practices:** Numerous resources and forms were created in plain language to make them more understandable and gender neutral. The forms were approved and are ready at the Law Library and ready to post on the website:

### **Limited Jurisdiction Courts:**

Waiver of Counsel with court drop down list

Resource list for pro per assistance

Information for court ordered fingerprint process

Resource document for self-represented defendants

Veterans Standdown forms with court drop downs

Payment request form

Order jail release form

**Superior Courts:**

Petition for Temporary Assignment of Guardianship/Conservator

Petition for Appointment of Guardianship of Adult

Request for Evaluation of Guardianship

Service Packet

Request for Civil Mediation in Domestic cases

Response to Request for Civil Mediation in Domestic case

Response to Petition for Legal Decision Making and Parenting Time

Mediation

Online Alternative Dispute Resolution is now available.

4. **Educational Presentations:** Yavapai Courts greatest success over the past year was the opening of the Criminal Justice Center. The Presiding Judge spoke at the ribbon cutting and court staff provided community members tours of the facility and answered questions related to court operations and processes. Select Judges have presented on court and legal topics to the students at Prescott High School and Bradshaw Mountain High School as part of the One Judge One School program. Engagement with our community has continued, with regularly scheduled tours of the courthouse being offered over the year for organizations and schools. We provided publications with local media related to court business and a presentation at the Citizens Academy was conducted. These efforts aim to foster public trust and understanding of the courts' purpose, role and mission as an independent branch of government.
5. **Staff Involvement in the Community:** We created a system for communicating community events and sharing experiences for court staff. Events participated in over the past year included Bowling for Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Veterans Standdown and the Annual Whiskey Off Road Mountain Bike Event.
6. **Internship Program:** Yavapai Courts is invested in developing the next generation of leaders. Informational flyers were created to distribute to the local colleges to recruit interns. Judges secured contacts with NAU, ASU, and U of A to recruit judicial interns. A formalized intern process was developed and implemented. Over the past year Yavapai Courts recruited and educated five (5) interns.  
In addition, we partnered with Yavapai College to develop a Legal Office Clerk Certificate that will be added to the Mountain Institute CTED program which allows high school students to graduate with a college certificate. The student can enter the work force with this certificate and/or use it as the foundation for other legal programs.
7. **Succession Planning:** Our current employees are a priority and our efforts to retain and provide advancement for staff is important. A survey to evaluate job satisfaction, inclusivity and personal development was created over this past year. The survey will also provide suggestions on where the courts can

make improvements related to retention and job satisfaction. For new employees, a “Welcome Packet” was created, containing educational opportunities internally and in the community, training opportunities, career development, information regarding additional benefits of working for the county (such as discounts at local restaurants and businesses) and information about job shadowing for those interested in learning about other areas of the court. The Learning Center was built to provide new and existing staff an ergonomic and quiet setting for training opportunities.

**8. Technology Needs Assessment:** We were successful in securing funding for an additional tech support position, which was added to assist with court IT-related support and training. A tracking log was developed with end-of-life dates on equipment and technology. This list will be provided to the County Board of Supervisors with our annual budget requests assisting in funding preparation for current and future technology needs. Our court was able to secure funding over the past year to purchase equipment needed for security of the courts, i.e., training equipment, local BOLO system and ballistic shields.

**9. Emergency Preparedness – Training & Drills:** In keeping up to date and ensuring court personnel and community members safe, our security team implemented the “Enhanced Readiness Program” over this past year. The curriculum for all security staff includes:

All security staff conduct quarterly training. This training consists of the following:

- Annual Firearm Qualification as required by AOC.
- Annual Chemical Irritant (Pepper Spray) Certification
- Annual Conducted Energy Weapon (Taser) Certification
- Scenario Based Threat Neutralization Training such as incidents occurring in courtrooms and incidents that endanger the maintenance of order
- Defensive Tactics and Handcuffing Techniques
- Use of Force Policy which is covered every quarter during training

We will soon be incorporating the following training:

- Ballistic Shield Training
- Simunition Firearm Scenario Based Shoot/No Shoot Training
- Mass Casualty Attack: We have adopted and are trained in the ALERT system for active attacks that occur anywhere on judicial branch grounds.

Equipment:

In addition to our standard officer equipment the Emergency Readiness Program calls for the following: Ballistic shields and helmets. rifle plates, rifles and/or shotguns. Security has been equipped with and are training with Narcan and have had Stop the Bleed training which includes use of tourniquets, wound packing and bandages. We are also going to be integrating CPR and AED training.

Simulated Incident Training Drills conducted by Administration and Security as follows:

- Fire Drills as directed randomly
- “Active Shooter” Drills as directed randomly
- Panic Alarm Drills conducted randomly by Security personnel

**Challenges:** Despite our successes, we acknowledge the challenges we faced, such as Judicial vacancies, transitioning of Therapeutic Courts and movement of Division locations and assignments. These experiences have provided valuable insights as we are committed to providing access to justice, upholding the law, and resolving legal matters in a fair and timely manner. We will apply the lessons learned to strengthen the public’s trust and confidence in our ability to provide impartial, efficient and responsive court system.

**Strategic Initiatives for 2024:** In the next year, the Yavapai County Courts will focus on the following strategic initiatives:

1. **Website Improvements:** Continue to build and develop the court’s own fully functional website; making the website interactive and mobile friendly.
2. **Programs and Services:** Enhance and expand programs and services to meet the changing and evolving needs (e.g., pretrial service, probation, treatment courts, etc.)
3. **Consistent Forms and Practices:** Continue to develop forms and resources for consistency, understandability and ease of use.
4. **Educational Presentations:** Expand community involvement and engage with more stakeholders and community organizations to advocate and build support for the courts.
5. **Staff Retention:** Create an implementation plan related to employee well-being as a priority.
6. **Emergency Preparedness – Training and Drills:** Revision of the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) to make it more practical and user friendly. Implementation of coordinated training scenarios with court security and judges/courtroom staff. Develop best practices for courtroom security officers/bailiffs with standardized training.
7. **Criminal Justice Coordinating Council:** Design, develop and implement a revamped Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms have been established to track the progress of each initiative. Key performance indicators will be used to assess the impact and effectiveness of our strategic plan.

We extend our gratitude to all stakeholders, including judges, attorneys, staff and the community for their continued support and collaboration. Together we will uphold the principles of justice and ensure Yavapai Courts remains committed to their core values: *Equitable, Respectful, Innovative and Customer Focused.*