



## OFFICE OF STATE ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS ANNUAL REPORT 2022

225 Peachtree Street, NE, Suite 400, Atlanta, Georgia 30303  
[www.osah.ga.gov](http://www.osah.ga.gov)



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## A Letter from the Chief Judge



It goes without saying that the last few years have been extraordinary for both OSAH and the world. The onset of a global pandemic made us rethink and adjust the ways we lead our everyday lives. Phrases like “social distancing” and “N95 masks” worked their way into our lexicon, all while the health and safety of our loved ones remained foremost in our minds.

Throughout this time, OSAH kept its mission front and center: to serve the citizens of Georgia by timely and impartially resolving disputes involving state agencies. Thanks to the work of our small but dedicated staff, our Atlanta office never once closed its doors during the pandemic, as our judges continued to hold calendars for thousands of cases throughout the state (even if we had to do so by phone or while wearing masks). As a result, OSAH has never faced a backlog of cases.

OSAH’s early embrace of new technology also served us well during the pandemic, as our judges pivoted to using new tools such as VOIP, Zoom, and GoTo Meeting. Having gone 100% paperless, OSAH also provides litigants with full online access to their case files via a secure platform.

No doubt the coming years will present challenges, new and familiar. Yet from what I have seen OSAH achieve during this unprecedented time, I am confident that only further success awaits. As always, it remains a privilege to serve this great state.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Malihi". The script is fluid and cursive.

