



THE NAVAJO NATION

# JUDICIAL BRANCH

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FY 2024 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Report

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# A Message from Chief Justice

Yá'át'ééh Shidine'é,

As we embark on new ideas, incremental changes, and fresh perspectives, I am honored to share the highlights of the Navajo Judicial Branch for the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2024.

During this quarter, our District and Family courts have been very active, with a total of 3,242 cases filed, averaging 56 cases per business day. In addition, we have successfully closed 4,494 cases, averaging 80 cases closed per business day. This impressive performance has resulted in an overall clearance rate of 139%, significantly surpassing our goal of a 100% clearance rate. This achievement underscores the dedication and hard work of our judges and court staff.

Peacemaking and Probation and Parole Services, in addition to providing direct services, have been actively redeveloping plans of operations, standard operating procedures and agreements that will improve services to all our communities.

I am pleased to report that the expenditure plan for *Hashkééjí Nahat'á Béeso Bá Hooghan* is completed and ready for legislative action. This plan, co-sponsored by Chairwoman Eugenia Charles-Newton and Chairwoman Shaadiin Parrish, will provide essential funding for the continued operation and improvement of our judicial services. In this plan is funding for the construction of a new Navajo Peacemaking Building. This new facility will greatly enhance our ability to provide vital peacemaking services to our community. The plan also funds the Aneth Judicial Complex in Aneth, Utah as well as other priority projects that have been well planned for many years.

At the beginning of the new fiscal year, the Window Rock Judicial District is planning to open its new facility in Fort Defiance. While we work towards a permanent building with other justice partners, this facility will house the Window Rock Probation and Parole Services program and the Window Rock Judicial District, which has been without a facility for more than eight (8) years. This facility will provide a more efficient and comfortable environment for both the public and our staff.

Throughout this past quarter, we have been developing the next steps to a Judicial Branch E-file system. Over the next year, the Judicial Branch will be rolling out a comprehensive study to identify the information technology needs, court processes and procedures updates and customer requests to effectively bring an E-file system that is effective for the Navajo Nation. All of this will need to address the ever-increasing pool of pro se litigants who seek justice through our courts.

These developments reflect our commitment to justice, efficiency, and community support. We are moving in a new direction, embracing new ideas and perspectives to overcome longstanding challenges. While we innovate and adapt, we will continue to strive for excellence in all aspects of our judicial system, ensuring that we serve the Navajo Nation with integrity and dedication.

Ahéhee'

**JoAnn B. Jayne**

*Chief Justice of the Navajo Nation*

## Judicial Highlights

- 3,242 cases were filed in Navajo Judicial District Courts (trial courts) during FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, averaging 56 cases filed per business day.
- 4,494 cases were closed in Navajo Judicial District Courts (trial courts) during FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, averaging 80 cases closed per business day.
- Overall clearance rate for the Navajo Judicial District Courts (trial courts) is 139%.

**The goal clearance rate is 100%. Clearance Rate is the number of outgoing cases as a percentage of the number of incoming cases. This rate identifies how effective a court is handling incoming caseload and clearing backlogged cases.**

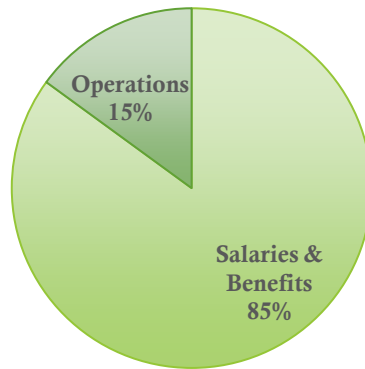
- Construction funding for a new Navajo Peacemaking Building is ready for legislative with two co-sponsors Chairwoman Charles-Newton and Chairwoman Parrish.
- Window Rock Judicial District is planning to open its new facility in Fort Defiance at the beginning of the new fiscal year.
- Kayenta Judicial District will begin construction on their new Judicial Complex. The groundbreaking ceremony will occur in the next quarter.

# Judicial Highlights

- Administrative Director, Bennie Francisco, has completed his probationary period and is now the permanent Administrative Director of the Courts.
- The financial unit of the Administrative Office of the Courts has undergone reorganization and reclassification. Other units within AOC will also be reorganized soon to effectively address the needs of the public.
- Judge Malcomb Begay and Judge Victor Clyde with court staff are revising legal notice for publication to reduce financial burden for *Pro Se* litigants.
- Shiprock Judicial District continues to be a priority on the Judicial/Public Safety Facilities Fund List. The need for a permanent judicial facility for Shiprock remains a priority.
- Hashkééjí Nahat'á Béeso Bá Hooghan expenditure plan is completed and ready for legislation with two co-sponsors, Chairwoman Charles-Newton and Chairwoman Parrish.

# Budget and Operations

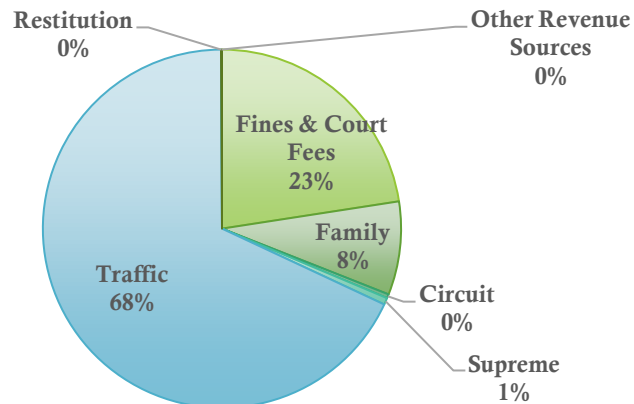
## FY2024 GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATIONS NAVAJO JUDICIAL BRANCH



The FY 2024 General Fund Appropriation for the Navajo Judicial Branch consists of 85% in Salaries and Benefits and 15% in Operations.

\$482,723.23 collected in Fines & Fees for FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter. All funds are deposited into the Navajo Nation General Fund.

## MONIES COLLECTED BY COURTS FY2024 3RD QUARTER



# Navajo Justice Systems

## *Original Justice System*

Peacemaking is a traditional justice system within the Judicial Branch of the Navajo Nation that can be used instead of or alongside the Navajo Nation court system. Its goal is to provide a non-adversarial forum for resolving disputes, promoting healing, and reestablishing harmony.

### **Hózhóji Naat'aah (Diné Traditional Peacemaking)**

Traditional Diné Peacemaking starts from a place of chaos, hóochxq'/anáhóót'i', within an individual or between people. The Peacemaker guides individuals or groups to confront this chaos and move toward harmonious existence.

### **Áłchíní BáNdazhnit'á (Diné Family Group Conferencing)**

This extension of peacemaking addresses the requirements of the Áłchíní Bi Beehaz' áannii Act of 2011. It seeks culturally appropriate methods for family preservation and reunification, facilitating harmony consistent with Navajo Nation statutes and Diné principles.

### **Nábináhaazláago Áłch'j yáti' (Life Value Engagements)**

Life value engagements are traditional services where individuals or groups meet with a Peacemaker to learn how to address problems by opening to hózhó. These engagements focus on personal accountability and the willingness to confront and overcome chaos for the benefit of oneself, family, and community.

## Navajo Justice Systems

### *Roles of the Supreme Court of the Navajo Nation*

Appellate jurisdiction over trial court decisions.

Original jurisdiction over petitions for extraordinary writs (mandamus, prohibition and habeas corpus and other writs).

Final adjudication of decisions by administrative bodies such as the Tax Commission, Office of Hearings and Appeals and the Labor Commission.

Discretionary review of certified questions by trial courts and administrative agencies, and state/federal courts.

Authority over the practice of law and bar membership on the Navajo Nation.

Appellate jurisdiction over certain decisions of the Navajo Bar Association.

Authority to approve all new and revised rules, pleadings, and forms of the Navajo Nation courts.

### *Roles of the District Courts*

Original jurisdiction over crimes, civil causes and other matters under Navajo statutory law, Diné bi Beehaz'áannii, and Navajo Nation Treaties.

Courts of general jurisdiction.

Small claims division within each district court.

Special Division of the Window Rock District Court.

Exclusive jurisdiction to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate and prosecute ethics and corruption cases involving officials of the Navajo Nation government.

