

OAKLAND COUNTY
SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT AND
OAKLAND COUNTY PROBATE COURT

2014 ANNUAL REPORT



Oakland County
Sixth Judicial Circuit Court and
Oakland County Probate Court



**1200 North Telegraph Road
Pontiac, MI 48341**

**248-858-1000 Circuit Court
248-858-0260 Probate Court**

To learn more about the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court and the
Oakland County Probate Court, please visit their websites at:

www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit

www.oakgov.com/courts/probate

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*The Honorable
Nanci J. Grant
Circuit Court Chief Judge*



*The Honorable
Elizabeth Pezzetti
Probate Court Chief Judge*

We are pleased to present the 2014 Annual Report of the Oakland County Circuit and Probate Courts. The report provides statistics, program descriptions, and other details that explain how the Courts operate. We hope that you will find it interesting and informative.

As part of our commitment to excellence within the Courts, we continuously examine court processes and operations to ensure that we are fulfilling our functions in the most efficient, timely, and impartial manner possible. What is difficult to assess, however, is the public's perception of how well the Courts are fulfilling their obligations. In order to seek feedback from court users, the Oakland County Circuit and Probate Courts participated in a Public Satisfaction Survey initiated by the Michigan Supreme Court. For the past two years, in conjunction with courts around the state, the Circuit and Probate Courts distributed surveys to members of the public who were at the courthouse during the survey period. The questions were designed to address topics such as timeliness, how well the individual understood what happened in their case, and how they were treated by staff.

The survey results were very positive in all areas. For courts that are funded by the County, which includes the Circuit and Probate Courts, the survey responses indicated that 85% thought they were able to complete their business in a reasonable amount of time, 82% felt the way their case was handled was fair, and 94% felt they were treated with courtesy and respect by court staff. We will be looking at the full results as we focus on future changes and improvements.

We consider it our privilege to be a part of the judicial system in Oakland County. We look forward to continuing our combined efforts on behalf of its citizens.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nanci Grant".

Nanci J. Grant
Circuit Court Chief Judge

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Pezzetti".

Elizabeth Pezzetti
Probate Court Chief Judge

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**The Honorable
James M. Alexander**
Civil/Criminal Division
Business Court

[www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/
Pages/judges/alexander-
james.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/Pages/judges/alexander-james.aspx)



**The Honorable
Martha D. Anderson**
Civil/Criminal Division

[www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/
Pages/judges/anderson-
martha.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/Pages/judges/anderson-martha.aspx)



**The Honorable
Leo Bowman**
Civil/Criminal Division

[www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/
Pages/judges/bowman-leo.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/Pages/judges/bowman-leo.aspx)



**The Honorable
Mary Ellen Brennan**
Family Division

[www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/
Pages/judges/brennan-mary-
e.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/Pages/judges/brennan-mary-e.aspx)



**The Honorable
Rae Lee Chabot**
Civil/Criminal Division

[www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/
Pages/judges/chabot-rae.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/Pages/judges/chabot-rae.aspx)



**The Honorable
Lisa Gorcyca**
Presiding Judge
Family Division

[www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/
Pages/judges/gorcyca-lisa.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/Pages/judges/gorcyca-lisa.aspx)

JUDGES OF THE CIRCUIT COURT



**The Honorable
Nanci J. Grant**
Circuit Court Chief Judge
Civil/Criminal Division

[www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/
Pages/judges/grant-nanci.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/Pages/judges/grant-nanci.aspx)



**The Honorable
Shalina D. Kumar**
Civil/Criminal Division

[www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/
Pages/judges/kumar-shalina.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/Pages/judges/kumar-shalina.aspx)



**The Honorable
Denise Langford Morris**
Civil/Criminal Division

[www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/
Pages/judges/langford-
morris.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/Pages/judges/langford-morris.aspx)



**The Honorable
Cheryl A. Matthews**
Family Division

[www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/
Pages/judges/matthews-
cheryl.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/Pages/judges/matthews-cheryl.aspx)



**The Honorable
Karen McDonald**
Family Division

[www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/
Pages/judges/mcdonald-
karen.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/Pages/judges/mcdonald-karen.aspx)



**The Honorable
Phyllis C. McMillen**
Civil/Criminal Division

[www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/
Pages/judges/mcmillien-
phyllis.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/Pages/judges/mcmillien-phyllis.aspx)



**The Honorable
Rudy Nichols**
Circuit Court Chief
Judge Pro Tem
Civil/Criminal Division

[www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/
Pages/judges/nichols-rudy.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/Pages/judges/nichols-rudy.aspx)



**The Honorable
Colleen A. O'Brien**
Presiding Judge
Civil/Criminal Division

[www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/
Pages/judges/obrien-colleen.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/Pages/judges/obrien-colleen.aspx)



**The Honorable
Daniel Patrick O'Brien**
Civil/Criminal Division

[www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/
Pages/judges/obrien-daniel.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/Pages/judges/obrien-daniel.aspx)



**The Honorable
Wendy Potts**
Civil/Criminal Division
Business Court

[www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/
Pages/judges/potts_wendy.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/Pages/judges/potts_wendy.aspx)



**The Honorable
Michael Warren**
Civil/Criminal Division

[www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/
Pages/judges/warren-
michael.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/Pages/judges/warren-michael.aspx)



**The Honorable
Joan E. Young**
Family Division

[www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/
Pages/judges/young-joan.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/Pages/judges/young-joan.aspx)

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JUDGES OF THE PROBATE COURT



**The Honorable
Linda S. Hallmark**
Probate Court
Chief Judge Pro Tem

[www.oakgov.com/courts/probate/
Pages/judges/hallmark-linda.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/probate/Pages/judges/hallmark-linda.aspx)



**The Honorable
Daniel A. O'Brien**
Presiding Judge —
Guardianships,
Conservatorships, and
Mental Health

[www.oakgov.com/courts/probate/
Pages/judges/obrien-dan-a.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/probate/Pages/judges/obrien-dan-a.aspx)



**The Honorable
Elizabeth Pezzetti**
Probate Court
Chief Judge

[www.oakgov.com/courts/probate/
Pages/judges/pezzetti-
elizabeth.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/probate/Pages/judges/pezzetti-elizabeth.aspx)



**The Honorable
Kathleen A. Ryan**
Presiding Judge
Estates/Trusts

[www.oakgov.com/courts/probate/
Pages/judges/ryan-kathleen.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/courts/probate/Pages/judges/ryan-kathleen.aspx)

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CIRCUIT COURT BENCH

Sanford M. Green	1848–1852	James S. Thorburn	1963–1988	Barry L. Howard	1989–2001
Joseph Copeland	1852–1858	William R. Beasley	1966–1976	Deborah G. Tyner	1991–2006
James S. Dewey	1870–1874	Farrell E. Roberts	1967–1982	Rudy J. Nichols	1991–Present
Levi B. Taft	1873–1876	Daniel C. Devine	1966–1966	Denise Langford Morris	1992–Present
Aug C. Baldwin	1876–1880	Robert L. Templin	1967–1996	John J. McDonald	1993–2010
Silas B. Gaskill	1880–1882	William P. Hampton	1970–1976	Nanci J. Grant	1997–Present
William Stickney	1882–1888	Richard D. Kuhn	1973–2004	Joan E. Young	1997–Present
Joseph B. Moore	1888–1896	John N. O'Brien	1973–1993	Wendy L. Potts	1998–Present
George W. Smith	1896–1908	Robert B. Webster	1973–1982	Colleen A. O'Brien	1998–Present
Kleber P. Rockwell	1917–1921	Steven N. Andrews	1976–2008	Patrick J. Brennan	2001–2004
Frank L. Covert	1919–1933	Alice L. Gilbert	1978–1992	Rae Lee Chabot	2001–Present
Glenn C. Gillespie	1923–1934	Alice L. Gilbert	1995–2002	James M. Alexander	2001–Present
Frank L. Doty	1928–1965	Francis X. O'Brien	1977–1997	Michael Warren	2002–Present
Goodloe H. Rogers	1935–1935	Hilda R. Gage	1978–1996	Daniel Patrick O'Brien	2003–Present
George B. Hartrick	1935–1958	Bernard L. Kaufman	1979–1979	Martha D. Anderson	2003–Present
H. Russel Holland	1935–1963	Gene Schnelz	1979–2007	Mark A. Goldsmith	2004–2010
Clark J. Adams	1956–1973	George LaPlata	1979–1985	Cheryl A. Matthews	2005–Present
William J. Beer	1958–1980	Robert C. Anderson	1981–1998	Leo Bowman	2007–Present
Theodore Hughes	1959–1959	David F. Breck	1982–2000	Shalina D. Kumar	2007–Present
Stanton G. Dondero	1959–1965	Fred M. Mester	1982–2008	Lisa Gorcyca	2009–Present
Frederick C. Ziem	1959–1986	Norman L. Lippitt	1985–1989	Mary Ellen Brennan	2009–Present
Arthur E. Moore	1963–1976	Jessica R. Cooper	1987–2000	Phyllis C. McMillen	2010–Present
Philip Pratt	1963–1970	Edward Sosnick	1989–2012	Karen McDonald	2013–Present

PROBATE COURT BENCH

Dr. William Thompson	1821–1823	Alfred Crawford	1869–1872	Donald E. Adams	1960–1977
Nathaniel Millerd	1823–1826	Junius Ten Eyck	1872–1873	Norman R. Barnard	1963–1988
Smith Weeks	1826–1827	Joseph C. Powell	1873–1876	Eugene A. Moore	1966–2010
Gideon O. Whittemore	1827–1828	James A. Jacokes	1877–1880	John J. O'Brien	1975–1988
Williams F. Mosely	1828	Joseph C. Powell	1881–1884	Barry M. Grant	1977–2008
Ogden Clarke	1828–1832	Thomas L. Patterson	1885–1900	Sandra G. Silver	1988–2000
Stephen Reeves	1832–1844	Joseph S. Stockwell	1901–1909	Joan E. Young	1989–1997
M. LaMont Bagg	1845–1848	Kleber P. Rockwell	1909–1918	Wendy L. Potts	1997–1997
Michael E. Crofoot	1849–1856	Ross Stockwell	1917–1928	Linda S. Hallmark	1998–Present
Oscar F. North	1857–1861	Dan A. McGaffey	1928–1937	Elizabeth Pezzetti	2001–Present
Harry C. Andrews	1861–1863	James H. Lynch	1937–1938	Daniel A. O'Brien	2009–Present
Zephaniah B. Knight	1863–1868	Arthur E. Moore	1938–1963	Kathleen A. Ryan	2011–Present

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*Kevin M. Oeffner
Circuit Court
Administrator*



*Rebecca A. Schnelz
Probate Court
Administrator*

Elected Officials and Citizens of Oakland County:

Every year we prepare our Annual Report to offer readers information about the Courts' programs, projects, and accomplishments; to provide statistical information on caseload, juror use, revenues, and expenditures; and much more. We try to construct our Annual Report with the reader in mind by providing information that enhances access to the Courts and furthers the understanding of the judicial system in Oakland County.

