

Annual Report

*Sixth Judicial Circuit Court &
Oakland County Probate Court*



2018



SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT

Telephone: (248) 858-1000

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OAKLAND COUNTY PROBATE COURT

Telephone: (248) 858-1000

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Message from the Chief Judges



Hon. Shalina D. Kumar
Chief Judge of the
Circuit Court



Hon. Kathleen A. Ryan
Chief Judge of the
Probate Court

Elected Officials and Citizens of Oakland County:

We are pleased to present the 2018 Annual Report of the Circuit and Probate Courts in Oakland County. This report includes information about our operations so that the court system becomes more convenient and accessible. Included are highlights from 2018 and a description of our noteworthy achievements. We are proud of our accomplishments and productivity and we hope that this report enhances your understanding of how the courts serve the citizens of Oakland County.

As chief judges, we are acutely sensitive to the anxieties that accompany involvement in court proceedings. We will make every effort to simplify access to the court, make information and instruction readily available to help people navigate the court system, and foster an environment that is conducive to helping people come together to resolve disputes in a meaningful and productive way. Please understand that judges are required to apply applicable law equally and fairly, which sometimes results in a verdict that one or both sides feel is unfavorable. It is each judge's unwavering duty to ensure that the result demanded by justice is reached. We ensure that these objectives are accomplished by the application of fair and impartial justice, ensuring that the rights of all citizens are safeguarded.

The commitment of our judges and employees to the high calling that is the administration of justice makes these things possible. Our thanks to them for their excellent work, thoughtful consideration of each person with whom they interact, and continued dedication to the principles of public service. We trust that this commitment will be evident as you read the report that follows.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shalina Kumar".

Shalina D. Kumar
Circuit Court Chief Judge

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen A. Ryan".

Kathleen A. Ryan
Probate Court Chief Judge

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Historical Roster of the Courts

Sixth Judicial Circuit Judges

Sanford M. Green	1848–1852	William R. Beasley	1966–1976	Denise Langford Morris	1992–Present
Joseph Copeland	1852–1858	Farrell E. Roberts	1967–1982	John J. McDonald	1993–2010
Sanford M. Green	1858–1870	Daniel C. Devine	1966–1966	Nanci J. Grant	1997–Present
James S. Dewey	1870–1874	Robert L. Templin	1967–1996	Joan E. Young	1997–2016
Levi B. Taft	1873–1876	William P. Hampton	1970–1976	Wendy L. Potts	1998–2018
Aug C. Baldwin	1876–1880	Richard D. Kuhn	1973–2004	Colleen A. O'Brien	1998–2015
Silas B. Gaskill	1880–1882	John N. O'Brien	1973–1993	Patrick J. Brennan	2001–2004
William Stickney	1882–1888	Robert B. Webster	1973–1982	Rae Lee Chabot	2001–Present
Joseph B. Moore	1888–1896	Steven N. Andrews	1976–2008	James M. Alexander	2001–Present
George W. Smith	1896–1917	Alice L. Gilbert	1978–1992	Michael Warren	2002–Present
Kleber P. Rockwell	1916–1921	Alice L. Gilbert	1995–2002	Daniel P. O'Brien	2003–Present
Frank L. Covert	1919–1933	Francis X. O'Brien	1977–1997	Martha D. Anderson	2003–Present
Glenn C. Gillespie	1922–1934	Hilda R. Gage	1978–1996	Mark A. Goldsmith	2004–2010
Frank L. Doty	1927–1960	Bernard L. Kaufman	1979–1979	Cheryl A. Matthews	2005–Present
Goodloe H. Rogers	1935–1935	Gene Schnelz	1979–2007	Leo Bowman	2007–Present
George B. Hartrick	1935–1958	George LaPlata	1979–1985	Shalina D. Kumar	2007–Present
H. Russel Holland	1935–1963	Robert C. Anderson	1981–1998	Lisa Gorcyca	2009–Present
Clark J. Adams	1956–1973	David F. Breck	1981–2000	Mary Ellen Brennan	2009–Present
William J. Beer	1958–1980	Fred M. Mester	1982–2008	Phyllis C. McMillen	2010–Present
Theodore Hughes	1959–1959	Norman L. Lippitt	1985–1989	Karen McDonald	2013–Present
Stanton G. Dondero	1959–1965	Jessica R. Cooper	1987–2000	Lisa Langton	2015–Present
Frederick C. Ziem	1959–1986	Edward Sosnick	1989–2012	Hala Jarbou	2015–Present
Arthur E. Moore	1963–1976	Barry L. Howard	1989–2001	Jeffery S. Matis	2015–Present
Philip Pratt	1963–1970	Deborah G. Tyner	1991–2006	Victoria A. Valentine	2017–Present
James S. Thorburn	1963–1988	Rudy J. Nichols	1991–2015		

Oakland County Probate Judges

Dr. William Thompson	1821–1823	Junius Ten Eyck	1872–1873	Eugene A. Moore	1967–2010
Nathaniel Millerd	1823–1826	Joseph C. Powell	1873–1876	John J. O'Brien	1975–1988
Smith Weeks	1826–1827	James A. Jacokes	1877–1880	Barry M. Grant	1977–2008
Gideon O. Whittemore	1827–1828	Joseph C. Powell	1881–1884	Sandra G. Silver	1988–2000
Williams F. Mosely	1828	Thomas L. Patterson	1885–1900	Joan E. Young	1989–1997
Ogden Clarke	1828–1832	Joseph S. Stockwell	1901–1909	Wendy L. Potts	1997–1997
Stephen Reeves	1832–1844	Kleber P. Rockwell	1909–1917	Linda S. Hallmark	1998–Present
M. LaMont Bagg	1845–1848	Ross Stockwell	1917–1928	Elizabeth Pezzetti	2001–2016
Michael E. Crofoot	1849–1856	Dan A. McGaffey	1928–1937	Daniel A. O'Brien	2009–Present
Oscar F. North	1857–1861	James H. Lynch	1937–1938	Kathleen A. Ryan	2011–Present
Harry C. Andrews	1861–1863	Arthur E. Moore	1938–1963	Jennifer Callaghan	2017–Present
Zephaniah B. Knight	1863–1868	Donald E. Adams	1960–1977		
Alfred Crawford	1869–1872	Norman R. Barnard	1963–1988		

Judges of the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court



Circuit Court Judges

Front row (left to right): Judges Michael Warren, Rae Lee Chabot, Nanci Grant, Denise Langford Morris, Wendy Potts, and James M. Alexander

Middle row: Judges Phyllis C. McMillen (Presiding Judge of the Civil/Criminal Division), Lisa Langton, Karen McDonald, Victoria A. Valentine, Martha D. Anderson (Chief Judge Pro Tem of the Circuit Court), Hala Jarbou, and Cheryl A. Matthews

Back row: Judges Daniel Patrick O'Brien, Mary Ellen Brennan, Leo Bowman, Lisa Gorcyca, Jeffery S. Matis (Presiding Judge of the Family Division), and Shalina D. Kumar (Chief Judge of the Circuit Court)

Judges of the Oakland County Probate Court



Probate Court Judges

Front row (left to right): Judges Linda S. Hallmark (Chief Judge Pro Tem of the Probate Court) and Kathleen Ryan (Chief Judge of the Probate Court)

Back row: Judges Daniel A. O'Brien and Jennifer Callaghan

Judicial Retirement



Hon. Wendy Potts
Circuit Court Judge

At the conclusion of 2018, Judge Wendy Potts retired from the Circuit Court bench after more than 21 years of service with Oakland County. Judge Potts, a graduate of the University of Michigan and the Wayne State University Law School, began her law career as a law clerk for a judge on the Michigan Court of Appeals. She went into private practice in 1980 and eventually joined the firm of Clark Hill PLC. Judge Potts also served as a magistrate for the 48th District Court in Bloomfield Township for more than ten years.

