



# Annual Report 2018

20th Judicial Circuit and  
Ottawa County Probate Courts  
Ottawa County, Michigan

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April 9, 2019

Ottawa County Board of Commissioners  
12220 Fillmore Street  
West Olive, Michigan 49460

Dear Chairperson DeJong and Commissioners:

As Chief Judges for the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court and the Ottawa County Probate Court, it is our pleasure to present the 2018 Annual Report. This document provides insight regarding the important work of the judicial branch of government. The judges of the Circuit and Probate courts strive to be faithful stewards of public resources, while fulfilling our constitutional duty to do justice in every case presented to the courts. We are also mindful of the generous support provided by the Board of Commissioners and the collaborative relationships we enjoy with elected officials, county administration, and the many county employees with whom the courts interact on a regular basis, without which the courts would be unable to provide excellent service to the citizens of Ottawa County.

Beginning with our Annual All Staff Meeting in January 2018, where we explored the impact of disruptive innovation and change, 2018 was a year of challenge and improvement. Caseloads remained steady, yet the complexity of legal issues presented to our courts increased, along with heightened concerns regarding the safety and security of citizens and court staff required to use public facilities. In addition, significant statewide changes required the attention of judges and court administration. The expansion of electronic filing of court cases by the Michigan Supreme Court, the development of new standards for court appointed counsel required by the Michigan Legislature through the Indigent Defense Commission, significant and costly changes to administrative rules governing the Child Care Fund by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, and proposed legislation to “Raise The Age” of juvenile offenders are just a few examples of these statewide changes that are disruptive and require trial courts to change current business processes.

Fortunately, the Circuit and Probate courts of Ottawa County have an outstanding judiciary, competent court administration, and dedicated employees who are focused on providing the best public service possible. As an organization, the courts are resourceful and nimble enough to successfully navigate change. This is due, in large part, to the strategic planning process the courts have used for sixteen years to clearly identify our mission and to collectively update goals, ensuring high performance in all aspects of court operations. As Chief Judges, we are proud of the exemplary work completed by judges and court staff in 2018. We are equally aware of the continual need to learn and improve. We pledge to be good stewards of the resources provided by the citizens of Ottawa County and to daily fulfill our mission “*to administer justice and restore wholeness in a manner that inspires public trust.*”

Very truly yours,

*Jon A. Van Allsburg*

Hon. Jon A. Van Allsburg  
Chief Judge, 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court

*Mark A. Feyen*

Hon. Mark A. Feyen  
Chief Judge, Ottawa County Probate Court

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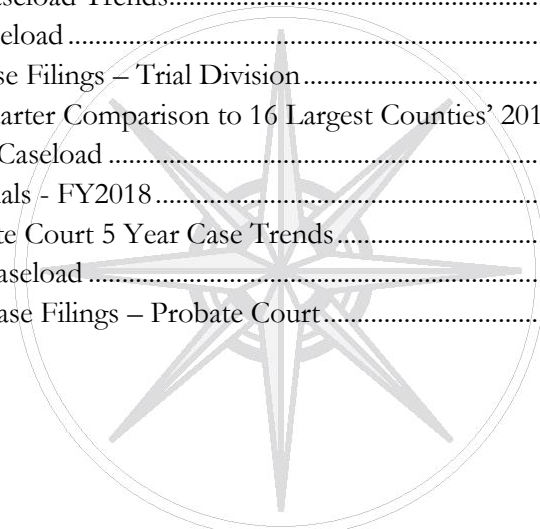
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# The 20th Judicial Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts 2018 Annual Report

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## *Restoring Wholeness...*

Each year the Annual Report for the Circuit and Probate courts focuses on a theme selected by the Courts' Strategic Planning Oversight Team. In 2017, it was determined the 2017-2019 Annual Reports would use the three components of the Courts' Mission Statement as a focal point to share important information about court performance, court culture, and court values. The mission simply states the purpose of the courts is ***“to administer justice and restore wholeness in a manner that inspires public trust”***. Last year, the 2017 Annual Report shared significant information about court process and caseload statistics to paint a clear picture of how the rule of law is administered in Ottawa County. This 2018 Annual Report provides a greater focus on the many court programs available to local citizens, which benefit court users as well as their families and helps ensure Ottawa County maintains a strong and vibrant community. Next year, the 2019 Annual Report will discuss public trust and confidence in the courts, which is critical to the success of democratic institutions in today's society.



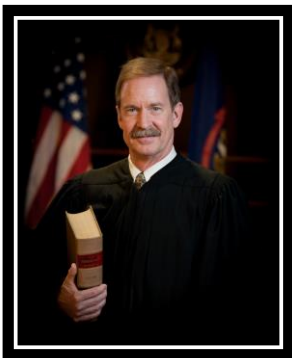
At first, restoring wholeness may seem to be an abstract concept, but for members of the Ottawa County community it is very tangible. For instance, victims of crime are traumatized by offenders who may cause physical and mental injuries through violent encounters or financial loss through theft, negligence, or intentional property damage. Often, crime victims have no insurance on which to rely or have private insurance policies that are insufficient to cover their losses. Courts can help restore wholeness in these situations through ordering and assisting with the collection of restitution. Courts are also able to assist with referrals to counseling, family therapy, mediation, crime victim services, domestic violence support and a variety of community programming to assist crime victims. For young people involved with the juvenile justice system, the Juvenile Court operates several evidence-based programs specifically developed to restore wholeness through intensive work with youth and their families. The Friend of the Court assists with the collection and disbursement of child support to ensure children have basic resources such as food, clothing and shelter. The Probate Court supports families soon after the loss of a family member through the estate process and with guardianship requests when a family member needs specialized assistance. These are just a few examples of how the Courts' focus on restoring wholeness assists individuals in the justice system and simultaneously strengthens the fabric of our community.

# The 20th Judicial Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts Judges

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*“Four things belong to a judge: to hear courteously, to answer wisely, to consider soberly, and to decide impartially.” – Socrates*

The Circuit and Probate courts in Ottawa County are fortunate to have a learned and collegial group of elected judges. The 20th Circuit Court has four judges presiding over the courtrooms, handling a variety of criminal, civil, family, juvenile and appellate cases. The Probate Court has one judge who handles all probate cases and assists the Circuit Court with Family Division cases, as well as the Ottawa County Recovery Court. The Hon. Jon A. Van Allsburg and the Hon. Mark A. Feyen have been appointed by the Michigan Supreme Court to serve as Chief Judge of the Circuit Court and Probate Court, respectively. The Hon. Jon H. Hulsing serves as Chief Judge Pro Tempore of the Circuit Court.



**Jon A. Van Allsburg, Chief Judge, 20th Circuit Court**

Judge Van Allsburg graduated from West Ottawa High School and Central Michigan University. While in college, he took a semester off to backpack through Europe and North Africa. After college, he attended Detroit College of Law (now Michigan State University College of Law) and graduated with honors. He practiced law for two years in Oakland and Wayne counties, then moved back to Holland and joined what became Coupe, Van Allsburg & Pater, P.C. He practiced in the areas of family law, civil and criminal litigation, estate planning, real estate, and business law. In addition to practicing law, he taught business law for several years at both Hope College and Grand Valley State University.

In 2004, Van Allsburg ran for the newly created fourth seat in the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court. He won the election, becoming the first judge in this judicial position. He handles both Family Division cases and civil matters, including business court matters, administrative appeals and appeals from the district court. In November 2016, Van Allsburg was appointed Chief Judge by the Michigan Supreme Court. Van Allsburg also serves as president elect of the Michigan Judges Association and on the State Bar of Michigan Judicial Council.



**Mark A. Feyen, Chief Judge, Ottawa County Probate Court**

Judge Feyen is the Chief Judge of the Ottawa County Probate Court. In this capacity, he handles cases involving decedent estates, guardianships, conservatorships, and the mentally ill. He hears cases in the Family Division consisting of juvenile delinquency, abuse/neglect, adoptions, and name changes. He also presides over the Ottawa County Recovery Court.

Feyen is a lifelong resident of West Michigan. He received his bachelor's degree from Calvin College and graduated from the College of Law at the University of Illinois in 1980. He then practiced law with the Grand Haven firm, Scholten Fant. Following private practice, he joined the Ottawa County Prosecutor's Office and specialized in child welfare cases. He was elected to the Probate bench in November, 1988.



### **Jon H. Hulsing, Chief Judge Pro Tempore, 20th Circuit Court**

A life-long Ottawa County resident, Judge Hulsing grew up in Spring Lake and graduated from Western Michigan Christian High School. He received his undergraduate degree from Grand Valley State University in 1986, *magna cum laud*. While attending GVSU, he was named the Criminal Justice Student of the Year. During his undergraduate years, he joined the Ottawa County Sheriff's Office as a deputy.

Hulsing became a road patrol officer with the City of Wyoming Police Department in 1985. While working full time as a police officer, Hulsing graduated *summa cum laude* from Thomas M. Cooley Law School in 1991. Prior to becoming a judge, Hulsing was an attorney in private practice for six years. He also worked as an assistant prosecutor for Ottawa County. When Judge Wesley Nykamp retired, Hulsing received a gubernatorial appointment to fill the vacancy. He was first elected in 2006 to complete the unexpired portion of Judge Nykamp's term. Hulsing hears felony criminal and general civil cases.



### **Kent D. Engle, Judge, 20th Circuit Court**

Judge Engle graduated from Zeeland High School in 1972. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Taylor University, graduating in 1976. In 1979, he received his Juris Doctorate upon graduation from the University of Detroit School of Law.

After graduation from law school, Engle returned to Zeeland and established a solo law practice. Engle served Ottawa County as an assistant prosecuting attorney from 1988 until 2010. He handled cases ranging from traffic citations to homicides. In November 2010, Engle was elected to the Circuit Court bench. He began serving as judge on January 1, 2011, with a diverse Family Division docket, including domestic relations, juvenile, and child welfare cases.



### **Karen J. Miedema, Judge, 20th Circuit Court**

Judge Miedema was raised on a farm with her brothers in Borculo, Michigan. Miedema graduated from Holland Christian High School in 1975. She then earned her Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from Ferris State University. In 1982, Miedema received her Juris Doctorate from Wayne State University Law School.

After graduating from law school, Miedema began her career as an assistant prosecuting attorney in Oakland County, handling the criminal prosecutions of misdemeanor and felony cases. Then, Miedema moved back to west Michigan and worked as an associate attorney in civil litigation for Smith, Haughey, Rice and Roegge in Grand Rapids. In 1989, Miedema returned to work as an assistant prosecuting attorney, this time in Ottawa County. Miedema was elected to serve as Judge of the Twentieth Judicial Circuit Court by the Ottawa County voters after Judge Edward R. Post's retirement at the end of 2016. Miedema hears felony criminal cases, general civil cases, and divorce cases.



## Historical Roster of Ottawa County Circuit Court Judges

<b>EPAPHRODITUS RANSOM</b> 1836 – 1838	<b>FRED T. MILES</b> 1930 – 1947
<b>CHARLES W. WHIPPLE</b> 1839 – 1848	<b>RAYMOND L. SMITH</b> 1948 – 1972
<b>EDWARD MUNDY</b> 1848 – 1851	<b>CHESTER A. RAY</b> 1967 – 1970
<b>GEORGE MARTIN</b> 1851 – 1857	<b>WENDELL A. MILES</b> 1970 – 1974
<b>LOUIS S. LOVELL</b> 1858 – 1858	<b>JAMES E. TOWNSEND</b> 1973 – 1990
<b>FLAVIUS LITTLEJOHN</b> 1859 – 1867	<b>GEORGE R. CORSIGLIA</b> 1974 – 1974
<b>MOSES B. HOPKINS</b> 1868 – 1869	<b>CALVIN L. BOSMAN</b> 1975 – 2010
<b>AUGUSTINE H. GIDDINGS</b> 1869 – 1873	<b>WESLEY J. NYKAMP</b> 1991 – 2006
<b>JOHN W. STONE</b> 1874 – 1874	<b>EDWARD R. POST</b> 1993 – 2016
<b>DAN J. ARNOLD</b> 1874 – 1892	<b>JON A. VAN ALLSBURG</b> 2005 – present
<b>HANNIBAL HART</b> 1892 – 1892	<b>JON H. HULSING</b> 2006 – present
<b>PHILIP PADGHAM</b> 1893 – 1911	<b>KENT ENGLE</b> 2011 – present
<b>ORIEN S. CROSS</b> 1912 – 1929	<b>KAREN J. MIEDEMA</b> 2017 – present

## Historical Roster of Ottawa County Probate Court Judges

<b>EDMUND H. BADGER</b> 1838 – 1839	<b>CHARLES E. SOULE</b> 1885 – 1892
<b>DR. TIMOTHY EASTMAN, II</b> 1839 – 1843	<b>JOHN VAN BUREN GOODRICH</b> 1893 – 1901
<b>WILLIAM HATHAWAY, JR</b> 1844 – 1856	<b>EDWARD P. KIRBY</b> 1901 – 1916
<b>AUGUSTUS W. TAYLOR</b> 1857 – 1864	<b>JAMES J. DANHOF</b> 1917 – 1932
<b>GEORGE B. PARKS</b> 1865 – 1868	<b>CORA VANDE WATER</b> 1933 – 1948
<b>EDWARD BOLTWOOD</b> 1869 – 1870	<b>FREDERICK T. MILES</b> 1949 – 1976
<b>EDWIN BAXTER</b> 1870 – 1872	<b>JACK A. VANDE BUNTE</b> 1977 – 1988
<b>SAMUEL L. TATE</b> 1873 – 1884	<b>MARK A. FEYEN</b> 1989 – present

# Court Administration

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In August 1969, soon after he became chief justice of the United States, Warren E. Burger observed, “The courts of this country need management, which busy overworked judges, with drastically increased caseloads, cannot give. We need a corps of trained administrators or managers to manage and direct the machinery so that judges can concentrate on their primary duty of judging. Such managers do not now exist, except for a handful who are almost entirely confined to state court systems. We must literally create a corps of court administrators or managers and do it at once.”<sup>1</sup> As a result of Chief Justice Burger’s efforts and those of other leaders in the field, court administrators have become an important part of the federal, state and local levels.

All judges, particularly the chief judge, are responsible for the administration of the court. In effect, the judges are a board of directors; the chief judge is the chairman of the board and the court administrator is the executive officer responsible for executing policies adopted by the board. Alternately stated, the chief judge (or judges) and the courts’ administrator forms the courts executive team for policy making and implementation.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts, the Court Administrator provides a clear vision and leadership for the courts. He is responsible for all administrative functions including strategic planning initiatives, caseload management, personnel and financial management, succession planning and more. There is direct accountability to the chief judges of the Circuit and Probate Courts. Daily operational management and oversight of the courts is conducted by the Courts’ Leadership Team, including the Court Administrator, Juvenile Court Director, Friend of the Court, Trial Division Director and Probate Register. The Courts’ mission, vision and values guide the Leadership Team.