We find that the act of preparing our Annual Report benefits us as much as, and perhaps even more than, the reader. It serves as a reminder of the challenges of the year just passed and the efforts undertaken by our judges and employees to meet those challenges. It also helps us to recall where we were and to see where we are going, and to remember that change may be inevitable, but we can never lose sight of the bedrock principles upon which these Courts are founded – the fair and impartial administration of justice without regard to status or standing.

We invite you to read our Annual Report. We are proud of our accomplishments which are due entirely to the dedication, creativity, and tremendous work ethic of our judges and employees. We hope that this Annual Report conveys our collective pride in public service and commitment to furthering the administration of justice in Oakland County.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin M. Oeffner".

Kevin M. Oeffner
Circuit Court Administrator

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca A. Schnelz".

Rebecca A. Schnelz
Probate Court Administrator

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*Lisa Langton
Deputy Court
Administrator*

The Family Division, overseen by Deputy Court Administrator Lisa Langton, includes the Friend of the Court operations, Judicial Support Services, and Court Services, which encompasses Casework Services, Youth Assistance, the Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court, the Adult Treatment Court, and the Psychological Clinic.

Judge Lisa Gorcyca is the presiding judge of the Circuit Court — Family Division. This division is comprised of seven judges who are elected to six-year terms in nonpartisan elections. The judges hear domestic relations cases involving divorce, child support, and paternity matters. They also preside over child abuse and neglect cases, juvenile delinquency matters, conservatorship and guardianship proceedings, and handle Personal Protection Orders. Assisting the judges within this division are judicial staff attorneys, judicial secretaries, and judicial clerks.

FRIEND OF THE COURT

Friend of the Court (FOC) is responsible for assisting in domestic relations cases by investigating and enforcing issues involving custody, support, and parenting time. Friend of the Court also assists parties with the registration of court orders as the parties move into or out of the state of Michigan. Further, Friend of the Court is responsible for enforcement of court ordered medical provisions. Both unpaid medical bills and requirements that parents insure their children are handled by the Friend of the Court.

Friend of the Court referees hold hearings to enforce and modify Family Division orders regarding support, custody, and parenting time. Referees conduct early intervention conferences when a divorce is initiated to help divorcing clients understand the FOC and the divorce process. FOC family counselors provide the SMILE (Start Making it Livable for Everyone) program to help parents understand the impact of divorce on their children. Forms requesting assistance from the Friend of the Court are available on the county website at www.oakgov.com/courts/foc.

Friend of the Court staff continues to serve on many statewide committees and workgroups to improve the child support program in Michigan.



Suzanne Hollyer, the Friend of the Court, congratulates Pam Sala, Chief Assistant FOC Operations, on being recognized as the “FOC Manager of the Year” by the Michigan Family Support Council at their annual conference in October.

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SUMMARY OF DOMESTIC RELATIONS ACTIVITY

New Filing Activity	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>
Domestic Relations				
Without Children	2,425	2,496	2,341	2,345
With Children	2,356	2,411	2,159	2,063
Paternity	986	905	905	910
Interstate	94	73	66	58
Support	1,095	1,123	1,171	1,242
Other	256	294	339	339
Total New Filings	7,212	7,302	6,981	6,957

Friend of the Court Enforcement

Friend of the Court (FOC) offices exist to serve the needs of families involved in the domestic relations court system in each of the state’s 83 counties and 57 Circuit Courts. From the most sparsely populated reaches of the western Upper Peninsula to the densely populated counties in southeast Michigan, everyone turns to the same Michigan laws for direction. These acts were extensively revised at the end of the 2014 Legislative session. Families navigating the domestic relations court system can look forward to some changes in FOC operations in the years to come as Oakland County seeks to implement these creative new remedies available in the state’s laws.

The Support and Parenting Time Enforcement Act was amended by 2014 PA 378 in two major ways. The methods by which a change of address can be handled by the Friend of the Court were revised along with the contempt of court practices.

The new Public Act provides that the Friend of the Court may change the address at which mail is served to another address if the Friend of the Court determines that the current address is bad. This change was made to allow the Friend of the Court to use new technology to manage the ever-changing addresses of the caseloads. The National Change of Address database maintained by the United States Postal Service is the example most often raised as a source for good addresses. Families involved in the domestic relations court system must always remember the importance of maintaining a current address with the Friend of the Court. The new law will make it easier to keep the databases of addresses up to date; however, it is a mistake to assume the Friend of the Court will “find” a good address for an individual.

The contempt-of-court section of the statute was also amended. Although contempt of court has traditionally been considered a “stick” in compelling payment of support, a new way of looking at these cases has been evolving over the past several years. Known as the *problem solving court*, an additional revision to the Support and Parenting Time Enforcement Act was passed last year. 2014 PA 374 created an alternative contempt track for support payers who have difficulty making payments due to a documented medical condition, a psychological disorder, substance abuse, illiteracy, homelessness, a temporary curable condition that the payer has difficulty controlling without assistance, or unemployment lasting longer than 27 weeks. The statute provides authority for the court to create a plan to address the payer’s conditions. The Oakland County Friend of the Court has

Friend of the Court Enforcement (continued)

already established a special docket to address the needs of these troubled payers of support. Labeled the AID docket (Assistance in Resolving Debt), the program was just created at the end of the year.

It is anticipated that these legislative and programmatic changes in 2014 will pave the way for a bright 2015 for Oakland County families. The Friend of the Court can be a friendly place for families navigating the domestic relations court system. Keeping in touch with the Friend of the Court when changes occur in employment, residence, custody, and medical insurance is critical to ensure smooth sailing.

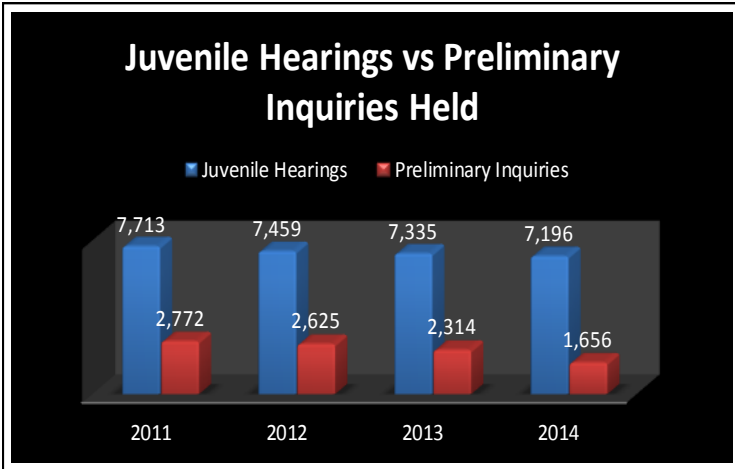
JUDICIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Headed by William Bartlam, Manager of Judicial Support/Judicial Assistant, this area consists of the Juvenile Referees, Juvenile Intake, Juvenile Adoption, and the Personal Protection Order Office. In Mr. Bartlam’s role as Judicial Assistant, he is also the lead legal advisor for the Family Division.

The Juvenile Intake support staff process all incoming requests for action, perform record checks to identify prior court involvement, forward documents to the Prosecutor’s Office, and schedule preliminary hearings, diversion conferences, traffic hearings, and other matters for the four referees assigned to Juvenile Intake.

The support staff in the Juvenile Deputy Register and Juvenile File Room areas prepare files for hearings as well as create, maintain, and update the physical and electronic records for each case, the court schedule, confidential files, transcripts and exhibits, and assist the public and parties in cases before the Juvenile Court. They prepare court orders for all hearings heard by referees and distribute all court orders after they have been processed by the County Clerk’s Office.

The eight Juvenile Court referees assist Family Division judges by conducting hearings and recommending decisions following the hearings. The referees represent the Court 24 hours per day, 365 days each year. They act on requests for detention of juveniles and placement of children who are at substantial risk of harm. Referees act as the gatekeeper to Juvenile Court by evaluating each complaint or petition filed and then making the decision whether to grant or deny authorization, to divert the matter, or use informal resolution methods. Where no judge is demanded for the trial, referees serve as finders of fact in delinquency or neglect and abuse cases. Referees recommend the appropriate disposition of cases, including the recommendation for termination of parental rights in certain instances.



The attorney appointment specialist maintains a database of attorneys qualified by education and experience to represent indigent parties who request a lawyer. The specialist matches requests for court-appointed lawyers with attorneys on the roster.

The Personal Protection Order (PPO) Office liaison provides legal expertise in both the issuance and enforcement of PPOs. The liaison oversees the support staff in the PPO Office who assist petitioners in completing the application process. In the PPO enforcement process, the liaison also works with Pre-Trial Services in developing bond recommendations for incarcerated respondents and with petitioners who have requested show cause orders.

The permanency coordinators work with the two judges and two referees who handle a specialized Adoption Permanency Docket. The coordinators monitor the progress toward adoption permanency for each child on this specialized docket and maintain a dedicated database to assist them. The coordinators also monitor both foster care and adoption caseworker performance and work to eliminate barriers to a child’s adoption.

The permanency coordinators prepare hearing summaries for the jurists, draft case scheduling orders, attend each child’s hearing, and serve as a specialist resource for both legal and social work professionals. They lead the agency review meetings where the Court assesses overall agency performance and identify specific areas where improvement is required.

The Adoption Department staff works with the public and adoption agencies to provide oversight and supervision of adoption petitions and post-adoption information requests. The professional and support staff are charged with ensuring that the confidentiality of information is maintained and that the adoption process is handled expeditiously, as required by law.