Judge Potts' service as a jurist began with her appointment to the Probate Court in March 1997. Nine months later she was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Circuit Court bench in the General Jurisdiction Division, handling civil and criminal matters. She subsequently was elected to four terms. In 2004, Judge Potts was selected to serve as chief judge and did so for six years. In 2013, she was appointed by the Michigan Supreme Court to preside over the Circuit Court's new Business Court docket, alongside her colleague Judge Alexander, in addition to handling criminal cases.

Under Judge Potts' leadership, several technology initiatives paved the way for enhanced access, openness, and operational efficiencies. One such initiative was the launch of Court Explorer in November 2006. E-filing was initiated during Judge Potts' tenure as chief judge, a program which proved so successful that the State Court Administrative Office eventually procured a statewide e-filing system that allows attorneys and parties to file case documents in any trial court in Michigan. Many other technology projects were launched or expanded during Judge Potts' tenure as chief judge, including Judge On-Line and video conferencing, which allows for "virtual" appearances in court proceedings.

Other significant achievements during Judge Potts' tenure as chief judge include the expansion and funding of the drug treatment courts as well as effectuating an amendment to the Jail Overcrowding State of Emergency Act that virtually stopped jail overcrowding emergencies overnight. Since 2007 when the amendment took effect, Oakland County has not experienced a single jail overcrowding emergency.

We honor Judge Potts for her outstanding service as a judge and her resolute leadership as a chief judge and wish her a happy and healthy retirement.

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Circuit Court Administration

Circuit Court Administration



Kevin Oeffner
Circuit Court
Administrator



David Bilson
Deputy Court
Administrator

Headed by Circuit Court Administrator Kevin Oeffner and Deputy Court Administrator David Bilson, Circuit Court Administration is the office that keeps all the plates spinning. The Circuit Court Administrator serves as the chief executive officer for the Circuit Court; oversees the operations of the Friend of the Court, the Criminal Assignment System, and the Jury Office; and acts as liaison to local and state government offices and other courts.

Each year brings new challenges to providing efficient court services. The following are a few highlights of Court Administration during 2018:

NEW CHIEF JUDGE

2018 brought a change in judicial leadership as Judge Shalina Kumar was appointed by the Michigan Supreme Court to the role of chief judge of the Sixth Circuit Court. She succeeded Judge Nanci Grant who served as chief judge for the previous eight years. To round out her leadership team, Judge Kumar selected Judge Martha Anderson as Chief Circuit Judge Pro Tem, Judge Phyllis McMillen as Presiding Judge of the Civil/Criminal Division, and Judge Jeffery Matis as Presiding Judge of the Family Division. As chief judge, Judge Kumar serves as the presiding officer and the director of the administration of the Circuit Court while continuing to maintain a full docket and preside over the Adult Treatment Court.

CHANGE IN BUSINESS COURT

Judge Martha Anderson was appointed by the Michigan Supreme Court to preside over one of the two Business Court dockets. Judge James Alexander presides over the other docket. Michigan law requires that all circuit courts with three or more judges have a Business Court dedicated to hearing business disputes as defined by the governing statute. Though appointed in 2018, Judge Anderson's assignment as a Business Court judge is effective January 1, 2019. Judge Anderson is a veteran judge of the court, having served since January 1, 2003. In addition to business court disputes, Judge Anderson will continue to preside over her criminal docket. The Business Court was initiated in June of 2013. About 1,000 Business Court cases are filed in this Circuit Court annually.

NEW JUDGES

With the retirement of Judge Wendy Potts and the creation of a new Circuit Court judgeship, in November 2018 Oakland County voters elected two new Circuit Court judges whose service on the bench begins on January 1, 2019. Elected to the bench were Judge Julie McDonald and Judge Jacob Cunningham. Judge McDonald will fill a new judgeship that the Circuit Court bench agreed to assign to a Family Division docket in light of new workload demands imposed by statutes and court rules. Judge Cunningham was elected to the seat formerly held by Judge Wendy Potts. Both of our newest judges will preside over Family Division dockets consisting of juvenile delinquency; child protective proceedings; divorce actions including custody, parenting time and child support; adoptions; personal protection orders; and other family-related matters.

HIGHEST PERFORMING CRIMINAL DOCKET

The National Center for State Courts conducted a national study of criminal cases to determine the time needed to dispose of those cases. Of particular interest to the National Center was an evaluation of the factors contributing to the time to dispose of criminal cases. Our Circuit Court was shown to have the shortest time to disposition of the nearly 60 courts whose criminal dockets were evaluated. Representatives of the National Center visited our court to interview judges, defense attorneys, jail administrative staff, and others involved in our criminal justice system to learn of the practices associated with the processing of criminal cases and to evaluate those factors. The National Center's objective was to examine how high-performing courts manage their criminal dockets and to develop a manual of best practices that other courts can use to improve their performance.

CLERK SUPPORT

Under the direction of Karen Wentz, Supervisor Clerk Support, and Megan Koss, Court Clerk Coordinator, Clerk Support provides training for new clerks and continuing training for current clerks. By working with all the judicial chambers, Clerk Support aims to continually develop protocols and procedures that support the judicial clerks and judges while also ensuring that staffing needs in chambers are met. Clerk Support handles the Float Clerk initiative which aims to provide additional training and resources for substitute clerks in order to provide improved coverage in both the Circuit and Probate Courts.

In August, Brett Dery, former Supervisor Clerk Support, transferred to the 52-2 District Court to take the position of District Court Administrator.



Judicial Clerks

As part of the ongoing training of judicial clerks, the annual clerks' meeting was held to review updated policies and procedures and to stay current on changes in the law and enhancements in court technology.



Circuit Court

Civil / Criminal Division

Circuit Court—*Civil / Criminal Division*



Hon. Phyllis C. McMillen
Presiding Judge of the
Civil/Criminal Division



Pamela Monville
Manager-Civil/Criminal
Division/Judicial Assistant

Judge Phyllis C. McMillen presides over the Civil/Criminal Division and assists Chief Judge Shalina Kumar in providing leadership goals and directives for matters affecting the civil/criminal bench.

The Civil/Criminal Division is composed of 13 judges who hear civil cases with alleged damages over \$25,000, criminal cases involving felonies or high misdemeanors, and appeals from the 14 district courts, as well as judicial oversight and administrative support for four specialty courts within the Civil/Criminal Division.

This division includes the Administrative Support Unit, which assists the judges in this division as well as 60 judicial staff and administrative support staff; the Case Management Office, which schedules and tracks cases through disposition and coordinates Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR); and the Jury Office, which is responsible for jury operations and obtaining jurors for the courts. This division also assists three specialty courts: Business Court, Adult Treatment Court, and Combat Veterans Treatment Court.

Pamela Monville, manager of the division, coordinates administrative support and information to assist in implementing goals identified by the civil/criminal bench, to update staff on changes in the laws promulgated by the governor and legislature, and to follow procedures established by the State Court Administrative Office. The Civil/Criminal Division Manager also provides administrative support regarding access to court records and transcripts, foreign language interpreters, ADA accommodations, court reimbursement issues, and case evaluation show cause hearings.

RESENTENCING OF JUVENILE LIFERS—UPDATE

On June 20, 2018, the Michigan Supreme Court ruled that Michigan statute MCL 769.25 did not violate the sixth amendment and, therefore, a judge, not the jury, decides whether to impose a sentence of life without parole upon a juvenile offender. Subsequent to this ruling, the Circuit Court judges began lifting stays that were set in 2016 and 2017. As of December 20, 2018, five juvenile cases had been resentenced, 11 had been set for re-sentencing hearings, and nine had status conferences pending. In the five cases that were resentenced, none of the judges imposed life without the possibility of parole.

