

**17th Judicial Circuit Court
&
Kent County Probate Court**

**2015
ANNUAL
REPORT**





STATE OF MICHIGAN
17TH CIRCUIT COURT

DONALD A. JOHNSTON
CHIEF JUDGE

SUITE 11500 D
180 OTTAWA AVENUE NW
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49503-2751

To the Citizens of Kent County:

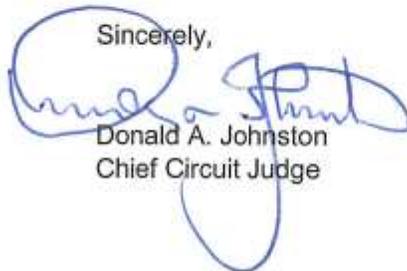
On behalf of the judges and staff of the 17th Circuit Court, I am pleased to submit our Annual Report for 2015. It is designed to acquaint you with the organization, activity and accomplishments of the Court, and some of the many people responsible for its efficient operation. I wish to extend my personal gratitude to all of our dedicated personnel, whether named in this Report or not, for the important work they perform every day.

As in the past several years, we were constrained by the strictures of yet another bare-bones County-funded general operating budget in 2015. We were therefore required to operate this complex organization with fewer dollars than were appropriated half a dozen years ago, even though the cost of salaries and benefits for our employees have continued to increase incrementally in the meantime. This has required continued sacrifice and creativity by our judges, administrators, and staff, as we are required to leave more vacant positions unfilled, and to restructure so as to keep the Court functioning with the least possible disruption.

At mid-year, Probate Judge George Jay Quist of the Circuit Court Family Division was appointed by Governor Snyder to replace Circuit Judge James Robert Redford, who resigned in January to assume the position of chief legal counsel to the Governor. Judge Quist has been assigned to our Civil/Criminal Trial Division, and his former position on the Probate/Family Division bench has been filled by the appointment of Judge Terence J. Ackert, whom we are very pleased to welcome to our Court. He has settled in quickly and easily, and he has been well-received by bench, bar, and staff alike.

After the County Board of Commissioners refused in 2014 to approve the addition of the new circuit court judgeship which was authorized by the Michigan Legislature in 2014 Public Act 58, we renewed our request for Board approval in 2015. Upon careful review of the statistical analysis prepared by the State Court Administrative Office and the National Center for State Courts, which irrefutably established the need for this position, the Board overwhelmingly voted to approve it at its December meeting. The position will be on the ballot in the 2016 general election, and the new judge will be assigned to the Family Division after taking office in January, 2017. We greatly appreciate the Board's action, which will help us deal more effectively with those area in which our caseload continues to expand.

Sincerely,



Donald A. Johnston
Chief Circuit Judge

CIRCUIT COURT

VISION STATEMENT:

The 17th Circuit Court will achieve excellence and be recognized as a leader by providing an accessible, effective, efficient, and innovative court operation.



MISSION STATEMENT:

The 17th Circuit Court will provide a system of justice that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of matters brought before the Court.



CIRCUIT COURT

CIRCUIT COURT AUTHORITY/ADMINISTRATION:

The 17th Circuit Court is the trial court of general jurisdiction in Kent County and has county-wide jurisdiction over all actions except those given by state law to another court, including:

- Criminal matters in which the potential sentence is incarceration of more than one year
- Domestic relations matters
- Personal protection orders
- Juvenile matters pertaining to delinquency or criminal activity
- Child protective proceedings
- Parental consent waivers
- Adoptions
- Emancipations
- General civil actions involving claims of \$25,000 or more
- Cases appealed from another court by an administrative agency
- Superintending control over other courts within the judicial circuit, subject to final superintending control of the Supreme Court
- Final decisions of the Circuit Court may be appealed to the Court of Appeals

Administratively, each multi-judge circuit has a chief judge appointed by the Michigan Supreme Court. The chief judge is the presiding officer and director of administration for the court. With the assistance of the Court Administrator, the chief judge develops and implements policies of the court; supervises caseload management; directs assignment of the court's business; supervises performance of the court's personnel; manages the court's finances; effects compliance with court rules and provisions of law.

Court Administrator

CIRCUIT COURT LOCATIONS:

Andrew Thalhammer

COURTHOUSE
180 Ottawa Avenue NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

FRIEND OF THE COURT
82 Ionia Avenue NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

JUVENILE CENTER / DETENTION
1501 Cedar Street NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Court Website
www.accesskent.com

THE 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT/PROBATE COURT'S JUDGES



Front row left to right:

Hon. Paul J. Denenfeld, Hon. James R. Redford, Chief Judge Probate Court - Hon. David Murkowski, Chief Judge Circuit Court - Hon. Donald A. Johnston, Hon. Patricia D. Gardner, Hon. Dennis B. Leiber.

Back row left to right:

Hon. George J. Quist, Hon. Mark A. Trusock, Hon. Paul J. Sullivan, Hon. Christopher P. Yates, Hon. George S. Buth, Hon. Kathleen A. Feeney, Hon. G. Patrick Hillary, Hon. Daniel V. Zemaitis



JUDGES



DONALD A. JOHNSTON CHIEF JUDGE

Judge Johnston obtained his undergraduate education at the University of Virginia, where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1966. Thereafter, he attended Wayne State University Law School, from which he obtained his Juris Doctor degree, Cum Laude and with Silver Key, in 1969. Upon graduating from law school, Judge Johnston took a position with the Kent County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, where he worked his way up from law clerk to Chief Assistant Prosecuting Attorney. On February 19, 1979, he was appointed Judge of the 61st District Court in Grand Rapids by Governor William G. Milliken, and was subsequently elected to six year terms on that Court in 1980 and 1986. His colleagues on the Court elected him Chief Judge Pro Tempore in 1979, and Chief Judge in 1981, 1982-3, 1984-5, 1986-7 and 1988-9. In 1988, Judge Johnston was elected Judge of the Kent County Circuit Court. On January 1, 2010 Judge Johnston became the Chief Judge of the 17th Circuit Court by appointment from the Michigan Supreme Court and re-appointed for two year terms in 2012 and 2014.

Secretary/Court Clerk - Karen Reid
Court Clerk - Keri Abraham
Court Reporter - Becky Miner
Law Clerk - Rebecca Shermak

Phone (616) 632-5032
Fax (616) 632-5036



JAMES R. REDFORD

CHIEF JUDGE PRO TEMPORE (Replaced as Pro tempore by Judge Trusock—mid year)

Judge Redford was elected November 2002 and took the bench on January 1, 2003 and was re-elected in 2010. He received his Bachelor of Science degree from John Carroll University in 1982 and his Juris Doctor from the University of Detroit in 1985. Before taking the bench, Judge Redford was a partner in the law firm of Plunkett & Cooney. Prior to his affiliation with Plunkett & Cooney, Judge Redford served as an Assistant United States Attorney in the Western District of Michigan for nearly eight years and before that was on active duty in the Judge Advocate General's Corps of the United States Navy for five years. Judge Redford served in the Reserve Component of the U.S. Navy from August 1990 until August 2012 when he was transferred to the Retired Reserve List in the rank of Captain. His Navy assignments included three Commanding Officer tours and service as the Chief Reserve Trial Judge for the Navy & Marine Corps Trial Judiciary. Judge Redford is assigned to the Civil-Criminal Division of the Circuit Court and was named Chief Judge Pro Tempore in January, 2010. Since 2009, Judge Redford has served on the State Supreme Court's Model Civil Jury Instruction Committee and has chaired the Committee since January 2014. He is also a member of the Michigan Judicial Institute's Academic Advisory Committee.

Secretary/Court Clerk - Ruth Thomet
Court Clerk - Deb Berkstresser
Court Reporter - Teri Heacock
Law Clerk - Maggie Richards

Phone (616) 632-5092
Fax (616) 632-5023



PATRICIA D. GARDNER

PRESIDING JUDGE-FAMILY DIVISION

Judge Gardner received her B.A. from the University of Michigan in 1980. Thereafter, she attended University of Michigan Law School, graduating with a Juris Doctor Degree in 1983. Judge Gardner practiced general civil litigation from 1983-1988. Judge Gardner was a partner in a law firm, specializing in probate practice and family law from 1989-1996. She was appointed by Governor Engler to the Kent County Probate Court in January of 1997. She currently serves as Presiding Judge of the Family Division of the Circuit Court and Chief Judge Pro Tem of the Probate Court. Judge Gardner is a member of the State Bar of Michigan, Grand Rapids Bar Association, Probate Judges Association, and Women Lawyers Association. Judge Gardner is active in the community serving on a number of non-profit boards.

Secretary/Court Clerk - Shelley Lilly
Court Clerk - Renee Marzean

Phone (616) 632-5070
Fax (616) 632-5074

JUDGES



GEORGE S. BUTH

Judge Buth received his B.A. from Michigan State University in 1968. Thereafter, he attended Wayne State University Law School, graduating with a Juris Doctor degree in 1971. His professional experience includes the Michigan Court of Appeals, Prehearing/Michigan Appellate Digest. Judge Buth was a sole practitioner specializing in appeal cases from 1973-1986. He became a Kent County Circuit Court Judge in 1987 and was Chief Judge Pro-Tem from 1992 through 1999. Judge Buth was appointed Chief Judge by the Supreme Court for a two year term starting January 2000 and reappointed for another two year term in January 2002.

Secretary/Court Clerk - Marlene Gould
Court Clerk - Denise Lange
Court Reporter - Leslie Rydahl
Law Clerk - Martha Irwin

Phone (616) 632-5020
Fax (616) 632-5023



PAUL J. DENENFELD

Judge Denenfeld took the bench on August 10, 2009. He received his BA degree from Western Michigan University and his JD from the University of Cincinnati. Before taking the bench, Judge Denenfeld was a partner in the law firm Yates, LaGrand & Denenfeld, PLLC. Prior to that, he was the senior litigator with the Federal Public Defender office in Grand Rapids, and was the chief of the special litigation division of the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia. For nearly 10 years, he was a civil rights and civil liberties attorney in Detroit. Judge Denenfeld has also spent considerable time working on the rule of law in several former Soviet republics. Judge Denenfeld is assigned to the Family Division of the Circuit Court.

Secretary/Court Clerk - Anna Blackford
Court Clerk - Deb Morris

Phone (616) 632-5214
Fax (616) 632-5212



KATHLEEN A. FEENEY

Judge Feeney graduated with high honors from Michigan State University's Honors College and received her Juris Doctorate from the University of Illinois College of Law. Upon graduation, Judge Feeney took a position with the Lansing firm of Foster, Swift, Collins & Smith, P.C., where she specialized in no-fault litigation as well as labor and employment law. Judge Feeney joined the Grand Rapids firm of Mika, Meyers, Beckett & Jones in May 1990 with her practice concentrating in the areas of domestic relations, condemnation, and personal injury law. In January 1993, Judge Feeney accepted a position with the Michigan Court of Appeals' Research Division and was shortly thereafter retained by the Honorable Jane E. Markey as Judge Markey's judicial counsel on the Court of Appeals. Governor John Engler appointed Judge Feeney to the Kent County Circuit bench on March 15, 2000. She was subsequently elected to fill the seat in November 2000 and has continually served the residents of Kent County since then. She is the first woman to be either appointed or elected to the Kent County Circuit Court. Judge Feeney is assigned to the Family Division of Circuit Court.

Secretary/Court Clerk - Ronnell Fogg
Court Clerk - Elizabeth Shearer

Phone (616) 632-5087
Fax (616) 632-5096

JUDGES



G. PATRICK HILLARY

Judge Hillary was elected in November of 2000 to fill the judicial position vacated by the retirement of Judge John P. Steketee, and started on the bench in January of 2001. He earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration in 1979 and his Juris Doctorate in 1983. Judge Hillary practiced law since 1983 and was a sole practitioner prior to being elected Probate Judge. Judge Hillary's private practice included experience in the area of business, corporate, real estate, wills/trusts, estate planning and family law. He served as presiding judge of the Circuit Court Family Division from 2004-2009. Judge Hillary has served on numerous boards in the community and created the Parents and Children Section of the Grand Rapids Bar Association. He also taught as Adjunct Professor at Davenport College and Thomas M. Cooley Law School. Judge Hillary participated as a member of the National Child Welfare Advisory Board in Washington D.C. which assisted in the enactment of laws to protect children brought into the United States without any adult supervision.