**Kevin J. Bowling, JD, MSJA, CCE**  
**Court Administrator**



**Sandra K. Metcalf, MS, CCE**  
**Juvenile Court Director**



**Jennell L. Challa, JD**  
**Friend of the Court**



**Susan M. Franklin, JD, MPA**  
**Trial Division Director**



**Penni A. DeWitt, DBA**  
**Probate Register**

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<sup>1</sup> The Court Administrator: A Guide and Manual, National Association for Court Management, 2011  
20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit and Probate Courts, Ottawa County – Annual Report 2018

## *Strategic Planning and Strategic Execution*

An important hallmark of high performance courts is a well-articulated strategic plan and the ability to effectively execute the plan using available resources. The plan for the Circuit and Probate courts in Ottawa County has survived several iterations during the past sixteen years, yet the stability of the courts' mission, vision and core values is a testament to the critical and timeless nature of the guidance they provide. These guideposts have been identified by judges and court employees to demonstrate how the courts' high standards for justice and public service may be operationalized daily.

### Mission of the Courts

**To administer justice and restore wholeness in a manner that inspires public trust.**

This mission statement intentionally embodies several of the purposes of courts. The competent administration of justice necessarily includes doing individual justice in individual cases, appearing to do justice, and providing a final resolution of legal disputes. In addition, the courts are dedicated to restoring wholeness to litigants through a variety of evidence-based programs including substance abuse treatment, family counseling, mentoring for youthful offenders, residential programming for girls, and much more. The courts also provide some relief to crime victims through the collection of court ordered restitution payments. Efforts to inspire public trust include the provision of high quality customer service, legal self-help options, and the responsible use of public resources to provide judicial services.

### Vision of the Courts

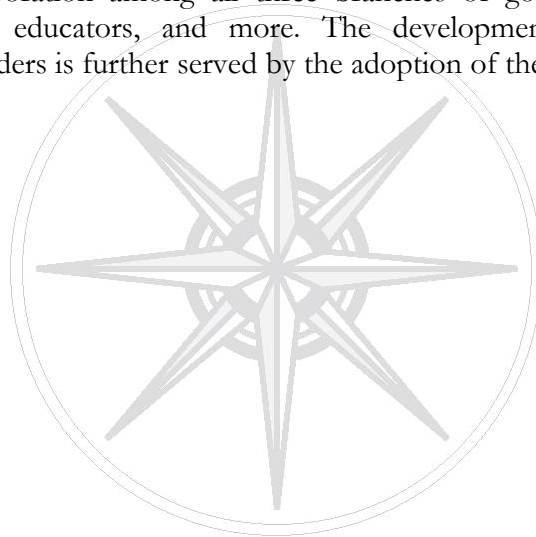
**As a leader among Courts, we exemplify high standards for justice and public service.**

To obtain the above vision, the courts are committed to:

- ❖ Providing justice and equal access to all;
- ❖ Processing and resolving legal matters quickly, fairly, and efficiently;
- ❖ Being nimble and embracing change; responding quickly and effectively to emerging needs and circumstances;
- ❖ Providing easy physical and electronic access to services at all court locations; using proven technologies to enhance access, services, and operational efficiencies;
- ❖ Using evidence-based and promising practices to achieve effective case and justice outcomes;
- ❖ Seeking sufficient funding and resources to meet the needs of the community and court users;
- ❖ Developing positive community relations and collaborating effectively with justice system and community partners; and
- ❖ Being an “employer-of-choice” with a stellar reputation, attracting highly skilled applicants, and ensuring judicial officers and employees are well-trained, satisfied, and engaged.



All the efforts discussed above have been identified by judges and court employees to demonstrate how the courts' high standards for justice and public service may be operationalized daily. Clear identification of the courts' mission and vision was a critical first step toward achieving effective strategic execution. It became evident early in the strategic planning process that knowing the goal and what to do to achieve the goal are certainly important, but the goals must be understood and implemented in the relational environment of the courts. As the third branch of government, courts are both independent and inter-dependent. While individual case decisions are made independently by judicial officers, the administrative operations of the courts require extensive collaboration among all three branches of government, as well as attorneys, litigants, treatment providers, educators, and more. The development and maintenance of strong partnerships among all stakeholders is further served by the adoption of the courts' core values, as identified above.



## Caseload Trends... Circuit Court

TABLE 1: CIRCUIT COURT CASELOAD TRENDS

TRIAL DIVISION	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change (2017-2018)
Appeals	77	60	63	49	55	+12.2%
Criminal	1054	999	908	1115	1132	+1.5%
Civil	434	370	364	391	372	-4.9%
<b>Total Trial Division Filings</b>	<b>1,565</b>	<b>1,429</b>	<b>1,335</b>	<b>1,555</b>	<b>1,559</b>	<b>+0.3%</b>

FAMILY DIVISION (Includes FOC and Juvenile Court)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change (2017-2018)
Divorce	1077	1037	1031	1029	1039	+1%
Other Domestic Relations	428	587	740	670	609	-9.1%
Personal Protection Orders	616	578	625	688	697	+1.3%
Delinquency (does not include Probation Violations)	929	965	864	952	788	-17.2%
Juvenile Traffic	19	26	23	15	17	+13.3%
Child Protective	110	100	83	74	78	+5.4%
Adoptions	113	119	143	108	148	+37%
Misc. Family	71	81	90	88	103	+17%
<b>Total Family Division Filings</b>	<b>3,363</b>	<b>3,493</b>	<b>3,599</b>	<b>3,624</b>	<b>3,479</b>	<b>-4%</b>
<b>Grand Total Filings and Reopened Cases</b>	<b>4,928</b>	<b>4,922</b>	<b>4,934</b>	<b>5,179</b>	<b>5,038</b>	<b>-2.7%</b>

## Caseload Trends... Probate Court

TABLE 2: PROBATE COURT CASELOAD TRENDS

OTTAWA COUNTY PROBATE COURT CASELOAD TRENDS	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change (2017-2018)
Estates, Trusts	445	434	405	396	460	+16.2%
Civil, Other	24	16	19	11	17	+54.5%
Guardians	243	203	202	214	261	+22%
Conservators	55	59	59	55	54	-2.0%
Mental Commitments	336	368	354	336	406	+20.8%
<b>Grand Total Filings and Reopened Cases</b>	<b>1,103</b>	<b>1,080</b>	<b>1,039</b>	<b>1,012</b>	<b>1,198</b>	<b>+18.4%</b>

For additional caseload information, visit:

<http://courts.mi.gov/education/stats/Caseload/Pages/default.aspx>

## *Attorney Referee Activity*

The Circuit Court Attorney Referees are judicial hearing officers who are cross-trained to conduct hearings in the Family Division, including domestic relations hearings (Grand Haven and the Fillmore Complex) and juvenile delinquency and child protective proceedings (Fillmore Complex). Based on the assigned docket, Referees hear testimony and recommend orders in cases involving juvenile delinquency, abuse/neglect, adoption, child support, parenting time, paternity, uncontested divorce and more.

Overall, from 2017 to 2018, Referee hearings decreased 16.8% with a total of 3,318 hearings conducted. Domestic relations and civil proceedings decreased 25.2% with 1,725 hearings conducted, including 668 child support, 405 parenting time, 156 uncontested divorce, and 496 paternity hearings conducted at the Ottawa County Courthouse in Grand Haven. At the Fillmore Complex in West Olive, the decrease in Juvenile Court Referee activity was 5.3%, decreasing from 1,682 hearings in 2017 to 1,593 hearings in 2018.

Delinquency and child protective petitions are scheduled for preliminary hearings shortly after filing. Domestic relations hearings are typically scheduled within three to four weeks after filing. The Court employs two full-time and one part-time Attorney Referees, in addition to the Friend of the Court who conducts hearings once a week. The Senior Law Clerk and Court Administrator serve as substitute referees to provide docket coverage when needed.



**Patricia Gelderloos**  
Attorney Referee



**David V. Macias**  
Attorney Referee



**Erin Magley**  
Attorney Referee



**Jennell L. Challa**  
Substitute Referee



**C. Richard Parks**  
Substitute Referee



**Kevin J. Bowling**  
Substitute Referee

## Family Division/Juvenile Court (Fillmore Complex)

TABLE 3: REFEREE HEARINGS AT THE FILLMORE COMPLEX

DELINQUENCY PROCEEDINGS	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change (2017-2018)
Preliminary Hearings	167	167	163	151	138	-8.6%
Pre-Trial Conferences	457	531	573	630	569	-9.7%
Pleas of Admission/No Contest Hearings	140	141	108	109	61	-44.0%
Original Disposition Hearings	369	317	296	320	252	-21.3%
Dispositional Review Hearings	36	55	29	15	312	+1980%
Consents/Holds/Other	N/A	289	264	272	131	-51.8%
Saturday Preliminary Hearings	29	25	21	17	10	-41.2%

CHILD PROTECTIVE PROCEEDINGS	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change (2017-2018)
Preliminary Hearings	155	130	126	99	70	-29.3%
Adoption Release/Consent/Emancipation/ Emergency Removal/Other	35	51	69	69	50	-27.5%
<b>Total Family Division/Juvenile Court Referee Hearings</b>	<b>1,388</b>	<b>1,706</b>	<b>1,649</b>	<b>1,682</b>	<b>1,593</b>	<b>-5.3%</b>

## Family Division (Grand Haven)

TABLE 4: REFEREE HEARINGS IN GRAND HAVEN

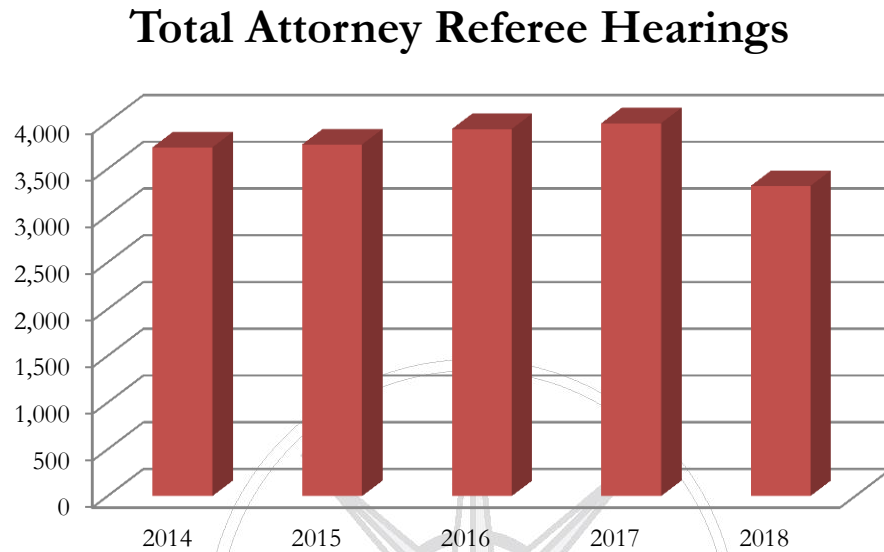
DOMESTIC/CIVIL PROCEEDINGS	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change (2017-2018)
Support Hearings	1,082	948	979	803	668	-16.8%
Parenting Time Hearings	532	536	504	541	405	-25.1%
<i>Pro Confesso</i> Divorce Hearings	231	235	238	167	156	-6.6%
Paternity Arraignment/Support Hearings	498	337	557	796	496	-37.7%
<b>Total Family Division Domestic/Civil Referee Hearings</b>	<b>2,343</b>	<b>2,056</b>	<b>2,278</b>	<b>2,307</b>	<b>1,725</b>	<b>-25.2%</b>

TABLE 5: TOTAL ATTORNEY REFEREE HEARINGS

ATTORNEY REFEREE HEARINGS	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change (2017-2018)
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3,731</b>	<b>3,762</b>	<b>3,927</b>	<b>3,989</b>	<b>3,318</b>	<b>-16.8%</b>

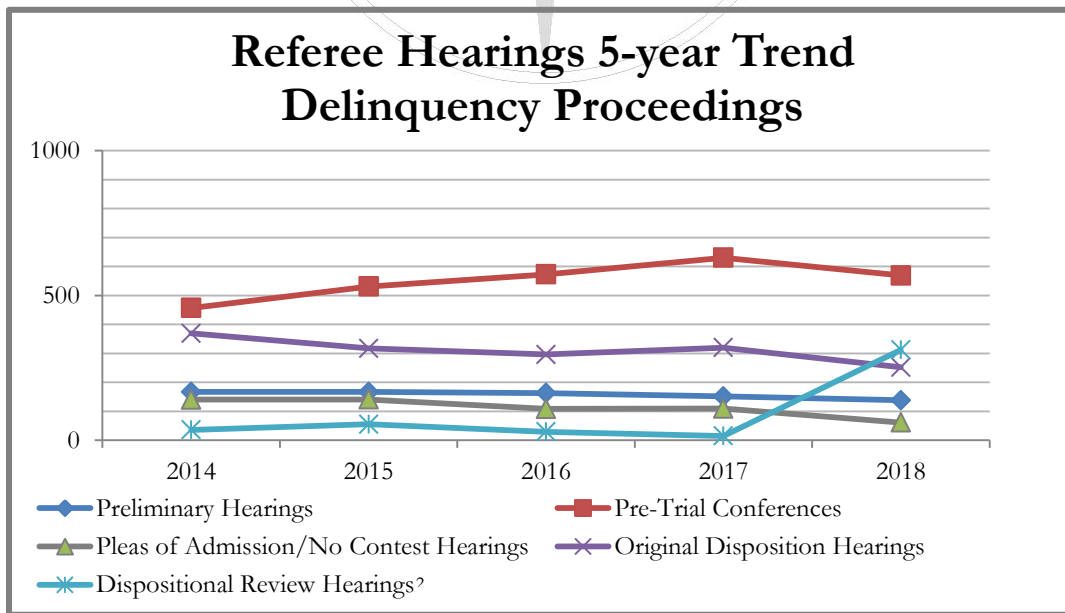
By conducting 3,000-4,000 judicial hearings every year, the Attorney Referees play a significant role in the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court’s efforts to maintain excellent caseload management. Administering justice by ensuring all parties have their “day in court” and providing timely decisions on matters as important as child support, parenting time, appropriate consequences for delinquent behavior, and more is how the Court’s Referees provide direct service to the public and assist the elected judges with their caseloads.

