



# Annual Report 2021

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

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

April 5, 2022

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

Dear Chairperson Fenske and Commissioners:

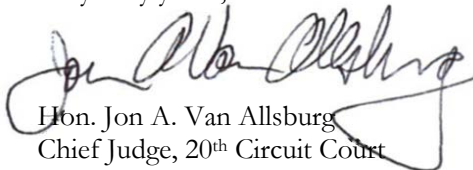
As Chief Judges for the 20th Circuit Court and the Ottawa County Probate Court, it is our pleasure to present the 2021 Annual Report. This document provides insight regarding the important work of the judicial branch of government. The judges of the Circuit and Probate Courts strive to be faithful stewards 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.

The only constant is change, as the year 2021 proved. Due to the continuing pandemic, our Courts continued virtual hearings, limited public attendance in our courthouses, relocated many employees to work from home, provided additional online services and more – all while maintaining current dockets and achieving compliance with most case processing time guidelines. The Courts’ early involvement in work-from-home alternatives and ODR, as well as their quick pivot to virtual hearings, have allowed the Courts to continue the administration of justice and avoid tremendous backlogs.

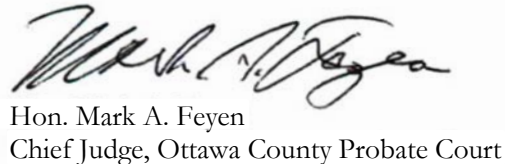
In addition to meeting those challenges, we have continued work on many exciting initiatives as we decided on a new case management system, expanded our use of online dispute resolution (ODR), updated security measures, collaborated on the County DEI initiatives, looked forward to a new Family Justice Center, and much more. We also continued our strategic planning work, debuting a new strategic plan to guide the Courts’ next three years. Our plan focuses on several areas of particular importance to the Courts, such as better use of technology, increased access to justice, onboarding and increased employee retention.

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 possible public service. 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 many 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 our judges and court employees in 2021. 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,



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



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

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# The 20th Judicial Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts 2021 Annual Report

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## *Justice for All: Adapting, Improving and Transforming*

Typically, each year the Annual Report for the Circuit and Probate courts focuses on a theme selected by the Courts' Strategic Planning Oversight Team. In 2021, we chose the theme of "Justice for All." This theme particularly resonated with us due to the challenges in providing court services to the public during the continuing global pandemic and the debut of our most recent Strategic Plan in April.

The Courts began their strategic planning initiative in 2005, and have reviewed and generated a new Strategic Plan every three years since. Our newest Strategic Plan provides renewed inspiration and guidance as the Courts' continue the important work of "doing justice – one case at a time". Specific strategic focus areas include: Improving the Court User Experience (Access, Services, Programs); Improving the Employee Experience (Inclusion, Satisfaction, Well-being); Efficient Court Operations; and Funding, Resources, and Facilities. Each of these focus areas will be informed by the Courts' values and the commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in all we do. The significant work of this Strategic Planning Team, led by the Chief Judges and Court Administrator, is important evidence of how seriously the Courts' consider and improve upon our past performance.

Our Strategic Planning Team members have considered several future scenarios and are using the many lessons learned during the pandemic, together with updated trends analysis and stakeholder survey data in this revitalization of the Courts' Strategic Plan. To put our plans into place with fidelity, we have formed several smaller strategic planning teams to focus on particular issues identified in our Strategic Plan. One team, for instance, is contemplating and proposing areas for which online dispute resolution ("ODR"), already used in our child support and parenting time areas, may be utilized in other court applications. Other teams are focusing on increasing access to justice for non-English speakers, effective onboarding of new court employees, and assessing and increasing our effective use of technology, to name a few.

Many other projects were also worked on during 2021 – we continue to work toward a new case management system to meet the requirements of the state and court alike. We have been active and responsible participants in the design of the new Family Justice Center, to ensure the fiscal responsibility and functionality of this new building.

Perhaps most importantly, continued resiliency was exhibited by judges and court employees alike as the pandemic continued in 2021. Everyone worked together to maintain case processing, court hearings, collections, provision of treatment services, great public service, and much needed support for co-workers. Despite constantly changing rules and new duties, our employees have consistently risen to the occasion. The rule of law has been safeguarded in Ottawa County and the effective administration of justice continues.





# Judicial Officers

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

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

In a recent publication of the American Bar Association, Division for Public Education<sup>1</sup>, an article regarding “How Courts Work” includes a brief, yet insightful description of the important civic responsibility handled by our elected judges and judicial officers. The role of judges is described in the following terms.

*“What does a judge do? Maybe it's best to start with what he or she doesn't do. Even though he or she works for the state, a judge is not a law enforcement officer. A judge is not a prosecutor. Judges don't arrest people or try to prove them guilty.*



20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court Judges – (left to right) Hon. Jon A. Van Allsburg, Hon. Kent D. Engle, Hon. Jon H. Hulsing, and Hon. Karen J. Miedema

*Judges are like umpires in baseball or referees in football or basketball. Their role is to see that the rules of court procedures are followed by both sides. Like the ump, they call 'em as they see 'em, according to the facts and law—without regard to which side is popular (no home field advantage), without regard to who is "favored," without regard for what the spectators want, and without regard to whether the judge agrees with the law.”*

Fully understanding the complex role of the judicial branch of government and the judges who serve as primary decision makers is a difficult undertaking. Citizens of Ottawa County, however, have historically elected outstanding judges who undertake the position seriously and strive to provide fair and legally correct decisions in every case.

The role of the judge in an adversarial process is to preside over the proceedings and maintain order. During a trial, the judge rules on whether the evidence the parties want to use is legal and proper. If the trial is before a jury, the judge gives instructions about the law that applies to the case; if the trial is before the court, the judge determines the facts and decides the case. In a criminal trial, the judge metes out the sentence to those convicted.

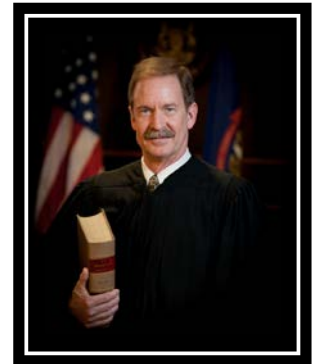
For courts to be impartial, judges must be free to decide cases based upon the law and facts of the case uninfluenced by either external pressures or internal preferences. Impartiality is impossible unless judges are independent—free from external threats, intimidation, or fears of sanctions based upon their decisions.

<sup>1</sup> See [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public\\_education/resources/law\\_related\\_education\\_network/how\\_courts\\_work/judge\\_role/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_education/resources/law_related_education_network/how_courts_work/judge_role/)  
20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit and Probate Courts, Ottawa County – Annual Report 2021

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 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. He is also a past president of the Michigan Judges Association and was an officer of the State Bar of Michigan Judicial Council in 2021.

### **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**

The Honorable Jon Hulsing has served as judge for the 20th Circuit Court in Ottawa County, Michigan since 2006. His docket consists of both criminal and civil cases. He has been the Chief Judge Pro Tempore since 2016. In 2019, he was elected by all of Michigan's circuit court judges to be a representative on the Judicial Tenure Commission which investigates allegations of judicial misconduct. He now serves as the Commission's Chairperson.



In addition to six years of private law practice, Judge Hulsing served as an Assistant and Senior Assistant Prosecutor in Ottawa County from 1995 to 2006. In 1983, he began his public service career as a deputy with the Ottawa County Sheriff's Office and then as a patrolman with the Wyoming Police Department. He previously served as a member and committee co-chair of the Michigan Judges Association. He graduated *summa cum laude* with a Juris Doctorate from Thomas M. Cooley Law School and has a Bachelor of Science degree from Grand Valley State University. In 2020, he became one of only 22 national commissioners with the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) which establishes best practices for law enforcement agencies.

### **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 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.





## Caseload Trends

The following caseload trends provide some context for the daily activity of the Circuit and Probate judges. Additional statistical details are contained in the Trial Division, FOC, Juvenile Court and Probate Court sections of this Annual Report. Overall caseloads were stable during the past several years; however, once the COVID pandemic hit in March 2020, regulations restricting courthouse access and “stay at home” protective orders resulted in a significant reduction in the overall 2020 caseload for both Circuit and Probate Courts. As the pandemic continued in 2021, our caseload numbers are only beginning to return to their pre-pandemic state.

TABLE 1: CIRCUIT COURT CASELOAD TRENDS<sup>2</sup>

TRIAL DIVISION	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% Change <sup>3</sup> (2020-2021)
Appeals	49	55	43	50	58	+13.8%
Criminal	1,115	1,132	969	750	818	+8.3%
Civil	391	372	386	301	304	+0.01%
<b>Total Trial Division Filings</b>	<b>1,555</b>	<b>1,559</b>	<b>1,398</b>	<b>1,101</b>	<b>1,180</b>	<b>+6.7%</b>
FAMILY DIVISION (Includes FOC and Juvenile Court)	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% Change <sup>6</sup> (2020-2021)
Divorce	1,029	1,039	1,030	851	914	+6.9%
Other Domestic Relations	670	609	602	511	504	-1.4%
Personal Protection Orders	688	697	665	661	680	+2.8%
Delinquency (does not include Probation Violations)	952	788	740	655	745	+12.1%
Juvenile Traffic	15	17	32	49	23	-53.1%
Child Protective	74	78	88	71	71	0.0%
Adoptions	108	148	120	100	98	-2.0%
Misc. Family	88	103	125	102	119	+14.3%
<b>Total Family Division Filings</b>	<b>3,624</b>	<b>3,479</b>	<b>3,402</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>3,172</b>	<b>+5.4%</b>
<b>Grand Total Filings and Reopened Cases</b>	<b>5,179</b>	<b>5,038</b>	<b>4,800</b>	<b>4,101</b>	<b>4,352</b>	<b>+5.8%</b>

TABLE 2: PROBATE COURT CASELOAD TRENDS

OTTAWA COUNTY PROBATE COURT CASELOAD TRENDS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% Change <sup>6</sup> (2020-2021)
Estates, Trusts	396	460	414	344	505	+31.9%
Civil, Other	11	17	17	12	8	-33.3%
Guardians	214	261	232	177	212	+16.5%
Conservators	55	54	45	47	51	+7.8%
Civil Commitments	336	406	405	457	433	-5.3%
<b>Grand Total Filings and Reopened Cases</b>	<b>1,012</b>	<b>1,198</b>	<b>1,113</b>	<b>1,037</b>	<b>1,209</b>	<b>+14.2%</b>

<sup>2</sup> For additional caseload information, visit: <http://courts.mi.gov/education/stats/Caseload/Pages/default.aspx>.

<sup>3</sup> Reduction in case totals primarily caused by COVID-19 pandemic and resulting limitations on in-person proceedings.

## Historical Roster 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 J. 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 D. ENGLE</b> 2011 – present
<b>ORIEN S. CROSS</b> 1912 – 1929	<b>KAREN J. MIEDEMA</b> 2017 – present

## Historical Roster 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

## *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, Attorney Referees hear testimony and recommend orders in a variety of Circuit Court Family Division cases.

