



TWENTY-THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT Overview - January 2025

On January 14th, 2025, the Colorado Judicial Department celebrated the establishment of the new Twenty-Third Judicial District, marking the first time in 62 years the department had created a new Judicial District.

During 2024, the District worked with numerous partners and invested countless hours of hard work and collaboration to implement HB20-1026. The passage of HB20-1026 in 2020 divided the 18th Judicial District, the largest in the state with a million people, based on population growth in Douglas, Elbert, and Lincoln counties. As a result of this legislation, the 18th Judicial District will continue to serve Arapahoe County, and the 23rd Judicial District serves Douglas, Elbert, and Lincoln Counties.

Population and Geographic Area

With an estimated District population of 418,192, the Courts of the 23rd Judicial District serve three diverse and growing counties. The District population includes Douglas County with a population of 383,906 and home to 21,474 veterans; Elbert County with a total population of 28,806 and home to 2,295 veterans, and Lincoln County with a total population of 5,480 and home to 300 veterans.

Douglas County was named in honor of U.S. Senator Stephen A. Douglas. It is located between Denver and Colorado Springs. Douglas County is approximately 843 square miles, of which 63,037 acres are permanently protected land through the Douglas County Open Space Program. Recreational areas include more than 146,000 acres of Pike National Forest, Roxborough State Park, Castlewood Canyon State Park, and the Chatfield State Recreation Area. The county includes the towns of Castle Rock, Castle Pines, Franktown, Larkspur, Lone Tree, Parker, and Sedalia, and the major subdivisions of Highlands Ranch and Acres Green. In 2021 Douglas County was named the 2nd healthiest county in America, according to the 2021 Healthy Communities rankings by U.S. News and World Report, released in collaboration with the *Aetna Foundation*. Douglas County was ranked 2nd in the nation in 2020 and in 2018. The County topped the annual list in 2019.

Elbert County is primarily rural. The County is approximately 1,851 square miles with Five Public School Districts and three community colleges. Some of the communities in Elbert County are Elizabeth, Kiowa, Ponderosa Park, Matheson and Simla. Elbert has 30 miles of Union Pacific rail lines. Elbert County Industries include Agriculture, Renewable Energy, Oil and Gas and Manufacturing. Both Denver and Colorado Springs lie within 50 miles. Elbert County is the 21st most populated county in the state out of 64 counties.

Lincoln County was formed in 1889 from parts of Elbert and Bent Counties. Lincoln County communities include Hugo and Limon. Interestingly, the county is shaped like a backward L, which is 72 miles long and 48 miles wide. Lincoln county is approximately 2,593 square miles of rolling prairie with river valleys and sand hills. Cattlemen came to the area in the late 1860s and then followed by sheep growers as late as 1900. The earliest homesteads were claimed in the 1880s, with land seekers continuing to move onto government lands in this area over the next several decades. A state prison is located near Limon in Lincoln County.

Courthouses

The 23rd Judicial District provides court services from three different courthouses within District boundaries: Castle Rock in Douglas County; Kiowa in Elbert County; and Hugo in Lincoln County. All courts are open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on regular business days. The Clerk's Office in Douglas County is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on regular business days. The Clerk's Offices in Lincoln and Elbert Counties are open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on regular business days. Most court proceedings are open to the public and visitors are welcome.

Case Filings and Docket Assignments

In FY 2024, 9,034 new cases were filed in the District Courts in Douglas, Elbert, and Lincoln counties combined. There were 24,641 new cases filed in the County Courts during this same period. This caseload is the responsibility of 19 Judicial Officers, comprised of: 6 Magistrates (one is part-time), 5 County Court Judges (2 are part-time) and 8 District Court Judges. One of the District Court Judges and one of the part-time County Court Judges sit in Elbert County. One of the District Court judges works in both Douglas and Lincoln Counties, and one part-time County Court Judge is also in Lincoln County.

County Court Judges are responsible for handling a large workload of traffic and misdemeanor matters, as well as small claims cases, civil cases of values up to \$25,000, and preliminary hearings in felony cases. In FY 2024, Judges in County Court handled 59 trials. District Court Judges handle a caseload comprised of the following case types: domestic relations, felony, juvenile, probate, mental health, and civil filings. During FY 2024, 61 trials were held in District Court.

In addition to the regular court dockets, the 23rd Judicial District is also home to four specialized adult programs known as Problem Solving Courts. These courts offer a non-traditional approach to integrating treatment provision and criminal justice case processing, and rely on the close collaboration of multidisciplinary teams, including members from the judicial and treatment communities. The 23rd Judicial District Problem-Solving Courts include: *Veterans Court*, that serves veterans who are struggling with trauma-related issues, with a focus on those that are directly related to military service; *Recovery Court*, that serves clients who are struggling with severe substance use disorders; *Wellness Court*, serving clients who are struggling with co-occurring severe and persistent mental health symptoms and severe substance use disorders; and *Sobriety Court*, that provides comprehensive, multi-disciplinary responses to high-risk, high-need Felony DUI offenders.

Court Staff

In addition to Judicial Officers, the Trial Court has approximately 90 employees consisting of administrative staff, Clerks of Court, Judicial Clerks, Supervisors, Jury Commissioner, Legal Research Attorneys, Court Reporters, Collections Investigators, Family Court Facilitators, Problem Solving Court Coordinators, and several others.

Probation

The Probation Department employs approximately 60 staff members, housed in all court locations. In FY 2024, the Probation Department conducted 353 adult and juvenile offender investigations and prepared presentence, assessment, screening, drug screen, and other reports after those investigations. The department also completed 633 alcohol evaluations. The department received 1,961 new probationers for probation supervision, and 1,102 were terminated from state probation. As of June 30, 2024, there were 3,066 active adult and juvenile cases being supervised in the District.

For further information regarding the Trial Court, please contact the Court Executive, Carol Rigato, at (720) 437-6168, or carol.rigato@judicial.state.co.us. Questions regarding the Probation Department may be directed to Lori Griffith, Chief Probation Officer, at (720)-437-6188 or lori.griffith@judicial.state.co.us.