

Annual Report 2022



20th Judicial Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts

Ottawa County, Michigan
www.miottawa.org/Courts



April 6, 2023

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

Dear Chairperson Moss and Commissioners:

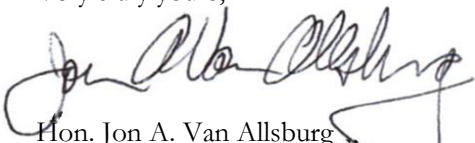
As Chief Judges for the 20th Circuit Court and the Ottawa County Probate Court, it is our pleasure to present the 2022 Annual Report. For the benefit of the Board of Commissioners and the public we serve, this document provides an overview of the important work of the judicial branch of government in Ottawa County. 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 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.

In 2022, we began the realization of several years of planning, as we broke ground for the Family Justice Center. This state-of-the-art courthouse will unite the Family Division judges, referees, Friend of the Court, and Juvenile Services under one roof, to better serve the citizens of Ottawa County. We look forward to being able to occupy the building in early 2024.

The year 2022 also brought another welcome change, as a new Circuit Court judge seat was created by the State Legislature. This Circuit Court seat was created due to the judicial requirements of our expanding court dockets, as determined and recommended by the State Court Administrative Office. An election was held in November of 2022 for an eight-year term, which was won by former Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Paul F. Kraus. His investiture was held in December 2022, and his term of office began on January 1, 2023. As a result, the caseloads and docket assignments of the Circuit court were equitably re-assigned among the probate and circuit judges by consensus.

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. As Chief Judges, we are proud of the exemplary work completed by our judges and court employees in 2022. 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, 20th Judicial 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 2022 Annual Report

Justice for All

Typically, each year the Annual Report for the Circuit and Probate Courts focuses on a theme selected by the Courts' Strategic Planning Oversight Team. For 2022, we chose the theme of "Justice for All." This theme matched the Michigan Supreme Court's 2021 creation of the Michigan Justice for All (JFA) Commission chaired by Justice Brian Zahra, **and** particularly resonated with us as we considered different ways to provide our services to the public.

The Courts began their strategic planning initiative in 2005 and have reviewed and generated a new Strategic Plan every three years since. Our current 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, as required by the Michigan Supreme Court's 2022 order creating the Commission on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Michigan Judiciary (DEI Commission). The significant work of this Strategic Planning Team, led by the Chief Judges and Court Administrator, is important evidence of how seriously the Courts evaluate 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. 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 2022 – 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 2022. 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 Court Judges

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

The court system in the State of Michigan is created by the Michigan Constitution and state law. The different courts so established hear and decide different legal matters.

“The circuit court is the trial court with the broadest powers in Michigan. In general, the circuit court handles all civil cases with claims of more than \$25,000 and all felony criminal cases (cases where the accused, if found guilty, could be sent to prison). The family division of circuit court handles all cases regarding divorce, paternity, adoptions, personal protection actions, emancipation of minors, treatment and testing of infectious disease, safe delivery of newborns, name changes, juvenile offenses and delinquency, juvenile guardianship, and child abuse and neglect. In addition, the circuit court hears cases appealed from the other trial courts or from administrative agencies. The friend of the court office is part of the family division of the circuit court and handles domestic relations cases where minor children are involved.”¹



The 20th Circuit Court Judges in 2022– (left to right) Hon. Jon A. Van Allsburg, Hon. Kent D. Engle, Hon. Jon H. Hulsing, and Hon. Karen J. Miedema

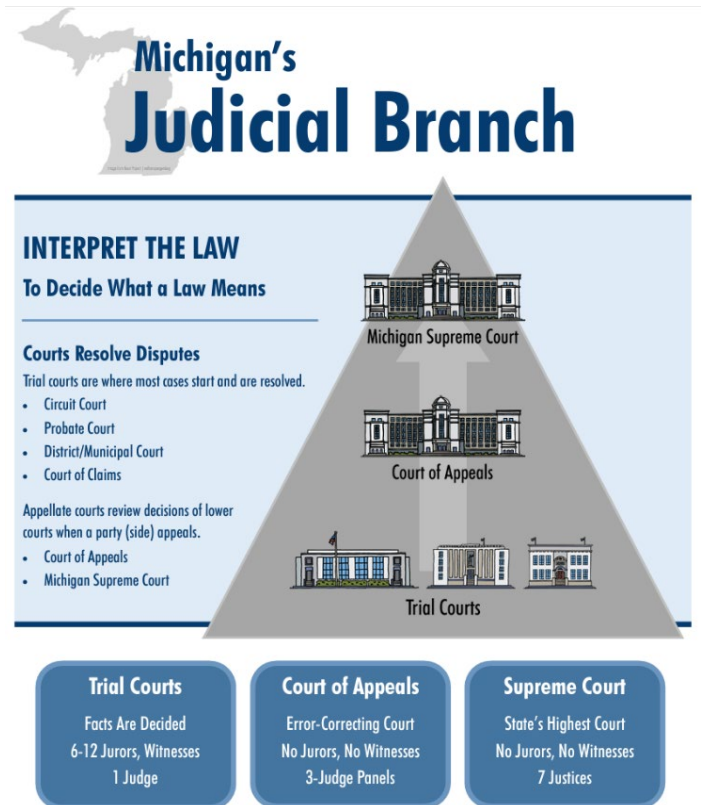


Figure 1 <https://www.courts.michigan.gov/4ad631/siteassets/msc-learning-center/mijudicialbranch-infographic.pdf>

“The probate court handles wills, administers estates and trusts, appoints guardians and conservators, and orders treatment for mentally ill and developmentally disabled persons.”²

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,

¹ <https://www.courts.michigan.gov/courts/trial-courts/>

² <https://www.courts.michigan.gov/courts/trial-courts/>

however, have historically elected outstanding judges who undertake the position seriously and strive to provide fair and legally correct decisions in every case.