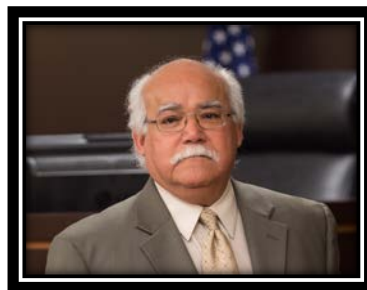
Overall, from 2020 to 2021, Referee hearings decreased nearly 13% with a total of 2,437 hearings conducted. Domestic relations and civil proceedings decreased 14% with 1,053 hearings conducted, including 260 child support, 255 parenting time, 63 uncontested divorce, and 475 other hearings (including review and paternity establishment) conducted at the Ottawa County Courthouse in Grand Haven. At the Fillmore Complex in West Olive, there was a 12.1% decrease in Juvenile Court Referee activity, decreasing from 1,574 hearings in 2020 to 1,384 hearings in 2021.

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 weekly hearings. The Court contracts with an experienced Attorney to serve as a substitute referee, as well as using the Senior Law Clerk and Court Administrator serve as substitute referees to provide docket coverage when needed.

As Judicial Officers, the Attorney Referees took on additional duties in hearing neglect and abuse cases to alleviate some strain on the judges' dockets. Most referee hearings were conducted virtually via Zoom in 2021.



**Patricia J. Gelderloos**  
Attorney Referee



**David V. Macias**  
Attorney Referee



**Erin M. Magley**  
Attorney Referee



**Jennell L. Challa**  
Substitute Referee



**C. Richard Parks**  
Substitute Referee



**Joseph P. Kozakiewicz**  
Substitute Referee



**Kevin J. Bowling**  
Substitute Referee

## *Family Division (Grand Haven)*

TABLE 3: REFEREE HEARINGS IN GRAND HAVEN

<b>DOMESTIC/CIVIL PROCEEDINGS</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>% Change<sup>4</sup> (2020-2021)</b>
Support Hearings	803	668	480	296	260	-12.2%
Parenting Time Hearings	541	405	369	255	255	0.0%
<i>Pro Confesso</i> Divorce Hearings	167	156	108	129	63	-51.2%
Paternity Arraignment/Support Hearings	796	496	613	544	475	-12.7%
<b>Total Family Division Domestic/Civil Referee Hearings</b>	<b>2,307</b>	<b>1,725</b>	<b>1,570</b>	<b>1,224</b>	<b>1,053</b>	<b>-14.0%</b>

## *Family Division/Juvenile Court (West Olive)*

TABLE 4: REFEREE HEARINGS IN WEST OLIVE

<b>DELINQUENCY PROCEEDINGS</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>% Change<sup>8</sup> (2020-2021)</b>
Preliminary Hearings	151	138	192	172	280	+38.6%
Pre-Trial Conferences	630	569	580	464	382	-17.7%
Pleas of Admission/No Contest Hearings	109	61	75	58	60	+3.3%
Original Disposition Hearings	320	252	201	222	143	-35.6%
Dispositional Review Hearings	15	312	307	426	96	-77.5%
Consents/Holds/Other	272	131	109	80	97	+17.5%
Saturday Preliminary Hearings	17	10	14	13	28	+53.6%
<b>CHILD PROTECTIVE PROCEEDINGS</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>% Change<sup>8</sup> (2020-2021)</b>
Preliminary Hearings	99	70	80	83	264	+68.6%
Adoption Release/Consent/Emancipation/ Emergency Removal/Other	69	50	81	56	34	-39.3%
<b>Total Family Division/Juvenile Court Referee Hearings</b>	<b>1,682</b>	<b>1,593</b>	<b>1,639</b>	<b>1,574</b>	<b>1,384</b>	<b>-12.1%</b>

TABLE 5: TOTAL ATTORNEY REFEREE HEARINGS

<b>ATTORNEY REFEREE HEARINGS</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>% Change<sup>8</sup> (2020-2021)</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3,989</b>	<b>3,318</b>	<b>3,209</b>	<b>2,798</b>	<b>2,437</b>	<b>-12.9%</b>

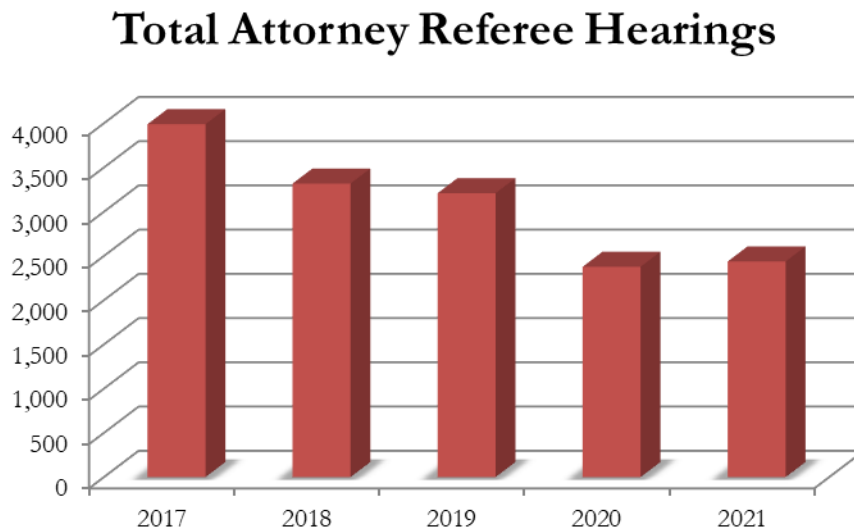
Generally, Attorney Referees conduct 3,000-4,000 judicial hearings every year, playing a significant role in the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court's efforts to maintain excellent caseload management. Administering justice by ensuring all parties have their "day in court" and providing timely decisions on matters as important as child support,

<sup>4</sup> Reduction in proceedings totals primarily caused by COVID-19 pandemic and resulting limitations on in-person proceedings.  
20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit and Probate Courts, Ottawa County – Annual Report 2021



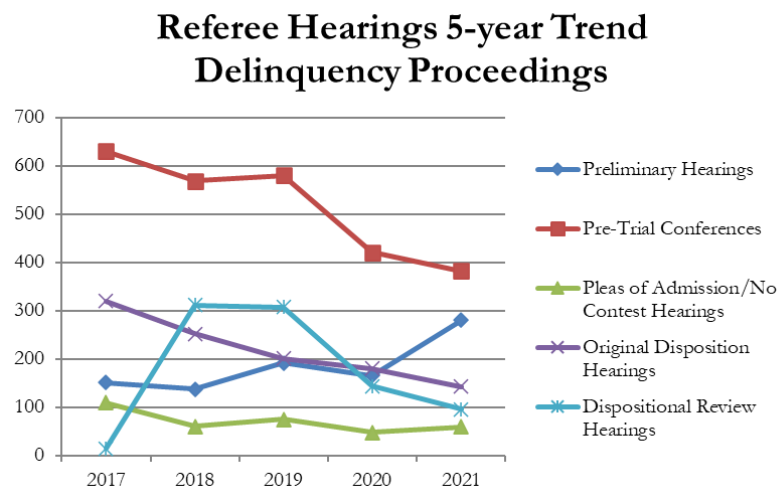
parenting time, appropriate consequences for delinquent behavior, and more is how the Court’s Attorney Referees provide direct service to the public and assist the elected judges with their caseloads.

FIGURE 1: REFEREE HEARINGS – 5-YEAR TREND, TOTAL



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

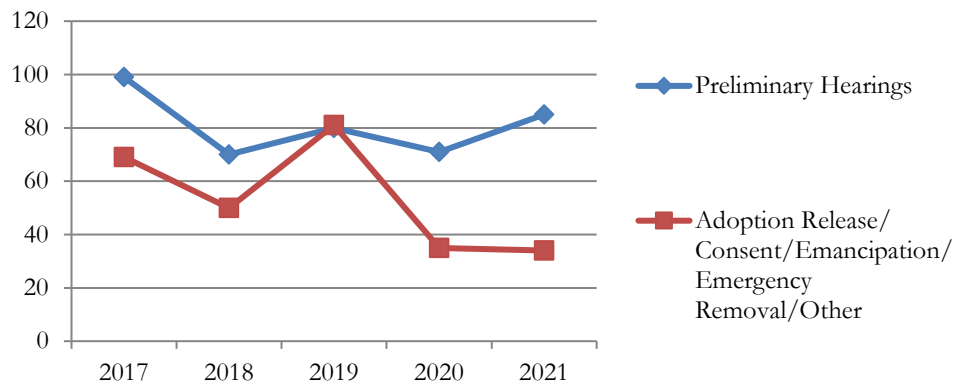


The following blue trend line demonstrates a slight decrease in child protective proceedings being filed with the Court and requiring preliminary hearings. These initial hearings, which can result in children being removed from their home based on allegations of abuse or neglect, are conducted by Attorney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

<sup>5</sup> Due to changes in data tracking, Dispositional Review Hearings appear to increase significantly in 2018.  
 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit and Probate Courts, Ottawa County – Annual Report 2021

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

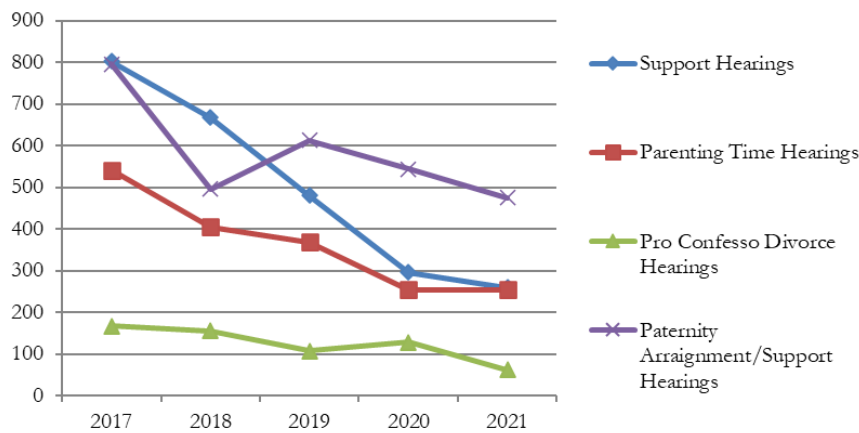
### Referee Hearings 5-year Trend Child Protective Proceedings



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, along with the CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act) funding to assist families during the pandemic, 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; however, the paternity hearings seemed to have leveled off after experiencing a sharp increase in 2019. This is 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.

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

### Referee Hearings 5-year Trend - Domestic/Civil Proceedings



## Court Administration

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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.

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>6</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 judicial systems.

In the 20th Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts, the Court Administrator 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, including supervision of all court employees depicted on the following organizational charts, is conducted by the Courts’ Leadership Team, which includes the Court Administrator, Juvenile Court Director, Friend of the Court, Trial Division Director and Probate Register.

In October, after 19 years with the Ottawa County courts and 44 years of a judicial administration career, Court Administrator Bowling announced his intent to retire from his position effective January 14, 2022. At the end of 2021, the Chief Judges promoted Trial Division Director Susan Franklin to the Court Administrator position.