Secretary/Court Clerk - Kristie Byrnes
Court Clerk - Dianne Hill
Court Recorder - Nicole Ludge

Phone (616) 632-5206
Fax (616) 632-5084



DENNIS B. LEIBER

Judge Leiber attended Aquinas College, where he graduated in 1969 with a double major in political science and history. From there he enrolled at Wayne State University Law School, where he won national recognition for oral advocacy and was awarded the degree of Juris Doctor in 1972. His work experience includes Grand Rapids, Michigan Assistant City Attorney 1973-1975, sole practitioner 1975-1977, and Assistant Kent County Prosecutor 1977-1988. He was first elected to the Kent County Circuit Court in 1988, and has been re-elected, unopposed, in 1994, 2000, 2006 and 2012. Judge Leiber was the first to be assigned to the newly created Family Division of Circuit Court and performed those duties for three years. He is assigned to the Civil/Criminal Division of the Circuit Court.

Secretary/Court Clerk - Nicole Greenberg
Court Clerk - Lisa Gibson
Court Reporter - Bobbi Jo Huey
Law Clerk - David Hughes

Phone (616) 632-5012
Fax (616) 632-5016



GEORGE J. QUIST

Judge Quist took the bench on January 23, 2012. He received his BA from Hope College and his JD from George Washington University. Before taking the bench, Judge Quist was a magistrate and administrative law judge with the State of Michigan. In addition to 12 years experience as an adjudicator before taking the bench, Judge Quist was a civil litigator for 9 years. From January 2012 through May 2015, Judge Quist was assigned to the Family Division of the Circuit Court. As of June 1, 2015, Judge Quist is assigned to the Civil/Criminal Division of the Circuit Court.

Secretary/Court Clerk - Deborra Shafer
Court Clerk - Stacy Dilworth

Phone (616) 632-5099
Fax (616) 632-5016

JUDGES



PAUL J. SULLIVAN

A native of New Hampshire, Judge Sullivan received his undergraduate degree in Government from Georgetown University in 1969 and his JD from The Catholic University of America in 1972. In 1988 he was elected to the 61st District Court in Grand Rapids, serving as Chief Judge from January 1994 until his appointment to the circuit bench by Governor John Engler in March 1995. He served as Chief Circuit Judge for 6 years commencing January 1, 2004, and in the dual capacity of Chief Circuit and Probate Judge from July 2006 thru December 2007. Before taking the bench, Judge Sullivan was an Assistant District Attorney in Philadelphia PA and in private practice for 14 years with the firm of Roach, Twohey, Maggini & Brady. He is assigned to the Civil/Criminal Division of Circuit Court.

Secretary/Court Clerk - Linda Wierenga
Court Clerk - Sandra Boyer
Court Recorder - Ginny Post
Law Clerk - Rob Dordan

Phone (616) 632-5099
Fax (616) 632-5016



MARK A. TRUSOCK

Replaced Judge Redford mid year as Chief Judge Pro Tempore

Judge Trusock graduated from Michigan Technological University (MTU) in 1974. After college, Judge Trusock worked for a large insurance company from 1975 to 1984. In 1983 he obtained a Chartered Life Underwriter (CLU) from the American College in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. In 1985 Judge Trusock graduated from the Thomas M. Cooley Law School in Lansing, Michigan. For the next 21 years, he worked for the partnership of Lannen and Trusock. At Lannen and Trusock he worked with civil, criminal, family, juvenile and appellate cases in courts throughout the state of Michigan. Judge Trusock was elected in November of 2006 to fill a new judicial position. Judge Trusock is assigned to the Civil-Criminal Division of the Circuit Court.

Secretary/Court Clerk - Renee Pegg
Court Clerk - Tracy Kniffen-Oates
Law Clerk - Andrew Lukas

Phone (616) 632-5008
Fax (616) 632-5023



CHRISTOPHER P. YATES

Judge Yates took the bench on April 22, 2008. He received his BA from Kalamazoo College and his JD and MBA from the University of Illinois. Before taking the bench, Judge Yates served as a law clerk to a federal trial judge and a federal court of appeals judge, then as an Assistant U.S. Attorney, then in the Office of Legal Counsel at the U.S. Department of Justice, and as the Chief Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Michigan. Most recently, he worked in private practice as a partner in two Grand Rapids law firms, Willey, Chamberlain & Yates and then Yates, LaGrand & Denenfeld. Judge Yates is assigned to the Court's Specialized Business Docket.

Court Clerk - Molly Norton
Court Clerk - Wendy White
Law Clerk - Andrea Remyense

Phone (616) 632-5026
Fax (616) 632-5096

JUDGES

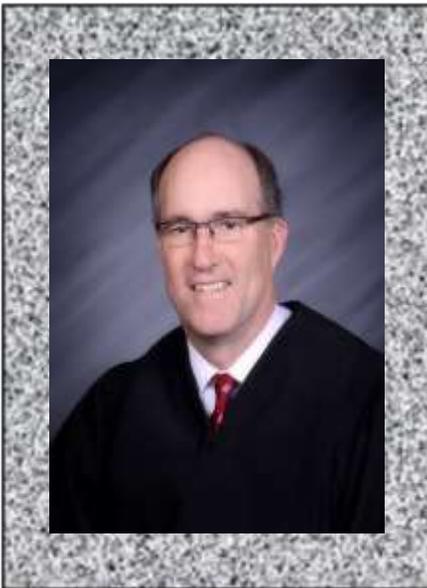


DANIEL V. ZEMAITIS

Judge Daniel V. Zemaitis was elected November 2002 to fill one of the vacant Judgeships for Kent County. He started on the bench on January 1, 2003. Judge Zemaitis has lived on the Northwest side of Grand Rapids most of his life. He received his Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in History from Marquette University. He received his Juris Doctor degree from Case Western University in 1977. Judge Zemaitis was the magistrate for the 59th District Court from 1990 to 2002, and in 1995 became Michigan's first Multi-District Court Magistrate by joining the 62A District Court. Judge Zemaitis was a Visiting Professor of History/Law at Grace Bible College from 1995 to 1997 and 1999 to 2002. He has served as an adjunct professor at Thomas M. Cooley School of Law by teaching Family Law. Judge Zemaitis is a member of many community organizations. Judge Zemaitis is assigned to the Family Division of Circuit Court.

Secretary/Court Clerk - Kristen Brink
Court Clerk - Bryan Ensing

Phone (616) 632-5203
Fax (616) 632-5212



Terence J. "T.J." Ackert

Judge Terence J. "T.J." Ackert took the bench on September 1, 2015. A graduate of the University of Michigan and University of Toledo College of Law, he served clients throughout Michigan and the Midwest for thirty one years. He was affiliated as a Shareholder with the firm Smith Haughey Rice & Roegge, P.C. from 1984 to 2007, and then as a Member of Miller Johnson Snell & Cummiskey, PLLC from 2007 until 2015. For most of his private practice, Judge Ackert served as a business counsel and trial attorney advising closely held and family owned businesses in both transactional and litigation matters involving an array of industries including manufacturing, construction, technology, and start-ups. He received the distinction of being listed in Best Lawyers in America® for Business Organizations, Closely Held Companies and Family Business Law, Corporate Law and Mergers and Acquisitions Law. Judge Ackert has served on numerous business, civic and charitable boards, including President of the Grand Rapids Bar Association in 2013. Judge Ackert currently serves on the Tribal State Federal Judicial Forum. Judge Ackert is assigned to the Family Division of the Circuit Court.

Secretary/Court Clerk - Sue Cox
Court Clerk - Courtney Bryant

Phone (616) 632-5091
Fax (616) 632-5092

REFEREES

ADAM C. KOMAR
Clerk - Aubrey Pridgeon
Phone (616) 632-5170

LYNN PERRY
Clerk - Kelli Klein
Phone (616) 632-5148

MARIE E. KESSLER
Clerk - Echo Matson
(616) 632-5165

CRAIG FREDERICK
Clerk - Brooke Alt
Phone (616) 632-5104

JOHN D. KMETZ
Clerk - Suzanne Kaldenberg
Phone (616) 632-5150

DEBORAH L. MCNABB
Clerk - Delores Maurice
Phone (616) 632-5153

ARTHUR P. WINTHER
Clerk - Marie Bolen
Phone (616) 632-5147

FINANCIAL REVIEW

CIRCUIT COURT BUDGET

UNAUDITED

	Appropriated	Expended	Increase over 2014
PERSONNEL COSTS	\$29,071,590	\$28,412,849	\$678,469
OPERATION COSTS	19,259,536	18,042,753	-491,921
CAPITAL OUTLAY	178,734	179,777	78,640
TOTAL	\$48,509,860	\$46,635,378	
INCREASE FROM 2014	\$1,287,905	\$265,196	

2014 REVENUES COLLECTED BY THE CIRCUIT COURT AND ITS DIVISIONS

State Grants	17,037,717
Federal Grants	119,768
Other Grants	245,170
Medical & Medicaid	34,339
Board & Care	449,578
Court Costs	1,278,583
Service Fees	473,460
Motion Fees	69,798
Filing Fees	140,426
Certified Copy Fees	77,521
Name Search Fees	566,880
Other Fees	270,841
Overseeing Fees	45,983
Jury Fees	166,045
Collection Fees	110,015
Domestic Relations Fees	169,360
Court Bond Costs	18,238
Bond Forfeitures	14,028
Other Reimbursements	65,284
Appeal Fees	1,500
Forensic Fees	536
Penal Fines	12,573
Refunds/Rebates	6,125

STATE COURT EQUITY FUND

In addition to the noted revenues, Kent County received \$2,814,458 during State Fiscal year 2014-2015 in Court Equity Fund monies. Pursuant to MCL 600.151(a) these funds are to be used for the operational expenses of the trial courts (Circuit, District, and Probate) and indigent legal assistance.

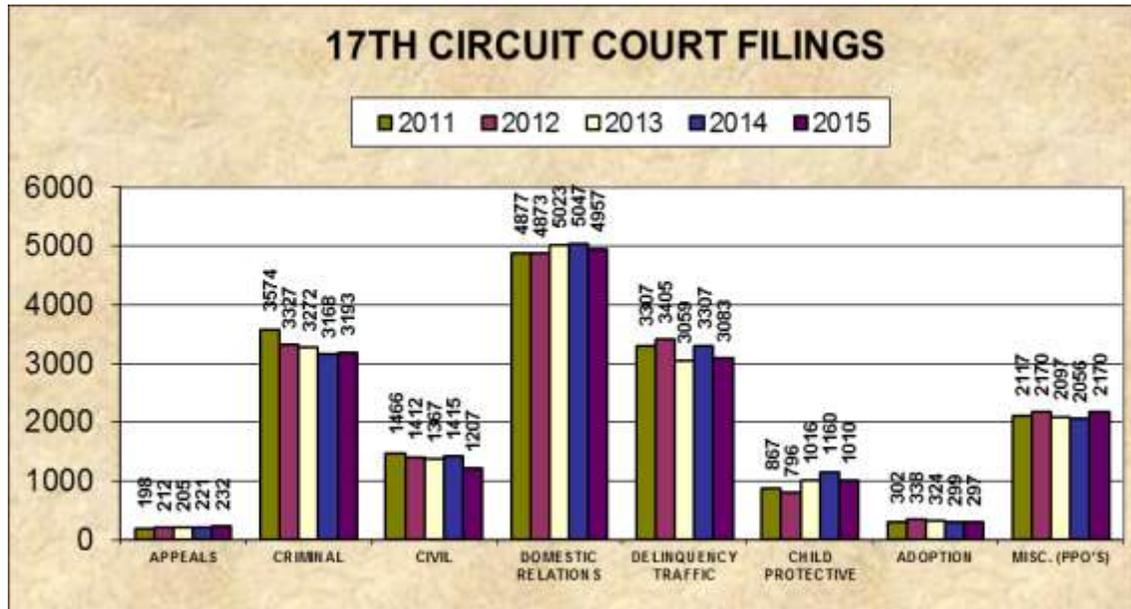
Total Revenues Collected	\$21,373,769
Total 2013 County Contributions	\$25,261,610
GRAND TOTAL	\$46,635,378

ADMINISTERING COLLECTION OF PASS-THROUGH PAYMENTS

It should be noted that the 17th Circuit Court collects and accounts for victims' restitution. During the calendar year 2015, the Court collected approximately \$1,518,791 in restitution. In addition to restitution, the Court assesses fines which, by law, are used to support local libraries. During the 2015 calendar year \$361,258 was collected. The Court also assesses Crime Victim Rights fees. These fees are collected for the State to help compensate and support victims of crime. In 2015, the Court collected \$239,101 in CVR Fees. The Court also collects State Minimum Costs which help the State with the costs of operating the Courts in the State of Michigan. During the calendar year the Court collected \$209,440 in State Minimum Costs.