Michael Malihi

# OSAH Staff

## Administrative Law Judges



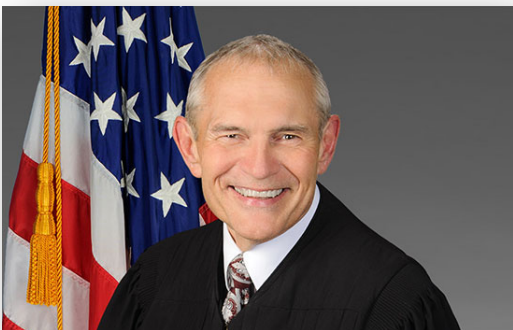
Chief Judge Michael Malihi



Judge Barbara Brown



Judge David Langston



Judge Steven Teate



Judge Patrick Woodard

## ANNUAL REPORT 2022



Judge Carol Walker-Russell



Judge Ana Kennedy



Judge Ronit Walker



Judge Stephanie Howells



Judge Kimberly Schroer



Judge Charles Beaudrot



## ANNUAL REPORT 2022



Judge Shakara Barnes



Judge John Fry



Judge Lisa Boggs

## Attorneys

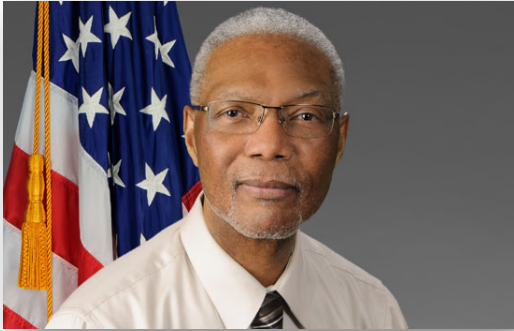


Dominic Capraro  
General Counsel



Jessica Wang  
Staff Attorney

## Clerk's Office



Larry Parker  
Chief Clerk



Jason Rouse  
Deputy Chief Clerk & eCourt Specialist

## Information Technology



Charmaine Hooke-Powell  
Chief Information Officer



## Administrative Staff



Renata Bareza  
Executive Legal Assistant



Rachel Braddock  
Case Management Assistant



Devin Hamilton  
Case Management Assistant



Grant Mintz  
Budget Director



Kristan Moses  
Case Management Assistant



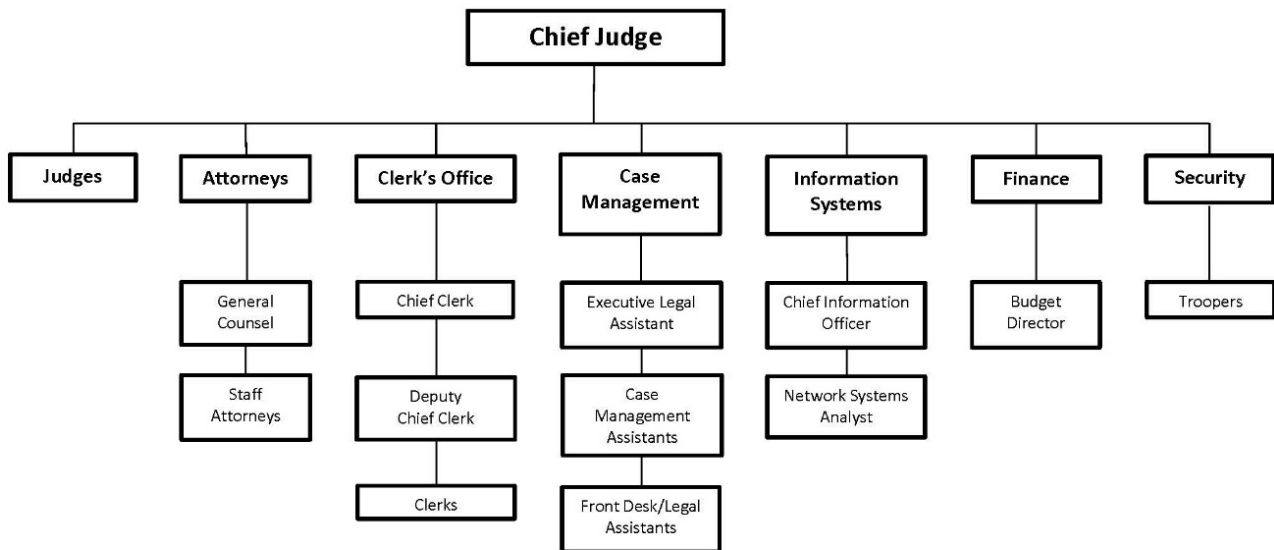
Tiana Petreshock  
Front Desk/Legal Assistant



Ana Rodriguez  
Front Desk/Legal Assistant

NOT PICTURED: Evelyn Gertsch, Clerk; Hazel Jackson, Case Management Assistant; Chelsea Unschuld, Case Management Assistant; and Delores Waters, Clerk.