CASE EVALUATION PROCESSES EXAMINED

With the steady increase in automobile no-fault (NF) case filings, the Case Management Office segregated the NF cases from other general negligence case types competing for case evaluation time slots. When evaluating options, the Case Management Office discovered that product liability (NP) cases were rarely filed in Circuit Court (about 2 cases per year). Moreover the NP cases did not typically advance to the case evaluation process prior to disposition. As a result, the NF cases were moved to the NP slots. In September of 2018, the bench approved a process by which the Case Management Office would monitor NP case initiations. The assigned judge has the discretion, subject to party objections, to exempt the NP case from case evaluation entirely and place it into private facilitation. In 2018, one NP case was filed and subsequently removed from the case evaluation process entirely.

PROBLEM SOLVING COURTS UNDERGO CERTIFICATION PROCESS

In 2018, the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) mandated “certification” for all Michigan problem solving courts. The certification process was staggered in four-year cycles. The Oakland County Circuit Court’s Adult Treatment Court and Combat Veteran Treatment Court were slated for the first cycle. These courts were “provisionally” certified for the 2018-2019 grant fund period; however, in order to receive grant funds or otherwise be classified as a “problem solving court” in 2019 and beyond, the SCAO required the courts apply for certification in 2018. Both problem solving courts have undergone programmatic changes to meet certification requirements and will undergo onsite evaluations in 2019.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

The Administrative Support Unit is comprised of two judicial staff attorneys (one full time and one part time) who assist the 13 Civil/Criminal Division judges with legal and administrative matters. The Administrative Support judicial staff attorneys provide assistance to chambers’ staff attorneys in drafting proposed opinions on complex appeals and criminal post-conviction motions. In addition, support staff provide assistance to chambers when a staff attorney is out on extended leave.

CASE MANAGEMENT OFFICE

Under the leadership of Gwynne Starkey and supervised by Michelle Kase, the Case Management Office is the hub for caseflow. Eleven specialized support staff, divided between the Civil Case Support area and the Criminal Case Support area, administer the daily case operations for civil, criminal, and probate dockets, including specialized programs such as case evaluation and Judge On-Line.

The Civil Case Support area maintains statistics and is responsible for assigning, reassigning, and consolidating cases; processing Judge On-Line requests; managing praecipes; preparing and distributing scheduling orders; logging and directing mail; and adjusting docket entries. The Criminal Case Support area is responsible for assigning criminal cases, is involved with appointing trial counsel, and compiles information used for pre-sentence investigations. Staff also track and maintain criminal assignment data and monitor the daily inmate population.



Case Management Office

*Front row (left to right): Deb Brown, Lori Hale, Cindy Morales, and Milly James
Back row: Denise Hatter, Sue Bennington, Jill Adkins, Gwynne Starkey, Ryan Horvath, Angelina Sharon, and Shelly Hollingsworth
Not pictured: Porki Mellado, and Michelle Kase*

CASE MANAGEMENT OFFICE HIGHLIGHTS—

- Bindovers processed from district courts—4,090
- Appointed appellate counsel for criminal defendants—251 cases
- Preliminary background information prepared for pre-sentence investigation reports—3,577 reports
- Cases completed through the case evaluation process—2,115
- Acceptance rate for case evaluation—17% (364 cases)
- New no-fault cases started—2,545 (200% increase over 2017)
- Requests for individuals to participate in hearings through Judge-On-Line program—573
- Petitions processed at the trial level for court-appointed attorneys—3,717

JURY OFFICE

The Jury Office is overseen by Deborah Fahr, Jury Office Supervisor, and assisted by Michelle Glover, Jury Office Leader. The Jury Office tracks juror utilization statistics and ensures a sufficient number of jurors are available for trials while imposing the least hardship on those summoned for jury service. All persons not legally excused from jury service, regardless of status or occupation, are expected to serve when summoned. More information about jury service can be found at: <https://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/civil-criminal/Pages/jury-service.aspx>

With the implementation of a new juror software system in October 2017, the Jury Office has become more automated, and potential jurors now have more communication options with which to connect with the Jury

NEW FILINGS AND REOPENED CASES

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>
Criminal	4,422	4,571	4,299
Civil	6,062	6,357	8,095
Appeals	402	378	397

DISPOSITION OF CASES

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>
Criminal	4,514	4,547	4,149
Civil	6,199	5,958	6,777
Appeals	396	384	384



JURY OFFICE (continued)

Office. Jurors may complete their questionnaires online, allowing court staff to expedite the check-in process. With online access, jurors have the ability to update their personal information, check their juror status, immediately contact Jury Office staff, reprint a misplaced juror questionnaire or print attendance letters as proof of their jury service. Jurors who provide their email address or sign up for text alerts receive electronic notification and important reminders regarding their juror service. With these immediate notification services, the Jury Office has experienced a reduction in the number of jurors who fail to appear.

An increase in the per diems for jury service was approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor effective April 1, 2018. Per diems for jury service increased as follows:

Half day, first day—\$15 (increase of \$2.50)

Full day, first day—\$30 (increase of \$5.00)

Half day, subsequent day—\$22.50 (increase of \$2.50)


Full day, subsequent day—\$45 (increase of \$5.00)

Round trip mileage increased from \$0.10 per mile to \$0.20 per mile

JURY OFFICE HIGHLIGHTS—

- Jurors summoned—34,490
- Jurors required to report for service—7,598
- Jurors selected to sit on a case—1,728
- Number of jury trials—150
- Average jury service for civil trials—3.71 days
- Average jury service for criminal trials—2.57 days
- Average cost per jury trial—\$2,437.13
- Total paid to jurors, including updated juror fees and mileage—\$365,570

JURY TRIALS			
	2016	2017	2018
Impaneled	1,991	1,835	1,728
Reported	9,867	9,135	7,598
Summoned	43,728	39,744	34,490



BUSINESS COURT

Business Courts were established by the Michigan Legislature in 2013 (MCL 600.8031 *et seq.*). The Michigan Supreme Court has appointed Judges Martha Anderson and James Alexander to serve on the Oakland County Business Court. Judge Anderson was appointed to the Business Court by the Michigan Supreme Court to replace Judge Wendy Potts who retired in December 2018. The statutory purpose of the Business Court is to establish best practices for the resolution of business disputes; improve efficiency; utilize the latest technology in managing Business Court cases; and enhance the accuracy, consistency, and predictability of decisions in business and commercial cases. The Oakland County Business Court is the busiest Business Court in Michigan and one of the busiest in the United States.

BUSINESS COURT HIGHLIGHTS—

- New Business Court filings—931
- Business Court cases disposed—958

ADULT TREATMENT COURT

The Adult Treatment Court (ATC) was established in 2001 to provide both intensive community and judicial supervision to defendants who suffer from serious substance abuse disorders.

The ATC continued with significant changes in 2018. To better serve the ATC population, the program was expanded to include three jurists. Judge Kumar continues to be the presiding judge over the female participants, and in June of 2018, Judge Phyllis McMillen joined the team presiding over the male participants who have co-occurring disorders. In October of 2018, after serving for over two years, Judge Hala Jarbou passed the baton to Judge Jeffery Matis. Judge Matis presides over the male participants who have been diagnosed solely with a substance use disorder.

In October of 2018, the program redesigned its phase structure based on a model provided by the National Drug Court Institute. The new phase structure places an importance on the achievement of proximal goals, incorporating more opportunity for success.



Adult Treatment Court Graduation

In October, the Adult Treatment Court held its 56th graduation ceremony in the Board of Commissioners Auditorium with a graduating class of 19. Michigan Supreme Court Justice Elizabeth Clement (front row center) was on hand to congratulate the graduates along with (front row, starting third from right) ATC Presiding Judges Hala Jarbou, Phyllis McMillen, and Chief Judge Shalina Kumar

ADULT TREATMENT COURT HIGHLIGHTS—

- Participants admitted to program since inception—791
- Graduates of the program—310
- Graduates employed full time at discharge—97%
- Average number of days to complete program—548 days or 18 months
- Male participants in the program—50
- Female participants in the program—21
- Individuals with co-occurring disorders and in the mental health track of the program—39
- Percentage of graduates who have improved their education level while in the program—12%

COMBAT VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

The Combat Veterans Treatment Court (CVTC) at Oakland Circuit is the state's only Combat Veterans Treatment Court and is operating in its fifth year. Judge Nanci Grant presides over this specialty court. The CVTC was created as a way to help combat veterans who literally placed themselves in harm's way to protect our freedoms.