CIRCUIT COURT

FILINGS



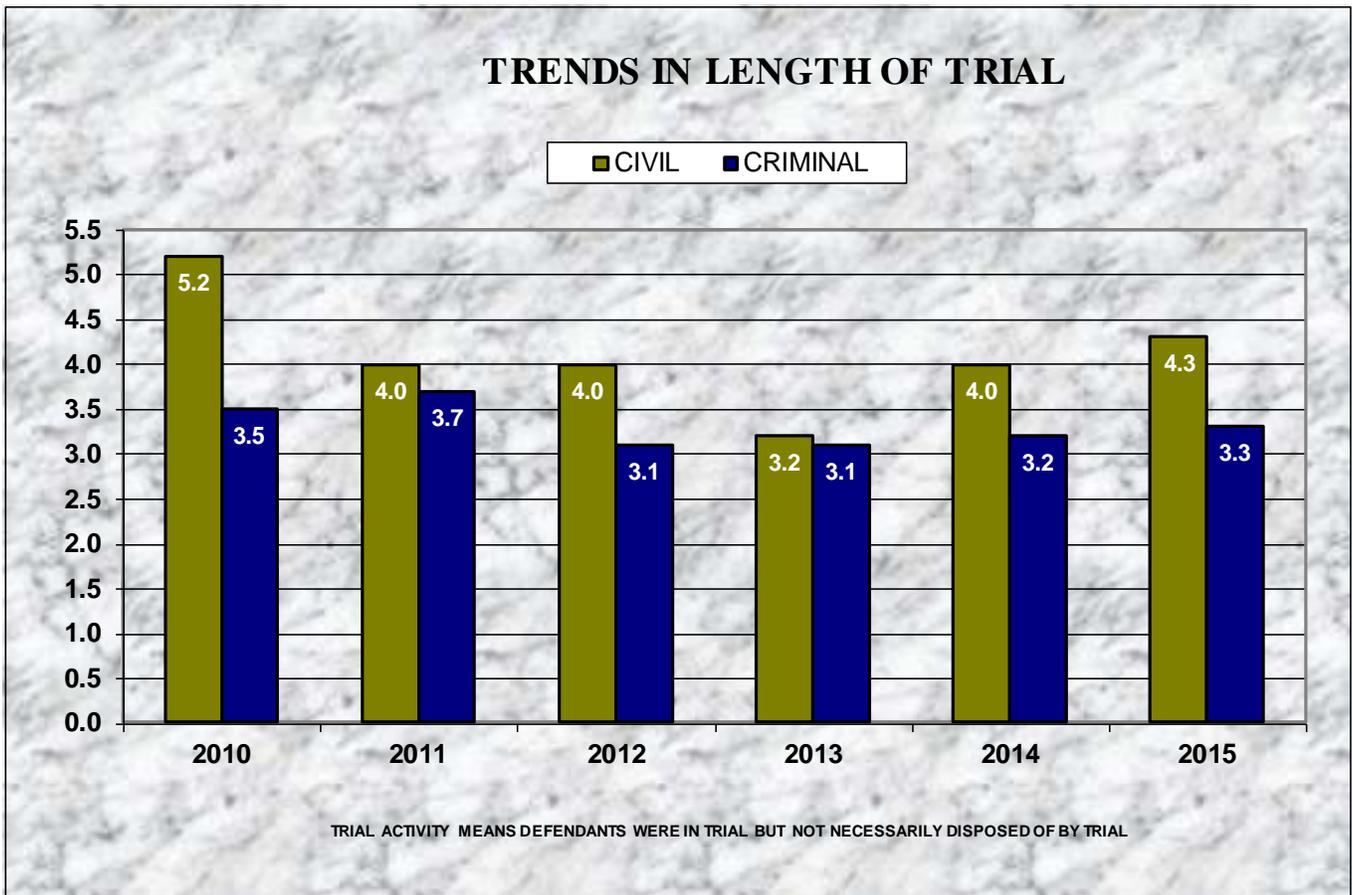
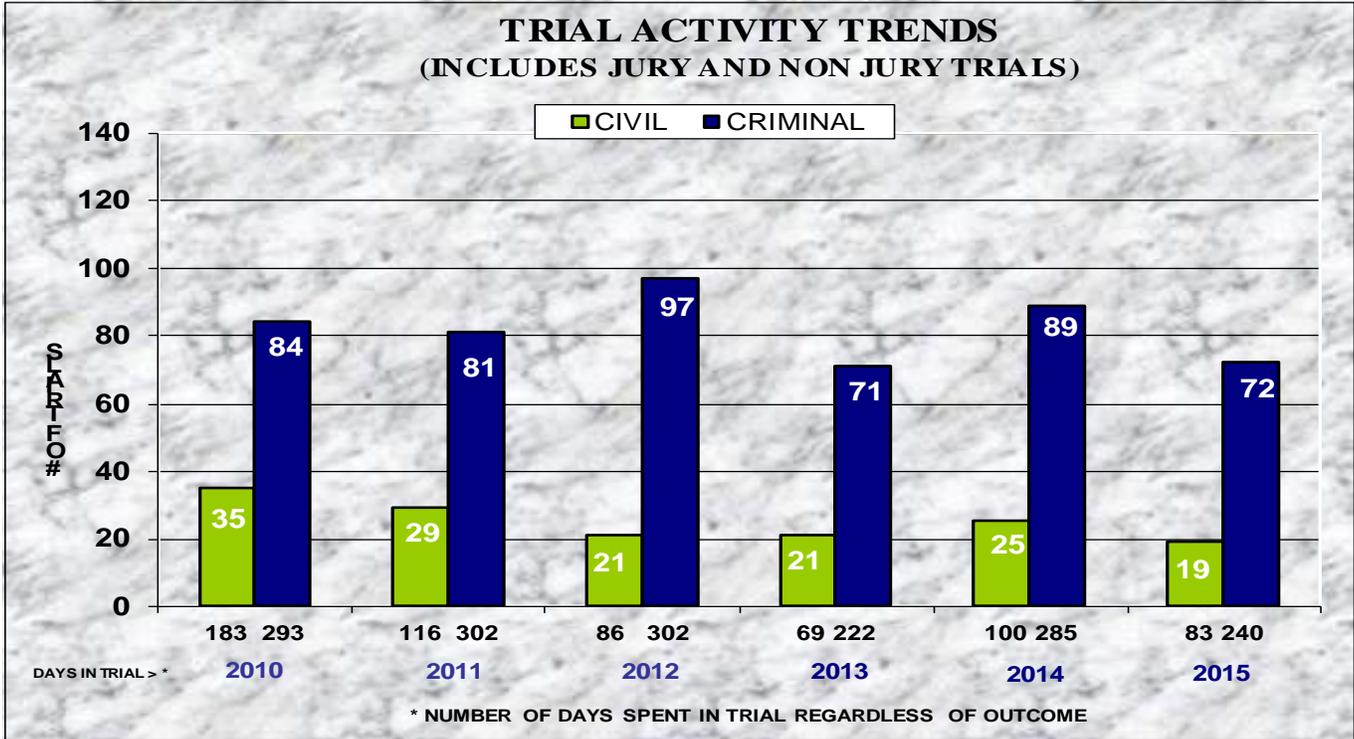
TOTALS: 2011 (16,708) 2012 (16,533) 2013 (16,364) 2014 (16,673) 2015 (16,149)

***Miscellaneous represent: PPO's, emancipations, infectious diseases, safe deliveries, name changes, parental**



CIRCUIT COURT

TRENDS



CIRCUIT COURT

NEW FILINGS

CIRCUIT COURT CRIMINAL FILINGS

CASE TYPE	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
NON-CAPITAL OFFENSES	3256	3360	3087	3037	2971	2972
CAPITAL OFFENSES	179	191	177	189	157	183
FELONY JUVENILE	1	0	8	0	0	0
EXTRADITION	46	23	55	47	40	38
TOTAL OFFENSES	3482	3574	3327	3273	3168	3168

CIRCUIT COURT CIVIL FILINGS

CASE TYPE CATEGORIES	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
CIVIL DAMAGE SUITS	399	405	447	471	551	486
OTHER CIVIL SUITS	1257	1061	965	896	864	721
TOTAL	1656	1466	1412	1367	1415	1207

CIRCUIT COURT APPEALS

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
APPEALS	156	198	212	205	221	232

FAMILY DIVISION FILINGS

Case Type Categories	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Divorce w/o Children	1419	1375	1264	1307	1296	1290
Divorce w/ Children	1512	1450	1380	1438	1319	1318
Paternity	1224	843	941	940	1024	973
Uniform Interstate Family Support Act	77	69	51	60	54	55
Support	950	803	840	911	949	916
PPOs/Stalking	608	521	538	512	543	595
PPOs/Domestic Relations	1495	1367	1321	1443	1371	1426
Other Domestic*	378	348	397	263	404	404
Adoptions	264	302	338	324	299	297
Miscellaneous Family**	230	191	270	115	116	112
Delinquency	3471	3189	3285	2995	3227	2971
Designated	9	15	13	8	10	8
Traffic	126	103	107	64	70	85
Child Protective	882	867	796	1016	1160	1009
Personal Protection Order involving minor	43	38	41	27	26	37
Totals	12,787	11,481	11,582	11,423	11,868	11,496

*
domes-
in-
custody filings

** Miscellaneous family filings consist of name change, safe delivery, emancipation of minor, infectious disease, parental waiver, voluntary foster care, juvenile guardianships and violations of out-of-county PPOs

Other
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CIRCUIT COURT

SPECIALIZED BUSINESS DOCKET

The Kent County Specialized Business Docket (“SBD”), which has been operating for more than four years, now handles cases under the permanent authority of Public Act 333 of 2012. Since its inception, the SBD has been run by Judge Christopher P. Yates, who serves as an elected member of the board of directors of the American College of Business Court Judges, an appointed business-court representative for the American Bar Association Business Law Section, an elected council member of the State Bar of Michigan Business Law Section, and a faculty member for the National Judicial College and the National Association of Certified Valuators and Analysts.

In 2015, the Kent County SBD took in 268 new cases and closed 259 cases, resolving those cases in an average of 240 days. Judge Yates published 83 opinions on the SBD website, which can be found at accesskent.com. The SBD closed more than 93 percent of its complex cases within the time guidelines established by the State Court Administrative Office.