SUMMARY OF JUDICIAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY

New Filing Activity	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>
Juvenile/Adoptions				
Delinquency	2,611	2,443	2,036	1,585
Child Protective Proceedings	314	335	405	395
Juvenile Traffic Tickets	100	72	73	49
Adoption Petitions	407	340	351	323
Subtotal	3,432	3,190	2,865	2,352
Personal Protection Orders				
Domestic	1,692	1,763	1,666	1,549
Non-Domestic	682	945	746	696
Juvenile	40	55	57	24
Subtotal	2,414	2,763	2,469	2,269
Miscellaneous Family				
Name Change	509	488	462	482
Other	50	30	34	31
Subtotal	559	518	496	513
Total New Filings	6,405	6,471	5,830	5,134

The “Super User” Training Commitment For Trial Court System Implementation

They say all good things must come to an end ... and the end is near for the Mainframe Computer System currently used in the Juvenile Court area. Due to outdated technology and high costs associated with state-mandated changes, there will be a new case management system in Juvenile Court in the spring of 2015. Plans to move to the Trial Court System (TCS) have been underway for the last two years and should be complete before summer 2015 arrives.

The Commitment to Staff Training in Preparation for Implementation

A “train-the-trainer” approach was chosen, with several staff members from the Intake and Deputy Register areas and from one judicial chambers agreeing to serve as trainers for the project. The “super users” team is comprised of Kristy Bills, Jessica Early, Jerri Decker, Jennifer Rembach, Cindi Duggan, Carmen Janik, and Sandy Burgess. Julie Fabrizio and Terry Castiglione from the Court’s Data Tech unit train the “super users” and oversee the project from the Oakland County side. Beginning in July 2014 and continuing to the present, the team has devoted a minimum of two days per week to learning the TCS system in depth in order to field questions from their co-workers and assist them in becoming familiar with its capabilities. The process of converting Oakland County’s mainframe data to the TCS application has proven to be a real challenge. Meanwhile, the team is checking this data to ensure its accuracy as well as providing an overview of the system to remaining court staff and evaluating reporting needs.

Although change always comes with challenges, this conversion should help the Oakland County Circuit Court process child protective proceedings and juvenile delinquency cases and report relevant data more efficiently and accurately. Both the Probate Court and the Adoptions unit successfully made the change to TCS in 2005.



The TCS “Super Users” team is comprised of: (front row, left to right) Jennifer Rembach, Jessica Early, Julie Fabrizio (trainer), and Terry Castiglione (trainer). (Back row) Kristy Bills, Jerri Decker, Cindi Duggan, and Carmen Janik. (Not pictured—Sandy Burgess)

COURT SERVICES

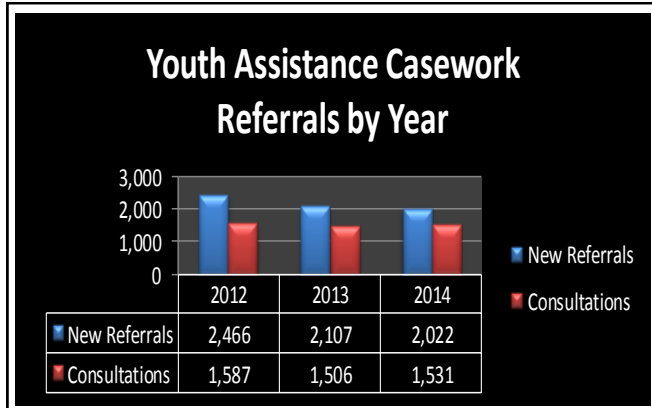
This unit provides juvenile probation, casework services, and clinical services through the Court Psychological Clinic, as well as community diversion and re-entry services through the Youth Assistance program. It also includes both the Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court and the Adult Treatment Court programs.

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Casework Services — The Casework Services Juvenile Probation unit is responsible for all delinquency cases authorized for the Court by the Intake Department and assists cases through the adjudication process when necessary. Upon adjudication, the Casework unit is responsible for making recommendations regarding disposition. During post-disposition, it assists in implementing court orders, including the monitoring of probation, restitution, community service, restorative justice, parent education, and counseling.

During the course of 2014, Casework Services undertook a comprehensive review of unit forms and common documents to ensure continued utility to unit functioning. Also, the Intensive Probation Student Intern Handbook was revised with completion scheduled for 2015. In addition, the unit also created a Casework Services/Intake Department liaison position to assist in the assessment and processing of matters coming into the Intake Department.

Youth Assistance — As the prevention arm of the Court’s continuum of service, Youth Assistance uses a two-pronged approach to strengthen youth and families. Professional staff placed in 26 field offices countywide provide family-focused casework to at-risk youth referred by the police, schools, and the Intake Department of the Court. Staff also work with a volunteer board of directors in each community that identifies needs, raises funds, and then plans and implements primary prevention programs. Youth Assistance has a unique tri-sponsorship structure where staff is hired by the Court, but each local program is also sponsored by the school district and municipalities.



Youth Assistance Receives AT&T Grant

AT&T presented a \$15,000 contribution to Youth Assistance to support its mission of strengthening local families and assisting at-risk youth. AT&T Michigan President Jim Murray commented that “Youth Assistance is doing innovative things to improve lives right here in Oakland County. AT&T is proud to partner with them as they make a daily difference for local families.” These funds will be used to provide scholarships for tutoring, summer school, and other skill-building activities that are geared to improving school attachment and achievement. “We’re incredibly proud of the work this organization and this company are doing right here in our community,” stated State Representative Brad Jacobsen, who was instrumental in linking the council and AT&T for this grant.



On hand for the check presentation were: (front row, left to right) Deputy Court Administrator Lisa Langton, Lori Doughty of AT&T, Chief of Youth Assistance Mary Schusterbauer, State Representative Brad Jacobsen, Oakland County Commissioner Shelley Taub, along with Youth Assistance staff and volunteers.

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Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court — Entitled OPTIONS (Owning the Problem - Trusting in our New Skills), the Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court began in June of 2001 and has served over 283 youth and their 481 family members as of the end of 2014. It is the mission of the Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court to promote public safety and reduce juvenile drug crime rates by helping substance abusing youthful offenders and their families achieve drug-free lives and healthy family relationships. Led by the Honorable Mary Ellen Brennan, the team uses a non-adversarial approach and consists of court staff, a defense attorney, and both substance abuse and mental health professionals.

Jacqueline Howes-Evanson serves as the supervisor for both the Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court and the Adult Treatment Court programs. The RESTORE Foundation was created in 2008 to help financially support the Oakland County Circuit Court drug court programs.

Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court Site Visit

On March 5, the Juvenile Drug Court underwent a thorough site visit by the State Court Administrative Office to ensure fidelity to the Sixteen Strategies of Juvenile Drug Courts (JDC). While there are 10 Key Components for every drug court, there are 16 strategies that JDCs should follow which are designed from evidence-based and promising practices (see table below). The SCAO audit found that the JDC was in compliance with all strategies with one minor exception. SCAO noted that the Juvenile Drug Court should change the wording on all dispositional orders to read “JDC” instead of “Juvenile Drug Court” to further protect the privacy of the youth.

Sixteen Strategies of Juvenile Drug Courts

1. Engage all stakeholders in creating an interdisciplinary, coordinated, and systemic approach to working with youth and their families.
2. Develop and maintain an interdisciplinary, non-adversarial work team.
3. Define a target population and eligibility criteria that are aligned with the program’s goals and objectives.
4. Schedule frequent judicial reviews and be sensitive to the effect that court proceedings can have on youth and their families.
5. Establish a system for program monitoring and evaluation to maintain quality of service, assess program impact, and contribute to knowledge in the field.
6. Build partnerships with community organizations to expand the range of opportunities available to youth and their families.
7. Tailor interventions to the complex and varied needs of youth and their families.
8. Tailor treatment to the developmental needs of adolescents.
9. Design treatment to address the unique needs of each gender.
10. Create policies and procedures that are responsive to cultural differences and train personnel to be culturally competent.
11. Maintain a focus on the strengths of youth and their families during program planning and in every interaction between the court and those it serves.
12. Recognize and engage the family as a valued partner in all components of the program.
13. Coordinate with the school system to ensure that each participant enrolls.
14. Design drug testing to be frequent, random, and observed. Document testing policies and procedures in writing.
15. Respond to compliance and noncompliance with incentives and sanctions that are designed to reinforce or modify the behavior of youth and their families.
16. Establish a confidentiality policy and procedures that guard the privacy of the youth while allowing the drug court team to access key information.

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Adult Treatment Court - The Adult Treatment Court (ATC), created in 2001, offers alternative sentencing for non-violent adult felony offenders who have a history of drug and/or alcohol dependence. Judge Joan Young presides over the male participants in the program and Judge Colleen O'Brien presides over the female participants. The program includes extremely close judicial and community supervision, intense substance abuse treatment, frequent substance abuse testing, and a long-term commitment to program requirements. In addition, the participants are expected to find and maintain employment, consistently participate in treatment, pay court costs including restitution and, of course, take responsibility for the support of their children.

In 2009, the ATC incorporated a mental health component into the programming to better serve those who have both an Axis I diagnosis and a Substance Use Disorder (SUD).

In December of 2014, the Adult Treatment Court conducted its 40th graduation ceremony. To date, 185 participants have successfully graduated from the four-phase program.

Psychological Clinic — The Clinical Services unit, also known as the Psychological Clinic, is responsible for aiding jurists in making informed decisions by providing forensic evaluations of children and families who are involved with the Court. The clinic offers specialized treatment services to clients and clinicians are available for case consultation with court staff and others. The Court Clinic implemented new procedures to align its work with the new competency statute.

CIRCUIT COURT — FAMILY DIVISION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Held 2,358 Early Intervention Conferences with parties going through the divorce process. These conferences allow parties access to their Friend of the Court referee early in the divorce process. The conference allows FOC staff to assist in the settlement of a divorce and to provide information about services available at the Friend of the Court.
- FOC Family Counselors addressed 25,841 complaints regarding parenting time.
- FOC Referees held 28,210 hearings to enforce custody, parenting time, and support.
- Together with the Michigan Department of Human Services, implemented the Crossover Youth Practice Model in Oakland County. By following the protocols developed and refined in 2013, the number of minors dually involved in both the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice systems was reduced by more than 50%, and the coordinated case planning for such dually-involved youth resulted in a single-case service plan.
- Held the 12th Annual Michigan Adoption Day program which finalized the adoptions of nine children and their adoptive families. The ceremony also included recognition of Child Welfare Services Director Susan Hull as the “Arthur Eugene Moore Champion of Children Award” recipient and Attorney William Lansat as the “Sandra Silver Children’s Advocate Award” recipient.