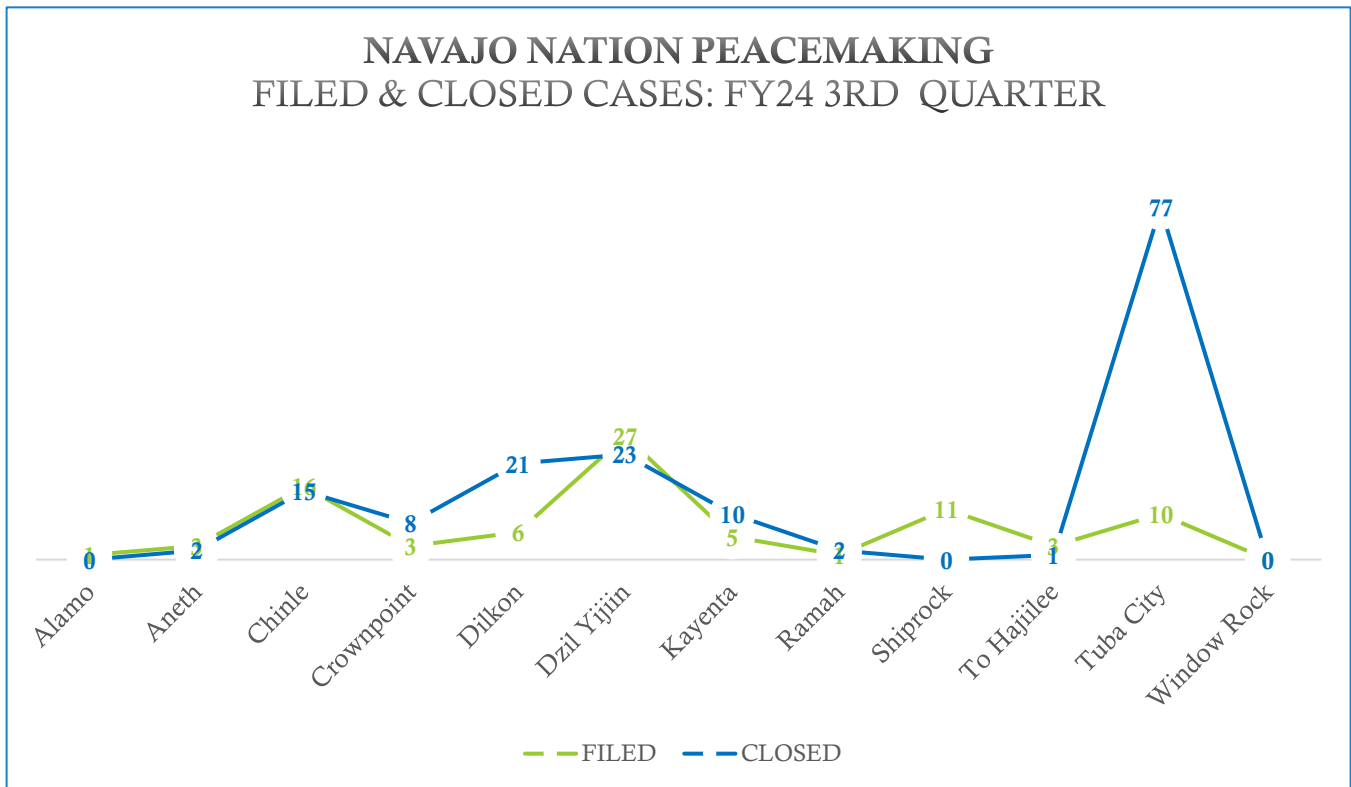
### *Roles of the Family Courts*

Original exclusive jurisdiction over:

- Cases arising under the Navajo Nation Álchíní Bi Beehaz'áannii Act
- Domestic relations
- Probate
- Adoption
- Paternity
- Custody
- Child support
- Guardianship
- Mental health commitments
- Mental and/physical competency
- Name changes
- Elders



# Navajo Nation Peacemaking



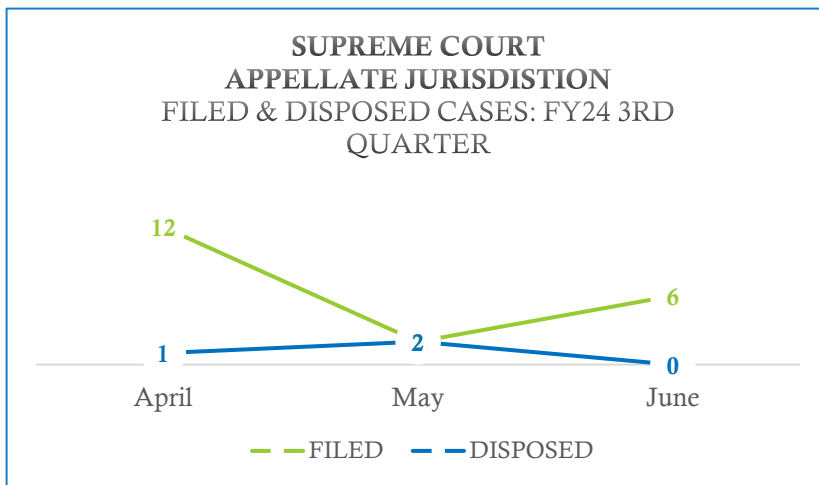
Navajo Peacemaking continues to be the original justice system of the Navajo Nation by providing a non-adversarial forum for resolving disputes, promoting healing, and reestablishing harmony.

During FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, a total of 86 cases were filed with Navajo Peacemaking and 159 cases were closed resulting in an 185% clearance rate.

Peacemaking has held four work sessions to revise their Plan of Operations, aiming to complete the amendments by the end of 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter.

Construction funding for a new Peacemaking building is ready for legislation.

# Navajo Nation Supreme Courts



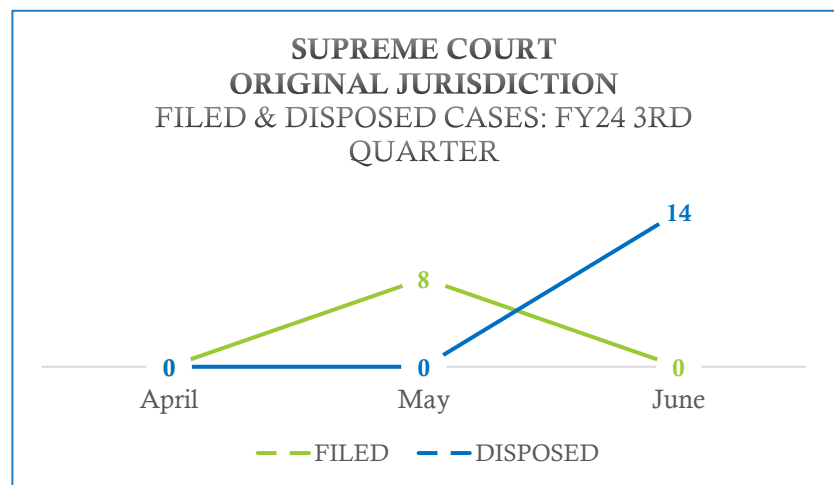
20 Appellate cases were filed with the Navajo Supreme Court during the FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter.

3 cases reached final disposition.

As the sole appellate court for the Navajo Nation, the Supreme Court reviews lower court records, transcripts, and legal briefs as well as hold oral arguments.

The Navajo Supreme Court serves as the Original Jurisdiction Court for bar members.

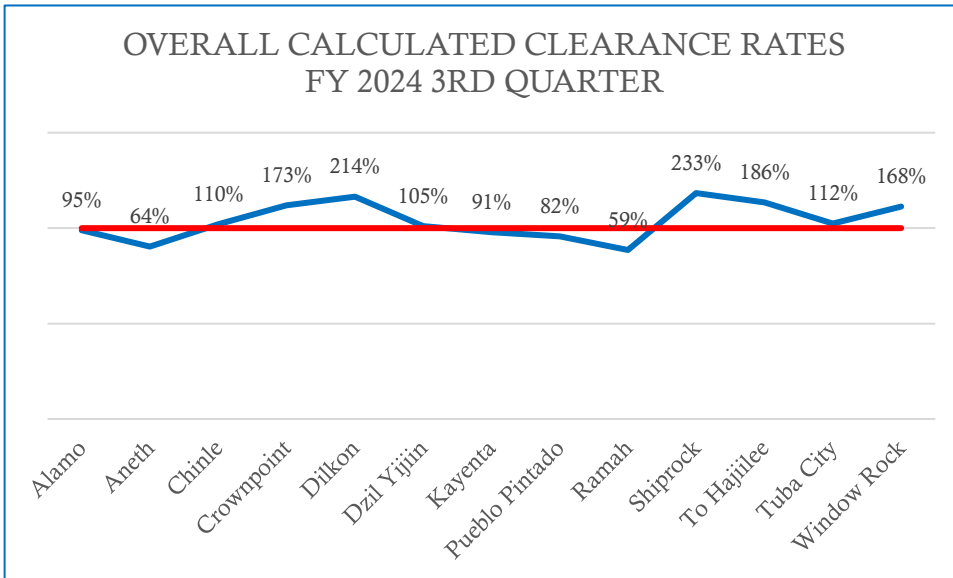
**The Court admitted and swore in 14 new Navajo Nation Bar Members.**



A total of 85 *Pro Bono* Appointments were made in FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter. The Tuba City, Kayenta and Dilkon Judicial Districts have the highest need to *Pro Bono* appointments.

