

PROBATE COURT
IMPACT OF OVERALL JUDICIAL BRANCH REDUCTION

The Hillsborough County Probate Court judicial position has now been vacant since July 2008. The court is staffed by 5 different Probate Court judges, who are handling the caseload. The weighted caseload studies show a need for 10+ judge days per week to run the Hillsborough County probate court. There were 9 judge days a week in Manchester before Hillsborough North operations were temporarily relocated to Nashua; there are now approximately 8 days a week with 3 days in the Manchester District Court.

One of the largest areas of growth in the probate caseload is in guardianship of incapacitated adults, which are approaching 1,000 new cases a year, and involve elderly individuals who need someone appointed often to make important medical decisions on their behalf. Many of these cases involve petitions for expedited hearings, which must be held within 14 days. These deadlines are getting increasingly difficult to comply with.

A backlog in management of estate and trust accounts is expected in the counties with staff vacancies (Merrimack, Strafford, Hillsborough, and Cheshire) over the next several weeks. Case processing time is monitored and probate staff from other counties is "floated" when possible. Court closing, due to unpaid furlough days, however may result in longer processing time for accounts in all counties and delays in hearings, particularly in Hillsborough where we now have reduced court days.