## OSAH Staff Organizational Chart



# **OSAH**

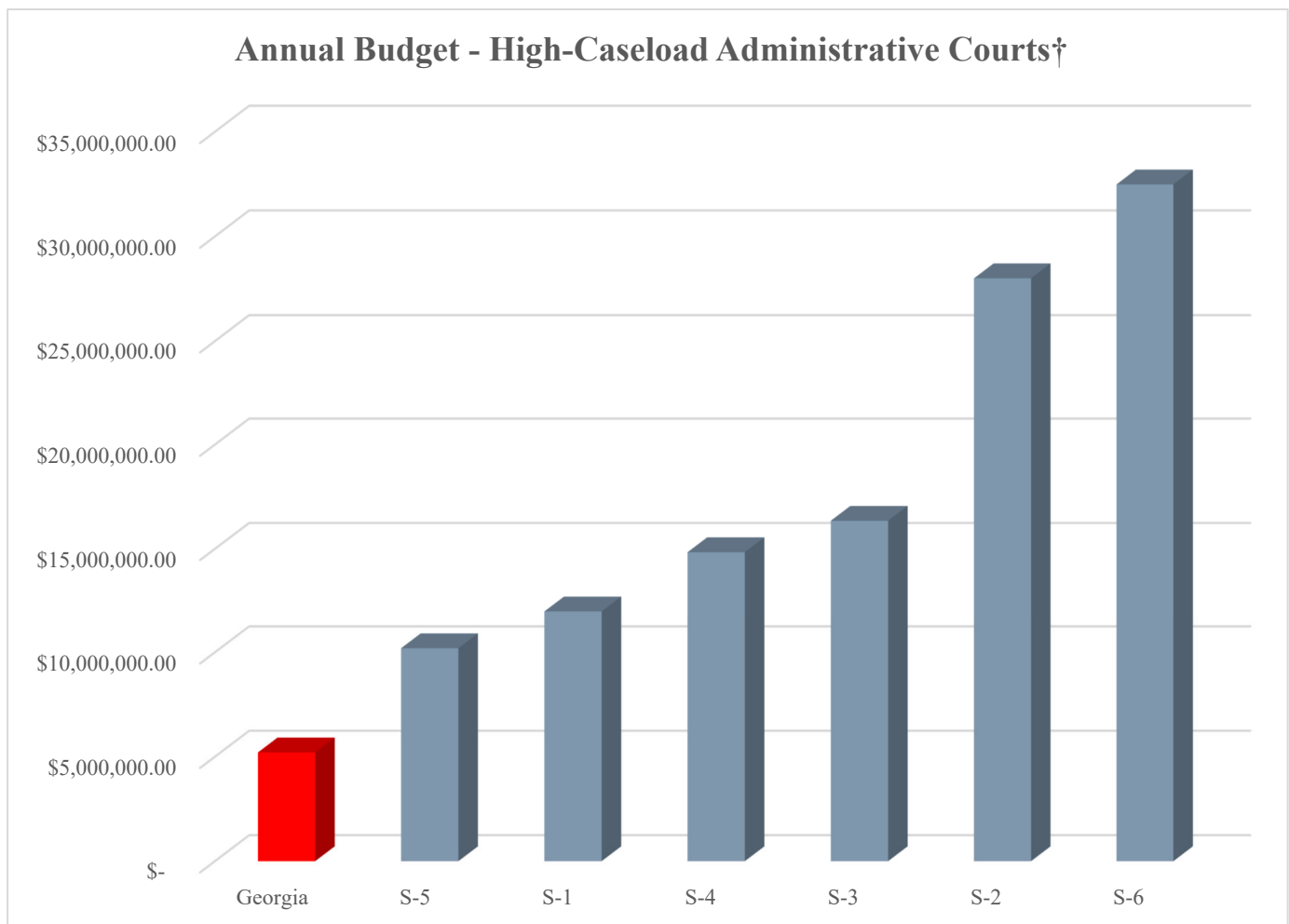
# **Facts and Figures**

## ANNUAL REPORT 2022

### Fiscal Responsibility

OSAH practices outstanding fiscal responsibility, as evident by OSAH's allocated annual budget and the cost per case.

Compared to other administrative courts with similarly high caseloads, **OSAH saves taxpayers at least \$5 million per year.**



Source: State of Louisiana, 2021 Comparison of States with Centralized Administrative Hearings Tribunals. Each administrative court included in the study, except Georgia, has been coded with the letter "S" signifying "state/district," and a number. These codes are the same on all graphs in this section.