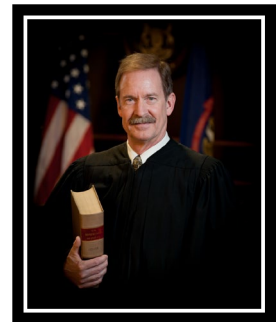
The role of the judge in an adversarial process is to preside over the proceedings and maintain order. During a trial, the judge rules on whether the evidence the parties want to use is legal and proper. If the trial is before a jury, the judge gives instructions about the law that applies to the case; 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.

The Circuit and Probate Courts in Ottawa County are fortunate to have a learned and collegial group of elected judges. 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 then Hon. Jon H. Hulsing serves as Chief Judge Pro Tempore of the Circuit Court.

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

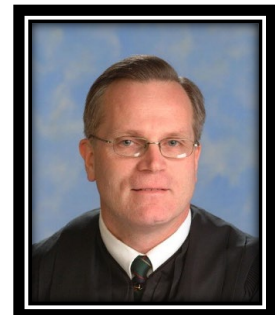
Judge Van Allsburg graduated from West Ottawa High School and Central Michigan University. He attended Detroit College of Law (now Michigan State University College of Law) and graduated with honors. After practicing law for two years in Oakland and Wayne counties, he moved back to Holland and joined 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 20th Circuit Court. He won the election, becoming the first judge in this judicial position. He handles Family Division cases and business court matters, and until 2021 handled administrative appeals and appeals from the district court. In November 2016, Van Allsburg was appointed Chief Judge by the Michigan Supreme Court. He is a past president of the Michigan Judges Association and is a member of the State Bar of Michigan Judicial Council.

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

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



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

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



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 2018, 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. In 2021, our caseload numbers slowly began to return to their pre-pandemic state, continuing in 2022. The implementation of the “Raise the Age” legislation on October 1, 2021, also made an impact on the juvenile caseload in 2022.

TABLE 1: CIRCUIT COURT CASELOAD TREND <https://www.courts.michigan.gov/courts/trial-courts/>³

TRIAL DIVISION	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	% Change (2021-2022)
Appeals	55	43	50	58	54	-6.9%
Criminal	1,132	969	750	818	776	-5.1%
Civil	372	386	301	304	388	+27.6%
Total Trial Division Filings	1,559	1,398	1,101	1,180	1,218	+3.2%

FAMILY DIVISION (Includes FOC and Juvenile Court)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	% Change (2021-2022)
Divorce	1,039	1,030	851	914	867	-5.1%
Other Domestic Relations	609	602	511	504	519	+2.9%
Personal Protection Orders	697	665	661	680	660	-2.9%
Delinquency (does not include Probation Violations)	788	740	655	745	847	+13.7%
Juvenile Traffic	17	32	49	23	107	+365.2%
Child Protective	78	88	71	75	59	-2.1%
Adoptions	148	120	100	98	102	+4.0%
Misc. Family	103	125	102	119	143	+20.1%
Total Family Division Filings	3,479	3,402	3,000	3,172	3,304	+4.2%
Grand Total Filings and Reopened Cases	5,038	4,800	4,101	4,352	4,522	+3.9%

TABLE 2: PROBATE COURT CASELOAD TRENDS

OTTAWA COUNTY PROBATE COURT CASELOAD TRENDS	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	% Change (2021-2022)
Estates, Trusts	460	414	344	505	464	-8.1%
Civil, Other	17	17	12	8	18	+125%
Guardians	261	232	177	212	226	+6.6%
Conservators	54	45	47	51	56	+9.8%
Civil Commitments	406	405	457	433	410	-5.3%
Grand Total Filings and Reopened Cases	1,198	1,113	1,037	1,209	1,173	-2.9%

³ For additional caseload information, visit: <http://courts.mi.gov/education/stats/Caseload/Pages/default.aspx>.

Historical Roster
Ottawa County Circuit Court Judges

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

Historical Roster
Ottawa County Probate Court Judges

EDMUND H. BADGER 1838 – 1839	CHARLES E. SOULE 1885 – 1892
DR. TIMOTHY EASTMAN, II 1839 – 1843	JOHN VAN BUREN GOODRICH 1893 – 1901
WILLIAM HATHAWAY, JR 1844 – 1856	EDWARD P. KIRBY 1901 – 1916
AUGUSTUS W. TAYLOR 1857 – 1864	JAMES J. DANHOF 1917 – 1932
GEORGE B. PARKS 1865 – 1868	CORA VANDE WATER 1933 – 1948
EDWARD BOLTWOOD 1869 – 1870	FREDERICK T. MILES 1949 – 1976
EDWIN BAXTER 1870 – 1872	JACK A. VANDE BUNTE 1977 – 1988
SAMUEL L. TATE 1873 – 1884	MARK A. FEYEN 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 and juvenile delinquency and child protective proceedings. Based on the assigned docket, Attorney Referees hear testimony and recommend orders in a variety of Circuit Court Family Division cases.

