

OAKLAND COUNTY

SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT OAKLAND COUNTY PROBATE COURT



2015 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 or

www.oakgov.com/courts/probate

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Message from the Chief Judges



Honorable Nanci J. Grant
Circuit Court Chief Judge



Honorable Elizabeth Pezzetti
Probate Court Chief Judge

We are pleased to present the 2015 Annual Report of the Circuit and Probate Courts in Oakland County. In it you will find statistics, data, and other information that will help the reader better understand how the Courts operate. We hope that you will find our Annual Report interesting and informative.

Often we use this message to highlight new initiatives or explain how we expanded or enlarged existing programs and projects. That is described within the pages of this Annual Report; but this year we want to use this message to publicly thank the judges and employees who demonstrate daily their commitment to the rule of law and devotion to exceptional public service. Our accomplishments and achievements would not happen without the knowledge and creativity displayed by our judges and employees, and for that we express our deep appreciation.

The essential mission of courts is to advance the administration of justice in a fair and impartial way to ensure that the rights of the citizens are safeguarded. How that noble responsibility is accomplished can vary among courts. The Michigan Supreme Court has rightfully promoted accountability, accessibility, and efficiency as cornerstones upon which courts carry out their mission. Perhaps nowhere have these cornerstones been more on display than in the Courts here in Oakland County.

Some people shy away from challenges, but not our judges and employees. They view challenges as opportunities, and opportunities as a gateway to innovation and improvement. No doubt they will seize the opportunities that lay ahead to further cultivate an accountable, accessible, and efficient justice system. Our sincerest thanks to the judges and employees for their hard work and continued dedication to the administration of justice and without whom the achievements noted in this Annual Report would not be possible.

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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Historical Roster of the Courts

Sixth Judicial Circuit Judges

Sanford M. Green	1848–1852	William R. Beasley	1966–1976	Denise Langford Morris	1992–Present
Joseph Copeland	1852–1858	Farrell E. Roberts	1967–1982	John J. McDonald	1993–2010
Sanford M. Green	1858–1870	Daniel C. Devine	1966–1966	Nanci J. Grant	1997–Present
James S. Dewey	1870–1874	Robert L. Templin	1967–1996	Joan E. Young	1997–Present
Levi B. Taft	1873–1876	William P. Hampton	1970–1976	Wendy L. Potts	1998–Present
Aug C. Baldwin	1876–1880	Richard D. Kuhn	1973–2004	Colleen A. O'Brien	1998–2015
Silas B. Gaskill	1880–1882	John N. O'Brien	1973–1993	Patrick J. Brennan	2001–2004
William Stickney	1882–1888	Robert B. Webster	1973–1982	Rae Lee Chabot	2001–Present
Joseph B. Moore	1888–1896	Steven N. Andrews	1976–2008	James M. Alexander	2001–Present
George W. Smith	1896–1917	Alice L. Gilbert	1978–1992	Michael Warren	2002–Present
Kleber P. Rockwell	1916–1921	Alice L. Gilbert	1995–2002	Daniel P. O'Brien	2003–Present
Frank L. Covert	1919–1933	Francis X. O'Brien	1977–1997	Martha D. Anderson	2003–Present
Glenn C. Gillespie	1922–1934	Hilda R. Gage	1978–1996	Mark A. Goldsmith	2004–2010
Frank L. Doty	1927–1960	Bernard L. Kaufman	1979–1979	Cheryl A. Matthews	2005–Present
Goodloe H. Rogers	1935–1935	Gene Schnelz	1979–2007	Leo Bowman	2007–Present
George B. Hartrick	1935–1958	George LaPlata	1979–1985	Shalina D. Kumar	2007–Present
H. Russel Holland	1935–1963	Robert C. Anderson	1981–1998	Lisa Gorcyca	2009–Present
Clark J. Adams	1956–1973	David F. Breck	1981–2000	Mary Ellen Brennan	2009–Present
William J. Beer	1958–1980	Fred M. Mester	1982–2008	Phyllis C. McMillen	2010–Present
Theodore Hughes	1959–1959	Norman L. Lippitt	1985–1989	Karen McDonald	2013–Present
Stanton G. Dondero	1959–1965	Jessica R. Cooper	1987–2000	Lisa Langton	2015–Present
Frederick C. Ziem	1959–1986	Edward Sosnick	1989–2012	Hala Jarbou	2015–Present
Arthur E. Moore	1963–1976	Barry L. Howard	1989–2001	Jeffery S. Matis	2015–Present
Philip Pratt	1963–1970	Deborah G. Tyner	1991–2006		
James S. Thorburn	1963–1988	Rudy J. Nichols	1991–2015		

Oakland County Probate Judges

Dr. William Thompson	1821–1823	Alfred Crawford	1869–1872	Donald E. Adams	1961–1977
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	1967–2010
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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Judges of the Circuit Court



Front row (left to right): Judges Wendy Potts, Joan E. Young, Denise Langford Morris, Rudy J. Nichols (Circuit Court Chief Judge Pro Tem), Nanci J. Grant (Circuit Court Chief Judge), and Colleen A. O'Brien (Presiding Judge of the Civil/Criminal Division)

Middle row: Judges Karen McDonald, Lisa Langton, Rae Lee Chabot, Phyllis C. McMillen, Martha D. Anderson, Mary Ellen Brennan, and Cheryl Matthews

Back row: Judges Michael Warren, Shalina D. Kumar, Leo Bowman, Lisa Gorcyca (Presiding Judge of the Family Division), James M. Alexander, and Daniel Patrick O'Brien

Not Pictured: Judges Hala Jarbou and Jeffery S. Matis

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Judges of the Probate Court



*Front row (left to right): Judges Linda S. Hallmark
(Probate Court Chief Judge Pro Tem) and
Elizabeth Pezzetti (Probate Court Chief Judge)*

*Back row: Judges Kathleen A. Ryan (Presiding Judge of the Estates/Trusts Division) and
Daniel A. O'Brien (Presiding Judge of the Guardianship/Conservatorship/Mental Health Division)*

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Judges in Transition



Honorable Rudy Nichols
Circuit Court Chief Judge Pro Tem

Circuit Court Chief Judge Pro Tem Rudy Nichols, affectionately known as the “Dean of the Bench,” retired on June 30 after serving 25 years with the Oakland County Circuit Court. Judge Nichols was elected in 1990 and was re-elected on four subsequent occasions.

Judge Nichols graduated from Detroit College of Law and began his legal career in 1963 as a general and municipal practice lawyer with the law firm of Booth, Patterson & Karlstrom. He later became the Deputy City Attorney for the City of Pontiac. In 1981 he was elected as a Michigan State Representative and eventually ran successfully for the State Senate where he served two terms. During his second term, he was appointed by Governor Engler to chair the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Judge Nichols was the recipient of the “Outstanding Legislator of the Year” award by the Michigan Judges Association and was also recognized by the Police Officers Association of Michigan as the “Legislator of the Year.”

He authored and co-authored several articles published in professional journals, including “Time for an Overhaul of Michigan’s Condominium Act” and “Overview of Michigan Rules of Evidence,” as well as Michigan’s “Domestic Violence Law,” appearing in the *State Bar Journal* and in *Laches*, respectively.

After 33 years as a public servant, Judge Nichols and his wife have retired to South Carolina to be near their children and grandchildren. The judges and employees of the court are sorry to see Judge Nichols leave, but wish him the best of luck in his retirement.

In September of this year, Judge Colleen O’Brien was tapped by Governor Snyder to fill an opening in the Michigan Court of Appeals. Judge O’Brien had served on the bench of the Oakland County Circuit Court since 1998 and had been in private practice, specializing in civil litigation for 17 years prior.

During her tenure at the court, Judge O’Brien served as Presiding Judge of the Civil/Criminal Division and was Presiding Judge of the female section of the Adult Treatment Court. She also served as President of the Michigan Judges Association and was a fellow of the Michigan State Bar Foundation and the Oakland County Bar Foundation. She is a former member of the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan Board of Directors and a former president of the Oakland County Women’s Bar Association.

Judge O’Brien has been active with Crossroads for Youth, a non-profit treatment agency serving at-risk children, and is a member of the Michigan Interagency Council on Homelessness. She is an adjunct Professor at Cooley Law School and is on the Advisory Board of the Baker College Paralegal Program.

Judge O’Brien is wished the best of luck in her new position and will truly be missed by her friends and colleagues at the Oakland County Circuit Court.



Honorable Colleen A. O’Brien
Presiding Judge of the
Civil/Criminal Division

Judges in Transition



Honorable Lisa Langton
Family Division

Judge Langton was elected to the Circuit Court bench on November 4, 2014, and joined the bench in January 2015. Prior to being elected, she served for six years as the Deputy Court Administrator for the Circuit Court, overseeing the Family Division.

Judge Langton began her legal career as a court clerk for Retired Oakland County Probate Court Judges Eugene Arthur Moore and Norman Barnard. She later joined the firm of Williams, Williams, Rattner & Plunkett, P.C., as an associate attorney for eight years.

