



2020 Annual Report

Austin Municipal Court

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Letter from Austin Municipal Court's Presiding Judge and Clerk of the Court

As we look back on this most unusual year, we see with clarity the unprecedented challenges and the ways they fostered growth and innovation. The year began with planning and implementation of Municipal Court's move to our new location at 6800 Burleson Road. A relocation had been in the works for over a decade, but upon opening the new facility, the pandemic forced us to close, and our teams transitioned to primarily working remotely. This did not stop us from staying connected, communicating, and collaborating to reengineer our processes and continue providing core services to the public.

Our staff rapidly created virtual services, and we were able to provide examples and guidance to other municipal courts. The dedication, professionalism, and innovation of staff resulted in incredible accomplishments during a time of difficulty and uncertainty. Ms. Grubb and I are honored to serve as the court clerk and presiding judge and are extremely proud of the way the staff of the Austin Municipal Court (AMC) stepped up to meet so many challenges with such extraordinary dedication.

Our annual report highlights some of these efforts and the work our department completed. Moving forward, we hope to foster an environment emphasizing public service and positive outreach through education and community activities.



Sherry Statman
Presiding Judge

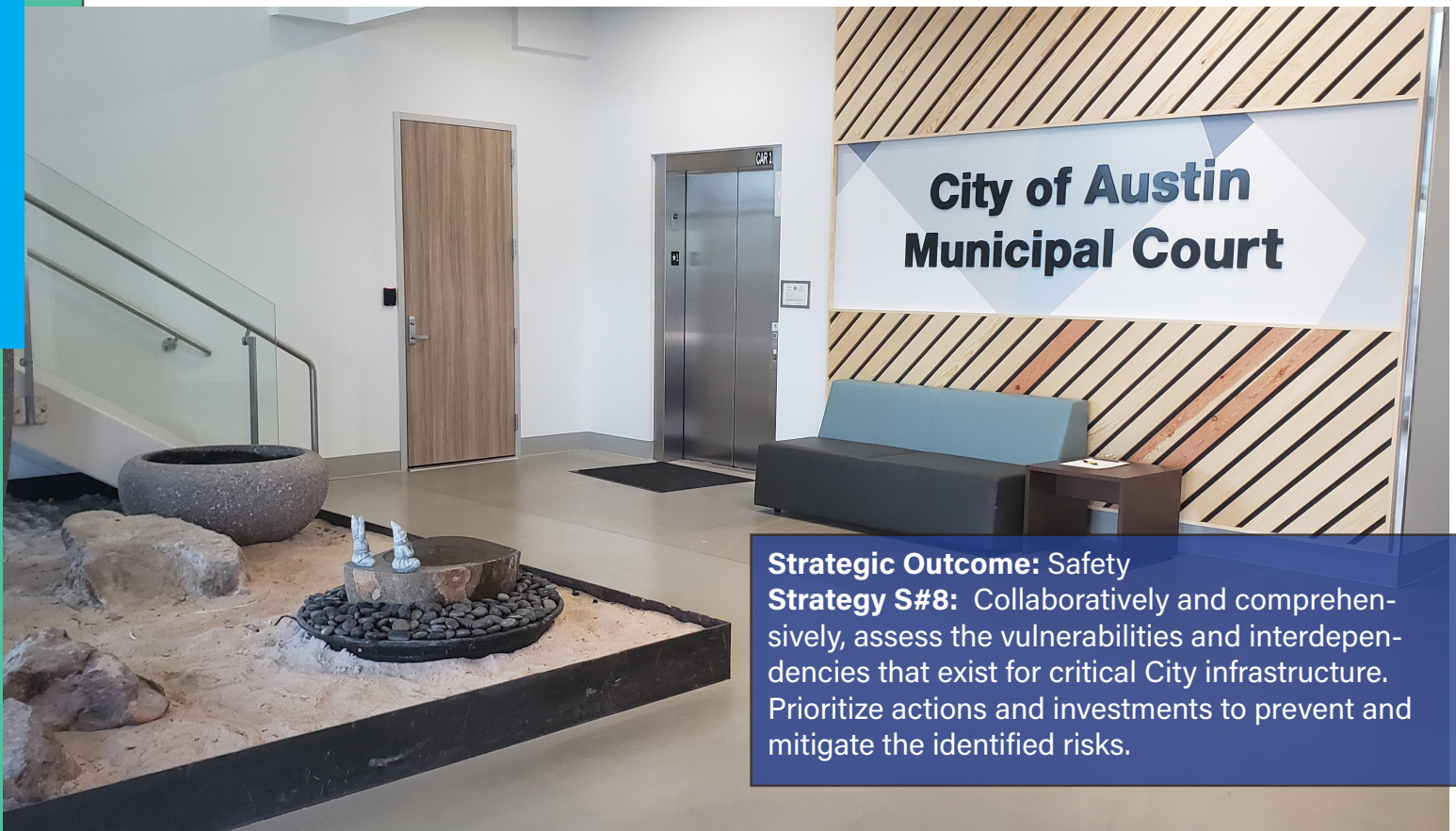


Mary Jane Grubb
Clerk of the Court

Relocation

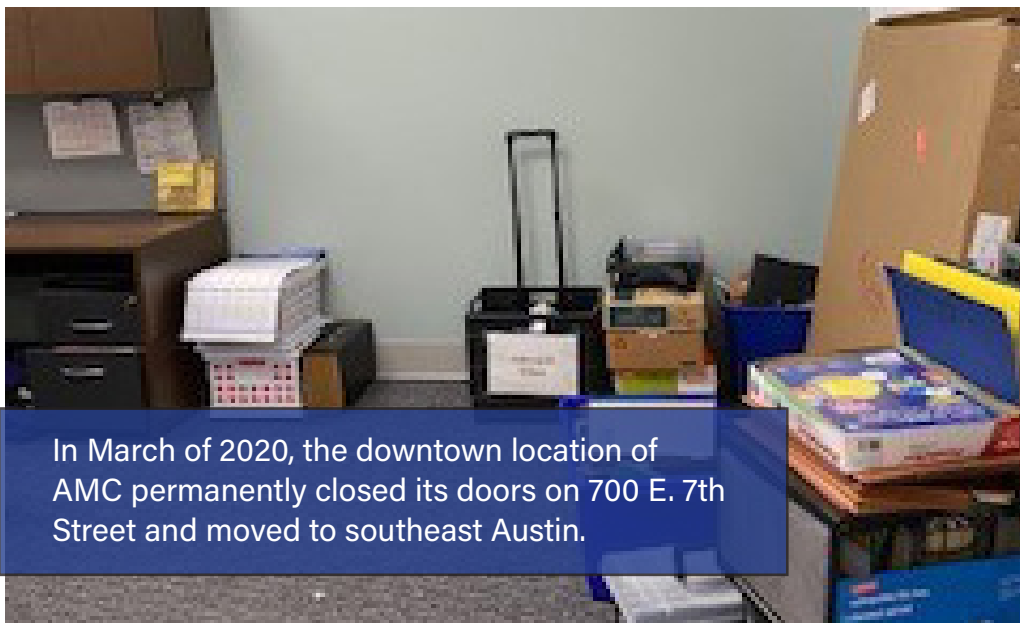
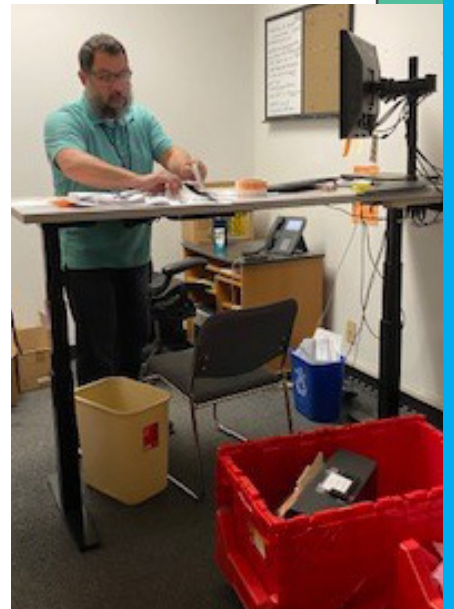
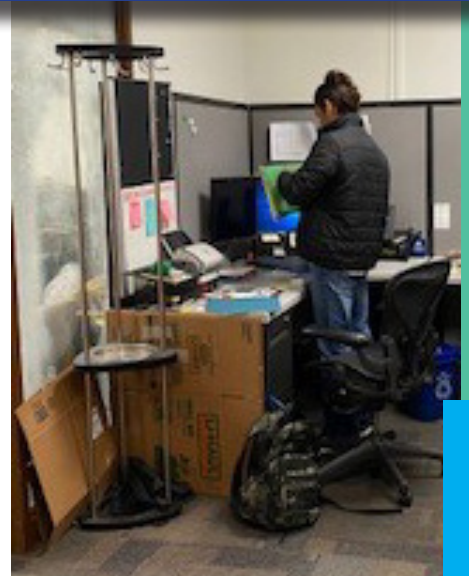
On October 18, 2018, the Austin City Council voted unanimously to approve a \$29.9 million, 10-year contract with CCI-Burleson LLP, to lease space at the Bergstrom Tech Center located at 6800 Burleson Road. The long-term plan is to identify two permanent locations; one in North Austin and one in South Austin. In March of 2020, AMC permanently closed its doors at 700 East 7th Street and moved to the new facility *mere days before an almost fourteen month public closure due to the pandemic*.

The new court contains the functions and staff of the main location, prosecutors, interpreters, court security officers, and civilian offices of the police department – roughly 170 staff members in total. The new facility consists of large customer service and courtroom lobbies; spacious courtrooms, including an additional 5th courtroom; separate areas for jurors, witnesses, and defendants; rooms for defense attorneys to meet privately with their clients; and adequate meeting space for staff. The new location also has more than 220 free parking spaces, a significant improvement from the limited parking available at the former downtown location. New technology solutions include an updated lobby queue system, new courtroom audio and visual recording system, electronic docket displays, and enhanced security features.