# Navajo Nation Courts

## Judicial District (Trial Courts)



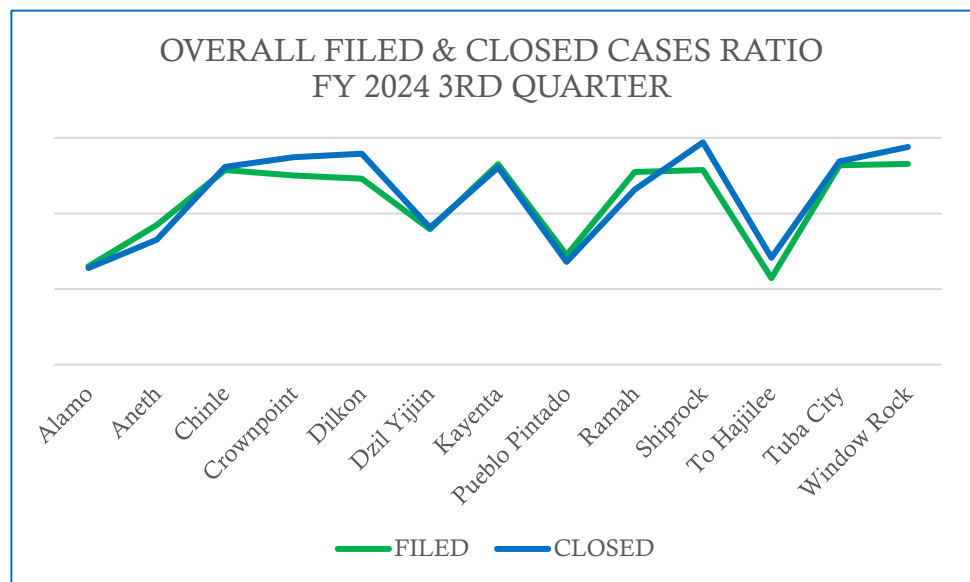
**Navajo Judicial District Courts (trial courts) are closing more cases than filed per quarter.**

Staying above 100% is crucial to address pending and backlog cases.

**Judicial District Courts Overall Clearance Rate is 139%.**

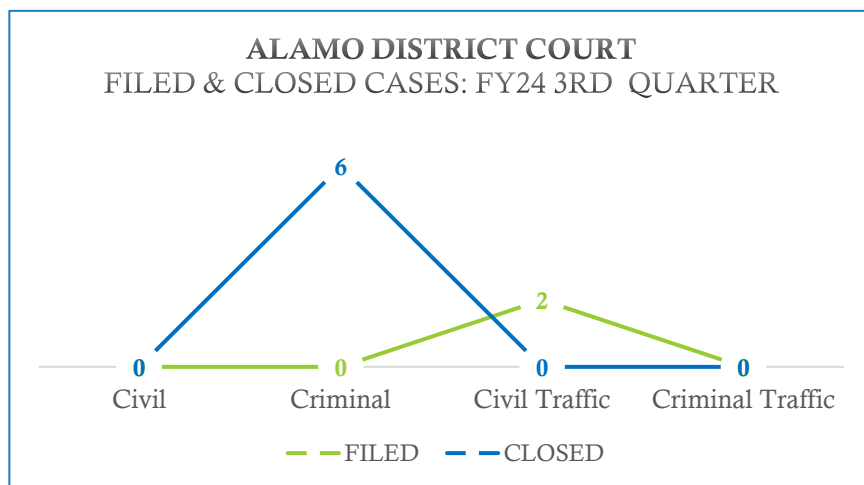
**The overall ratio of filed and closed cases for the trial courts identifies a positive trend.**

The closed protectory should at least mirror the filed to effectively managed caseloads.



# Alamo/Tó Hajiilee Judicial District

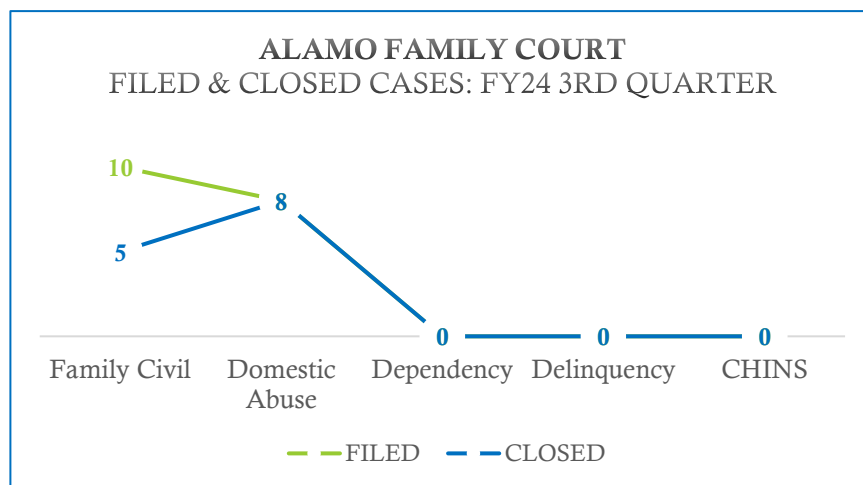
## Alamo District Court



**20 cases were filed in both the Alamo District and Family courts during the FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter.**

**19 cases were closed.**

**Clearance Rate is 95%**

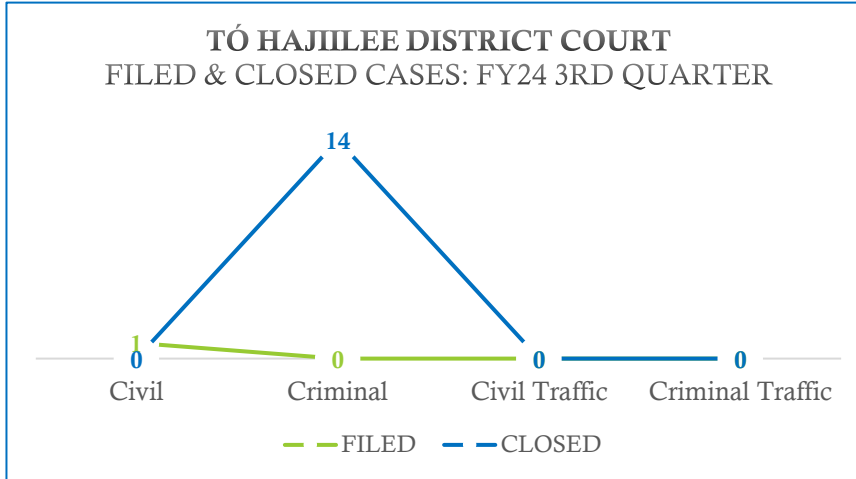


Judge Laughing began providing services to Alamo Judicial District in addition to his service to Ramah Judicial District.

Alamo Judicial District and Alamo community stakeholders began addressing high truancy rates within the community.

Alamo Judicial District welcomed its new Court Administrator and Office Technician.