She returned to the Probate Court as Chief of the Probate Estates Division. After the creation of the Family Division in 1998, she served in the Probate Court as Probate Register and the Circuit Court as Family Division Administrator. After serving eight years in her dual role, she joined the Court Administrator's Office as the Deputy Court Administrator. Judge Langton

assumed the vacant opening on the bench that was formerly held by Judge John McDonald and is assigned to the Family Division.

Judge Hala Jarbou was appointed to the Oakland County Circuit Court and joined the bench in November as the 70th Circuit Court judge.

Judge Jarbou graduated from Wayne State University Law School and joined the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office in 1997 where she held various roles until 2010 when she was appointed U.S. Assistant Attorney in the United States Attorney's Office. It was during her tenure with the United States Attorney's Office that she was appointed by Governor Snyder to become an Oakland County Circuit Judge.

Upon joining the Oakland County Circuit bench, Judge Jarbou was assigned to the Civil/Criminal Division and assumed the docket formerly assigned to Judge Nichols who retired in June.



Honorable Hala Jarbou
Civil/Criminal Division



Honorable Jeffery S. Matis
Family Division

Judge Jeffery S. Matis was appointed by Governor Snyder to fill an opening with the Oakland County Circuit Court and also joined the bench in November, becoming the 71st judge of the Circuit Court.

Judge Matis began in private practice in 1994 and started his political career as a councilman for the City of Rochester. He was later elected to the Oakland County Board of Commissioners where he served as vice chair of the board. In 2012, Judge Matis joined the firm of Garan Luow Miller, PC, in Troy until his appointment to the Oakland County bench. He also served as an adjunct professor of law at Western Michigan University Thomas Cooley Law School.

Judge Matis took over the family division docket held by Judge Cheryl Matthews who moved from the Family Division to the Civil/Criminal Division.

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Letter from the Court Administrators



Kevin M. Oeffner
Circuit Court Administrator



Rebecca A. Schnelz
Probate Court Administrator

Elected Officials and Citizens of Oakland County:

The Annual Report that follows is the joint effort of judges and staff members throughout the Courts. The intent is to provide readers with information that highlights the work of the Courts. It includes statistical information for areas such as caseload, juror use, and revenues and expenditures. The readers will also find descriptions of court programs, accomplishments, and services that are offered to the public. The goal in providing this information is to further the readers' understanding of the judicial system in Oakland County.

The Courts successfully met many different challenges throughout 2015. Judges and staff members strived to treat each challenge as an opportunity for improvement with the ultimate goal being the fair and impartial administration of justice for all citizens. This Annual Report serves as a summary of those efforts and a reminder to judges and staff of the path forward.

We hope that you will find the Annual Report a useful tool in understanding the Courts. We are very proud of the accomplishments of the dedicated judges and staff of the Oakland County Circuit and Probate Courts. Their commitment to the citizens and their pride in public service are clearly evident in the following pages.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin M. Oeffner".

Kevin M. Oeffner
Circuit Court Administrator

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca A. Schnelz".

Rebecca A. Schnelz
Probate Court Administrator

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Circuit Court — Civil/Criminal Division

Judge Colleen O'Brien was the presiding judge of the Civil/Criminal Division until her appointment to the Michigan Court of Appeals in October. At that time, Judge Michael Warren took over the responsibilities of presiding judge of the Civil/Criminal Division.

The Civil/Criminal Division of the Circuit Court is composed of 13 judges who hear civil cases with alleged damages in excess of \$25,000 and criminal cases involving high misdemeanors and felony charges. In addition to their general civil/criminal dockets, the 13 judges also serve an appellate function. The judges preside over appeals from the Oakland County Probate Court and the several district courts within Oakland County, as well as from administrative agencies, such as local zoning boards, licensing boards, and parole boards.

Oakland County Circuit Court also has five specialty courts—Business Court, Adult Treatment Court, Combat Veterans Treatment Court, Juvenile Drug Court, and Urban Drug Court. Each specialty court was established to address the specific needs identified in particular types of cases as more fully described herein. Judges James Alexander and Wendy Potts preside over the Business Court. Judge Joan Young presides over the male section of the Adult Treatment Court, and Judge Colleen O'Brien presided over the female section of the Adult Treatment Court until Judge Shalina Kumar took over for Judge O'Brien. Judge Mary Ellen Brennan presides over the Juvenile Drug Court. Judges Phyllis McMillen, Daniel P. O'Brien, and Michael Warren preside over the Urban Drug Court.

As identified in this section, the Civil/Criminal Division provides a variety of services to the Court and those who use it, enhancing accessibility and ensuring that cases proceed smoothly and efficiently.

Judges' chambers are staffed with judicial attorneys, judicial secretaries, and judicial clerks to assist in managing the various day-to-day functions and 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, and the Jury Office.



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

JUDGES ON THE MOVE

2015 brought changes to the Oakland County Circuit Court Civil/Criminal Division. Although the number of judges remained at 13, the faces have changed. Judge Rudy Nichols, fondly known as the "Dean of the Bench" due to his 25-year tenure with the Circuit Court, announced his retirement as of June 30, 2015.

Judge Colleen O'Brien continued as presiding judge of the Civil/Criminal Division until October when she accepted the appointment to serve on the Michigan Court of Appeals, ending her 17-year tenure with the Circuit Court bench. Thereafter, Judge Cheryl Matthews, having completed 10 years of service with the Oakland County Circuit Court — Family Division, transitioned to the Civil/Criminal Division and assumed Judge O'Brien's docket.

The newest face to the Civil/Criminal Division was Judge Hala Jarbou, who accepted the appointment to serve on the Oakland County Circuit Court. Judge Jarbou began presiding over Judge Nichols' former docket in November.

Circuit Court — Civil/Criminal Division

Administrative Support

Headed by Pamela Monville, Manager/Judicial Assistant of Civil/Criminal Division, this division works collaboratively with court staff and county departments to develop and implement short-term and long-term policies and procedures in response to evolving rules and legislation. The manager serves as a liaison among the various county departments housed within the courthouse complex, such as the clerk's office, probation department, reimbursement/fiscal services, sheriff's office, prosecutor's office, and corporation counsel. The manager also works with the general public, litigants, attorneys, and district court personnel to provide collaborative public service.

Administrative Support assists with legal and administrative matters for the 13 judicial staff attorneys who work for the civil/criminal judges. Two on-site administrative judicial staff attorneys, Pam Hamway and Maureen Hudson Smith, provide additional judicial support to chambers by answering procedural and legal questions and provide work overflow assistance with administrative agency appeals and criminal appellate motions.

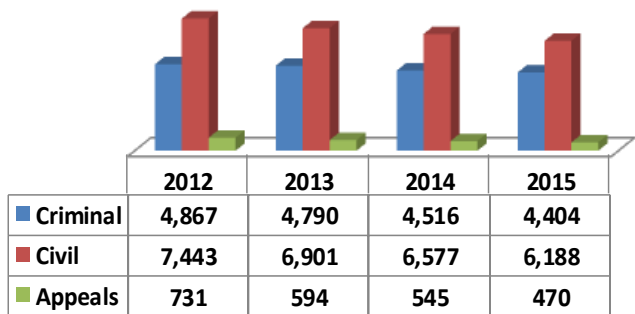
Also, as part of the Administrative Support team, Gwynne Starkey, Chief of the Civil/Criminal Division, oversees support staff from Civil Case Support, Criminal Case Support, and the Jury Office.

Case Management Office

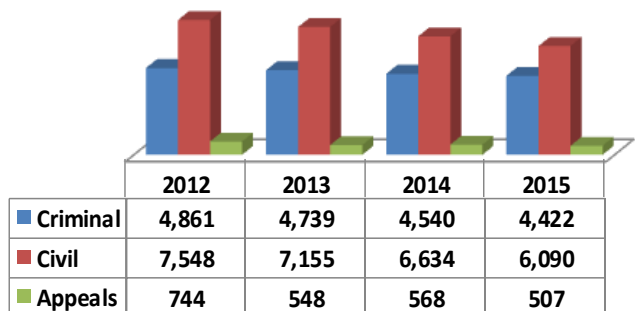
The Case Management Office (CMO) is the hub for case flow and includes two types of judicial support staff – the Civil Case Support staff and the Criminal Case Support staff. In addition to daily case operations, both branches create and maintain statistical data for monthly, quarterly, and annual reports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

Civil Case Support — The Civil Case Support staff consist of nine individuals who are responsible for operations of civil cases from establishment to closure. Staff establish, monitor, and maintain statistics on case evaluation and mediation programs for not only the Civil/Criminal Division, but also for the Family Division and Probate Court. Evaluative and alternative dispute resolution programs are processes by which cases may settle prior to trial, saving litigants and the Court valuable time, effort, and money.