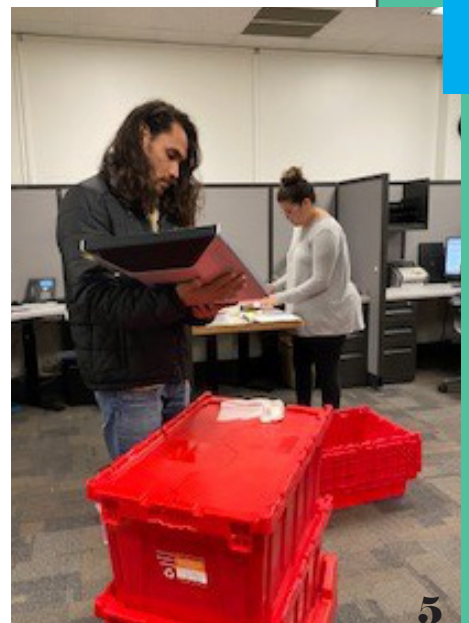


Strategic Outcome: Safety
Strategy S#8: Collaboratively and comprehensively, assess the vulnerabilities and interdependencies that exist for critical City infrastructure. Prioritize actions and investments to prevent and mitigate the identified risks.

Moving Day



In March of 2020, the downtown location of AMC permanently closed its doors on 700 E. 7th Street and moved to southeast Austin.



Pandemic Adaptation, Planning, and Management

In March 2020, AMC closed its doors to the public in effort to reduce exposure to COVID-19. During this time, staff worked diligently to adapt processes to function in a new environment undergoing continuous change. The judiciary, support services, and operational units collaborated closely to develop plans to provide access to justice while mitigating risks to the community. Case deadlines and due dates were extended while the building was closed to the public. Additionally, warrant processing and confirmations for Class C offenses were suspended to reduce the number of individuals entering the Travis County jail.

The management team concentrated on creating a responsible reintegration plan that required numerous adjustments due to rapidly fluctuating conditions. The facilities and safety teams implemented multiple precautionary measures to include the installation of hand sanitizer stations, separate entries/exits, social distancing markers, signage, plexiglass barriers, and temperature scanners; this work was accomplished with help from staff in multiple areas of the department. Human Resources focused on managing special programs such as the Family First Coronavirus Response Act (FFRCA) to minimize the impact of the pandemic on staff and their families.

Though the pandemic presented enormous challenges, staff remained resilient and steadfast in commitment to provide services to the public and curtail the impact of delays in justice. These uncertain times resulted in new service options, which increased access to justice and reduced significant barriers in navigating the criminal justice system.

Strategic Outcome: Government that Works
Strategy GTW-13: Establish a workplace culture of high performance, continuous improvement, and human-centered innovation that encourages employee growth and inclusive collaboration. In addition, embrace technology, rapidly prototype potential solutions, and improve business processes to increase efficiencies and reduce red tape.

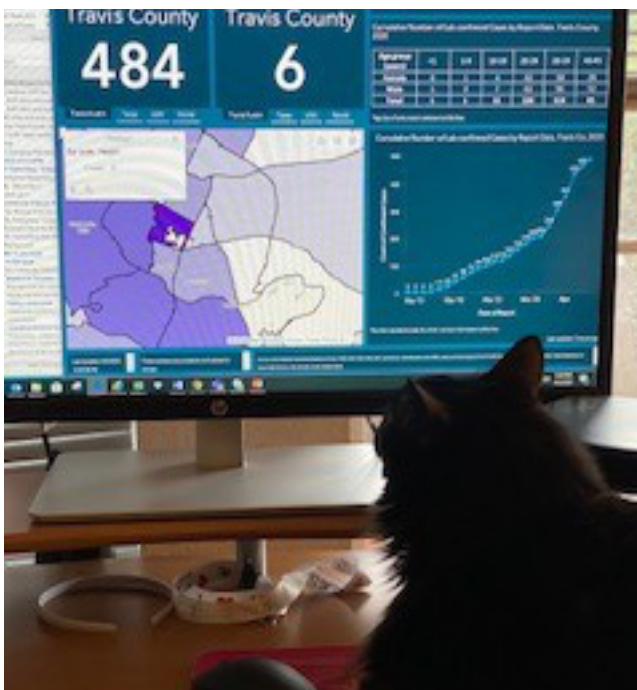
Pandemic Adaptation, Planning, and Management