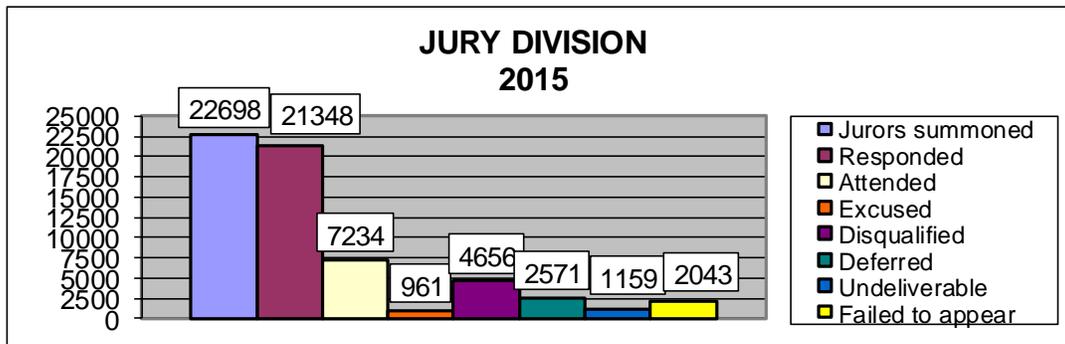
Over the course of its four-year history, the Kent County SBD has been assigned more than 1,000 cases and Judge Yates has published more than 300 opinions. The Kent County SBD routinely seeks input on its performance. Comments and suggestions can be offered to Chief Judge Donald Johnston, SBD Judge Yates, or the two attorneys who serve on the SBD advisory committee. By appointment of Chief Judge Johnston, those attorneys are David Gass, Esq., of Miller Johnson and Bruce Neckers, Esq., of Rhoades McKee.



CASE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

JURY MANAGEMENT

Jury Service is one of the most important duties that members of a free society are called upon to perform. The jury is an expression of the democratic idea that authority can be exercised most equitably only if people participate. The Jury Division of the Circuit Court plays an important role in this process by summoning and qualifying prospective jurors for Kent County. In addition, all other aspects of the Circuit Court's jury system are handled through this division. Jurors summoned and qualified for Circuit Court jury service are on-call for a week, or for one trial. Jurors may go to the County website (www.accesskent.com) or call the Jury Information Line (866-215-3884) to determine whether or not they must serve on the week they are on call.



ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) offers the parties a timely and affordable alternative to settle disputes and, thereby, avoid costly litigation. Kent County started a formalized ADR program in 1990 with Civil Case Mediation, which later became known as Case Evaluation. Court rules allow for parties to be ordered into facilitative mediation. Kent County implemented its court-ordered domestic relations mediation and civil mediation programs in 2004.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES:

- 60% of divorce mediations held will settle or settle in part.
- 60% of civil mediations held will settle or settle in part.
- 70% of those completing a mediation evaluation form will indicate satisfaction with the mediation process.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES-2015:

- 77% of divorce mediations settled or settled in part.
- 67% of civil mediations settled or settled in part.
- 92% of those completing the divorce evaluation form indicated satisfaction with the process.
- 93% of those completing the civil evaluation form indicated satisfaction with the process.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 425 domestic mediations were held.
 - 109 civil mediations were held.
 - 248 case evaluation hearings were held. 70 cases had all parties accepting the award for a 28.2% settlement rate.
- The Case Management Department reviews pending civil and domestic relations cases and sends a no progress

CASEFLOW MANAGEMENT

dismissal notice to the attorneys and parties when the matter languishes for more than 91 days. If the parties take no action, the judge may enter an Order of Dismissal on the action.

COURT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

GOAL: To assist the local Criminal Justice System by providing alternatives to incarceration.

PRETRIAL SUPERVISED RELEASE

Pretrial supervised release is the supervision of defendants out on bond pending their court hearing. This also includes Maximum Supervision (electronic monitoring) of selected defendants.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES:

- 85% of all defendants placed on pretrial supervised release will successfully complete program requirements.
- 80% of all defendants placed on Maximum Supervision will successfully complete program requirements.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES-2015:

- 86% of the defendants placed on pretrial supervised release successfully completed program requirements.
- 98% of the defendants placed on Maximum Supervision successfully completed program requirements.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 1,600 defendants were placed on pretrial supervision.
- Approximately 111,000 jail bed days were saved by the use of pretrial supervision.
- 47 defendants were placed on Maximum Supervision.
- Approximately 5,500 jail bed days were saved by the use of Maximum Supervision.

COMMUNITY SERVICE—ADULT/JUVENILE

Adult Community Service provides a community-based sentencing option in lieu of incarceration for the District and Circuit Courts of Kent County. The Juvenile Community Service Program provides a means for delinquent youth to make a form of reparation to the community for damages or injury inflicted as a result of their delinquency.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES:

- 80% of all defendants placed on adult community service will successfully complete program requirements.
- 90% of all juveniles placed on juvenile community service will successfully complete program requirements.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES-2015:

- 80% of the defendants placed on adult community service successfully completed program requirements.
- 97% of the juveniles placed on juvenile community service successfully completed program requirements.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 2,567 defendants were placed on adult community service.
- 148,000 hours of community service were performed by adult defendants.
- 398 juvenile offenders were placed on community service.
- 4,905 hours of community service were completed by juvenile offenders.

COURT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

WORK CREW

Work Crew is a structured, labor-intensive form of community service for the more habitual, problematic adult offender, and participants are supervised by Court Services staff and perform group work projects primarily at the Recycling Center.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

- 70% of all defendants placed on Work Crew will successfully complete program requirements.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME-2015:

- 74% of the defendants placed on Work Crew successfully completed program requirements.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 396 defendants were placed on Work Crew.
- Defendants performed 39,000 Work Crew hours.

DIVERSION

The Diversion Program provides case management and supervision services for offenders who are referred from the Kent County Prosecuting Attorney's Office. Upon successful completion of the Program, an offender will have the original charge dismissed.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

- 85% of all defendants placed on the Diversion Program will successfully complete program requirements.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME-2015:

- 86% of the defendants placed on the Diversion Program successfully completed the program requirements.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 80 defendants were placed on the Diversion Program.
- \$13,000 was paid by defendants for restitution that was disbursed to victims.

The Electronic Home Monitoring Program allows certain select juvenile offenders to be confined in their own home

JUVENILE ELECTRONIC HOME MONITORING

rather than in an out-of-home placement, by the use of electronic equipment such as a "tether anklet".

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

- 60% of juvenile offenders placed on Electronic Home Monitoring will successfully complete the program requirements.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME-2015:

- 72% of the juvenile offenders placed on Electronic Home Monitoring successfully completed program requirements.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 145 juveniles were placed on Electronic Home Monitoring.

COURT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

PRETRIAL SCREENING / INVESTIGATION

In 2015, the Court Services Department continued to provide valuable information to the judiciary relative to release prior to the defendant's first court appearance. This information allows the judges to set a bond based on verified information about the defendant, while addressing important issues regarding risk of flight, safety to the community, prudent use of jail space, and early intervention concerning the problems of the defendant. During 2015, 5,000 bond reports were generated by the Pretrial Intake Investigation Unit.

In 2015, the Court Services Department generated and distributed approximately 450 jail bed reports to Court Judges,

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

State Probation/Parole, the Office of Community Corrections, the Kent County Correctional Facility, and the Grand Rapids Police Department. The dissemination of accurate information to the criminal justice system is essential, both to prevent cases from becoming "lost" in a very complex system, and to assist in the management of jail beds available to the Courts.

Public Act 511, the Community Corrections Act, was passed in 1988 primarily to divert eligible non-violent/low-risk

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS

GOAL: To support and expand the use of community sanctions in order to provide rehabilitation opportunities for Kent County felony offenders, to promote the efficient use of jail/prison beds while protecting the community, and to examine the causes of repeated criminal behavior while facilitating collaboration among stakeholders and service providers.

offenders from prison by placing them in community programs which provide the courts with a continuum of sentencing options. A secondary goal is to divert offenders from jail in order to free up jail space for the more serious offenders diverted from prison. Kent County first received P.A. 511 funding in 1990 and administers these funds through the Kent County Community Corrections Advisory Board. Additionally, the Community Corrections Advisory Board, through the Office of Community Corrections, is responsible for the development and implementation of the local community corrections plan.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES:

- Expend 100% of the Community Corrections grant.
- Maintain an overall program enrollment rate of 95% or greater.
- Maintain a 70% successful termination rate for all O.C.C. enrollees.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES-2015:

- Program enrollment rate was 117%.
- 67% of enrollees successfully completed their program.
- 99% of the Community Corrections grant was expended.

2015 SUMMARY:

- The OCC secured approximately \$1,080,000 in revenue through the County Jail Reimbursement Program.
- 1,800 offenders were served.

PERMANENCY PLANNING

Children under 18 years of age who are suspected of being abused by their parents are referred to the Family Division of the Circuit Court by the Child Protective Services Unit of the Kent County Department of Human Services (DHS). Protective Services investigates all complaints of abuse and/or neglect in the County and determines which cases require court action.

The Court's role in the child welfare system in Kent County is to provide the judicial authority necessary for legal wardship and treatment, and to provide leadership to ensure that the service delivery system continues to function well. Children found by the Court to be neglected or abused are usually made temporary wards of the Court and placed under the general supervision of the Kent County DHS. Direct casework services for neglected children and their families are provided by the DHS or one of the private agencies under contract with the DHS. The judges assess the progress of each case at regular review hearings, an integral part of the case management system.

The Court Appointed Special Advocate Program (CASA) is a program using carefully screened and specially trained

CASA PROGRAM

GOAL: CASA of Kent County provides highly-trained volunteers to advocate in the best interest of abused and neglected children in family court proceedings.

volunteers appointed by the Judge to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in child protective proceedings. The role of the CASA volunteer as an independent voice for the children is to investigate, facilitate, monitor and advocate on behalf of children until they are in a safe, permanent home. The CASA volunteer has only one case at a time and remains with the children throughout the case until it is discharged by the Court. In 2015, 96 CASA Volunteers advocated on behalf of 197 children served by the program.

*Individuals who are interested in becoming a CASA volunteer are encouraged to call:
(616) 632-5311*

ADOPTION

ADOPTION DEPARTMENT

GOAL: To facilitate the legal process for children who need a permanent home and to streamline the adoption process for children and families.

The Adoption Department serves a diverse group of families and children who are in the process of an adoption or are seeking support and information concerning a completed adoption. Most of the children involved in these adoptions are either permanent wards of the court or are voluntarily released by their biological parents. Additional services are provided for adult adoptions and for children adopted in another country.

ADOPTIONS FINALIZED	2013	2014	2015
Adult Adoptions	12	4	15
Agency International Adoptions	3	8	4
Direct Placement Adoptions (voluntary consent to a specific family)	25	30	24
Relative Adoptions	21	11	15
Safe Delivery of Newborn Adoptions	1	0	1
Permanent Ward Adoptions	191	185	189
Non-Relative Guardian Adoptions	0	0	7
Agency Other Adoptions (voluntary release to private adoption agency)	8	3	6
Step-Parent Adoptions	36	47	37
Delayed Registration-Foreign Adoptions	29	28	37
TOTAL ADOPTIONS	326	316	335

DELINQUENCY SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

INTAKE DEPARTMENT

The Intake Department plays a major role in the delinquency division of the Court. Intake decisions are the result of a process of assessment and information gathering. The Intake Department acquires its investigative authority from Section 11 of the Juvenile Code.

The intake process begins with a referral sent by a police agency to the Prosecutor's Office or City Attorney's Office. An assistant prosecuting attorney reviews the complaint for legal sufficiency, determines the precise charge, and then refers it to the Intake Department. The Intake Supervisor screens certain cases with subsequent diversion to other counties and to other agencies and programs that deal with certain types of delinquent activity, such as shoplifting, alcohol abuse, and family problems. Other cases receive a letter of warning from the Court. The majority of cases are assigned to Intake probation officers who contact the youth and parents for a preliminary inquiry and decide what type of response should be made to the referral. Intake probation officers assess the seriousness of the offense and the youth's prior court and/or police record. They review prior or present community agency involvement. A special emphasis is placed on evaluating home behavior, parental control and parent/child relationships. School matters such as performance and behavior are evaluated. On certain offenses, the Prosecutor's Office is contacted for case input. In addition, Intake probation officers evaluate damage and loss, and an appropriate court response to the victim of the law violation.