The goal of the court is to reach Oakland County combat veterans who have been charged with offenses related to traumatic experiences suffered in combat, conflict, search and rescue operations, or recovery missions while serving our country. This program does not seek to give participants special treatment, but focuses on the unique issues faced by our veterans.

COMBAT VETERANS TREATMENT COURT HIGHLIGHTS—

- Combat Veterans Treatment Court participants—10
- Veterans who have successfully completed the program since its inception —11
- Defendants under consideration for admission into the program—1



Combat Veterans Treatment Court Graduation

Graduation participants: (left to right) Garth Wooten, Oakland County Veteran's Services; Heather Wayne, Michigan Department of Corrections; Denice Reeves-Cook, Michigan Department of Corrections; Xayvier Swenson, veteran and graduation speaker; Honorable Nanci Grant, Presiding Judge, Combat Veterans Treatment Court; Clyde Willis, veteran and Program Mentor; Honorable Bridget McCormack, Chief Justice, Michigan Supreme Court; and Marseille Allen, Michigan Department of Corrections



Circuit Court

Family Division

Circuit Court—*Family Division*



Hon. Jeffery S. Matis
Presiding Judge of the
Family Division



Suzanne Hollyer
Friend of the Court

Judge Jeffery S. Matis, Presiding Judge of the Family Division, is responsible for managing this division. Judge Matis succeeds Judge Lisa Gorcyca who served as Presiding Judge from 2014 through 2017. The Family Division is composed of six Circuit Court judges who hear domestic relations cases involving divorce, child support, and paternity matters. Judges in this division also finalize adoptions; handle name changes and juvenile guardianships; preside over hearings for juvenile offenses, delinquencies, and child abuse and neglect cases; and oversee personal protection orders.

FRIEND OF THE COURT

Administered by Friend of the Court Suzanne Hollyer, this office is responsible for investigating and enforcing issues involving custody, support, and parenting time on the court's domestic relations caseload. The Family Division judges are assisted by 19 Friend of the Court referees who hold hearings to enforce and modify Family Division orders regarding support, custody, and parenting time and hold early intervention conferences to help divorcing clients understand the process. Also assisting the Family Division judges are 18 family counselors who provide the SMILE (Start Making It Livable for Everyone) program to help parents understand the impact of divorce on their children. More information about the FOC can be found at: <https://www.oakgov.com/courts/foc/Pages/default.aspx>

FREE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE THROUGH FOC

Friend of the Court offers a free service to parents who need a psychological assessment to assist the court in resolving domestic relations disputes but cannot afford to pay for this type of intervention. In 2018, Dr. Linda Green conducted 90 psychological assessments which assisted the Family Division judges in resolving custody and parenting time disputes. Parents who would typically have to pay several thousands of dollars for this service were able to be tested at no cost.

Another program available at no cost to parents with domestic relations cases is COPE (Co-Parenting Effectively). This is a free five-hour post-judgment, skills-based class for co-parents who are struggling to work together in parenting their children from separate households. Parents attend separate sessions where they explore tools that will assist in coping with the stress and frustration associated with co-parenting with someone they see as difficult or uncooperative. Parents also learn communication strategies to reduce conflict. In 2018, 134 parents attended the COPE program.



Friend of the Court Referees

Front row (left to right): Rebecca Ellis, Alisa Martin, Sahera Housey, Evanne Dietz, and Libby Blanchard

Back row: Susan Thorman, Geoffrey Wojcikiewicz, Kate Weaver, Ryan O'Neil, Tyler Martinez, Ilyssa Cimmino, Mark Sherbow, Kenneth Tolbert, Traci Rink, and Camille Dennis

Not pictured: Kathryn Mayer, Rebecca Decoster, Chris Harrington, and Lorie Savin

DOMESTIC RELATIONS NEW CASE FILING ACTIVITY

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>
Without Children	2,404	2,267	2,220
With Children	2,060	1,922	1,909
Paternity	688	584	516
Interstate	49	60	45
Support	1,199	943	741
Other	336	301	315



Service Awards

The Referees Association of Michigan recognized two Friend of the Court referees. Sahera Housey (right) received the Past President Award for her commitment to furthering RAM's mission and her dedication to the practice of family law. Kate Weaver (left) received the Presidential Award for her continued commitment and dedication as Co-Chair of the Conference Committee.

FRIEND OF THE COURT HIGHLIGHTS—

- Completed investigations and recommendations regarding custody, parenting time, change of domicile or residence, and child support—4,891
- Hearings held by FOC referees to enforce custody, parenting time, and support—28,838
- Number of parents who received assistance in resolving custody or parenting time disputes—5,189
- Number of parents who attended the COPE program—134

JUDICIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Judicial Support Services is led by Scott Hamilton, Manager of Judicial Support/Judicial Assistant and lead legal advisor for the Family Division. This area consists of the Juvenile Court referees, Clinical Services, and Juvenile Support Services, which includes the Juvenile Intake Unit, Juvenile Court Legal Processing Unit, Personal Protection Order Office, and Adoption Unit.

Juvenile Court Referees—

Referee Karla Mallett oversees the eight Juvenile Court referees who assist the Family Division judges by conducting hearings and making recommendations following the hearings. Referees act as the gatekeeper to Juvenile Court by evaluating each complaint or petition filed and then making the decision whether to grant or deny authorization, divert the matter, or use informal resolution methods.

With the use of iPads™, Juvenile Court referees represent the court 24/7, 365 days a year, and are able to view petitions, record testimony, and complete and sign court orders. Referees can immediately act on requests for detention of juveniles and placement of children who are at substantial risk of harm.

In August of 2018, the court lost a dear friend and loyal employee, Martin Alvin. Marty began his career with the court as a Referee III in 1990 and moved to Senior Juvenile Referee in 1994. He later became a Referee Supervisor until he stepped down from that position in 2017 and returned to his former position as Juvenile Referee. He was also a referee with the Juvenile Drug Court from its inception in 2001. Marty was known for his tireless dedication to the welfare of children and their families and his infectious sense of humor. He will be truly missed by his colleagues and his friends at the court.

The courts also said goodbye to two respected and long-serving Juvenile Referees: Joseph Racey, who had 38 years of service with the county, 28 years as a Juvenile Referee, and Twila Leigh, who had 28 years of service with the county, 24 years with the court.

Clinical Services Unit—

The Clinical Services Unit, also known as the Psychological Clinic, operates under the direction of Melissa Sulfaro-Rodriguez, Psy.D., LP. This unit assists the judges in making informed decisions by providing forensic evaluations of children and families who are involved with the court. In 2018, the Clinical Services Unit received 422 referrals for abuse/neglect and delinquency cases. Of those, 22 were for competency and criminal responsibility evaluations, as compared to five in 2017. The unit also received 80 subpoenas requiring testimony from clinicians.



Scott Hamilton
*Manager—Judicial
Support Services/
Judicial Assistant*



Martin Alvin

JUVENILE SUPPORT SERVICES

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

Juvenile Intake Unit—

Jerri Decker, Juvenile Intake Supervisor, oversees support staff who process all incoming requests for action, perform record checks to identify prior court involvement, and forward documents to the Prosecutor's Office. This unit also schedules preliminary hearings, diversion conferences, traffic hearings, and other matters for the four referees assigned to Juvenile Intake.