Virtual Services

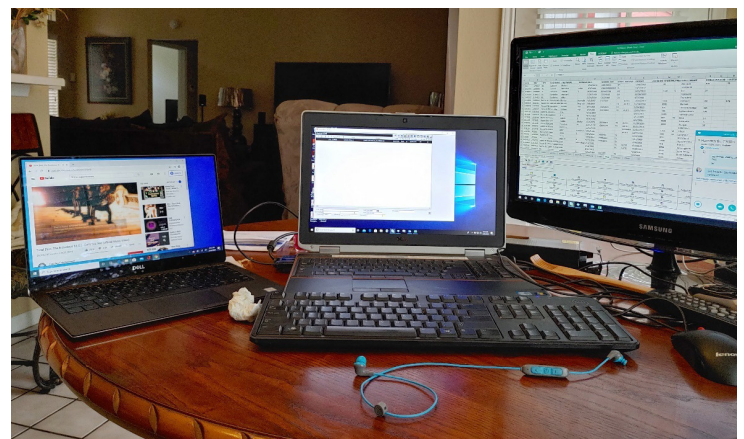
Within weeks of our public closure, we transitioned approximately 95% of the staff to a remote working environment. This involved deploying laptops to employees and countless hours of planning, troubleshooting, and reimagining processes to offer virtual services that were brand new to much of the criminal justice industry. Staff worked tirelessly to implement numerous technological changes to allow customers to conduct court business remotely via phones, email, and improved digital forms. In addition, we launched virtual magistration, mitigation, administrative hearings, appearance dockets; parking hearings; juvenile and minor classes; new employee orientation; online learning management system; and probable cause and warrant processing for charges higher than a Class C misdemeanor.

Remote Call Center and Emails

The Communications unit continued to provide customer service via the phones and email throughout the pandemic. There were 102,644 phone calls answered and 22,461 emails processed. Emails were processed completely electronically (no printing) contributing to environmental sustainability and saving resources.



22,461
EMAILS PROCESSED



102,644

PHONE CALLS ANSWERED



Pandemic Adaptation, Planning, and Management

Magistrations Dockets

In late March, Municipal Court magistrates began virtual arraignments at Travis County Jail. Travis County initiated virtual arraignments via Zoom for arrested defendants needing magistrate warnings to include partnerships with American Sign Language and other interpreters. During the fiscal year, magistrates virtually arraigned 12,025 defendants on higher charges and 2,556 defendants on Class C charges.



12,025
DEFENDANTS VIRTUALLY
ARRAIGNED ON
HIGHER CHARGES

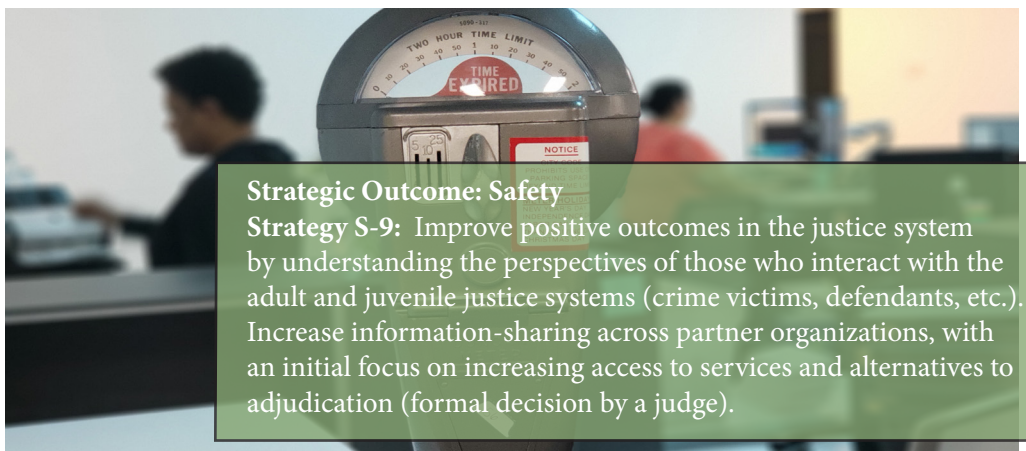
2,556
DEFENDANTS VIRTUALLY
ARRAIGNED ON
CLASS C CHARGES

480
CASES ADJUDICATED VIA
EMAIL

In May, the Civil Administration unit implemented virtual parking hearings as well as a user-friendly interface on the AMC website to better serve customers. Virtual services are paperless and requests for hearings can be submitted electronically by email; hearing officers then reach out to citizens and facilitate either a virtual hearing or provide the customer with information on their case. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the majority of hearings were held via e-mail, and that is still the case today. In fiscal year 2020, there were approximately 480 cases adjudicated via email, almost 500 cases adjudicated via a revamped internal work queue, and 10 virtual parking hearings.

Parking Hearings

10
VIRTUAL
PARKING
HEARINGS

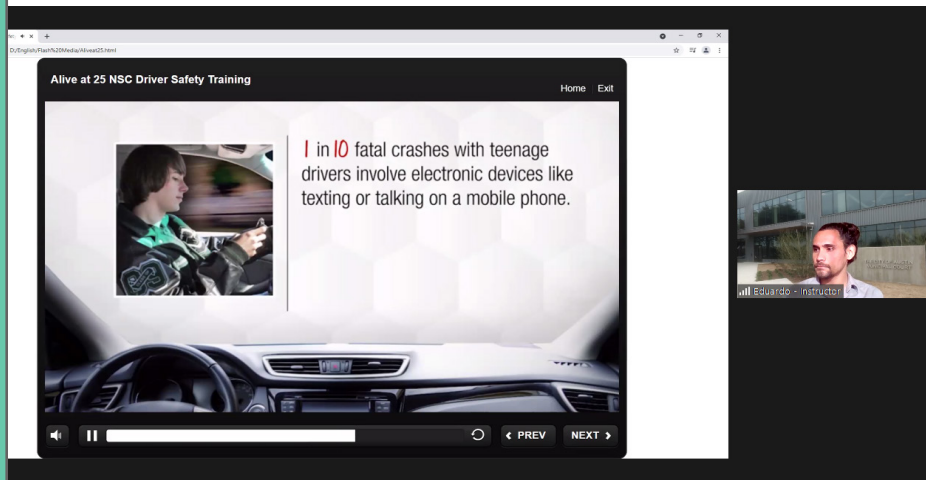


Strategic Outcome: Safety
Strategy S-9: Improve positive outcomes in the justice system by understanding the perspectives of those who interact with the adult and juvenile justice systems (crime victims, defendants, etc.). Increase information-sharing across partner organizations, with an initial focus on increasing access to services and alternatives to adjudication (formal decision by a judge).