If formal court involvement is not necessary or required by law, the Intake probation officer has a number of options. A case may be diverted for counseling or special services related to the specific law violation (e.g. shoplifting, alcohol or drug use, or family problems). A case may be held in order to monitor the situation and reassess it at a later date. Certain stipulations may be required such as paying restitution to a victim or successfully completing a certain number of community service hours in the Court Work Program. The Intake probation officer may determine, after the preliminary inquiry, that the presenting problem of the law violation has been handled appropriately and no other services are necessary. These cases are termed "adjusted". A petition is authorized if the Intake probation officer determines that formal court action is necessary, or if specific intake guidelines or Michigan laws require it. The case is then transferred to the Probation Unit for assessment and intervention purposes, in preparation for a formal court hearing.

INTAKE STATISTICS	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Juveniles Referred	2286	2278	2059	2064	2047
-Cases assigned	1223	1187	1136	1214	1046
-Cases adjusted	569	676	653	506	472
-Cases to field	479	460	449	465	446
-Cases to consent calendar	152	163	140	144	147
-Cases waived to county of residence	149	127	123	150	131
-Cases dismissed by prosecutor	63	48	36	54	62
-Diverted by Intake Supervisor	915	908	701	717	672
-Petitions received from other counties	103	130	118	102	77
Restitution Collected	\$5315	\$4373	\$5570	\$10,030	\$12,665

DELINQUENCY SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAM

GOAL: To prevent status offenders from being held in Detention without a court order, and to reduce the number of status offenders or youth involved in minor law violations from becoming court wards.

The Crisis Intervention Program is a short-term family counseling program for families with youth between the ages of 12-17 who have runaway from home, are truant from school or have other related school problems, are experiencing family conflicts due to adolescent development issues, are beyond parental control, and/or commit minor law violations. The Crisis Intervention Program also provides assistance in the filing of petitions for the emancipation of minors.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES:

- 90% of all status offenders admitted to Detention without a court order will be released within 6 hours of admission.
- 85% of all status offenders or juveniles involved in minor law violations who receive Crisis Intervention services will be diverted from formal court wardship for at least 120 days.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES-2015:

- 100% of all status offenders admitted to Detention without a court order were released from Detention within 6 hours of admission.
- 79% of all status offenders or juveniles involved with minor law violations who received Crisis Intervention services were diverted from court wardship for at least 120 days.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 284 juveniles and their families were served by the Crisis Intervention Program.
- 124 juveniles were released from Detention after Crisis Intervention involvement.
- 91 status offenders were diverted from formal court involvement.
- 2 status offender petitions were authorized for formal court involvement.

The Young Delinquent Intervention Program is a home based service (including counseling, mentoring, and pro-social activities)

YOUNG DELINQUENT INTERVENTION PROGRAM (YDIP)

GOAL: To prevent further delinquency by intervening early with very young offenders.

to children and their parents of young offenders 11 years and younger who have broken the law. This program operates under the reality that the best indicator for future delinquent behavior is the age of onset for delinquency, and that the earlier the intervention in the lives of high-risk youth, then the greater the potential for preventing further acts of delinquency. The court contracts for the provision of these services with D.A. Blodgett for Children.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES:

- 75% of all young offenders in treatment will successfully complete their treatment objectives.
- Less than 10% of all young offenders will have a new law violation while in treatment.
- Less than 5% of all young offenders who successfully complete treatment objectives will have a new law violation within 12 months of discharge from court wardship.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES-2015:

- 75% of all the young offenders in treatment successfully completed their treatment objectives.
- 1 young offender in treatment had a new law violation while in treatment.
- 8% of all young offenders who successfully completed treatment objectives had a new law violation within 12 months of discharge from court wardship.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 18 young offenders were served.
- 100% of the families involved in the program indicate on their Parent Satisfaction Survey that they were satisfied with the services provided by the program, the workers involved, and the progress their child made while in the program.

DELINQUENCY SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

TRAFFIC UNIT

The Traffic Unit handles misdemeanor traffic violations by juveniles. Depending upon the type of violation and court history, each juvenile must either respond in person or by mail to the violation(s). The Traffic Referee typically requests a suspension of driving privileges for juveniles who fail to respond. In 2015, the Traffic Unit received 112 tickets and collected \$8,132 in fines.

CONSENT CALENDAR

GOAL: To reduce recidivism by diverting low risk juvenile offenders from the formal court docket.

The Consent Calendar is a diversion program provided by court rule that allows for the informal processing of appropriate cases. Consent calendar cases are typically placed under informal supervision of the Court for approximately 90 days. No case may be placed on the Consent Calendar unless the juvenile and the parent agrees to this decision. Failure to comply with the requirements of the Consent Calendar or subsequent law violations most often result in the juvenile's transfer to the formal calendar. If the juvenile successfully completes the Consent Calendar, the court may then destroy all records of the proceedings.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

- 80% of all juveniles placed on the Consent Calendar will successfully complete the requirements of the program.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME-2015:

- 85% of all the juveniles placed on the Consent Calendar successfully completed the requirements of the program.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 147 juveniles and families were served.
- Juveniles were on the Consent Calendar an average of 134 days.
- \$2,474 was collected from juveniles and paid directly to victims.

The Adolescent Sex Offender Treatment Program provides assessment and treatment services to juvenile sex

ADOLESCENT SEX OFFENDER TREATMENT PROGRAM (ASOTP)

GOAL: To prevent further sexual victimization

offenders, ages 8-17.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES:

- 75% of all the juvenile sex offenders in treatment will complete treatment objectives.
- Less than 10% of all the juvenile sex offenders in treatment will re-offend sexually while in treatment.
- Less than 5 juvenile offenders who complete their treatment objectives will re-offend sexually within one year of treatment completion.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES-2015:

- 92% of the juvenile sex offenders accepted into treatment completed their treatment objectives.
- 0 juvenile sex offender re-offended sexually while in treatment.
- 2 juvenile sex offender re-offended sexually within 1 year of completion of their treatment objectives.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 79 juvenile sex offenders were referred to the program.
- 65 assessments were completed.
- 51 juvenile sex offenders completed treatment.

DELINQUENCY SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

COMMUNITY PROBATION

GOAL: To reduce further delinquency.

Community Probation is a unique and non-traditional way of providing decentralized and personalized supervision to juveniles and their families. Community Probation places much emphasis on developing cooperative and coordinated relationships with law enforcement, and on providing services and treatment plans that enhance the balanced and restorative justice concept (community safety, competency development, and accountability).

Community probation officers are assigned to specific neighborhood areas and only receive cases from these areas. They also have established offices within these geographical assignments. Probation officers are expected to have at least weekly personal contact with the youth assigned to them and are required to work a certain number of non-traditional hours each month (i.e. nights and weekends).

Surveillance monitoring is an intensive supervision option available to probation officers for juveniles who need such monitoring. The surveillance officer assists the probation officer by supporting the parents and school officials with holding the youth accountable while residing in the community. The surveillance officer typically has random contact with the juvenile on a daily basis.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES:

- Less than 10% of the cases assigned to community probation will be referred by the police for a new felony law violation while on community probation.
- Less than 15% of cases that are discharged successfully from community probation will commit a new law violation and again be referred to the court.
- 80% of parents surveyed immediately after their child is discharged from community probation will indicate satisfaction with the work of the probation officer assigned.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES-2015:

- 8% of the juveniles assigned to community probation were involved with a new felony law violation while on community probation.
- 16% of the cases discharged successfully from community probation committed a new law violation and were again referred to the court.
- 92% of the parents surveyed after discharge from community probation indicated satisfaction with the work of the probation officer assigned to their child.

2015 SUMMARY:

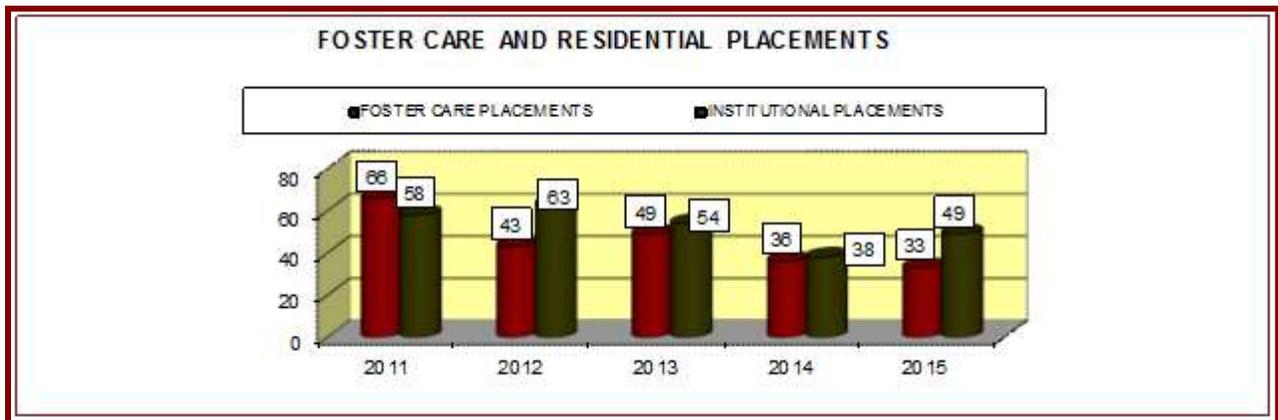
- 449 juveniles were placed on community probation.
- 855 juveniles were served by community probation.
- 23,760 face-to-face contacts were completed by probation officers with juveniles on community probation.
- 5,249 night and weekend hours were worked by probation officers.
- Over 2,283 contacts were made by probation officers with their community police officers.
- 457 juveniles placed on probation were discharged.

DELINQUENCY SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT

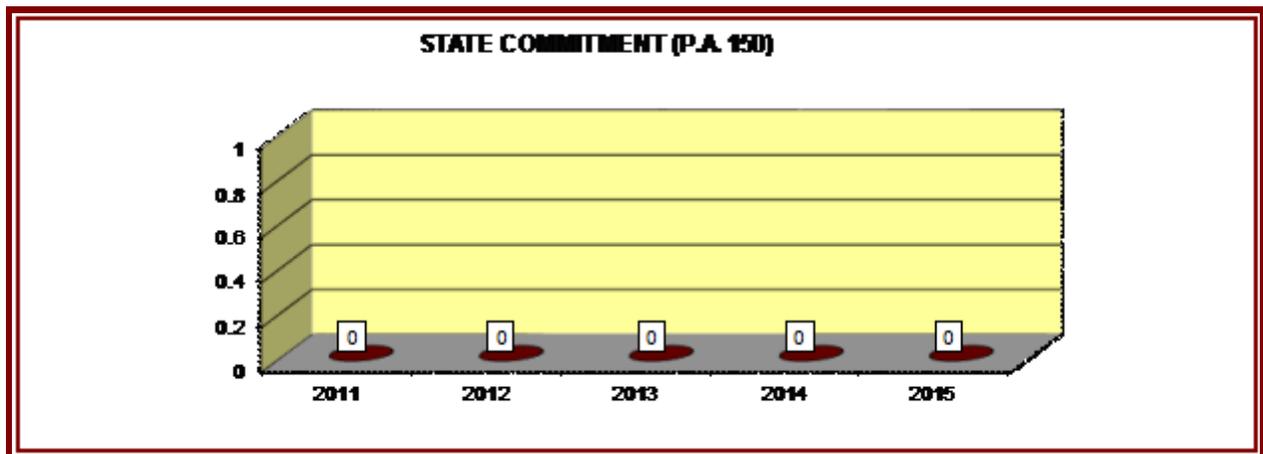
FOSTER CARE AND INSTITUTIONAL PLACEMENT

Even though the Court places a high priority on working with juvenile offenders in their own homes, some situations require the Court to order the juvenile placed in either foster care or residential institutional placement. Foster care more closely reflects a family home setting, while institutional placement is more restrictive and provides a specific type of treatment modality. The average per diem cost of foster care is approximately \$70. Institutional placement is much more expensive and depending on the type of institution averages about \$200 per day.



