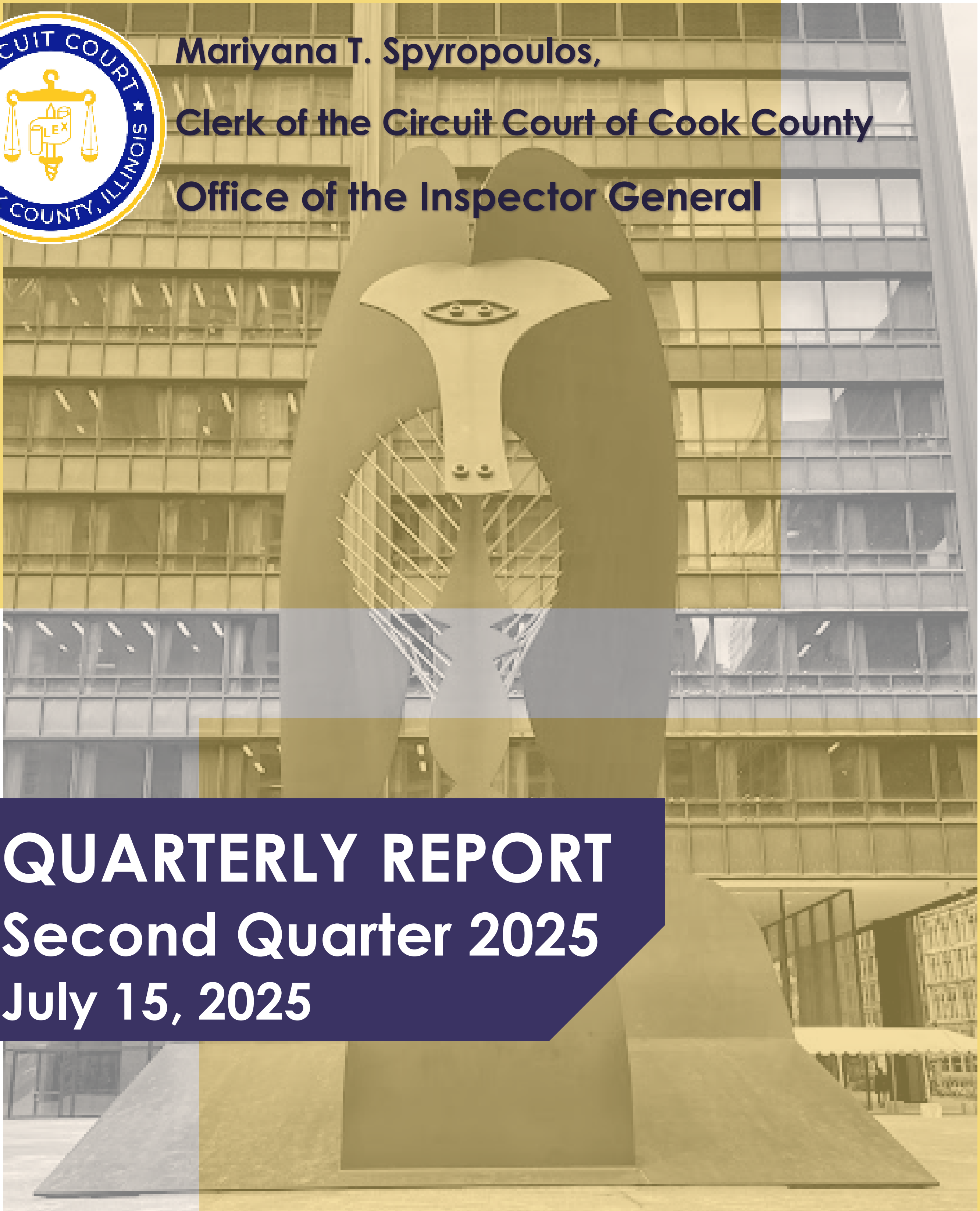
Mariyana T. Spyropoulos,

Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County

Office of the Inspector General



QUARTERLY REPORT

Second Quarter 2025

July 15, 2025

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To the Honorable Clerk Mariyana Spyropoulos, the Executive Staff, and all residents whom we serve:

Enclosed for your review is the public report on the operations of the activities of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County (Clerk's Office) for April 1, 2025, through June 30, 2025.

About the Office of Inspector General

OIG's mission is to promote economy, effectiveness, efficiency, and integrity in the operation of the Clerk's Office. To this end, OIG works to detect, deter, and prevent corruption, fraud, waste, mismanagement, and misconduct in the operation of the Clerk's Office, with integrity and professionalism. OIG conducts investigations and issues summary reports of investigations with findings and recommendations for corrective action.

