



Office of the Inspector General
Mariyana T. Spyropoulos
Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County

Third Quarter 2026

To the Honorable Clerk Mariyana T. Spyropoulos, the Executive Staff, employees of the Clerk's Office, and all residents whom we serve:

Enclosed is the report on the operations and activities of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County (Clerk's Office) for July 1, 2026, through September 30, 2026. The OIG's mission is to promote economy, effectiveness, efficiency, and integrity in the operation of the Clerk's Office. We carry out this mission by identifying and addressing misconduct, strengthening internal processes, and promoting accountability through independent review.

Key Q3 Highlights

In Q3, the OIG saw a significant increase in overall intake from 144 submissions in Q2 2026 to 292 submissions in Q3 2026. Most of the submissions originated from the Customer Service Survey. The influx from last quarter may be partially attributed to a residual malfunction of the survey's QR code in certain locations, which caused issues with receipt of customer submissions. By the beginning of Q3, the OIG had concluded auditing the QR codes to ensure any technical issues were rectified.

Despite the increase in overall intake, the OIG saw a decrease in overall complaints pertaining to the Clerk's Office. In Q2, complaints involving the Clerk's Office were 54% of the total intake, compared to Q3 with only 45% of the total intake. However, the most significant change was the increase in customer compliments. The OIG received 121 customer compliments for Q3, 48% higher than any other quarter since the launch of the Customer Service Survey in February of 2025. In Q4 2026, the OIG will continue to maintain its commitment to strengthening policies and procedures, promoting integrity, and improving responsiveness to the public and internal operations.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Katherine McKay', with a stylized, cursive-like script.

Katherine McKay
Inspector General

CC: Michael Ciaccio, Chief of Staff
James Chandler, General Counsel
Chad Gearig, Chief Human Resources Officer

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I | INSIDE THE OIG: HOW WE OPERATE

1 | Understanding the Investigative Process

Over the past year, the OIG has focused on strengthening how it reviews complaints, conducts investigations, and reaches findings. This section provides an overview of the Office's approach to promote transparency and help employees and the public better understand what to expect.

2 | How Matters Are Assessed

Every submission received by the OIG undergoes an initial review to determine:

- Whether it falls within OIG jurisdiction
- Whether it alleges potential misconduct or policy violations
- Whether sufficient information exists to proceed

Matters that meet these criteria may be opened as investigations. Others may be resolved through referral, guidance, or administrative closure.

3 | How Investigations Are Conducted

When the OIG opens an investigation, it gathers and evaluates evidence using a consistent, structured approach. This may include:

- Interviews of complainants, accused individuals, and witnesses
- Review of documents, communications, and policies
- Analysis of video, electronic records, or other available evidence

The OIG assesses credibility based on consistency, corroboration, and supporting documentation.

4 | How Findings Are Reached

The OIG applies a preponderance of the evidence standard, meaning that an allegation is sustained when it is more likely than not that the conduct occurred. Findings fall into two primary categories:

- Sustained – sufficient evidence supports the allegation
- Not Sustained – insufficient evidence to support the allegation

5 | What Happens After an Investigation

At the conclusion of an investigation, the OIG may:

- Issue recommendations for discipline or corrective action
- Recommend training, policy clarification, or operational changes
- Refer matters to appropriate departments for further action

The OIG does not impose discipline but provides findings and recommendations to leadership.

6 | Commitment to Consistency and Fairness

The OIG is committed to:

- Applying policies consistently across all cases
- Conducting objective, independent reviews
- Maintaining confidentiality to the extent permitted by law
- Completing investigations in a timely and thorough manner

7 | Looking Ahead

The OIG will continue to enhance transparency by expanding public-facing resources, including additional guidance on its processes and expectations for those participating in investigations.

II | INTAKE & CASE ACTIVITY

1 | Intake Overview

During Q3 2026, the OIG received 292 total intake submissions. The OIG receives submissions through the OIG telephone hotline, mail, web, email, fax, direct report, and a QR code customer service survey (CSS). Some submissions are received from more than one source. The OIG categorizes submissions into administrative matters (AMs) and case files (CFs).

A CF is a submission that falls within the OIG's jurisdiction, and based on preliminary review, warrants further investigation. An AM is a submission that does not result in an OIG investigation. An AM may be a complaint, customer inquiry, or a customer compliment. The OIG refers AMs to the appropriate external agencies or internal departments for resolution. Ten days after the OIG refers a customer's submission to an internal department, the OIG follows-up to ensure that any complaints or customer inquiries were addressed and resolved.

2 | Intake Categories

The 292 Q3 submissions were categorized as follows:

- **15 Case Files (CFs)** – matters requiring investigation
- **277 Administrative Matters (AMs)** – complaints, customer inquiries, or customer compliments resolved without a full OIG investigation

Approximately **93% of submissions**, 272 in total, **originated from non-employees**, reinforcing the OIG's role as both an internal and external accountability mechanism.