FIGURE 1: TOTAL ATTORNEY REFEREE HEARINGS



The five-year delinquency proceedings trend line shown below demonstrates the ability of the Court to resolve numerous juvenile cases through the effective use of pre-trial conferences. This requires well prepared prosecutors, defense counsel, juvenile court officers and the availability of evidence-based programs which are part of a substantial continuum of care in Ottawa County.

FIGURE 2: REFEREE HEARINGS – 5 YEAR TREND, DELINQUENCY PROCEEDINGS

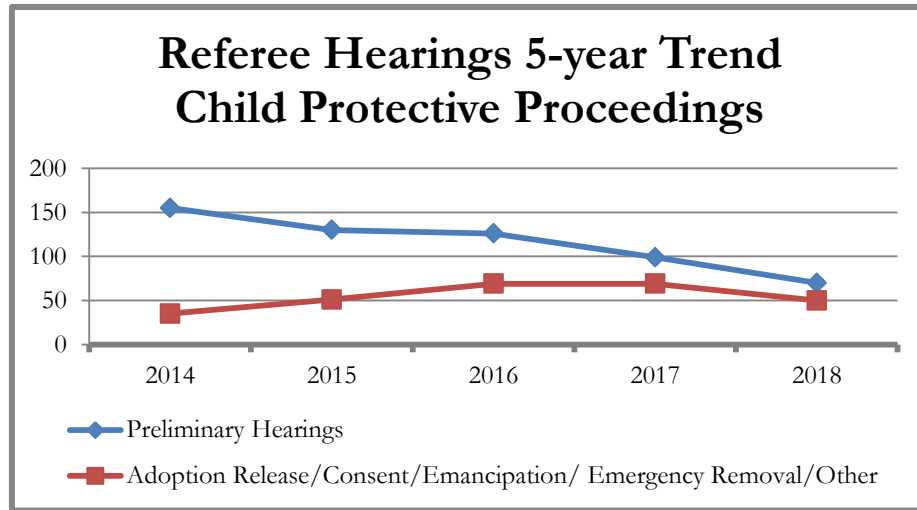


<sup>2</sup> Dispositional Review Hearing data was previously inaccurate, accounting for the significant increase in 2018.



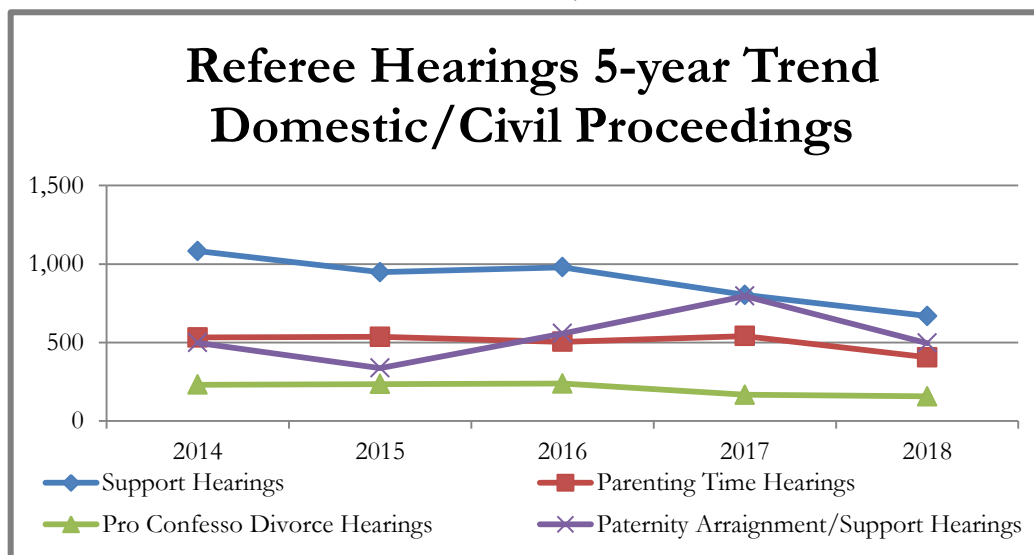
The following blue trend line demonstrates very positive movement with a reduction in child protective proceedings being filed with the Court and requiring preliminary hearings. These initial hearings, which can result in children being removed from their home based on allegations of abuse or neglect, are conducted by Attorney Referees and their recommendations are moved forward to the judges in subsequent hearings. The red trend line shows an increase in adoption release hearings where the birth mother formally releases her child to make a legal adoption possible.

FIGURE 3: REFEREE HEARINGS – 5 YEAR TREND, CHILD PROTECTIVE PROCEEDINGS



The competing trends noted in Figure 4 below, show four major areas of Attorney Referee hearings which are primarily conducted in the Ottawa County Courthouse in Grand Haven. During the past five years there has been a notable decline in repeated child support hearings, which suggests existing court orders are being properly followed and there are fewer significant changes in circumstances requiring modification of existing support orders. There are many possible reasons for this trend; however, improvements in the general economy and the reduction in unemployment rates are likely contributing factors. The trend lines for hearings on parenting time disputes and uncontested divorces have been relatively stable during the past five years. Between 2015 and 2017, the paternity hearings experienced a sharp increase due in part to more active management of paternity establishment cases by the Friend of the Court staff and their ability to conduct paternity DNA tests at the courthouse. The backlog of cases having been resolved, this line will likely stabilize in coming years.

FIGURE 4: REFEREE HEARINGS – 5 YEAR TREND, DOMESTIC/CIVIL PROCEEDINGS



## *Court Wide Initiatives*

**Strategic Planning** – Maintaining the Strategic Plan, periodically updating and revising goals, objectives, and priority projects, is an important function of court administration. In 2018, the Strategic Planning Oversight Team (SPOT) reviewed and revised the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts’ Strategic Plan to ensure court leadership and strategic planning action teams have consistent and reliable direction for court improvements. The most recent review included changing the Strategic Focus Areas to add a team designated to courthouse security and to provide a greater focus on court specific technology.<sup>3</sup>

**Family Justice Center** – To provide better coordinated and centralized Family Division services to the citizens of Ottawa County, the Courts and County Administration have been discussing plans to build a Family Justice Center on the Fillmore campus. In time, this Center would support the legislatively mandated concept of “one judge – one family” by bringing together the judges, attorney referees and court staff who handle domestic relations cases, juvenile cases, and child welfare cases. Space limitations currently require these services to be divided between courthouses in Grand Haven and West Olive. The Center will also move frequently used court services closer to the population centers within Ottawa County. Phase I of the project includes a “family friendly” courthouse, Phase II will provide for an updated juvenile detention facility, and Phase III envisions educational and treatment space for the Juvenile Justice Institute.

**Electronic Filing (efiling) of Court Documents** - The Circuit Court and the Ottawa County Clerk/Register’s Office were early adopters of efile technology and subsequently were selected as one of five pilot counties for the Michigan Supreme Court efile project. Throughout 2018, court and clerk personnel continued to work with the State Court Administrative Office and ImageSoft, Inc. to establish a fully functional efile portal, providing attorneys and litigants with the opportunity to remotely file documents in established cases. Toward the end of 2018, the Ottawa County Probate Court was selected as the test site for the statewide probate court “standard solution.” Testing continues to assist in the development of this application. As the acceptance of efile technology grows, this innovation will provide great access to the courts and increase public trust and confidence in the judicial branch of government.<sup>4</sup>



**BIS Digital, Inc. – Video Recording of Court Proceedings** – During the first half of 2018 court staff worked closely with BIS technicians to upgrade the video recording technology used to capture the official court record in courtrooms and attorney referee hearing rooms. This required significant planning, docket revisions, and testing to ensure the proper recording of all court proceedings. The successful completion of this project is also a great example of collaboration among the courts and several county departments, including Facilities, Innovation & Technology, and Fiscal Services.

**Ottawa County Office of Public Defender** - In 2013, the Michigan Legislature passed Public Act 93, creating the Michigan Indigent Defense Commission (MIDC) and authorizing the Commission to establish standards for public defender systems. Following the approval of the first four standards, all Michigan counties were required to submit compliance plans, with detailed budgets. The Ottawa County Courts and several County partners worked together to create a plan establishing a new executive branch public defender office. Initially, the Ottawa County Plan was approved by the MIDC, however the budget was

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.miottawa.org/Courts/20thcircuit/pdf/reports/2018-2020-Strategic-Plan.PDF>

<sup>4</sup> <https://mifile.courts.michigan.gov/>

rejected and a revised plan was subsequently submitted. In the Fall of 2018, the revised plan was approved, funding was received, and implementation of the Office of Public Defender commenced.<sup>5</sup>

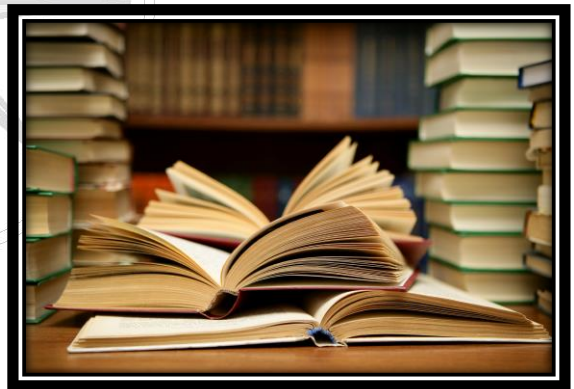
**JusticeSuite Software Development** – Court staff have been working with the County Innovation & Technology Department and SolidCircle to redesign a web-based case management system, intended to replace the legacy AS/400 Justice System currently in use. Since this type of process innovation requires detailed requirements gathering, beta testing and project oversight, participating courts and county departments have committed significant resources to ensure the ultimate success of the project. It is anticipated the initial product will be released in May 2019.

**Courthouse Security** - At the Ottawa County Courthouse in Grand Haven and the Family Division/Probate courthouse in West Olive, two staff teams have been meeting on a regular basis to review and update Site Emergency Plans, discuss relevant courthouse security issues, and collaborate on viable solutions to defined problems. The team consists of representatives from the Courts, the Sheriff's Department, County Clerk/Register's office, and related offices. Since these security teams have been formed, they have achieved many accomplishments, including:

- ❖ Updating Site Emergency Plans and conducting several table-top exercises
- ❖ Coordinating emergency drills with the Sheriff's Department
- ❖ Reviewing key card access to the buildings
- ❖ Reviewing and revising the West Olive incident report procedures

The Courts continue to participate in security improvements through staff emergency planning teams and with the County CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) activities.

**Public Education** – Throughout each year the courts are actively engaged in a variety of public education efforts. In 2018 for example, several school groups toured the courthouses and the Juvenile Detention Center where they learned about court process, observed judicial hearings, were exposed to a variety of evidence-based programs. In addition, numerous presentations were prepared and delivered on the Juvenile Court, Recovery Court and related substance abuse issues, the role of courts in society, technology applications in the justice system, talent development/talent management, procedural fairness, strategic planning, child support collection strategies, the importance of the US and Michigan constitutions, and much more.



**College Internship Program** - This court-wide intern program was revised to better accommodate short-term internships and to maximize the use of volunteer resources and compliment staffing needs. Internships provide a practical learning experience within the justice system, which benefits the student, the school, and the courts.<sup>6</sup>

**Website Updates** - Court information on the County's website is regularly reviewed to update content and to ensure ease of use. Modifications were made to provide new content, increased accessibility and a user-friendly format.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> <http://michiganidc.gov/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.miottawa.org/Courts/20thCircuit/internships.htm>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.miottawa.org/Courts/20thcircuit/default.htm>

## *Legal Self-Help Center*

The Legal Self-Help Center (LSHC) supports the work of the courts in Ottawa County by providing individuals with the forms and education necessary to access court services. Once individuals have accessed court services, the self-help center provides support in navigating court processes.

LSHC staff regularly interacts with individuals who are dealing with the court for the first time (e.g., divorce and custody cases) and those who have been involved with the court for many years (e.g., child support cases). These individuals are often stressed and dealing with major life changes. Volunteers are dedicated to providing outstanding customer service and treating each individual with compassion and respect. LSHC volunteers have earned the following praise:



- ❖ “Ladies were awesome and made my day. [They] walked me through step by step and [I] got all filed and filing productive.”
- ❖ “Very kind and helpful ladies.”
- ❖ “Lady was very helpful and thorough in explaining things.”

In 2018, the LSHC logged 1,814<sup>8</sup> hours of service and navigated more than 4,582 requests for assistance.<sup>9</sup> LSHC staff answered questions, distributed and organized forms, made copies and explained courtroom procedures. In total, LSHC volunteers provided the courts and Ottawa County with over \$19,938 worth of services.<sup>10</sup>

The LSHC distributed over 1,317 forms and 651 packets. Divorce and custody packets include a number of different forms required to start a court case. Last year, self-represented litigants in Ottawa County filed 513 new divorce cases<sup>11</sup>, or approximately 50% of all new divorce filings.<sup>12</sup> The majority of these self-represented filers utilized paperwork from the Legal Self-Help Center.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the LSHC trained four new volunteers in 2018. These volunteers are learning skills and gaining experience that make them prime candidates for future employment by the court or Ottawa County.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> 807.5 hours provided by volunteers; 1006.5 hours provided by paid staff.

<sup>9</sup> In person = 3797; Online = 249; Phone = 536

<sup>10</sup> In 2018, 1 volunteer hour was worth \$24.69 according to [independentsector.org/value-of-volunteer-time-2018](http://independentsector.org/value-of-volunteer-time-2018).

<sup>11</sup> 249 divorce without children (DO) and 264 divorce with children (DM).

<sup>12</sup> Actual percentages are 56% of new DO cases and 45% of new DM cases.

<sup>13</sup> 65% of filers without children and 76% of filers with children utilized LSHC paperwork.

<sup>14</sup> To date, the LSHC has trained 10 individuals who were subsequently hired by the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court or Ottawa County. These individuals include: Kate Armstrong, Pete Armstrong, Susan Hoekema, Sheri Lankheet, Tiffany Mast, Karen Meyers, Keshonna Redmond, Shannon Rogers, Ken Schreur, and Kelli Wyse.

# *Ottawa County Circuit Court Poised on the Forefront of Robotic Court Technology Solutions*

The 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court received a considerable amount of attention from around the country when it tested a new potential employee the week of November 12, 2018. CORA (a Court-Operated Robotic Assistant) visited the Grand Haven courthouse to provide direction and stress-relief to visitors. CORA's name also honored Ottawa County's first female Probate Court Judge, Hon. Cora VandeWater, who served from 1933 to 1948. The name was a result of a courthouse employee vote.

The Circuit Court worked with Paul McManus and his team from Advanced Robot Solutions, which has previously provided robots for airports, trade shows and hospitals. CORA, however, was the first robot to be used in a courthouse setting.