Pandemic Adaptation, Planning, and Management

Mitigation, Appearance, and Juvenile Dockets

By the end of April, the court began providing virtual services for defendants to appear in front of judges and prosecutors to address their cases. The court expanded services remotely throughout the fiscal year to include implementing virtual services for the Downtown Community Court (DACC). Between April and September, the court held 300 virtual court dockets, assisting more than 300 customers with over 700 cases. The Compliance unit played an important role by contacting 715 individuals to offer the option of a virtual court setting resulting in almost half selecting that option.



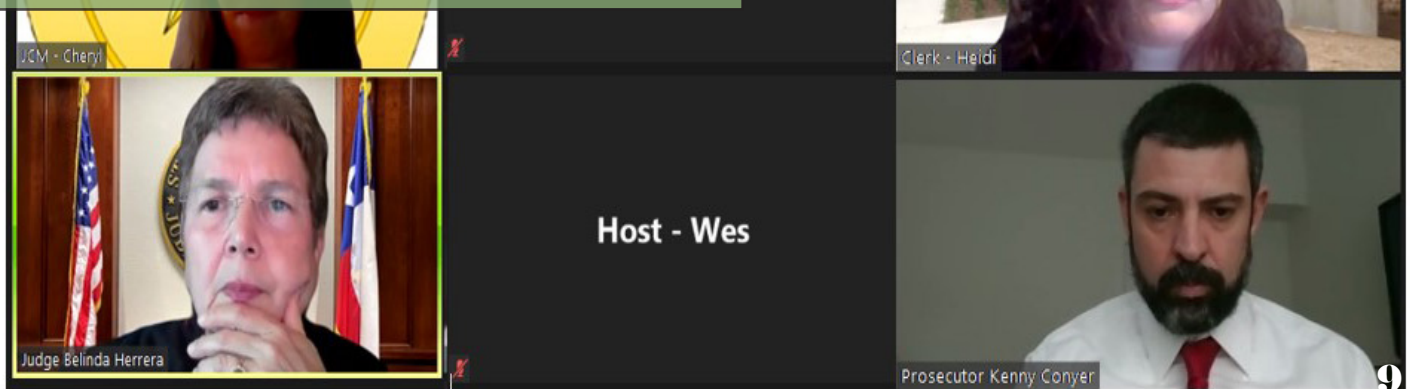
300
VIRTUAL DOCKETS
BETWEEN APRIL
AND SEPTEMBER

Juvenile and Minor Classes

In addition to facilitating virtual juvenile dockets, the Youth Services unit converted the Alive at 25, Unlicensed Driver, Theft, and Underage Drinking and Tobacco/Vaping classes to a virtual platform via Zoom. The new classes include a customer-focused review process garnering feedback from staff and the public via focus groups. All classes were created with the goal of ensuring quality educational content, relatable (age appropriate) videos, engaging activities, and skill development.

Strategic Outcome: Mobility

Strategy M-1: Promote a communitywide culture of safe driving through education and enforcement focused on behaviors most contributing to injuries and fatalities, (speeding, impaired driving, observing Sally distract-ed driving, and failure to yield) as defined by our community's Vision Zero initiative.



Pandemic Adaptation, Planning, and Management

Probable Cause and Warrant Processing

In late March, Austin Police Department (APD) implemented an online case management system called Cloud Gavel (CG). The AMC judges were the first group to be trained and begin utilizing CG. This system provides an application for APD to remotely enter and submit probable cause affidavits and warrants for higher charges. Municipal Court magistrates can approve or reject cases remotely within CG. Since the implementation, court clerks located at Travis County Central Booking have processed 2,318 case numbers for the county and district courts.



Online Learning Management System

In November, Human Resources implemented a learning management system, LMS365. The LMS is a user-friendly system for supervisors to be able to monitor and track employee training records. The system allows for blended training (in-person & virtual) as well as on-demand courses which offer flexible scheduling options.

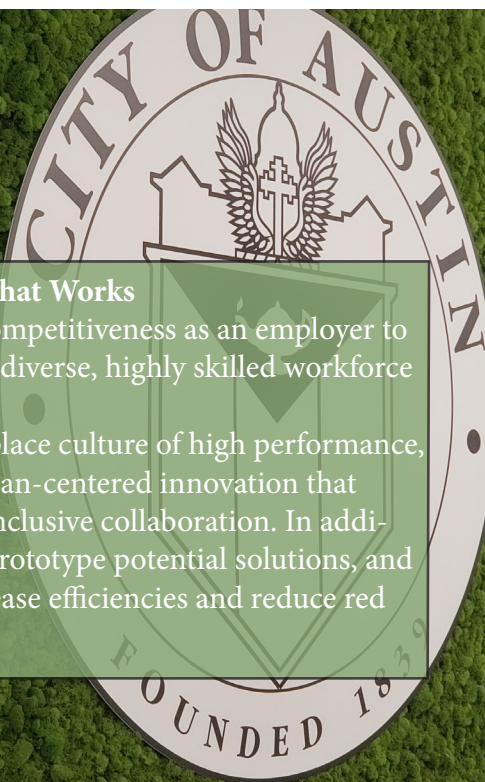
New Employee Orientation

The Municipal Court on-boarded 12 new employees. We held nine (9) virtual NEO sessions. With the introduction of Teams and O365, we were able to provide an engaging experience for our new hires through a remote environment.

Strategic Outcome: Government that Works

Strategy GTW-11: Improve our competitiveness as an employer to attract, efficiently hire, and retain a diverse, highly skilled workforce across the entire City organization.

GTW-13: Establish a workplace culture of high performance, continuous improvement, and human-centered innovation that encourages employee growth and inclusive collaboration. In addition, embrace technology, rapidly prototype potential solutions, and improve business processes to increase efficiencies and reduce red tape.



Training and Education

Strategic Outcome: Government that Works

Strategy GTW-11: Improve our competitiveness as an employer to attract, efficiently hire, and retain a diverse, highly skilled workforce across the entire City organization.

GTW-13: Establish a workplace culture of high performance, continuous improvement, and human-centered innovation that encourages employee growth and inclusive collaboration. In addition, embrace technology, rapidly prototype potential solutions, and improve business processes to increase efficiencies and reduce red tape.

GTW-14: Support ethical behavior by all City officials and staff members by setting clear expectations, improving training, and creating a culture of accountability that results in reduced risk and improved morale.

The pandemic offered the opportunity for court clerks to cross train in other units to provide operational coverage. Although the Customer Service unit reallocated the most resources to the cross training effort, clerks in multiple units worked together to perform functions associated with answering phones, emails, mail processing, participating in citywide efforts at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and working with the Bed Management Team (BMT) to provide housing to individuals experiencing COVID-19 and homelessness. Court-wide cross training promoted the professional development of staff resulting in cross-functional work teams performing together to provide high levels of customer service to citizens.

The judiciary attended all state-required, annual judicial training virtually. In addition, all AMC judges were provided opportunities to complete virtual continuing legal education programs including Texas Municipal Courts Education Center's Traffic Safety Seminars and various webinars, the Austin Bar Association's 21-Day Diversity and Inclusion Challenge, and an AMC-specific sexual harassment training and awareness seminar specifically for judges.