New Filings and Reopened Cases



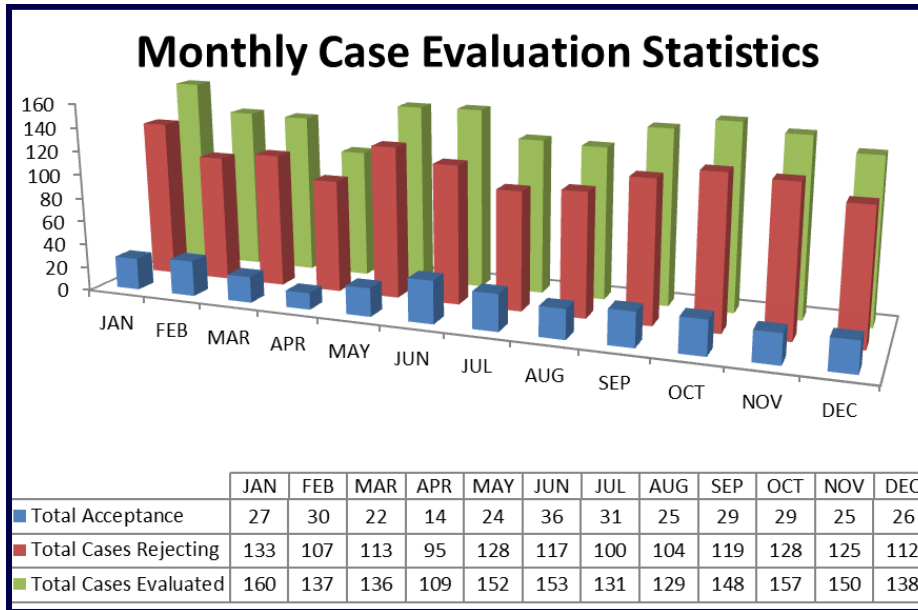
Disposition of Cases



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Circuit Court — Civil/Criminal Division

The Civil Case Support staff is also responsible for assigning, reassigning, and consolidating cases; processing Judge On-Line requests; managing praecipes; preparing and distributing scheduling orders; logging and directing mail; adjusting docket entries; managing the case evaluation process; and maintaining statistical data for all 23 judges within the Oakland County Circuit and Probate Courts.



Criminal Case Support — The Criminal Case Support staff is composed of five individuals who provide essential case preparation and management functions. The staff assign cases to Circuit Court judges after felony warrants are issued and appoint trial counsel, where necessary, to represent defendants prior to bindover from district court. Staff also appoint appellate counsel and obtain 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. In addition to case management, the staff also track and maintain criminal assignment data and monitor the daily inmate population.



The Criminal Case Support staff includes: (left to right) Angelina Sharon, Porki Mellado, Shelly Hollingsworth, Jill Adkins, and Susan Bennington.

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Circuit Court — Civil/Criminal Division

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Oakland County Circuit Court Local Administrative Order 2013-03 established a business court as required by Public Act 333 of 2012. Oakland County is one of 16 Michigan counties who currently have business court Local Administrative Orders.¹ On July 1, 2013, Judges James Alexander and Wendy Potts began presiding over Oakland County's specialized court as part of a six-year term. Their current terms end April 1, 2019.

The Business Court has jurisdiction in accordance with MCL 600.8031. Business-related litigation involves commercial disputes between "business enterprises"² with alleged damages in excess of \$25,000. If no damages are alleged, there is no business court jurisdiction.

Over the first six months of operation, 620 cases were assigned to Oakland County's Business Court, with 1,068 new filings in 2014. Of those cases filed in 2014, a little over one-quarter had corresponding jury demands. The disposition rate for 2014 was approximately 89% and the average case age at disposition was 147 days old. A Business Court case manager position was created to assist with the caseload and administrative demands of the Business Court. In late 2015, the court hired a part-time judicial staff attorney, Julie Adams, to fill this need. By the end of 2015, the Business Court's disposition rate increased to 99%.

Oakland County's Business Court is one of the busiest and most innovative in the nation. Initial case conferences allow scheduling orders to be tailored to the needs of the parties as opposed to being "boilerplate." Wednesday morning volunteer discovery facilitators allow the parties the opportunity to amicably resolve their issues. The Court is utilizing the latest Alternative Dispute Resolution concepts to assist in resolving disputes more efficiently.

The Oakland County Business Court is committed to fulfilling the purposes of the business court legislation...to develop expertise, consistency, and predictability in order to allow for a more receptive business climate in Michigan.



Judge Wendy Potts and Judge James Alexander preside over the Business Court and are assisted by: (left to right) Meg McGown, Nick Haller, Kristyn Recchia, Sheila Russ, Derek Howard, Audrey Marshall, Joanne Thorndycraft, Jill Adams, and Donna LaBelle.

¹A listing of each Michigan Business Court LAO can be found at <http://courts.mi.gov/administration/admin/op/business-courts/pages/business-courts.aspx> (accessed February 24, 2016)

²"Business enterprises" means a sole proprietorship, partnership, limited partnership, joint venture, limited liability company, limited liability partnership, for-profit or not-for-profit corporation or professional corporation, business trust, real estate investment trust, or any other entity in which a business may lawfully be conducted in the jurisdiction in which the business is being conducted. Business enterprise does not include an ecclesiastical or religious organization. MCL 600.8031(1)(b)

Circuit Court — Civil/Criminal Division

Jury Office

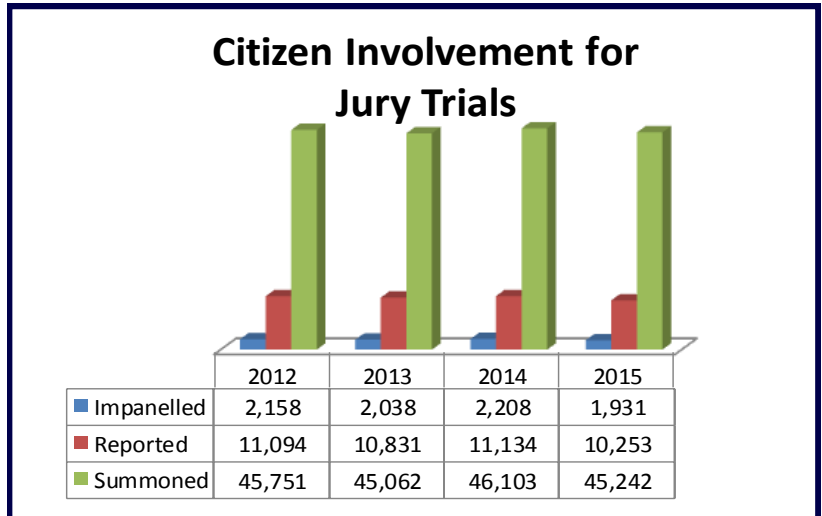
The Jury Office, supervised by Deborah Fahr, employs six staff members who maintain operations to support jury requests from both the Circuit and Probate Courts of Oakland County.

New jurors are scheduled to report for duty on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. Jurors check in, receive a barcoded juror badge, and wait in the jury assembly room for further instructions. Jurors are welcomed and thanked by one of several participating Circuit Court judges who stress the importance of jury service. Thereafter, jurors

are shown a short video regarding jury service. Jury staff members provide further instructions on what to expect while serving throughout the day and address any concerns the jurors may have. Jurors are randomly selected, using an electronic process, to go to assigned courtrooms as needed throughout the day. If jurors are not selected, they are dismissed for the day and have completed their jury service.

The number of jurors required for a particular date is determined five weeks in advance. The appropriate number of jurors are selected from the Secretary of State database which is based upon driver's license or personal identification lists. Jury Questionnaires are printed in the Jury Office and mailed to prospective jurors. Completed questionnaires are reviewed by the Jury Office staff to determine juror eligibility.

By statute, citizens are exempted from jury service if their permanent residence is not within Oakland County, they have served as a juror within the past 12 months, they are not physically able to serve (and provide a doctor's note as verification), they have been convicted of a felony, or they 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. Jurors are paid a per diem and mileage, pursuant to Michigan law, and checks are mailed to the juror after service is completed.



The Jury Office staff (left to right): Becky Young; Deb Fahr, Supervisor; Jenna Smith; Michelle Glover; Teresa Williams; and Debra Brown.

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Circuit Court — Civil/Criminal Division

SUMMARY JURY TRIAL PILOT PROJECT

In March, the Michigan Supreme Court authorized a pilot project to test the summary jury trial concept. A summary jury trial is defined as a “voluntary, binding jury trial, typically conducted in a single day before a panel of six jurors and presided over by the assigned judge.” The summary jury trial purports to give litigants an efficient and economical means to resolve a dispute. In June, Judge Phyllis McMillen was presented with an opportunity to preside over such a proceeding.

The particular case before Judge McMillen resulted from dog bite injuries. The complaint was filed in February of 2014 and was promptly answered. The parties continued through the discovery process and in January of 2015 participated in case evaluation. The evaluation was accepted by one party but rejected by the other, prompting the scheduling of a jury trial in April. The parties attempted to settle and pushed the trial date out to June. They worked diligently to reach resolution by conceding many facts, yet remained far apart on the value of pain and suffering. On the eve of trial, the parties presented a consent order for a summary jury trial in accordance with Michigan Supreme Court Administrative Order 2015-1. Among other things, the parties waived rights under traditional jury trial court rules and modified the rules of evidence to speed the process. They set high and low verdict parameters and also agreed to a binding jury verdict which was not appealable except where fraud is alleged. The jury trial lasted less than three hours with the following results:

- Ten potential jurors were sent to the courtroom for selection instead of the typical 20 jurors.
- Jury selection took a total of 20 minutes.
- Four jurors were excused and the remaining six were impaneled.
- Preliminary jury instructions and presentation of the testimony and evidence lasted approximately 55 minutes.
- Closings were completed in 20 minutes.
- Final jury instructions lasted 7 minutes.
- The jury deliberated for approximately 50 minutes.
- The jury verdict fell within the high/low range of expected outcomes.
- The jury verdict was less than the case evaluation award.