STATE COMMITMENT (P.A. 150)

When the Court has exhausted appropriate resources for a juvenile offender, the Court may order the juvenile committed via Public Act 150 to the Michigan Department of Human Services for placement and supervision. The placement for these juveniles is typically in State Training School. These residential placements are very expensive and provide a high level of security.



DELINQUENCY SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITY

GOAL: To provide a safe and secure environment for juveniles admitted to Detention.

The function of Detention is to provide temporary care for youth requiring secure custody pending court evaluation and disposition, or pending transfer to another jurisdiction or agency. Detained youth are those whose offenses are so serious that release would endanger public safety or the welfare of the child.

The Detention Facility, which has a bed capacity of 69, currently employs 102 staff (includes school, medical, mental health personnel, etc.) with the majority of that workforce being Youth Specialists.

The Facility's staff training/orientation program is extensive in its coverage of training issues and, in addition to its own staff, offers training to other court staff and County employees. The State's Division of Child Welfare Licensing mandates training in 9 specific areas, and requires at least 24 hours of training for each Detention employee per year. Kent County Juvenile Detention averaged more than 28 hours of training per employee in 2015.

The Detention Center provides a cognitive behavioral training (CBT) concept for its behavioral management for our residents. This cognitive learning model is designed to change adolescents value and belief systems by getting them to examine their thinking before making choices. The goal is to help reduce recidivism by teaching residents to make rational choices, and maintain this thinking ability after the leave Detention.

Although Detention is not a treatment facility, one of the six units within this facility is utilized as a short-term residential program for Kent County residents who have been ordered to an institutional placement. This four month treatment program, known as the Delta Program, is staffed by the Detention youth specialists and provides services offered to the Detention residents, as well as off-site activities with the primary focus of productive reintegration into their community.

The facility continues to offer a year-round school program. The Lighthouse Academy provides classes Monday through Thursday. Community consultants as well as Detention staff provide Friday classes which include topic areas such as Youth Empowerment, Therapeutic Communication, Physical Education, Art Therapy, Health Education (public topics and AIDS, safety, sexual awareness), Life and Social Skills. These Friday classes offer residents a chance to deal with issues that contributed to their coming to the facility, as well as teaching them skills that will help them make better decisions.

DELINQUENCY SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITY

DETENTION FACILITY STATISTICS									
	Males			Females			Totals		
	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015
Admissions	979	946	918	361	369	364	1340	1315	1282
Releases	983	946	928	365	364	368	1348	1310	1296

DAYS OF CARE PROVIDED						
	Days of Care			Average Daily Census		
	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015
Totals	19,034	21,514	21,515	49	55	55

PER DIEM COST OF CARE		
2013	2014	2015
\$308.00	\$217.00	\$239.00

The Haven is a

contracted 20-

THE HAVEN

GOAL: To prevent Detention over-crowding by providing a safe and secure alternative to juveniles admitted to Detention.

bed staff secure facility for delinquent youth operated by Holy Cross Children's Services. The program is a short-term, step-down program for youth who are admitted to Detention but do not require the security level provided by Detention.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES:

- Less than 5% of juveniles admitted to the program will truant from the program.
- Less than 10% of the juveniles admitted to the program will be returned unsuccessfully to Detention.
- Less than 5% of the juveniles admitted to the program will be involved in a new law violation while in the program.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES-2015:

- 1 juvenile truant from the program.
- 7 juveniles required placement back into secure Detention.
- No juveniles were involved in a new law violation while in the program.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 139 juveniles were admitted to the program.
- 4,296 days of care were provided.
- The average length of stay in the program was 30 days.

FRIEND OF THE COURT

FRIEND OF THE COURT— DAN FOJTIK

MISSION: TO ASSIST THE FAMILY DIVISION OF THE CIRCUIT COURT IN FACILITATING THE RESOLUTION OF DOMESTIC RELATIONS MATTERS SO THAT CHILDREN'S BEST INTERESTS ARE PROTECTED.

As set forth in the 1998 Child Support Performance and Incentive Act, state child support enforcement programs are measured in five key areas: Collections on Arrears, Total Collections, Paternity Establishment, Cost Effectiveness and Order Establishment. The following rankings represent how the Kent County Friend of the Court measured in 2015 against the eleven (11) largest counties in Michigan, excluding Wayne County. Those factors, and Kent's rankings, are as follows:

	<u>KENT COUNTY RANKING</u>
• COLECTIONS ON ARREARS	#1
• TOTAL COLLECTIONS	#2
• PATERNITY ESTABLISHMENT *	#2
• COST EFFECTIVENESS	#3
• ORDER ESTABLISHMENT *	#8

* Performance in these two areas is not controlled by the Kent County Friend of the Court office.

ENFORCEMENT

The Friend of the Court (FOC) employs a range of enforcement remedies and innovative strategies to improve the reliability of child support payments. Emphasis is placed on establishing realistic child support orders, reducing un-payable child support debt and intervening early when parents begin to struggle to make payments.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

- Collect 70% of total court ordered child support that was charged.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME-2015:

- 77% of court ordered child support charged was collected.

2015 SUMMARY:

- \$97,269,926 in current child support was collected.

FRIEND OF THE COURT

INCOME WITHHOLDING

With income withholding, payments are deducted from the payer's check and sent to the Michigan State Disbursement Unit (MiSDU) in Lansing, or in a small percentage of cases, directly to the FOC. When a payer changes jobs and/or fails to advise the FOC of new employment, the computer system checks the state Data Warehouse and automatically sends an Income Withholding Notice (IWN) to the source of income.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

- Collect 75% of child support collections by withholding order.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME-2015:

- 76% was collected via income withholding order.

2015 SUMMARY:

- There were 6,944 Income Withholding Notices (new and modified) sent manually by staff. Additional notices were issued through the MiCSES system.

SHOW-CAUSE HEARINGS

When payments are not made regularly and the payer does not work with us to make payments or remedy his or her inability to pay, we may schedule a show cause hearing. At the hearing, case managers attempt to resolve the non-payment or present the case before the court for a determination of contempt.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

- 55% of cases will remit payment within 60 days of an order to show cause hearing.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME-2015:

- 52% of cases remitted a payment within 60 days of an order to show cause hearing.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 5,107 contempt hearings were scheduled.
- 88% of those ordered to jail complied with payment terms and were released within 2 weeks.

TAX OFFSET

A commonly used enforcement remedy is the interception of a payer's state and federal tax refunds.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

- 90% of cases qualifying for a tax offset are submitted.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME-2015:

- 100% of cases qualified for a tax intercept were submitted.

2015 SUMMARY:

- \$4,079,211 was collected from the Federal tax offset program.
- \$386,912 was collected from the State tax offset program.

FRIEND OF THE COURT

LICENSE SUSPENSION

The FOC may petition to suspend a payer's driver, occupational, and/or recreational (hunting/fishing) license(s). Suspension of licenses results automatically if a payer fails to appear for a scheduled non-support hearing. Our goal in suspending licenses is to encourage the payer of support to resolve the non-payment that led to the suspension, and to obtain a conditional order to encourage future payments.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

- 40% of cases with a suspended license contact the FOC to make payment arrangements.
- 55% of conditional license suspension orders will make payments.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME-2015:

- 46% of cases with a suspended license contacted FOC to make payments.
- 62% of cases with a suspended license due to non-payment of child support started remitting payments.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 2,513 license suspension orders were entered. There wer 2,538 conditional orders (both prior to and during 2015).
- 1,889 cases where licenses were suspended (both prior to and during 2015) contacted the FOC and made arrangements to pay.
- 3 claims were filed against decedent obligor's estate.

LEINS AND GARNISHMENTS

The law allows the FOC to place a lien against property owned by the payer of support when an arrearage has accrued. Garnishments may also be served against a delinquent payer's inheritance.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

- 80% of cases submitted for a Lien/Garnishment are to receive an order to perfect one.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME-2015:

- 100% of cases submitted for a lien or garnishment received one.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 9 real estate liens were placed, 2 liens were discharged and \$0 was collected.
- 23 liens/garnishments were placed against inheritances and \$65,619.03 was collected.
- 7 claims were filed against decedent obligor's estate.

ASSET SEIZURE / VEHICLE BOOTING

The FOC is authorized to pursue asset seizure and/or vehicle booting when a payer is delinquent on child support. When a vehicle is booted, an immobilizing device is placed on the vehicle's tire and a notice is attached to the driver's window directing the payer to arrange for payment of a lump sum in exchange for removal of the device.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

- 50% of cases that had this remedy applied received a payment within 90 days due to the specific remedy.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME-2015:

- 66% of cases received a payment within 90 days due to the specific remedy.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 6 asset seizure orders were entered resulting in collection of \$3,684.54.

FRIEND OF THE COURT

BENCH WARRANTS

A bench warrant may issue if a person fails to appear for a show cause contempt hearing. These hearings are scheduled when a parent fails to comply with orders to pay child support, provide health care insurance, or follow a custody or parenting time schedule. Also, a show cause hearing may be scheduled against an employer if it fails to comply with an income withholding notice.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

- 55% of cases will remit a payment within 45 days of a warrant dismissal.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME-2015:

- 49% of cases remitted a payment within 45 days of a warrant dismissal.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 2,132 cases remitted a payment after dismissal of a bench warrant.
- 60% of those who were ordered to jail paid and were released in 2 weeks.

The Health Care Unit has two main objectives. One is to enforce court orders in respect to the maintenance of health care insurance. The other is to enforce court orders in respect to the processing of uninsured health care expenses. In

HEALTH CARE

respect to the maintenance of health care insurance, the FOC utilizes the National Medical Support Notice (NMSN), the federal form, for most enforcement processes. This form is automatically generated and sent to a client's employer whenever new employment is reported or downloaded into the MiCSES. For uninsured health care expenses, parents are required to first contact the other parent to request reimbursement for his/her share of the expense. If that is not successful, the parent can then contact the FOC for assistance.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES:

- 65% of cases have orders with health care provisions.
- 90% of cases with health care reimbursement accounts received payment.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES-2015:

- 77% of cases with orders have health care provisions.
- 98% of cases with health care reimbursement accounts received payment.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 4,723 clients or employers were contacted regarding the client's responsibility to maintain health care insurance.
- 3,347 uninsured health care expense claims were processed.

FRIEND OF THE COURT

PARENTING TIME

The primary function and statutory duty of the Parenting Time Unit is to secure compliance with parenting time and physical custody orders. This is accomplished through education, assisting parents with modification of their orders, or helping in other ways to prevent future violations from occurring. Also, the FOC continues to manage the Access and Visitation Grant that allows payment for supervised parenting time and for therapeutic reintroduction on specific cases through the contract agencies.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

- 75% of parenting time complaints resolved prior to a hearing.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME-2015:

- 86% of complaints resolved prior to a hearing.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 2,244 formal written parenting time complaints were filed.
- 95 hearings were scheduled on parenting time violations.
- There were a total of 5,807 parenting time complaints, including telephonic and written.

The FOC Income Review Department evaluates whether a child support order is set at the amount recommended by

INCOME REVIEWS

the Michigan Child Support Formula Manual. If a change of more than 10% of the current obligation or \$50/month (whichever is greater) is recommended, FOC will petition the Circuit Court to modify the obligation. Reviews are commenced when a client is eligible (every 3 years or if there has been a significant change of circumstances) and makes a written request, when it is referred by court order or when it is initiated by FOC. Following completion of a review, FOC issues a detailed report and recommendation to the Judge, the attorneys and each parent. The overall goal of the Income Review Department is to make sure that the financial responsibility is in line with the individual's ability to pay.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

- 100% of income review recommendations are to be set according to the Michigan Child Support Formula Manual.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME-2015:

- 100% of review recommendations set according to the formula.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 3,161 support reviews were completed.
- 1,742 reviews were completed after a request for modification.
- 458 court order reports and recommendations were completed.

FRIEND OF THE COURT

ORIENTATION

It is important that parents new to the FOC have information about how the office works. In order to provide all parents with as much information as possible during the difficult time when a case is new, we provide orientation in multiple ways. Every party to a new paternity, family support, custody and divorce filing receives information about online orientation available at www.accesskent.com. These parents also receive written materials and the option of scheduling an appointment with his or her case manager.