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



**Thom A. Lattig, MS**  
Juvenile Court Director



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



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



**Johanna Wallace, AA**  
Probate Register

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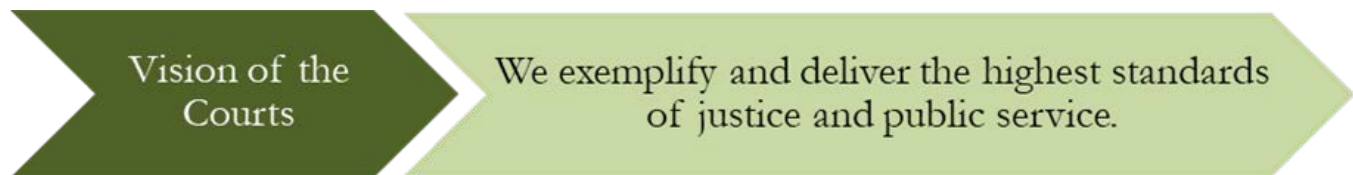
<sup>6</sup> The Court Administrator: A Guide and Manual, National Association for Court Management, 2011.  
20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit and Probate Courts, Ottawa County – Annual Report 2021

## *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 evolved during the past seventeen 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.



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.



To reach this Vision of the Courts, the Circuit and Probate courts are committed to providing leadership in the following manner.

- ❖ 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.
- ❖ 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.



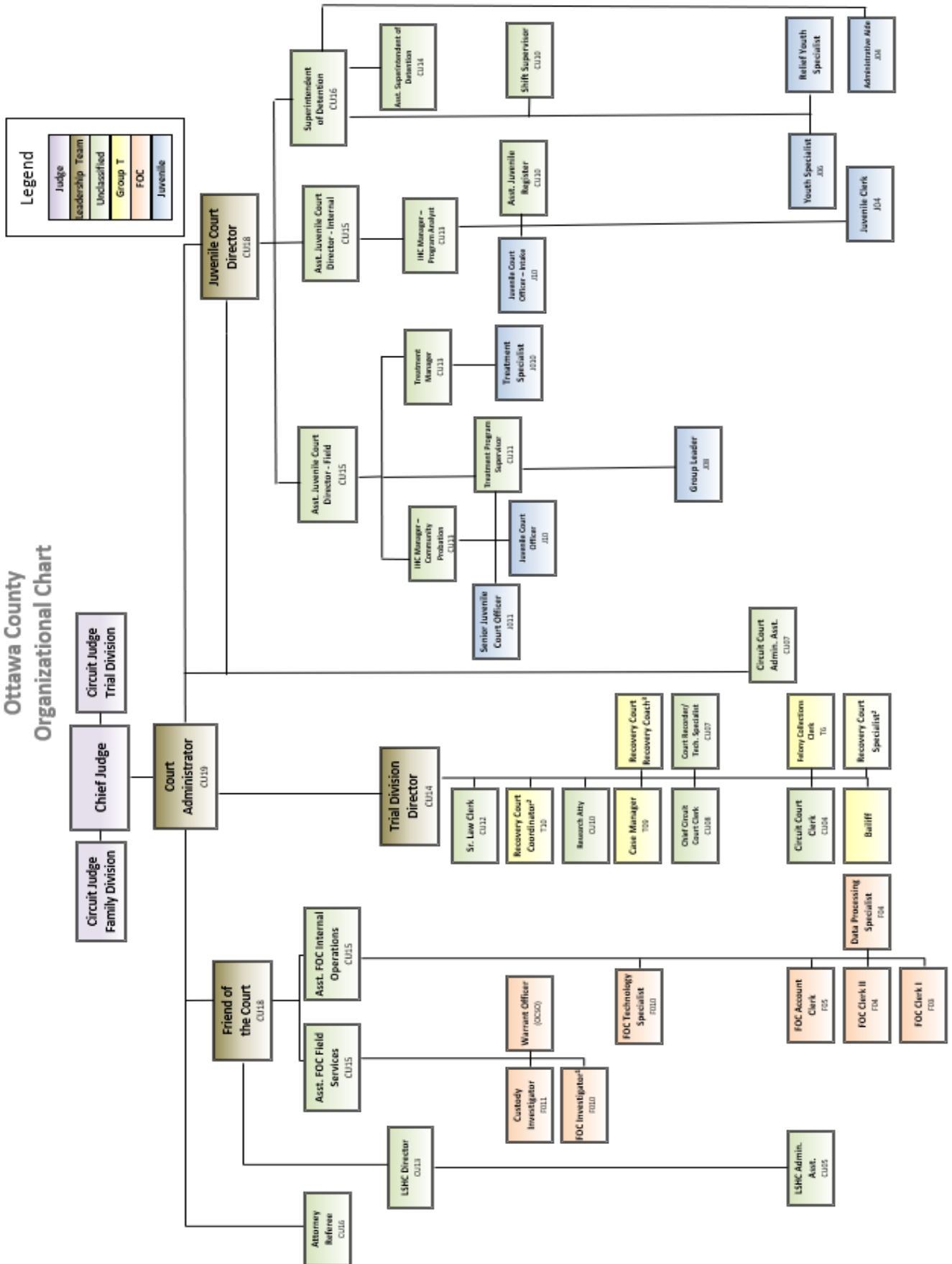
All the efforts discussed above have been identified by judges and court employees to demonstrate how the courts’ high standards for justice and public service may be operationalized daily. Clear identification of the courts’ mission and vision was a critical first step toward achieving effective strategic 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.



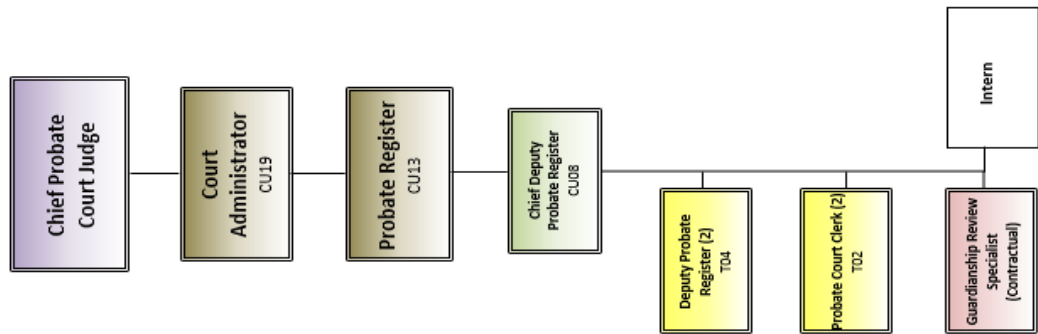
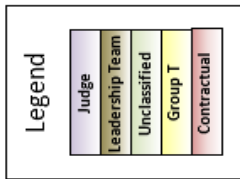
A significant amount of time in the strategic planning process was devoted to identifying the Courts’ Core Values. While an emphasis on justice, fairness, integrity and truth might be expected for a court system, our Strategic Planning Oversight Team also chose to focus on values such as empathy, equity, diversity and inclusion. Those important words were used to create the outline of a court building, with an open door to represent that our Courts are here to serve the public.

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 with 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.

# 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court Ottawa County Organizational Chart



# Ottawa County Probate Court Organizational Chart



## *Court Wide Initiatives*

**Strategic Planning** – Maintaining the Strategic Plan<sup>7</sup>, periodically updating and revising goals, objectives, and priority projects, is an important function of court administration. In 2020 and 2021, the Strategic Planning Team began the extensive process of reviewing and revising 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 updated trends analysis, SWOT analysis, surveys of court employees and external stakeholders, revising the Strategic Focus Areas which will drive innovation during the next three years.

**Case Management System Review** – Court staff have been working with the County Innovation & Technology Department to identify and implement 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. The District and Circuit Courts decided in 2021 to use the State’s Justice Information Services (“JIS”) case management system and are working to create a smooth transition.

**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. During 2020 Ottawa County conducted extensive contract negotiations with the architects of DLZ and Granger Construction, intending to implement the IPD (Integrated Project Delivery) method of building. Although the pandemic slowed the process, the building design phase was substantially completed in 2021, and pending County approval, groundbreaking is anticipated in 2022.

**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 2021, 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.” The standard solution was subsequently launched for most Probate Court filings. As the acceptance of efile technology grows, this innovation will provide great

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.miottawa.org/Courts/Probate/pdf/2021-2024\\_StrategicPlan.pdf](https://www.miottawa.org/Courts/Probate/pdf/2021-2024_StrategicPlan.pdf)



access to the courts and increase public trust and confidence in the judicial branch of government.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the first major test of this technology was during the COVID pandemic when e-filing became a primary access point for the courts. Since the project was already underway, the Circuit and Probate Courts were able to remain open and continue operations, while many other trial courts in Michigan were forced to temporarily close to the public.

**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

During 2021, the Courts continued to participate in security improvements (including the installation of new security cameras) 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. As the pandemic has wound down, school groups toured the courthouses and the Juvenile Detention Center where they learned about court process, observed judicial hearings, and 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.

**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>9</sup>

**Online Dispute Resolution (ODR)** – The 20th Circuit Court began the use of online dispute resolution tools in child support collection matters in 2016, and the successes of that project have led the Court to expand the use of these tools into domestic relations matters. In 2021, parenting time disputes were also handled via ODR. The COVID-19 pandemic has also compelled the rapid growth of virtual hearings, and the courts expect that some of this training and virtual hearing capacity will continue beyond the end of the emergency, giving the court expanded ability to conduct hearings with remote participants.

**Establishing a Court Social Media Presence** – Based on preliminary discussions within the Strategic Planning Oversight Team (SPOT), a Court Social Media Committee was established to develop a comprehensive social media policy that would fully comply with SCAO social media standards. Subsequently, court related social media platforms were developed on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter. The purpose of this effort is to increase public education and awareness of court operations.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://mifile.courts.michigan.gov/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.miottawa.org/Courts/20thcircuit/default.htm>

## *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, considers 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.