CORA provided visitors with docket information, directions, biographical information on the judges and referees, and answered frequently asked questions. Her information was available in English and Spanish. CORA was not just all work and no play, though! In addition to her informative nature, she was able to dance and display “selfies” of the people who interacted with her.

The pilot test was a complete success, with great feedback in the courthouse, as well as in response to the numerous articles and news items about the test. Children especially seemed intrigued by CORA, further demonstrating the potential value of a courthouse robot in situations where children may be in need of stress relief.

Ottawa County gained further attention when Circuit Court and Probate Court Administrator Kevin Bowling later presented with Mr. McManus at the National Center for State Court's 2018 eCourts Conference about the future of courthouse robotic solutions.



CORA was developed without any financial support from the Ottawa County Circuit Court.

## *Over the Past Six Years, People are Very Satisfied with the 20th Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts*

For several years, the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts have received high marks from the public regarding their experiences with the court. Using a survey that was administered in courts statewide, the local Circuit and Probate Courts asked court users questions about whether the Courts were accessible, timely, and fair, and if they were treated with courtesy and respect by judges and court staff.

“Our court serves the people, so their views are critically important in helping us make decisions on how to improve court operations,” said Chief Circuit Judge Jon A. Van Allsburg. Chief Probate Judge Mark A. Feyen also noted, “I am very proud of the hard work put in by our Probate Court employees, and we are committed to being even more efficient and focused on improving service to the public.”

Highlights from the 2018 survey include:

- ❖ 92% of court users said they were treated with courtesy and respect by court staff.
- ❖ 88% of court users said the way the judge or attorney referee handled their case was fair.
- ❖ 84% of court users were able to get their business done in a reasonable amount of time.

“We use the data from this survey to make management decisions that help better serve the public,” said Court Administrator Kevin J. Bowling. “Our goal is for every person who comes through the courthouse doors to be satisfied and treated fairly.”

Developed with input from judges and court administrators statewide and tabulated by the State Court Administrative Office to insure accuracy, the survey enables courts to identify strengths, provide positive feedback to employees, and target areas for improvement. The survey was completed by a range of court users, including parties to cases, attorneys, jurors, and others.

The public satisfaction survey is part of a statewide initiative of the Michigan Supreme Court and the State Court Administrative Office to measure and report on court performance. From 2013 through 2018, over 120,000 surveys were completed in courts throughout Michigan. Visit [www.courts.mi.gov](http://www.courts.mi.gov) for more information.



## *Financial Overview*

As an independent branch of government, the Courts generate limited revenue but do not operate like a for-profit business. Other than case filing fees established by the state legislature, the public is not charged for many court services and in cases where there is no ability to pay, fees are typically waived. Instead, the Courts rely on the Michigan Supreme Court to pay for judicial salaries through a legislative appropriation and partially reimburse the County for court-specific operating expenses through the Court Equity Fund. In addition to state reimbursements, the Courts rely heavily on County general fund appropriations to cover the cost of most employees and daily operations.

The Court Equity Fund, (MCL 600.151b), was established in October 1996 to provide limited funding for trial court operations. The fund is disbursed quarterly within the state fiscal year to county governments, based on a statutory formula that establishes each county's share. The formula includes two factors: the caseload activity of the circuit and probate courts and the number of judgeships in each county. The first factor, caseload, takes into account new cases filed for the most recent three years in the circuit and probate courts and compares the county's proportion of these filings for the three years to the total state filings. The second factor compares the number of judgeships within the county to total judgeships for the entire state.

Revenue sources of the Court Equity Fund include state general fund appropriations and multiple sources of restricted revenue that originate from local trial court fees, costs and assessments. Each payment from the fund within the state fiscal year reflects the revenue deposits to the Court Equity Fund for the preceding quarter. Therefore, quarterly payments will vary, reflecting fluctuations in court revenues received.

The Juror Compensation Reimbursement Fund was created as of January 1, 2003 to provide a source of reimbursement funding to trial courts for legislated increases in juror attendance compensation. Beginning October 1, 2003, jurors were compensated at higher rates (see MCL 600.1344) and trial court funding units are allowed to claim reimbursement biannually from the fund for increased expenses.

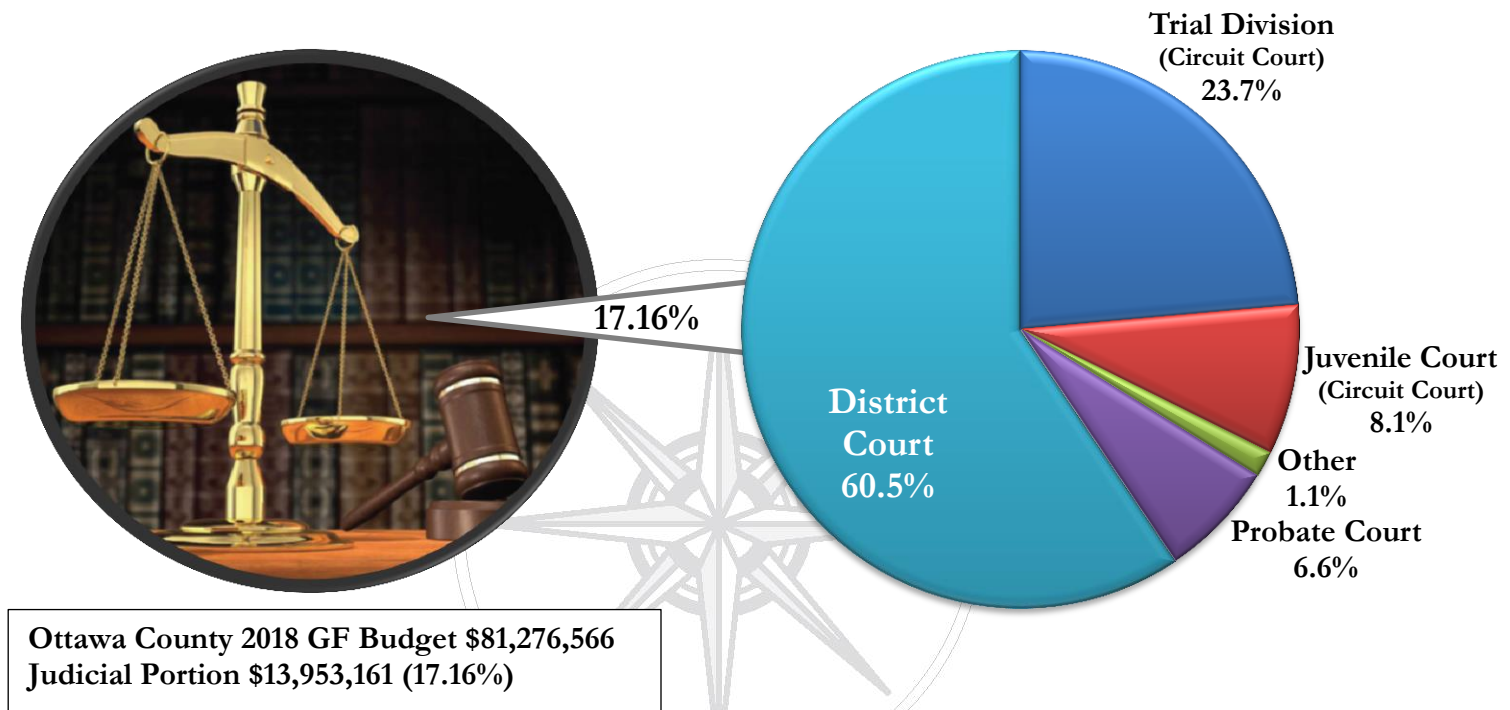
Other Court expenses are paid in part by federal Title IV-D funds (Family Division – FOC child support collection); the Michigan Child Care Fund, Title IV-E and Title I funds (Family Division – Juvenile Court programming); state reimbursement for the County Juvenile Officers, and various state and federal grants (e.g., partial Recovery Court funding). The substantial balance is paid through an appropriation from the Ottawa County general fund.



## Ottawa County 2018 General Fund Allocation

In FY 2018, the County general fund expenditure budget was \$81,276,566; the judicial portion was \$13,953,161 or 17.16% of the GF budget. Of the 17.16% expenditure, the Circuit Court Trial Division (Fund 1310) was allocated \$3,306,899 (23.7%); Juvenile Court (Fund 1490) was allotted \$1,130,206 (8.1%); and Probate Court (Fund 1480) received \$920,909 (6.6%). The remaining \$8,441,662 (60.5%) went to District Court (Fund 1360), with a small 1.1% allocation to “adult probation and other”.

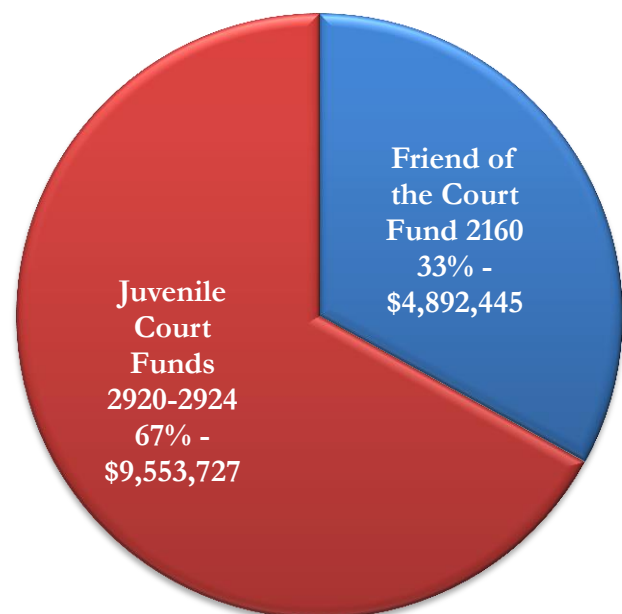
FIGURE 5: OTTAWA COUNTY 2018 GENERAL FUND ALLOCATION – JUDICIAL PORTION



## Ottawa County 2018 Special Revenue Funds Transfer

Due to other funding streams, the Friend of the Court (FOC) and Child Care Fund portion of the Juvenile Court budget is not reflected in the general fund budget allocations. For FY 2018, the 20th Circuit received special revenue fund expenditure budgets amounting to \$14,446,172. These allocations were divided as follows: FOC received a revenue operating transfer of \$4,892,445; and the Juvenile Court received funding for child care programs of \$9,553,727.

FIGURE 6: 2018 SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS TRANSFER





## *Van Allsburg and Feyen Reappointed Chief Judges*

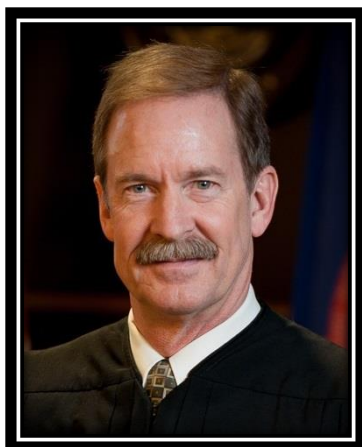
The Michigan Supreme Court reappointed 20th Circuit Court Judge Jon Van Allsburg and Ottawa County Probate Court Judge Mark Feyen to the position of Chief Judge for a two year term expiring December 31, 2019. The position of Chief Judge is essential to the successful operations of the Circuit and Probate Courts. Pursuant to Michigan Court Rule, the Chief Judge has “administrative superintending power and control over the judges of the court and all court personnel” to supervise caseload management, monitor judicial workloads, assign the business of the court, develop policies, oversee court finances, and much more.

“I am grateful to the Michigan Supreme Court for providing this leadership opportunity and I look forward to continuing a collaborative relationship with our outstanding judges and court employees as we tend to the legal needs of the public,” said Judge Van Allsburg. “The 20th Circuit Court has been a leader among trial courts in Michigan and we will continue our efforts to improve performance and provide excellent public service.”

Van Allsburg is an honors graduate of the Michigan State University College of Law, and joined the Circuit Court in 2005 after a 25-year career in the practice of law, during which he served as chairman of the board of the Michigan West Coast (formerly Holland Area) Chamber of Commerce. He will continue to be assigned to the Family Division of the Circuit Court, and he is also assigned to hear appeals from lower courts, municipalities, and state agencies. In 2013, Van Allsburg was originally appointed by the Michigan Supreme Court to serve as the 20th Circuit Business Court judge and, recently, was reappointed for a six-year term. He also serves as an officer of the Michigan Judges Association.

Feyen received his Bachelors degree from Calvin College and graduated from the College of Law at the University of Illinois in 1980. He was admitted to the Michigan bar on May 26, 1981. He then went on to join Scholten & Fant, a private law practice in Grand Haven and later served the Ottawa County Prosecutor’s Office as an assistant prosecutor, specializing in cases involving children. Feyen won the November 1988 election, and began serving as Probate Judge on January 1, 1989. He has been reelected to the bench five times. In addition to his probate court duties, he hears cases in the Family Court division involving juvenile delinquency, abuse and neglect, adoptions, and name changes. He also conducts the adult felony Ottawa County Recovery Court and is a member of the Michigan Probate Judges Association.

**Hon. Jon A. Van Allsburg**



**Hon. Mark A. Feyen**



## *20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Judge Jon H. Hulsing Appointed to the Judicial Tenure Commission*

Lynn A. Helland, Executive Director and General Counsel of the Michigan Judicial Tenure Commission announced the appointment of the Hon. Jon H. Hulsing as Commissioner for the Judicial Tenure Commission, representing all of the circuit court judges in Michigan. Judge Hulsing began his three-year term as Commissioner on January 1, 2019.

The Judicial Tenure Commission is an independent state agency responsible for investigating complaints of judicial misconduct and disability, conducting hearings as appropriate, recommending sanctions to the Michigan Supreme Court, and otherwise working to enhance the integrity of the judiciary. The Michigan Constitution was amended to establish the Judicial Tenure Commission in 1968. The Commission protects the public from unethical judicial conduct, preserves the institutional integrity of the judiciary, and attempts to ensure that unsubstantiated complaints do not interfere with the essential work judges do.

Judge Hulsing began serving as Circuit Court Judge for the 20th Circuit Court on April 26, 2006, and was subsequently elected to two six-year terms. Before his judicial appointment, Judge Hulsing served as an assistant prosecutor for Ottawa County, along with several years in private practice. In 2004 he was recognized as Prosecutor of the Year by the Michigan Arson Prevention Committee. He graduated summa cum laude earning a Juris Doctor degree from the Thomas M. Cooley Law School and magna cum laude earning a Bachelor of Arts degree from Grand Valley State University. Judge Hulsing currently presides over felony criminal and civil cases and was previously assigned to the Family Division.