2015 SUMMARY:

- Orientation materials were mailed to 4,385 parties in 2015.
- 256 individuals watched the online orientation.

PARENT AWARENESS CLASS

The FOC, in conjunction with Life Guidance Services, began providing the Parent Awareness Class (PAC) in 1996. The objective of this educational tool is to provide parents with ideas that may benefit them and their children in coping with the grief and pain of change and conflict that goes along with separation and/or dissolution of a marriage. At the conclusion of the PAC session, as with the orientation, participants are asked to complete a survey regarding the PAC presentation.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 189 parents signed up to attend the PAC.
- 157 of those who signed up to attend actually participated in these classes.



FRIEND OF THE COURT

CUSTODY/PARENTING TIME EVALUATIONS AND TROUBLESHOOTING

Custody and parenting time evaluations are initiated after a written order is received from the Court. The purpose of the evaluation is to gather information regarding the best interests of the children as defined in the (12) factors of the Michigan Child Custody Act. The parties participate in an initial interview together. The evaluator will either write a report and recommendation and submit a proposed order, or continue the evaluation process. The report and recommendation may be to terminate the investigation altogether or it may address limited issues in the case. If there is a proposed order attached, the parents may object within 21 days and request a hearing. If there is no objection, the court will enter the order after the 21 days has expired, as long as the proposed order comports with the Court's decision.

Troubleshooting is scheduled upon a direct referral from the Court, usually on motion day, and is an ADR process where both parties attend a meeting with a FOC mediator or evaluator. The goal is to gather information to assist the parents in settling the dispute by reaching an agreement. If an agreement is reached, the FOC representative will prepare a stipulation and order.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

- 100% of the evaluations are to be completed within 90 days from the date the court ordered the referral.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME-2015:

- 74% of evaluations, and troubleshoots were completed within 90 days of the order for referral.

2015 SUMMARY:

- There were 1,046 referrals from the Court requesting an evaluation.
- 758 interviews were held.
- 93 stipulations were entered.
- 644 report and recommendations were submitted to the Court.
- 362 custody recommendations were completed.



FRIEND OF THE COURT

MEDIATION

Mediation is authorized by statute and is a voluntary and confidential process. If one parent does not wish to mediate, other options are offered to the requesting parent. The objective of the mediator is to assist the parents in looking at alternatives, helping each person to see the other person's position, focusing on the best interests of the child rather than on the adults' wants or desires, balancing the communication between the parents, and empowering the parties to make decisions for the benefit of their child. If the parents reach an agreement, a stipulation and order is prepared, approved and signed by both parents. If the parents do not reach an agreement, the mediator does not make a recommendation to the Court. Kent County FOC also conducts "court rule mediations" which are court ordered. Although not voluntary, they are still confidential.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

- 75% of mediations will be conducted within 60 days of being scheduled.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME-2015:

- 70% of mediations held within 60 days.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 340 statutory mediations were held.
- 185 statutory mediations resulted in stipulated agreements.
- There were 49 unsuccessful mediations and 68 not held due to non-appearance..

In an effort to assure that the FOC is responsive to the concerns of clients, the FOC Act provides a grievance procedure for complaints about FOC operations or employees. A grievance may not be used to change or object to an

GRIEVANCES

FOC recommendation, or to disagree with a referee's recommendation or a judge's decision. Once a grievance has been received, the FOC must investigate and respond or issue a statement explaining why a response is not possible within 30 days. The Kent County FOC has always been encouraging and receptive of these types of formal complaints. Rather than being considered a negative reflection of office performance, it is felt to be a good way to measure customer satisfaction and help improve services where necessary.

2015 SUMMARY:

- 10 grievances were received in 2015.
- 10 grievances were sent to the Citizens Advisory Committee.

The Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) was created by the legislature 16 years ago to assist citizens and the FOC office with issues concerning office operations. Since then, only 30 of 83 counties ever formed committees, and only two are still active. Even though legislation eventually eliminated the mandate that required counties to have a CAC,

CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Kent County and Oakland County still maintain a committee. Minutes from its meetings were submitted to the County Board, while sub-committees reviewed actual grievances. Zero grievances were filed directly with the committee in 2015, while all 10 grievances received by the FOC were forwarded to CAC for their review.

CLERK'S OFFICE / CIRCUIT COURT DIVISION



MARY HOLLINRAKE - COUNTY CLERK, CLERK OF THE COURT
NICK LITTLE - CHIEF DEPUTY CIRCUIT COURT CLERK

The Circuit Court Division of the Kent County Clerk's Office is located on the 2nd floor of the Courthouse. With a staff of 22, the office opens, maintains, tracks and stores all cases filed in the civil, criminal and family divisions of the Circuit Court. Court files are open to the public and may be viewed in the Clerk's Office between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday-Friday.

Our Financial Division collects and distributes state mandated costs, court-ordered fines, costs, restitution, crime victim rights fees and other assessments. In 2015, we collected over \$3,600,000 for Kent County. In addition, the Clerk's Office handles bonds posted in criminal cases, which often can be applied against court-ordered assessments at the conclusion of the case, thereby increasing the Clerk's collection activities.

2015 was another busy year for the Clerk's Office, which managed the receipt and filing of 11,910 new cases. Additionally, all formal juvenile delinquency and neglect/abuse cases are processed through this office which still dedicates 1.5 FTE's to this task. In 2015, the Clerk's Office continued to provide e-filing in lieu of traditional mail or hand delivery to the Clerk's Office for cases assigned to the Court's Specialized Business Docket. The Community Archive Center (CARC) continues to provide much needed storage space for approximately 40+ years worth of the Circuit Court's oldest civil, domestic and criminal case files. This offsite storage includes microfilm duplicates, steno notes and docket books from as far back as the 1800's. The most recent files reside within the Kent County Courthouse.

The County Clerk remains committed to providing access for the public and attorneys to these records and services through a technology initiative that began with the Register of Deeds and Vital Records office in 2003. The Clerk's Office Courtside currently offers online services to request certified divorce decrees and motion calendars for scheduling pro confesso with referees and motion hearings for all judges.

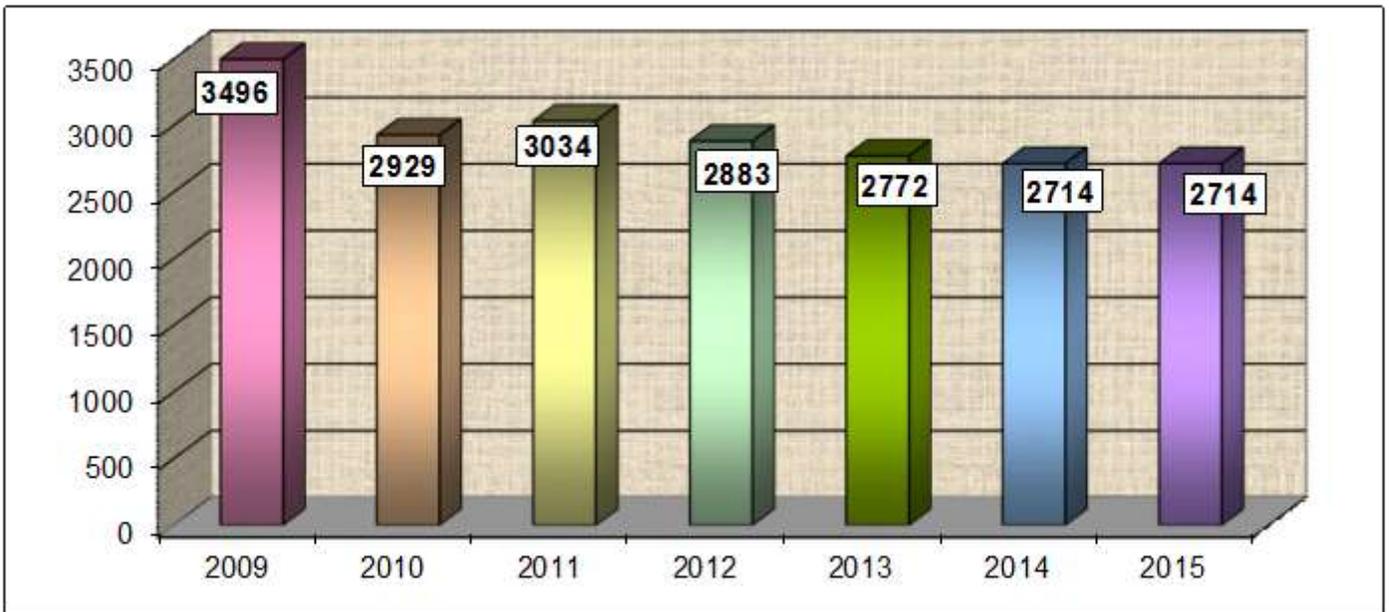
Mary Hollinrake, County Clerk/Register, continues her service and maintains her commitment to improving efficiencies in the Clerk's Office. 2015 represents fifteen years of service to the residents of Kent County.

CIRCUIT COURT PROBATION

Wendy Sadowski, Area Manager
Lynn Kaufman, Program Manager

Kent County Circuit Court Probation is the second largest Probation Office in the State of Michigan. The office is located at 82 Ionia Avenue, Suite 100. Supervising the 2,340 probationers in Kent County are 40 probation agents. In addition to the agents, four supervisors and seven administrative support staff ensure that the needs of the Court are met. Agents are responsible for providing presentence investigations to the Court, supervising probationers in the community which includes referring them to appropriate programming, providing the Court with information regarding the probationer's progress and making certain that the financial obligations to the Court and victims are met by the probationer.

PRESENTENCE REPORTS COMPLETED



The chart shows the number of presentence investigation reports completed each year from 2009 through 2015. The Probation Office has several specialized caseloads and while being supervised, probationers may be assigned to a substance abuse, sex offender, electronic monitoring, SAI, female offender, veteran, mental health, low risk reporting or interstate caseload. Probationers must comply with their conditions of probation and to monitor same, agents have ongoing contact with probationers' family members, employers, teachers, and counselors. Through referrals to a variety of programs such as substance abuse treatment, vocational and educational programs, electronic monitoring, psychological counseling, and community service/work crew, probationers are provided the necessary tools with which to make positive changes in their lives and become responsible, contributing members of the community.



STATE OF MICHIGAN
KENT COUNTY PROBATE COURT

DAVID M. MURKOWSKI
CHIEF JUDGE

SUITE 9500 C
180 OTTAWA AVENUE NW
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49503-2751

To the Citizens of Kent County:

On behalf of the administrators and employees of the Kent County Probate Court, I am proud to submit for your review our Annual Report for 2015. The report contains pertinent information regarding the jurisdiction, responsibilities, performance and achievements of the Probate Court. With this report, we take the opportunity to examine our collective work in the last year and to identify our needs and plan our strategic goals for the next year.

Our successes and accomplishments are rooted in our skilled and dedicated employees who continue to maintain, improve, and deliver quality services to the public in the face of explosive docket growth and persistent limited resources. We will continue to measure performance to improve efficiency, harness technological advances to increase public access, and re-engineer court operations as prudent stewards of our public resources.

Facing dramatic funding and personnel reductions from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and to meet the growing needs of our county's most vulnerable adults, the Kent County Public Guardianship Program was completely overhauled in 2015 and a public-private partnership was forged between the Probate Court, Spectrum Health and Mercy Health St. Mary's. The hospitals generously committed \$300,000 to our program. This collaborative effort also included tremendous work from the Kent County Board of Commissioners and county administration, the Area Agency on Aging, and the local DHHS office. This partnership will ensure the continued delivery of guardianship services to Kent County's most vulnerable population.

We also take this opportunity to welcome Judge Terence J. Ackert to the Kent County Probate Court, who was appointed by the Governor to fill a vacancy on the Kent County Probate Court. Judge Ackert brings a wealth of experience and a west Michigan work ethic to the bench and has been well received by his colleagues and the Bar. Judge Ackert serves as Chief Judge Pro Tempore to the Probate Court and is assigned to the Kent County Circuit Court – Family Division.