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CIRCUIT COURT — FAMILY DIVISION ACCOMPLISHMENTS (continued)

- In response to the *In re Sanders* decision by the Michigan Supreme Court, staff formulated, obtained approval for, and implemented changes in court policy and practice to make the Court compliant with *Sanders*, a decision that abolished the “one parent doctrine” in child neglect cases. This entailed the review of nearly every active juvenile case over a several-month period.
- Expanded use of the casework database to include access by hearing officers and clerical staff.
- Completed repainting of casework offices at the courthouse and South Oakland Office Building.
- The model of tri-sponsorship of Youth Assistance remains strong across the county with \$1,203,125 in cash and in-kind contributions from school districts and municipalities supporting the local operations of 26 field offices.
- There were over 2,000 participants in Youth Assistance sponsored Family Education Programs across the county.
- Served 764 youth and their family members since the inception of the Juvenile Drug Court in 2001.
- Underwent a thorough site visit by the State Court Administrative Office to ensure fidelity to the Sixteen Strategies of Juvenile Drug Courts.
- The ATC implemented a method for identifying and offering crisis management to those likely to abscond from treatment, especially during their first week in the program. Of the ATC graduates with co-occurring disorders; 89% were employed at the time of their commencement and 94% were medication compliant.

Farewell to Lauran Howard

The Family Division said farewell to Lauran Howard in November as she retired from the county after 14 years of dedicated service as the Chief of Adoptions and Juvenile Services. During her tenure, Lauran was instrumental in creating the Annual Adoption Day program, implemented Michigan’s Trial Court System in adoptions, moved to electronic filing of juvenile complaints from police agencies throughout Oakland County, and began operating the Personal Protection Order Office to assist citizen petitioners.

Under Lauran’s direction, the Permanency Docket was created which received the “Honorable Robert Weiss Award for Excellence in Court Improvement” and the “National Justice Achievement Award” from the National Association for Court Management.

Erin O’Brien, former judicial staff attorney to the Honorable Joan Young, was welcomed as Lauran’s successor. Erin started her career with the court in 1997 as a judicial clerk to the Honorable Wendy Potts.





*Richard Lynch
Manager - Circuit Court
Civil/Criminal Division*

There are 13 Circuit Court judges assigned to the Civil/Criminal Division. In 2014, Judge Colleen O'Brien began a two-year term as presiding judge over the division.

Civil/Criminal judges hear civil cases with alleged damages in excess of \$25,000 and criminal cases involving felony charges. In addition to their general civil/criminal dockets, the judges also serve an appellate function presiding over appeals from the Oakland County Probate Court, any of the several district courts within Oakland County, and administrative agencies, such as local zoning boards, licensing boards, and parole boards.

Two civil/criminal judges also preside over specific business-related litigation as defined in MCL 600.8031, *et seq.* Judge James Alexander and Judge Wendy Potts were appointed to serve a six-year Business Court term which ends April 1, 2019.

Business-related litigation involves commercial disputes between business entities as defined under the statute. Disputes allege damages in excess of \$25,000 for claims including, but not limited to, information technology, internal business organization, contracts, banking transactions, commercial insurance, or commercial real estate transactions.

Eight judges go above and beyond their required judicial functions to intensively supervise participants in the Adult Treatment Court, Combat-Veterans Treatment Court, and the Urban Drug Court, which are specialty courts within the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court. Judge Joan Young and Judge Colleen O'Brien preside over the Adult Treatment Court and Judge Nanci Grant presides over the Combat Veterans Treatment Court. Both are statutorily-created alternative treatment courts pursuant to MCL 600.1060, *et seq.* and MCL 600.1200, *et seq.* The Urban Drug Court is a three-year pilot program funded by a State Court Administrative Office grant. Judges Phyllis McMillen, Michael Warren, Daniel Patrick O'Brien, Shalina Kumar, and Rudy Nichols supervise participants in the Urban Drug Court.

JUDICIAL SUPPORT

Every judge's chamber is staffed with a judicial attorney, judicial assistant/secretary, and two judicial clerks to assist in managing the various functions to support the judges in processing the thousands of cases filed each year. Outside of chambers, assistance is provided by Civil/Criminal Division personnel, from Administrative Support, the Case Management Office, the Jury Office, and the Urban Drug Court.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

The manager of the division performs a variety of duties to assist the Court Administrator in the development of short and long-term policies and procedures affecting the Civil/Criminal Division for efficient court operation. Duties range from answering procedural legal questions to performing extensive research or case studies to develop policies and procedures designed to meet the ever-changing rules and regulations imposed upon the Court, litigants, and the bar.

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The manager supervises administrative judicial staff attorneys and personnel in the Urban Drug Court (UDC). Administrative judicial staff attorneys address overflow appellate issues as assigned by any of the 13 Civil/Criminal Division judges. The attorneys may also be called upon to assist with extensive research projects. The UDC personnel consist of a case manager and a part-time technical assistant. The case manager works closely with participants, a probation agent, and UDC judges to monitor participant progress. The technical assistant performs record-keeping and outreach functions for the UDC.

Signs of Understanding

The Michigan Department of Civil Rights maintains a Division on Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing. The purpose of the division is to help improve the lives of Michigan's one million deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing (D/DB/HH) citizens. In June of 2014, the Division on D/DB/HH adopted Qualified Interpreter Rules which directly impact trial courts. The rules require the Court to provide a D/DB/HH person with access to a qualified interpreter or other technology which provides for meaningful communication in judicial proceedings, administrative proceedings, and interrogations. The act created three levels of certification standards. A level 3 endorsement is required for high-risk legal interpreting, such as forensic psychiatric evaluations, emergency broadcasts, any activity involving the police, prison, prisoners, attorneys, courts, children's protective services, and probation or parole (R 393.5025). Criminal trials and police interrogations require the highest standard of interpreting.

Complying with the rules has not been a challenge for the Oakland County Circuit Court as it has already been providing such accommodations. Throughout 2014, Oakland County Circuit Court provided eight deaf interpreters to aid in meaningful communication during criminal court proceedings. The Jury Office also accommodates D/DB/HH individuals. In 2014, the Jury Office accommodated ten deaf individuals who reported for jury service and accommodated a blind individual who was ultimately seated on a jury in May of 2014.

Because criminal trials have potentially life-altering consequences, a criminal trial involving a D/DB/HH defendant requires a minimum of two qualified interpreters during the proceedings – a proceedings interpreter and a table interpreter. The proceedings interpreter is an officer of the court. A table interpreter facilitates communication between a D/DB/HH person and his or her counsel and is prohibited from interpreting for the Court. The table interpreter is a member of the defense team and an agent of the attorney who interprets privileged information. To safeguard the attorney-client privilege, qualified interpreters are prohibited from interpreting for opposing parties and/or counsel in a legal proceeding (R 393.5051). More information regarding services provided by the Michigan Department of Civil Rights Division of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing can be found on their website at Michigan.gov.

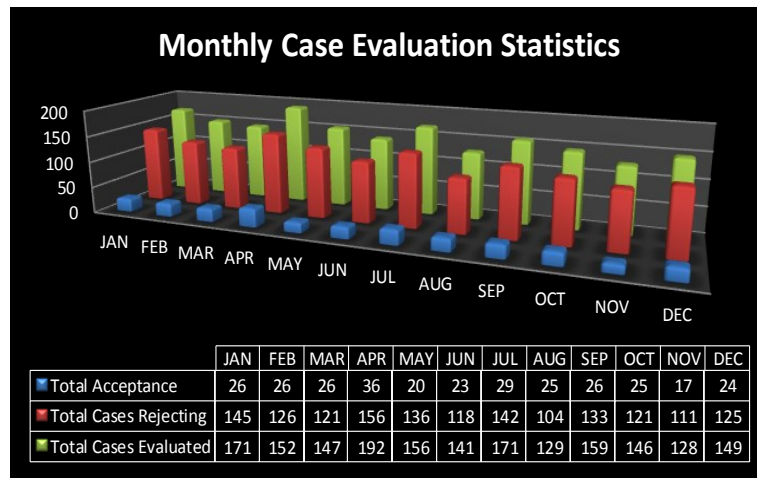


Sandra Maloney, a certified sign language interpreter, signs for a deaf juror during the initial phase of jury selection.

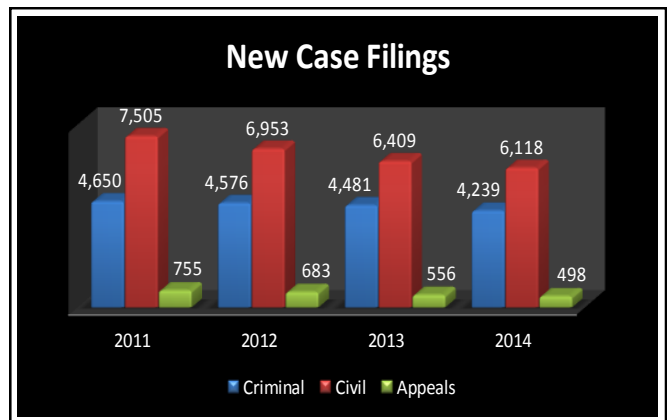
The Civil/Criminal Division manager also works with the Chief of the Civil/Criminal Division, Gwynne Starkey, who oversees operations within the Case Management Office and the Jury Office.

CASE MANAGEMENT OFFICE

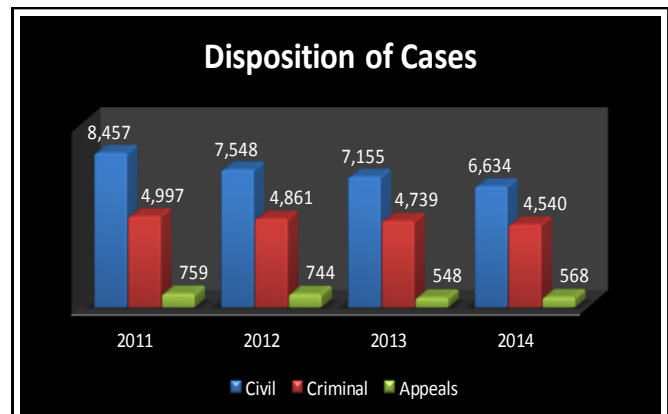
The Case Management Office (CMO) is the hub for case administration court wide. The office has two types of judicial support staff – the Case Management staff and the Criminal Case Support staff. In addition to daily case operations, both branches create and maintain statistical data for monthly, quarterly, and annual reports as mandated by the State Court Administrative Office.