Overall, the summary jury trial received positive feedback from all who were involved. Summary jury trials might be a perfect choice for litigants who want to avoid the high cost of protracted litigation but still want a jury of their peers rather than a single arbitrator to decide their case. The State Court Administrative Office is collecting data on the feasibility of summary jury trials via the pilot program. However, as one might say, ... “the jury is still out.”



Judge Phyllis McMillen presided over the first summary jury trial in her courtroom in June as part of a Summary Jury Trial Pilot Project. The entire trial, from jury selection to verdict, lasted less than three hours.

Circuit Court — Civil/Criminal Division

Adult Treatment Court

The Adult Treatment Court (ATC) began in 2001, helping participants who have serious substance abuse problems and have committed non-violent felonies within Oakland County. Under the direction of Jacqueline Howes-Evanson, Drug Treatment Court Supervisor, ATC 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 Shalina Kumar presides over the female participants. Judge Kumar took over as presiding judge from Judge Colleen O'Brien who was appointed to the Court of Appeals in October of 2015.

As of December, 196 participants have successfully graduated from the Adult Treatment Court. In 2009, the ATC incorporated a mental health component into the programming to better serve those who have an Axis I diagnosis along with a Substance Use Disorder (SUD).



The Adult Treatment Court held its 43rd graduation ceremony in July of this year celebrating its 192nd—196th graduates from the program. Judge Joan Young presides over the male participants and Judge Colleen O'Brien was the presiding judge of the female participants. Judge Shalina Kumar has taken over the presiding role of the female participants after Judge Colleen O'Brien's

Urban Drug Court

The Urban Drug Court (UDC) was launched in 2013 as a joint collaboration between the Governor's office and the Michigan Supreme Court. UDC was created to help substance addicted participants who have committed non-violent felonies within the City of Pontiac. With positive support from the Michigan leadership within the State Court Administrative Office, the Legislature, and the Governor's office, funding for this program has been continued through 2018. Judge Phyllis McMillen, Judge Michael Warren, and Judge Daniel P. O'Brien accept referrals to the UDC on a rotational basis.

Headed by Ebony McCann, UDC uses a team approach to provide comprehensive and integrated drug treatment and rehabilitation services designed for participants' individual circumstances and supervision from one of three UDC judges. Twenty participants have graduated from the program and to date there are 45 active participants in the program.

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Circuit Court — Civil/Criminal Division

Combat Veterans Treatment Court

The Combat Veterans Treatment Court began in 2013 with the goal of reaching Oakland County veterans who have been charged with offenses related to residual traumatic experiences suffered in combat, conflict, or search and rescue or recovery missions while serving our country. Eligibility for the program requires that participants cannot have a criminal record prior to their service and must have been honorably discharged.

Chief Judge Nanci Grant oversees this specialty court along with Marseille Allen, Michigan Department of Corrections probation agent. The program requires intense supervision, mental health and substance abuse treatment, readjustment counseling, and mentoring with military veterans who can relate to the participants' combat experiences. This Court does not give veterans special treatment, but focuses on the unique issues faced by veterans.



The Combat Veterans Treatment Court celebrated its first graduation ceremony in January. Chief Circuit Judge Nanci Grant presides over the Combat Veterans Treatment Court and is assisted by Marseille Allen. The team meets prior to each court session to discuss and review the progress of the participants.

Circuit Court—Civil/Criminal Division Accomplishments

- * Scheduled 1,829 cases for evaluation. Of the scheduled cases, 1,700 completed the evaluation process and 318 cases accepted the evaluation award within the 28-day acceptance/rejection period.
- * Overall acceptance rate for case evaluation was 19%, which is a 2% increase over 2014.
- * There were 245 no-fault automobile insurance cases referred to case evaluation with an acceptance rate of 17.6%, and there were 612 personal injury auto negligence cases referred to case evaluation with an acceptance rate of 14.2%.
- * Business Court had 932 new filings with 929 dispositions. Average case age at disposition was 184 days.
- * Processed 661 requests for individuals to participate in hearings via telephone through the Judge On-Line program.

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Circuit Court — Civil/Criminal Division

Circuit Court—Civil/Criminal Division Accomplishments (continued)

- * Processed 3,648 petitions for court-appointed attorneys for indigent or partially indigent defendants.
- * Oakland County district courts bound 4,123 cases over to Circuit Court.
- * Approximately 4,235 pre-sentence investigation reports were prepared.
- * Appointed appellate counsel for criminal defendants in 279 cases.
- * Maintained the Oakland County Interpreter List with 16 certified and 18 qualified interpreters which encompasses 11 languages.
- * Jury Office processed 10 juror requests for American Sign Language interpreters.
- * Jury Office summoned 45,242 prospective jurors for service to meet the daily needs of the trial court. Of that number, 10,253 were required to report for service and ultimately 1,931 citizens were selected as jurors in 2015.
- * Total fees and mileage paid to jurors who were required to appear at court was \$373,215, with the average cost of a jury being \$2,062.
- * Provided jurors to courts for 70 civil trials, with an average duration of 3.02 days. Provided jurors to courts for 111 criminal trials, with an average duration of 2.56 days. Of the criminal trials, 41 were capital offenses and 11 of the capital trials were homicide cases.
- * Adult Treatment Court has served 619 participants since the program's inception in August of 2001 and, as of October, 202 participants have graduated from the program.
- * Graduates of the ATC have an average of 305 sobriety days by the time they graduate, with 86% of the participants having improved their level of employment at the time of their commencement from the program.
- * While most ATC graduates enter the program with either a high school diploma and/or GED, 15% further improve their education level while in the program.
- * Since its inception in 2013, there have been 109 Urban Drug Court participants and 20 have successfully completed the program.
- * Combat Veterans Treatment Court had three participants graduate from the program.

Circuit Court — Family Division



*Honorable Lisa Gorcyca
Presiding Judge of the
Family Division*

Judge Lisa Gorcyca is the presiding judge of the Family Division of the Circuit Court. The Family Division is composed of eight judges who are elected to six-year terms. The judges hear domestic relations cases involving divorce, child support, and paternity matters. Judges in this division also finalize adoptions; handle name changes and juvenile guardianships; preside over hearings for juvenile offenses, delinquencies, and child abuse and neglect cases; and oversee Personal Protection Orders.

David Bilson, former juvenile court referee, was promoted in January to Deputy Court Administrator and is responsible for managing this division. This vacancy was created by the election of Judge Langton to the Circuit Court bench.

Judge Jeffery S. Matis, a former Oakland County Commissioner and private attorney, was appointed to the Circuit Court bench and joined the Family Division in November. Judge Matis took over the caseload of Judge Cheryl

Matthews who transferred to the Civil/Criminal Division.

Included in the Family Division are the Friend of the Court operations, Judicial Support Services, Juvenile Support Services, and Court Services.

Friend of the Court

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

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 to assist parties in making requests for assistance by the Friend of the Court are available on the FOC website at www.oakgov.com/courts/foc.

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

SUMMARY OF DOMESTIC RELATIONS ACTIVITY

New Filing Activity	2012	2013	2014	2015
Domestic Relations				
Without Children	2,496	2,341	2,345	2,276
With Children	2,411	2,159	2,063	2,078
Paternity	905	905	910	835
Interstate	73	66	58	57
Support	1,123	1,171	1,242	1,152
Other	294	339	339	324
Total New Filings	7,302	6,981	6,957	6,722

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Circuit Court — Family Division

ASSISTANCE IN RESOLVING DEBT

Navigating the child support system can be tricky for anyone, but for a parent who is unemployed, the Friend of the Court can be a scary place to be. Alternatively, parents on the other side of the child support equation can find support payments abruptly cut off, often without notice, right when a prom dress or food needs to be purchased. The Friend of the Court finds itself in the middle of that equation attempting to both ensure the financial support of children and balance the needs of payers caught up in a changing economy.

Keeping that balance in mind, the Friend of the Court created the AID docket to provide, as the acronym implies, “Assistance In resolving Debt.” Two referees were appointed to the new docket and served their first full year with distinction in 2015. Referees Ken Tolbert and Ilyssa Cimmino are supported by Case Assistant Priscilla Thompson in this exciting new project. During that time, the percentage of current support collected by the office increased a full percentage point to 76.6% and the number of cases with arrearages that received a payment also increased by nearly a percent to 68.5%.

Recent changes in the law utilized by the AID docket include modifications to the Support and Parenting Time Enforcement Act, MCL 552.601-52.650, which was amended by 2014 PA 378 (effective March 17, 2015). Changes allow the Court to initiate proceedings to enforce a *conditional* commitment order when the Friend of the Court informs the Court that the contemnor has failed to satisfy the Court’s conditions.