Juvenile Intake Unit

*Left to Right: Sarah Myers, Kristy Bills, Maria Ortiz, Jerri Decker,
Kelly Hill, Nicole Martin, and Meggan Rogers
Not pictured: Jodi Richmond and Kelly Ryan*

Juvenile Court Legal Processing Unit—

The Juvenile Court Legal Processing Unit operates under the direction of Supervisor Carmen Janik. The support staff, which includes deputy registers, order clerks, typists, and file room assistants, are responsible for preparing files for hearings as well as creating, maintaining, and updating the physical and electronic records for each case. They also oversee the court schedule, confidential juvenile files, transcripts, and exhibits. This unit assists the public and parties in cases before the Juvenile Court. They prepare court orders for all hearings heard by referees and distribute court orders after they have been processed by the County Clerk's Office.

Nicole Rude, Attorney Appointment Specialist, maintains a data base of attorneys qualified by education and experience to represent indigent parties who request a court-appointed attorney. In 2018, there were 2,497 requests for court-appointed attorneys, and 4,700 contacts were made to facilitate these appointments.

Personal Protection Order Office—

This office assists petitioners in completing the application process for personal protection orders. Melissa Hoppe, Personal Protection Order Liaison, provides legal expertise in the enforcement of personal protection orders and works with Pre-Trial Services, a unit of the Oakland County Community Corrections Division, in developing bond recommendations for incarcerated respondents. Ms. Hoppe and a paralegal also work with petitioners who have requested personal protection order violation show cause hearings.

Adoption Services Unit—

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

The Adoption Services Unit processes adoption petitions for direct placement, agency, adult, stepparent, and relative adoptions. It also accepts petitions regarding post-adoption matters, including confidential intermediary services. In addition, two permanency coordinators handle a specialized Permanency Docket and monitor the progress toward adoption permanency for foster children. The coordinators also monitor both foster care and adoption caseworker performance to eliminate barriers to a child's adoption.

ADOPTION SERVICES UNIT HIGHLIGHTS-

- Adoptions finalized in 2018—297
- Hosted the 16th Annual Adoption Day Celebration, highlighting the adoption of eight children with five families
- Since the inception of the Annual Adoption Day Celebration in 2003, over 200 children from Oakland County have had their adoptions finalized with 140 families on this special day



***Adoption Services Unit with Judge Jeffery Matis,
Presiding Judge of the Family Division***

*Front row (left to right): Erin O'Brien, Becky Young, Brenda Kelly,
Annette Liike, and Danielle Chiappelli*

*Back Row: Gabrielle Osooli, Judge Jeffery Matis, Melissa McIntosh, and Lisa Westphal
Not pictured: Laura Roman-Christman and Bethany Brooks*



16th Annual Adoption Day Celebration

Judge Mary Ellen Brennan participated in the annual Adoption Day Celebration where eight children and five families celebrated their forever families.

JUDICIAL SUPPORT NEW FILING ACTIVITY

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>
Juvenile/Adoptions			
Delinquency	1,614	1,501	1,316
Child Protective Proceedings	431	332	275
Juvenile Traffic Tickets	47	49	24
Adoption Petitions	291	320	311
Subtotal	2,383	2,202	1,926
Personal Protection Orders			
Domestic	1,558	1,561	1,515
Non-Domestic	754	710	729
Juvenile	36	38	36
Subtotal	2,348	2,309	2,280
Miscellaneous Family			
Name Change	504	509	559
Other	30	24	29
Subtotal	534	533	618
Total New Filings	5,265	5,044	4,824



COURT SERVICES

Court Services encompasses Casework Services, Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court, and Youth Assistance. Tina Lathers is the Chief of Casework Services and also oversees the Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court. Tina succeeds Bill Hamilton who retired in March 2018 after a career of 35 years with Oakland County.

Three employees were promoted to casework supervisors due to retirements. Jerry Seawright, Melissa Reid, and Stacey Doria supervise the Intensive Casework Unit and the Standard Casework Unit. They join Jacqueline Howes-Evanson who supervises the Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court.

Mary Schusterbauer is the Chief of Youth Assistance and oversees the professional staff in the 26 field offices countywide.



Bill Hamilton's Farewell Party

Bill Hamilton, Chief of Casework Services, retired in early 2018 after 35 years with Oakland County. He is surrounded by many of his staff who stopped by to wish him well and congratulate him on his well-deserved retirement.

Casework Services—

Casework Services is responsible for juvenile probation, including standard and intensive probation with community-based and residential treatment services. It also handles delinquency cases authorized for the court by the Intake Department and assists cases through the adjudication process when necessary. Upon adjudication, the Casework Unit is responsible for making recommendations regarding disposition. During post-disposition, it assists with implementing court orders, including monitoring of probation, restitution, community service, parent education, and counseling.

Twenty-eight juvenile probation officers within this unit service approximately 600 cases at any given time. Casework staff provides exemplary service to the children and families in their care. In 2018, the Casework Unit began processing Victim's Rights information to members of the community—a task previously handled by the Juvenile Intake Department.

Court Services lost two highly regarded and experienced supervisory employees due to retirements, Robert Proudfoot and Robert Jueckstock, whose combined years of service and knowledge totaled 77 years.

CASEWORK SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS-

- New cases opened in 2018—690
- Files closed in 2018—695
- Three new Youth and Family Casework Supervisors were promoted during 2018
- One Youth and Family Caseworker was hired and trained in 2018
- Casework Services continued to expand collaboration with community partners, including Children's Village, Crossroads for Youth, Oakland Schools, and Oakland Community Health Network, in order to improve service delivery to those youth who come before the court for delinquent behavior and their family members



New Casework Supervisors

Tina Lathers, (second from right), Chief of Casework Services, welcomed three new Casework Supervisors in 2018 (left to right) Melissa Reid, Stacey Doria, and Jerry Seawright.

Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court—

Judge Mary Ellen Brennan continues to preside over the Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court which has been in existence since 2001. The Juvenile Drug Court (JDC) mission is to promote public safety and reduce juvenile drug crime rates by helping substance abusing youthful offenders and their families achieve drug-free lifestyles and healthy family relationships. Jacqueline Howes-Evanson supervises this program.

In 2018, in partnership with the National Center of State Courts and the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO), the JDC incorporated the new Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Guidelines into the JDC program. Some of these updates include administering a standard risk/needs assessment called the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) on all potential JDC candidates. Only youth who score moderate to high risk (for reoffending) are eligible for the program. Further, the team developed a grid of incentives and sanctions and how to individualize these according to the participant's phase and program goals. The team also updated the eligibility criteria and now sit in on casework area staff meetings to assist in identifying potential participants.

The Juvenile Drug Court also experienced a large void with the passing of Juvenile Court Referee Marty Alvin. He was involved with the JDC from its inception in 2001 and was part of the planning and implementation committee in 2000. Marty was the JDC Referee and would substitute when the presiding judge was unavailable. He completed all dispositional hearings that would be the beginning of the families' journeys into the drug court system. So many of them thanked him at graduation ceremonies for the hope and encouragement he gave to them through his kind and wise words. He was an instrumental part of the program and is greatly missed by the team and families.

FAMILY-FOCUSED JUVENILE DRUG COURT HIGHLIGHTS-

- Graduation rate as of 2018—48%
- Number of sobriety days averaged by JDC graduates at the time of their commencement—226
- Percentage of graduates who improved their level of education while in the program—99%
- Percentage of participants who improved their employment status during the program—92%
- Celebrated 51 graduations through end of 2018
- Since inception of program, number of graduates—160



50th Juvenile Drug Court Graduation

Juvenile Drug Court Presiding Judge Mary Ellen Brennan and Juvenile Referee Lisa Harris listen to the graduation speech of the 160th graduate from the program in March.

Youth Assistance —

Youth Assistance is the prevention arm of the court's continuum of services and uses a two-pronged approach to strengthen youth and families. Professional staff in 26 field offices countywide provide family-focused casework to at-risk youth referred by police departments, schools, and the Intake Department of the Juvenile Court. Volunteer boards of directors in each community identify needs, raise funds, and plan and implement primary prevention programs. Youth Assistance has a unique tri-sponsorship structure where staff is hired by the court, but each local program is sponsored by the school district and municipalities.