Executive Summary

Q2 statistics demonstrate promising trends for the Clerk's Office and reflect the hard work of our employees. **OIG received 30% fewer complaints in Q2 than in Q1, while compliments increased by 71%.**

The OIG Team has continued to experience significant growth and development throughout Q2. OIG has recently become fully staffed, with Ty Thomas joining OIG as its fourth IG Investigator. Deputy IG Sharon Cannon and IG Investigator Thomas plan to complete their AIG certification at the August 2025 AIG Inspector General Institute. Despite an increase in submissions, OIG staff have been working hard to process and investigate complaints in a timely yet thorough manner. In Q2 OIG closed 48% of its active case investigations, as compared to 25% in Q1. OIG anticipates that its newly achieved full staffing will improve closure rates further. OIG has also continued to make considerable infrastructure, policy and operational efficiency progress. Highlights this quarter include:

- **Policy and Process Development**: Formalized multiple internal policies, processes and procedures.
- **Investigation Tools**: Designed new template for case file summary report to include a credibility analysis and format for writing allegations.
- **Conflict of Interest Safeguards**: Implemented a Conflict of Interest Policy.
- **Resource and Training Development**: Set up a centralized document library for investigation-related documents and training guides.
- **Operational Efficiency Enhancements**: Updated the submission tracking system with smart features.

OIG is committed to continuously improving policies and processes, promoting integrity, and being responsive to public submissions and internal operations. OIG will continue this work moving forward.

I | INTAKES

1 | Submissions Received this Quarter

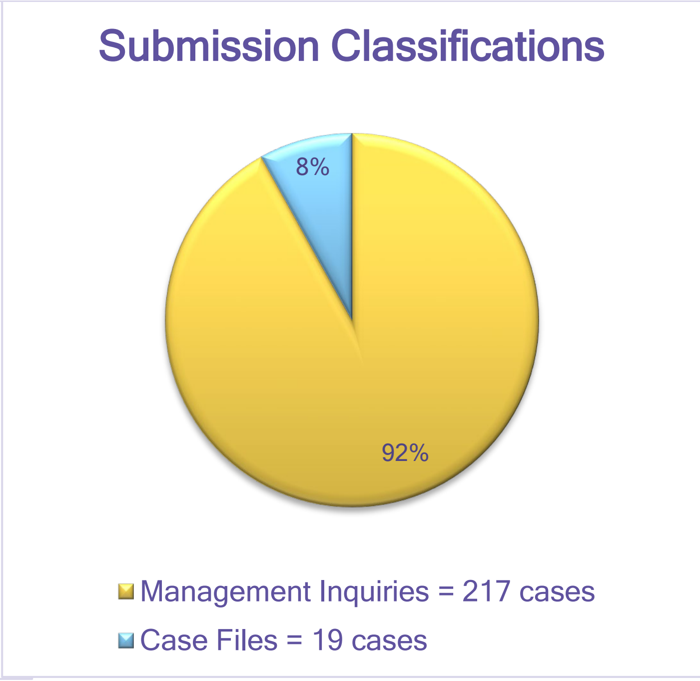
OIG receives submissions through the OIG telephone hotline, mail, web, email, fax, direct report, and a QR code customer service survey (CSS). OIG categorizes submissions into management inquiries (MIs) and case files (CFs). MI is a submission that does not result in an OIG investigation. MI may be a complaint, inquiry, or a compliment. OIG refers MIs to the appropriate external agencies or internal departments for resolution. OIG follows up on referrals to internal departments to ensure that any complaints were resolved. CF is a submission that falls within OIG's jurisdiction and, based on preliminary review, warrants further investigation.

During Q2, OIG received a total of 236 submissions through the OIG telephone hotline, mail, web, email, fax, direct report, and the QR Code Customer Service Survey.

Of the 236 total submissions, OIG classified 217 as MIs, and 19 as CFs.