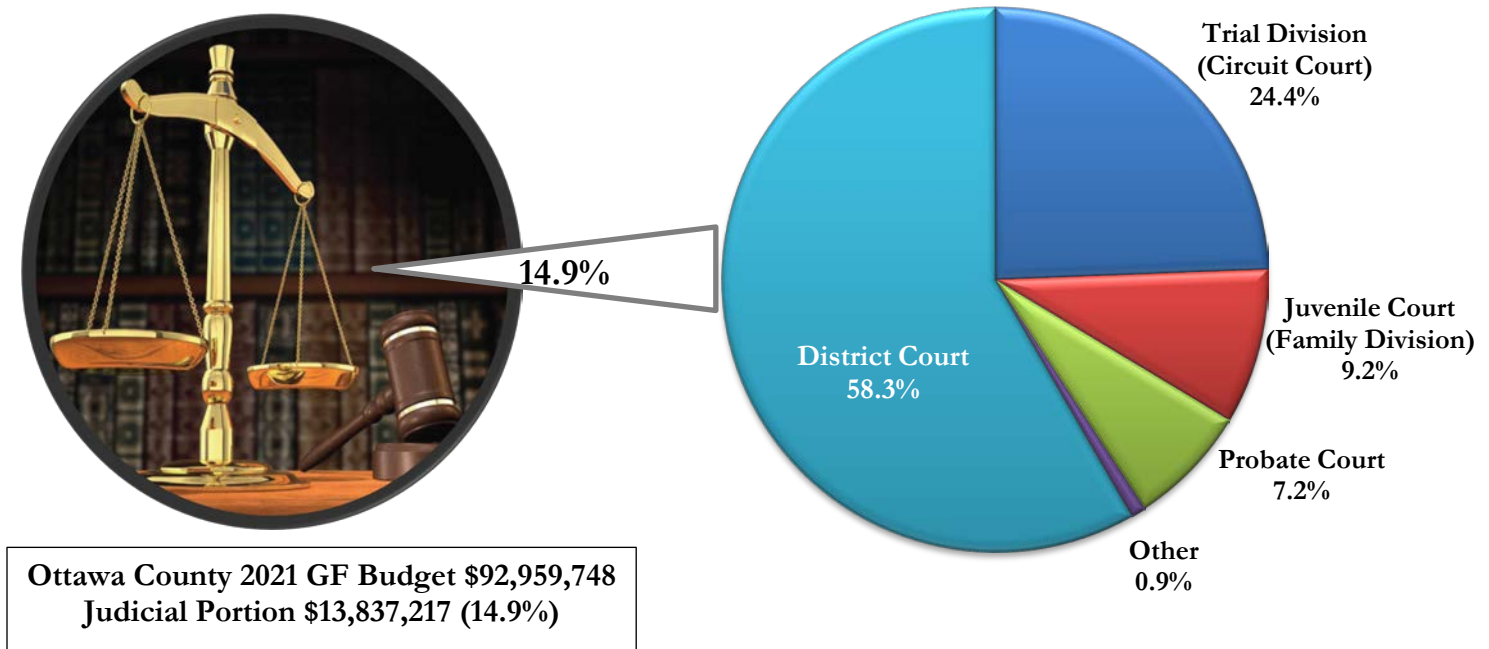
Other Court expenses are paid in part by federal Title IV-D funds (Family Division – FOC child support collection); the Michigan Child Care Fund, Title IV-E and Title I funds (Family Division – Juvenile Court programming); state reimbursement for the County Juvenile Officers, and various state and federal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



## *Ottawa County 2021 General Fund Allocation*

In FY 2021, the County general fund (Fund 1010) expenditure budget was \$92,959,748<sup>10</sup>; the judicial portion was \$13,837,217 or 14.9% of the GF budget. Of the 14.9% expenditure, the Circuit Court Trial Division (Fund 1310) was allocated \$3,372,861 (24.4%); Juvenile Court (Fund 1490) was allotted \$1,275,110 (9.2%); Probate Court (Fund 1480) received \$998,844 (7.2%) and the District Court (Fund 1360) received \$8,068,140 (58.3%). The remaining \$122,262 (0.9%) was allocated to “adult probation and other”.

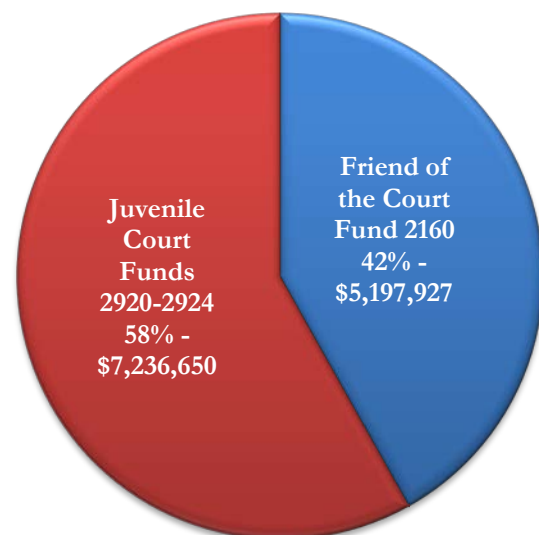
FIGURE 5: OTTAWA COUNTY 2021 GENERAL FUND ALLOCATION – JUDICIAL PORTION



## *Ottawa County 2021 Special Revenue Funds Transfer*

Due to other funding streams, some of the Family Division consisting of 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 2021, the 20th Circuit received special revenue fund expenditure budgets amounting to \$12,434,577. These allocations were divided as follows: FOC received a revenue operating transfer of \$5,197,927; and the Juvenile Court received funding for child care programs of \$7,236,650.

FIGURE 6: OTTAWA COUNTY 2021 SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS TRANSFER



<sup>10</sup> Ottawa County Adopted 2021 Budget, [https://www.miottawa.org/Departments/FiscalServices/pdf/2021Budget/Budget\\_Summary.pdf](https://www.miottawa.org/Departments/FiscalServices/pdf/2021Budget/Budget_Summary.pdf)  
 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit and Probate Courts, Ottawa County – Annual Report 2021

## *Legal Self-Help Center*

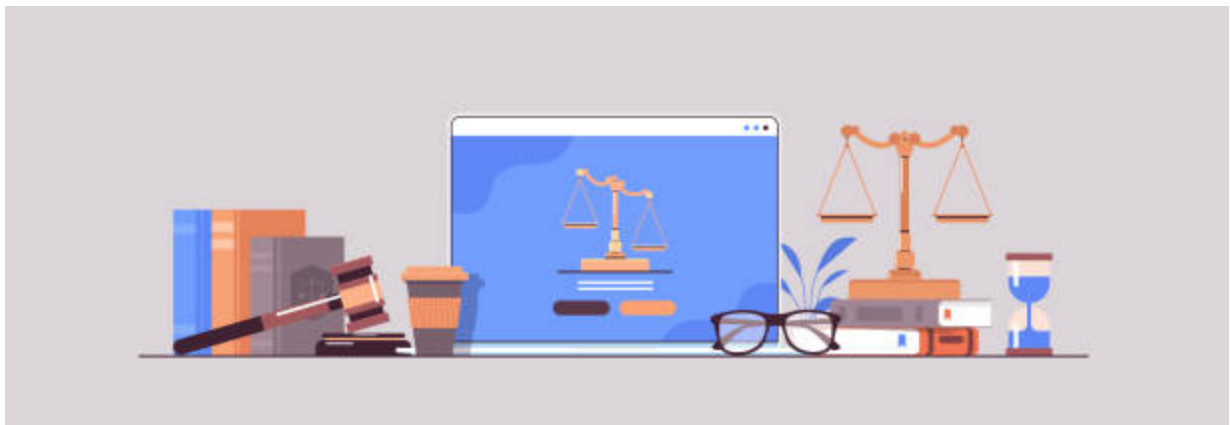
The Legal Self-Help Center (LSHC) supports the work of the courts in Ottawa County by providing individuals with the forms and education necessary to access court services. Once individuals have accessed court services, the self-help center provides support in navigating court processes.

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 and staff provide outstanding customer service and treat everyone with compassion and respect.

In 2021, the LSHC logged 1,542<sup>11</sup> hours of service and navigated more than 2,926 requests for assistance<sup>12</sup>. The LSHC reopened for in-person service on June 1, 2021. The LSHC Director and Administrative Assistant provided services in-person, by phone, and by email. In April 2021, the volunteer program resumed with one volunteer answering phone calls from a location outside of the courthouse. In 2021, this volunteer provided the courts and Ottawa County with over \$5,308.44 worth of services<sup>13</sup>.

Last year, self-represented litigants in Ottawa County filed 411 new divorce cases<sup>14</sup>, or around 50% of all new divorce filings<sup>15</sup>. More than half of these self-represented filers utilized paperwork from the Legal Self-Help Center<sup>16</sup>.

Volunteers are learning skills and gaining experience that make them prime candidates for future employment by the court or Ottawa County<sup>17</sup>. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the LSHC did not recruit or train any new volunteers in 2021.



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<sup>11</sup> 186 hours provided by volunteers; 1,356 hours provided by paid staff.

<sup>12</sup> In person = 836; Phone = 1579; Email = 222; Orders = 289

<sup>13</sup> In 2021, 1 volunteer hour was worth \$28.54 according to [independentsector.org/value-of-volunteer-time-2021](https://independentsector.org/value-of-volunteer-time-2021).

<sup>14</sup> 235 divorce without children (DO) and 176 divorce with children (DM).

<sup>15</sup> Total new divorce filings by self-represented litigants and attorneys were 868.

<sup>16</sup> 265 of 411 self-represented litigants (65%) utilized LSHC paperwork to file for divorce.

<sup>17</sup> To date, the LSHC has trained 11 individuals who were subsequently hired by the court or Ottawa County. These individuals include: Kate Armstrong, Pete Armstrong, Susan Hoekema, Sheri Lankheet, Tiffany Mast, Karen Meyers, Keshonna Redmond, Michela Ringquist, Shannon Rogers, Ken Schreur, and Kelli Wyse.





FIGURE 7: LEGAL SELF HELP CENTER

# 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 2021, Judge Miedema and Judge Hulsing presided over criminal, civil and personal protection order cases. At the beginning of the year, Judge Miedema also handled 60% of divorces without children, but in July, started hearing 100% of these cases. 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.

Starting in July, Judge Miedema began hearing 100% of the divorces without minor children, and Judge Hulsing began hearing the appellate cases.

From 2020 to 2021, the appellate caseload increased by 13.8% and the criminal caseload (new filings and reopened cases) increased by 8.3%, while the civil caseload remained steady. It is important to note that although the total number of domestic relations case filings in the Family Division is down, the average complexity and time involved in these cases (particularly in those known as “high-conflict” cases) continues to increase. Overall, the Trial Division experienced a 6.7% increase in new filings and reopened cases from 2020 to 2021.

