

A Look at What We Do

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The responsibilities of the Probate Court are somewhat divided into two types of functions. One of those functions centers on the processing of filings and hearings associated with the various case types under the Probate Court's jurisdiction. The other function focuses on monitoring fiduciary compliance with statutory requirements and managing required reviews of guardianships.

During 2007, the Oakland County Probate Court processed more than 7,800 new filings and reopened cases. This includes new filings of all case types assigned to Probate as well as files that were reopened for additional proceedings after being closed. Assigned case types include: decedent estates, trusts, adult and minor guardianships and conservatorships, developmentally disabled individuals, mental health commitments, civil matters, protective orders, and other miscellaneous matters.

With 830 new filings in 2007, the number of adult guardianship filings increased from 2006, as did adult conservatorships with 387 new filings. New filings in the area of mental health commitment hearings continued to grow with a total of 2,569 new filings in 2007. In addition, 163 petitions for a second or continuing order for mental health treatment were processed by the court.

Information regarding all new filings for 2007 is detailed in the accompanying table. Additional items of note include that 984 wills were filed with the court in 2007 for safekeeping and 122 motions were filed to establish delayed registration of foreign birth by court order.

At the close of 2007, there were 15,152 active cases in the Oakland County Probate Court. This figure includes all active estate and trust cases as well as guardianship and conservatorship cases the court is monitoring for compliance.

The monitoring that the court is required to do includes tasks such as the tracking of annual accountings by conservators, annual reports on the welfare of the ward for guardianships, and the filing of inventories in estate cases, as well as ensuring that Notices of Continued Administration are filed.

Also included in the active case figure are guardianships for which the court must schedule regular reviews. The reviews require an individual to visit the ward and make a report to the court on the status and well-being of the individual. For adult guardianships, a review must take place within one year of the appointment and at least every three years after that. In minor guardianships, there must be an annual review for all wards under the age of six. The Probate Court trains volunteers to perform many of these reviews and must also follow up on any issues that are reported.

On a daily basis, interaction with parties at the Probate counter continues to be an essential part of the services we

provide. During the first eight weeks of 2008, Probate staff served an average of several hundred customers per week. This includes activities such as opening new files; processing motions; reviewing inventories, accounts and annual reports; and processing petitions for hospitalization in mental health cases.

Each week, thousands of pages of documents are scanned after filing, posted to the computer and placed in the court file. The Probate staff, along with staff from the judges' chambers, prepares files for hearing and processes the resulting orders. Some of our other daily functions include opening and processing voluminous amounts of mail, answering phones, and performing the myriad clerical tasks necessary to the processing of cases.

It is always our goal to provide efficient and accurate service to everyone accessing the Probate Court. As you can see from the numbers, this keeps us pretty busy. However, we look forward to our ongoing challenge of meeting the needs of the public and providing excellent service.

NEW FILES OPENED	2006	2007
Small Estates	610	660
Supervised Estates	32	33
Unsupervised Estates	1,821	1,766
Trust – Intervivos	206	200
Adult Guardianships	761	830
Minor Guardianships	724	687
Adult Conservatorships	377	387
Minor Conservatorships	177	155
Mentally Ill	2,389	2,569
Guardianships (Developmentally Disabled)	236	213
Reopened Estates and Trust	191	211
Protective Orders	44	46
Civil and Other Matters	108	88
TOTAL	7,676	7,845

Active Cases as of December 31, 2007:

Estate and Trust Cases	3,959
Adult Guardianships	3,350
Adult Conservatorships	1,641
Minor Guardianship	2,923
Minor Conservatorships	1,538
Developmentally Disabled Guardianships	1,673
Civil and Other Matters	68
Total	15,152