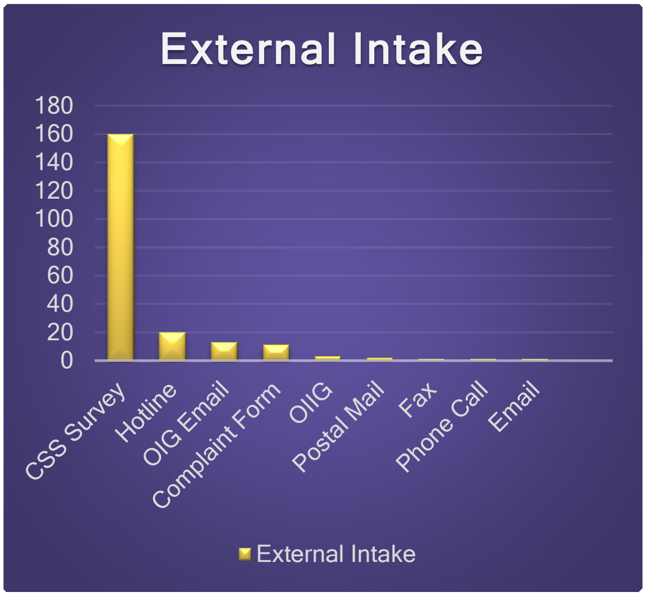
- Of the 19 CFs, 16 were submitted by employees and 3 by non-employees.
- Of the 217 MIs, 207 were from non-employees and 10 were from employees.

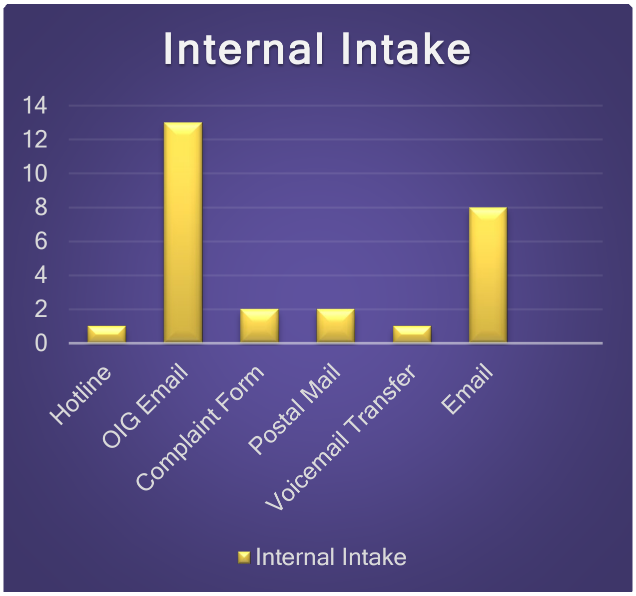
Of the 239 total submissions, Clerk's Office employees submitted 26 and non-employees submitted 210.



2 | Intake Sources

During Q2, OIG received 212 submissions from external sources. Of these 212 external submissions, OIG received 160 submissions via the Customer Service Survey, 20 from the confidential hotline, 13 from the OIG email, 11 from the complaint form, three from the OIIG, two via postal mail, one each via fax, phone call, and direct email. OIG received 13 submissions from internal sources. OIG received eight submissions via direct email, two via the complaint form, one via OIG email, one from the confidential hotline, and one via voicemail transfer. OIG combined duplicative submissions from more than one source into a single MI.





3 | Pending Cases at the Beginning of Q2

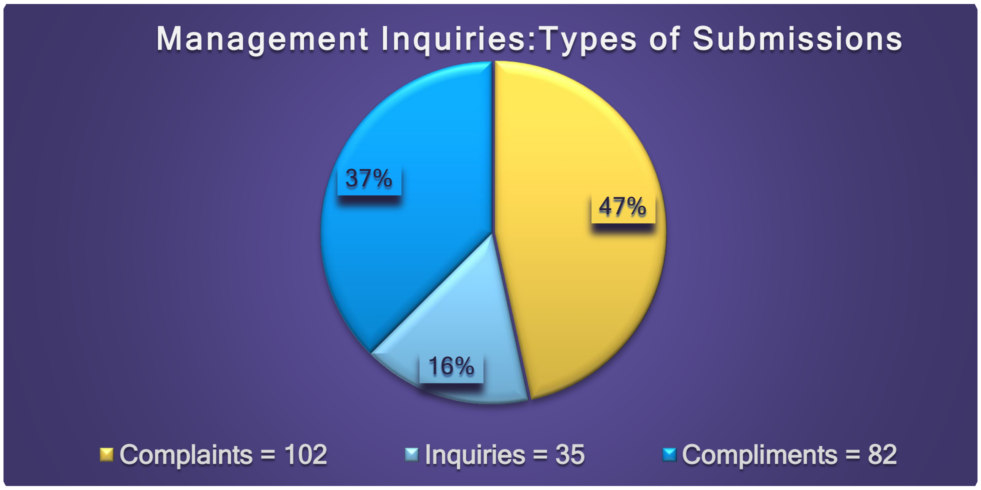
At the beginning of Q2, the OIG had 32 open pending cases: 21 CFs and 11 MIs. Of the 21 CFs pending, one was from Q4 2022, one was from Q4 2024, and 19 were from Q1 2025. By the end of Q2, 12 of the 21 pending CFs were closed and all 11 of the pending MIs were closed. In Q2, OIG closed the CF from Q4 2022 and the CF from Q4 2024. Thus, all remaining pending CFs were opened in 2025.