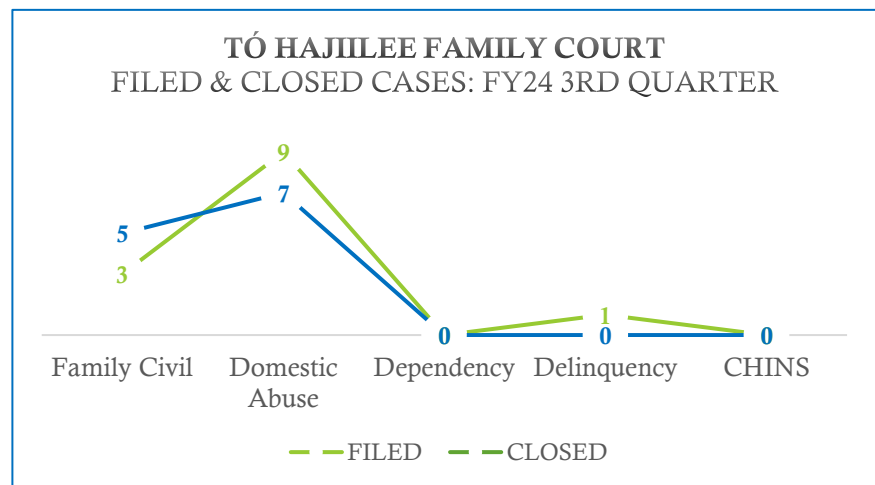
## Tó Hajiilee District Court



**14 cases were filed in both the Tó Hajiilee District and Family courts during the FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter.**

**26 cases were closed.**

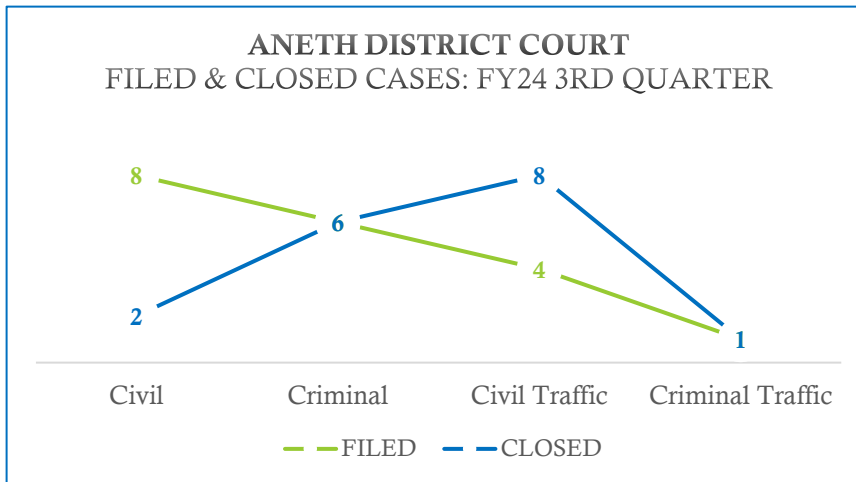
**Clearance Rate is 186%**



Judge Platero began providing services to Crownpoint Judicial District including Pueblo Pintado Circuit Court.

Crownpoint Judicial District and Tó Hajiilee Courts worked to address the reassignment of Judges through electronic means.

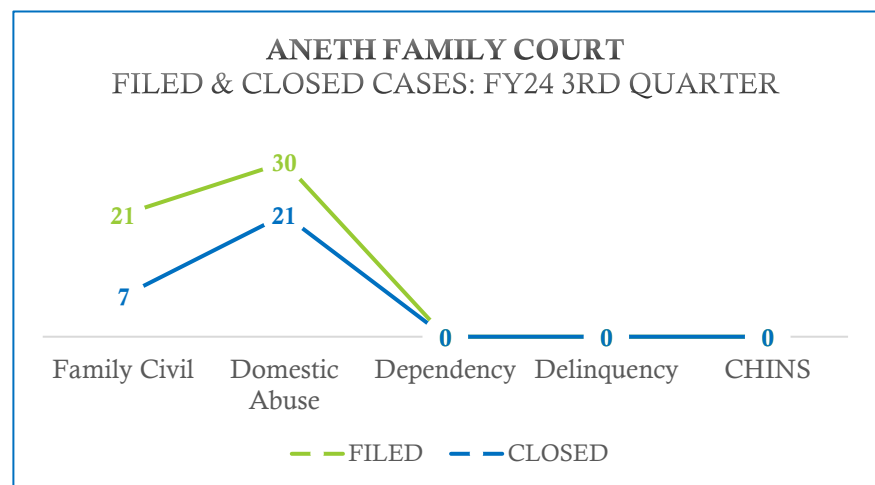
## Aneth Judicial District



**70 cases were filed in both the Aneth District and Family courts during the FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter.**

**45 cases were closed.**

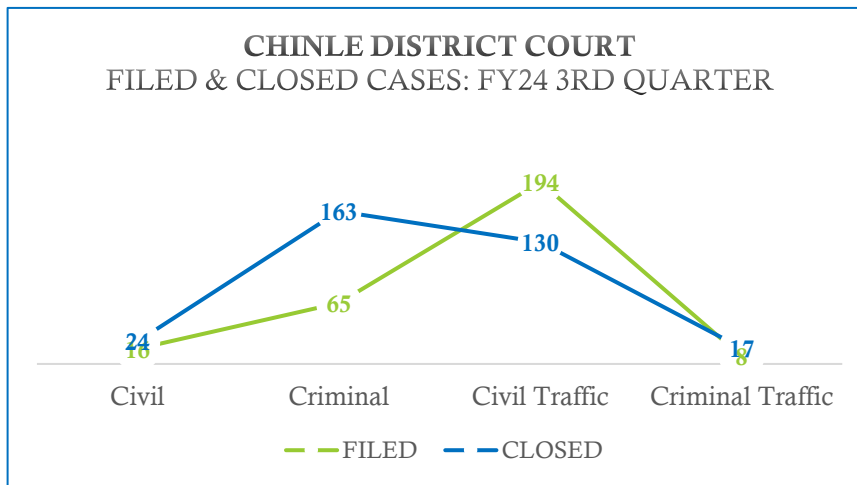
**Clearance Rate is 64%**



Aneth Judicial District continues to work with Aneth Chapter on the development of its new court facilities, which will be funded by *Hashkééjí Nahat'á Béeso Bá Hooghan*. Chairwoman Charles-Newton and Chairwoman Parrish are co-sponsoring this legislation.

The Court reviewed its bench warrant list and is waiting for a response from Shiprock Police Office and Prosecutor's Office to determine next steps for an Amnesty Day.

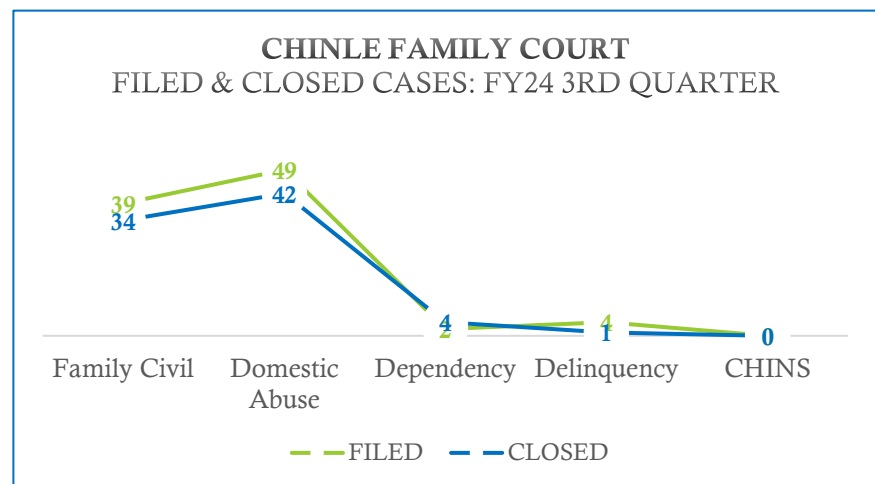
## Chinle Judicial District



**377 cases were filed in both the Chinle District and Family courts during the FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter.**

**415 cases were closed.**

**Clearance  
Rate is 110%**

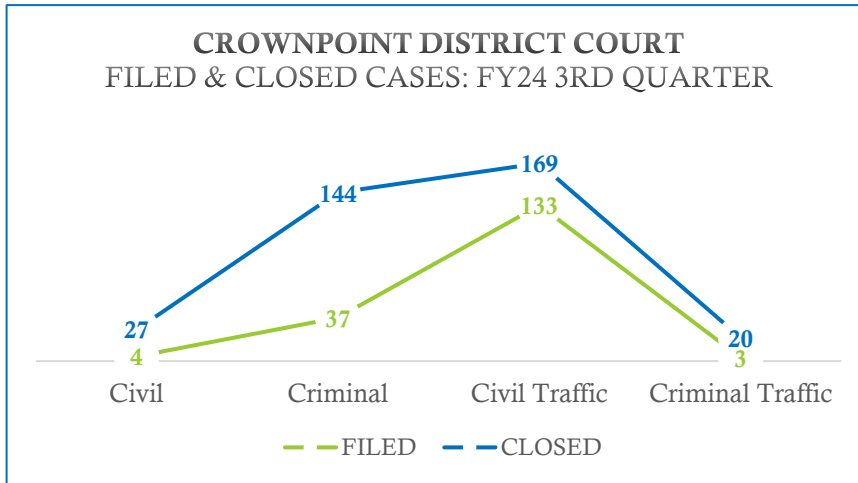


Chinle Justice Day provided information to community members, local business, students and programs. Presentation was conducted on the type of court services and how to access the justice system.