The Civil Administration unit worked closely with Austin Transportation to reinstate their Volunteer Accessible Parking Enforcement Program. This program trains volunteers to issue citations and warnings to motorists illegally parked in designated accessible parking spaces. The focus is to educate the community on the importance of keeping these spaces open for those who are legally entitled to use them. Additionally, both departments worked to automate and streamline the process for ticket entry associated with these charges.

1,200
STAFF HOURS WORKED FOR
THE EOC AND BMT

Innovation

Throughout the year, the staff of AMC worked hard to reimagine new ways of delivering services resulting in innovation and improvement across the department.



Reorganization

Due to ever-evolving business needs, an internal assessment of operations was conducted with the result being a reorganization of certain operational units. The goal was to streamline operations while realizing a cost savings through a reduction in staff. Two units, Warrant Processing and Caseflow Management, were consolidated to perform similar tasks related to case management and quality assurance. The new team established accountability for essential functions ensuring daily activities support performance measures and unit goals.

Rebranding

The Collections unit was renamed the Compliance unit. In alignment with City Council goals and the Office of Court Administration, the court has increased efforts to efficiently contact defendants to encourage compliance with court orders; thereby, increasing access to justice. These substantive, gradual changes allowed the unit to increase contact with defendants via phone, mail, and in person. Increased contact with individuals addresses the challenges experienced by defendants and reduces barriers to the successful compliance with court orders promoting a higher level of public safety for the community.

Court Style Guide

The Communications unit worked closely with the Training Specialist to develop a style guide that is used daily to ensure consistency in our written communications to the public.



Improved Sites and Content

Updated Open datasets to include demographic information:

Added additional race and gender fields to AMC Open datasets.

Participated in the development of a new website and also maintained content:

The Information Technology Services (ITS) unit worked with the Assistant Manager of Operations to update the website content and make it more user friendly. Special focus was placed on improving language access for Spanish speaking customers that included input from citizens and staff to incorporate meaningful, user-centric terminology.

Migrated Court Intranet SharePoint site to Office 365 cloud solution:

Moved the on-premise site to Office 365 cloud to be available to users anywhere.

Improved Payment Processes

Paperless Deposit Reconciliation:

The Communication, Compliance, and Accounting units developed a paperless process for deposits that saves money, time, and natural resources.

Streamlined the check request process for DACC:

With the relocation of the main courthouse, DACC lost the convenience of having the main court a block away. DACC Clinical Case Managers often need to pay for time sensitive services for their clients. The Accounting team developed a streamlined electronic process for these check requests, saving a trip to the main courthouse.



Strategic Outcome: Government that Works

Strategy GTW-13: Establish a workplace culture of high performance, continuous improvement, and human-centered innovation that encourages employee growth and inclusive collaboration. In addition, embrace technology, rapidly prototype potential solutions, and improve business processes to increase efficiencies and reduce red tape.

Language Access Training

Expanded training to improve language access across all court services which includes, but is not limited to, the use of bilingual staff, Language Line (phone interpretation for hundreds of languages), Texas Relay, American Sign Language, CART services, certified court interpreters, and I-Speak cards.

Case Processing and Special Projects

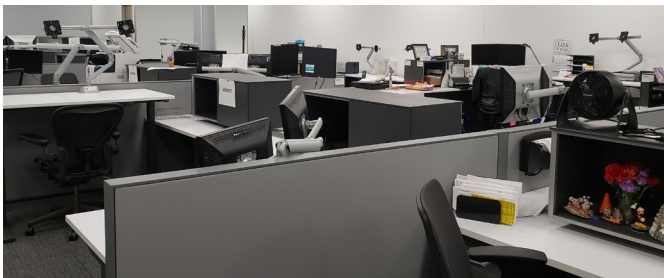


9,609
DEFERRED DISPOSITIONS
RESULTING IN POSSIBLE
CASE DISMISSAL

1,864
HELP TICKETS
RESOLVED BY
ITS

31,596
CASES RESEARCHED FOR CUR-
RENT CONTACT INFORMATION
(SKIP TRACING)

In addition to implementing and managing virtual services, AMC maintained these metrics. Some of the associated tasks were performed remotely while others were performed by staff onsite at the municipal court facilities.



27,213
PIECES OF MAIL PROCESSED

553,202
UPDATES MADE TO
DEFENDANT CASES

700
REFUNDS DUE TO OVER-
PAYMENTS AND/OR
DISMISSALS PROCESSED



Vision

*To be the most effective, efficient, and impartial
Municipal Court in Texas.*

Mission

*To impartially administer justice in a fair and
efficient manner so that trust and accountability
are exemplified to the public we serve.*

All statistics measured from October 2019 to September 2020.

Letter from Downtown Austin Community Court's Presiding Judge and Court Administrator

Downtown Austin Community Court's (DACC) mission is to administer justice equitably and compassionately to foster trust and accountability, and to utilize a client-centered and housing-focused intensive case management model to help individuals experiencing homelessness achieve long-term stability. During Fiscal Year 2020, we proactively evolved our practices to identify, and then meet, the growing and changing needs of the people we serve. Thanks to the dedication and commitment of our staff, we were able to continue essential services, develop new ways to access court services and case management, and play a significant role in the City's emergency response to COVID-19.

DACC dedicated fifty-five percent of DACC's employees to assist the City's Emergency Operations Center. Case managers, management, and the full Community Service Restitution team assisted in the intake process, program management, and daily operations of the Protective Lodging facilities serving individuals experiencing homelessness as well as the COVID-19 Isolation Facility. Court processes also adapted, including a hold on pending cases, warrants, and deferrals. Implementation of an online virtual docket system enabled individuals to resolve cases safely, and planning began for walk-in virtual dockets for individuals without access to technology, which was implemented in Fiscal Year 2021 once community-wide COVID-19 safety protocols allowed.

Throughout the pandemic, DACC maintained walk-in case management services, connecting individuals experiencing homelessness to basic needs, COVID-19 safety planning, service navigation, and other resources. Additionally, DACC ensured access to ongoing intensive case management and provided cell phones and hygiene kits for over 100 active clients. The demand for walk-in case management has nearly tripled since March 2020; DACC's temporary move to Terrazas Branch Library helped to seamlessly continue in-person services safely for guests and staff.

Though Fiscal Year 2020 brought many challenges and heartaches, it also brought us the opportunity to improve our services in ways that will carry forward and benefit the public well into the future. DACC is excited to have contributed to the City's priority of addressing homelessness through a compassionate, client-centered approach and advance the City's dedication to fair and equitable administration of justice. DACC remains grateful to be part of Austin's compassionate approach to serving individuals experiencing homelessness and the City's dedication to an equitable approach to justice.



Michael Coffey
Presiding Judge



Pete Valdez
Court Administrator

DACC Top Accomplishments

Triage Case Management

Maintained walk-in case management services throughout the pandemic, connecting individuals experiencing homelessness to basic needs, COVID-19 safety planning, and other resources. From March 16 through the end of Fiscal Year 2020, DACC has served individuals walking in for case management services 4,395 times.