In 2018, Oakland County Youth Assistance celebrated 65 years of preventing delinquency, neglect, and abuse in Oakland County.

As 150 supporters from across the county gathered at the annual meeting, Chairperson Mike Kazyak and Chief Mary Schusterbauer presented the Champion of Youth Award to Dr. Michael Simony and Officer David VanKerkhove and the Youth Assistance Retail Fraud Video crew from Bloomfield Hills.

YOUTH ASSISTANCE CASEWORK REFERRALS BY YEAR

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>
New Referrals	1,987	1,962	2,136
I & R Cases	1,590	1,235	1,393
Reentry	123	103	111



Youth Assistance Staff

Front row (left to right): Deb Lindsey, Anna Torres, Stacy Williams, Amy Sullivan (intern), Elizabeth McGregor, Doreen Brant, Lauren Klos, Ragen Rockwell, Liz Csizmadia, and Paula Johnson

Back row: Stacy Pasini, Jessica Wallace, Amber Kish, Zetter Slappy, Paul Tiseo, Tasha Hanson, Pam Strzalkowski, Robin Brown-Green, Nikki Keller, Tom Swieboda, Gail Innis, Julie Stitt, Nancy Minckler, Cathy Womack, Jeff Brough, Lisa Shields, and Mary Schusterbauer

Not pictured: Mary Bartolotta, Elissa Fogel, Brittany Kalso, Joanna Papiez, Jennifer Robertson, Karyn Willis, and Karen Wonsowicz



Probate Court

Administration

Probate Court Administration



Edward A. Hutton III
**Probate Court
Administrator**

The Oakland County Probate Court provides essential services to Oakland County's most vulnerable citizens. The Probate Court Administrator works with the Probate Chief Judge regarding operations of the Probate Court and serves as liaison to local and state government offices and other courts.

PROBATE COURT UPDATES

The Probate Court underwent a host of exciting changes in 2018 in an effort to improve efficiency and to better serve its customers. Some changes will be apparent to visitors while others cannot be seen but will hopefully be felt in the form of faster and better service. A change that will be readily apparent to frequent Probate Court guests will be the complete repurposing of the Probate Court Annex room. The entire staff of the Mental Health Unit has been relocated to the annex in order to provide more efficient service and a calmer atmosphere, which is often more conducive for parties involved in those matters. This move will also reduce congestion in the main Probate Court filing area, leading to better service all the way around.

The Probate Court has also doubled the number of computers available to the public for researching, reviewing, and purchasing court documents. These computers are now located in the Probate Court Annex.

LASERFICHE IMPLEMENTATION

The Probate Court was the first court in the county to implement Laserfiche, Oakland County's new document management system. Laserfiche enhances document workflow and integrates with the court's case management software for increased efficiency and access in processing documents and assisting the public. The Probate Court was instrumental in assessing the application and how it will be implemented in departments across the county.

PROBATE COURT WEBSITE

The Probate Court website is continually updated and provides online brochures containing basic information regarding guardianships, conservatorships, decedent estates, and mental health proceedings. These brochures, as well as the necessary forms, can be found on the Oakland County Probate Court website at <https://www.oakgov.com/courts/probate/Pages/default.aspx>.



Probate Court

Estates & Mental Health

Probate Court

Estates and Mental Health



Barbara Andruccioli
Probate Court
Register

The Oakland County Probate Court is comprised of four judges: Honorable Kathleen A. Ryan, Chief Judge; Honorable Linda S. Hallmark, Chief Judge Pro Tempore; Honorable Daniel A. O'Brien; and Honorable Jennifer Callaghan.

Barbara Andruccioli was appointed to the position of Probate Court Register following Jill Koney Daly's retirement in early 2018 after 29 years of service with the court. The Probate Court Register works closely with the Probate Court overseeing support staff within the three distinct units of the Probate Court.

The Probate Court is divided into three units: Mental Health Unit, Guardianship and Conservatorship Unit, and the Estates and Trusts Unit. The Mental Health Unit handles adult guardianships for individuals with developmental disabilities, transport orders for individuals with a mental illness, and mental health commitment hearings. The Guardianship and Conservatorship Unit handles minor guardianships/conservatorships and adult guardianships/conservatorships for legally incapacitated individuals. The Estates and Trusts Unit handles matters concerning decedent estates and will safekeeping.

The Probate Court also works with the Circuit and Probate Courts' Jury Office to manage probate jury trials, the courts' Case Management Office regarding judicial assignments and case evaluations, and the courts' Business Division in regard to the Probate Court's \$6.1 million budget.

MENTAL HEALTH UNIT

Mental health commitment hearing dockets are held by the Court twice each week. At these hearings, the judge must decide whether the respondent is mentally ill and requires treatment and whether or not hospitalization is the only appropriate treatment. Mental health respondents participate in court hearings by physically appearing in court or through video conferencing.

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

MENTAL HEALTH UNIT HIGHLIGHTS—

- Mental Health docket accounted for roughly 25% of the Probate Court cases
- Oakland County Probate Court disposed of approximately 90% of their mental health cases within 14 days of filing

GUARDIANSHIP AND CONSERVATORSHIP UNIT

The Probate Court hears all petitions to initiate, modify, or terminate guardianships and conservatorships for minors and adults, as well as guardianships for developmentally disabled persons. The Court also resolves issues that arise during the pendency of a guardianship or conservatorship and monitors many cases through regular review hearings. Unlike many other cases, conservatorship and guardianship cases often remain open for years.

This unit manages the court filings for the guardianship and conservatorship cases, including processing annual reports of guardians and the annual accounts of conservators. Court staff assigned to this unit also ensure that mandatory reviews of guardianships are performed. Consistent monitoring is required to determine whether fiduciaries have complied with statutory requirements.

The Probate Court conducts basic training classes for conservators and guardians on a monthly basis at the courthouse. These training classes are conducted by volunteer attorneys and are provided at no charge to the participants. The training provides essential information and tools for handling duties as a conservator and/or guardian.

GUARDIANSHIP AND CONSERVATORSHIP UNIT HIGHLIGHTS—

- 1,674 guardianship reviews were performed by court-appointed reviewers, many of them trained volunteers
- Although state case age guidelines require that 75% of minor guardianship dispositions occur within 90 days, Oakland County Probate Court disposed of over 92% of their files within that timeframe

ESTATES AND TRUSTS UNIT

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

ESTATES AND TRUSTS UNIT (continued)

Civil cases involving trust and estate assets are also heard in Probate Court. These cases typically involve claims in which a fiduciary is seeking to preserve or recoup assets.

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

ESTATES AND TRUSTS UNIT HIGHLIGHTS—

- The Probate Court accepted 803 new wills for safekeeping; they join the tens of thousands of wills already held by the court
- Estate and trust cases comprise almost 40% of the Probate Court caseload
- The Probate Court disposed of 99.8% of the estate dispositions within a 182-day timeframe, which is 9.8% higher than the state case age guideline



Farewell to Jill Koney Daly

In early 2018, Jill Koney Daly retired from the Probate Court after 29 years of service, the last 11 years as the Probate Court Register. Chief Judge Pro Tem Linda Hallmark presented Jill with a gift and plaque from the court and thanked her for her many years of dedicated service.

PROBATE COURT ACTIVITY

New Filings	7,158
Reopened Cases	272
Pending Cases	322
Wills	803
Foreign Births	12

ACTIVE CASE TOTALS AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2018

Estates & Trusts Cases	5,385
Adult Guardianships	4,655
Adult Conservatorships	1,418
Minor Guardianships	1,891
Minor Conservatorships	723
Guardianships (Developmentally Disabled)	2,370
Civil and Other Matters	39





Business Division of the Courts

Business Division of the Courts



John Cooperrider
Business Division Manager

The Business Division, under the leadership of John Cooperrider, is responsible for the development and delivery of business and administrative support services for the Circuit and Probate Courts. This division is responsible for developing and monitoring the Circuit Court's \$65 million budget and the Probate Court's \$6.1 million budget.