**Hon. Jon H. Hulsing**



# Trial Division

## Caseload Facts

The 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court Trial Division (Grand Haven) caseload includes appeals, criminal and civil cases. In addition, the Trial Division handles the domestic relations portion of the Family Division docket.

Throughout 2018, Judge Miedema and Judge Hulsing presided over criminal, civil and personal protection order cases. Judge Miedema also handled 60% of divorces without children. Judge Van Allsburg heard appellate and business court cases, 50% of the domestic relations cases, and 20% of divorces without children. Judge Engle was assigned 50% of the domestic relations cases and 20% of divorces without children. In addition, Judge Engle conducted court two days per week at the Fillmore Complex with a mixed docket of juvenile delinquency cases and child protective proceedings.

From 2017 to 2018, the appellate caseload increased by 12.2% and the criminal caseload (new filings and reopened cases) increased by 1.5%, while the civil caseload decreased by 4.9%. Overall, the Trial Division experienced a less than 1% increase in new filings and reopened cases from 2017 to 2018. This caseload data helps explain the workload variations experienced by Trial Division staff and may impact the outcome of the judicial resource study conducted by the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) and the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) in 2018.

FIGURE 7: CIRCUIT COURT 5 YEAR CASELOAD TRENDS

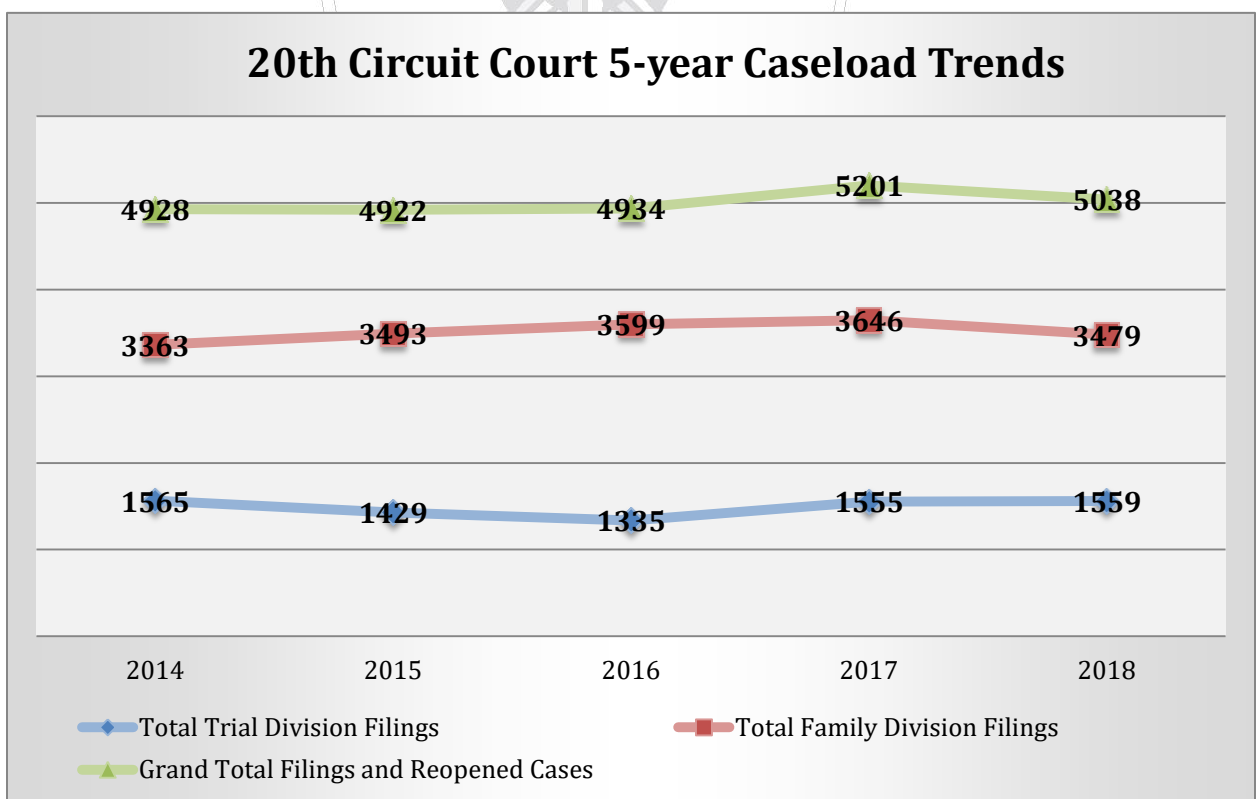
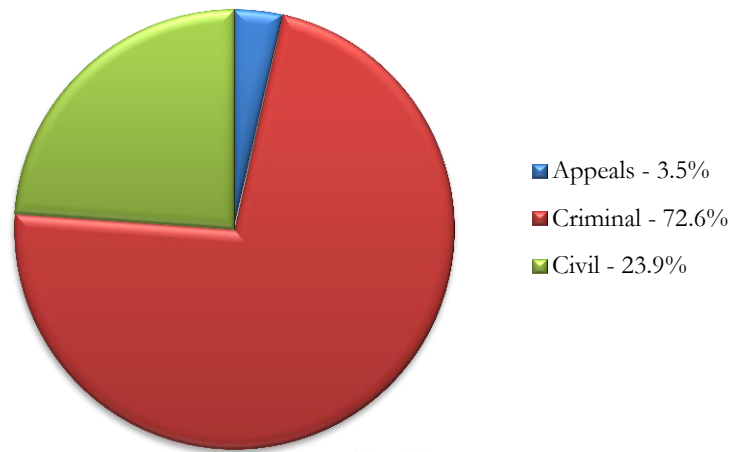


FIGURE 8: 2018 TRIAL DIVISION CASELOAD

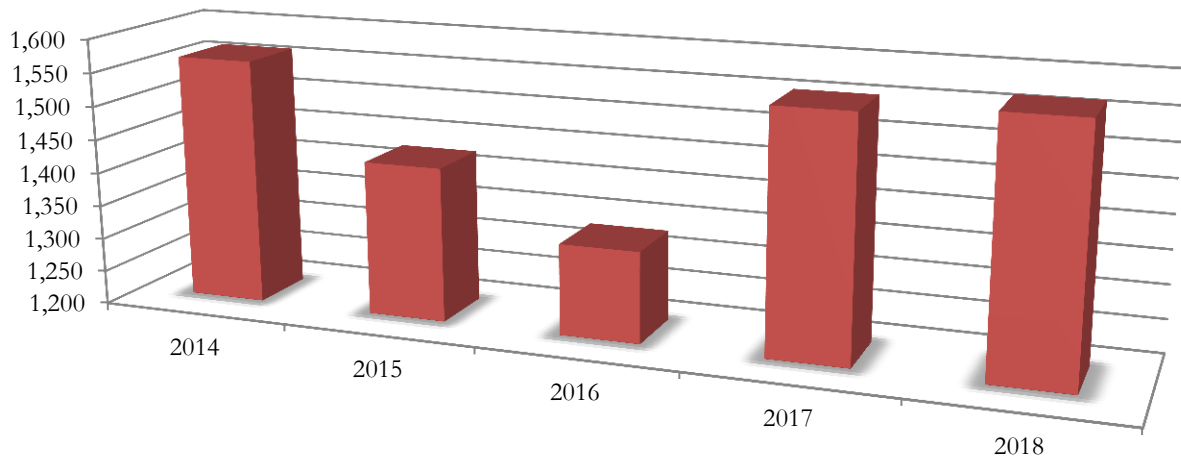
### Trial Division Caseload - 2018



Although the Trial Division caseload is distinct from the Family Division caseload, it is important to note that judges and court employees regularly assist with all aspects of the court’s important work, even if assigned to a specific court division. For instance, the primary criminal and civil judges, Judges Hulsing and Miedema, routinely handle most requests for adult or juvenile personal protection orders. Likewise, due to the current split of the Family Division between the Grand Haven and West Olive courthouses, Trial Division staff assists Family Division staff with the processing and scheduling of disparate cases types. This collaboration and sharing of workloads is a cultural norm in Ottawa County and is reflective of the courts’ core values noted above.

FIGURE 9: NEW AND REOPENED CASE FILINGS – TRIAL DIVISION

### New and Reopened Case Filings - Trial Division



## *Restoring Wholeness Through Circuit Court Collections*

Once a defendant is sentenced by a judge to pay fines, court costs, and restitution, the 20th Circuit Court felony collections team starts tracking their whereabouts until their financial obligations are paid in full. For some cases, this may be for just a few weeks; for others, it could be decades. It is the team's priority to ensure victims in these cases are made whole again and financial obligations owed to the court are fulfilled.

For example, in 2018 Mr. Smith<sup>15</sup> was placed on parole after serving several years in prison. He owed a significant amount in restitution to more than thirty victims. The collections team arranged a time to meet with Mr. Smith to discuss his ability to pay and review his financial situation. During this meeting, Mr. Smith proposed an unrealistic payment amount of \$25.00 per month, claiming that was all he could afford. However, Mr. Smith failed to bring any proof of income or bills for verification. A contempt of court (show cause) hearing was scheduled for Mr. Smith to appear before the judge and he was told again to bring proof of his income and bills to that hearing. Mr. Smith was clearly attempting to avoid this obligation and was hoping that by serving his prison time, he would not have to repay the restitution due to the victims.

When Mr. Smith appeared for his show cause hearing before the judge, he brought proof that he was receiving Social Security Income exceeding \$1,600.00 per month plus Medicare benefits. In addition, Mr. Smith was living with a family member and had a personal monthly budget which included paying for a vehicle, which he didn't own. He was unemployed and showed little interest in looking for work. The judge reviewed this information and denied Mr. Smith's request to pay only \$25.00 monthly. Knowing there were victims who have been waiting years to see some kind of return on their losses, the judge established a reasonable monthly payment plan for the defendant, Mr. Smith.

Since the hearing, Mr. Smith has complied with his monthly payments exactly as ordered. Almost \$2,000 has been repaid to the victims and the payments continue. Without the exemplary work of the felony collection clerks and the support of Circuit judges, Mr. Smith would have continued on parole with no intention to repay any significant part of this debt. The collections team plays a crucial role ensuring court ordered restitution is paid to victims of crime and collecting for court expenses.



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<sup>15</sup> Name changed for privacy purposes

## *Ottawa County Recovery Court*

The adult felony drug court for the 20th Circuit Court in Ottawa County began in January, 2005. The 58th District Court started a sobriety court about six months prior to this and continues to operate an alcohol docket and a mental health docket. In addition, the Ottawa County courts participate in a regional Veterans Treatment Court with Allegan and Van Buren Counties. The drug court model used by the Circuit Court with adults has been highly effective. Research shows fidelity to the ten key components<sup>16</sup> of drug court will ensure a program's success. Courts which improvise too much generally have poor results.

The Ottawa County Recovery Court program has received strong support from the Prosecutor's Office, the Sheriff's Office, several treatment agencies, and the community in general. There are church volunteers who provide rides to court for participants who have often lost driving privileges due to their addictions. Other volunteers provide snacks at "the gathering" which follows each court hearing so participants can get to know each other and staff on an informal basis. Volunteers employed by local banks provide budget counseling for participants. Current funding for the program is from grants through the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) and the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). With these grants, positions are funded for two staff and two peer recovery coaches as well as for participant treatment.

Peer recovery coaches are an integral part of the program. These individuals are recovering addicts who have successfully completed intensive training to support other addicts in recovery. With generous grant funding, the Ottawa County Recovery Court has also sponsored several recovery coach trainings to extend a supportive network for the recovery community. A participant who is struggling will tell their recovery coach personal concerns they may not want to share with a probation officer or staff. Honesty is promoted as the first rule of recovery. A recovery coach who has "been there and done that" can often help a participant break down barriers of denial.

Recovery Court is a strict behavioral program. Every participant has a minimum number of AA or recovery support meetings to attend. Treatment always begins with a residential program or nine hours per week of intensive outpatient treatment. Treatment becomes less intensive thereafter, but will continue for as long as they are in the program (minimum 18 months, average 21 months, maximum 30 months). Participants must report weekly to their probation officer, submit to random, observed drug testing, complete writing assignments, appear for regular court review hearings, submit to home checks by night-time surveillance officers, and obey a curfew. Electronic monitoring of participants using a tether or SCRAM/alcohol monitoring system is also used when helpful to the recovery process. Every effort is made to keep participants busy with positive activities and leave little time for mischief.

All good drug/recovery courts employ a system of sanctions and incentives. The sanctions are identified for participants in advance so they clearly understand the consequences of violating the law or program rules. Most sanctions do not involve jail, but short periods of jail time are used when necessary. Incentives are equally important to program success. Participants may receive applause during the review hearings when there is a positive report, sometimes gift cards are used, and occasionally program requirements are adjusted to recognize good performance. The Recovery Court uses a participant handbook and policy manual to provide details regarding program eligibility, the referral process and program requirements.<sup>17</sup>

The Ottawa County Recovery Court program has made some recent changes. Program phases have been re-designed, the phase structure has changed from four phases to five and the overall program length was

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ndci.org>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.miottawa.org/Courts/20thCircuit/recoverycourt.htm>

lengthened. Program size is another significant change, expanding from 30 participants to 60 participants. Adding participants also provided an opportunity to create two distinct dockets, one for alcohol cases and one for drug cases. Best practices suggest this docket split in part because drug offenders and alcohol offenders seem to prefer being segregated in this way. This is the primary reason why Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous are two separate organizations. It also provides for greater efficiency when conducting the court review hearings and helps comply with hearing standards set by the National Drug Court Institute.

Another 2018 change is the program name. The 20th Circuit Adult Drug Court was renamed the Ottawa County Recovery Court (OCRC). The new name emphasizes that the program promotes recovery, not drugs. It also fits better with the two docket structure.

Recently, the National Drug Court Institute designated the OCRC as a National Mentor Court. This allows the OCRC opportunities to host teams from drug courts in other communities who are about to start, or have recently started their own program. Teams from Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania have already been hosted and more will come. Several years ago, the OCRC team visited a court in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and were mentored by them. It was a helpful experience, not only to learn and view good practices, but also for observing some negative aspects of the program and ensuring the elimination of those practices from the OCRC. Being a mentor court has been a positive experience and has caused the court to reflect. It lessens the possibility that practices continue because “that’s what we’ve always done.”

Visitors are encouraged to observe the OCRC review hearings on alternating Thursdays, 9:00 AM, Courtroom 3B, Ottawa County Courthouse, Grand Haven.