Intensive Case Management

Provided ongoing intensive case management throughout the pandemic including linkages to housing and access to wrap around social service supports such as substance use treatment, peer support services, and permanent supportive housing, while also providing cell phones, hygiene kits, and COVID-19 safety planning for over 100 active clients.



Strategic Outcome: Health and Environment
Strategies HE-1: Promote healthy living and well-being with a particular focus on areas and community with high rates of chronic disease and high-risk behaviors who lack access to services.

100

CLIENTS SERVED THROUGH INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT

4,395

ENGAGEMENTS WITH INDIVIDUALS SEEKING WALK-IN CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

55%

PERCENT OF DACC STAFF ASSISTING WITH EOC

Austin Homelessness Advisory Council

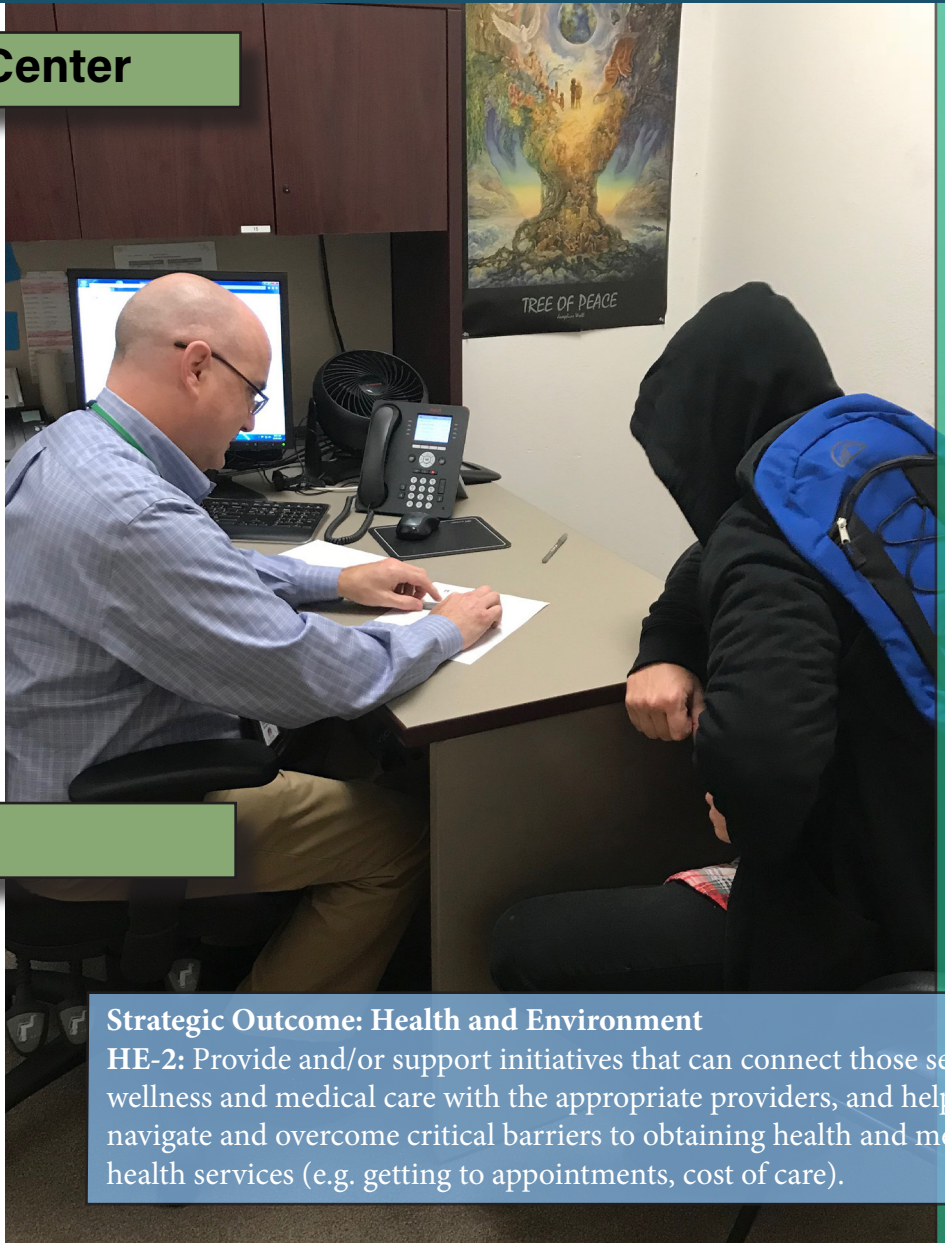
Strategic Outcome: Economic Opportunity and Affordability
Strategies EOA-8: Define and enact our response to homelessness focusing on efficient and effective use of our resources to address disparities, prevent homelessness, and support housing stability.

Ongoing facilitation and support of the Austin Homelessness Advisory Council, including transitioning to a survey format during COVID-19 to provide continued access to lived experience expertise. AHAC provides guidance on policies, programs and practices impacting individuals experiencing homelessness, which has included helping to develop the [Violet KeepSafe Storage Program](#).

DACC Top Accomplishments

Emergency Operation Center

Dedicated 55% of DACC's employees to assist the Emergency Operations Center in the intake process, program management, and daily operations of the Protective Lodging facilities, which provides individuals experiencing homelessness who are medically vulnerable a safe place to isolate and access to basic needs, services, and housing navigation during the pandemic. Beginning in July, DACC began implementation of a grant-funded COVID ESG program to provide case management and housing navigation for guests at the Protective Lodging facilities.



Virtual Dockets

Implemented a virtual docket system to enable individuals with access to technology the ability to resolve cases safely during the pandemic. Phase 2 of this effort will include development of access to virtual dockets where individuals can walk in to DACC and access a portal to resolve cases.

Strategic Outcome: Health and Environment

HE-2: Provide and/or support initiatives that can connect those seeking wellness and medical care with the appropriate providers, and help them navigate and overcome critical barriers to obtaining health and mental health services (e.g. getting to appointments, cost of care).