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 (effective March 17, 2015) created specialty courts for child support. The amendment creates 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. FOC is building partnerships with other county programs like Step Forward to address some of these conditions for our non-paying parents.

Additionally, under a new program, arrearages owed to the state may be discharged in some circumstances! Payers may apply for this program by completing a questionnaire identifying their barriers to successful payment. The FOC is looking forward to exploring new enforcement ideas with the flexibility provided by the new AID docket.



Referee Ken Tolbert, Case Assistant Priscilla Thompson, and Referee Ilyssa Cimmino served over 1,100 payers of support on the special docket known as the Assistance in Resolving Debt team.

Circuit Court — Family Division

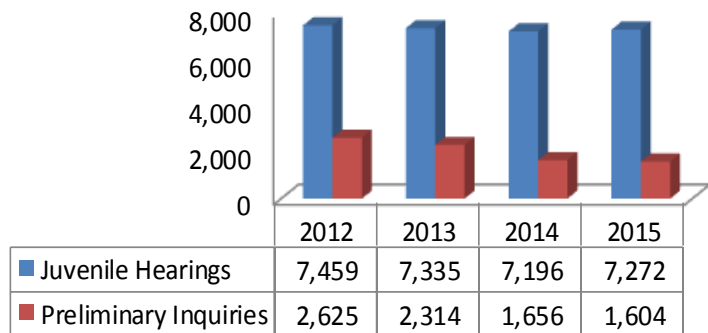
Judicial Support Services

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

Juvenile Court Referees — Martin Alvin, Senior Referee, oversees the Juvenile Court referees who 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, divert the matter, or use informal resolution methods. When a judge is not demanded for the trial, referees serve as fact finders 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.

Clinical Services — 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. Clinicians are available for case consultation with court staff and others. The Court Clinic implemented new procedures to align its work with the competency statute, including links to restoration providers.

Juvenile Hearings v Preliminary Inquiries Held



Juvenile Support Services

Erin O'Brien, Chief of Juvenile Support Services, manages the Juvenile Intake Department, the Personal Protection Order Office, the Adoption Department, and the Juvenile Legal Processing Department. These departments provide essential assistance to the judges of the Family Division as well as the residents of Oakland County.

Juvenile Intake — Headed by Jerri Decker, Juvenile Intake Supervisor, the 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.

Juvenile Court Legal Processing — Under the direction of Carmen Janik, Supervisor - Juvenile Court Legal Processing, the support staff, which includes the deputy registers, order clerks, typists, and file room assistants, prepare files for hearings as well as create, maintain, and update the physical and electronic records for each case, the court schedule, confidential files, and transcripts and exhibits and assist the

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Circuit Court — Family Division

public and parties in cases before the Juvenile Court. The staff 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.

Nicole Rude, 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 attorneys with lawyers on the approved roster.

Personal Protection Order Office — The Personal Protection Order (PPO) Office Liaison, Melissa Hoppe, provides legal expertise in both the issuance and enforcement of PPOs. The PPO Office staff 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.

Adoption Department — The Adoption Department 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. This department is responsible for the Annual Adoption Day program which is held in conjunction with a statewide event celebrating children and their new families.

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 Judicial Support Services administrative team assesses overall agency performance and identifies specific areas where improvement is required.



The Adoption Department staff (left to right—front row): Erin O'Brien, Chief of the Juvenile Support Services; and Gabrielle Osooli; (back row) Brenda Kelly; Annette Liike; Lisa Westphal; Naomi Schwartz; and Laura Roman-Christman. (Not pictured: Bethany Brooks)

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Circuit Court — Family Division

13TH ANNUAL ADOPTION DAY

On November 24th, the 13th Annual Celebration of Michigan Adoption Day was held before a large audience in the Commissioners' Auditorium. Judge Lisa Gorcyca, Presiding Judge of the Family Division, along with Chief Circuit Judge Nanci Grant, Chief Probate Judge Elizabeth Pezzetti, Judge Linda Hallmark, Judge Joan Young, Judge Karen McDonald, and Judge Mary Ellen Brennan, finalized the adoptions of eleven children with seven forever families. There was applause, tears of joy, and warm congratulations from everyone who had the honor of witnessing this event.

Michigan Supreme Court Justice Joan L. Larsen was on hand for the ceremony and provided heartfelt remarks along with the presentation of a resolution from the Michigan Supreme Court recognizing Adoption Day in Oakland County.

The program also included presentations of the "Arthur Eugene Moore Champion of Children" award to Oakland County Circuit Judge Mary Ellen Brennan and the "Sandra Silver Advocate for Children" award to attorney H. Elliot Parnes in recognition of their work and dedication to the children of Oakland County.

Immediately following the program, a reception was hosted by the Adoption Department for all of the new families and their extended families and friends. An array of gift bags and toys were presented to all of the adoptees and their new siblings, which were generously donated by the Oakland County Citizens Alliance for the Probate and Circuit Courts.

More than 13,000 children in Michigan live away from their birth families in foster care and every year an estimated 2,000 children in foster care throughout Michigan are available for adoption. For more information on adoption, please visit www.mare.org.



Judge Lisa Gorcyca, Presiding Judge of the Family Division, officiated over the 13th Annual Celebration of Michigan Adoption Day Program which united eleven children with seven forever families.

Circuit Court — Family Division

SUMMARY OF JUDICIAL COURT ACTIVITY				
New Filing Activity	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Juvenile/Adoptions				
Delinquency	2,443	2,036	1,585	1,568
Child Protective Proceedings	335	405	395	374
Juvenile Traffic Tickets	72	73	49	61
Adoption Petitions	340	351	323	410
Subtotal	3,190	2,865	2,352	2,413
Personal Protection Orders				
Domestic	1,763	1,666	1,549	1,674
Non-Domestic	945	746	696	716
Juvenile	55	57	24	47
Subtotal	2,763	2,469	2,269	2,437
Miscellaneous Family				
Name Change	488	462	482	505
Other	30	34	31	29
Subtotal	518	496	513	534
Total New Filings	6,471	5,830	5,134	5,384

Court Services

Court Services includes Casework Services, Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court, and Youth Assistance. William Hamilton is the Chief of Casework Services and oversees the Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court and Mary Schusterbauer is the Chief of Youth Assistance.

Casework Services — The Casework Services unit is responsible for juvenile probation, including regular and intensive-probation with community-based and residential services. This unit handles 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 2015, Casework Services relocated the Juvenile Drug Court staff from offices on the second floor of the East Wing of the courthouse to space previously occupied by the Adoption Department staff. Also, the Intensive Probation Student Intern Handbook revision was completed in 2015. The duties of the Casework Services / Intake Department liaison position continued to expand in the assessment and processing of matters coming into the Intake Department.

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Circuit Court — Family Division

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 is supervised by Jacqueline Howes-Evanson. It is the mission of the Juvenile Drug Court (JDC) to promote public safety and reduce juvenile drug crime rates by helping substance abusing youthful offenders and their families achieve drug-free lifestyles 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.

Services provided by JDC include intensive community and judicial monitoring, substance abuse and mental health treatment for participants and family members, family therapy, in-home therapy when needed, transportation and employment assistance for participants and parents, personal enrichment activities, recreation opportunities, and other ancillary services to help families to succeed.



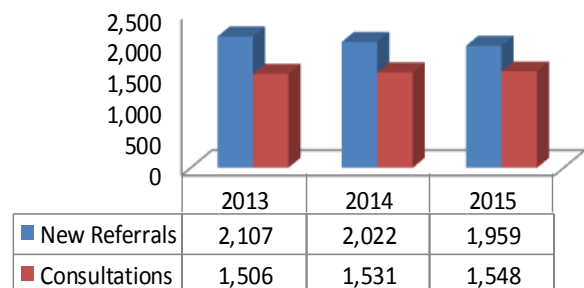
The Juvenile Drug Court team meets on a regular basis to evaluate and review the progress of the participants. Pictured are (left to right): Nate Gilling, Youth and Family Caseworker; Jacqueline Howes-Evanson, Drug Treatment Court Supervisor; Martin Alvin, Juvenile Referee; Candace Sereno, Business Analyst; Judge Mary Ellen Brennan, Presiding Judge; Megan Wentz, Youth and Family Caseworker; and Moneka Sanford, Defense Attorney.

“Self-Exploration Through Art” is an annual program using art therapy as a process to identify how a participant’s issues got them into the program, what their triggers are, and how they can be addressed going forward. Participants use different pieces of artwork and mediums to explore self-expression through visual imagery.

“Self-Exploration Through Art” is an annual program using art therapy as a process to identify how a participant’s issues got them into the program, what their triggers are, and how they can be addressed going forward. Participants use different pieces of artwork and mediums to explore self-expression through visual imagery.