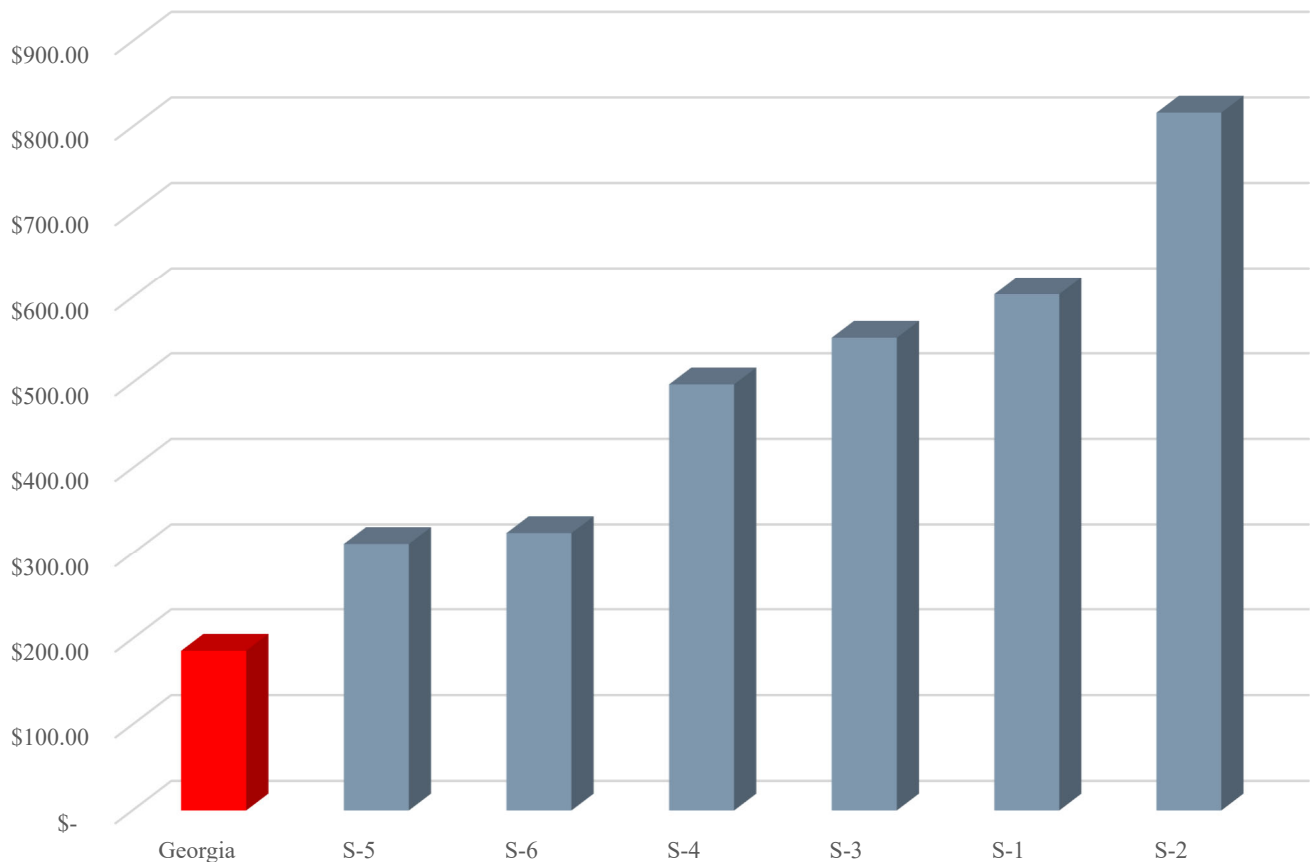
\*Based on FY2021 data, the most recent data available for the national study.

† "High caseload" = states/districts whose administrative law courts receive more than 15,000 cases in a year.

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OSAH's average cost per case was \$186— approximately 64% less than the average of \$518 among administrative courts with similarly high caseloads.\*

**Cost Per Case - High-Caseload Administrative Courts†**



*Source: State of Louisiana, 2021 Comparison of States with Centralized Administrative Hearings Tribunals. Each administrative court included in the study, except Georgia, has been coded with the letter "S" signifying "state/district," and a number. These codes are the same on all graphs in this section.*