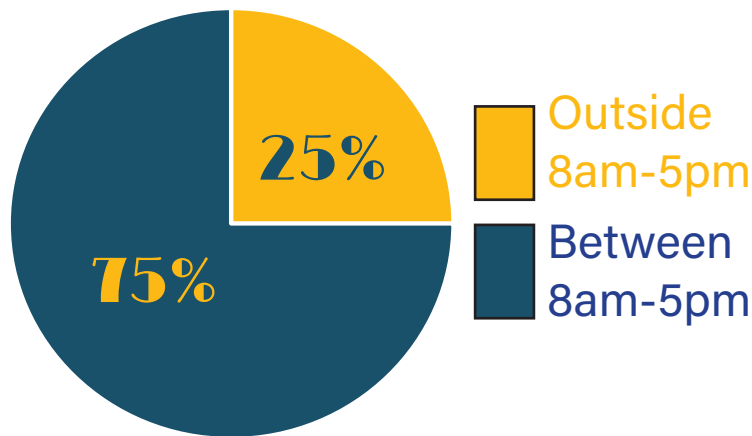


SD23 Metrics-AMC

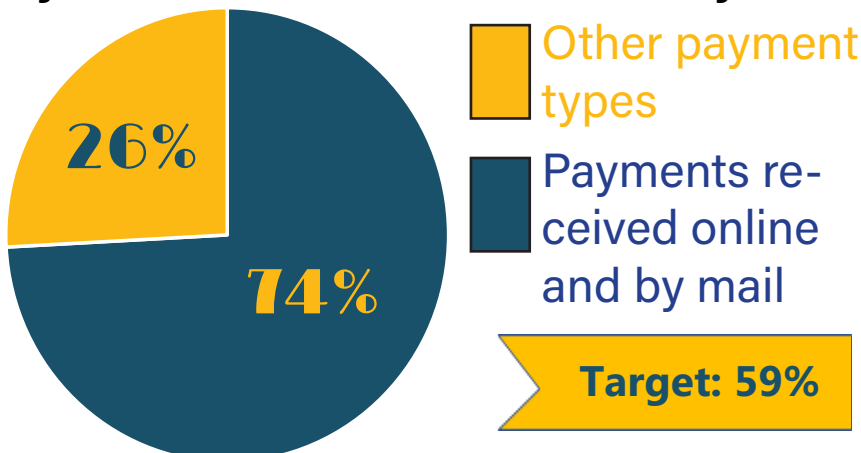
SD4: Number and percentage of instances where people access court services other than in person and outside normal business hours (e.g. phone, mobile application, online, expanded hours)

AMC offers services via in person, phone, mail, email, online, in the community, in multiple locations, and during non-traditional hours to make it easier and more convenient for individuals to handle court business. This measure tracks the percentage of customers who utilize court services outside of normal business hours, defined as 8am-5pm Monday-Friday, and how many payments were made by methods other than in person. The measure helps determine how court services are being used and enables the Court to allocate its resources to best meet the needs of the public. Historically, almost 30% of the operational hours are outside of traditional hours and the average percentage of payments made by mail and online has been over 59%. Operational hours were decreased April-September due to the pandemic.

Annual Operational Hours of AMC



Payments Recieved Online and By Mail



SD2:

% of people who agree they were treated fairly during our enforcement and judicial processes:

52%

Target: 53%

1/1/2019-12/31/2019*

Every year, the City of Austin administers a community survey to assess citywide satisfaction with the delivery of major city services and to determine community priorities as part of the City's ongoing planning process.

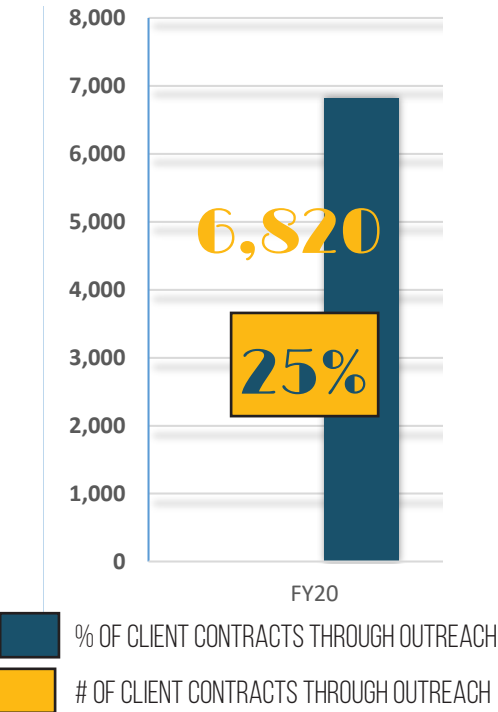
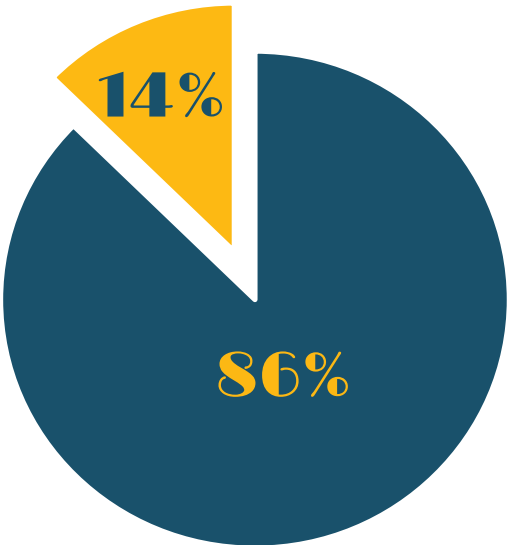
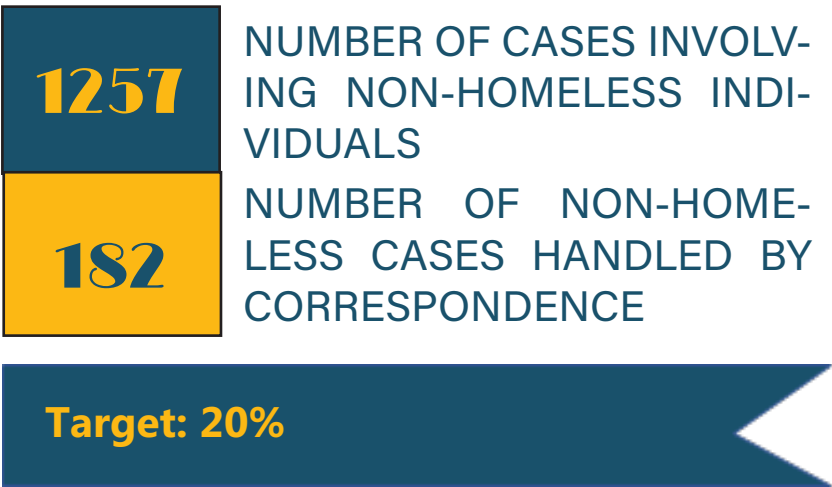
There are several contributing factors affecting this measure's trend, including the overall community relationship with and perception of the criminal justice system, specifics of a case, and which parties the individual came into contact with during their enforcement and judicial processes.

The outcome of cases also plays a large role in the perception of fairness. AMC strives to ensure that staff is trained on equity, implicit/explicit biases, and the proper application of laws to guarantee that cases are adjudicated fairly and impartially.

*NOTE: 2020 DATA FOR THIS MEASURE CANNOT BE PROVIDED DUE TO THE SOURCE SURVEY BEING POSTPONED.

SD4a: Number and Percentage of instances where people access court services other than in person and outside normal business hours - Downtown Austin Community Court, Correspondence Cases

DACC was established to address quality of life and public order offenses occurring in the downtown Austin area utilizing a restorative justice court model. DACC offers alternatives to fines and fees for defendants to handle their cases such as community service restitution and participation in rehabilitation services. Defendants who reside outside of a 40-mile radius from DACC are offered an opportunity to handle their case through correspondence action, meaning the entire judicial process can be handled through email or postal mail. Correspondence action eliminates an undue burden requiring a defendant to travel back to Austin to appear for their case and allows for quicker access to court services of Austin residents by reducing the number of individuals required to appear for their case. Being above or below the stated target is dependent on the number of Class C Misdemeanors citations written by the Austin Police Department; however, DACC will continue to identify cases where correspondence action is appropriate and offer it as an adjudication process.