Youth Assistance — Youth Assistance is 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 who 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 Casework Referrals by Year



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Circuit Court — Family Division

Circuit Court—Family Division Accomplishments

- * Held 2,065 Early Intervention Conferences with parties going through the divorce process. These conferences allow parties access to the Friend of the Court referee early in the divorce process and allow FOC staff to assist in the settlement of a divorce and provide information about services available at the Friend of the Court.
- * FOC Family Counselors addressed 26,894 complaints regarding parenting time issues, and FOC Referees held 28,018 hearings to enforce custody, parenting time, and support.
- * After serving the court for 37 years, Cynthia Duggan retired from her position as Supervisor of the Juvenile Deputy Registers and support staff. Cindi returned in a part-time capacity to assist in training new staff on the TCS system and continues to impart her vast institutional knowledge to others.
- * Judicial Support Services had several employees reassigned to positions within the department: Carmen Janik, Supervisor, Juvenile Court Legal Processing; Jerri Decker, Office Supervisor of Juvenile Intake; Kristy Bills, Office Leader; Laura Roman-Christman, Adoption Caseworker; Jenny Lucas, Yvonne Goryca, Jessica Early, and Dustin Theis, Deputy Juvenile Registers.
- * The Adoption Department completed 380 adoptions during the year and moved thousands of adoption records from the ground floor to the second floor of the courthouse as part of a multi-unit move that placed similar functions together.
- * Casework Services began the year with 601 active cases and ended the year with 657. There were 805 new cases logged and assigned to caseworkers and 786 cases were closed during the year. Casework Services provided a total of 229,198 days of service to cases closed during 2015.
- * The Out-of-Home Screening Committee considered 375 cases for possible placement in Intensive Probation, Juvenile Drug Court, Day Treatment or Residential Treatment.
- * At the time of commencement, JDC participants averaged 241 sobriety days, and 98% of graduates had improvement in their education level, and 63% had achieved either part-time or full-time employment.
- * Youth Assistance said goodbye to four retirees—three caseworkers and one supervisor. Hiring to fill the vacancies and make appropriate placements was a priority for this year.
- * Youth Assistance continued their collaboration with the Sheriff's Department which has allowed 2,205 caseload youth to participate in the UTurn Jail Tour.

Probate Court — Estates and Mental Health



Jill Koney Daly
Probate Court 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 2015, 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 Office regarding judicial assignments and case evaluations.

The administrators have taken an active role in bringing the Probate Court to the community. The Probate Court Administrator and Probate Register participate in training sessions for attorneys through the Oakland County Bar Association. The Court also provides online 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.

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. The training provides essential information and tools for handling duties as a conservator and guardian.

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. This program is designed to educate senior citizens and their families so that they can make informed decisions regarding estate planning and understand the probate process.

HISTORY OF THE PROBATE COURT

The Historical Roster of the Courts lists the first Oakland County Probate Court judge as Dr. William Thompson, who sat from 1821-1823. Since 1821, there have been 36 probate judges. Four of those individuals were on the bench for 25 years or more: Hon. Arthur E. Moore (1938-1963), Hon. Norman R. Barnard (1963-1988), Hon. Eugene Arthur Moore (1967-2010), and Hon. Barry M. Grant (1977-2008).

The first Probate Court operated in the Village of Pontiac beginning in 1823 and eventually moved to West Huron and Saginaw Streets in the City of Pontiac. In 1962, the Probate Court relocated to 1200 North Telegraph Road in the Courthouse Tower. Since that time, major remodels and improvements have been made to meet caseload and business needs. Today, the Probate Register's Office may be found on the first floor of the east wing of the Courthouse Complex. (continued on next page)

Probate Court — Estates and Mental Health

HISTORY OF THE PROBATE COURT (continued)

One of the most significant changes to impact the Probate Court happened in 1997 as planning began to create the Family Division of the Circuit Court. As part of this reorganization, the juvenile division was shifted from the Probate Court to the Family Division, along with adoption cases and name changes. This change became effective in 1998.

Efforts to update the court's technological tools began in 1982 when the court instituted the use of computerized case records. The original system was replaced in 2005 with the case management system still in use today. The use of a bar code system to track individual files began in 1997. Document scanning with an electronic document management system began in 2001. Online access to the Register of Actions became available in 2012 and online document ordering began in 2014. The court continues to explore innovative methods of utilizing technology in order to better serve the public.



The service counter is a bustling center of activity for the Probate Court and served nearly 41,000 citizens in 2015. Maura Hodits assists attorney Stephen Albery with the opening of a file.

Although the first Oakland County probate judge might not recognize much about how the court works today, he would be able to clearly see that the court's commitment to the public it serves remains as strong as ever. That commitment will remain in place as the court faces new challenges with anticipated caseload growth due to an aging population, advances in technology, and continued evolution of probate law.

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 and requires treatment and whether or not hospitalization is the only appropriate treatment.

Mental health respondents participate in court hearings 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 2015, the Probate Court conducted well 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, arranges for 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.

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Probate Court — Estates and Mental Health

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 during 2015 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 ensure that mandatory reviews of guardianships are performed. Consistent monitoring is required to determine whether fiduciaries have complied with statutory requirements. During 2015, 1,470 reviews were performed by court-appointed reviewers, many of them trained volunteers.

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 2015, 42 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 2015, the Probate Court accepted 871 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 to the attorneys and litigants appearing before the Court. Scanning and validating the document data has become an integral part of the Court's operations.

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Probate Court — Estates and Mental Health

SUMMARY OF PROBATE COURT ACTIVITY

NEW FILES OPENED	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Supervised/Unsupervised/Small Estates	2,576	2,528	2,528	2,585
Trusts	241	238	250	260
Adult Guardianships	972	928	1,025	1133
Minor Guardianships	540	554	545	561
Adult Conservatorships	386	332	354	373
Minor Conservatorships	128	116	91	111
Mentally Ill	2,793	2,823	2,796	2,292
Guardianships (Developmentally Disabled)	287	356	459	455
Reopened Estates	195	239	223	212
Protective Orders	55	70	64	69
Civil and Other Matters	107	100	99	111
Total	8,280	8,284	8,434	8,162

ACTIVE CASES AS OF DECEMBER 31

Estates & Trust Cases	4,683	4,926	5,070	5,231
Adult Guardianships	3,981	4,028	4,168	4,370
Adult Conservatorships	1,755	1,706	1,693	1,689
Minor Guardianships	2,335	2,303	2,269	2,263
Minor Conservatorships	1,087	1,038	972	932
Guardianships (Developmentally Disabled)	1,747	1,861	2,006	2,152
Civil & Other Matters	54	29	38	33
Total	15,642	15,891	16,216	16,670

Probate Court — Estates and Mental Health Accomplishments

- * Issued almost 5,800 *Notices of Deficiency* to fiduciaries who had not completed required tasks. Over 748 fiduciaries were issued a suspension for failure to correct a deficiency.
- * Processed 23,098 pieces of incoming mail in addition to assisting nearly 41,000 people at the service counter.
- * Processed over 8,100 new filings and reopened estates.
- * Presented the “Removing the Mysteries of Probate Court” seminar to over 170 citizens at six senior citizen centers throughout Oakland County.
- * Scanned over 183,000 documents into the electronic document management system.

Business Division of the Courts



John Cooperrider
Business Division Manager

The Business Division, under the leadership of John Cooperrider, is responsible for the development and delivery of business and administrative support services for the Circuit and Probate Courts. Chris Bujak, Chief of Court Business Operations, assists in supervising this multifaceted operation. 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, consisting of five full-time and two part-time employees, is responsible for developing and monitoring the Courts' \$60 million budget. Funds for seven grants, including the Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court grant, Adult Treatment Court grant, Adult Mental Health grant, JAIBG grant, JAG grant, Urban Drug Court Initiative grant, and the Court Improvement Program grant are reviewed and tracked on a monthly basis.

This area also reconciles outstanding credit adjustments with the State of Michigan Department of Health and Human Services for youth committed to the State of Michigan as either an MCI ward (abuse or neglect) or a PA 189 ward (delinquent).

A large portion of the work done by this area involves processing payments for case-related services such as court-appointed attorneys, expert witnesses, and interpreters. In 2015, several modifications were instituted to the fee schedules for the Family Division and Civil/Criminal Division regarding review hearings, retained-out fees, and hearings resulting in bench warrants being issued.

In addition, this unit processes all court personnel transactions, including new hires and employees leaving the court, and records and reports weekly attendance and mileage or travel expenses for more than 350 Circuit Court and Probate Court employees.

As needs arise in and around the courthouse and the Troy satellite office, requests are made to facilitate capital improvements, special projects, supplies, printing requests, work orders, furniture, and equipment for the Circuit and Probate Courts.

ATTORNEY PAYMENTS PROCESSED

Case Types	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Family Division			
Juvenile Delinquency	1,246	1,074	1,046
Neglect and Abuse	3,795	4,473	4,875
Other	102	49	25
Total	5,143	5,596	5,946
Civil/Criminal Division			
Appeals	260	225	242
Criminal	3,415	2,932	2,992
District Court	782	663	790
Violations of Probation	3,173	2,424	2,323
Trials	72	68	64
Other	358	274	558
Total	8,060	6,586	6,969
Probate Court			
Estates and Mental Health	2,393	2,658	3,044
Grand Total	15,596	14,840	15,959

Business Division of the Courts

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 and oversees viewing and long-term storage of court records in compliance with State requirements. This 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.

