

SEVENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

STATE OF COLORADO

November 2023

The 7th Judicial District is made up of six (6) counties in west-central Colorado. The district includes the following counties: Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray and San Miguel. There are combined court clerk's offices (district court and county court) in the county seat of each of these counties and an associate county court for Montrose County located in Nucla in the western part of Montrose County. The geographical area of the district is approximately 10,000 square miles of mostly high mountain valleys. This area is about the same size as the states of Vermont, Rhode Island and Delaware combined. The distance between Lake City in the eastern part of the district and Nucla in the west is approximately 200 miles one-way. The County seats of Gunnison (Gunnison County), Lake City (Hinsdale) Ouray (Ouray County) and Telluride (San Miguel County) have elevations of over 7,700 feet.

The 7th Judicial District has five (5) District Court Judges who handle diversified dockets. The current district judges have offices located in Delta, Gunnison, Montrose and San Miguel. The cases covered by District Judges include domestic relations, criminal, juvenile, mental health, probate, and civil filings that exceed the county court jurisdictional amount of \$25,000. There are seven (7) County Judges who are responsible for handling traffic, misdemeanor, and civil cases under the jurisdictional limit of \$25,000. In addition to the Judges, the Seventh Judicial District has one full-time and one part-time Magistrate. The full-time Magistrate handles dependency/neglect, domestic relations and emergency protective orders cases in Delta and Montrose counties. The part-time Magistrate handles county court matters, primarily in Montrose.

The district has 65 full or part-time employees including judicial officers, employees in the clerk's offices, collections and in administrative positions in support of court operations. The probation department has 24 employees in four (4) locations in the district. The district's payroll and operating budget is approximately \$6.3 million.

The largest towns in the Seventh Judicial District are Delta, Gunnison, and Montrose. Delta County is the location of a Department of Corrections facility just outside the City of Delta. Gunnison is home to Western Colorado University. Gunnison County (Crested Butte Ski Area) and San Miguel County (Telluride Ski Area) each boast one of the largest ski resorts in western Colorado. Montrose is in the center of the district, and region, and is the location of many state and federal government offices. Montrose is the site of Colorado Mesa University – Montrose Campus and boasts the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. This National Park is a large tourist attraction thus promoting retail and service-related business growth in the area. Hinsdale, Ouray and San Miguel Counties are within national historic districts and have many recreational sites popular with tourist and sportsmen alike. Tourism/recreation, agri-business, retail and government are the main employers of the area.

The Seventh Judicial District is continually striving to respond to changing concerns and circumstances of the courts. This requires the continued evaluation of staff resources and the implementation of changes to meet the needs of the public accessing the system. The Seventh Judicial District has instituted several measures to process cases and manage workloads. These include a centralized Jury Commissioner, a centralized Account Clerk, a collections department, and centralized records management personnel. The district also has a full-time Self-Represented Litigant Coordinator (SRLC), a full-time Family Court Facilitator, and a part-time dedicated court judicial assistant to support the district's effort to assist all litigants, who are not represented by an attorney, navigate and understand the judicial system. The district has implemented the operation of specialty courts (drug/alcohol abuse) in Delta, Gunnison, Montrose, and San Miguel Counties to specifically deal with this seemingly ever-increasing problem in our district. Other innovative programs to meet the ever-changing needs and efficiency of the courts and Probation Department are being considered for implementation in the future.