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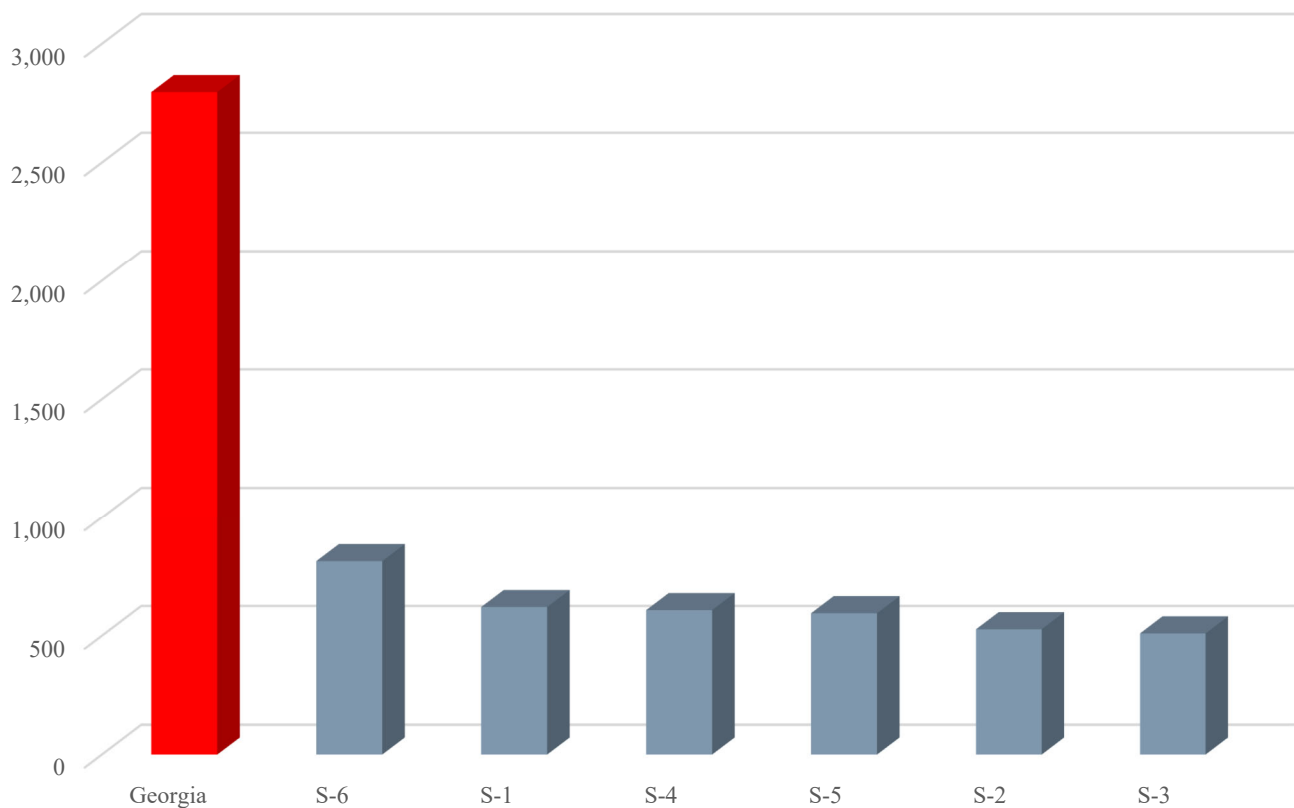
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### Workflow Efficiency

OSAH operates at a high level of efficiency, as demonstrated by its ability to manage high caseloads at a low cost.

OSAH's average case count per judge was 2,797—more than 3 times the case counts in other administrative courts with similarly high caseloads.\*

**Cases Per Judge - High-Caseload Administrative Courts†**



*Source: State of Louisiana, 2021 Comparison of States with Centralized Administrative Hearings Tribunals. Each administrative court included in the study, except Georgia, has been coded with the letter "S" signifying "state/district," and a number. These codes are the same on all graphs in this section.*