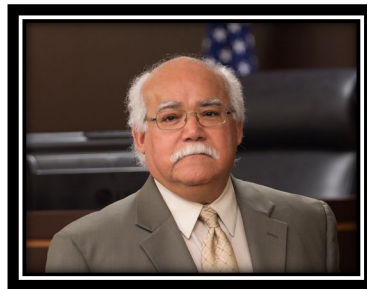
Delinquency and child protective petitions are scheduled for preliminary hearings shortly after filing. Domestic relations hearings are typically scheduled within three to four weeks after filing. The Court employs three full-time Attorney Referees. The Court contracts with an experienced Attorney to serve as a substitute referee, as well as using the Friend of the Court to serve as a substitute referee to provide docket coverage when needed.

Generally, Attorney Referees conduct 3,000-4,000 judicial hearings every year, playing a significant role in the 20th Circuit Court's efforts to maintain excellent caseload management. This was especially helpful to the court in 2022, as the impact of an insufficient number of judges for the court's caseload was being keenly felt. Administering justice by ensuring all parties have their "day in court" and providing timely decisions on matters as important as child support, parenting time, appropriate consequences for delinquent behavior, and more is how the Court's Attorney Referees provide direct service to the public and assist the elected judges with their caseloads.

As Judicial Officers, the Attorney Referees also hear neglect and abuse cases to alleviate some strain on the judges' dockets. Most referee hearings were conducted virtually via Zoom in 2022. Attorney Referee Patricia Gelderloos retired at the end of 2021, and that position was filled in 2022 by Peter Armstrong, Jr.



Peter Armstrong, Jr.
Attorney Referee



David V. Macias
Attorney Referee



Erin M. Magley
Attorney Referee



Jennell L. Challa
Substitute Referee



Joseph P. Kozakiewicz
Substitute Referee

Family Division (Grand Haven)

TABLE 3: REFEREE HEARINGS IN GRAND HAVEN

DOMESTIC/CIVIL PROCEEDINGS	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	% Change (2021-2022)
Support Hearings	668	480	296	260	304	+16.9%
Parenting Time Hearings	405	369	255	255	295	+15.6%
<i>Pro Confesso</i> Divorce Hearings	156	108	129	63	187	+196.8%
Paternity Arraignment/Support Hearings	496	613	544	475	380	-20.0%
Total Family Division Domestic/Civil Referee Hearings	1,725	1,570	1,224	1,053	1,166	+10.7%

Family Division/Juvenile Court (West Olive)

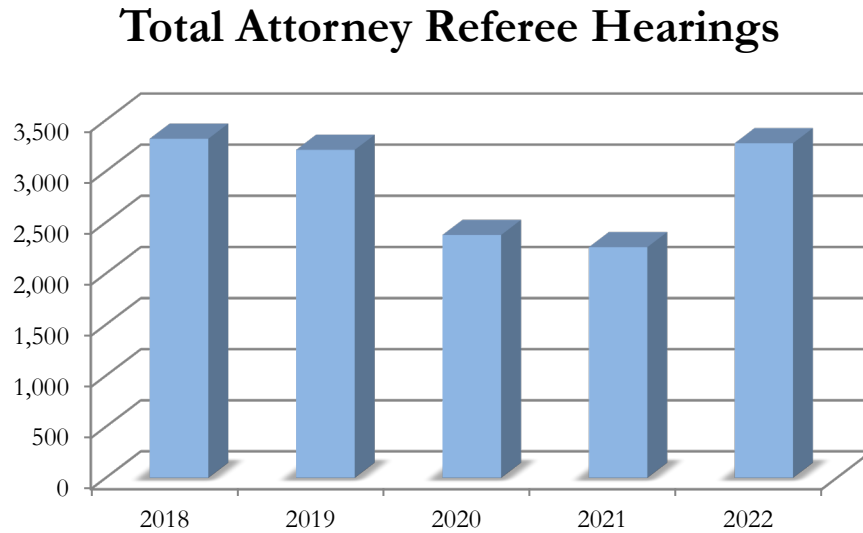
TABLE 4: REFEREE HEARINGS IN WEST OLIVE

DELINQUENCY PROCEEDINGS	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	% Change ⁸ (2021-2022)
Preliminary Hearings	138	192	172	280	282	+0.7%
Pre-Trial Conferences	569	580	464	382	549	+43.7%
Pleas of Admission/No Contest Hearings	61	75	58	60	59	-1.6%
Original Disposition Hearings	252	201	222	143	217	+51.7%
Dispositional Review Hearings	312	307	426	96	135	+40.6%
Consents/Holds/Other	131	109	80	97	70	-27.8%
Saturday Preliminary Hearings	10	14	13	28	19	-32.1%
CHILD PROTECTIVE PROCEEDINGS	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	% Change ⁸ (2021-2022)
Preliminary Hearings	70	80	83	264	385	+45.8%
Adoption Release/Consent/Emancipation/ Emergency Removal/Other	50	81	56	34	16	-52.9%
Total Family Division/Juvenile Court Referee Hearings	1,593	1,639	1,153	1,205	2,108	+74.9%