The Case Management staff consists of nine individuals who are responsible for operations of civil cases from establishment to closure. The staff establishes, monitors, and maintains statistics on case evaluation and mediation programs for not only the Civil/Criminal Division, but also for the Family and Probate Divisions within the Circuit Court. Facilitative and alternative dispute resolution programs are processes by which cases are settled prior to trial, saving litigants and the court system valuable time, effort, and money.



Case Management staff duties also include assigning, reassigning and consolidating cases, processing Judge On-Line requests, managing praecipes, preparing and distributing scheduling orders, linking addresses, logging and directing mail, adjusting docket entries, managing the case evaluation process, and maintaining statistical data for all 22 judges within the Oakland County Circuit and Probate Courts.



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CRIMINAL CASE SUPPORT

The Criminal Case Support unit is comprised of five individuals who provide essential case preparation and management functions. The staff receives information from felony warrants and District Court bindovers to assign cases and appoint trial counsel. The unit also appoints appellate counsel and obtains transcripts for criminal appeals. The department processes various scheduling and testing orders and assists in compiling information which is used for pre-sentence investigation by the Probation Department and for specialized jail programs, such as the Life and Employment Skills Program (LESP) and Jail Alliance with Support (JAWS). In addition to case management, the staff also tracks and maintains criminal assignment data and monitors the daily inmate population.

CLERK SUPPORT

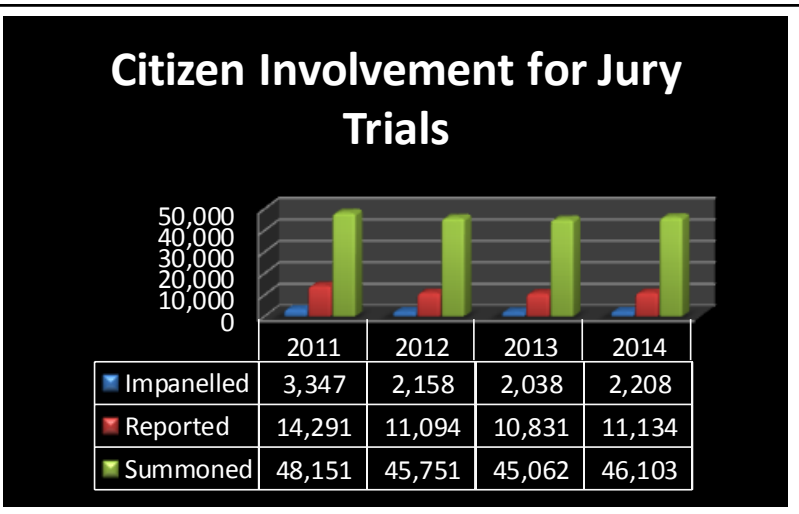
The Clerk Support unit oversees the training and development of the judicial full-time clerks and floating clerks. In addition to assisting court staff, the Clerk Support unit engages in outreach to area law schools and paralegal programs, offering internships that provide valuable experience for the students. The unit also works closely with various departments to develop and implement policies and procedures affecting chambers and the courtroom, while providing courtroom expertise and support to policy discussions.

The unit saw changes this year as Brenda Beiter accepted a new position within the court and Brett Dery was promoted to supervisor. Megan Koss was promoted to clerk coordinator.

JURY OFFICE

The Jury Office is supervised by Deborah Fahr and comprised of six staff members who maintain operations to support jury requests from both the Circuit and Probate Courts of Oakland County.

New jurors are scheduled to report for duty on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. Jurors check in, receive a juror badge, and are instructed to wait in the Jury Assembly Room for further instruction. Jurors are welcomed by a judge who explains the importance of jury service in the American legal system. Jurors then watch a video that provides information regarding the trial process and their role as a juror.



Thereafter, Jury Office staff provide further instructions, including the number of jury trials that are scheduled for the day and what to expect when the individual's name is or is not called. If chosen for jury service, the prospective juror will accompany his or her group to a specified courtroom.

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Prior to potential jurors checking in at the Jury Office, much preparation is required. Juror questionnaires are distributed to residents of Oakland County based upon the Secretary of State driver's information and personal identification lists. Questionnaires are reviewed by the Jury Office staff to determine if a juror is eligible. By statute, citizens are exempted from jury service if they do not reside in Oakland County, have served as a juror within the past 12 months, are not physically able to serve, have been convicted of a felony, or are not conversant in the English language. Persons over the age of 70 are exempt upon request and nursing mothers, with a medical letter of verification, are also exempt. The average jury trial lasts approximately three days and jurors are paid a per diem and mileage pursuant to Michigan law.



The Honorable Cheryl Matthews welcomes and explains jury service to a group of potential jurors as part of juror orientation and thanks them on behalf of the Circuit and Probate Courts for their contributions to the justice system.

URBAN DRUG COURT

The Sixth Circuit Court Urban Drug Court (UDC) is a grant-pilot program supported by the legislature and established in 2013. The program is designed to work with offenders with a history of substance abuse who commit non-violent felonies within the city of Pontiac. As a requirement of probation, the participants agree to receive integrated drug treatment and rehabilitation services and frequent court reviews. The participants are monitored by one of the five judges previously mentioned.

In 2014, the UDC hired a part-time technical assistant, Michelle Sawyer, to help the case manager with managing case files and documentation as required by the State Court Administrative Office.



Ebony McCann, case manager of the Urban Drug Court, and Michelle Sawyer, technical assistant, review court files and test results prior to a court session for the Urban Drug Court.

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Pilot Program Progress

For the calendar year of 2014, the Urban Drug Court (UDC) judges supervised 63 participants who received comprehensive and integrated drug treatment and rehabilitation services specific to their individual needs. The UDC team screens individuals with an admitted substance abuse addiction and who have committed certain felony offenses in the city of Pontiac. The team has the final decision for acceptance into the program. Over the past year, the UDC reviewed 80 potential participants – 35 were accepted; the remaining 45 were not qualified for the program.

The treatment plans have three progressive phases. Phase one will last at least three to four months; phase two will last three to six months; and phase three will last six to eighteen months, depending upon the participant’s ability to successfully complete each phase. During the past year, 11 active participants reached phase three which is the last step prior to graduation. Two participants successfully completed the program and were discharged in 2014.

The UDC team determines when a participant will graduate. Graduation requirements include maintaining sobriety for at least four consecutive months, completing all treatment goals and community service assignments, paying all court-ordered financial obligations, maintaining employment or completing or progressing in an academic program, and having an association with an aftercare-type support system.

In October, the UDC entered into its final fiscal year of the pilot program which ends September 2015. However, it is anticipated that the State Court Administrative Office will continue the pilot project with continued legislative and gubernatorial support.

COMBAT VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

The Combat Veterans Treatment Court was created in 2013 by Chief Judge Nanci Grant as a way to help citizens who literally placed themselves in harm’s way to protect our freedoms. To be accepted into the program, participants cannot have a criminal record prior to their service and they must have been honorably discharged. Veterans are in the program because their service and the effects of their service, whether physical or emotional, led directly to their involvement with the criminal justice system.

The program includes intense supervision, mental health and substance abuse treatment, readjustment counseling, and mentoring with military veterans who can relate to the participants’ combat experiences. The treatment court is designed to serve as an alternative to incarceration. Veterans Court does not seek to give veterans special treatment, but focuses on the unique issues faced by the veterans.



Judge Nanci Grant, Presiding Judge of the Combat Veterans Treatment Court, and Marseille Allen, Michigan Department of Corrections probation agent, meet prior to each court session to discuss and review the progress of the veterans in the program.

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Fond Farewell

Near the end of 2014, Civil/Criminal Division Manager Richard Lynch accepted the position of General Counsel for the Third Judicial Circuit Court in Wayne County, Michigan, ending more than two decades of dedicated service to Oakland County Circuit Court. On November 7, many courthouse employees attended Mr. Lynch's farewell party extending their congratulations and sad goodbyes to their beloved colleague and friend.

During his time with the Court, Rich Lynch was actively involved in improving access for the limited English proficient and deaf/hard of hearing individuals by securing interpreters, developing a comprehensive interpreter application and training process, and securing higher rates for interpreters, all of which helped make the Sixth Circuit one of the leaders in the state on this issue. He was also responsible for developing a more efficient system for processing criminal correspondence and post-conviction motions which enabled the Court to address defendants' paperwork in a more timely fashion.

In his position as Civil/Criminal Division manager, Rich worked with the Clerk's Office, Corporation Counsel, the Health Department, the Prosecutor's Office, and the Sheriff's Office in making the Court more accessible and effective to outside stakeholders. He also participated in the development and implementation of the eFiling program which has become a working model throughout the state. More than anything, Rich will be known for his outgoing personality and his zest for life.



The Honorable James Alexander and the Honorable Joan E. Young congratulate Rich Lynch at his farewell party on his new position with the Third Judicial Circuit Court.

On December 1, 2014, Pamela Monville transitioned into the manager position vacated by Mr. Lynch. Ms. Monville brings 27 years of legal experience to the position after spending the previous 10 years serving the Oakland County Circuit Court as judicial staff attorney to Judge Cheryl Matthews. Ironically, her interest in working for the judiciary began with Mr. Lynch's outreach efforts to Wayne State University Law School for judicial interns.

CIRCUIT COURT — CIVIL/CRIMINAL DIVISION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The Jury Office processed jury functions and provided jurors to courts for 86 civil trials, with an average duration of 3.10 days. It also provided jurors to courts for 123 criminal trials with an average duration of 2.69 days. Of the criminal trials, 53 were capital offenses and 21 of the capital trials were homicide cases.
- There were 46,103 Oakland County citizens summoned for jury duty.

