

COURT COMMISSIONER

The Court Commissioner's Department aids the Sheboygan County Circuit Court and, thereby, the citizens of Sheboygan County by making the dispute resolution system more effective. Cases referred by the Circuit Court are dealt with promptly and impartially in accordance with the applicable law.



Ryan O'Rourke
Court
Commissioner

404

Paternity
Hearings

131

Wedding
Ceremonies
Officiated

162

Restraining
Order
Hearings

134

Cases Referred
To Family
Mediation

The primary role of the Court Commissioner's Department is to assist in the administration of the court system through three main functions. First, the Department conducts preliminary matters in court proceedings, including temporary order hearings in divorces, probable cause hearings in mental commitments, and bail hearings or initial appearances in criminal, traffic, small claims, paternity, and juvenile court matters. Second, the Department renders final decisions in stipulated divorces, domestic abuse and harassment injunction hearings, and most types of small claims cases. Third, the Department assists the courts through mediation, overseeing the processes for small claims cases and child custody disputes.

By enabling litigants to resolve matters through mediation, the Department helps all parties avoid the significant time and expense of a trial. In addition to these primary roles, the Department officiates weddings and remains on call 24 hours a day to authorize search warrants for criminal investigations.

2025 Achievements



Provided constant on-call availability to authorize search warrants for criminal investigations



Diverted 134 cases from trial via mediation programs



\$11,587 under budget



2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

In 2025, the Court Commissioner's Department demonstrated strong fiscal stewardship, finishing the year \$11,587 under budget. The Department also participated in a comprehensive statewide time study, where commissioners logged all hearing and administrative tasks to help the State identify resource needs and optimize future allocations.

Significant preparation took place throughout the year for upcoming organizational shifts, including the planning and training required for new County-wide financial software. The Department maintained high service volumes, presiding over hundreds of paternity and restraining order hearings while managing a growing family court mediation program. These efforts ensured the continued smooth operation of the court system during a period of administrative transition.

2025 BUDGET

Revenues	\$ 389,288
Expenses	\$ 377,701
Transfers In/Out	-
(Under)/Over Budget	\$ (11,587)

2026 LOOK AHEAD

In 2026, the Department will prioritize the implementation of new finance software, training staff in specialized modules for billing, payroll, and payment processing. A key personnel transition is also underway as the Assistant Court Commissioner moves from judicial research to presiding over all juvenile plea and restraining order hearings. To support this, the Department is working to cultivate new hearing locations; establishing additional space will allow the office to expand its capacity and assume hearing responsibilities historically managed by the Circuit Courts.

Furthermore, a significant reorganization is proposed to merge this office with the Register in Probate and Judicial Assistants. If approved by the County Board, this integration will substantially increase the Department's size and scope. Under the leadership of the longest presiding Circuit Court Judge, the Department will be renamed, with 2026 resources dedicated to ensuring a seamless transition and unified operation of these combined functions.