TABLE 5: TOTAL ATTORNEY REFEREE HEARINGS

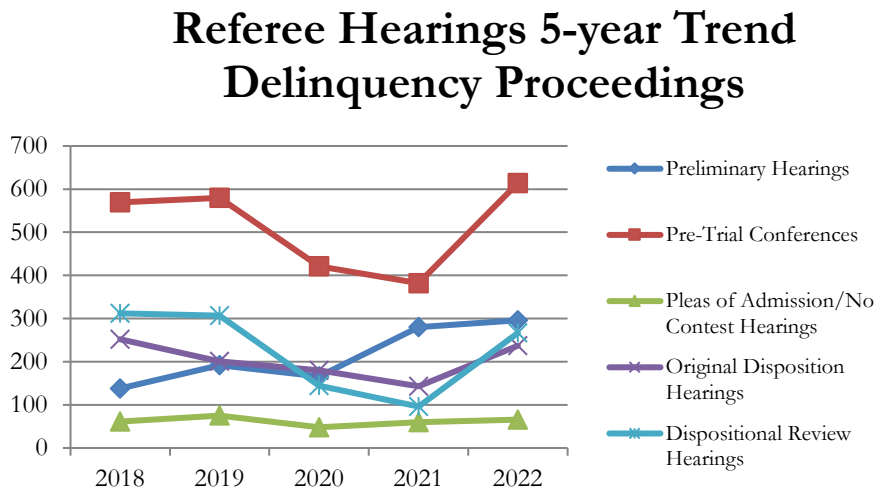
ATTORNEY REFEREE HEARINGS	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	% Change ⁸ (2021-2022)
Grand Total	3,318	3,209	2,377	2,258	3,274	+44.9%

FIGURE 2: 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 3: REFEREE HEARINGS – 5-YEAR TREND, DELINQUENCY PROCEEDINGS

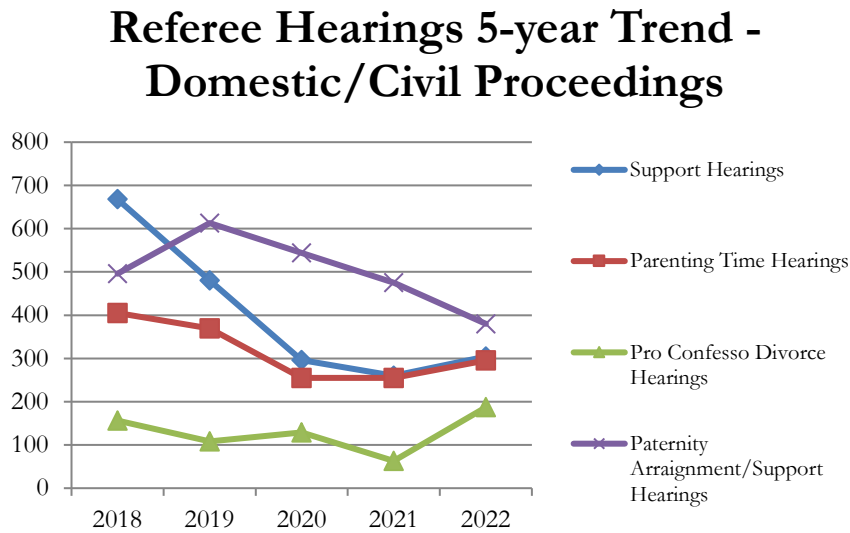


The competing trends noted in Figure 3 below, show four major areas of Attorney Referee hearings which are primarily conducted in the Ottawa County Courthouse in Grand Haven. During the past five years there has been a notable decline in repeated child support hearings, which suggests existing court 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

⁴ Due to changes in data tracking, Dispositional Review Hearings appear to increase significantly in 2018.
20th Judicial Circuit and Probate Courts, Ottawa County – Annual Report 2022

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



Court Administration

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.”⁵ 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.