On May 4th, the Data Technology unit oversaw the conversion of the existing juvenile mainframe to the



State's Trial Court System (TCS). The remainder of the year was spent cleaning up data in order to get accurate information and reports from the new case management system. Due to outdated technology and high costs associated with the State mandated changes, it was necessary to convert the Juvenile Court to a new case management system to help process cases and report relevant data more efficiently and accurately.

The Data Tech unit oversees the day-to-day operations of court technology for the Circuit and Probate Courts. The unit includes (left to right): Bobby McLaughlin; Julie Fabrizio; Lisa Czyz, supervisor; Phill DeBarr; Brianna Lewis; and Terry Castiglione.

NEW ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM COMING TO THE COURTS AND OAKLAND COUNTY

The Data Technology unit, in conjunction with the Information Technology Department, County Clerk's Office, Prosecutor's Office, and several other departments, researched the feasibility of replacing OakDocs (existing imaging system) with a new Electronic Document Management System. The management of paperless documents in the courts' environment has become so important that it is now a mission critical function and, in many ways, dictates how we do business and perform our jobs. (continued on next page)

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Business Division of the Courts

NEW ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM COMING TO THE COURTS AND OAKLAND COUNTY (continued)

In early 2015, an RFP (Request for Proposal) was developed for soliciting bids from vendors for a new document imaging system. This included developing a comprehensive Business Requirements document which itemized the system's current functionality and identified "must have" features along with a new list of features required for the new system.

The RFP was disseminated to potential vendors in July, and two vendors responded with proposals. Over the next few months, many meetings were held to review the two proposals, observe presentations and demonstrations of the products, and visit other jurisdictions currently using the products.

A decision will be made in early 2016 after performing due diligence to ensure the very best possible solution is selected and that the potential vendor can supply the "must have" functionalities. The Data Technology unit is looking forward to working with IT, the various other departments, and the new vendor in implementing a new county-wide enterprise solution for electronic document management.

Court Resource and Program Specialist

The Court Resource and Program Specialist position is an area of general responsibility in the Business Division. Karen Koshen oversees the Circuit and Probate Courts' efforts in this regard. Responsibilities include providing informational, technical, and administrative support services to the judges, various court departments, and outside agencies. Coordinating and assisting with special projects and events, such as investitures, new lawyers admission ceremonies, the Adoption Day program, Constitution Day, courthouse employee functions, plaque ceremonies, special breakfasts and luncheons, retirements, and Removing the Mysteries of Probate Court, is also included in this position.

Additionally, this position entails serving on various committees and 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 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.

Business Division Accomplishments

- * Coordinated several moves, modifications, and facility improvements to courtrooms and chambers due to judges transitioning in the courthouse and other department and staff changes throughout the year.
- * The Business Division had three significant retirements: Julie Fabrizio, Terry Castiglione, and Sherry Macias. With their combined years of service, the division lost over 90 years of experience as well as three outstanding employees.

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Business Division of the Courts

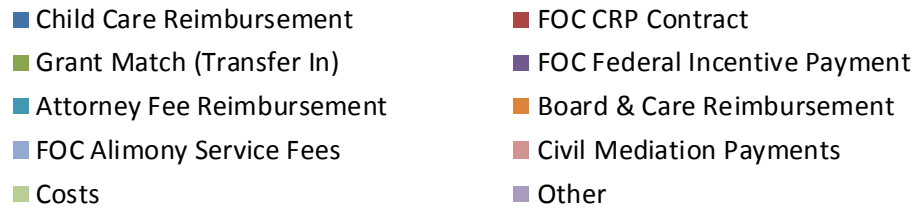
Business Division Accomplishments (Continued)

- * Received and monitored the following grants: Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court grant, Adult Treatment Court grant, Adult Mental Health grant, JAIBG grant, JAG grant, Urban Drug Court Initiative grant, and the Court Improvement Program grant. Total grant awards was over \$400,000.
- * Established a new contract with Westlaw to provide online legal research tools for judicial staff attorneys and other attorneys throughout the Probate and Circuit Courts.
- * Modified Family Division and Criminal Division fee schedules which included an increase in fees for review hearings, retained-out fees for violation of probation attorneys, and hearings that result in bench warrants being issued in violation of probation, personal protection order, and district court matters.
- * Adopted and submitted a Local Administrative Order (LAO) that conformed to the model developed by State Court Administrative Office regarding persons with disabilities. This LAO was part of the Michigan Supreme Court's efforts to improve public access to Michigan courts ensuring that persons with disabilities have equal and full access to the court system. The Probate and Circuit Courts' Joint Administrative Order can be found on the courts' websites and includes procedures for requesting accommodations, forms, grievance procedures, and a list of ADA coordinators.
- * Upgraded the Child Care Fund system for preparing and submitting the Child Care Fund budget and reporting payments. Participated as a liaison in establishing the new system which will integrate into the MiSACWIS system. Tested the system and communicated progress of this transition to staff in Oakland County.
- * Coordinated various court events, including two Circuit Court Judges' investitures, Adoption Day, Constitution Day, Annual Court Picnic, Annual Fall Festival, Employee Book Exchange, Annual Holiday Luncheon, Removing the Mysteries of Probate Court, New Lawyer Admission Ceremonies, and several other events throughout the year.
- * Conducted a three-day Public Satisfaction Survey which was mandated by the State Court Administrative Office. Over 1,000 surveys were collected and the responses indicated that most court users were satisfied with their experiences in Oakland County and felt that the courts were accessible, fair, and timely and treated them with courtesy and respect.
- * Reconciled outstanding credit adjustments with the State of Michigan Department of Health and Human Services resulting in Oakland County receiving over \$63,300 in State Ward chargeback credit adjustments for charges related to youth committed to the State of Michigan either as MCI wards (abuse or neglect) or PA 189 wards (delinquent).

Business Division of the Courts

Circuit Court and Probate Court Financial Report

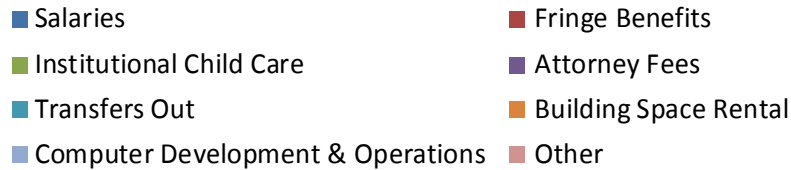
2015 Revenues
\$33,937,461



Revenues/Sources of Funds

	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014-2015</u> <u>% Change</u>
Child Care Reimbursement	\$13,141,581	\$13,824,584	\$13,222,324	-4.36%
FOC CRP Contract	\$8,217,207	\$8,709,473	\$8,514,173	-2.24%
Grant Match (Transfer In)	\$4,738,849	\$4,356,689	\$4,198,816	-3.62%
FOC Federal Incentive Payment	\$1,727,967	\$1,575,921	\$1,597,121	1.35%
Attorney Fee Reimbursement	\$1,288,899	\$1,208,255	\$1,259,998	4.28%
Board & Care Reimbursement	\$1,227,789	\$1,237,914	\$1,132,110	-8.55%
FOC Alimony Service Fees	\$559,910	\$607,052	\$626,435	3.19%
Civil Mediation Payments	\$571,411	\$500,200	\$594,050	18.76%
Costs	\$713,166	\$751,955	\$572,138	-23.91%
FOC Judgment Fees	\$325,800	\$297,560	\$310,000	4.18%
Probate Estate Fees	\$252,619	\$267,068	\$281,241	5.31%
Other	\$164,599	\$227,173	\$220,248	-3.05%
Jury Fees	\$223,565	\$230,190	\$211,578	-8.09%
eFiling Fees	\$197,705	\$198,545	\$203,377	2.43%
Reimbursement State County Agent	\$180,533	\$180,533	\$180,533	0.00%
Mediation Fines	\$142,050	\$124,050	\$128,350	3.47%
Probate Certified Copies	\$120,899	\$126,372	\$117,035	-7.39%
FOC Family Counseling Fees	\$102,015	\$111,525	\$112,245	0.65%
Probation Service Fees	\$140,439	\$120,556	\$104,412	-13.39%
FOC Processing Fees	\$72,815	\$79,773	\$81,777	2.51%
Other Probate Filing Fees	\$120,280	\$84,220	\$71,907	-14.62%
FOC Costs Bench Warrants	\$0	\$0	\$65,901	100.00%
Reimbursement Salaries	\$0	\$47,874	\$45,542	-4.87%
Psychological Clinical Evaluation Fees	\$45,399	\$46,973	\$41,206	-12.28%
FOC Reimbursement Medical Incentives	\$0	\$0	\$33,944	100.00%
Probate Will Deposits	\$10,600	\$10,975	\$11,000	0.23%
TOTAL	\$34,275,497	\$34,914,455	\$33,937,461	-2.80%