CIRCUIT COURT — CIVIL/CRIMINAL DIVISION ACCOMPLISHMENTS (continued)

- The Jury Office required 11,134 prospective jurors to report for service to meet the daily needs of the trial courts. Ultimately, 2,208 citizens sat as jurors in 2014.
- The total fees and mileage paid to jurors required to appear at court was \$441, 400, which was a slight decrease from 2013.
- The average cost of a jury was \$2,055.
- A total of 212 trials were held on civil and criminal cases.
- The Court scheduled 1,964 cases for case evaluation. Of the scheduled cases, 1,841 cases completed the evaluation process and 303 cases accepted the evaluation award within the 28-day acceptance/rejection period.
- There were 1,060 new case filings accepted into the Business Court.
- There were 680 requests from individuals to participate in hearings via telephone processed through the Judge On-Line program.
- The Court appointed trial counsel for indigent or partially indigent defendants in 3,855 cases.
- There were 4,239 felony cases bound over for trial from the district courts.
- A total of 4,540 petitions for pre-sentence investigation reports were prepared.
- The Court appointed appellate counsel for criminal defendants in 296 cases.
- The Court appointed 357 foreign language interpreters for individuals with limited English proficiency, including 264 Spanish interpreters.
- The Court appointed 51 interpreters for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- The UDC supervised 63 participants who receive comprehensive and integrated drug treatment and rehabilitation services.
- Two participants graduated from the Urban Drug Court program.
- The Combat Veterans Treatment Court completed its first full year with two veterans nearing graduation.



*Jill Koney Daly
Probate Register*

The Oakland County Probate Court provides essential services to Oakland County’s most vulnerable citizens and is a vital component of Michigan’s legal system.

In 2014, the Oakland County Probate Court was comprised of four judges: the Honorable Elizabeth Pezzetti, Chief Judge; the Honorable Linda S. Hallmark, Chief Judge Pro Tem; the Honorable Daniel A. O’Brien; and the Honorable Kathleen A. Ryan. Judge Hallmark and Chief Judge Pezzetti are also assigned to the Family Division of the Circuit Court. The Oakland County Probate Court is the second largest probate court in Michigan.

Rebecca A. Schnelz, Probate Court Administrator, and Jill Koney Daly, Probate Register, oversee support staff in distinct probate areas, including the Mental Health unit, the Guardianship and Conservatorship unit, and the Estates and Trusts unit. The Probate Court also works with the Circuit and Probate Courts’ Jury Office to manage probate jury trials and the courts’ Case Management and Case Evaluation offices regarding judicial assignments and case evaluations.

The administrators have taken an active role in bringing the Probate Court to the community. First, the Probate Court Administrator and Probate Register participate in training sessions for attorneys through the Oakland County Bar Association. Secondly, the Court provides on-line brochures containing basic information regarding guardianships, conservatorships, decedent estates, and mental health proceedings. These brochures (as well as necessary forms) are available at www.oakgov.com/courts/probate.



Probate Register Jill Koney Daly presents the “Removing the Mysteries of Probate Court” seminar at a local senior center. This program is designed to enlighten and educate senior citizens regarding estate planning and the probate process. This free seminar has reached thousands of citizens over more than 20 years and was developed in cooperation with the Citizens Alliance for the Oakland County Probate and Circuit Courts.

Additionally, the Court conducts basic training classes for conservators and guardians once a month. These classes are provided at no charge to the participants and were developed in cooperation with the Citizens Alliance for the Oakland County Probate and Circuit Courts. Finally, the Court presents a free seminar, “Removing the Mysteries of Probate Court,” six to eight times a year at various locations within Oakland County.

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MENTAL HEALTH PROCEEDINGS

Mental health commitment hearing dockets are held by the Court twice each week. At these hearings, the judge must decide whether the respondent is mentally ill, requires treatment, and whether or not hospitalization is the only appropriate treatment.

The mental health respondents participate at the court hearing by physically appearing in court or through video conferencing. Likewise, medical or psychological experts can testify in these proceedings by physically appearing in court or through video conferencing. In 2014, the Probate Court conducted over 900 hearings regarding involuntary mental health treatment.

The Mental Health unit of the Probate Register’s Office manages proceedings under the Mental Health Code. This includes mental health commitment hearings, requests for assisted outpatient treatment (also known as “Kevin’s Law”), substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation, and emergency requests for mental health examination and possible hospitalization. This unit facilitates jury trials, transportation of individuals for judicial hearings, and coordinates appointment of counsel and expert medical witnesses. This unit also processes and schedules all motions in mental health cases and prepares the orders after court hearings.

GUARDIANSHIP AND CONSERVATORSHIP PROCEEDINGS

The Probate Court hears all petitions to initiate, modify, or terminate guardianships and conservatorships for minors and adults, as well as guardianships for developmentally disabled persons. The Court also resolves issues that arise during the pendency of a guardianship or conservatorship and monitors many cases through regular review hearings. Unlike many other cases, conservatorship and guardianship cases usually cannot be closed after a judge makes a ruling on the initial filing. Instead, many of the guardianship and conservatorship cases remain open for years. The oldest adult guardianship case that the Court monitored this year was first opened in 1971.

The Guardianship and Conservatorship unit of the Probate Register’s Office manages the court filings for the guardianship and conservatorship cases, including processing annual reports of guardians and the annual accounts of conservators. Court staff assigned to this unit also ensures that mandatory reviews of guardianships are performed. Consistent monitoring is required to determine whether fiduciaries have complied with statutory requirements. During 2014, over 1,400 reviews were performed by court-appointed reviewers, many of them trained volunteers.



Attorney Michael Hughes conducts Conservator Basic Training on a monthly basis at the Probate Court. The trainings provide practical and essential information and tools for handling duties as a conservator. Guardianship training is also offered. These trainings are sponsored by the Citizens Alliance for the Oakland County Probate and Circuit Courts.

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ESTATES AND TRUSTS PROCEEDINGS

The Court resolves issues regarding wills and trusts in the event of uncertainty or conflict and determines the heirs in estates where there is no will. If a conflict is present regarding interpretation of a trust or the disposition of property under the terms of a trust, then the Court resolves the issues. The Court may also render decisions involving conflicts between fiduciaries.

Civil cases involving trust and estate assets are also heard in Probate Court. These cases typically involve claims in which a fiduciary is seeking to preserve or recoup assets. In 2014, 48 new civil actions were commenced with the Probate Court.

The Estates and Trusts unit of the Probate Register's Office manages the court filings for estates, trusts, and civil cases. Members of this unit are responsible for the authorization of small estates and *Letters of Authority* for personal representatives in certain situations. Staff assigned to this unit also monitor all active cases on a daily basis to ensure required documentation is filed and timelines are met. This unit issues notices of deficiency and suspensions of fiduciaries when necessary and fields questions on open files.

COURT RECORDS/VAULT

The staff in the Probate File Room is responsible for securing all filings made with the Court. This includes documents filed in cases as well as wills filed for safekeeping. Legal records, or filings made in cases, are a matter of public record and are available for review by the general public. On the other hand, wills that are filed with the Probate Court for safekeeping are not public records.

In 2014, the Probate Court accepted 972 new wills for safekeeping. They join the tens of thousands of wills already held by the Court. The oldest unclaimed will deposited with the Court dates back to 1852.

Documents that are part of the public record are filed in their specific court file according to a case number and are electronically scanned. The electronic record aids the Probate Court in providing an efficient customer service experience to the general public as well as the attorneys and litigants before the Court.

Scanning and validating the document data has become an integral part of the Court's operations with well over 185,000 documents being processed into the electronic document management system during 2014.

PROBATE COURT — ESTATES AND MENTAL HEALTH ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- During 2014, the Probate Court staff issued over 6,200 *Notices of Deficiency* to fiduciaries who had not completed required tasks. Over 900 fiduciaries were issued a suspension for failure to correct a deficiency.
- Staff processed over 24,600 pieces of incoming mail in addition to assisting over 40,000 people at the service counter.

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**PROBATE COURT — ESTATES AND MENTAL HEALTH ACCOMPLISHMENTS
(continued)**

- In 2014, the Probate Court processed over 8,400 new filings and reopened estates.
- The Probate Court presented the “Removing the Mysteries of Probate Court” seminar to almost 200 citizens at seven senior citizen centers throughout Oakland County.

SUMMARY OF PROBATE COURT ACTIVITY

NEW FILES OPENED	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>
Supervised/Unsupervised/Small Estates	2,439	2,576	2,528	2,528
Trusts	228	241	238	250
Adult Guardianships	969	972	928	1,025
Minor Guardianships	612	540	554	545
Adult Conservatorships	396	386	332	354
Minor Conservatorships	100	128	116	91
Mentally Ill	3,058	2,793	2,823	2,796
Guardianships (Developmentally Disabled)	352	287	356	459
Reopened Estates	205	195	239	223
Protective Orders	47	55	70	64
Civil and Other Matters	87	107	100	99
Total	8,493	8,280	8,284	8,434

ACTIVE CASES AS OF DECEMBER 31

Estates & Trust Cases	4,463	4,683	4,926	5,070
Adult Guardianships	3,869	3,981	4,028	4,168
Adult Conservatorships	1,733	1,755	1,706	1,693
Minor Guardianships	2,459	2,335	2,303	2,269
Minor Conservatorships	1,138	1,087	1,038	972
Guardianships (Developmentally Disabled)	1,729	1,747	1,861	2,006
Civil & Other Matters	63	54	29	38
Total	15,454	15,642	15,891	16,216



*John Cooperrider
Business Division
Manager*

The Business Division, under the supervision of John Cooperrider, is responsible for the development and delivery of business and administrative support services for the Circuit and Probate Courts. In 2014, this division was slightly restructured and a new position, Chief of Court Business Operations, was created to assist in supervising this multifaceted operation. Christina Bujak was promoted to fill this important position. This division is divided into three areas of operation in order to effectively manage its diverse and complex responsibilities.

ADMINISTRATIVE/FINANCIAL UNIT

Under the supervision of Cindy Lingle, the Administrative/Financial unit is responsible for developing and monitoring the Courts' \$60 million budget. Funds for various drug and sobriety

courts, as well as funds for the care of court wards, are included in this budget amount and are tracked on a monthly basis. A large portion of the work done by this unit involves processing payments for case-related services such as court-appointed attorneys, expert witnesses, and interpreters.

In addition, this unit processes all personnel transactions and records and reports weekly attendance and any mileage or travel expenses for more than 350 Circuit Court and Probate Court employees. As needs arise in and around the courthouse and satellite office facilities, requests are made to facilitate capital improvements, special projects, supplies, printing requests, work orders, and equipment for the Circuit and Probate Courts.