FIGURE 8: 5-YEAR CASELOAD TRENDS, CIRCUIT COURT

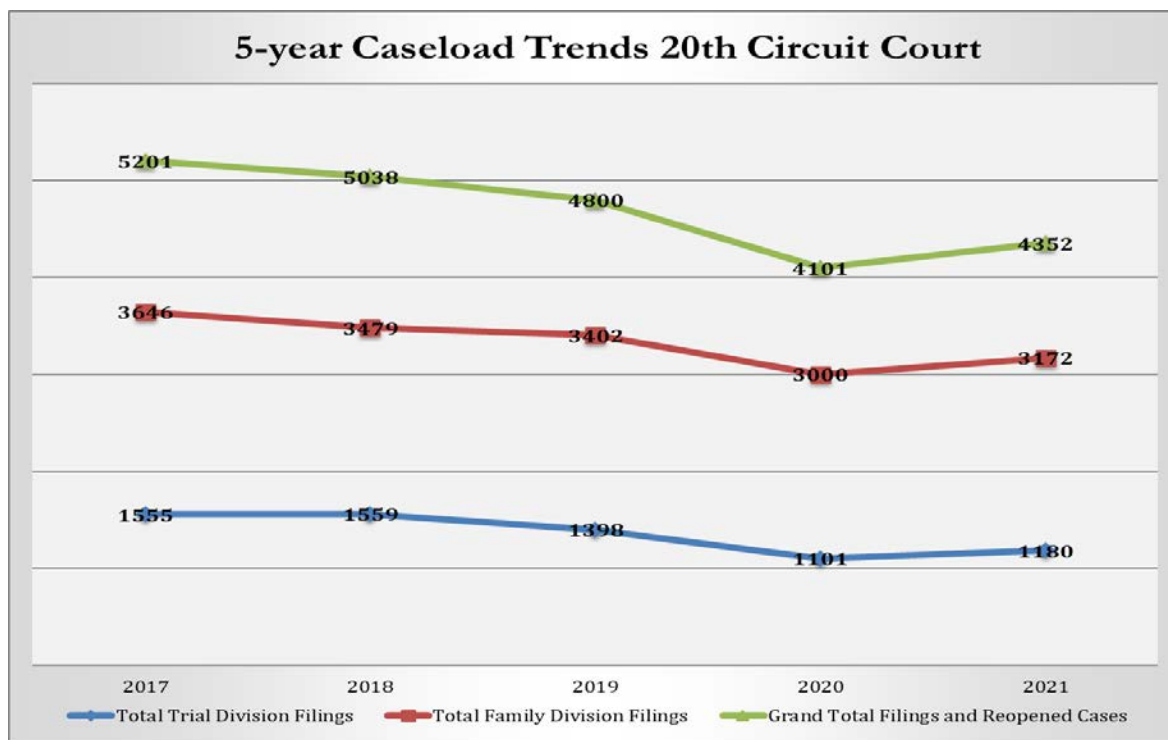
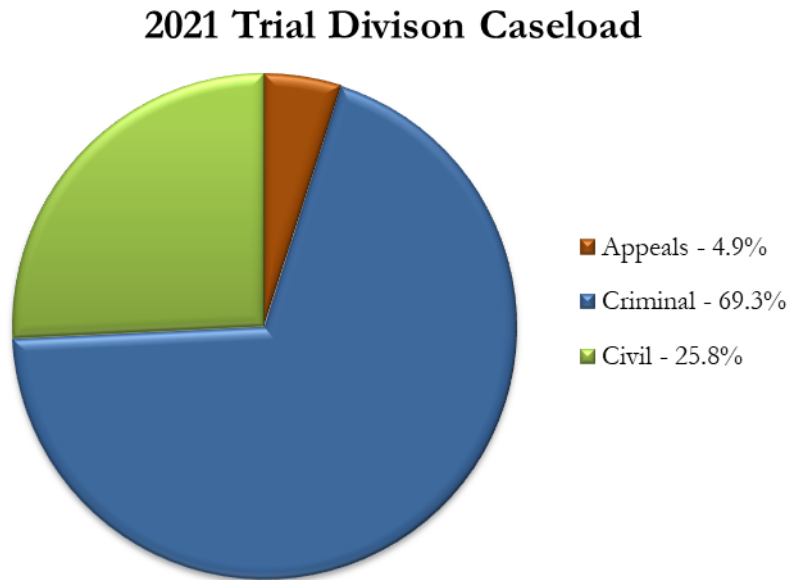


FIGURE 9: 2021 TRIAL DIVISION CASELOAD



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 case types. This collaboration and sharing of workload is a cultural norm in Ottawa County and is reflective of the courts’ core values noted above.

## New and Reopened Case Filings Trial Division

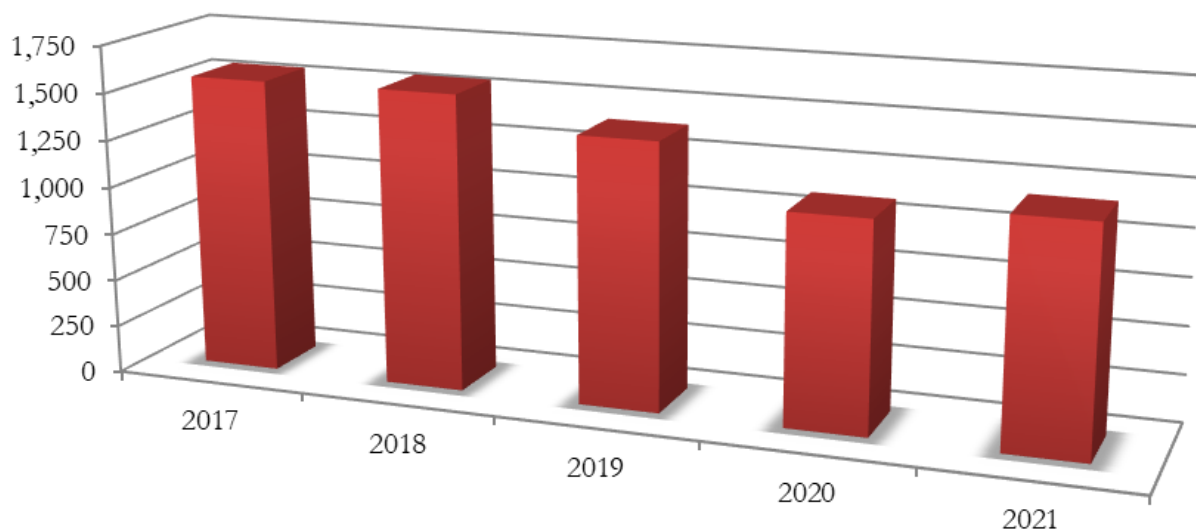


FIGURE 10: TRIAL DIVISION NEW AND REOPENED CASE FILINGS

# *Ottawa County Recovery Court* *“Changing Behaviors, Changing Lives”* *2021 Summary*

2021 was another year of unique challenges for the OCRC as we continued to operate through the ever-changing realities of a global pandemic. However, we have been able to sustain continuous services while leveraging technology to adapt how our services are delivered. We are grateful for the incredible flexibility and adaptability of our staff and participants.

During 2021, the OCRC had many successes:

- 2021 marked its 17<sup>th</sup> year of operation. We have remained funded solely through state and federal grants since starting in 2005.
- We were awarded a multi-year \$2 million grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. This grant will support operations for the next 5-years.
- During 2021, we completed our 2<sup>nd</sup> consecutive 3-year term as a national mentor court by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals and the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The OCRC was selected as 1 of 8 programs from over 3,000 in the country
- We hosted five virtual site-visits for court programs across the United States.
- We admitted a record of 42 new participants.
- We hired a second peer recovery coach.

We are proud of our many accomplishments in 2021 and look forward to continuing services in the years to come with the support of our federal, state, and local partners.



## *The Recovery Court Experience*

The Ottawa County Recovery Court exists to help people like John (not his real name), who entered Recovery Court after sentencing for his third drunk driving offense. John had struggled with alcohol most of his adult life and experienced many barriers to stable employment, housing, finances, and transportation. These stressors negatively impacted family relations and led to poor quality personal relationships. Like many entering Recovery Court, the pathway to building a better life was not apparent and accepting help was not easy.

John was willing, however, to put in the work. Recovery Court consists of random drug and alcohol testing, intensive outpatient treatment, recovery support meetings, random home checks, substance use treatments, community service, and bi-weekly review hearings with Judge Feyen. At a minimum, Recovery Court lasts for 18 months and consists of five phases to provide participants with structure, accountability, support and treatment services.

Since entering Recovery Court, John has remained sober for the longest period of his life (over 2 years), navigated life during a pandemic which has included securing stable employment, safe housing, and rebuilding relationships with his children, and meeting all requirements of the Recovery Court. Even more remarkable is that he has started a non-profit that supports underprivileged youth through basketball and has successfully fundraised within the community to create scholarship opportunities for youth in the program.

As John nears the end of his time in Recovery Court, he often comments on the positive relationships he has developed with the Recovery Court team and the support received from his probation officer, case manager, recovery coach, and the judge. As he prepares to graduate and continue a life in recovery, he has made plans to complete a state certification to become a peer recovery coach to support others working to improve their lives. Recovery Court exists to work with John and others like him. Every success story such as John's encourages the Recovery Court staff and community partners that their work is providing considerable value to the citizens of Ottawa County.





# Family Division - Friend of the Court (FOC)

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## *Caseload Facts*

Throughout 2021, Friend of the Court staff handled a Title IV-D caseload (child support) of 11,781 cases, representing a 7.7% increase from 2020. During the same time period, there was a 2.4% increase in new divorce and other domestic relations filings. To enforce court orders on these cases, 1,585 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), 427 bench warrants were issued, and over \$39 million in child support payments were collected and disbursed to families in need. In addition to these enforcement efforts, staff directly assisted clients by holding 4,033 client meetings in the office or remotely, both on appointment and walk-in basis. To help ensure child support orders are updated to reflect significant changes in circumstances, staff conducted 2,201 case reviews and recommended modification where appropriate (representing a 11% decrease from 2020). Based on federal child support performance measures, the 20th Circuit FOC is one of the most effective operations in Michigan, ranking at the top of the 16 largest counties and collecting \$8.85 for every dollar spent.

In addition to the child support enforcement efforts of the Friend of the Court, there were 142 cases in 2021 in which the 20th Circuit Court received a petition for a special assessment regarding child custody or parenting time issues. In 65.5% of these cases, FOC staff conducted an extensive investigation and provided the Court with recommendations. Diversion conferences conducted by FOC staff, resolved 9.2% of these cases, saving significant time and resources for all involved. Often, custody investigators are required to appear in court and testify regarding the investigation and their 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 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 Program (CRP) Contract. **For 2021, the FOC received reimbursement of \$2,974,478.00** (federal reimbursement of \$2,723,684.00 and the state reimbursement of \$250,794.00) to help defray operating costs.

The Friend of the Court office also offsets 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 enforcement is also measured, and incentives are earned on this factor at a rate of 15% of medical support collections.

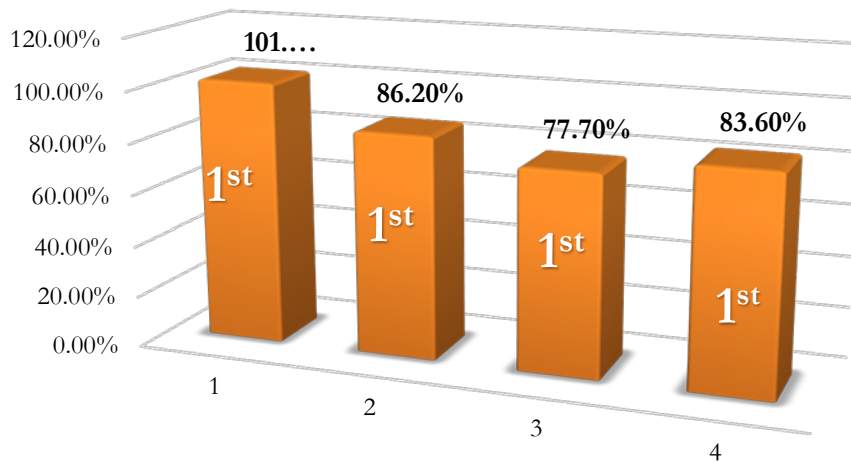
When the Friend of the Court office in Ottawa County measures itself against the nine counties with similar sized IV-D programs (caseloads of 10,000 – 34,000 cases), its performance is notable in all areas. This high performance not only helps secure child support for families and children in Ottawa County, but results in earned incentive dollars that reduce the amount of Ottawa County general fund dollars needed to fund the program. In 2021, the total Federal incentive dollars earned was \$379,991 plus an additional medical incentive

of \$59,368 (**\$439,359 in incentives earned overall**). Total reimbursements and incentives reduced Ottawa County general fund dollars by **\$3,413,837.00** in 2021.