Susan M. Franklin, JD, MPA
Court Administrator



Thom A. Lattig, MS
Juvenile Court Director



Jennell L. Challa, JD
Friend of the Court



Cheryl L. Zorn, MPA
Trial Division Director

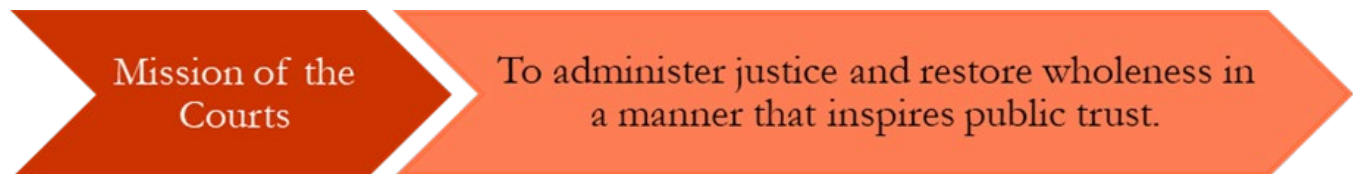


Johanna Wallace, AA
Probate Register

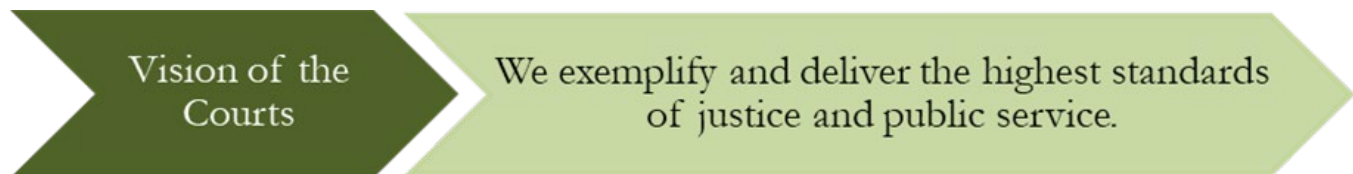
⁵ The Court Administrator: A Guide and Manual, National Association for Court Management, 2011.
20th Judicial Circuit and Probate Courts, Ottawa County – Annual Report 2022

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, following procedures and policies that are perceived to be fair, 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 financial 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.

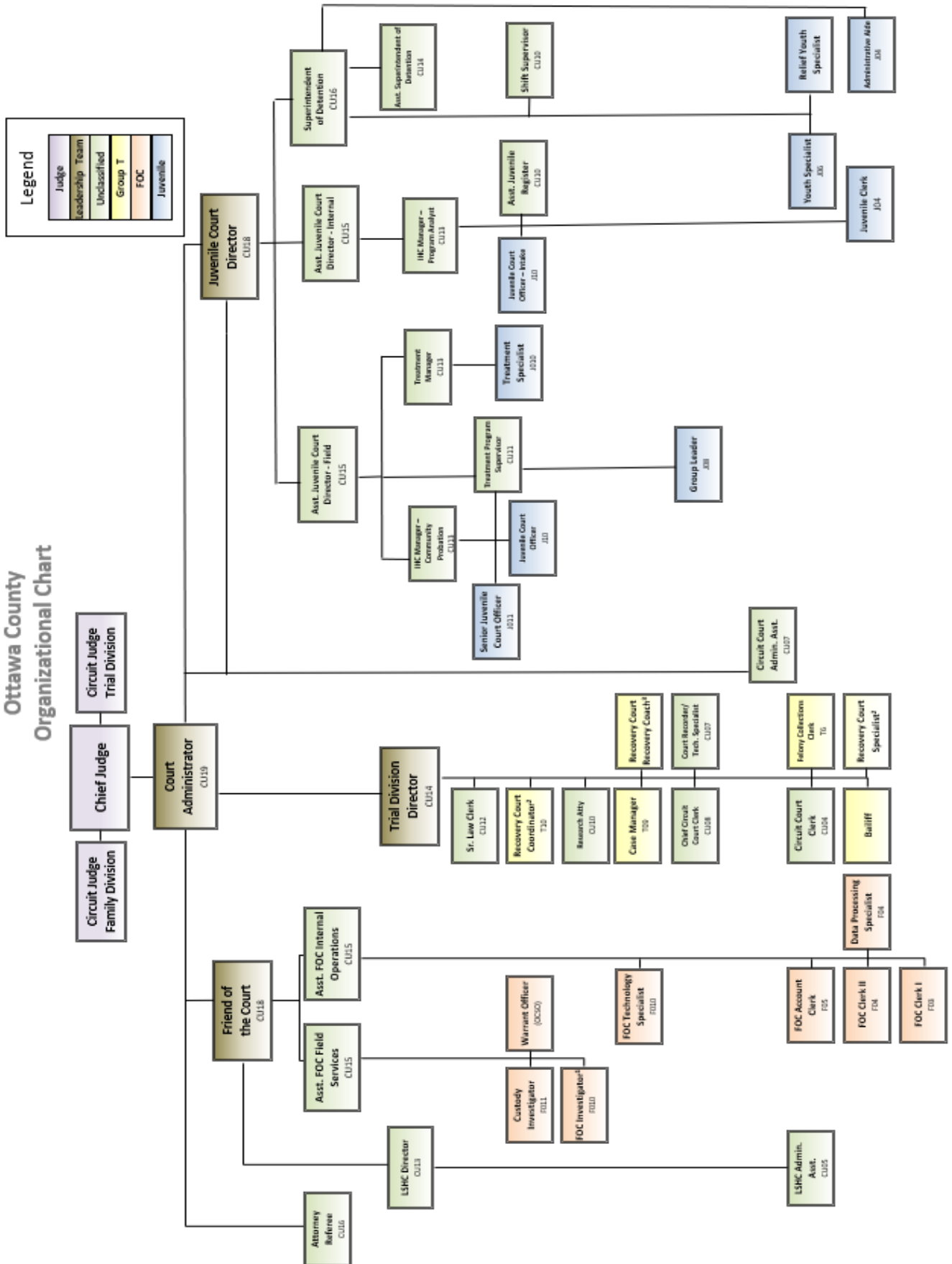
All the efforts discussed above have been identified by judges and court employees to demonstrate how the courts’ high standards for justice and public service may be operationalized daily. Clear identification of the courts’ mission and vision was a critical first step toward achieving effective strategic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



