



SNAPSHOT

Data Collection Process for Judicial Weighted Caseload Estimates

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State law requires the Comptroller's Office to compare the state's existing judicial resources with an estimate of the judicial resources needed. The Comptroller's Office performs this comparison annually and publishes the results in an updated judicial weighted caseload study. Due to the extraordinary circumstances faced by the courts as a result of the COVID pandemic, the FY 2020 update to the judicial weighted caseload study was suspended. In lieu of an update for FY 2020, the Comptroller's Office of Research and Education Accountability (OREA) has produced a legislative brief on the data collection process for judicial weighted caseload estimates.

OREA has concluded that the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) has a thorough data collection process that has been extensively refined over the years. The AOC may wish to take some additional steps, however, to further improve the data collection process:

1. **The AOC may wish to share historical records of data and reporting issues that affect the counts for judicial weighted caseload updates with the Comptroller's Office.** Greater knowledge of the size and effect of such issues would help the Comptroller's Office better inform the General Assembly regarding judicial weighted caseload studies.
2. **The AOC may wish to create an internal document that outlines the validation steps taken to ensure data accuracy.** Although the AOC takes numerous steps designed to ensure data accuracy, the office does not currently maintain a document that outlines these steps. Producing such a document would yield a number of benefits, including an internal review (and possible revision) of all current steps taken by the AOC prior to creating such an internal document. The document might also be used to provide external parties with an official record of the steps taken by the AOC to ensure data quality.

The brief summarizes Tennessee's history with the judicial weighted caseload model. In addition, the brief examines the need for a new time study for judges. The current judicial weighted caseload model is based on how much time, on average, judges reported spending on different types of cases in 2013.

Recently passed laws that have implications for future weighted caseload studies are addressed in the brief. An analysis of case filings from FY 2013 to FY 2020 is included as well.

Weighted caseload studies for district attorneys general and public defenders are also addressed in the brief. These studies were last produced for FY 2006, and the brief identifies what needs to be in place (e.g., data and new time studies) before these weighted caseload studies can again be produced.

To read the report, visit the Comptroller's OREA website at tncot.cc/orea.