Additionally, the Friend of the Court’s cost effectiveness rate was measured at a collection rate of \$8.36 for every dollar spent.

FIGURE 11: OTTAWA COUNTY 4TH QUARTER COMPARISON TO 16 LARGEST COUNTIES’ 2021 PERFORMANCE LEVELS

### Ottawa County - FY 2021 County Comparison Performance Levels



## Cooperative Reimbursement Program (CRP) Performance Measures

The fiscal year (FY) 2017-2021 Cooperative Reimbursement Program (CRP) contract between the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Office of Child Support (OCS) and the Friend of the Court (FOC) office in Ottawa County included a new performance measurement component, including performance standards for several program areas. Child support collection falls under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act and the local Friend of the Court office operates as a IV-D agency. The FOC in Ottawa County is a combined office, which means that it performs paternity and support establishment functions, typically performed by the local Prosecuting Attorney’s office, and enforcement functions. The CRP was amended in 2021 and now extends through FY 2023.

The child support program areas with contract performance standard (CPS) measurements include court action referral (CAR) processing; locate; service of process (SOP); order establishment; review and modification; medical support; timely enforcement; and customer service and Michigan Child Support Enforcement System (MiCSES) training.

Contract Performance Standards (CPS) are met based on the following criteria:

#### 1) Court Action Referral (CAR) Processing

- 75% of CARs were evaluated and acted on pursuant to IV-D policy and recorded in MiCSES within 14 calendar days.

- 2) **Locate**
  - 75% of cases had documented (in MiCSES) a locate attempt within 75 days of a non-custodial parent (NCP) being “unable to locate” and every 90 days thereafter until located.
- 3) **Service of Process (SOP)**
  - 75% of cases had a successful SOP pursuant to Michigan IV-D Child Support Manual 4.15.
- 4) **Order Establishment**
  - 75% of child support (DS) and paternity (DP) cases had an order established within 6 months, pursuant to Michigan IV-D Child Support Manual Section 4.15.
- 5) **Review and Modification**
  - The review and modifications are performed in accordance with the Michigan IV-D Child Support Manual, Section 3.45 and 75% are completed within 180 days.
- 6) **Medical Support**
  - 75% of cases include provisions ordering one or both parties to provide medical insurance or cash medical support.
- 7) **Timely Enforcement**
  - Enforcement was initiated or continued within thirty days of locating an NCP in 75% of cases.
- 8) **Training**
  - Approximately 50% of IV-D staff to complete customer service training each fiscal year with 100% of IV-D staff to complete customer service training every two fiscal years.
  - Approximately 50% of IV-D staff to complete MiCSES training each fiscal year with 100% of IV-D staff to complete MiCSES training every two fiscal years.

According to data reporting in MiCSES, the FOC in Ottawa County has exceeded all contract performance measures for 2021, including the learning management training standards with 91% of staff having completed customer service training and 69% of staff having completed MiCSES training.

TABLE 6:: MiCSES CONTRACT PERFROMANCE STANDARDS

IV-D Case County	IV-D County Name	Partner	Performance Standard	Current Period Performance	% Exceeding contract standard
070	OTTAWA	FOC	CAR Processing	83.8%	08.8%
070	OTTAWA	FOC	Locate	86.4%	11.4%
070	OTTAWA	FOC	Medical Support	100.0%	25.0%
070	OTTAWA	FOC	Order Establishment	91.2%	16.2%
070	OTTAWA	FOC	SOP	78.8%	03.8%
070	OTTAWA	FOC	Locate	98.2%	23.2%
070	OTTAWA	FOC	Medical Support	98.4%	23.4%
070	OTTAWA	FOC	Rev/Mod	99.2%	24.2%

Contract performance standards help the child support program function effectively and efficiently and ensure that IV-D staff are highly trained in customer service and knowledgeable about the statewide child support enforcement system. These measurement tools also help FOC managers confirm high performance from FOC staff and help identify where additional FOC resources and training may be needed.

## *FOC Achievements*

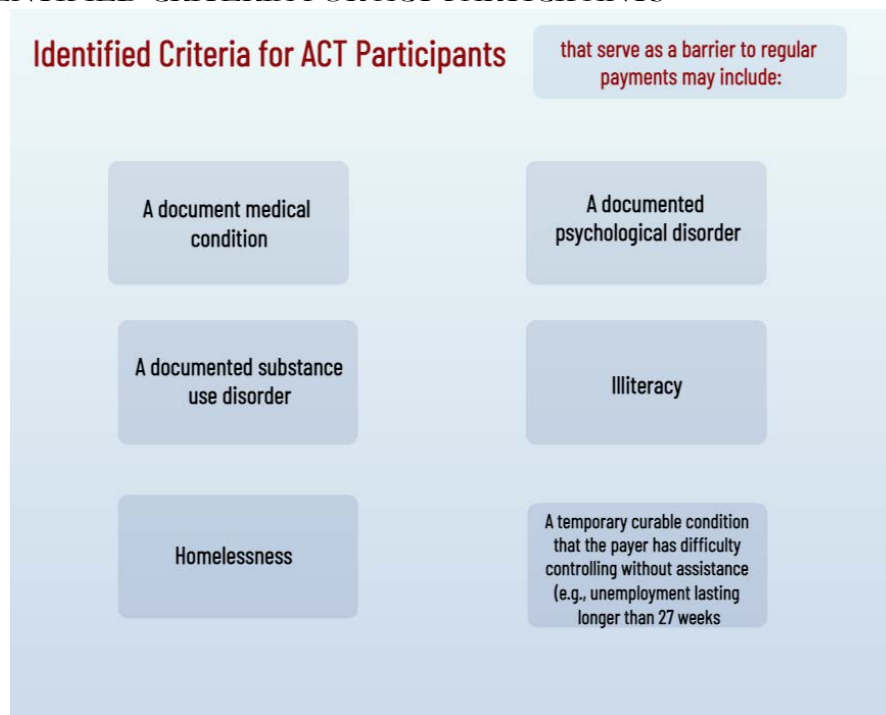
### **Alternative Contempt Track (ACT) Program**

In January 2021, the State Court Administrator’s Office approved the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court’s Administrative Order 2021-01 “Alternative Contempt Track Docket” plan.

The Alternative Contempt Track (ACT) docket is a form of problem-solving court available for difficult child support cases. ACT was designed to allow the court an intermediate solution alternative to criminal non-support and/or incarceration as a result of civil contempt for non-payment. ACT participant payers identify specific personal issues that are barriers to their success in meeting their child support obligation and work with a specialized FOC Investigator in creating a case service plan to address barriers. The FOC then collaborates with a variety of county non-profit organizations for services to address each participant’s individualized needs.

ACT is a specialty court, modeled after the Swift and Sure Sanctions Probation Program (SSSPP), an intensive probation supervision program for high-risk felony offenders. ACT provides intensive probation services and close supervision by the court. ACT addresses the needs and challenges of participants in a holistic manner, connecting participants with local services including education, employment, mental health, and substance abuse treatment. ACT participants must volunteer to be in the program, which is one year in duration, with the potential for immediate re-entry.

FIGURE 12: IDENTIFIED CRITERIA FOR ACT PARTICIPANTS



ACT began accepting participants in June 2021. Overall, there were 10 referrals to ACT with 3 participants (with 6 corresponding child support cases) enrolled in the program at the end of December 2021.

The ACT docket is assigned to Chief Judge Jon A. Van Allsburg who holds hearings for ACT participant cases each month. At these hearings, progress on the court-ordered case service plan is described, participants are recognized for steps toward success and encouraged to continue to make improvements. Case services plans and court orders are modified as needed.

In a short period of time, ACT participants have already made significant strides!

One participant was provided counseling services through Mosaic Counseling to address PTSD resulting from past military service. He began working with West Michigan Works to obtain his Commercial Driver's License, something he dreamed about but was not able to accomplish until now. He is currently employed full time making deliveries for Amazon. He enjoys his work and has not missed a support payment since starting the ACT program.

Another participant is working with Zeeland Adult Education to obtain his GED. He told the FOC Investigator, "he had never felt proud of himself until now and is thankful he was given an opportunity like this through the ACT program." In addition to working toward his GED, he registered for welding classes and is learning those skills as well. He and his mother found themselves facing eviction while in the ACT program and worked with the FOC to secure housing. Both participants indicated they did not feel cared about by the courts in the past, however, their participation in ACT changed that perception and they feel lucky to participate.

Overall services provided to ACT participants in 2021 include:

- 1 participant received counseling
- 3 participants received MI Works referrals
- 1 participant received adult education services/GED
- 1 participant enrolled in trade school welding classes
- 3 participants currently working, with 2 having steady gainful employment
- 1 participant passed their initial Commercial Driver's License permit tests

Child Support Payments for 2021:

- Court reduced monthly payment amounts for 3 participants who were fully participating in ACT.
- All 3 participants began making monthly payments as ordered.
- \$232,781 collected from ACT participants, with no missed payments on the reduced ordered amount.

2021 was a difficult year for ACT implementation given the COVID precautions in place that limited many agencies' services. Besides the pandemic, transportation and homelessness continue to be the biggest barriers to overcome for current and potential ACT participants.

Two additional participants will enter the program in early 2022 with a goal to enroll 20 participants by then end of 2022. Not only does the ACT program work to reduce barriers to non-payment by connecting participants with much needed services, it also reduces FOC resources on enforcement efforts and secures regular, consistent payments for custodial parents and children.



## Online Dispute Resolution Expanded for Use in Resolving Parenting Time Complaints

In 2021, the FOC further expanded upon the capabilities of the Court Innovations/Matterhorn “Online Dispute Resolution” (ODR) software platform to incorporate parenting time dispute resolution services. The FOC had been utilizing the Matterhorn technology to provide text notifications to payers of child support who were noncompliant with their court order. The text notification served as an outreach tool to inform the payer of noncompliance and encourage contact with the FOC to work toward eliminating barriers to payment. This effective method of resolving non-payment issues resulted in a 24% reduction of show cause hearings scheduled with Judges.

Matterhorn’s parenting time module, implemented in 2020, initially sought to assist and empower parents in developing and drafting parenting time plans. Parties who work cooperatively to reach agreement themselves are more likely to follow their court orders, thus reducing future court hearings.

With help from the FOC, the Matterhorn platform expanded its parenting time module in 2021 to incorporate parenting time complaints. In this circumstance, parties have a court ordered parenting time plan, and it is alleged that the plan has been violated. The platform provides a guided online forum for parties to resolve parenting time complaints quickly and get information about possible remedies. FOC investigators, knowledgeable in domestic relations law and trained in dispute resolution techniques, work to streamline the parenting time complaint process which historically takes several weeks to research and resolve.