4 | Total Active Cases in Q2

Of the 268 active cases during Q2, OIG classified 228 as MIs and 40 as CFs. OIG closed 219 of the 228 MIs and 19 of the 40 CFs. At the end of Q2, there were 21 pending CFs and 9 pending MIs.

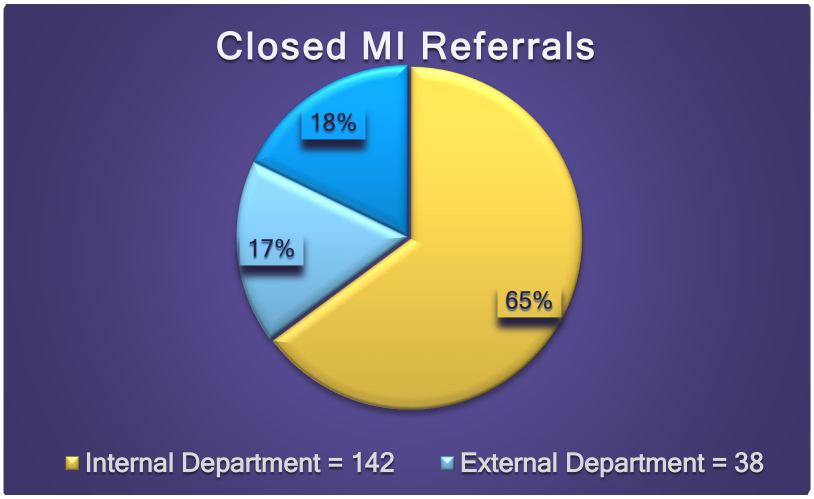
5 | Management Inquiries: Types of Submissions

OIG classifies MIs as complaints, inquiries, and compliments. Of the 219 MIs closed during Q2, OIG classified 102 as complaints, 35 as inquiries, and 82 as compliments.