**ATTORNEY PAYMENTS
PROCESSED**

Case Types	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>
Family Division		
Juvenile Delinquency	1,246	1,074
Neglect and Abuse	3,795	4,473
Other	102	49
Total	5,143	5,596
Civil/Criminal Division		
Appeals	260	225
Criminal	3,415	2,932
District Court	782	663
Violation of Probations	3,173	2,424
Trials	72	68
Other	358	274
Total	8,060	6,586
Probate Court		
Estates and Mental Health	2,393	2,658
Grand Total	15,596	14,840



Along with processing payroll and record-keeping functions for over 350 courthouse employees and maintaining and developing the Courts' budget, the Administrative/Financial unit is also the hub for the courthouse for fielding general courthouse questions and telephone calls. This unit is comprised of: (left to right) Sherry Macias, Donna Riley, Angie Garrett, Alda Gojcay, Pam Ferguson, Cindy Lingle (supervisor), and Amy Vinyard.

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DATA TECHNOLOGY UNIT

The Data Technology unit is responsible for all aspects of court technology and automation, acting as the Circuit and Probate Courts' liaison to Oakland County's Department of Information Technology (IT), various vendors, and other state and local government agencies. Lisa Czyz oversees the team who assists both staff and litigants with court programs such as eFiling, Judge On-Line, and video conferencing initiatives.

The unit manages 23 video courtrooms and eight video referee hearing rooms, overseeing viewing and long-term storage of court records in compliance with state requirements. The IT unit also supports specialized software, produces statistical reports for the State Court Administrative Office, manages the content of the Courts' websites, produces multimedia presentations, coordinates mobile equipment, and creates court forms. The unit's goal is to assist departments with initiatives that increase accuracy and efficiency while expanding citizens' access to court programs and information. This unit also provides word processing support to various operations throughout the Courts.

COURT RESOURCE AND PROGRAM SPECIALIST

An area of general responsibility in the Business Division is that of the court resource and program specialist. Karen Koshen directs the Circuit and Probate Courts' efforts in this regard. Responsibilities include providing informational, technical, and administrative support services to the Courts and outside agencies, as well as coordinating and assisting with special projects and events, such as investiture ceremonies, new lawyers admission ceremonies, the Adoption Day program, Constitution Day, courthouse employee functions, special plaque ceremonies, and Removing the Mysteries of Probate Court. This position also entails serving on various committees and includes maintaining and updating the Bail Bondsman List, the BCORP Emergency Plan for the Circuit Court, and judicial attendance and photographs as well as preparation of the annual report, press releases, historical roster of the Courts, and other publications.

This area also assists judges and other court departments with public information management, grant writing, and improvement studies on all aspects of court operations to find alternative ways to perform court functions more efficiently and effectively.

Public Satisfaction Survey

The Circuit and Probate Courts conducted a Public Satisfaction Survey which was mandated by the State Court Administrative Office as part of a statewide Trial Court Performance Measures project. In Oakland County, the survey was conducted over a three-day period to reach a variety of court users doing business with the court. The purpose of conducting the survey was to identify where the courts can improve, particularly with respect to professionalism and performance.

The surveys, available in English, Spanish, Arabic, and Chinese, were handed out to court users as they exited the courthouse and the Friend of the Court offices. Survey questions related to timely service, treatment by court staff, how the case was handled in court, treatment by judge/magistrate/referee, outcome of the case, and whether or not the person understood what happened in the case. Answers were based on a scale of one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree) or NA (not applicable). Other questions in the survey referenced the type of matter that brought the individual to court, what their role was in the case, their gender, and their race.

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Public Satisfaction Survey (continued)

Approximately 50 court employees volunteered to help conduct the survey in the courthouse and FOC offices. In the three-day period, over 1,900 surveys were completed which were ultimately hand delivered to Lansing.

A similar survey was first conducted in Oakland County and throughout the state in 2013. General results from that survey concluded that most people agreed that they were treated with courtesy and respect by court staff and that their case was handled fairly.

“Michigan courts take public service very seriously,” said John Hohman Jr., State Court Administrator. “By listening to those who use the court, we can make good public service even better.”



Court employees volunteered their time to assist with the Public Satisfaction Survey. The surveys were given to court users exiting the building in order to rate their level of satisfaction with their courthouse experience. Over 1,900 surveys were compiled during this three-day period. The results from the 2014 Public Satisfaction Survey will be available in early 2015. Assisting with the survey were: (left to right) Cindy Lingle, Phill DeBarr, Yvonne Goryca, and Karen Koshen.

BUSINESS DIVISION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Continued planning efforts to replace the existing Juvenile Mainframe System with the State’s Trial Court System (TCS), mapping existing data from the mainframe to TCS, and preparing for conversion. Due to outdated technology and high costs associated with state-mandated changes, it became necessary to convert to a new case management system in Juvenile Court. Implementation is scheduled for spring of 2015. This change will help process cases and report relevant data more efficiently and accurately.
- Implemented a mobile application for smartphone users to access Court Explorer so that access to court records and imaged documents for attorneys and litigants was improved. Ultimately, will expand this mobile application to ePraecipie and judicial schedules on-line to improve public access to court documents and records as well.
- Developed, prepared, submitted, and monitored six different grants, including the Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court, the Adult Treatment Court, the Adult Mental Health Grant, the JAIBG grant, the JAG grant, and the Urban Drug Court Initiative in an amount over \$500,000.
- Completed FY2014 Child Care Fund on-site program and fiscal review. Each program was found to be in compliance with Child Care Fund rules and regulations and no corrections were required.

BUSINESS DIVISION ACCOMPLISHMENTS (continued)

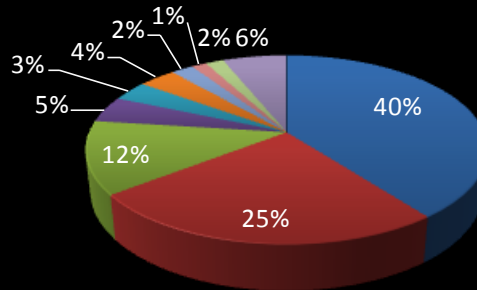
- Planned for the creation of a new Family Division docket for an incoming new judicial seat filled by election in November 2014. This seat was previously suspended for four years as part of a budget task-saving measure. The existing Family Division caseload was to be redistributed and new cases randomly assigned to eight judges. Various case assignment processes had to be adjusted, as were many applications such as ePraecipe, Court Recordings On-Line, OakDocs, Judicial Schedule On-Line, OakReports, and several other applications.
- Assisted in the planning and restructuring of courtroom 2E and its associated chambers and staff offices.
- Worked on establishing two intergovernmental agreements and eight professional service contracts for various court services.
- Adjusted and modified the Family Division and Criminal Division Fee Schedules, including the approval of payments for bench warrants on Violation of Probation hearings and an affirmation that no payments will be made on review hearings.
- Served on the Child Care Fund (CCF) Task Force which was a collaborative effort to identify and address funding and services for juvenile justice youth and abused and neglected children covered by the Child Care Fund. The subcommittee workgroup looked for ways to expand CCF eligibility and the current recommendation for prevention groups such as Youth Assistance is pending approval.
- Participated in two large IT initiatives, including the Windows 7 rollout to all court users as well as a Print Management Project aimed at replacing all existing copiers, scanners, and faxes with new multi-function devices.
- Coordinated various court events such as Constitution Day, Adoption Day, Champion of Children Award Ceremony, Public Satisfaction Survey, Annual Court Picnic, Annual Fall Festival, Cocoa Day, Book Exchange, Annual Holiday Luncheon, and others.
- Reconciled outstanding credit adjustments with the State of Michigan Department of Human Services so that Oakland County received over \$230,443 in State Ward chargeback credit adjustments regarding charges for youth committed to the State of Michigan either as MCI wards (abuse or neglect) or PA189 wards (delinquent).
- Developed Court publications including *The Full Court Press*, *Sixth Judicial Circuit and Oakland County Probate Court Annual Report*, press releases, and other publications regarding newsworthy events.

Circuit Court and Probate Court Financial Report

2014

**Revenues:
\$34,925,430**

- Child Care Reimbursement
- Grant Match (Transfer In)
- Attorney Fee Reimbursement
- Costs
- Alimony Service Fees
- CRP Contract
- Federal Incentive Payment
- Board & Care Reimbursement
- Civil Mediation Payments
- Other



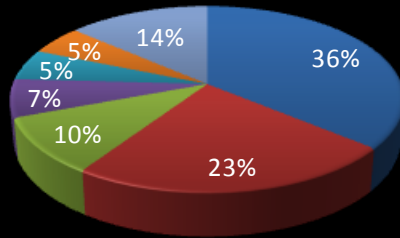
<u>Revenues/Sources of Funds</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013-2014 % Change</u>
Child Care Reimbursement	\$13,564,818	\$13,141,581	\$13,824,584	4.94%
CRP Contract	\$7,740,019	\$8,217,207	\$8,709,473	5.65%
Grant Match (Transfer In)	\$4,555,819	\$4,738,849	\$4,356,689	-8.77%
Federal Incentive Payment	\$2,361,472	\$1,727,967	\$1,575,921	-9.65%
Attorney Fee Reimbursement	\$1,335,141	\$1,288,899	\$1,208,255	-6.67%
Board & Care Reimbursement	\$1,273,522	\$1,227,789	\$1,237,914	0.82%
Costs	\$769,868	\$713,166	\$751,955	5.16%
Civil Mediation Payments	\$532,475	\$571,411	\$500,200	-14.24%
Alimony Service Fees	\$567,635	\$559,910	\$607,052	7.77%
Jury Fees	\$283,143	\$223,565	\$230,190	2.88%
FOC Judgment Fees	\$325,840	\$325,800	\$297,560	-9.49%
Probate Estate Fees	\$229,238	\$252,619	\$267,068	5.41%
Reimbursement State County Agent	\$180,533	\$180,533	\$180,533	0.00%
Probation Service Fees	\$171,216	\$140,439	\$120,556	-16.49%
Other	\$226,326	\$164,599	\$227,173	27.54%
Probate Certified Copies	\$125,339	\$120,899	\$126,372	4.33%
Family Counseling Fees	\$101,820	\$102,015	\$111,525	8.53%
Mediation Fines	\$111,150	\$142,050	\$124,050	-14.51%
Other Probate Filing Fees	\$85,927	\$120,280	\$84,220	-42.82%
Psychological Clinical Evaluation	\$54,142	\$45,399	\$46,973	3.35%
Processing Fees	\$73,261	\$72,815	\$79,773	8.72%
CRP State Supplement	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.00%
eFiling Fees	\$178,903	\$197,705	\$198,545	0.42%
Probate Will Deposits	\$8,700	\$10,600	\$10,975	3.42%
Reimbursement Salaries			\$47,874	100.00%
TOTAL	\$34,856,307	\$34,286,097	\$34,925,430	1.83%