Chris Bujak, Chief of Court Business Operations, assists in supervising this multifaceted operation. The Business Division is divided into three areas of operation, Administrative/Financial, Data Technology, and Court Resource and Program Support, in order to effectively manage its diverse and complex responsibilities.

2018 included significant changes, transitions, conversions, and large implementation projects in which the Business Division played a leadership role for the courts.

MOVE FROM PAPER TO DIGITAL RECORDS

As the courts move from paper to digital records, the process has begun to eliminate delivery and management of paper transcripts. Juvenile appeals are emailed, rather than faxed, to the transcription company who then forwards the information to the typists. This results in a savings of voluminous pages of faxed requests and cost of paper and toner and is a more efficient way to document share with the typists. Similarly, the transcriptionists upload completed juvenile transcripts to a secure server from which they are automatically sent to the court files. This is a savings of paper, toner and mailing costs, and has streamlined the delivery process to the court and court-appointed attorneys who are awaiting transcripts. This has also alleviated the necessity of staff managing incoming paper transcripts.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLAN

The County's Homeland Security Department, along with FM&O Building Safety, has developed the Facility Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan for all county buildings. Each building is required to test the plan by conducting two different types of drills per year. The courthouse facility coordinators and their four alternates planned, coordinated, and conducted two drills in 2018, the shelter-in-place chemical spill drill in the spring and the active assailant drill in the fall.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE COURT

As part of the Michigan Supreme Court's efforts to improve public access to Michigan courts as well as ensure that persons with disabilities have equal and full access to the court system per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), two years ago each court was required to adopt and submit a local administrative order conforming to the model developed by SCAO. The Probate and Circuit's Joint Administrative Order can be found on the website and includes procedures for requesting an accommodation, forms, grievance procedures, and a list of the ADA coordinators. These new procedures have resulted in significant additional workload to staff in responding to the many new requests for increased access. In 2018, the Circuit ADA Coordinator received and responded to over 60 ADA requests of various types and forms. Many of these individual requests resulted in multiple requests for an individual over time and required multiple responses of varying degrees.


ADMINISTRATIVE/FINANCIAL UNIT

Cindy Lingle, Supervisor of Administrative Services, oversees six full-time and four part-time employees. This unit is considered the gateway to the Circuit Court and routes voluminous phone calls and directs citizens to various departments throughout the building. This area is responsible for reconciling state ward credit adjustments; processing payments for case-related services, such as court-appointed attorneys, expert witnesses, and interpreters; and working with the Human Resources Department to process court personnel transactions for more than 350 Circuit and Probate Court employees. In addition, four typists work with 24 Family Division caseworkers and seven Family Division referees to prepare casework and referee reports on all juvenile neglect and delinquency cases. Capital improvements, special projects, supplies, printing requests, work orders, furniture, and equipment requests are also handled by this unit.

ADMINISTRATIVE/FINANCIAL UNIT HIGHLIGHTS—

- Hired a new transcriptionist with more than 20 years of experience to assist in the Word Processing Unit
- Reorganized staff positions to assist with covering office during lunch breaks so that the office and phones are continuously covered
- Assisted with viewing videos of court hearings in the newly constructed video viewing room which is easier for the public and less cumbersome for staff
- Court-appointed attorney vouchers processed—15,079

ATTORNEY PAYMENTS PROCESSED			
	2016	2017	2018
Family Division	5,989	6,227	6,285
Civil/Criminal Division	6,022	6,644	5,957
Probate Court	2,625	2,878	2,837
Total Payments	14,636	15,749	15,079



DATA TECHNOLOGY UNIT

Under the supervision of Lisa Czyz, Court Technical Services Supervisor, the Data Technology Unit is responsible for court technology and automation for the courts, including assisting both staff and litigants with court programs and video conference initiatives. This unit is the courts' liaison to Oakland County's Department of Information Technology, various vendors, and other state and local government agencies.

DATA TECHNOLOGY UNIT HIGHLIGHTS—

- Created automated blind draw system for all Probate Court cases
- Implemented shared email account for the public to contact Probate Court units
- Launched the new document repository and workflow for the Probate Court
- Released online training videos for website
- Worked with Oakland County IT to launch new website for Circuit and Probate Courts
- Streamed live court events, such as Constitution Day and New Lawyer Admission Ceremonies
- Reviewed process of Juvenile Court assignments to improve equality in case distribution
- Partnered with State of Michigan to develop and test new online case lookup for Probate cases with a launch date in 2019
- Reassigned cases to new Family Division docket
- Deployed mobile order capability to Family Division judges
- Expanded electronic filing of transcripts
- Initiated Windows 10 testing and rollout for all court computers
- Expanded digital record transfer

COURT RESOURCE AND PROGRAM SUPPORT UNIT

The Court Resource and Program Support Unit, overseen by Karen Koshen, is an area of general responsibility within the courts. This unit provides informational, technical, and administrative support services to the judges, various court departments, and outside agencies, as well as coordinates and assists with special projects, events, and media relations. Other responsibilities include maintaining judicial attendance records, preparing and maintaining the Bail Bondsman List, and updating the BCORP Emergency Plan for the Circuit Court. Preparation of the annual report, press releases, historical roster of the courts, and other publications are also handled by this unit.

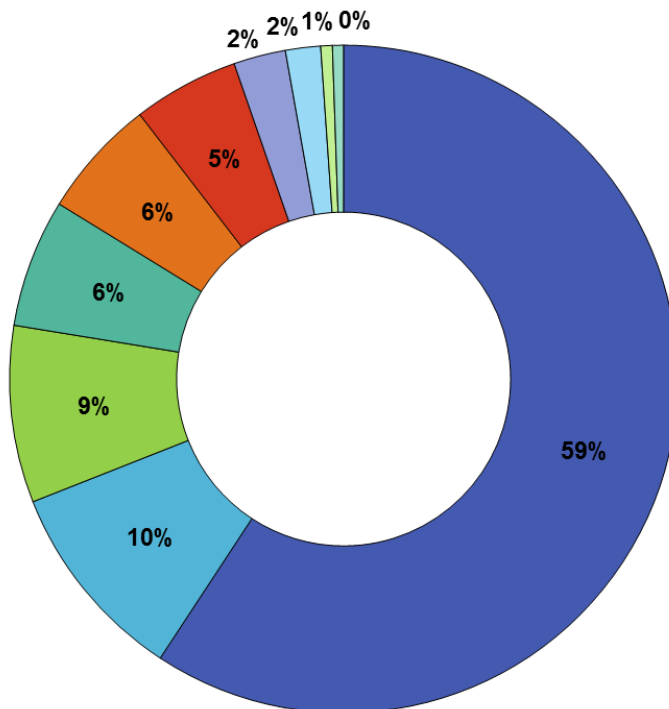
COURT RESOURCE AND PROGRAM SUPPORT UNIT HIGHLIGHTS—

- Coordination of special events: 16th Annual Adoption Day Program, Constitution Day Program, New Lawyers Admission Ceremonies, 20th Annual Police Training for the Juvenile Courts, Pro Bono Attorney Appreciation Breakfast, Public Satisfaction Survey, Take Your Child to Work Day, Judges Holiday Dinner, and Judicial Investiture
- Coordinated courthouse employee functions, plaque ceremonies, special breakfasts, luncheons, and retirements
- Organized and assisted with three Removing the Mysteries of Probate Court seminars
- Assisted Administrative/Financial Unit with reconciling reports and attorney payment vouchers