The ODR platform allows parties access on their own time, when it is convenient for their schedule, and does not require them to miss work or secure childcare to participate. If the parties resolve the complaint, the FOC will assist them in crafting an order that reflects their agreement, then secure their signatures electronically and forward the order to the Judge for signature and entry. If the parties are unable to resolve the parenting time complaint, the FOC will inform the parties of their options moving forward which may include a referral for formal mediation, filing a motion, requesting the FOC show cause a party for a parenting time violation or choosing to leave the issue unresolved. The FOC is working with PEW Charitable Trusts in the evaluation of this online dispute resolution tool and expects to have evaluation recommendations in 2022 to further improve upon and enhance online dispute resolution.

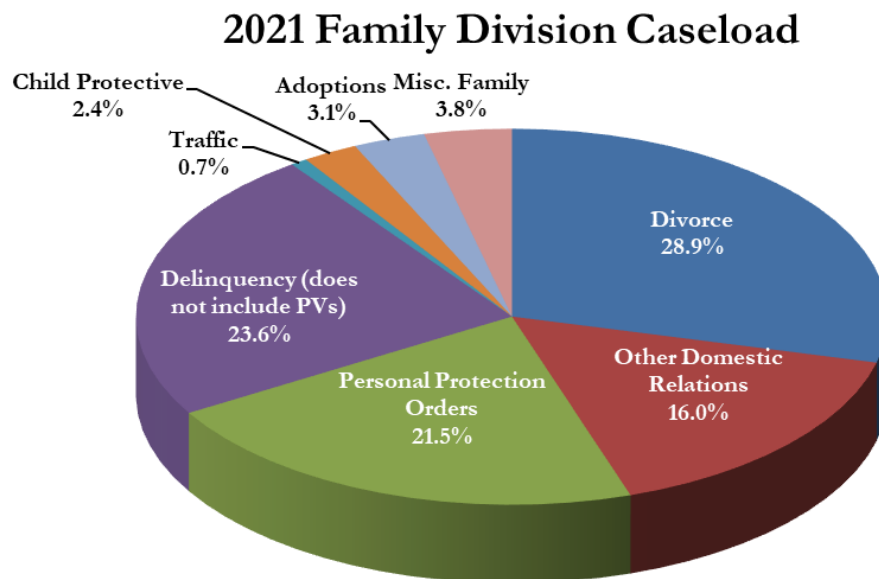


# Family Division - Juvenile Court and Juvenile Detention Center

## Caseload Facts

Court personnel, like most community leaders, understand children represent the future. As a result, when 745 new and reopened juvenile petitions and 23 traffic cases arrived at Juvenile Court throughout 2021, 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 7,769<sup>18</sup> contacts with juveniles and parents, as well as ancillary contacts with schools, counselors, etc. Juvenile Court caseloads were higher in 2021 than at any other point since 2018 (+12.1%). The complexity of many cases also remains high, with many youth exhibiting more mental health and substance abuse issues. This change in complexity required a customized approach to the provision of services and, in some cases, more costly residential treatment. Delinquency cases account for 23.6% 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 13: 2021 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.

<sup>18</sup> Contacts include face-to-face, video meetings with juveniles, consent/intake, surveillance and probation, telephone contact and video meetings. Attempted contacts, telephone contacts, e-mail and notes with no contact types were not included.

In 2021, the Juvenile Court provided educational services through the Juvenile Justice Institute to seventeen youth, of whom two received their high school diploma. Two juveniles were placed in foster care (DL cases) during 2021 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 five youth.

During 2021, there were 312 admissions to secure detention in the Ottawa County Juvenile Detention Center, representing 8,758 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 \$1,015,855.00 of new revenue in FY2021.

## *Community Report Card*

As a result of a 2008 consultation with the National Center for Juvenile Justice, the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit, Juvenile Court implemented a “Community Report Card” as one method for evaluating probation outcomes. The Community Report Card focuses on the concept of Balanced and Restorative Justice, which encompasses: Community Protection, Accountability and Competency Development

TABLE 7: JUVENILE COURT COMMUNITY REPORT CARD

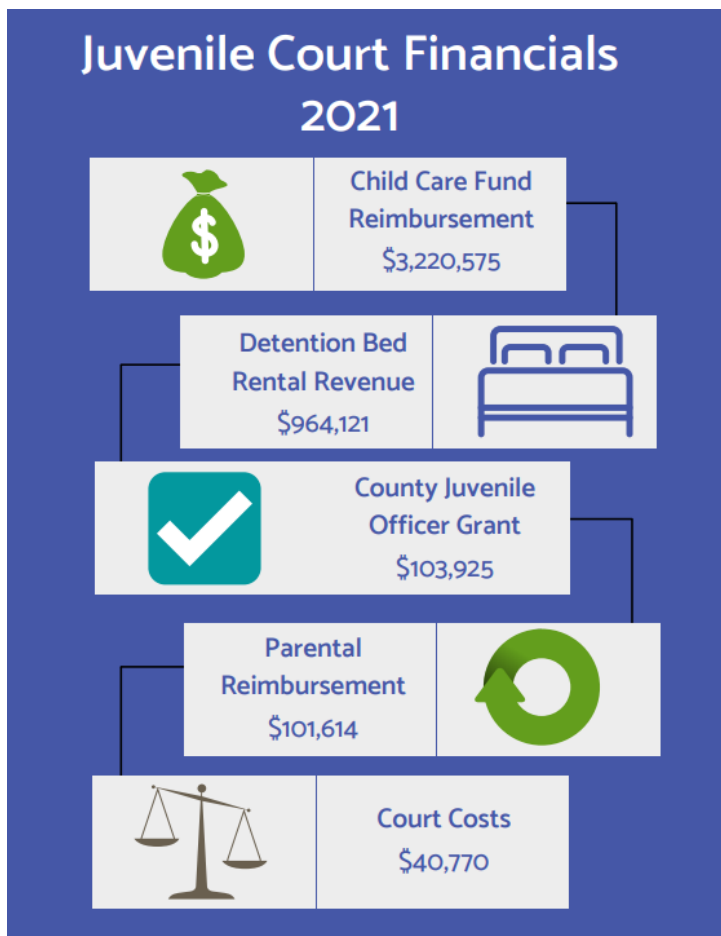
COMMUNITY REPORT CARD	2018	2019	2020	2021
Separate juveniles petitioned to the juvenile court	572	523	510	503
Number of cases closed	431	340	434	294
Juveniles placed on probation	102	73	78	77
Juveniles placed on Consent Calendar	253	244	306	217
Percentage of juveniles who had no adjudications or convictions for offenses that occurred while under supervision (Consent Calendar and Probation)	91%	87%	91%	86%
Number of community service hours completed (Consent Calendar and Probation)	3,996	2,775	3,348	1,289
Percentage of victims financially restored	74%	76%	67%	94%
Percentage of juveniles enrolled in school, graduated/obtained a GED or employed at the time of closure of the case (Consent Calendar and Probation)	93%	96%	98%	98%
Percentage of juveniles who were discharged from probation after successfully completing the terms of probation	88%	95%	93%	90%
Percentage of juveniles who successfully completed the terms of their consent calendar	97%	98%	96%	94%

For court staff, this instrument places into context the success of the youth they serve each year. For the community, it provides a holistic view of how court-involved youth are held accountable for their actions, restore wholeness to crime victims, and learn something positive from a negative action. The table above demonstrates the number of juveniles petitioned to the court and some of the outcomes achieved during their court involvement.

## 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 state eligible costs related to the direct care of and community-based programming for juveniles.
- ❖ The Ottawa County Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) generates revenue through renting beds to other counties in need of detention or programming for court-involved youth. The JDC has a great reputation among the juvenile courts in the state for providing quality care and treatment of their court-involved youth. Thus, at any given time, the Court contracts with as many as 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. The parents of court-involved youth are billed to recoup certain 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 14: JUVENILE COURT FINANCIALS – FY 2021

## *Building HOPE through Juvenile Court Programs*

During the height of the pandemic, the Juvenile Court moved most programs to a virtual format. As we all learned more about how to operate safely, in-person, the Court shifted its focus to rebuilding the connections that are enhanced by in-person activities. These connections serve as the foundation for meaningful and effective work with youth. Kids at Hope provides a platform for the delivery of Court programs and services. In 2021, those primary services included: a partnership with the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Department, continued boys and parent programming, small group art therapy program, and training the Court's treatment team in an adolescent focused, substance use disorder treatment model.

The Kids at Hope (KAH) initiative operates on the belief that “all kids are capable of success, no exceptions”. Youth in the justice system are often considered at-risk but instead, this philosophy focuses on kids “at hope”. The KAH and Court partnership is intended to renew staff hope in kids’ ability to envision future success, despite the most challenging of circumstances. With this philosophy in mind, and to lift youth from the confines of the pandemic, court staff considered ways to reinvigorate current programs and involve youth in different activities.



Through a partnership with the Ottawa County Parks Department, youth participated in two, month long groups focused on outdoor survival, kayaking, land management, and dune hiking. Often, these types of activities serve as a youth’s first introduction to the many outdoor recreational experiences available through the County’s extensive park system. Youth were incredibly receptive to these hands-on experiences with highly skilled Naturalist Guides and perhaps, some saw a different path to success through this experiential learning opportunity.

While the Parks Department activities are seasonal, the Court offers several, year around programs. Youth and parents continue to benefit from “Boys to Men-tors” and “Parenting in the 21st Century” groups, which first launched in fall 2020. Cole Williams, of Cole Speaks, continues to engage families through in person groups whenever possible and virtually, when required due to the pandemic. Cole relates to parents in a unique way, having lived the experience of a foster parent, adoptive parent, and parent of a court-involved youth. The parent curriculum is scheduled for eight weeks, but some parents find it so valuable, they participate beyond that time frame for additional support.



The Boys into Men-tors program provides up to 20 weeks of life skills and lessons focused on self-discovery, interpersonal relations, goal setting, critical thinking, problem-solving and crisis intervention. Cole’s belief in each youth’s success is evident in his exceptional ability to listen and connect with kids during and outside of group. He demonstrates care and compassion in each interaction and strives to meet each young man where he is at on his journey, while providing accountability for choices and behavior.

Recognizing youth needs can vary, the Court sought out services to engage court-involved females. Facilitated by art therapist Amy Hamman, Med., ATR-BC, the six-week Emotions Art Therapy program focuses on utilizing creativity to appropriately express feelings, learn new coping skills and share emotions in



a safe environment. Participants explore their own feelings and experiences through three-dimensional art, drawings, painting, bibliotherapy, and multi-media imagery. The program began as a one-time pilot and quickly blossomed into a regular feature in the Court’s continuum of services. Each week, girls leave the program with a representation of the work they’ve done to explore their past, present, and a vision for a hopeful future.