3 | Intake Sources

The 272 external submissions this quarter originated from the following sources:

- 180 via Customer Service Survey (CSS)
- 37 via the OIG email
- 20 via the online OIG complaint form
- 19 via the confidential OIG hotline
- 2 via internal department referrals
- 7 from external offices

4 | Caseload Overview

In Q3 2026, the OIG maintained strong closure rates. The numbers below include matters which were carried over from previous quarters.

Total active matters: 306

- Administrative Matters: 284
- Case Files: 22

Closures: 280

- Administrative Matters: 273 closed
- Case Files: 7 closed

5 | Administrative Matters

Breakdown of Closed Administrative Matters

The OIG classifies administrative matters into one of three categories: complaints, customer inquiries, or customer compliments. In Q3, the total number of closed administrative matters increased roughly 100% compared to Q2 when the OIG closed 136 administrative matters. Again, this influx from last quarter may be partially attributed to a residual malfunction of the survey's QR code in certain locations, which caused issues with receipt of customer submissions. The 273 closed administrative matters in Q3 were categorized as follows:

- 142 complaints
- 10 customer inquiries
- 121 customer compliments

Complaint and Inquiry Outcomes

Some submissions were referred to more than one department. The OIG received 152 complaints and customer inquiries, which were referred or closed administratively as follows:

- 69 were referred to internal departments
- 52 were administratively closed
- 31 were referred to external agencies:
 - 18 to Office of the Chief Judge (OCJ)
 - 5 to Office of the Independent Inspector General (OIIG)
 - 3 to External Law Enforcement
 - 2 to the Cook County State's Attorney's Office
 - 1 each to the ARDC, Judicial Inquiry Board, Judges of Lake County, Pro Se Self-Represented Litigant Center, and Legal Aid Chicago

6 | Complaint Trends

Customer service remained the largest source of closed non-employee complaints, accounting for 73 of the 133 non-employee closed complaints (55%), up from 52% in Q2. The nature of the customer service complaints continues to show that most complaints pertain to customer-employee interactions. Some customer complaints encompassed more than one category. The percentages below are calculated from a total of 51 confirmed customer complaints received this quarter.

Categories of confirmed internal department customer service complaints:

- 31% - unprofessional conduct (16)
- 14% - unclear or inaccurate information (7)
- 21% - lack of responsiveness (11)
- 18% - technical issues (9)
- 10% - administrative issues (5)
- 4% - long in-person wait times (2)
- 2% - phone/transfer issues (1)

Compared with Q2, complaints regarding long in-person wait times and unprofessional conduct showed little change, while **there was an increase in technical issues** (9 complaints this quarter compared to 2 in Q2) **and lack of responsiveness** (11 complaints this quarter compared to 3 in Q2). Administrative issues emerged as a new category as the OIG saw an increase in delayed filings, delayed case updates, and administrative errors.

7 | Customer Compliments

The OIG received 121 customer compliments during Q3, which is the highest number of compliments per quarter since the launch of the Customer Service Survey in February of 2025 (and a 48% increase from the previous highest compliment number of 82 in Q2 2025). Departments with the highest recognition included:

- Domestic Relations (52)
- District 4/Maywood (30)
- Archives (13)
- Law Division (4)
- 3 each for Call Center, District 2/Skokie, District 3/Rolling Meadows, and the CCC in general
- 2 each for Civil Division, County Division, District 6/Markham, and Probate Division
- 1 each for Chancery Division and Odyssey Case Lookup

III | INVESTIGATIONS

During Q3, the OIG closed seven investigations, including one sustained matter resolved through a summary report, and six matters which were closed administratively. The following is a general description of the case with sustained findings.

CF 26-06-256

During a review of camera footage for an unrelated case, the OIG discovered an operations manager prop open the evidence room door with a fire extinguisher and leave it ajar for multiple hours. The OIG opened an investigation and reviewed approximately 20 additional randomly selected days of camera footage. Over the multiple day camera review, the OIG found that the operations manager regularly left hard and soft evidence unsecured by leaving the evidence room door open and unattended. In fact, the operations manager was seen leaving the evidence room door unsecured and unattended for a total of 12 hours and 13 minutes across the days randomly selected for review. With the door left unattended and unsecure, unauthorized personnel could easily gain access to guns, drugs, or other weapons.

Additionally, the camera footage review revealed that the operations manager displayed an autopsy photo to several office clerks without authorization or justification. The autopsy photo was not public and was an impounded exhibit that should have been sealed and protected from unauthorized viewers. The OIG found that the operations manager showed the autopsy picture to unauthorized office clerks solely for their personal interest and curiosity, not for a business purpose.

Based on its investigation, the OIG recommended that the CCC:

- Review and update all relevant policies, especially as to the proper securing of evidence, handling of sensitive materials, and confidentiality of impounded documents;
- Standardize policies for evidence managers to ensure all evidence rooms follow the same processes and procedures;
- Limit access to cases and documents which are not identified as public to clerks and/or limited supervisory staff through the use of access codes restricting access; and
- Train additional supervisory staff members to be able to carry out evidence manager duties across all districts.