Financial Reports

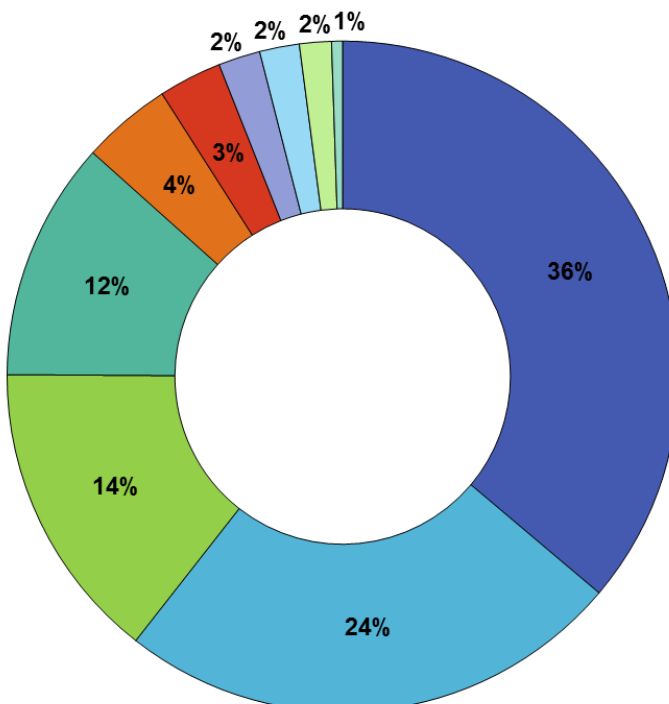
Circuit and Probate Courts

2018 Revenues—\$35,933,755



Child Care Reimbursement—\$12,994,498
FOC CRP Contract—\$8,772,443
Transfer In—\$5,214,334
FOC Fees and Revenues—\$4,149,428
Other/Miscellaneous Reimbursement—\$1,553,397
Attorney Fee Reimbursement—\$1,093,140
Mediation Payments and Fines—\$725,975
Costs—\$688,234
Probate Fees and Revenues—\$551,869
Jury Fees and E-filing Fees—\$190,437

2018 Expenditures \$71,555,982



Personnel Costs—\$42,396,388
Transfer Out—\$6,984,090
Youth Out-of-Home Care Costs—\$6,130,831
Court-Appointed Attorney Costs—\$4,441,846
Data/Communication Technology Costs—\$4,129,196
Facility Costs—\$3,672,982
Other/Miscellaneous—\$1,802,544
Other Case-Related Costs—\$1,215,474
Supplies/Materials/Furniture Costs—\$402,767
Professional Services—\$379,864

2018 Highlights





2018 MVPs

Most Valuable Persons

2018 Most Valuable Persons



2018 Most Valuable Persons

Probate Court Chief Judge Kathleen Ryan and Circuit Court Chief Judge Shalina Kumar (back row) congratulate the 2018 Most Valuable Persons: (left to right) Mimi Keidan Seltzer, April Gollar, Kelly Pena, Jenny Lucas, Ashley Williams, Jenna Smith, Dawn Cuthrell, and Jennifer Neumann

The courts are fortunate to have dedicated employees who are hard working, creative, and willing to go the extra mile to ensure that the courts run efficiently and smoothly. Twice a year, supervisors and employees have the opportunity to nominate MVP employees who exhibit a high level of commitment and demonstrate service that far exceeds their written job descriptions. After careful consideration, a committee selects eight employees who are recognized as MVPs at the Annual Employee Recognition Ceremony in December. The following employees were recognized and honored as the courts' 2018 Most Valuable Persons:

Dawn Cuthrell—Friend of the Court—Inter-Governmental Support Specialist
Mimi Keidan Seltzer—Chambers of Judge Michael Warren—Judicial Staff Attorney
Kelly Pena—Probate Court—Office Assistant II
Jenny Lucas—Juvenile Legal Processing Unit—Deputy Register II
April Gollar—Probate Court—Office Assistant II
Ashley Williams—Chambers of Judge Cheryl Matthews—Clerk
Jenna Smith—Jury Office—Office Assistant II/Jury Clerk
Jennifer Neumann—Friend of the Court—Junior Accountant

Making a Difference

Generous court employees

The Circuit and Probate Courts' employees are extremely generous and have big hearts as evidenced by the number of charitable events conducted throughout the year.

Casual Days—

Casual Day Fridays and other designated casual days allowed the courts to donate \$4,000 in 2018 to eight different charities. Since 2004, almost \$50,000 has been donated to a variety of charities throughout Oakland County.

Annual Pumpkin Auction—

Court employees participated in the Pumpkin Auction in October which raised over \$10,000 benefiting six local charities. Team captains from the courts included Chari Christie, Cheryl Werner, Brandi Bohn, and Heather Price who spearheaded the courts' fundraising. The courts had three entries in the pumpkin auction, and out of 60 entries, Cheryl Werner's entry of "Kindness Matters" won first place in the employees' favorite pumpkin voting contest.



**"Get In My Belly"
Venus Fly Trap**



"Kindness Matters"



**"You Look
Spook-tacular!"**

Christmas In July—

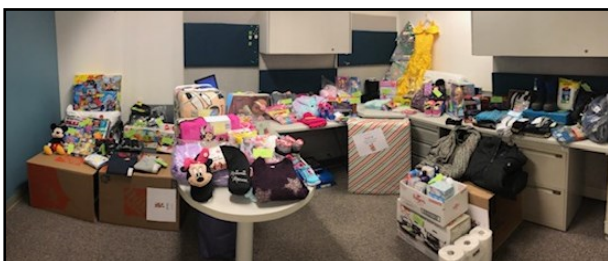
Christmas came early for the Oakland County Animal Control and Pet Adoptions Center. Court Administration employees donated bags of dog food and treats, leashes, collars, toys, kitty litter, carpet mats, and cash donations as part of their annual contribution to the center. Case Management's Deb Brown was selected as the August Volunteer of the Month for the center as she can be found every day at lunchtime cuddling and loving on the cats.



Friend of the Court—FOC staff collected \$718 to provide 140 meals to guests of the HOPE Adult Shelter and used leftover funds to purchase many of HOPE's wish list items.

March of Dimes—

Traci Howden and Angela Garrett were co-captains for the March of Dimes annual "Moms and Babies" campaign at the courthouse and led several special fundraisers and events to support this cause.



Adopt-A-Family—

Court Administration staff adopted a family of seven through Lighthouse-Oakland in November. Six large boxes containing clothing, toys, and household items were provided for a local family's holiday.

Milestones and Retirements

The following Circuit and Probate employees were recognized at the 37th Annual Retirement & Service Awards Celebration held in June of 2018 for their dedication, professionalism, and longevity with Oakland County.

MILESTONES

20 Years

Jill Adkins
Andrea Bayer
Juli Berres-Wainio
Debra Chmiel
Chari Christie
Paula Jefferson
Karen Koshen
Deborah Lindsey
Erin O'Brien
Kimberely Rivard

25 Years

Suzanne Bolton
Jennifer Edens
Shannon Fleur
Brian Gallant
Hon. Lisa Gorcyca
Michelle Kase
Jeanette Miracle-Leshan

30 Years

Susan Bennington
Lisa Czyz
Carol Esher
Pamela Green
Jacqueline Howes-Evanson
Kevin Threatt

35 Years

Rhonda Mohlman

40 Years

Vickilynn Mouthaan
Kenneth Tolbert

45 Years

Porki Mellado

RETIREMENTS

Circuit Court

Karen Allen
Deborah Beer
Susan Friedl
Gary Gasowski
William Hamilton
Robert Jueckstock
Shelley Nelson
Robert Proudfoot
Joseph Racey Jr.
Donna Riley
Karen Wonsowicz

Friend of the Court

Marta Alvarado-Walterhouse
Patricia Chetkovich
Jo Ellen Cody
Christina Conlon
Roald Foon
Vincent Welicka

Probate Court

Jill Koney Daly
Bridgett Ray

Acknowledgments

Thank you for your contributions.

This Annual Report is a historical record to reflect back on the people, events, and successes that have been an integral part of the courts over the past year. The Circuit and Probate Courts would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their valuable contributions to the 2018 Annual Report for the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court and the Oakland County Probate Court:

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OAKLAND COUNTY

M I C H I G A N

CIRCUIT & PROBATE COURTS