The Judge and Court Staff participated in Lynx Safety Day with Chinle Elementary School to present judicial career and pathways opportunities.

Judge Thompson continues to be assigned to two judicial district, Chinle and Dził Yijiin.

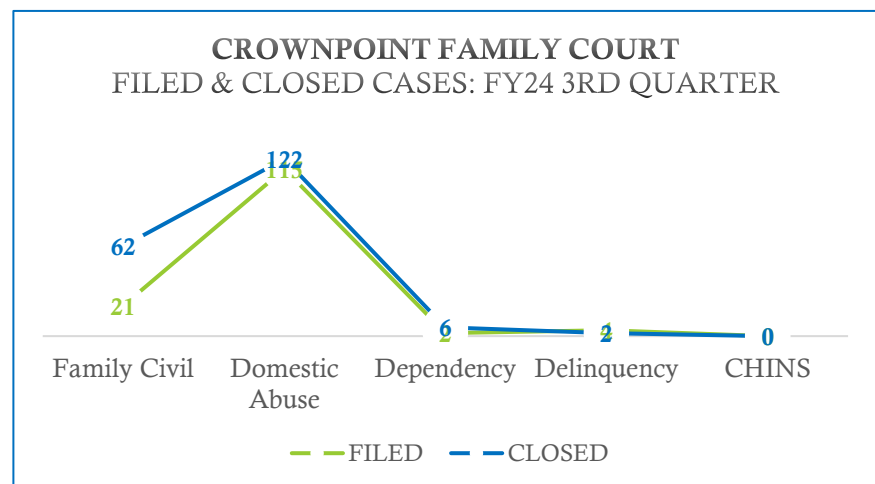
# Crownpoint Judicial District



**319 cases were filed in both the Crownpoint District and Family courts during the FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter.**

**552 cases were closed.**

**Clearance Rate is 173%**



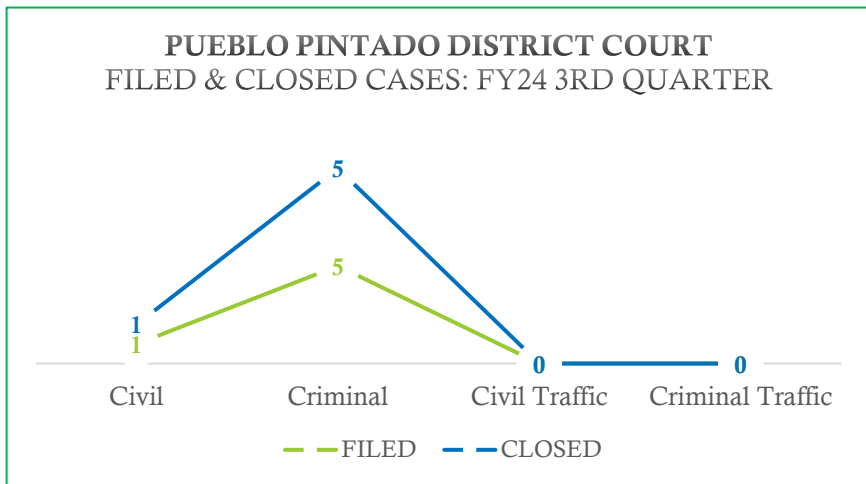
Crownpoint Judicial District hosted on Justice Day to provide public education and information on how to successfully access Navajo Justice System.

Judge Platero began providing services to Crownpoint Judicial District including Pueblo Pintado Circuit Court.



# Pueblo Pintado Circuit Court

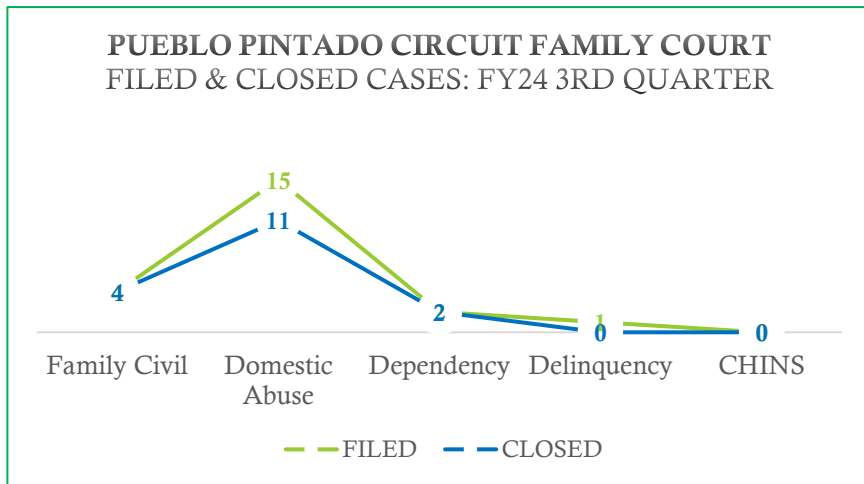
## Of the Crownpoint Judicial District



**28 cases were filed in both the Pueblo Pintado District Court and Family courts during the FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter.**

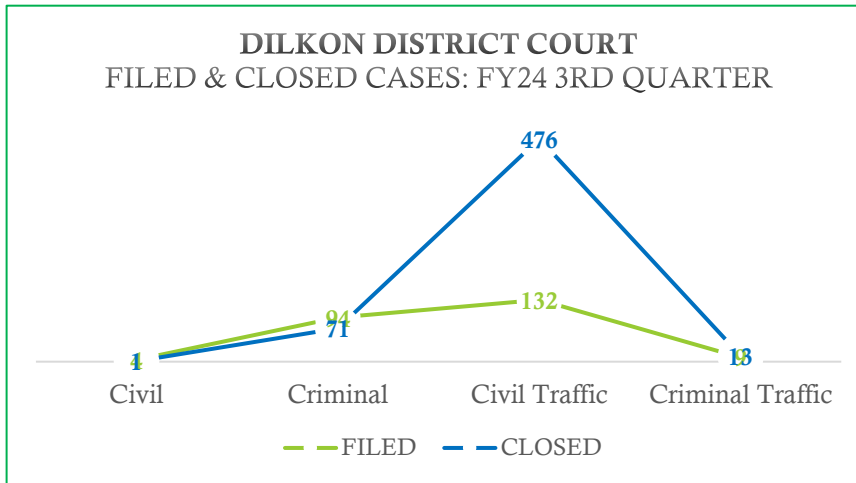
**23 cases were closed.**

**Clearance Rate is 82%**



Crownpoint Judicial District Administration continues to work towards reopening the Pueblo Pintado Circuit Court facility with 95% all requirements by NOSHA completed.

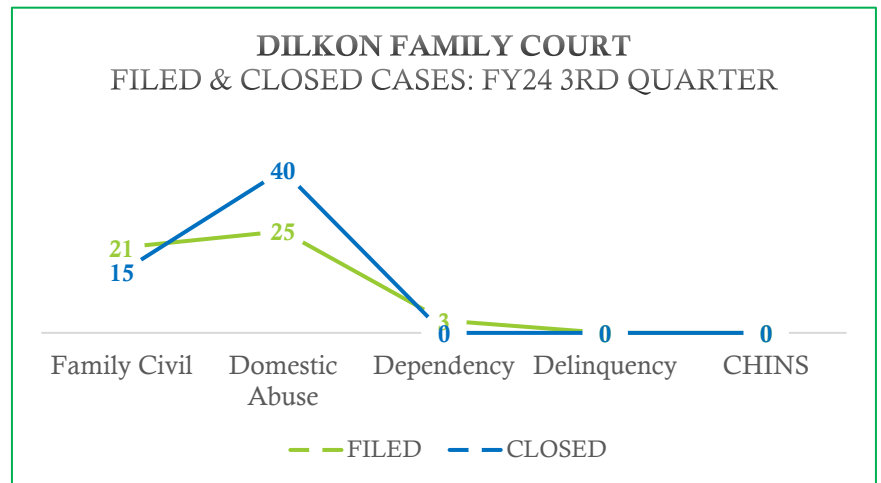
## Dilkon Judicial District



**288 cases were filed in both the Dilkon District and Family courts during the FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter.**

