

Maryland Judiciary FY 2015 Statewide Caseflow Assessment

Methodology

District Court



Administrative Office of the Courts

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FY 2015 Maryland Judiciary Statewide Caseflow Assessment Methodology and Data/Application Issues

District Court

This section of the report consists of two main parts. The first part describes data verification efforts conducted prior to the analysis of the FY 2015 District Court caseflow assessment data. The second part contains an analysis of the reasons why jurisdictions removed cases from the assessment application and discusses the extent to which jurisdictions performed the 10% data quality check review.

I. Methodology

Identification of Valid Data

The current analysis is based on a sample of 58,398 original cases terminated in District Court during FY 2015 (7/1/2014-6/30/2015). The data was downloaded from the assessment application in January, 2016.

The number of cases (i.e., original terminations) analyzed for the FY 2015 statewide report matches the assessment application's official counts of the valid data available from each case type. Valid data is defined by the official statewide time standards as those cases that contain a case start date, had the original termination during FY 2015, and have a positive case processing time, where the case start date occurs prior to the case stop date.

Of the 58,398 case terminations initially sampled from the JIS District Court databases, 321 terminations (<1%) were without case start dates and 20 terminations (<1%) had negative case processing times. In addition, there were 506 cases (<1%) in FY 2015 that were removed from the caseflow assessment application because they contained invalid data elements (e.g., case not really opened). The exclusion of consent and confessed judgments in FY 2014 greatly decreased the number of cases in the assessment with missing case start dates and negative case processing time. In past years, terminated cases without case start dates and negative case processing time accounted for 1-2% of the cases. For the main analysis, 57,549 cases were used. Anne Arundel County was excluded from this analysis for the FY 2015 cycle.

Similar to FY 2014, criminal cases in this sample are more prone than other District Court case types to have terminations with invalid key data elements. Over 86% of cases terminated with missing start dates were criminal cases. In previous years, civil cases accounted for over 50% of cases terminated with missing start dates. Traffic Payable cases accounted for 50% of the 20 terminations with negative case processing times in FY 2015.

Performance Measures

The FY 2015 caseflow assessment report is consistent with the FY 2014 report in regard to performance measures. In particular, when performance measures are displayed in the aggregate (e.g., statewide within-standard percentages, or average case times (ACT) for small, medium, and large jurisdictions), the values are weighted to account for differences in jurisdiction size, or the total number of cases originally terminated by a court. However, when historical data is used to show trends, the unweighted approach is used to calculate the statewide within-standard percentages and average case processing times due to data limitations before FY 2007.

In addition to reporting the average case processing times, this report also provides the median case processing times by case type. Unlike the average case time, the median case processing time is the middle value in the distribution of all case processing times in the sample for each case type. For example, if all of the Criminal case processing times in the sample were arranged in magnitude from lowest to greatest, the median Criminal case processing time would be the value in the middle of this distribution. Unlike the arithmetic mean (i.e., the ACT), the median is not affected by extreme scores, such as a particularly long case time.

The Maryland Judiciary is committed not only to documenting all jurisdiction-specific challenges and recommendations related to the completion of the assessment, but also to responding to each item in a timely and comprehensive manner.

II. Data Quality

Analysis of Removed Cases

A brief analysis of the cases that jurisdictions removed from the FY 2015 caseflow assessment application was performed for the statewide report. Currently, the assessment application has six pre-identified and valid reasons for removing a case from the application: 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. Jurisdictions may also remove cases in the application for 'Other' reasons. Beginning with the FY 2009 assessment, jurisdictions are now required to identify the 'Other' reasons for removing a case. The Maryland Judiciary is committed to making modifications to the application (where appropriate) to include additional valid removal reasons to the pre-identified list currently available.

The following analysis examines the types of cases removed by the District Court jurisdictions and their associated removal reasons (jurisdiction-specific information is available upon request). The assessment application has a filter to identify the removed cases. The following analysis is based on the caseflow data contained in the assessment application, which represents a sampling of each jurisdiction's total original terminations for FY 2015.

Table 1 displays the number and percentage of cases that jurisdictions removed manually from the assessment application by case type. Removed cases have been 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 had valid 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 removed automatically by the assessment application in any calculations of case processing performance.

A total of 506 cases were removed by jurisdictions from the assessment application across the six District Court case types analyzed for the FY 2015 assessment. Civil cases represented 87% (440 cases) of removed cases in FY 2015. Of the 506 District Court cases removed from the assessment application, 61% (307 cases) were valid cases but were removed from the application for other reasons (See Table 2). The remaining 199 cases (39%) were invalid cases with either missing case start dates or negative case processing times.

Table 1. Number and Percentage of Removed Cases by Case Type

Case Type	Removed Cases				Total
	Valid		Invalid		
	N	%	N	%	
Criminal	9	25%	27	75%	36
Traffic 21-902	11	100%	0	0%	11
Traffic Must Appear	2	100%	0	0%	2
Traffic Payable	5	68%	12	32%	17
Civil Large	99	57%	75	43%	174
Civil Small	181	68%	85	32%	266
Total	307	61%	199	39%	506

Valid Removals

Table 2 displays the removal reason for the 307 valid cases. Removal reasons were found for only four of the removal reasons categories in FY 2015.

Among removed cases, common reasons for removal were that the case was reopened or due to an ‘Other’ reason. Civil Small had the highest number of reopened cases (145). Civil Large cases had the highest number of ‘Other’ removal option among valid removed cases (35). Of those cases removed for other reasons in that case type, a majority contained the ‘other’ reason of MD Rule 3-506 or 3-507.