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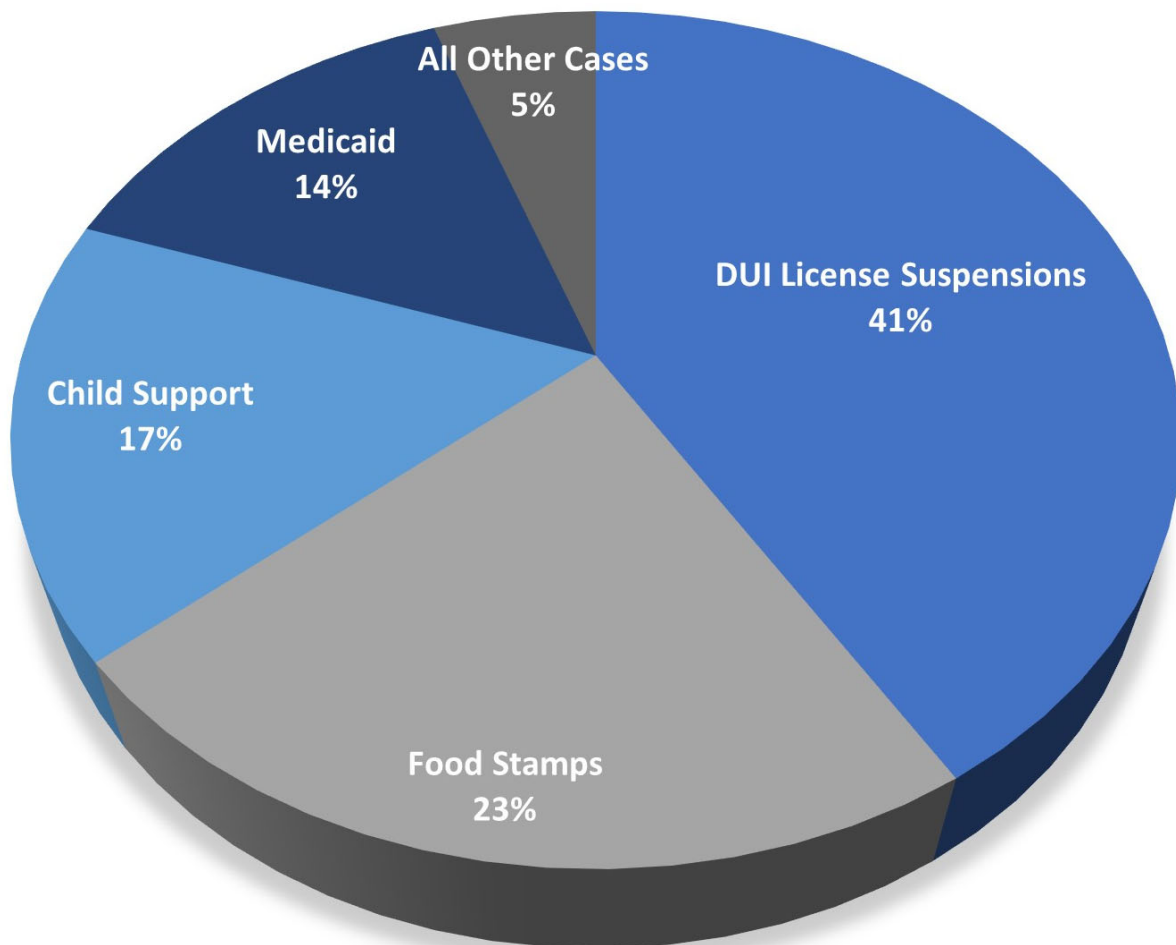
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### Caseload distribution

OSAH docketed **27,971** cases in FY2021.

Below is a breakdown of the types of case received.

Case Referral Distribution – FY2021



### How does OSAH remain one of the best-performing administrative courts in the United States?

Despite having the one of the highest caseloads in the United States, OSAH continues to provide one of the lowest costs per case. This is made possible by 26 years of innovative thinking and cost-reducing techniques.

#### **Calendar Consolidation**

High-volume case types are consolidated in to one calendar date and location in different geographic circuits each month. This decreases travel costs and ensures that citizens of Georgia have an opportunity to be heard promptly at 50 hearing locations throughout the state each month.