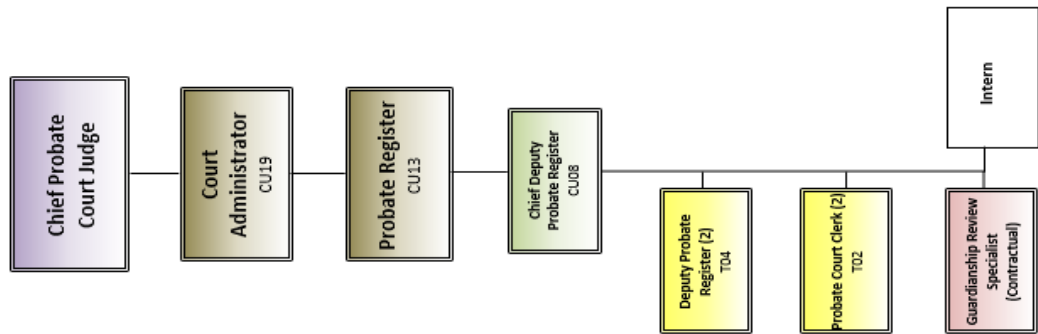
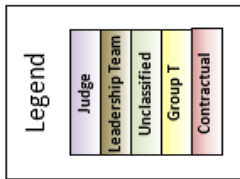
A significant amount of time in the strategic planning process was devoted to identifying the Courts’ Core Values. While an emphasis on the “four pillars” of freedom, equality, truth, and justice (also found etched upon the Michigan Hall of Justice at the state capital) might be expected for a court system, our Strategic Planning Oversight Team also chose to focus on values such as empathy, integrity, 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.

20th Circuit Court Ottawa County Organizational Chart



Ottawa County Probate Court Organizational Chart



Court Wide Initiatives

Strategic Planning – Maintaining the Strategic Plan⁶, periodically updating and revising goals, objectives, and priority projects, is an important function of court administration. In 2021, the Strategic Planning Team began revising the 20th 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, and 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, expected to be complete in 2023.

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 groundbreaking occurred in 2022. The courthouse is expected to be substantially complete by the end of 2023, and ready for operation in 2024.

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 access to the courts and increase public trust and confidence in the judicial branch of government.⁷ In fact,

⁶ https://www.miottawa.org/Courts/Probate/pdf/2021-2024_StrategicPlan.pdf

⁷ <https://mifile.courts.michigan.gov/>

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 2022, 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.

Legal Kiosks – One of the Courts' strategic planning teams applied for and received a grant to purchase and program 11 legal kiosks to be placed throughout Ottawa County. These kiosks are intended to provide for increased accessibility, strong Internet connections and a user-friendly format to allow patrons who are unable to travel to courthouses, or who have inadequate internet access or electronic devices, to access legal services as if they were in a courthouse.

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.

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.

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 waived according to court rule. 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.



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 Legal 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 2022, the LSHC logged 1,331^[1] hours of service and navigated more than 3,076 requests for assistance^[2]. The LSHC was open for in-person service for all of 2022. The LSHC Director and Administrative Assistant provided services in-person, by phone, and by email. The volunteer program continued with one volunteer answering phone calls from a location outside of the courthouse two mornings each week. In 2022, this volunteer provided the courts and Ottawa County with over \$8,775.35 worth of services^[3].

Last year, self-represented litigants in Ottawa County filed 370 new divorce cases^[4], or around 45% of all new divorce filings^[5]. Almost 70% of these self-represented filers utilized paperwork from the Legal Self-Help Center^[6].

Volunteers are learning skills and gaining experience that make them prime candidates for future employment by the court or Ottawa County^[7]. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the LSHC did not recruit or train any new volunteers in 2022.



^[1] 293 hours provided by volunteers; 1,038 hours provided by paid staff.

^[2] In person = 1680; Phone = 1116; Email = 208; Orders = 72

^[3] In 2022, 1 volunteer hour was worth \$29.95 according to independentsector.org/value-of-volunteer-time-2022.

^[4] 196 divorces without children (DO) and 174 divorces with children (DM).

^[5] Total new divorce filings by self-represented litigants and attorneys were 813.

^[6] 257 of 370 self-represented litigants (69%) utilized LSHC paperwork to file for divorce.

^[7] 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.

Trial Division



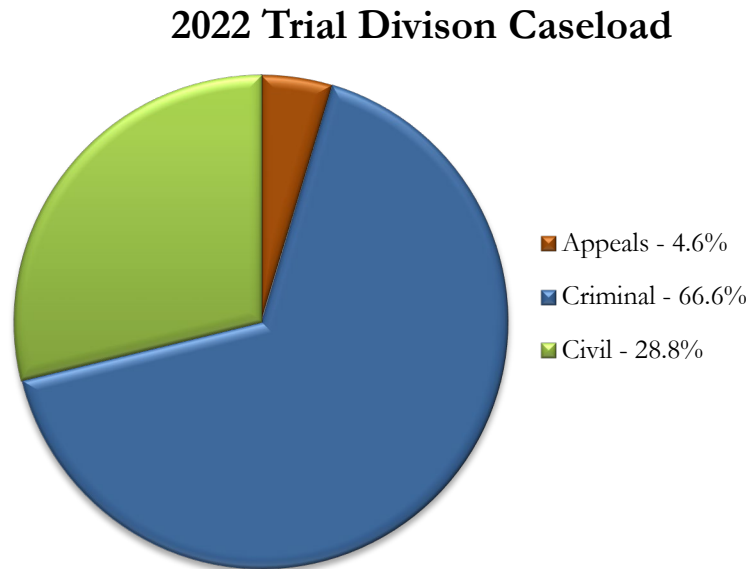
Caseload Facts

The 20th 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 2022, Judge Miedema and Judge Hulsing presided over criminal, civil and personal protection order cases. During most of the year, Judge Miedema also handled 100% of divorces without children, while Judge Hulsing heard the appellate cases. Judge Van Allsburg heard business court cases, and 50% of the divorce and other domestic relations cases. Judge Engle was assigned 50% of the divorce and other domestic relations cases. In addition, Judge Engle conducted court two days per week at the Fillmore Complex with a mixed docket of juvenile delinquency cases and child protective proceedings.