**616 cases were closed.**

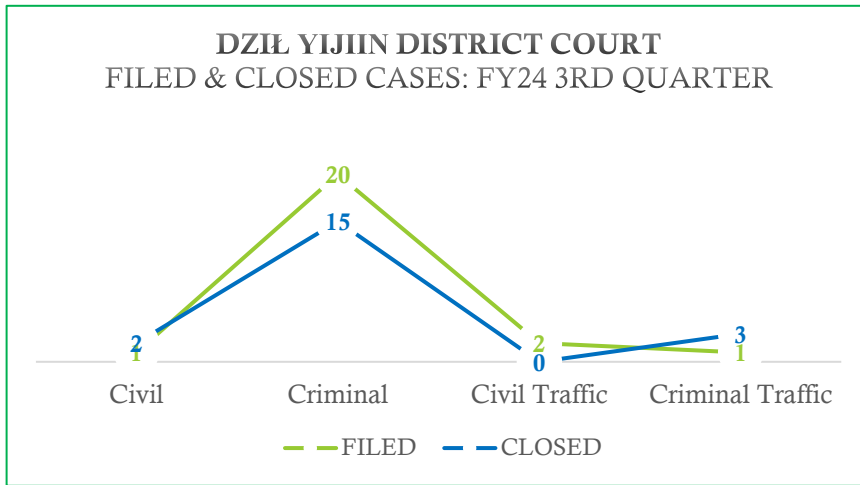
**Clearance Rate is 214%**



Judge Livingston has been reassigned to provide services to Dilkon Judicial District.

Judicial District Staff have proactively managed its caseload and improving the use of JustWare (Judicial Branch electronic case management system) to improve services to the community.

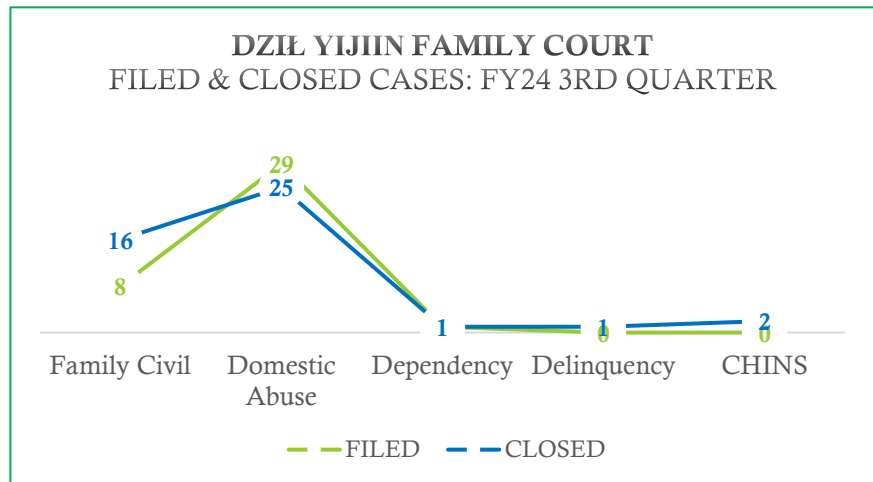
# Dził Yijiin Judicial District



**62 cases were filed in both the Dził Yijiin District and Family courts during the FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter.**

**65 cases were closed.**

**Clearance Rate is 105%**

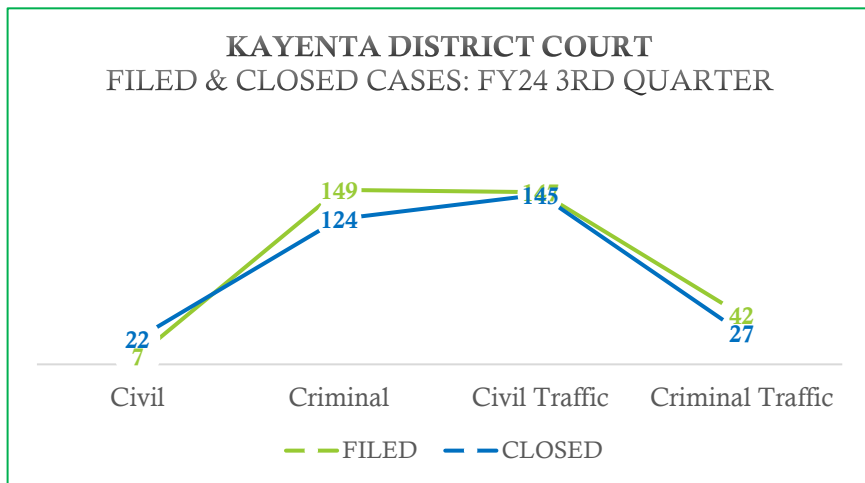


Dził Yijiin Judicial District hosted its annual Justice Day on April 3, 2024, with 258 community members in attendance.

Justice Days are to provide information to the community about court services and access to justice systems.

Judge Thompson continues to provide services to two judicial districts, Dził Yijiin and Chinle.

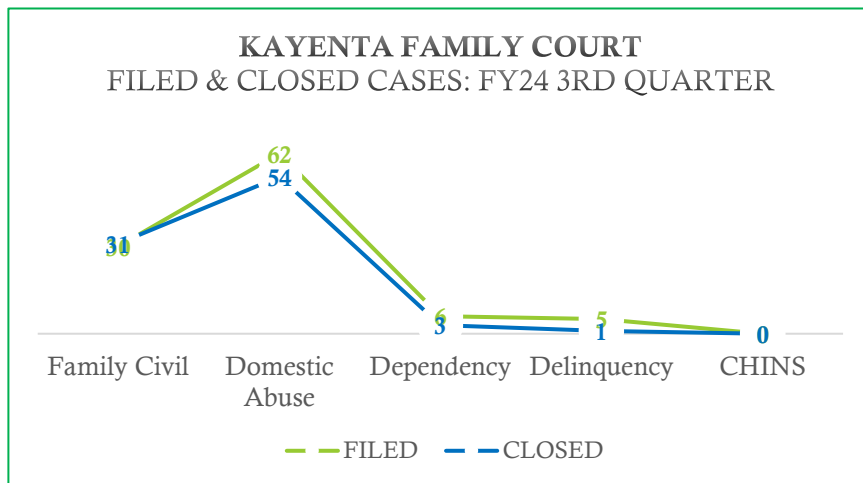
# Kayenta Justice District



**448 cases were filed in both the Kayenta District and Family courts during the FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter.**

**407 cases were closed**

**Clearance Rate is 91%**

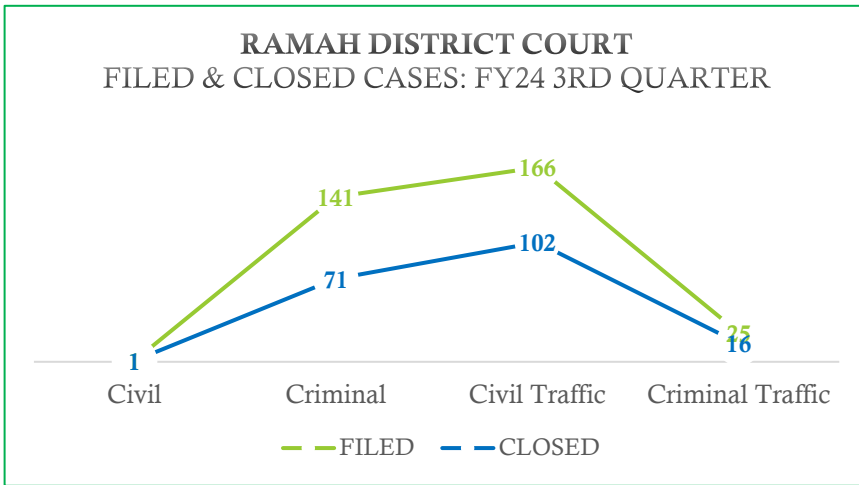


Kayenta Judicial District will begin construction on the new Kayenta Judicial Complex, which will house Judicial Branch Staff, Office of the Prosecutor and Office of the Public Defender. The groundbreaking ceremony will occur in the next quarter.

Staff participated in two criminal justice partners meetings to collaborate and streamline services to better serve community members.

Court Administrator, Lavonne K. Yazzie, led information sessions on Amnesty Day planning processes for all judicial districts on June 4, 2024.