## *Ottawa County Recovery Court - What Success Looks Like*

In 2018, the Ottawa County Recovery Court (OCRC) successfully completed its 14<sup>th</sup> year of operation as a specialized program of the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court. It is also entering its third year as one of nine national mentor courts (among 3,000+ specialty courts in the US) selected by the US Department of Justice and the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. The Recovery Court has accepted over 300 participants, has a 73% graduation rate, a 75% retention rate, and two rigorously designed evaluations have demonstrated the recovery court reduces recidivism more effectively than incarceration and/or traditional probation. The participant population is 73% less likely to be rearrested after 3-years, and there is a 20% reduction in felony re-arrests over 5-years post-discharge from the recovery court.

The Ottawa County Recovery Court is proud of these results. Success has been achieved while remaining primarily grant funded. The OCRC team has successfully engaged the community and continues to include agencies and individuals who volunteer their time and talents to make our recovery court work.

While it is standard to present results in terms of statistics and for business decisions to be made solely “on the numbers,” it’s all too easy to ignore the human impact of a program and how lives of individuals and families have improved and been transformed. The following anecdotes more clearly demonstrate this:

- ❖ Graduate with 13+ years sobriety completed a 4-year degree, received a master’s degree, and now works as a substance abuse therapist.
- ❖ Graduate with 12+ years sobriety went on to college, completed a 4-year degree, and is employed as a peer mentor in Ottawa County.
- ❖ Graduate with 7+ years sobriety now mentors others in recovery, chairs victim impact panels, and stays in regular contact with the court.
- ❖ Graduate with 6+ years sobriety has returned to court every year for the past five years on their sobriety anniversary to thank the court for the help received and to offer words of encouragement to participants.
- ❖ Graduate with 5+ years sobriety who works as a surgical assistant is now certified in advanced surgical procedures and started a recovery support and exercise group in the community.
- ❖ Graduate with 3+ years sobriety was hired full-time at his community services site, after completing his service while in the court, and still works at the location.

Success. The numbers speak. The participants tell the story.



**DRUG COURTS WORK!**



# Friend of the Court (FOC)

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## *Caseload Facts*

Throughout 2018, Friend of the Court staff handled a Title IV-D caseload (child support) of 11,066 cases, representing a 1.3% decrease from 2017. During the same time period, there was also a 1.3% decrease in new divorce and other domestic relations filings. To enforce court orders on these cases, 3,766 show cause hearings were conducted (where parties are ordered to “show cause” why they should not be held in contempt of court for failing to obey a valid court order), 1,294 bench warrants were issued, and \$39.6 million in child support payments were collected and disbursed to families in need. In addition to these enforcement efforts, staff directly assisted clients by scheduling 2,834 appointments and meeting with 624 walk-in clients. To help ensure child support orders are updated to reflect significant changes in circumstances, staff conducted 2,242 case reviews and recommended modification where appropriate (representing a 5% increase from 2017). Based on federal child support performance measures, the 20th Circuit FOC is one of the most effective operations in Michigan, ranking at or near the top of the 16 largest counties and collecting \$9.96 for every dollar spent.

Besides the child support enforcement efforts of the Friend of the Court, there were 178 cases in 2018 in which the 20th Circuit Court received a petition for a special assessment regarding child custody or parenting time issues. In 49% of these cases, FOC staff conducted an extensive investigation and provided the Court with recommendations. Diversion conferences conducted by FOC staff, resolved 47% of these cases thereby saving significant time and resources for all involved. Often, custody investigators are required to appear in court and testify regarding the investigation/recommendations. In addition to these in-depth child custody assessments, the FOC further supports the Court by providing detailed psychological evaluations in select cases.



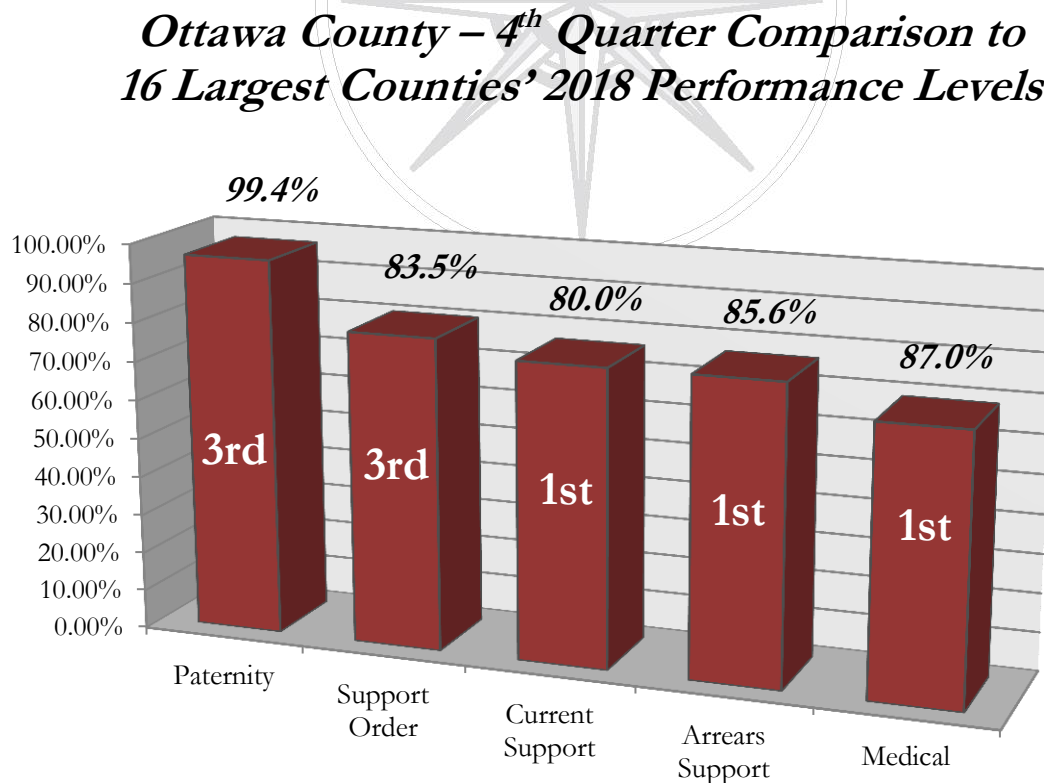
## *FOC Performance Measures*

Child support collection falls under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act. The Friend of the Court office operates as a Title IV-D agency and a large part of the expense of operating the office (approximately 66%) is reimbursed by federal funds through a State Cooperative Reimbursement Contract.

The Friend of the Court office also defrays operating costs by earning incentive dollars based on performance. As set forth in the 1998 Child Support Performance and Incentive Act, the performance of each IV-D agency is measured in five key areas. State child support enforcement programs across the country are measured in Paternity Establishment, Support Order Establishment, Collections on Current Support, Collections on Arrears, and Cost Effectiveness. Medical support establishment/enforcement is also measured and incentives are earned separately on this factor at a rate of 15% of medical support collections.

When the Friend of the Court office in Ottawa County is measured against the sixteen (16) largest counties in Michigan, its performance is notable in all areas. This high performance not only helps secure child support for families and children in Ottawa County, but results in earned incentive dollars that reduce the amount of Ottawa County general fund dollars needed to fund the program. In 2018, the total Federal incentive dollars earned was \$410,348 plus an additional medical incentive of \$56,238 (**\$466,586 overall, representing a 1.4% increase from 2017**).

FIGURE 10: OTTAWA COUNTY 4<sup>TH</sup> QUARTER COMPARISON TO 16 LARGEST COUNTIES' 2018 PERFORMANCE LEVELS



## *FOC Achievements*

**Child Support Collections** - Total FOC collections for 2018 were \$39,627,688 which is the highest amount of child support collected historically by the FOC in Ottawa County.

**Staff Training** - The FOC has maintained high levels of education and training for staff with each FOC employee responsible for participating in 40 hours of training each year. Additionally, 19 of 20 investigator staff are certified mediators. The FOC in Ottawa County is recognized as a high performing FOC office leading several state-wide training events related to bench warrant enforcement including: the use of assigned deputies from the local sheriff's department to enforce child support; location tools and social media platforms used for enforcement; and the use of immobilization devices ("boots") for vehicles of non-payers of support.



**County Innovation Grant** - The FOC applied for and successfully received an Ottawa County Innovation Grant in 2016 which allowed for the creation of a third Ottawa County Sheriff's Office deputy position assigned to the FOC, as well as, an additional FOC Account Specialist position. These additional positions have helped to reduce the outstanding civil bench warrants and have allowed the FOC to focus on meeting the required Federal Expiration Date for service of process in paternity and support cases. The paternity establishment percentage for 2018 FYQ4 was 99.4% clearly demonstrating the effectiveness and timeliness of paternity establishment when a child is born to unmarried parents. Getting paternity established quickly allows the FOC to set child support earlier in the child's life and is a way to allow families to become more self-sufficient and less reliant on public assistance.

**Online Dispute Resolution (ODR)** - In late 2016, the FOC began using the Matterhorn "Online Dispute Resolution" software platform to assist with reducing the number of cases set for show cause hearing for non-payment of support. Matterhorn created a check-in system for use on the day of the



court hearing which resulted in efficiencies for staff in conducting pre-hearings with non-paying parties in child support cases. The system also helped create an accurate bench warrant list for use in contempt of court findings. The Matterhorn platform set up a system for texting notification to payers when their case fit the criteria for show cause and allowed FOC staff to negotiate settlement of the outstanding payment amount. This effective method of resolving the non-payment issue resulted in a 24% reduction of show cause hearings scheduled with judges. Show cause hearings are now held two Fridays per month instead of every Friday. Use of the Matterhorn platform has also resulted in 33% fewer warrants issued due to payers taking notice of text notifications alerting them to the show cause hearing rather than relying on postal notification which may use inaccurate mailing address information. The FOC is excited about utilizing the Matterhorn platform to resolve other types of disputes in family law cases and believes it could easily be adapted and expanded for use in resolving parenting time issues.

**IRS Audit** - Perhaps the biggest achievement for Friend of the Court in 2018 was successful completion of an on-site federal audit by the IRS to determine if the FOC was in compliance with Federal law and regulations requiring the safeguarding of confidential data, including Federal Tax Information. The IRS conducts an audit of the Michigan Child Support Program every three years and chooses one county, of the 83 counties available, to visit on-site. Ottawa County was chosen and visited by the IRS for several days in September 2018. At that time, IRS auditors reviewed policies and procedures with management,

independently interviewed staff and completed a visual walk through of the office space itself. At the conclusion of the visit, IRS auditors indicated that they found no compliance issues with regard to FOC operations and the physical office space it occupies. The IRS conducted a separate IT audit with regard to the safeguarding of information within the many operating systems used by the Courts and County Departments. Although there were some findings from the IT audit that needed corrective action, IT is currently addressing those issues and as a result, the County should be in a better position to successfully complete any future IT audits.

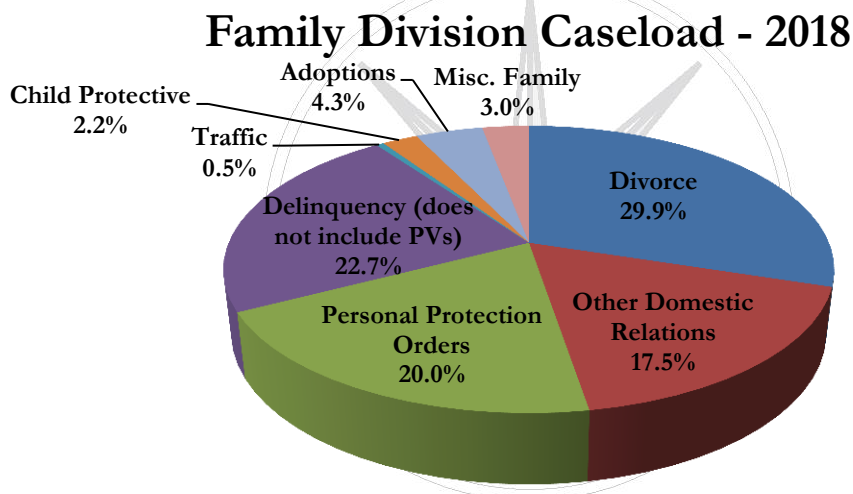


# Juvenile Court and Detention Center

## Caseload Facts

Court personnel, like most community leaders, understand children represent the future. As a result, when 788 new and reopened juvenile petitions and 17 traffic cases arrived at Juvenile Court throughout 2018, a concerted effort was made to ensure appropriate programming was available for delinquent youth, family, caregivers and related agencies. To professionally assess and manage delinquency cases, Juvenile Court staff provided a variety of services within the community. These services included 8,164 contacts with juveniles and parents, as well as ancillary contacts with schools, counselors, etc. Though the overall number of delinquency cases decreased from 2017 to 2018 (-16.7%), the complexity of many cases dramatically increased, thus requiring a customized approach to the provision of services and, in some cases, more costly residential treatment. As noted in the chart below, delinquency cases account for 23.5% of the family division caseload and Juvenile Court staff also assist with child protective proceedings and miscellaneous family cases which are handled at the West Olive Fillmore Complex.

FIGURE 11: 2018 FAMILY DIVISION CASELOAD



When court-involved youth are on probation or otherwise ordered to receive treatment, there is a continuum of available programs which are designed to assist youth and families in the remediation of offending behaviors. Programs include community-based treatment, supervised community service, anger management, sex offender program, intensive supervision, experiential ropes course, gender-specific groups, individual/group/family counseling, a community-based school and more. In 2018, the Juvenile Court provided educational services through the Juvenile Justice Institute to 13 youth of which, one received their high school diploma. Four juveniles were placed in out-of-home residential treatment during 2018 and two additional youth were placed in the Ottawa County Detention Center's Lighthouse Girls Treatment Program. The Juvenile Community Justice program provided alternative community support and supervision to 13 youth.