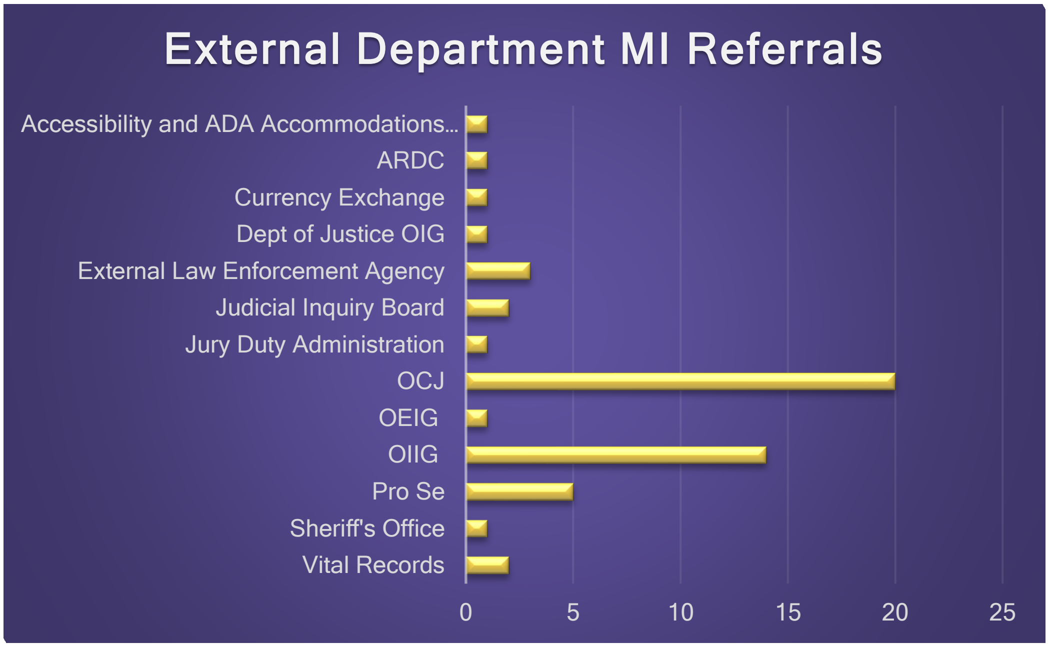


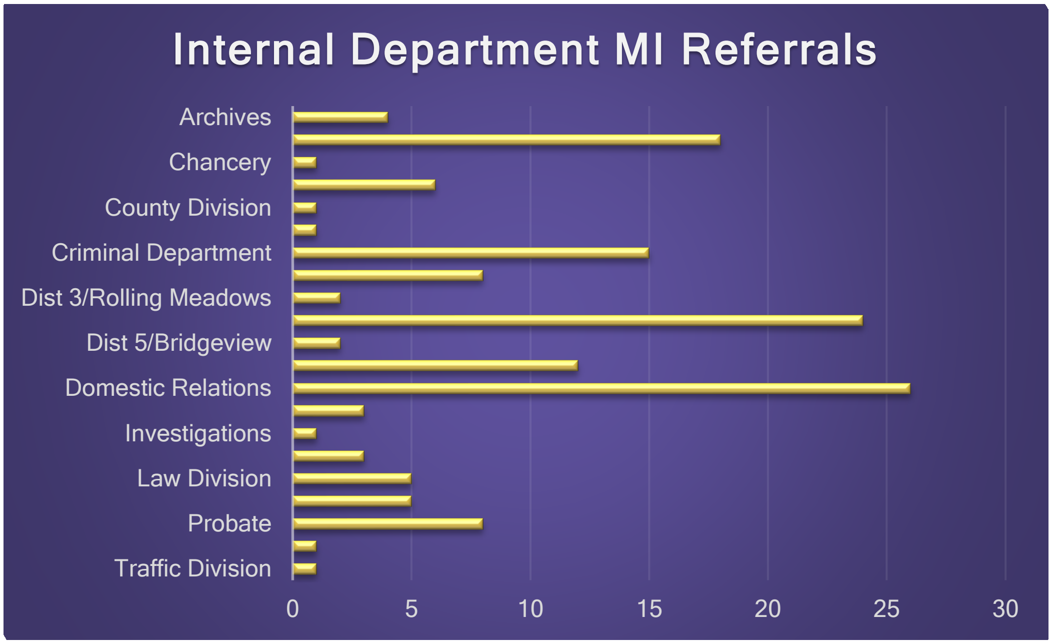
6 | Referrals

Of the total 219 MIs closed during Q2, OIG referred 137 to internal departments, 43 to external departments, and administratively closed 39.[1]



[1] Note: Some submissions were referred to more than one department.



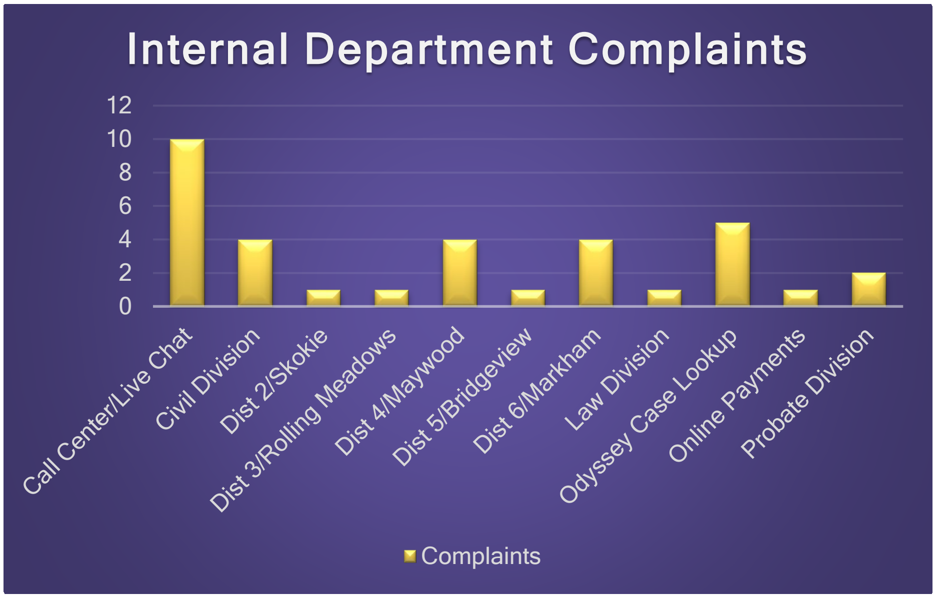


7 | Complaints: Categories

Of the 102 **complaints**, OIG classified 32 as internal department complaints and referred 31 to external agencies. OIG was unable to categorize the remaining 39 submissions for various reasons, including that they were incomplete, incoherent, provided incorrect information or no contact information for the complainant.

