

Washington Courts Incident Reports

282 critical incidents
between 2017 and 2021

73

Threats to staff

13

Bomb Threats

57

Positive outcomes from
security staff intervention

66

Incidents involving
individuals with weapons

20

Security breaches
presenting a threat to court
staff or the public

15

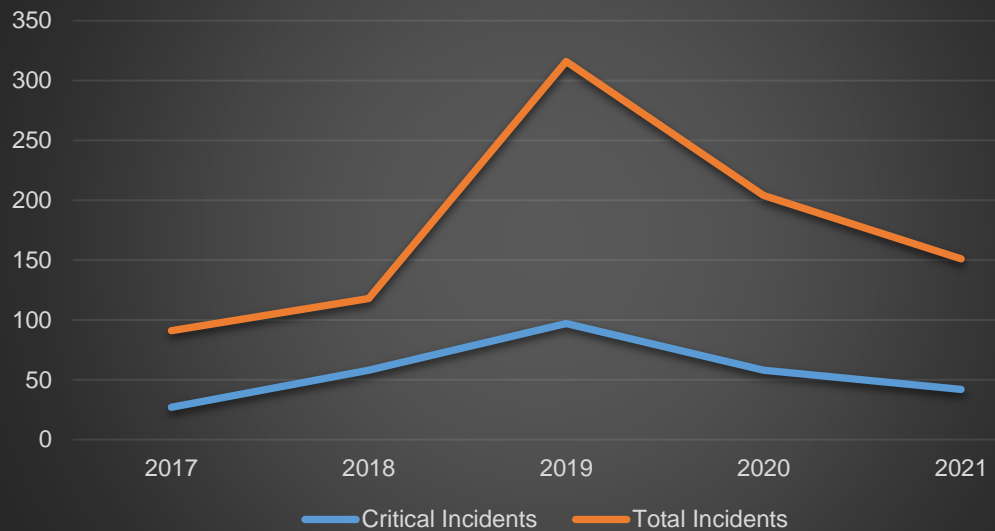
Physical Assaults

*Does not include injuries sustained while taking
defendant into custody

Washington Courts began requiring incident reports to be submitted in 2017 as part of GR 36.

879 incidents have been submitted through the system between 2017 and December 2021.

Incident Reports



*Data was compiled using incidents submitted to the Court Security Incident Log on inside.courts.wa.gov

Overall incidents appear to have decreased during the pandemic while the severity of the incidents during that time has not decreased at the same rate.

10% of reported incidents occurred in locations identified as priority sites for funding by the Court Security Equipment Grant.

"[...]something has sparked parent [...].Parent has emailed AOC, DCYF, State ombuds office, court participants, and court administration. This has escalated to social media postings of death threats and physical harm, including phone and address of judicial officer." – November 2021

"Are you a cop? Do you want me to kill you? If you don't leave right now, I will kill you." – March 2021

"I will be out of prison soon. And then you will all pay. So run to your precious cops. At the end of the day, they can't protect you from someone like me. The most dangerous man of all is a man with nothing left to lose." – February 2021

"I will [expletive] kill all of them. I will make the state pay for what they did to me." – January 2021

"I am extremely fearful now that [redacted] will follow through with his threats to kill me. [...] There are no cameras around the building. [...] he stated he knows where I work and my name and position." – July 2020

"I then had to turn around and tell the guy to "back off" [...] he had a hypodermic needle with the cap off of it [...] in his hand ready to use. He came toward me even closer and gestured for me to come toward him and hug him." – August 2020

Critical Incident Criteria

Critical incident definition:

A submitted incident that presented a significant threat of physical harm or fear of physical harm, or exposed a security flaw that could be exploited to cause harm.

The following criteria were used to screen for critical incidents:

- Physical harm occurred to non-law enforcement staff or the public.
- Physical harm was threatened or implied to non-law enforcement staff or the public.
- A weapon was seized in the courthouse.
- A security flaw that demonstrated an ability to access secure areas was revealed.
- Security intervened in an escalating situation that could have become violent.

While AOC acknowledges the importance of the data of all events submitted, the following types of incidents were screened out of consideration as a critical incident:

- Incidents in which the behavior of an individual could not cause harm (ex. throwing papers at a window).
- Incidents submitted from false alarms (ex. a bag left on grounds).
- Incidents in which individuals were on the grounds and acting in a way that was causing concern, but not in a way intended to threaten or present clear security risks (ex. individuals upset in court areas).
- Incidents where individuals were concealing contraband to not bring it into the courthouse.
- Incidents that took place in jail facilities within a courthouse unless specifically involving court staff.
- Incidents in which injuries to law enforcement occurred as a result of taking defendants into custody on Judge's orders if no other individuals were involved. This was treated as a job-related risk that would not be affected by changes in court security.
- Incidents in which law enforcement brought firearms into courthouses while on personal business and complied with security.
- Incidents in which vandalism occurred with no victim present, and did not present a specific threat to the security of the courthouse (ex. a window broken during protests, but no entry attempted).
- Incidents occurred outside of courthouses that did not directly involve courthouse staff or the public visiting the court.
- Incidents where individuals were upset by a ruling unless their behavior was specifically noted as presenting a threat.