Invalid Removals

As noted above, in addition to the cases that were removed by jurisdictions for valid reasons, there is a group of invalid cases that were removed by the assessment application. When the number of these cases is substantially large, however, removing these cases from the sample may

affect case processing times. Although the reasons for removal among invalid removed cases are available in the assessment application, the data does not lend itself easily to analysis of the

Table 2. Number and Percentage of Removal Reasons by Case Type

Removal Reasons	Case Type											
	21-902		Civil Large		Civil Small		Traffic Must Appear		Traffic Payable		Criminal	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Belongs to Another Court	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	20%	0	0%
Change Case Type	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Waiver for Fee Denied	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Case Not Opened	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Reopen	3	27%	76	77%	145	80%	1	50%	1	20%	1	11%
Transfer for Supervision Only	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Other	8	73%	23	23%	35	19%	1	50%	3	80%	8	89%
Total	11	100%	99	100%	181	100%	2	100%	5	100%	9	100%

effects of their removal.

Further analysis of these removal reasons was conducted. In addition to reopened and cases belonging to another jurisdiction present in both valid and invalid removed cases, it was found that many of the invalid cases removed also had ‘other’ reasons that included cases transferred-in to a jurisdiction, those cases removed due to expungements, those cases removed due to MD Rule 3-506 or 3-507, or no service with a party indicating their intention to defend. By virtue of having either a missing case start date or negative case processing time, these cases would be automatically excluded from the main analysis even if not manually removed by the jurisdictions.

Number of Cases Reviewed

Following the initiative implemented beginning with the FY 2008 caseload assessment, guidelines were shared for the 10% data review and provided in training manuals during the FY 2015 training session. The courts were also requested to flag the cases that received the 10% review by checking the ‘record reviewed’ data field in the assessment application. The present

analysis examines the extent to which the assessment data was subjected to the '10% review' by jurisdictions.

Table 3 presents the percentage and number of 'reviewed' cases by District Court location. Calculations of the percentage reviewed for each county and case type is based upon the number of cases extracted, or made available from the assessment application. This includes cases with missing start dates, negative clock times, and removed cases.

Compliance with Data Reviews

The compliance rate for the 10% review in FY 2015 was met statewide. Comparisons across types of courts (i.e., Circuit vs. District Courts) and jurisdictions within the same type of court should be approached with caution as data is not collected on the quality of the review being performed.

Overall, the statewide percentage of cases reviewed ranged from 11% for Traffic Payable to 17% for Civil Large, 21-902, Traffic Must Appear, and Criminal cases. There were 28 occurrences in which jurisdictions reviewed exactly the 10% minimum number of cases for a particular case type. Of these, the highest number of "minimum reviews" occurred among Traffic Payable cases (9) followed by Criminal, 21-902, and Traffic Must Appear (5). The lowest number of "minimum reviews" was recorded for Civil Small cases (4).

Given that the percentage of cases reviewed varies within each jurisdiction, management of the caseflow assessment, at least with respect to courts' data quality/review efforts, may not be standardized across departments (within a jurisdiction).

There are several limitations in the evaluation of compliance with data quality review. The present analysis is based on the examination of 'reviewed' data field in the assessment data. It is possible that some jurisdictions performed the 10% review and failed to check the 'reviewed' box. In addition, other jurisdictions may have checked the box without fully completing the review.

Table 3. Percentage and Number of Cases Reviewed by Jurisdiction and Case Type, District Court FY 2015

Jurisdiction	Criminal		21-902		Traffic Must Appear		Traffic Payable		Civil Large		Civil Small	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Allegany	83	17%	47	22%	146	29%	65	13%	15	14%	55	12%
Anne Arundel	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Baltimore City	103	21%	52	10%	50	10%	50	10%	135	29%	64	13%
Baltimore County	75	15%	55	11%	53	11%	51	10%	92	19%	96	19%
Calvert	72	14%	57	11%	68	14%	53	11%	55	34%	104	21%
Caroline	53	11%	21	14%	65	13%	53	11%	12	14%	52	13%
Carroll	174	35%	95	21%	126	25%	72	14%	22	11%	51	10%
Cecil	61	12%	50	17%	50	10%	54	11%	22	14%	56	11%
Charles	51	10%	50	10%	51	10%	52	10%	42	11%	53	11%
Dorchester	55	11%	17	12%	53	11%	51	10%	9	11%	59	12%
Frederick	87	17%	60	12%	63	13%	55	11%	37	11%	55	11%
Garrett	51	10%	22	17%	38	11%	56	11%	6	20%	27	16%
Harford	75	15%	55	11%	58	12%	62	12%	115	24%	114	23%
Howard	75	15%	75	15%	60	12%	60	12%	53	11%	53	10%
Kent	69	14%	26	19%	90	18%	64	13%	7	12%	17	12%
Montgomery	52	10%	50	10%	73	15%	51	10%	63	13%	66	13%
Prince George's	97	19%	51	10%	82	16%	50	10%	58	13%	73	15%
Queen Anne's	67	13%	18	12%	53	11%	51	10%	48	54%	53	19%
Somerset	88	18%	41	28%	79	16%	65	13%	7	23%	71	14%
St. Mary's	53	11%	43	12%	50	10%	56	11%	27	17%	69	14%
Talbot	51	10%	29	14%	53	11%	56	11%	14	17%	44	11%
Washington	90	18%	79	20%	157	31%	62	12%	28	11%	50	10%
Wicomico	81	16%	75	15%	50	10%	50	10%	22	11%	56	11%
Worcester	51	10%	50	10%	173	27%	51	10%	15	13%	51	10%
Total	1,714	15%	1,118	13%	1,741	15%	1,290	11%	904	17%	1,389	13%