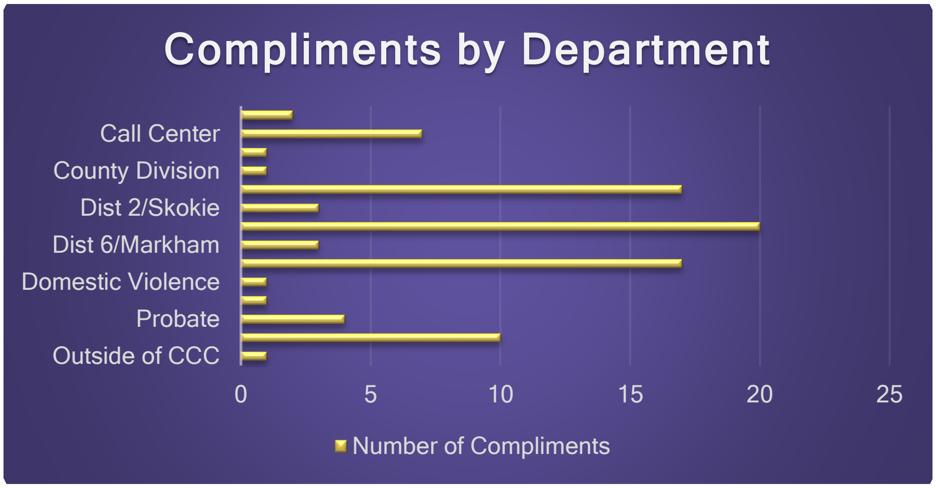
8 | Complaints: Internal Department Breakdown

Of the 32 internal department complaints, OIG referred 10 to the Call Center and Live Chat, five to MIS regarding Odyssey Case Lookup, four to the Civil Division, four to District 6/Markham, and four to District 4/Maywood. OIG referred 2 to the Probate Division, and one each to District 2/Skokie, District 3/Rolling Meadows, District 5/Bridgeview, Online Payments and the Law Division. Some complaints mentioned more than one department and OIG referred them to each department referenced.



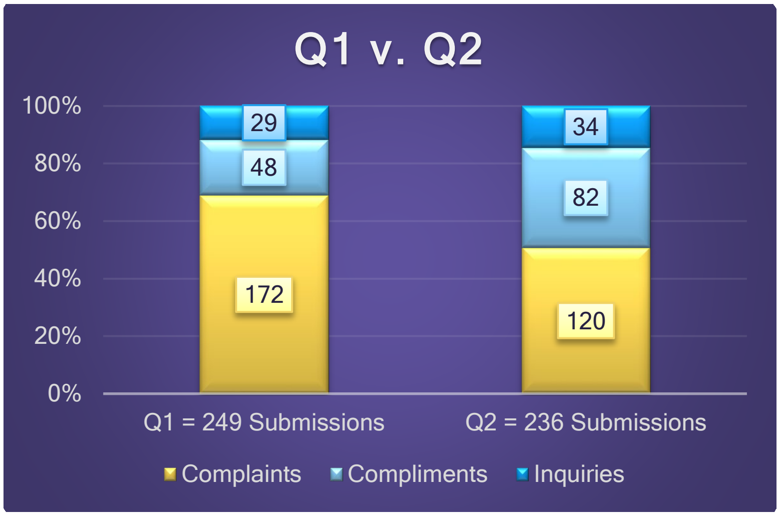
9 | Compliments: Internal Department Breakdown

Of the 82 **compliments**, internal departments with the highest number of compliments for Q2 included **District 4/Maywood** (20 compliments), **Domestic Relations** (17 compliments), and the **Criminal Department** (13 compliments), and the **Call Center** (seven compliments). In addition, the Clerk's Office as a whole received 10 compliments.



10 | Intake: Q1 v. Q2

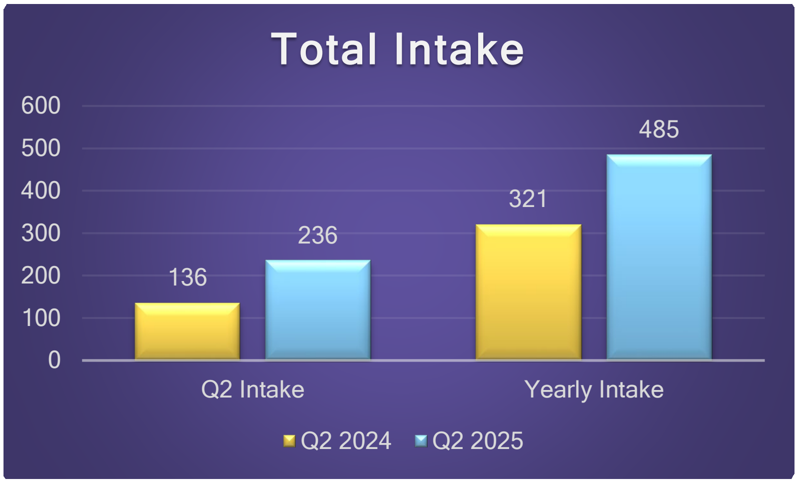
In Q2, overall submissions (MIs and CFs) decreased by approximately 5% from Q1, from 249 to 236 total submissions. Overall **complaints intake decreased by approximately 30%** and **compliments intake increased by approximately 71%.** In Q1, complaints comprised about 69% of the total intake (172 of 249 submissions). In Q2, complaints dropped to approximately 50% of the total intake (120 of 236 submissions). Compliments comprised about 19% of the intake in Q1 (48 of 249) and increased to nearly 35% (82 of 236) of the total intake in Q2.