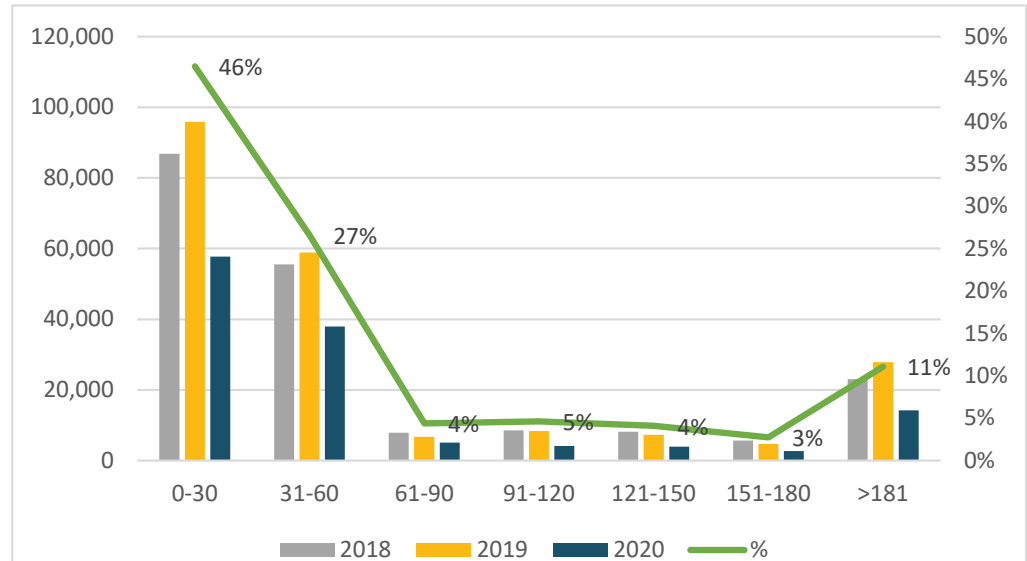
DACC’s priority population consists of individuals experiencing homelessness and the program’s main goal is to permanently stabilize individuals experiencing homelessness. To effectively serve these individuals, DACC created an Intensive Case Management (ICM) Program, which uses a person-centered and housing-focused approach. The ICM Program focuses on rehabilitating and stabilizing individuals using an evidenced-based model of wraparound interventions to help them achieve long-term stability. Because individuals participating in case management are currently experiencing homelessness, case managers must actively seek their clients in the community through outreach activities and, often times, work on behalf of the client via collateral engagement with other social service and housing providers. This measure highlights case management activities accomplished via outreach and collateral engagement.

SD23 Metrics-AMC and DACC

SD5: Number and percentage of court cases that are adjudicated within case processing time standards

Austin Municipal Court

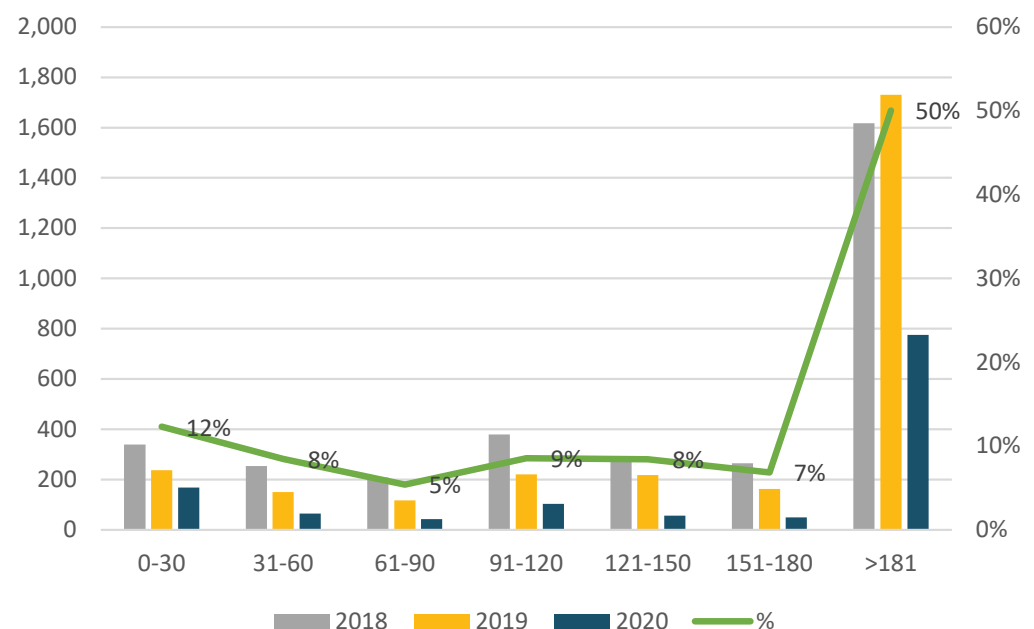
AMC is dedicated to processing cases efficiently and in alignment with nationally established time standards to reduce delay and ensure timely justice. Cases are typically adjudicated within 30-180 days. If case processing time standards are consistently exceeded, the overall administration of justice may be compromised resulting in inequitable outcomes and the loss of public trust. AMC monitors the length of time it takes to process cases and makes necessary adjustments to ensure compliance with time standards.



Number and Percentage of AMC Cases Adjudicated Within Case Processing Time Standards

Downtown Austin Community Court

DACC is committed to processing cases efficiently and in alignment with nationally established time standards to reduce delays and ensure timely justice, but cases related to individuals experiencing homelessness typically take longer than 180 days to adjudicate due to the case management activities associated with these cases. Case management activities include but are not limited to acquiring birth certificates, Social Security cards, accessing substance use, mental health and medical services, and acquiring permanent housing. Cases related to individuals not experiencing homelessness are typically adjudicated within 30-180 days.



Number and Percentage of DACC Cases Adjudicated Within Case Processing Time Standards

DACC monitors the length of time it takes to process cases and makes necessary adjustments to ensure compliance with time standards.

SD23 Metrics-DACC

SD6:

Number and % of all cases granted alternative form of adjudication (e.g. community service) in lieu of monetary penalties for those not able to pay

79%

Target: 75%

10/1/2019-9/30/2020

DACC offers alternatives to fines and fees for defendants to handle their cases such as community service restitution and participation in rehabilitation services. This measure highlights how DACC motivates individuals to handle their cases in a manner that is non-punitive and does not create a barrier for individuals in their future endeavors. Individuals experiencing homelessness are DACC's priority population and the program's main goal is to permanently stabilize these individuals by providing person-centered and housing-focused wraparound services.

**AMC currently only tracks community service completed. When our new case management system is implemented, we will track and report community service ordered.*