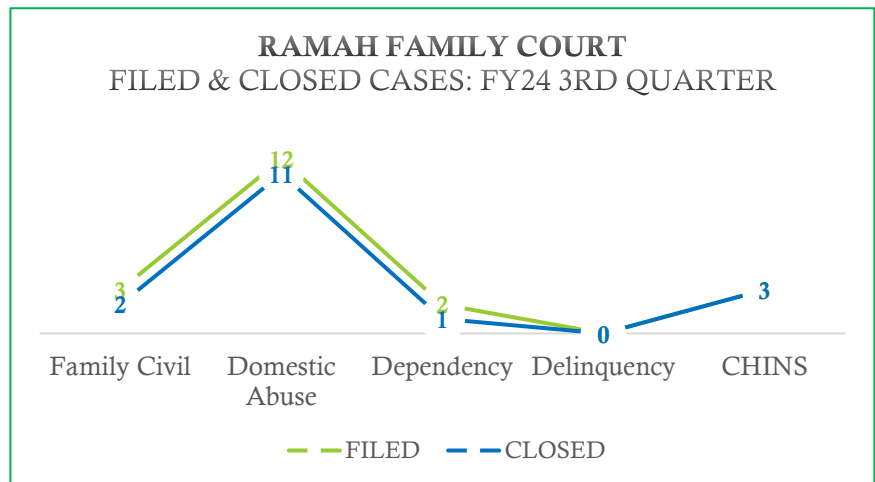
# Ramah Judicial District



**353 cases were filed in both the Ramah District and Family courts during the FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter.**

**207 cases were closed.**

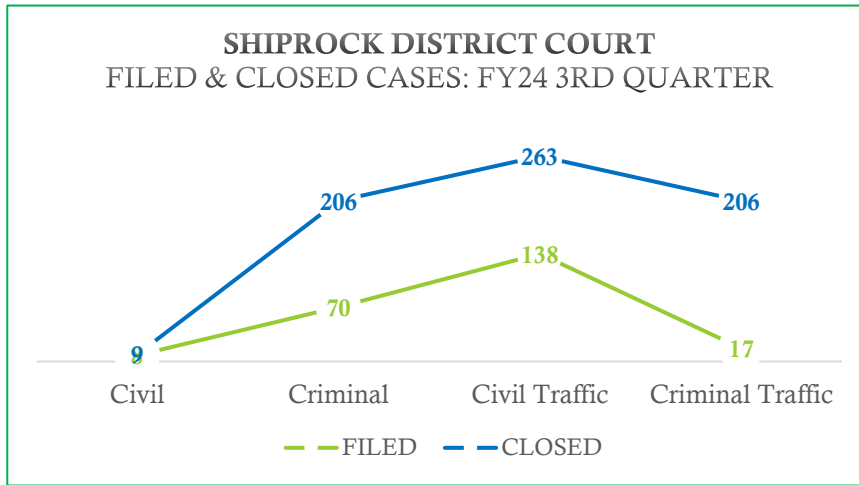
**Clearance Rate is 59%**



Ramah Judicial District hosted its annual Justice Day on April 5, 2024, to raise community awareness and public education on its justice system. Over 150 community members were in attendance.

Judge Laughing continues to be assigned to Ramah Judicial District in addition to Alamo Judicial District.

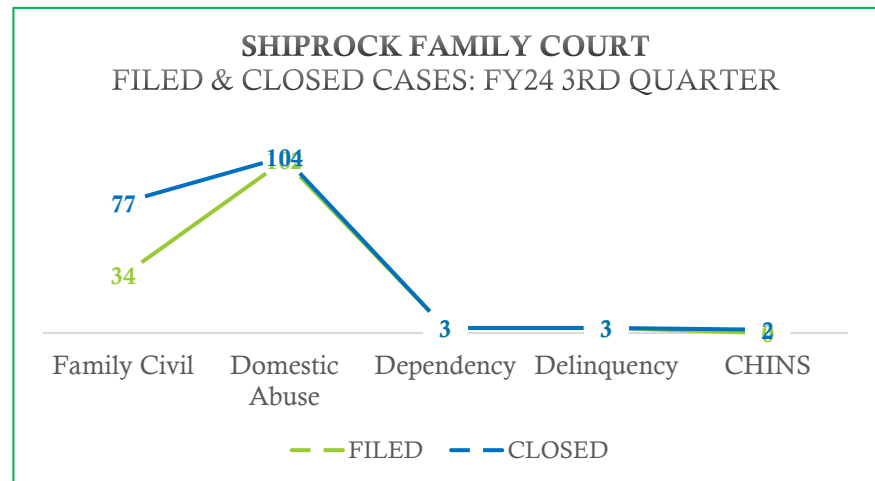
## Shiprock Judicial District



**375 cases were filed in both the Shiprock District and Family courts during the FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter.**

**873 cases were closed.**

**Clearance  
Rate is 233%**

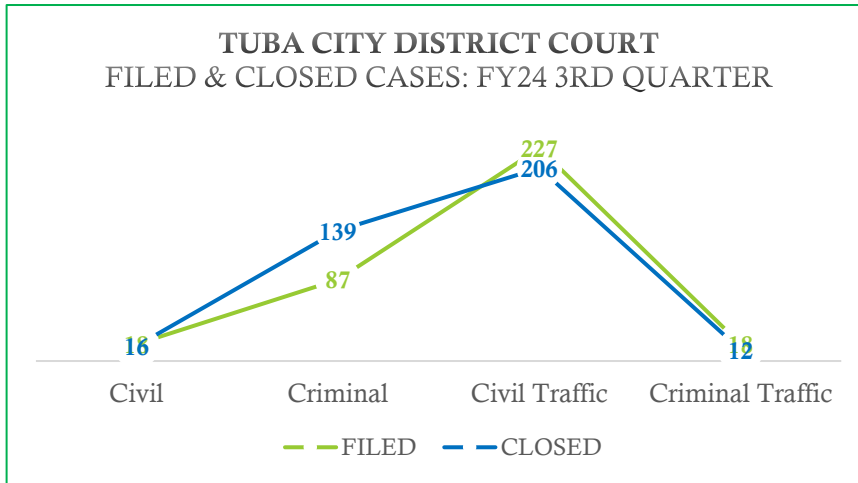


Shiprock Judicial District hosted its Justice Day on May 3, 2024, to provide information and public education on access to its justice system.

The Judicial District provides court services through in person, telephonic, postal, fax and drop box methods, receiving over 5,000 inquiries.

Shiprock Judicial District continues to work with other justice partners in the development of a permanent judicial facility.

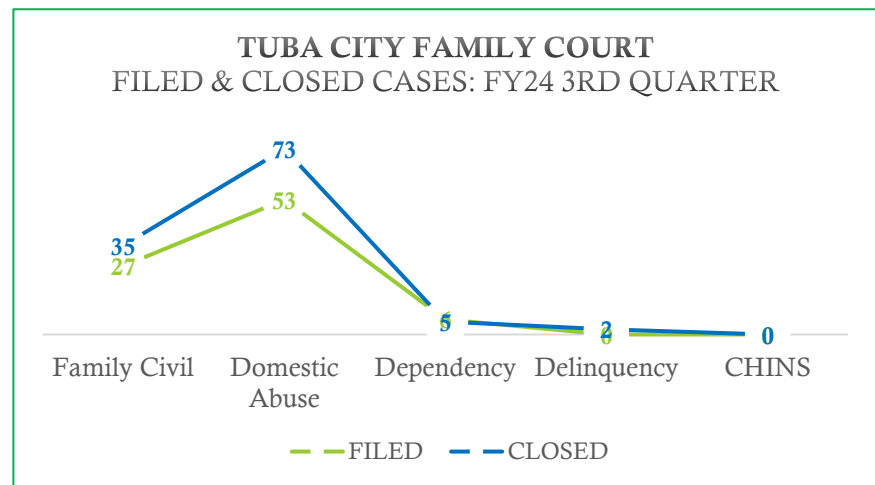
## Tuba City Judicial District



**436 cases were filed in both the Tuba City District and Family courts during the FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter.**

**488 cases were closed.**

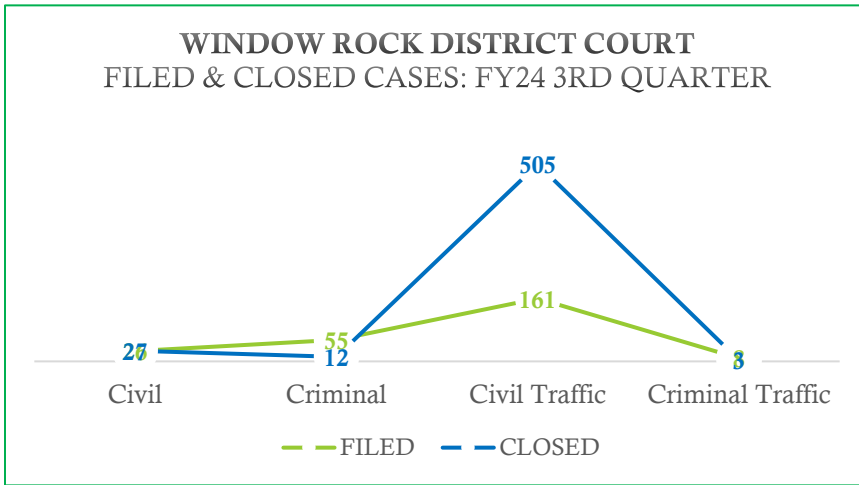
**Clearance  
Rate is 112%**



Tuba City Judicial District hosted its Justice Day on April 5, 2024, with more than 460 students and community members in attendance.