Finally, after exhaustive analysis by the State Court Administrative Office and the National Center for State Courts, and enacting legislation by the Michigan Legislature, the Kent County Board of Commissioners overwhelmingly approved the addition of a new Circuit Court judgeship to meet the burgeoning dockets of the Probate and Circuit Court. This elected position will appear on the 2016 ballot with duties commencing for the new judge on January 1, 2017.

As always, I thank you, the citizens of Kent County, for your continued trust and confidence. It remains a privilege and honor to serve you.

Sincerely,

David M. Murkowski
Chief Judge, Kent County Probate Court

PROBATE COURT

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Kent County Probate Court is to provide an accessible and person-centered venue to secure the peaceful and sound resolution of matters, where every individual is treated with dignity and respect.

The Probate Court is a trial court of statutory jurisdiction in Michigan. It has exclusive jurisdiction over matters relating to: the estates of decedents; trusts; guardianships of developmentally disabled persons, legally incapacitated adults, and minors; conservatorships for legally incapacitated adults and minors, protective orders; accounts of other fiduciaries; and petitions for hospitalization of mentally ill persons. The Probate Court also has jurisdiction over a myriad of other types of civil actions, in particular where an estate, trust, fiduciary or ward is a party. By the nature of the matters within its jurisdiction, the Probate Court is primarily concerned with the protection of incapacitated individuals and their assets and the proper transfer of assets at death.

JUDGE DAVID M. MURKOWSKI



was born and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In 1979 he graduated cum laude from Marquette University, where he was awarded the university's Outstanding Student Service Award and the Polanki College Achievement Scholarship. In 1979 Judge Murkowski was also inducted into the National Jesuit Honor Society. He attended Thomas M. Cooley Law School and was an honor roll graduate in 1983. Judge Murkowski served as law clerk to the Michigan House of Representatives Civil Rights Committee and worked as a solo practitioner in Grand Rapids until 1993, when he joined the law firm of Dilley & Dilley. He specialized in criminal defense, juvenile neglect and delinquency and probate law, and served as managing partner of Dilley, Dilley, Murkowski & Goller until 2006 when he was appointed to the Kent County Probate bench to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of the Honorable Janet A. Haynes. In December of 2007, the Michigan Supreme Court appointed Judge Murkowski to serve as the Chief Judge of the Kent County Probate Court commencing January 1, 2008. Judge Murkowski currently serves as the President-Elect of the Michigan Probate Judges Association and as a member of the Judicial Council of the Judicial Section of the State Bar of Michigan. He has previously served as council member of the Probate and Estate Planning Section of the State Bar of Michigan and as a member of the Executive Committee of the Kent County Family and Children's Coordinating Council. Judge Murkowski has lectured for the Michigan Judicial Institute, ICLE's Probate and Estate Planning Institute, the Michigan Probate Judges Association and the Grand Rapids Bar Association. Judge Murkowski is a chapter author of *Michigan Probate Litigation: A Guide to Contested Litigation, 2nd Edition*, a contributor to the *Michigan Probate Benchbook*, Associate Editor of *Inter-Com*, a journal publication of the Michigan Probate Judges Association, and was a contributor to the drafting of the Michigan Trust Code. In 2014, Judge Murkowski was the recipient of the Judicial Contributions in Law and Aging Award by Elder Law of Michigan, selected as a Leader in the Law by Michigan Lawyers Weekly, and was elected as a Fellow of the Michigan State Bar Foundation.

PROBATE COURT

CASELOAD AND CASEFLOW

In 2015 the Kent County Probate Court again experienced an increase in the numbers of new filings, particularly in adult guardianships and mental commitment cases both for Kent and for other counties.

NEW FILINGS	2013	2014	2015
Unsupervised Estates	766	809	821
Supervised Estates	4	4	0
Small Estates	416	408	402
Trusts	66	84	72
Guardianships – Legally Incapacitated Adult	383	388	478
Guardianships - Minor	214	219	189
Guardianships – Developmentally Disabled Person	110	138	149
Conservatorships – Legally Incapacitated Adult	135	134	179
Conservatorships - Minor	51	43	68
Mentally Ill – Petitions for Hospitalization	1836	2013	2184
Mentally Ill – Petitions for Transport for Exam	216	227	255
Mentally Ill Cases for Other Counties	1155	1408	1484
Civil and Other	1358	1410	1566
Total:	6720	7285	7847

The nature of probate cases is they often continue for many years. While administration of most estates of deceased persons is completed within a year, guardianships and conservatorships for minors often continue until the child is 18 years old, and the vast majority of guardianships and conservatorships for adults continue for the lifetime of the protected individual. Thus, even a decline in the number of new filings does not necessarily equate to a commensurate decline in the number of active matters requiring ongoing Court monitoring and supervision.

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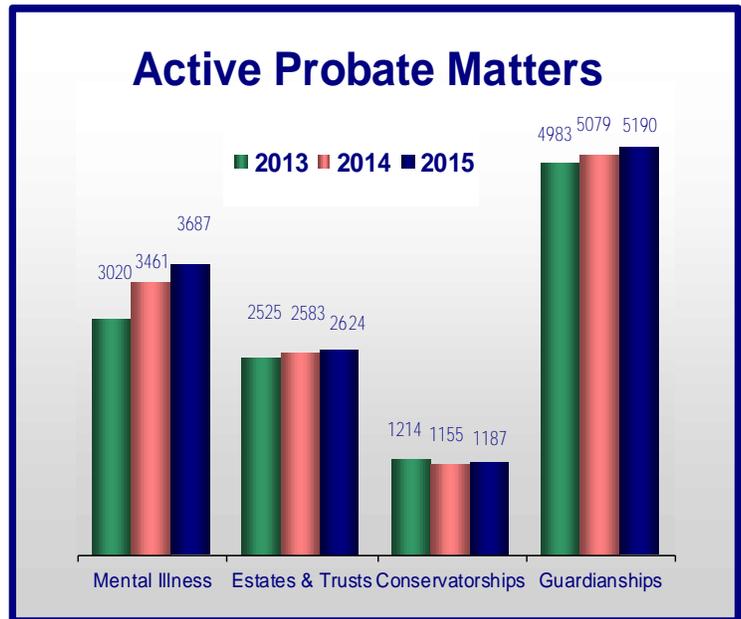
ACTIVE CASES	2013	2014	2015
Estates and Trusts	2525	2583	2624
Guardianships – Legally Incapacitated Adult	2117	2175	2276
Guardianships – Minor	1288	1286	1258
Guardianships – Developmentally Disabled Person	1578	1618	1656
Conservatorships – Legally Incapacitated Adult	807	795	824
Conservatorships - Minor	407	360	363
Mentally Ill	1865	2053	2200
Mentally Ill Cases for Other Counties	1155	1408	1484
Civil and Other	1371	1420	1576
Total:	13,113	13,698	14,261

Cases involving the involuntary hospitalization of mentally ill persons are a significant portion of the docket of the Probate Court. Until 3/4/14, Judge Murkowski and his court recorder, as well as a Kent County assistant prosecutor, traveled twice each week to our three local psychiatric facilities- St. Mary's Pine Rest, Forest View, and St. Mary's Psychiatric Medical Unit (PMU), for hearings on petitions for involuntary hospitalization. Effective 3/4/14, these hearings are being conducted via videoconferencing, thus saving the time and expense of travel. Because Kent County has developed into a regional psychiatric treatment center providing 284 inpatient beds, residents of other counties are frequently hospitalized here and the Kent County Probate Court arranges for and conducts the necessary hearings. This involves a significant

PROBATE COURT

CASELOAD AND CASEFLOW

The State Court Administrator's Office sets guidelines for how long contested probate matters should take to resolve. In 2015 the Kent County Probate Court met or exceeded those state time guidelines for disposition of all contested matters. In particular, 99.3% of all mental illness proceedings were disposed within 14 days (guidelines call for 90% within that time). Those few cases which took more than 14 days usually involved demands for jury trials or independent psychological evaluations by the respondents. Of other contested matters, 100% of all contested guardianship, conservatorship, estate and trust matters were disposed of within the 364 day guidelines (guidelines call for 95% within that time). Further, 100% of all civil matters were disposed within 728 days (guidelines call for 95% within that time).



GUARDIANSHIP PROGRAM

A large portion of the caseload of the Court involves guardianships and conservatorships for legally incapacitated or developmentally disabled adults. In the majority of these cases, a family member or friend is appointed to act as guardian or conservator for the ward. However, in many cases there is no family member or friend who is competent, suitable and willing to serve. In those cases, it is often in the ward's best interest that a professional be appointed. In Kent County we are fortunate to have the Kent County Guardianship Program, developed by the Kent County Department of Human Services and Probate Court to provide guardianship and conservatorship services for adult Kent County residents who have no one else to serve them. For more than 25 years the Program had been operated by DHHS and managed by employees of DHHS. However in recent years state DHHS administration (not local DHHS) has been increasingly unwilling to devote staff time to running the Program, and staff time to manage the Program was cut to 0.5 FTE effective 7/1/15. As of 10/1/15 DHHS permitted its staff to do nothing but manage the payments to guardians. Fortunately, Mercy Health St. Mary's and Spectrum Health, frequent users of the Program for patients at their hospitals, had approached the Probate Court to see if they could assist the Program so as to make professional guardians more readily available. Effective 10/1/15, Kent County took over the Guardianship Program from DHHS, with placement of the Program at the Probate Court, and the two hospitals each agreed to provide funding of \$50,000 per year for 3 years to pay for more guardian fees for indigent cases and also the services of the Guardian Monitor to manage the Program. Where the ward is indigent and has no other means to pay the fee of the guardian, the Program pays a modest monthly fee (currently \$55) for the services of a professional guardian. Funding to pay for the Program and these fees currently comes from 4 sources: Kent County (approximately \$160,000 per year), the Kent County Senior Millage (approximately \$102,000 per year – wards must be over the age of 60 and meet residency and income requirements), the State of Michigan (approximately \$43,000 per year) and Mercy Health St. Mary's and Spectrum Health (approximately \$30,000 per year after payment of \$70,000 for cost of Guardian Monitor). This funding permits the Program to pay for guardians for a maximum of 480 indigent wards for a year. As of the end of January, 2016 there were 35 guardians in the program serving a total of 863 wards. In February, 2016 the Program added 5 new guardians. It is anticipated that the revitalized Program will be able to grow and meet the increasing need for professional guardians for vulnerable adults in our community. We are grateful for the steadfast support of Kent County and all of our community partners in keeping this Program alive and strong.

PROBATE COURT

ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTORY

**KENT COUNTY COURTHOUSE
180 OTTAWA AVE NW, SUITE 2500
GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49503**

Judge

Suite 9500C

Chief Judge David M. Murkowski	- Fax	(616) 632-5074
Secretary/Clerk - Aimee Cory	- Phone	(616) 632-5428
Court Recorder - Holly Momber	- Phone	(616) 632-5428
	- Phone	(616) 632-5424

Probate Register

Suite 4400

Probate Register - Susan B. Flakne	- Fax	(616) 632-5152
	- Phone	(616) 632-5422

Probate Court Clerk

General	- Fax	(616) 632-5430
Probate Manager - Debora Sanchez	- Phone	(616) 632-5440
Erna Ingram	- Phone	(616) 632-5417
Lorah Riemersma	- Phone	(616) 632-5420
Barbara Smearman	- Phone	(616) 632-5418
Rhonda Brown	- Phone	(616) 632-5426
Catherine Waters	- Phone	(616) 632-5421
Sandy Rickert	- Phone	(616) 632-5433
Ashley Zander	- Phone	(616) 632-5423
Maria Nunez	- Phone	(616) 632-5427
	- Phone	(616) 632-5432

Mental Health Division

Karen Noorman	- Fax	(616) 632-5430
	- Phone	(616) 632-5425

Guardianship Specialist

Kalee Redder	- Fax	(616) 632-5430
	- Phone	(616) 632-5416