#### **Utilization of Part-Time Judges**

OSAH utilizes part-time judges to handle its high caseload and maintain the quality and timeliness of each case's disposition. This leads to a decrease in personnel costs and the optimization of human capital.

#### **Low Real Estate and Security Costs**

The low real estate and security costs are a direct result of OSAH's longstanding partnerships with local governments and courthouses. OSAH pays for real estate at only one out of 50 hearing locations – the Atlanta headquarters, which also houses OSAH's staff. All other hearing locations are local courthouses that willingly lend their space for OSAH hearings. In addition, many of the courthouses extend their on-site security to OSAH at no cost, thus saving OSAH from hiring its own officers.

#### **Digital Hearing Recordings**

The optimization of digital hearing recordings has nearly eliminated OSAH's need for very costly court reporters. This leads to a significant decrease in personnel costs.

#### **Technology**

The development of eCourt, OSAH's electronic case management system, has significantly streamlined administrative processes. All case files are now paperless and accessible to staff wherever they are in the State, via a secure login.

## Sample of Litigants

Citizens of the State of Georgia  
Office of the Governor  
Care Management Organizations  
County animal-control authorities  
Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities  
Department of Community Health  
Department of Driver Services  
Department of Early Care and Learning  
Department of Economic Development  
Department of Education  
Department of Human Services  
Department of Juvenile Justice  
Department of Labor  
Department of Natural Resources  
Department of Public Health  
Department of Public Safety  
Department of Revenue  
Department of Transportation  
Georgia Composite Medical Board  
Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission  
Georgia Real Estate Appraisers Board  
Georgia Real Estate Commission  
Office of the Secretary of State – Elections Division  
Office of the Secretary of State - Professional Licensing Board Division  
Office of the Inspector General  
Peace Officer Standards and Training Council  
Professional Standards Commission  
State Road and Tollway Authority

## Court Locations

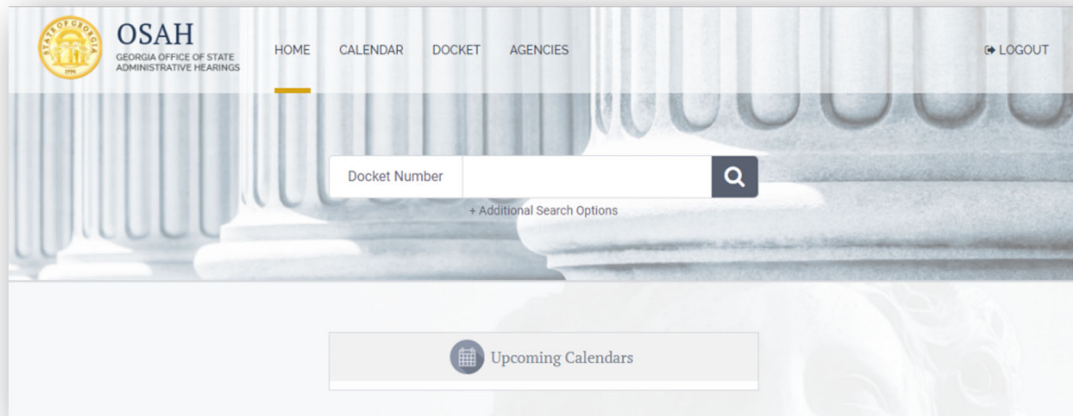
In addition to Atlanta, every month OSAH's judges adjudicate cases throughout the State of Georgia in 50 locations at no additional cost to the taxpayers. Each color corresponds to a judge and reflects the regions they cover.