Business Division of the Courts



Circuit Court and Probate Court Financial Report

2015 Expenditures
\$64,870,466

<u>Expenditures</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014-2015</u> <u>% Change</u>
Salaries	\$23,354,324	\$23,625,377	\$24,342,460	3.04%
Fringe Benefits	\$15,454,367	\$15,380,929	\$14,334,800	-6.80%
Institutional Child Care	\$5,271,896	\$6,459,712	\$7,068,109	9.42%
Attorney Fees	\$4,608,358	\$4,337,066	\$4,344,592	0.17%
Transfers Out	\$4,767,393	\$4,462,130	\$4,299,076	-3.65%
Building Space Rental	\$3,183,107	\$3,530,960	\$2,997,078	-15.12%
Computer Development & Operations	\$3,144,395	\$3,358,568	\$3,120,912	-7.08%
Indirect Costs	\$919,070	\$962,401	\$890,525	-7.47%
Mediator Fees	\$511,411	\$492,200	\$474,050	-3.69%
Professional Services	\$507,698	\$484,768	\$438,146	-9.62%
Jury Fees & Mileage	\$461,735	\$441,400	\$391,851	-11.23%
Telephone Communications	\$300,695	\$309,090	\$311,887	0.90%
Equipment Rental	\$297,830	\$313,244	\$298,727	-4.63%
Mileage/Leased Vehicles	\$229,889	\$218,711	\$208,469	-4.68%
Other	\$164,937	\$203,061	\$193,013	-4.95%
Transcripts	\$162,633	\$153,868	\$180,492	17.30%
Commodities/Supplies	\$204,262	\$150,540	\$164,940	9.57%
Library Materials	\$137,453	\$149,093	\$147,966	-0.76%
Postage/Mailroom	\$145,785	\$144,682	\$137,840	-4.73%
Interpreter Services	\$70,616	\$93,115	\$105,857	13.68%
Overtime	\$96,651	\$93,110	\$99,956	7.35%
Furniture/Equipment Purchases	\$15,854	\$41,586	\$82,311	97.93%
Maintenance Charges	\$71,213	\$63,364	\$72,650	14.66%
Printing	\$66,017	\$50,981	\$58,780	15.30%
Insurance	\$46,815	\$46,815	\$46,815	0.00%
Computer Legal Research	\$27,456	\$32,448	\$29,952	-7.69%
Visiting Judges	\$12,126	\$5,728	\$22,807	298.17%
Court Reporter Services	\$6,211	\$6,720	\$6,355	-5.43%
Operating Transfer/Adjust Prior Years	\$0	\$12,575	\$50	-99.60%
TOTAL	\$64,240,197	\$65,624,242	\$64,870,466	-1.15%

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Highlights from 2015



13th Annual Celebration of Michigan Adoption Day



Deputy Appreciation Luncheon



Arthur Eugene Moore
Champion of Children
Award and Sandra
Silver Advocate for
Children Award
Recipients



Constitution Day



Pro Bono Attorney Appreciation Breakfast

Highlights from 2015



4th Annual Fall Festival



Employee Summer Luau



Probate Holiday Breakfast

Employee Holiday Luncheon

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Employees Make A Difference

2015 Circuit and Probate Court Most Valuable Persons (MVPs)



At the Annual Employee Recognition Ceremony, Chief Probate Court Judge Elizabeth Pezzetti (far left) and Chief Circuit Court Judge Nanci Grant (far right) were on hand to recognize the following 2015 MVPs: (front row, left to right) Amanda Miller, Carol Gray, Patricia Crony, (back row, left to right) Andrea Bayer, Kristy Bills, Aulesha Harris, and Karen Koshen. (Not pictured: Roberta Dunn)

The Oakland County Circuit and Probate Courts are fortunate to have talented employees who exhibit a high level of commitment and characteristically demonstrate service that far exceeds their written job descriptions. The eight MVPs for 2015 were chosen for their dedication to the court and for providing the highest level of public service and quality of justice.

Twice a year, employees are nominated by their supervisors and peers for exemplary service. The MVPs are recognized for the dedication, commitment, and enthusiasm that they bring to their job each and every day.

At the Annual Employee Recognition Ceremony held in December, the following employees were recognized as the 2015 Most Valuable Persons:

- Andrea Bayer — Friend of the Court**
- Roberta Dunn — Judicial Support**
- Aulesha Harris — Friend of the Court**
- Karen Koshen — Court Administration**
- Kristy Bills — Juvenile Intake**
- Patricia Crony — Friend of the Court**
- Carol Gray — Guardianship Unit, Probate Court**
- Amanda Miller — Judge Warren's Chambers**

Employees Make A Difference

Standing Ovations

Navigating the courthouse and the judicial system can be a daunting task for the general public who may be unfamiliar with the building and the procedures of the Courts. Courthouse employees go out of their way to assist the public and provide exemplary service. Standing Ovation cards are submitted by individuals who have received excellent service as a way to recognize Circuit and Probate Court employees for their dedication to the Courts and the public they serve.

The following excerpts are just a sampling of the many Standing Ovation cards received during 2015 for exemplary service performed by employees who have gone above and beyond in assisting the public.

Geoffrey Wojcikiewicz — Friend of the Court - “I was impressed by the way the mediation was handled. Referee Wojcikiewicz spent an entire day to forge an agreement. He is truly a credit to your staff.”

Gary Gasowski — Youth Assistance - “I want to thank you for all of the opportunities you have given my grandchildren. We truly appreciate all the goodness you’ve brought into our lives.”

Judge Pezzetti and Staff - “Special thanks to Judge Pezzetti and her staff for the compassionate way they handled a delicate matter for our mother. You have made a huge difference in our entire family’s lives!”

James Hill — Probate Court - “He is a conscientious employee who works to provide prompt, courteous, and accurate information and service to the public.”

Alisa Martin — Friend of the Court - “Thank you for all the support our family has received since our case was transferred to your court. I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your kindness and understanding!”

Kristy Bills — Juvenile Intake - “Helpful, dependable and knowledgeable. Always has a smile on her face and maintains composure throughout the day.”

Maura Hodits — Probate Court - “Went beyond the call of duty and efficiently navigated our paperwork.”

Sarah Spencer and Geoff Muscat — Probate Court - “Kudos to both of these individuals for their friendliness and expertise.”

Nicole Martin — Juvenile Intake and PPO Office - “Very professional and was able to help me with my anxiety and handled the situation very well.”

Service Counter — Probate Court - “These people are marvelous, helpful, and friendly! They made a bad day better.”

Jury Office Staff - “I was impressed with it all. The staff is friendly and informative.”

Vickilynn Mouthaan — Friend of the Court - “Did a thorough job checking my case about an error and I appreciate that she gave me her time and attention.”

Heather Price — Probate Court - “Excellent customer service and provided pertinent information in a professional manner.”

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EMPLOYEES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

CASUAL DAY DONATIONS BENEFIT CHARITIES

On Fridays and various special occasions throughout the year, court employees are given the opportunity to wear casual attire in observance of Casual Day for a \$1 donation. At the end of the year, the money collected from Casual Day donations is dispersed to various charities that are selected from nominations submitted by employees. Since 2004, almost \$41,000 has been donated to 43 charities throughout Oakland County through the generosity of court employees.

In 2015, courthouse employee Casual Day donations totaling over \$4,000 were distributed to the following charitable organizations: Forgotten Harvest, Gleaners Food Bank, ARC of Oakland County, Grace Centers of Hope, THAW, Trail's Edge, Lighthouse of Oakland County, Open Door Food Pantry, and Alzheimer's Association.

Other departments in the building also generously opened their hearts and wallets by donating gloves, mittens, hats, scarves, and socks to the Lighthouse of Oakland County, and food, kitty litter, treats, bowls, leashes, and toys to the Oakland County Animal Control and Pet Adoption Center.

In addition, employees held food drives throughout the building to benefit the Gleaners Food Bank and the Open Door Food Pantry.



Casual Day funds were collected by Angela Garrett (seated) from court employees (left to right): Katherine Siebenaler, Chari Christie, and Amy Vinyard.

Previous Casual Day Fund Recipients

Southfield Community Foundation

Grace Centers of Hope

Gleaners Food Bank

USO Operation Care

Lighthouse of Oakland County

Baldwin Center

Open Door Food Pantry

Forgotten Harvest

Food Bank of Oakland County

Toys for Tots

CATCH

THAW

American Red Cross

South Oakland Shelter

Sandcastles

Karmanos Cancer Foundation

Common Ground

Paws for Life

Kids First Initiative

Sheriff's Children Benevolence Fund

Restore Foundation

Hospice of Michigan

Child Abuse and Neglect Council

St. John's Episcopal—Open Hands Food Pantry

The Mastocytosis Society

O.A.T.S. (Offering Alternative Therapy with Smiles)

Waterford Senior Center—Focus Hope

Salvation Army

Area Agency of the Aging 1-B in Southfield

Youth Assistance Coordinating Council

Fern Care Free Clinic

Susan G. Komen 3-Day Cure

Oxford/Iron Fish

A Space to Dream

American Cancer Society

Wounded Warrior

The Haven

Community Housing Network

Faith Ministries-Detroit Outreach

St. Baldrick's Foundation

The Belinda Sue Fund

Make a Wish

Takin' It To The Streets

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Courts would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their valuable contributions to the 2015 Sixth Judicial Circuit Court and Oakland County Probate Court Annual Report:

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

The following individuals for their pictorial contributions:

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