

# A Look at What We Do

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**D**uring 2006, the Oakland County Probate Court processed more than 7,500 new filings. This figure includes new filings over all case types assigned to Probate. Assigned case types include decedent estates, trusts, adult and minor guardianships and conservatorships, developmentally disabled individuals, mental health issues, civil matters, protective orders, and other miscellaneous matters. (And don't forget secret marriages.)

Since the beginning of 2007, the Probate staff has served an average of 813 customers at the Probate counter per week. In addition, new petitions, accounts, annual reports and other case filings are processed daily through the mail. And thousands of document pages are scanned each week after being filed and posted to the computer by staff.

For 2006, the highest growth level in new filings came in the area of mental health. In 2005, the mental health unit took in 1,709 new filings. In 2006, that number grew to 2,389. While the number of new filings in other areas stayed somewhat consistent with 2005, the number of active guardianships and conservatorships that the Probate Court must monitor continued to grow.

What many people do not realize is that the Probate Court's responsibility does not stop with accepting documents at the front counter. For example, on all adult conservatorships, the Probate Court is responsible for monitoring whether the fiduciary is complying with the statutory requirement to file an annual account of funds. When a fiduciary is not complying, notices must be sent and the case monitored until the account is either turned in or the fiduciary is replaced. The Probate Court is also responsible for monitoring whether a guardian submits their Annual Report regarding the ward's condition for both adult and minor guardianships.

In addition, the Probate Court must order and arrange for reviews of guardianships. If the ward is a minor under age six, there must be an annual review. For adults, there must be a review within the first year and additional reviews at least every three years. The Probate Court trains

volunteers to do many of these reviews and must also follow up on any issues that are reported. This is an essential function of the court and we greatly appreciate the efforts of our volunteers in monitoring the guardianships.

I've included here some of the most recent case statistics to help provide a general picture of the Probate caseload. We anticipate that our number of open cases will continue to grow and are working to increase the speed and efficiency with which we serve our constituents.

<b>NEW FILES OPENED</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>
Small Estates	611	610
Supervised Estates	36	32
Unsupervised Estates	1,886	1,821
Trust – Intervivos	185	206
Adult Guardianships	773	761
Minor Guardianships	693	724
Adult Conservatorships	378	377
Minor Conservatorships	177	177
Mentally Ill	1,709	2,390
Guardianships (Developmentally Disabled)	270	236
Reopened Estates and Trust	168	191
Protective Orders	47	44
Civil and Other Matters	65	108
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,998</b>	<b>7,677</b>

**Active Cases as of December 31, 2006:**

Estate and Trust Cases	3,992
Adult Guardianships	3,276
Adult Conservatorships	1,590
Minor Guardianships	3,248
Minor Conservatorships	1,730
Developmentally Disabled Guardianships	1,653
Civil and Other Matters	79
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,568</b>