The Court continuously explores opportunities to ensure programs and practices are relevant, engaging, and evidence-based whenever possible. For many years, the Court utilized community-based providers for substance abuse services. However, with several therapists on staff the Treatment team shifted direction and brought substance use disorder (SUD) treatment, “in house”. After conducting considerable research and comparing multiple programs, the Treatment team landed on the Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach (A-CRA). A-CRA is an empirically supported SUD treatment model proven to demonstrate reductions in criminal justice system involvement. It is utilized by other, local, SUD treatment providers and has been researched with co-occurring disorders. The Treatment team participated in the A-CRA training in July 2021 and immediately began using the model with youth and families. Through the summer of 2022, the Treatment team will continue to meet regularly with the A-CRA provider to ensure they implement the program as designed. Providing SUD services within the Court also allows staff to integrate the KAH philosophy and perpetuate the belief that all kids are capable of success, no exceptions!

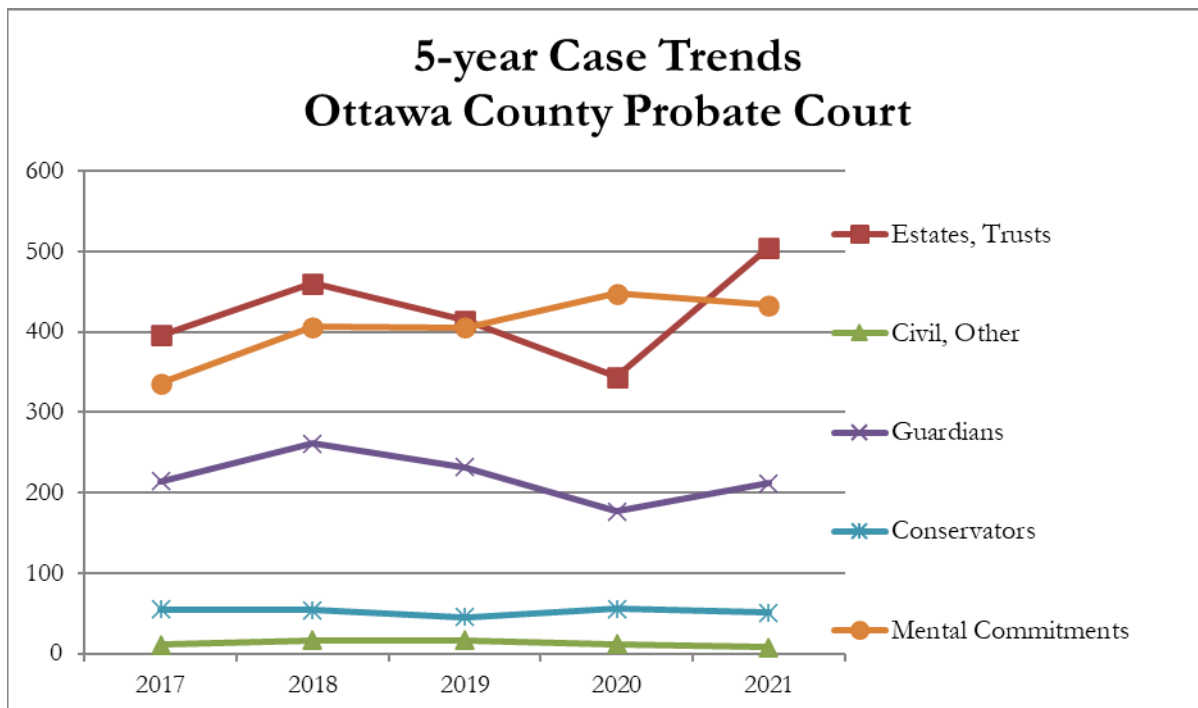


# Probate Court

## 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 continues to enhance its effectiveness using mediation, virtual hearing technology, e-filing (MiFile), document imaging, remote payment capability, and digital case management. These initiatives, managed by the professional and well-trained Probate Court employees, help ensure excellent customer service and a positive experience by court users.

FIGURE 15: 5-YEAR CASE TRENDS, OTTAWA COUNTY PROBATE COURT



During 2021, the Probate Court experienced a stable five-year trend with more than 1,000 new case filings. Among the new and reopened cases, most categories remained stable with some decreases in filings due to the pandemic restrictions caused by the COVID-19 virus, including estates and trusts (-17%), guardianship appointments (-24%) and civil and other filings (-29%). More than one-third of the Probate caseload involves individuals needing the protection of the Court in guardianship, conservatorship, and mentally ill cases. At the close of 2021, there were 676 adults and minors with guardians appointed by the Court. In cases where individuals need assistance managing financial assets, there were 244 adults and minors with Court appointed conservators. In addition to the regularly appointed guardians, there were 790 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 over 14,000 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.

The 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 33% of the Court’s overall case filings 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 44% of the Court’s new cases 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 case reviews are conducted to provide accountability. The second chart emphasizes the significant number of cases for which one judge and six employees are responsible. At the end of 2020, the Probate Court had 14,328 open cases.

FIGURE 16: 2021 PROBATE COURT CASELOAD

### 2021 Probate Court Caseload

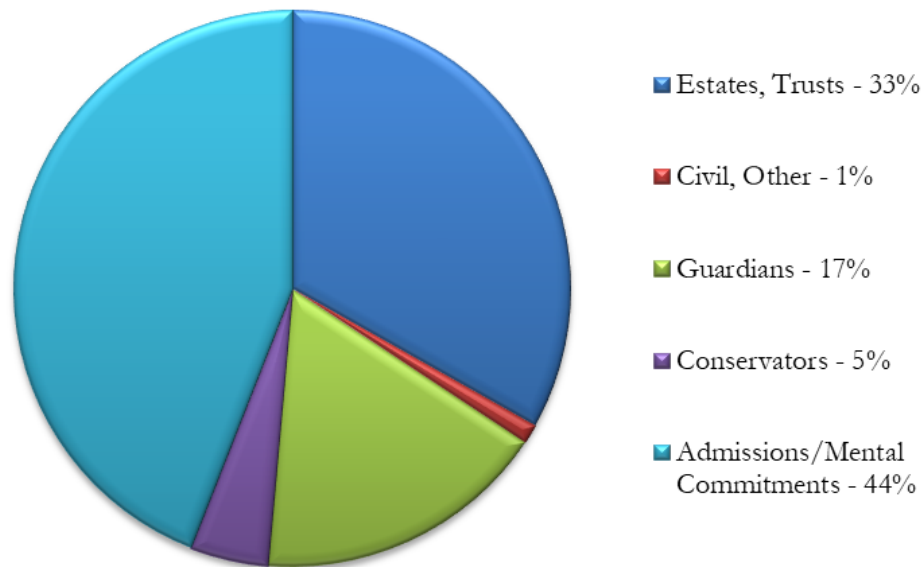
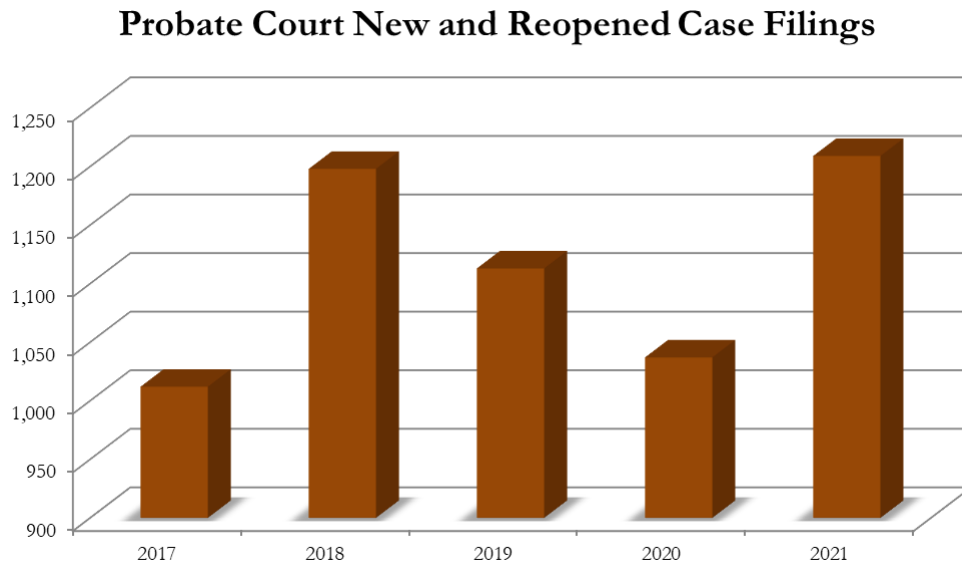


FIGURE 17: PROBATE COURT NEW AND REOPENED CASE FILINGS



### *Probate Court Initiatives*

The Ottawa County Probate Court continues to work with the State Court Administrative Office and ImageSoft, Inc. as the first Probate Court in Michigan to launch the MiFile electronic case filing system. E-filing is now mandatory for attorneys and discretionary for self-represented litigants. Probate staff have been testing all aspects of this new technology and have been instrumental in helping the system developers identify and resolve issues with the technology.

In addition, Probate Court has begun working with Mentis Technology, ImageSoft, Inc., the SCAO, and the County IT Department on the implementation of SmartBench technology. 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 like paging through a paper file manually...only better!

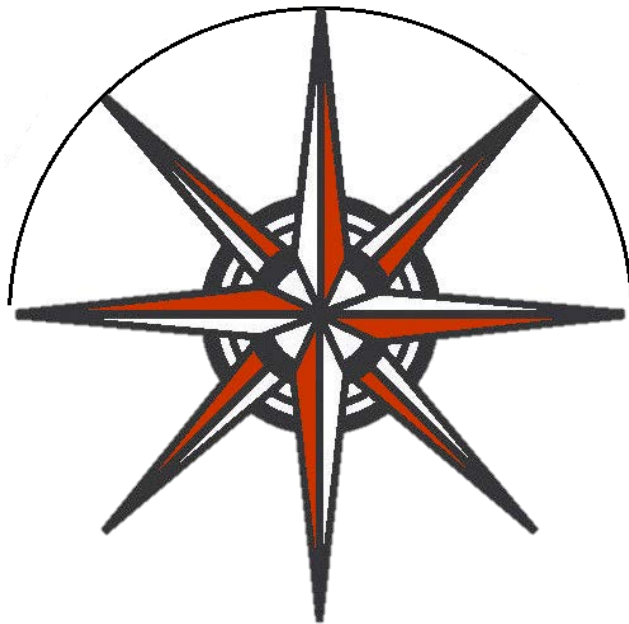
## About the Cover... The Compass Rose

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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.

By actively developing a culture of strategic thinking, strategic planning, and strategic execution, the 20th Judicial Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts are determining the best path to their destination. This 2020 Annual Report is a reminder of why the plan and destination are important.

The judges and court employees are in the business of administering justice – one case at a time. By upholding the rule of law and expertly managing the legal cases entrusted to us, 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 our own potential and to the rule of law on which our nation was built.





# 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
114	Full Time Staff
8	Part Time Staff (includes JDC relief)
4	Temporary Staff (includes Bailiffs)
4	Grant Supported Staff
2	Ottawa County Sheriff Deputies
10	Ottawa Area Intermediate School District

**146 Total**

### *Ottawa County Probate Court*

1	Probate Court Judge
6	Full Time Staff

**7 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**

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

#### **Juvenile Court Services**

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