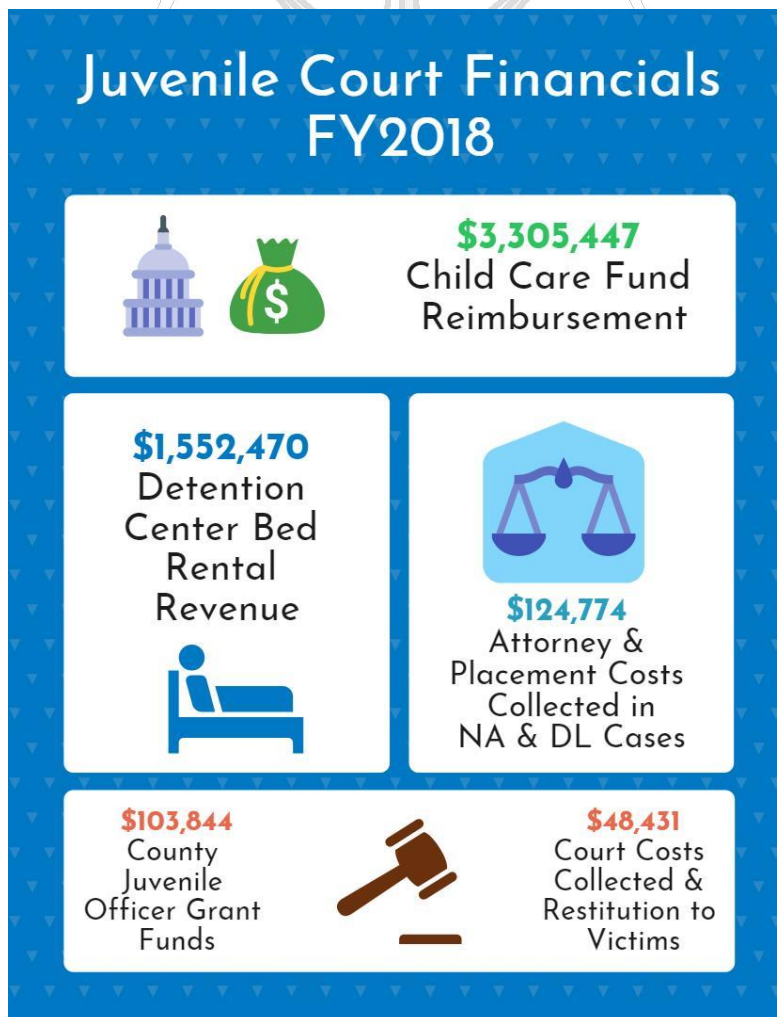
During 2018, there were 408 admissions to secure detention in the Ottawa County Juvenile Detention Center, representing 11,548 days of service. Many secure detention beds are occupied by Ottawa County youth; however, beds are also rented to other jurisdictions which have no local, secure placement options. Bed rental agreements accounted for \$1,552,470 of new revenue in 2018. In addition, the Court expanded the Lighthouse Program, a trauma-based, female-specific, residential program to address the needs of the court-involved, female offender population. Several beds within the Lighthouse Program are rented to other counties, generating additional revenue.

# Juvenile Court Funding

As a County funded entity, the 20th Circuit, Juvenile Court offsets and recoups operational costs whenever possible utilizing the following strategies:

- ❖ Michigan’s Child Care Fund provides 50% reimbursement for costs related to the direct care of and community-based programming for juveniles.
- ❖ The Ottawa County Juvenile Detention Center (OCJDC) generates revenue through renting beds to other counties in need of detention or programming for court-involved youth. The OCJDC has a great reputation among the juvenile courts in the state for providing quality care and treatment of their court-involved youth. Thus, in 2018, the Juvenile Court contracted with 30 counties for bed rental.
- ❖ Attorneys are appointed to children and parents in Delinquency and Neglect/Abuse cases when they are unable to afford legal representation. At times, it is necessary for a child to be placed outside the home of his or her parents. When appropriate, the parents of court-involved youth are billed to recoup some costs expended by the courts for attorneys and/or out-of-home placements.
- ❖ The County Juvenile Officer grant offsets the salaries of four Juvenile Court positions.
- ❖ The Court is required to assess various costs, including restitution to crime victims, which generates some revenue. In these cases, the fees assessed offset the cost of programs and services offered to court-involved youth.

FIGURE 12: JUVENILE COURT FINANCIALS - FY2018



## *A Program for Every Season*

Providing restorative services to youth and families is a top priority of every juvenile court and acquiring adequate space to do so is critical. In August 2017, through the gracious offering of Ottawa County administration, the 20th Circuit, Juvenile Court relocated the Juvenile Treatment Services Unit and the Juvenile Justice Institute (JJI) to 12263 James St., Holland, MI (CMH Building B). This spacious building provides the Court new opportunities to expand and improve the delivery of services to youth and families, beyond what was possible in the previous space. With most of the youth involved with the Juvenile Court living in the Holland area, this building also allows:



- ❖ easy access to youth who participate in programs and are challenged by transportation;
- ❖ accessible meeting space in which they can meet with their Juvenile Court Officers (JCOs); and
- ❖ youth to receive treatment services in a community-based setting.

Flexible hours are important to Court clients, and the new James Street location allows the Court to offer Wednesday evening appointments with Juvenile Court Officers and therapists.



**The Juvenile Justice Institute School:** During the day, the building bustles with students in the Juvenile Justice Institute, the Court's community-based school for adjudicated youth who are long-term suspended, expelled, or experiencing chronic, behavioral issues in school. JJI is a driving force behind much of the Court's programming and served as the impetus for the building transition.

**Extra-curricular Activities:** The Holland building offers a juvenile friendly setting, larger classrooms, a cafeteria, and a music room. Physical activity is a critical

aspect of healthy development for all adolescents and the new building boasts a large gym and new basketball hoops, which are used daily between classes and after school. During the Winter/Spring of 2018, the JJI Jaguars basketball team played their second season in the Lakeshore Honors League. Through basketball, students learned to work as a team, improve their ability to follow rules, regulate their emotions, and, of course, get some exercise!

**Evidence-based Programs:** Juvenile Court programming at this facility is also driven by several evidenced-based programs and practices, including the Youth Level of Service (YLS) inventory - an assessment designed to predict the risk for a youth to reoffend and Effective Practices in Community Supervision (EPICS) which is focused on helping youth identify and achieve specifically identified goals. Aggression Replacement Training and Thinking 4 A Change are also two evidence-based models employed to help students resolve conflict. Juvenile Court Officers use these tools to target high risk domains (such as Leisure/Recreation or Family/Parenting) and introduce new skills to assist youth in reducing identified risk factors.

**Summer Programming:** This year, Court staff designed a robust summer program geared toward keeping youth engaged with the community while learning new skills. Activities included:



- ❖ **Challenge Ropes Course:** Specially trained court staff led youth through low and high elements where they learned to problem solve and process through their emotions, overcome barriers, and move through personal challenges.

- ❖ **Community Service projects:** Participants assembled hundreds of sex education folders for the Ottawa County Department of Public Health and assisted a non-profit agency by placing 3,000 semi-colons on suicide awareness cards.

- ❖ **Life Skills:** Youth participated in several sessions on meal planning, budgeting, grocery shopping, and food preparation.

- ❖ **Building projects:** Groups built four wood benches, which are now used at JJI and the Ropes Course.

**Fall Festival:** Parent engagement is critical in the progress of court-involved youth’s rehabilitation. Given the positive response to summer programming, court staff hosted an evening event for the youth, their parents, siblings and children of their own. A Halloween themed event entitled “Fall Festival” offered crafts, games, food and costumes and created a festive atmosphere provided by Court staff and partners who assist the Court in offering a full continuum of services throughout the year. Representatives from the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District, Ottawa County Sheriff’s Office, Community Mental Health, Bethany Christian Services, and Wedgwood Christian Services set up booths to hand out candy for trick-or-treating and provided information to parents, youth, younger siblings and parents engaged in painting pumpkins, enjoying karaoke, and learning about other services offered throughout the community. Stepping outside of their traditional roles allowed Court staff and service providers to engage and connect with families in a deeper and more meaningful, personal way.



**A Traditional Christmas:** Recognizing many Court families cannot afford to provide their children with a traditional Christmas, the Juvenile Court ended the year by creating a holiday experience for JJI students. Community Mental Health employees, also located in Building B, delivered plates of cookies to each student. Staff gathered donated items and created a Christmas store, where students could purchase gifts using school “money” earned throughout the year. On “shopping day”, staff and volunteers served as personal shoppers and helped the youth wrap presents. Each student was thrilled to learn they could provide gifts to their families, something they would otherwise be unable to do.

During the weeks leading up to Christmas, staff from all areas of the Circuit Court and Ottawa County Clerk/Register’s Office personally sponsored a student and purchased gifts. On the last day of school before winter break, program staff set up a Christmas tree with the

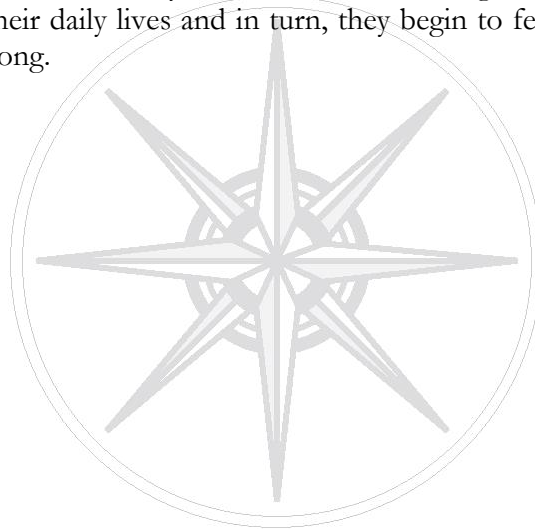


wrapped gifts, cooked pancakes, and joined the students in a festive breakfast. One student volunteered to act as Santa and handed out, for some, the only Christmas gifts they would receive, along with a little advice on how many of them could avoid the “naughty list” next year by doing such things as being on time to school.

As court-involved youth often present with long histories of trauma and past experiences which impede their success in traditional community activities, opportunities to participate in positive activities such as sport teams and school sponsored functions which engage their parents and families provide them with a sense of community and normalcy. Providing events on a small scale, with staff specially trained to teach and support youth as they build new skills and relationships, allows each court-involved youth a new chance at success.



Reflecting upon 2018 programs and events, the Court is grateful for the opportunities the new building space affords, and the staff sincerely appreciates the County’s support in equipping the space to maximize these efforts. Through collaborative efforts, youth at risk of offending learn to transfer each newly-learned skill from the court setting to their daily lives and in turn, they begin to feel connected to a strong, healthy community where they truly belong.



## *Celebrating Adoption Day - Giving Thanks for Families*

Each fall, the 20th Circuit Court, Family Division joins many courts around the state in “Giving Thanks for Families” by celebrating Adoption Day. Held on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, Adoption Day has become a holiday tradition, highlighting the importance of adoption and the needs of children in foster care.

At any given time, approximately 13,000 children are in foster care in Michigan. About 2,400 of these foster children will be adopted. Of those, 2,100 kids have an identified adoptive family, leaving 300 children in need of a “forever” home. Adoption Day is an opportunity to encourage families to step forward and take on the very important role of a foster or adoptive parent.



During this year’s celebration, one of those 2,100 children joined his forever family in a particularly meaningful event. Karl<sup>18</sup> was placed under the supervision of the child welfare system as an older youth, which led to the eventual termination of his parents’ rights. Further behavioral challenges and delinquent actions brought Karl under the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court as a delinquent youth, in addition to the child welfare system. After struggling through various foster homes, he spent a short period of time in a residential treatment program. Through the use of evidence-based practices and the Court’s Juvenile Community Justice (JCJ) program, a partnership with Bethany Christian Services, Karl worked diligently to improve his behavior, develop trusting relationships, and make better choices. Program staff were

deliberate in their efforts to identify a family to not just foster Karl, but to provide the support and encouragement needed to continue his progress toward positive change. Eventually, he was placed with a couple who, despite their initial plans to provide short term respite care, recognized their desire to offer Karl a forever home.

When the average age of a child in foster care awaiting adoption is 7.7 years old, witnessing the adoption of a 16 year old is truly a special event. Nine other children joined Karl in confirming their adoptions during this year’s celebration, which is commonly referred to as “the happiest day at the Court”. For the Court and private agency staff who work tirelessly throughout the year to bring permanency to children without families, the annual Adoption Day celebration never loses its spark. From the opening ceremony to the last hearing of the day, the infectious hope and joy of the families permeates the courthouse and the spirits of all who participate.

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<sup>18</sup> Name changed to protect the identity of the child

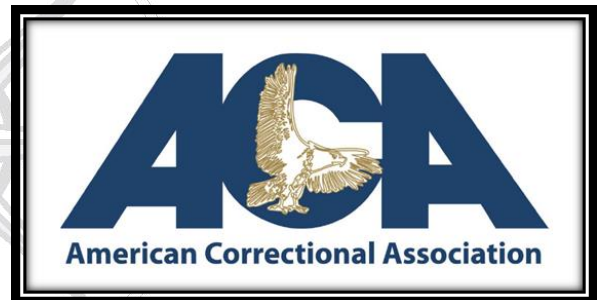
## *Detention Center Celebrates its 18th Year as an American Correctional Association Accredited Facility*

Supported by committed employees, visionary leadership, an invested community and comprehensive staff training, the Ottawa County Juvenile Detention Center (OCJDC) continues to deliver high quality care for its residents. In 2018, the Detention Center provided a total of 11,548 Child Care Days with an average daily population of 28.3 juveniles.

This year marked the Detention Center's 18<sup>th</sup> year as an American Correctional Association (ACA) accredited facility, and staff, administration, and the judiciary celebrated the event receiving the highest audit score received since it was first accredited in the year 2000. The OCJDC also continues to be the only ACA accredited juvenile detention center facility in Michigan.

ACA standards “represent fundamental correctional practices that ensure staff and inmate safety and security; enhance staff morale; improve record maintenance and data management capabilities; assist in protecting the agency against litigation; and improve the function of the facility or agency at all levels”<sup>19</sup>. In practice at the OCJDC, the standards provide an operational framework in which staff function to ensure the safety and well-being of all residents. In September, three ACA auditors with “chairman” experience for an on-site review reviewed and tested a total of 322 standards. A rigorous endeavor, the Detention Center scored an outstanding 100% on the 32 mandatory standards and 99.6% on the Non-Mandatory standards.

Though the Detention Center strives to meet all 322 ACA standards, one standard challenges a core tenet of the facility – to provide treatment to youth. The standard in question requires the facility to be used solely for the purpose of pretrial holding and prohibits use of the facility as a post-trial treatment center. Almost a decade ago, the Juvenile Court and Detention Center leadership recognized an opportunity to reduce residential placements by offering a short term, residential, trauma-based, female-specific treatment program within the facility (Lighthouse). In addition, the Court offers a short term, residential substance abuse treatment program within the facility through a contract with Wedgewood Christian Services. These programs provide high quality treatment to youth; contribute to improved outcomes for youth, significantly decrease the Court's placement budgets, and attract neighboring juvenile courts seeking similar services for their youth, resulting in them placing their youth in the OCJDC for a fee. Thus, though the Detention Center's treatment programs may not strictly comply with the referenced ACA standard, Circuit Court judges and administration continue to support their value to youth served by the Court.



During the audit and through the interviewing of multiple residents and staff, the ACA auditors stated how impressed they were with the high quality of the treatment programs offered and voiced an amazement of how the treatment programs and detention operations complimented each other in the daily operations – something they noted, is seldom seen in audits across the country. The auditors clearly recognized the treatment programs benefit to the residents and verbally supported their continuation in the Detention Center. Though the auditors were compelled to issue a citation on this standard, a waiver was requested and approved.