From 2021 to 2022, the appellate caseload decreased by -6.9% and the criminal caseload (new filings and reopened cases) decreased by -5.1%, 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 negligible difference in new filings and reopened cases from 2021 to 2022.

FIGURE 5: 2022 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 handled 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

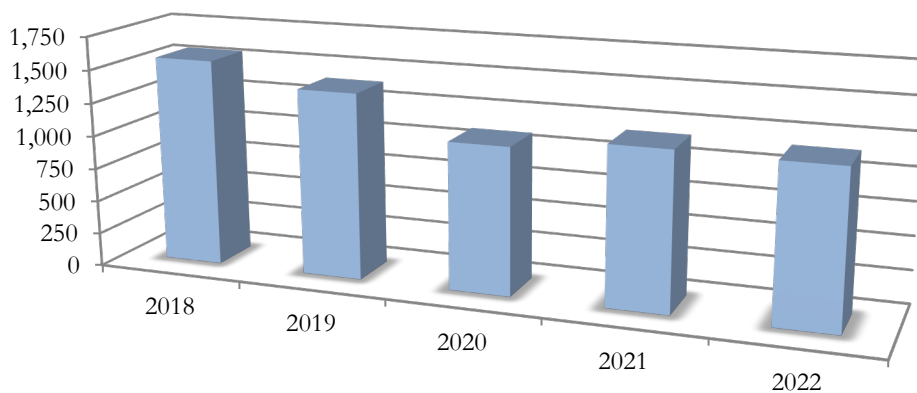


FIGURE 6: TRIAL DIVISION NEW AND REOPENED CASE FILINGS

Jury and Bench Trials Near Historic Numbers

The Constitution preserves the right of trial by jury, and the right to a speedy and public trial by an impartial jury. As we continue to return to normal following two years of Covid restrictions, the Trial Division saw an uptick in jury trials.

Some of the additional issues encountered as the Trial Division returned to in person trials were low juror attendance, initial technological challenges within the Court’s system of displaying electronic evidence and utilizing technology in juror orientations when the full jury panel was summoned, which necessitated the need for jurors to be in several different locations. It should also be noted that the significant increase in internet-based hearings (using “Zoom” technology), is more apparent in the family and civil divisions of the court, as criminal defendants have a Constitutional right to insist upon personal appearance in the court for many criminal proceedings.

There are many moving parts and actors involved in successfully preserving a defendant’s due process right to a trial by jury. This is a responsibility the Trial Division takes very seriously and can accomplish through cooperation between colleagues and coordinating harmoniously with other departments throughout the County and the Court.

In 2022, Ottawa County 20th Circuit Court held 33 jury trials. Of those, 28 were criminal trials, and five were civil trials. In total, 1,628 jurors were called to serve. In 2021 when 22 jury trials total were held, 21 were criminal trials and one was a civil trial. A total of 1,226 jurors were called to serve in 2021.

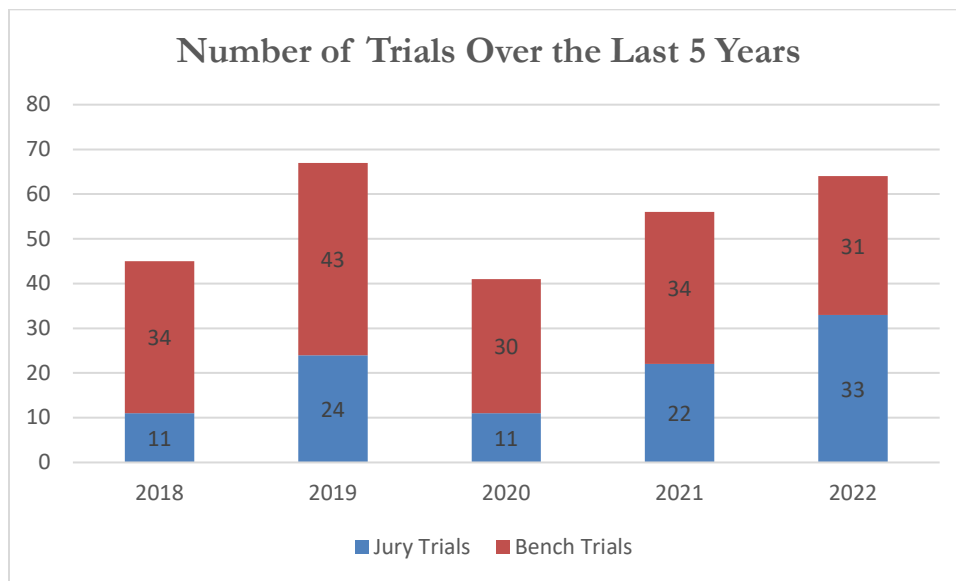


FIGURE 7: JURY AND BENCH TRIALS OVER THE LAST 5 YEARS

Ottawa County Recovery Court

2022 Summary

2022 was a year of transition to a post-pandemic new normal. For the many challenges of the pandemic, there were positive changes that occurred. Moving forward, we will continue to leverage technology for conducting remote work that includes staff working from home and varying community locations, virtual court hearings, counseling sessions held remotely, and online recovery support meetings. We are grateful for the incredible flexibility and adaptability of our staff and participants over the past two years.