In Q2 OIG closed 19 of the 40 total active CFs (47.5%). In Q1, OIG closed 7 of the 28 total CFs (25%).

11 | Intake: 2024 v. 2025

In Q2 2025, the overall submission intakes (MIs and CFs) were 236, a nearly 74% increase from 136 in Q2 2024. OIG received 321 total submissions in Q1 and Q2 of 2024. OIG saw a more than 50% increase during the same period in 2025, with a total of 485 submissions.



II | SUMMARY REPORTS

During Q2, OIG closed 19 CFs. OIG closed eight CFs via summary report and administratively closed the remainder. The following is a general description of the cases closed via summary report, the OIG's findings, and the basis for the findings.

CF 25-05-381

OIG investigated allegations regarding workplace misconduct by a Shakman-exempt manager. OIG sustained allegations that the exempt manager violated Clerk's Office policies. OIG found by a preponderance of the evidence that the exempt manager treated an employee adversely based on a protected characteristic. Witnesses stated that the manager made numerous derogatory comments, micromanaged the employee's day-to-day tasks, spoke in a condescending tone, and made dismissive remarks about the employee's competence in front of others. OIG determined that the manager's behavior was deliberate, repeated, and that it interfered with the employee's job performance.

OIG also sustained the allegation that the exempt manager bullied their staff. Witnesses stated that the exempt manager repeatedly raised their voice, acted in a dismissive manner and interacted with staff in an aggressive or intimidating manner. OIG found evidence that the manager's behavior was not isolated and that it ultimately affected employees' morale, performance, and well-being.

CF 25-03-242

OIG received a report of a $100 check missing from a Clerk's Office department. The investigation revealed that the check had been inadvertently given to an unintended recipient. OIG found that the error occurred due to the systemic failure to adequately secure the financial document prior to deposit. Specifically, the evidence showed that employees in the division used a horizontal desk organizer to separate incoming and outgoing documents, including checks. The investigation revealed that financial clerk 1 placed the check in the second tier of a horizontal desk organizer at their station. Financial clerk 2 then approached the desk organizer and moved the check from the second tier to the top tier of the desk organizer. Financial clerk 1, unaware that the check had been moved, inadvertently handed the documents from the top tier of the organizer, including the check, to an unintended recipient. The error was discovered in a timely manner and the issuer subsequently stopped payment on the check. The division's Shakman-exempt manager implemented corrective measures to prevent similar issues from reoccurring. OIG made numerous recommendations to improve the chain of custody controls for handling financial documents and sensitive information. OIG recommended, *inter alia*, that financial documents be immediately processed, a chain of custody log be maintained, and checks that are not immediately processed remain stored securely.

CF 25-03-241

OIG investigated allegations by an employee involving unauthorized entry into their office, theft of property, and defacement of Clerk's Office property. OIG reviewed surveillance camera footage, conducted interviews and assessed the available evidence. OIG found insufficient evidence to substantiate the theft and defacement allegations because multiple individuals had access to the office and the complainant admitted they sometimes left the door unlocked. OIG further found no evidence of retaliation in management reassigning the complainant to a different team and moving them from a private office to a shared space. OIG discovered that workspace and assignment changes affected multiple employees and were not isolated to the complainant.

CF 25-02-054

OIG investigated a complaint that a Court Clerk acted inappropriately in confronting a Judge in their chambers and allegedly intimidated and verbally threatened the Judge. OIG found that the clerk's actions in privately confronting the Judge in their chambers after closing the door, standing over the Judge, directing a veiled threat, and raising their voice violated Clerk's Office policies. OIG found that the clerk made an intimidating and/or threatening statement to the Judge, suggesting the clerk would have "gone off" if not for a family member's advice to remain calm. Additionally, OIG found that the clerk willfully bypassed the appropriate reporting channels. The clerk admitted their approach was a significant error in judgement. OIG recommended that the clerk remain out of the rotation for the Judge's courtroom.