# **Trends and Developments**

### Continued eCourt Expansion

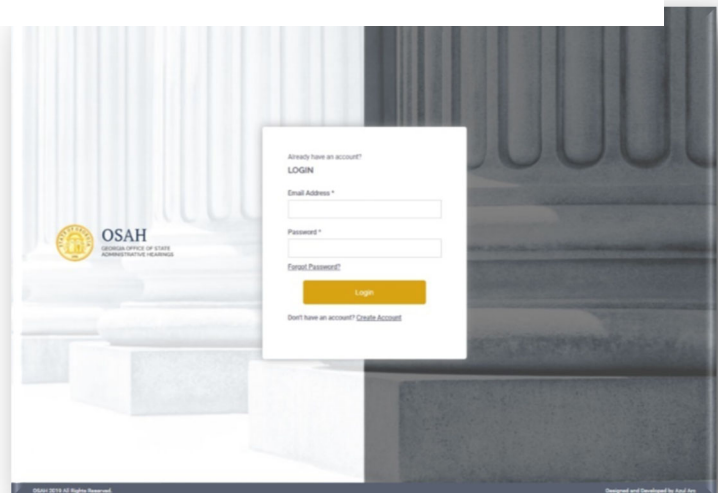
For the past four years, OSAH's staff have been using a web-based case management system called eCourt. This platform has automated many of OSAH's operations and led to financial savings, staffing efficiency, and increased access to case records. **Most importantly, eCourt has allowed OSAH to go 100% paperless with case files.**



During the past year, OSAH has continued expanding eCourt's features, including a notifications system for judicial staff and an application for sending mass emails to litigants.

### Public access made easy with ePortal

ePortal is a secure, web-based platform that provides all parties in a case the option to create an account and view all their case information (including all documents filed in their case). Users have a variety of tools at their disposal, including a notifications dashboard and a portal that allows for the electronic filing of documents with OSAH.



Since its launch in 2020, OSAH has been rolling out ePortal for more and more case type, and its staff has promoted its use to the public. Plans are under way to add a “e-service” feature to the module, so filers can electronically serve opposing parties using ePortal. To learn more, go to <https://eportal.osah.ga.gov>.



## Continuing Response to COVID-19

**Open for operation:** Due to the statewide judicial emergency order first issued in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of OSAH's traditional hearing locations throughout the state closed or limited OSAH's access. OSAH, however, kept its Atlanta location open throughout all of 2020 and 2021, thus ensuring the public always had access to needed adjudicative services. Several calendars normally held in metro counties were moved to the Atlanta courtrooms, where hearings took place in accordance with the guidelines issued by DPH and the CDC.

**Remote hearings:** Additionally, to avoid a potential backlog caused by the unavailability of hearing locations, OSAH's judicial staff transitioned to holding remote hearings. OSAH fortunately was already well-equipped for this change, as its courtrooms in Atlanta have videoconferencing technology that allows witnesses or other individuals to testify from remote locations. The judges also continued utilizing the videoconferencing tool GoTo Meeting, while also incorporating the more sophisticated Zoom application.

**Telework:** OSAH also had implemented a VOIP, or internet-based, phone system the year before, which allowed staff members more opportunities for telework. With the VOIP system, coupled with the online case management system, staff members were ready and able to fulfill some of their job responsibilities remotely when shelter-in-place measures took effect in early 2020.

**Return to normal operations:** As of June 1, 2021, in-person hearing calendars had resumed at nearly all of OSAH's pre-pandemic hearing locations. However, hearings by remote means remain available as needed. (*See below.*).

## Legislation Affecting Remote Hearings

During the 2021 legislative session, the General Assembly passed H.B. 553, which clarified that OSAH may conduct remote hearings by means other than telephone (i.e., video) with the parties' consent. H.B. 553 also gave the judge discretion to allow non-party witnesses to provide testimony remotely, thus ensuring that proceedings will not be stymied due to the inability of a witness to attend a hearing in person.

This legislative change ensures OSAH can adjudicate cases efficiently, while at the same time preserving the public's right to open and fair hearings.

The new law went into effect on April 29, 2021. *See* O.C.G.A. § 50-13-15(e).

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