Standards within the correctional field are ever changing to meet the unique needs of a sensitive population. The OCJDC staff and administration strive to maintain adherence with the highest level of juvenile-specific, correctional standards on a daily basis, and consistently welcomes opportunities to improve the quality of service provided to Ottawa County's youth.

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<sup>19</sup> [www.aca.org](http://www.aca.org)

## *“Masked” – An Enlightened Work of Art Reflecting Traumatic Histories in Young Girls*

Research indicates many boys and girls suffer from trauma and abuse during their lives, but girls integrate these traumatic events into their lives differently than boys due to a myriad of scientific reasons and physiology. Lighthouse - an intensive, short-term, treatment program for girls court ordered into the program in the Ottawa County Juvenile Detention Center – strives to help court-involved girls identify the power of the traumatic events in their lives. Once these events are identified, the girls can better understand them; move “through” them; and form a vision of their future without this abuse. Using evidence-based approaches and helping them develop a strong sense of “self” through mastery of personal skill development, the Lighthouse professional staff address the individual needs of girls through a holistic lens, understanding that girls have different needs than boys in the court system. In this way, mind, body, and spirit come together to help the girls identify and self-regulate their emotions while becoming stronger in their hope for a brighter future.



One of the ways in which personal expression is encouraged in Lighthouse is through art. In the fall of 2018, under the guidance of art teacher and consultant, Angie Briggs-Johnson and the program manager, Michelle Anguiano, the girls created an expressive art piece as a submission to one of the largest art competitions in the world – ArtPrize 2018 – in Grand Rapids. The following is their statement describing the art piece entitled “Masked”.

*“In the so-called age of ‘girl power’, we have failed to cut loose our most regressive standards of female success. Instead, we have shoved more and more expectation on the huge pile of qualities we expect young girls to possess. This is creating more mental health concerns and vulnerability to trauma leading to an overpowering dysregulation of emotions in teenage girls.*”

*“Masked” is an art piece representing the masks that teenage girls wear to fit the mold of today's pressured society. The paper mache masks were created by girls in a residential treatment program who are working through extensive histories of trauma from their past. The masks were created through molds of their own faces and the added details – including the words – portray how their life experiences have influenced who they have become and who they strive to be through resolution, peace, and opportunity.”*

One could not help but hear the comments of those who stopped by this exhibit at ArtPrize and who commented on the work of the girls. Many were saddened by the traumatic events the girls had experienced at such young ages, but they were also inspired by the girls’ courage and internal strength to survive and learn to *thrive*.

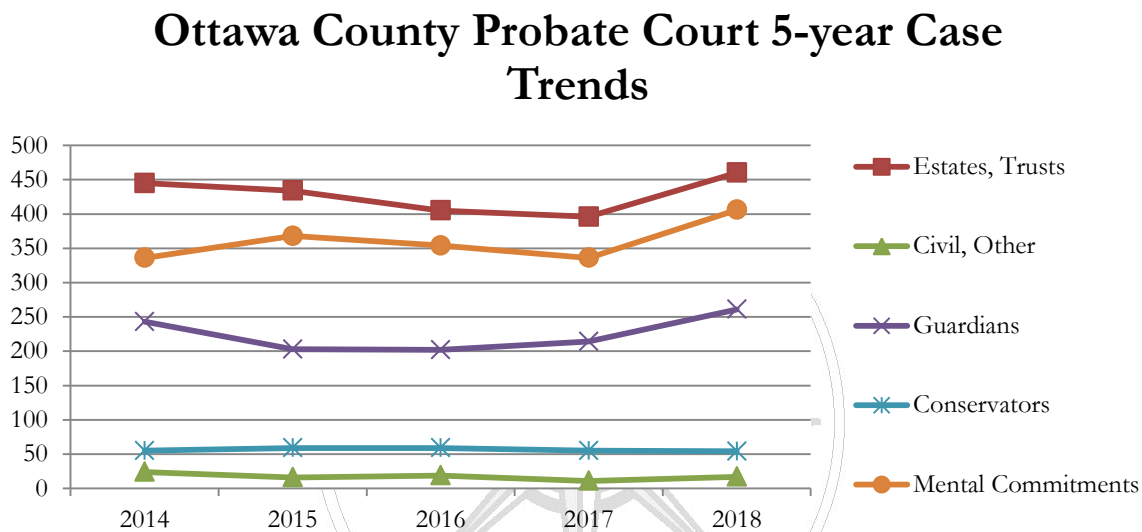
This art piece provided the viewer an opportunity to truly understand that often, what is considered to be “anti-social behavior” and judged behavior, is rooted in a legitimate cause and is understood through patient, trusting relationships. Once understood, through consistent guidance, a vision for a brighter future for each one of these girls emerges. Each of them shared their growth with the public as it was reflected to all who observed it through “Masked”.

# Probate Court

## Caseload Facts

Ottawa County Probate Court provides services to many who need special consideration including the mentally ill, adults and minors in need of guardians or conservators and families of deceased individuals. The Probate Court has enhanced the Court's effectiveness by the use of mediation, interactive video technology (IVT), document imaging, video court recording, credit card payment capability and on-line case management.

FIGURE 13: OTTAWA COUNTY PROBATE COURT 5-YEAR CASE TRENDS



During 2018, the Probate Court experienced a stable five-year trend with more than 1,100 new case filings. Among the new and reopened cases, most categories grew in number, including estates and trusts (+14%), guardianship appointments (+18%) and civil and other filings (+35%). Forty-three percent of the Probate caseload involves individuals needing the protection of the Court in guardianship, conservatorship and mentally ill cases. At the close of 2018, there were 378 adults and 364 minors with guardians appointed by the Court. In cases where individuals need assistance managing financial assets, there were 144 adults and 117 minors with Court appointed conservators. In addition to the regularly appointed guardians, there were an additional 690 (+9%) developmentally disabled individuals with guardians supervised by the Court.

The ability of the Probate staff to cope with the influx of new cases is aided by the County supported OnBase document imaging system. Immediate electronic access to all 12,517 open Probate files has allowed staff to become more efficient in processing cases. The imaging system also allows for more timely and effective public service for interested parties who are seeking case information. In addition to these case processing efficiencies, the Probate Court strives to be more accessible to the public through its website, <http://www.miottawa.org/CourtsLE/Probate/>, where individuals can locate forms and instructions to guide them through a variety of Probate proceedings.

Ottawa County Probate Judge, Hon. Mark A. Feyen, handles all required Probate matters and assists the 20th Circuit Court by serving as Presiding Judge of the Fillmore Complex Family Division. He also is the assigned judge for the Ottawa County Recovery Court.

The pie chart below provides a descriptive view of various types of new cases being filed with the Probate Court. Although the Court has legal jurisdiction to handle twenty distinct types of cases, the cases are generally grouped in one of five categories: estates and trusts, civil, guardianships, conservatorships, and mental commitments. As demonstrated in this chart, estate work represents nearly 40% of the Court’s overall caseload and emphasizes the important community service role of the Court when assisting spouses and families to resolve sensitive issues related to the recent loss of a family member. Another sensitive issue the Court assists with is the hospitalization (sometime involuntary) of individuals in need of mental health treatment. These cases represent over 30% of the Court’s caseload and require careful coordination with families, attorneys, hospitals, and mental health treatment providers. In situations where an individual is unable to take care of certain daily needs, due to physical or mental limitations, the Court is often asked to appoint a guardian to provide assistance. Likewise, if an individual needs help with managing their finances, a conservator may be appointed. In both instances, the Probate judge carefully reviews the situation and provides legal authorization for these “helpers” (guardians and conservators) to assist. Regular reviews are conducted to provide accountability. The second chart emphasizes the significant number of cases for which one judge and five employees are responsible. At the end of 2018, the Probate Court had 12,517 open cases.

FIGURE 14: 2018 PROBATE COURT CASELOAD

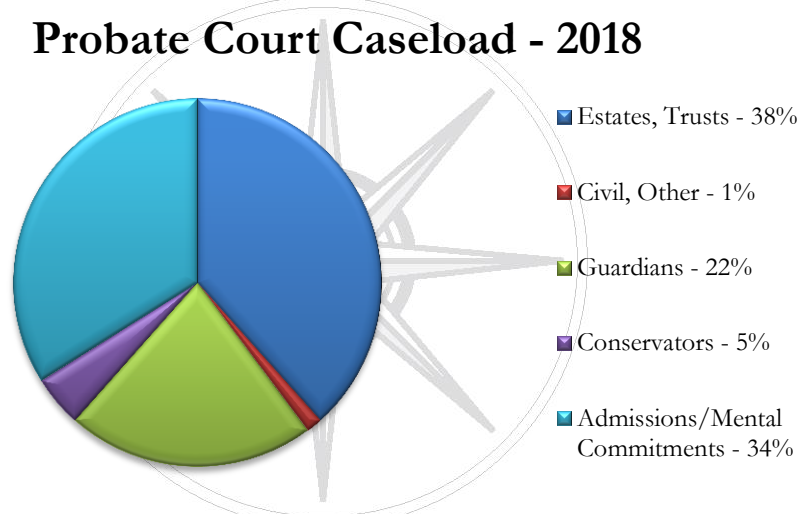
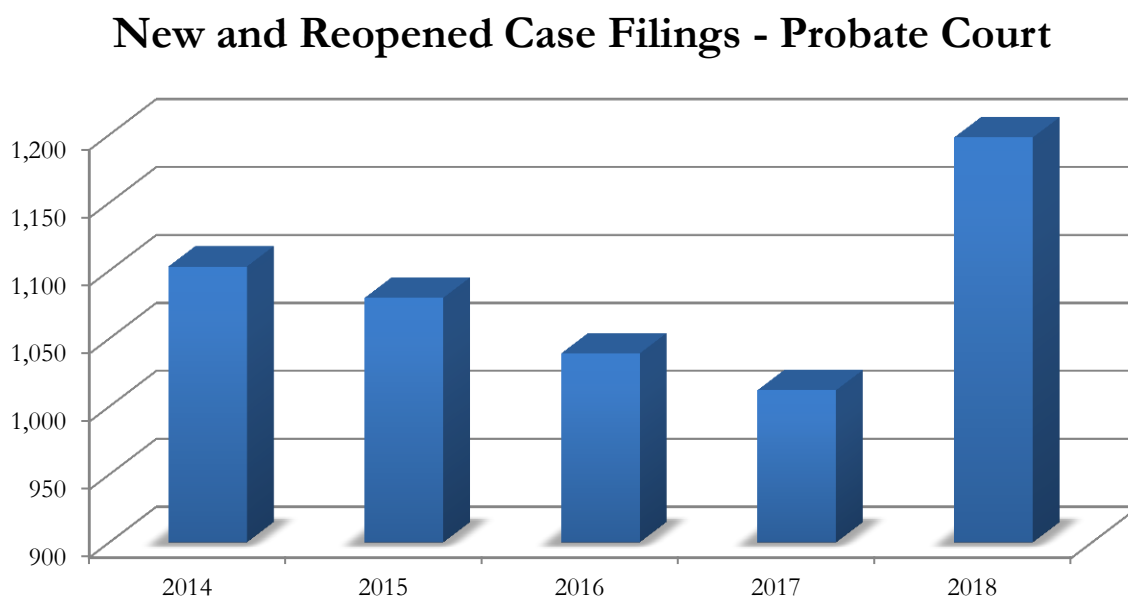


FIGURE 15: NEW AND REOPENED CASE FILINGS – PROBATE COURT



## *Probate Court Initiatives*

The Ottawa County Probate Court has been conducting User Acceptance Testing (UAT) for upcoming e-filing, which will replace documents sent by mail or hand delivery. Mandatory filings (to include case initiation) will begin in the spring of 2019 year. A “soft” go live date for e-filing is set for late April 2019. Ottawa County Probate Court will be the FIRST probate court in the State of Michigan to implement e-filing!

In addition, Probate Court will be exploring the implementation of SmartBench technology sometime in 2019. SmartBench is a software tool that judges can use to provide case summaries, full-text search capabilities, and extraction of critical data, all working with a touch screen similar to paging through a paper file manually...only better!

The Probate Court has recently vetted persons to serve as volunteer guardians and/or conservators for adults. These persons have gone through the required background checks to begin serving this elderly and often vulnerable population in Ottawa County.



## About the Cover... The Compass Rose

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The Compass Rose has been guiding sailors for centuries. Regardless of whether we are seafarers, we still ask, “Where are we going?” We need a clear plan to guide us to our destination.

Through strategic planning, the 20th Judicial Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts are determining the best path to their destination. The 2018 Annual Report is a reminder of why the plan and destination are important.

The judges and courts’ staff are in the business of administering justice – one case at a time. By doing so, we contribute to a better life within our community, state, nation and world. Perhaps these are lofty goals, but to do less would be a disservice to the rule of law on which our nation was built and to our own potential.





# Quick Guide to the Courts

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For Directions to the Courts:

[www.miottawa.org/Courts](http://www.miottawa.org/Courts)

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For General Information:

Call any office listed on this page

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For Payment Convenience:

- Make payments online at [www.miottawa.org](http://www.miottawa.org)
  - Call any office to pay by credit card
  - Mail payments
  - Pay in person
- 

## Staff Facts

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### *20th Judicial Circuit Court*

4	Circuit Court Judges
118	Full Time Staff
9	Part Time Staff
11	Temporary Staff (includes Bailiffs and Relief)
4	Ottawa County Sheriff Deputies
9	Ottawa Area Intermediate School District

**151 Total**

### *Ottawa County Probate Court*

1	Probate Court Judge
5	Full Time Staff

**6 Total**

## CIRCUIT COURT

### Trial Division

414 Washington Ave., Room 300  
Grand Haven, MI 49417  
Phone: 616.846.8320  
Fax: 616.846.8179

### Friend of the Court

414 Washington Ave., Room 225  
Grand Haven, MI 49417  
Phone: 616.846.8210  
Fax: 616.846.8128

### Juvenile Court Division

12120 Fillmore Street  
West Olive, MI 49460  
Phone: 616.786.4100  
Fax: 616.786.4154

### Juvenile Court Services Bldg.

12263 James Street  
Holland, MI 49424  
Phone: 616.393.4450  
Fax: 616.393.4471

## PROBATE COURT

12120 Fillmore Street  
West Olive, MI 49460  
Phone: 616.786.4110  
Fax: 616.738.4624

## LEGAL SELF-HELP CENTER

414 Washington Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Grand Haven, MI 49417  
Phone: 616.846.8141