Circuit Court and Probate Court Financial Report

2014

**Expenditures:
\$65,624,243**

- Salaries
- Fringe Benefits
- Institutional Child Care
- Attorney Fees
- Building Space Rental
- Computer Development & Operations
- Other



<u>Expenditures</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013-2014 % Change</u>
Salaries	\$23,460,136	\$23,354,324	\$23,625,377	1.15%
Fringe Benefits	\$15,539,695	\$15,454,367	\$15,380,929	-0.48%
Institutional Child Care	\$8,250,697	\$5,271,896	\$6,459,712	18.39%
Attorney Fees	\$5,216,923	\$4,608,358	\$4,337,066	-6.26%
Transfers Out	\$4,606,019	\$4,767,393	\$4,462,130	-6.84%
Building Space Rental	\$3,108,056	\$3,183,107	\$3,530,960	9.85%
Computer Development & Operations	\$2,836,122	\$3,105,153	\$3,355,895	7.47%
Indirect Costs	\$1,033,423	\$919,070	\$962,401	4.50%
Professional Services	\$583,802	\$507,698	\$484,768	-4.73%
Jury Fees & Mileage	\$434,521	\$461,735	\$441,400	-4.61%
Mediator Fees	\$532,475	\$511,411	\$492,200	-3.90%
Telephone Communications	\$305,063	\$300,695	\$309,090	2.72%
Postage/Mailroom	\$143,198	\$145,785	\$144,682	-0.76%
Commodities/Supplies	\$210,454	\$204,262	\$150,540	-35.69%
Transcripts	\$182,143	\$162,633	\$153,868	-5.70%
Printing	\$46,206	\$66,017	\$50,981	-29.49%
Visiting Judges	\$28,179	\$12,126	\$5,728	-111.70%
Other	\$155,367	\$164,937	\$203,061	18.77%
Mileage/Leased Vehicles	\$198,667	\$229,889	\$218,711	-5.11%
Equipment Rental	\$205,719	\$297,830	\$313,244	4.92%
Library Materials	\$128,074	\$137,453	\$149,093	7.81%
Maintenance Charges	\$48,307	\$71,213	\$63,364	-12.39%
Interpreter Services	\$62,017	\$70,616	\$93,115	24.16%
Transfers In	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.00%
Furniture/Equipment Purchases	\$45,721	\$15,854	\$41,586	61.88%
Computer Legal Research	\$32,462	\$27,456	\$32,448	15.38%
Insurance	\$46,815	\$46,815	\$46,815	0.00%
Overtime	\$86,573	\$96,651	\$93,110	-3.80%
Court Reporter Services	\$3,312	\$6,211	\$6,720	7.57%
Operating Transfer/Adjust Prior Years	\$99	\$0	\$12,575	100.00%
TOTAL	\$67,582,763	\$64,240,197	\$65,624,243	2.11%

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New Lawyer Admission Ceremony



12th Annual Celebration of Michigan Adoption Day Program



Oakland County Domestic Violence Prevention Awards Ceremony



Constitution Day



9th Annual International Elder Abuse Awareness Day



Pro Bono Attorney Appreciation Breakfast



Judicial Clerk Meeting



Summer Kick-Off Picnic



3rd Annual Fall Festival



U of M / MSU Tailgate Lunch



Holiday Luncheon and Ugly Sweater Contest



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CIRCUIT AND PROBATE COURTS' MOST VALUABLE PERSONS (MVPS)

The Oakland County Circuit and Probate Courts have been fortunate to have outstanding employees who are committed to the Courts and the public they serve. Nominations are taken twice a year for employees who have routinely demonstrated outstanding service that far exceeds their written job descriptions. Employees are nominated as Most Valuable Persons for the dedication, commitment, and enthusiasm that they bring to their job each and every day. These employees have been recognized by their supervisors, peers, and the citizens they serve for outstanding service. At the Annual Employee Recognition Ceremony held in December, the following employees were recognized as the 2014 Most Valuable Persons:

Colleen Bagazinski, Office Leader — Probate Estates and Mental Health

Mary Bartolotta, Office Assistant II — Youth Assistance

Amie Carlone, Domestic Support Specialist — Friend of the Court

Jessica Early, Office Assistant II — Juvenile Intake

Eddie Herron, Youth and Family Caseworker II — Juvenile Probation

Amanda Murley, Judicial Staff Attorney — Chambers of the Honorable Lisa Gorcyca

Mary Stewart, Youth Assistance Caseworker — Youth Assistance

Andy Thurlow, Systems Clerk — Friend of the Court



The Circuit and Probate Courts' MVPs for 2014 were recognized at the Annual Employee Recognition Ceremony in December. Probate Court Chief Judge Elizabeth Pezzetti (front row—far left) and Circuit Court Chief Judge Nanci Grant (back row—far right) were on hand to make the presentations. This year's 2014 MVPs are: (front row—left to right) Amanda Murley, Mary Bartolotta, Jessica Early, and Colleen Bagazinski. (Back row—left to right) Andrew Thurlow, Mary Stewart, and Eddie Herron. Not pictured: Amie Carlone.

STANDING OVATIONS

Navigating the courthouse and the judicial system can be a daunting task for the general public who may be unfamiliar with the procedures of the Courts. Circuit and Probate Court employees are recognized for their dedication to the Courts and the public they serve through Standing Ovation cards that are submitted by individuals who has received exemplary service while conducting business in the courthouse.

The following excerpts are just a sampling of the many Standing Ovation cards received during 2014 for exceptional service performed by employees who have gone above and beyond in assisting the public.

Amy Bordo — “Friendly and very respectful.”

Maura Hodits — “Clearly explained what forms and documentation were required and where I could access them on site. Also had a compassionate ear and earnest smile.”

John Range — “I needed courtroom info and I had no information, yet this clerk went beyond to locate the info I needed.”

Tom Swieboda — “... extend our highest level of gratitude for the superb care and generosity that your caseworker has bestowed upon our family.”

Cassandra Goulding — “Since the start of our time with Cassandra, our lives have improved so much and we are very thankful for her time and help. Thank you to Oxford-Addison Youth Assistance for helping make the community a better place for children and families.”

Nancy Minckler — “Thank you for all that you have done for our family. Words cannot express how grateful I am for your guidance.”

Deb Fahr — “Explanation without entertainment and too much explanation, etc. Just excellent.”

Shannon Fler — “She was amazing throughout, always nice, helpful, and returned calls. She is a great credit to your organization.”

Laura Roman-Christman — “She was cheerful, professional, and eager to resolve my rather complicated issue. With her help, I was able to resolve my filing expeditiously and hassle free.”

Carol Shaw and Karen Dodge — “I was very impressed with their professionalism and the manner in which they resolved the issue.”

Paula McDonald — “Is always extremely professional, helpful, and has a wonderful personality. She is efficient and organized.”

Probate Counter — “Very patient, informative, professional.”

Carol Gray — “Always polite, gracious, and goes out of her way to help despite the volume. Very efficient.”

Gina Hunt — “She was courteous, helpful, and made everything clear for us in this difficult time.”

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*Honorable
Francis X. O'Brien
1933—2011*

A plaque dedication, hosted by the Oakland County Bar Association, was held on July 10 honoring the memory and life of the late Honorable Francis X. O'Brien. Chief Judge Nanci Grant welcomed his family, friends, and former colleagues who came to honor his memory and legacy at the Court.

Oakland County Bar Association President-Elect David Carl Anderson presented the plaque to Judge O'Brien's wife, Shirley, who was accompanied by her children and grandchildren. Shirley O'Brien reminisced about fond memories and even shared a special song entitled "Accentuate the Positive," which was a favorite of the late Judge's.

Judge Daniel Patrick O'Brien shared from a journal he keeps of his father's anecdotes which included funny recollections and sound advice from his father's years on the bench.

Judge Francis X. O'Brien served on the Oakland County Circuit Court bench from 1977 to 1997. His career was filled with examples of dedication and commitment to the legal profession beyond his service as a judge.



Judge Francis X. O'Brien's wife, Shirley, and son, Honorable Daniel Patrick O'Brien, accepted the plaque from the Oakland County Bar Association on behalf of the family.



*Honorable
David F. Breck
1930—2009*

A plaque dedication ceremony, sponsored by the Oakland County Bar Association, was held on October 17 for the late Honorable David Breck. On hand to accept the plaque was Judge Breck's son, Kevin Breck, and his daughter, Margaret Smith, along with other family members. Several of Judge Breck's friends and former colleagues were also present to share in the celebration.

Chief Judge Nanci Grant welcomed those in attendance and Thomas H. Howlett, President of the Oakland County Bar Association, presented the plaque to the family. The Honorable Joan E. Young, Honorable Terrance A. Keith, and several former colleagues

shared their admiration

and humorous recollections of the late judge.

Judge Breck served as a Circuit Court judge from 1982 to 2000. He was known as a champion for equal rights and was instrumental in developing legal principles in the areas of assisted suicide, handicapped rights, civil rights, and the "drug lifer" law.



Receiving the plaque were Judge Breck's family: (left to right) David Smith (grandson), Margaret Smith (daughter), Kevin Breck (son), Ann Breck (daughter-in-law), and Kelsey Breck (granddaughter).

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Circuit and Probate Courts would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their valuable contributions to the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court and Oakland County Probate Court 2014 Annual Report:

The managers and supervisors of the offices highlighted in this report for their input with regard to office functions and accomplishments.

The following individuals for their pictorial contributions:

Phill DeBarr, Data Technology Unit

John Meiu, Detroit Legal News Publishing LLC

Beth Sayles, Sayles Studio
Oakland County Bar Association

Karen Koshen, Court Resource and Program Specialist, for managing the project and pictorial contributions.