Judicial Hearing Officer, Dorthea Denetsosie, continues to preside over domestic abuse hearings in Tuba City Judicial District as well as other Judicial Districts.

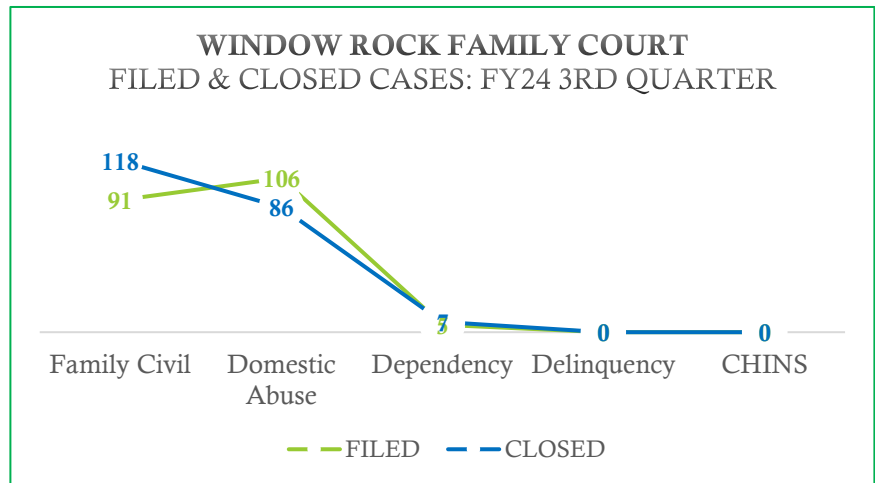
# Window Rock Judicial District



**452 cases were filed in both the Window Rock District and Family courts during the FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter.**

**758 cases were closed.**

**Clearance Rate is 168%**



Window Rock Judicial District, with the Administrative Office of the Courts, is finalizing the construction of its new court facility that is scheduled to be completed in the beginning of the new fiscal year.

Court staff conducted case certification on outstanding bench warrants and its looking to conduct an Amnesty Day when the new building is completed.

Judicial Hearing Officer, Loritta Largo, presided over domestic abuse hearings and shelter care hearings, and continues to provide services in multiple judicial districts in addition to Window Rock Judicial District.



# Navajo Nation Probation & Parole Services

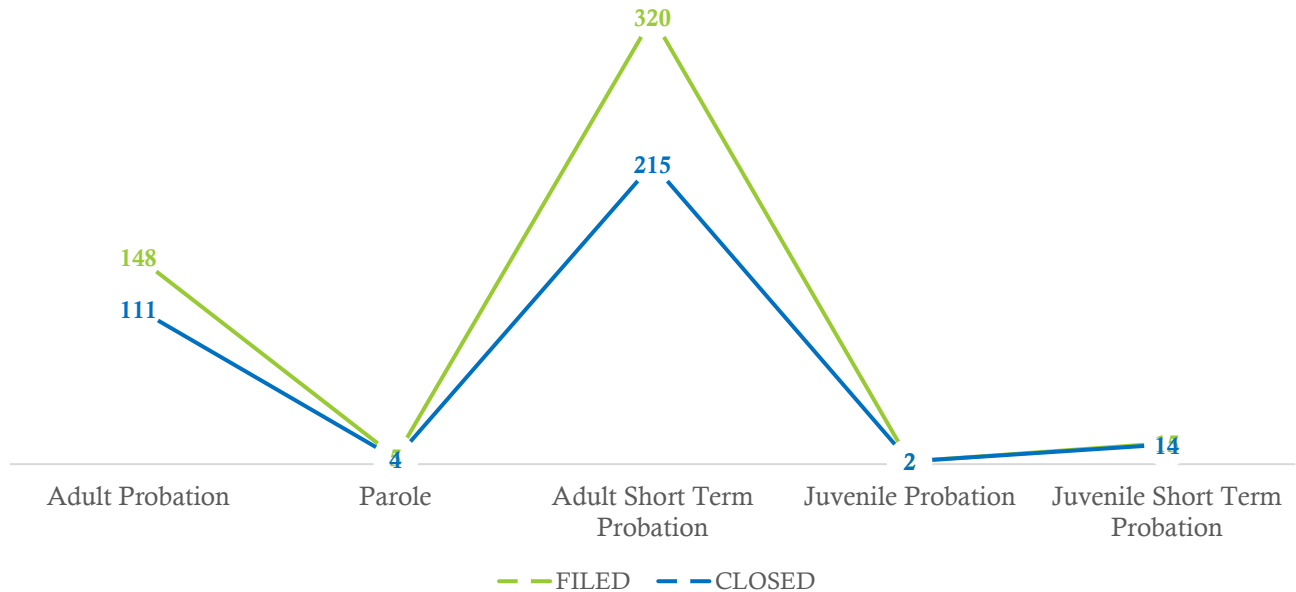
Probation and Parole Services of the Navajo Nation is committed to enhancing community wellness and fostering *hozho* restoration. We achieve this through community-based supervision aimed at rehabilitating client-offenders. We prioritize the involvement of families, communities, and relevant agencies.

Restoration of *hozho*, accountability, personal responsibility, and community wellness are fundamental principles of traditional restorative justice. In Navajo justice, "restorative justice" literally means restoring justice in accordance with these principles. It involves engaging client-offenders, victims, and affected communities in seeking solutions that promote restoration and rebuilding.

Our justice system holds the responsibility of restoring *hozho* by providing necessary resources to rehabilitate offenders and reintegrate them into their communities, following traditional principles. This includes active communication with victims and advocates.

Probation and Parole Services offers programs designed to help client-offenders, their traditional support structures, and communities achieve crime-free and successful reintegration. Our approach emphasizes accountability, personal responsibility, and supports competence, self-worth, and self-improvement. Through rigorous risk assessment and supervision, we ensure public safety and facilitate client-offenders' compliance with court-imposed conditions and obligations.

### NAVAJO PROBATION & PAROLE FILED & CLOSED CASES: FY24 3RD QUARTER



Probation and Parole Services are long-term services based on court ordered services and not all cases should be cleared within one quarter.

490 cases were filed with Probation and Parole Services during the FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter.

346 cases were closed or completed.

**Clearance  
Rate is 71%**

The Probation staff have completed two trainings during the quarter to further enhance case management, risk assessment and training that involves mental health and vicarious trauma.

# Administrative Office of the Courts

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) plays a crucial role in supporting the Judicial Branch as the administrative arm for all Navajo Nation Courts, Peacemaking system, and Probation and Parole Services.

The Administrative Director, Bennie Francisco, has completed his probationary period and is now the permanent AOC Director. Mr. Francisco oversees five essential units: fiscal, human resources, information technology, facilities, and probation and parole services.

A new Construction Project Manager has been hired to administer all construction-related work for the entire Judicial Branch.

During FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, AOC Human Resources has provided over 15 training courses to all Judicial staff including professional development and customer service.

The financial unit of AOC has undergone a reorganization and reclassification of all positions. Other units within AOC will also be reorganized soon to more effectively address the needs of the public, the courts and programs.

The information technology unit of AOC has fulfilled over 500 IT requests throughout the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch.

With only one branch wide Facility Maintenance staff, AOC has provided services to every court and program facility on the Navajo Nation.