CF 25-01-030

OIG investigated several incidents involving alleged financial discrepancies by a financial clerk. In each instance, OIG found that the financial clerk issued unauthorized credits or fee waivers after accepting cash payments from customers. OIG found that the clerk failed to properly process the funds and, despite registering waivers or credits on the customers' behalf, did not return the cash to the customers.

First, OIG found that the financial clerk accepted a $100 cash payment from a customer, issued unauthorized credit to the customer's account and was observed placing the cash in a personal drawer, not the cash register. OIG found the financial clerk did not follow cash handling procedures during the transaction. Second, the OIG found that the financial clerk issued an unauthorized $200 credit to a customer's account after the customer made a $1,200 cash payment. The financial clerk gave the customer a receipt for $1,000. The customer later discovered the discrepancy and reported it. The clerk was unable to account for the $200 discrepancy and said they did not recall the transaction. Third, OIG found that the financial clerk issued a $100 fee reduction on a $100 cash payment by a customer without the customer's knowledge and without returning the funds to the customer.

OIG subsequently reviewed the financial clerk's transaction history, which revealed the Clerk had processed a disproportionately higher number of transactions than other financial clerks at their division. OIG is currently undertaking a full audit of the financial clerk's transactions. OIG recommended increased oversight, improved document protocols, and performance of random transaction audits.

CF 25-01-005

OIG investigated how an unauthorized court order purporting to have been signed by a judge and bearing an unrelated judge's stamp was uploaded to the electronic court docket. First, OIG found that no Clerk's Office employee forged the judge's signature on the order. Rather, OIG found by a preponderance of the evidence that the forged signature was executed by a third party.

Second, OIG found insufficient evidence to determine which Clerk's Office employee stamped the unauthorized order. OIG determined that neither the judge presiding over the case nor the judge whose stamp was used approved the unauthorized order. OIG concluded by a preponderance of the evidence that while a Clerk's Office employee most likely stamped the fraudulent order, too many employees had access to the stamp and may have placed it on the order. Thus, OIG was unable to identify the employee who had stamped the order.

Third, OIG found by a preponderance of the evidence that a manager improperly uploaded the fraudulent court order to the electronic docket system. The manager accepted full responsibility for uploading the unauthorized court order and admitted their error. OIG found that the manager's error was caused by inattention exacerbated by their heavy workload combined with staff shortages during the relevant period. OIG recommended that Clerk's Office staff store judges' stamps in a secure area with limited access and that all court clerks and management be reminded to closely review all documents for accuracy before stamping or uploading them to the electronic case docket.

CF 24-10-513

OIG received a complaint alleging negligence by two Clerk's Office employees across three incidents from July to October 2024, that involved delays in court call setup, toner refills, and access requests. Through interviews, the OIG discovered that systemic issues such as leadership turnover, understaffing, unclear procedures, and communication gaps, caused the delays, not the negligence of either employee. The OIG recommended formalizing procedures, improving communication, developing manuals, tracking inventory, and establishing processes for toner requests.

CF 22-10-496

This investigation is summarized in a separately published report.

III | OIG PROJECTS

In Q2, OIG formalized numerous policies, methods, and procedures.

To streamline the investigative process, OIG created a new template for Case File Summary Reports. The new template includes a credibility analysis section, definition of applicable burdens and standards of proof, and guidelines for allegation writing.

To maintain the integrity of its investigations, OIG implemented a Conflict of Interest Policy and Form. The policy requires IG staff assigned to investigations to attest in writing that they have no known conflict of interest precluding them from investigating an assigned matter.

To maintain consistency, OIG created a document library that includes up-to-date information on administrative processes, including intake, investigations, and record-keeping. OIG also created various training manuals to assist with cross-training and out of office coverage. Additionally, OIG created new-hire materials.

To improve accuracy and efficiency, OIG updated the submission tracking spreadsheet with drop-down menus, auto-fill, and auto-highlight features. OIG also created tracking mechanisms for meetings, case assignments, and transfers. OIG overhauled digital file organization to reduce duplication and increase ease of access.

Conclusion

In Q3, OIG will continue to strive for the highest levels of excellence as established by the AIG. OIG plans to publish its Rules and Regulations, update its website, and ensure that OIG staff continues to engage in professional development, training, and education to better serve the taxpayers of Cook County.

Thank you for your time and attention. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this report further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,

Katarina Durcova
Inspector General

CC: Michael Ciaccio, Chief of Staff
James Chandler, General Counsel
Chad Gearig, Chief Human Resources Officer
Craig Wimberly, Senior Policy Advisor