During 2022, we had many successes:

- 35 new participants admitted to the program, with 21 successfully discharged;
- Began offering Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) groups to participants;
- Held our first in-person recovery coach academy since prior to the pandemic;
- Attended the National Association of Drug Court Professionals Conference in Nashville; and
- Passed program certification review by the State Court Administrative Office, confirming that we operate with fidelity to evidence-based best practice standards.

We are proud of our many accomplishments in 2022 and look forward to continuing services in the years to come with the support of our federal, state, and local partners.

Participant Success Story

Participant⁸ entered recovery court following participant's 7th felony conviction. Participant had struggled with drug use entire young adult and adult life, had significant trauma history, 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.



While a participant in Recovery Court, participant remained sober for the longest period ever (nearly two years), navigated life during a pandemic which has included securing stable employment, safe housing, and rebuilding relationships with family, and meeting all requirements of the recovery court. Even more remarkable is that participant completed GED, enrolled in community college and completed first two semesters of school with a GPA over 3.8.

Now a graduate of the recovery court, participant remains in school with a high GPA, has a job, owns a home, and remains in contact with recovery court staff.

⁸ For the privacy of the individual, this particular Recovery Court graduate will be referred to as "Participant."
20th Judicial Circuit and Probate Courts, Ottawa County – Annual Report 2022

Family Division - Friend of the Court (FOC)



Caseload Facts

Throughout 2022, Friend of the Court staff handled a Title IV-D caseload (child support) of 12,257 cases, representing a 4% increase from 2021. To enforce court orders on these cases, 2,171 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), 675 bench warrants were issued, and over \$38 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 4,530 client meetings in the office or remotely, both on appointment and on a limited walk-in basis. To help ensure child support orders are updated to reflect significant changes in circumstances, staff conducted 2,510 case reviews and recommended modification where appropriate (representing a 14% increase from 2021). 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 148 cases in 2021 in which the 20th Circuit Court received a petition for a special assessment regarding child custody or parenting time issues. In 52% of these cases, FOC staff conducted an extensive investigation and provided the Court with recommendations. Diversion conferences conducted by FOC staff, resolved 16% 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

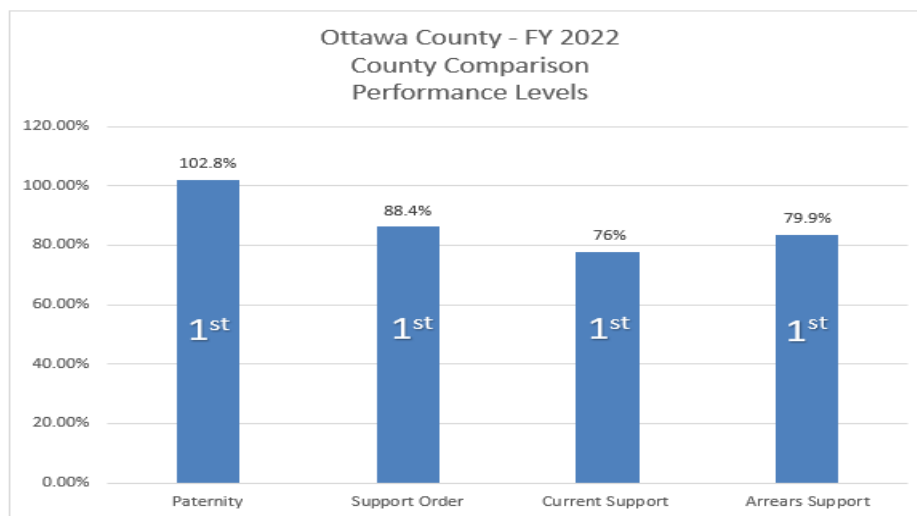
Child support collection falls under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act. The Friend of the Court office operates as a IV-D agency and a large part of the expense of operating the office (approximately 66%) is reimbursed by Federal funds through a State Cooperative Reimbursement Program (CRP) Contract. **For 2022, the FOC received reimbursement of \$3,023,127.15** (federal reimbursement of \$2,770,129.35 and the state reimbursement of \$252,997.80) 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 2022, the total Federal incentive dollars earned was \$384,154 plus an additional medical incentive of \$55,921 (**\$440,075 in incentives earned overall**). **Total reimbursements and incentives reduced Ottawa County general fund dollars by \$3,820,244.30 in 2022.**

Additionally, the Friend of the Court's cost effectiveness rate was measured at a collection rate of \$8.18 for every dollar spent.

FIGURE 8: OTTAWA COUNTY 4TH QUARTER COMPARISON TO 16 LARGEST COUNTIES' 2022 PERFORMANCE LEVELS



1st

FOC Achievements

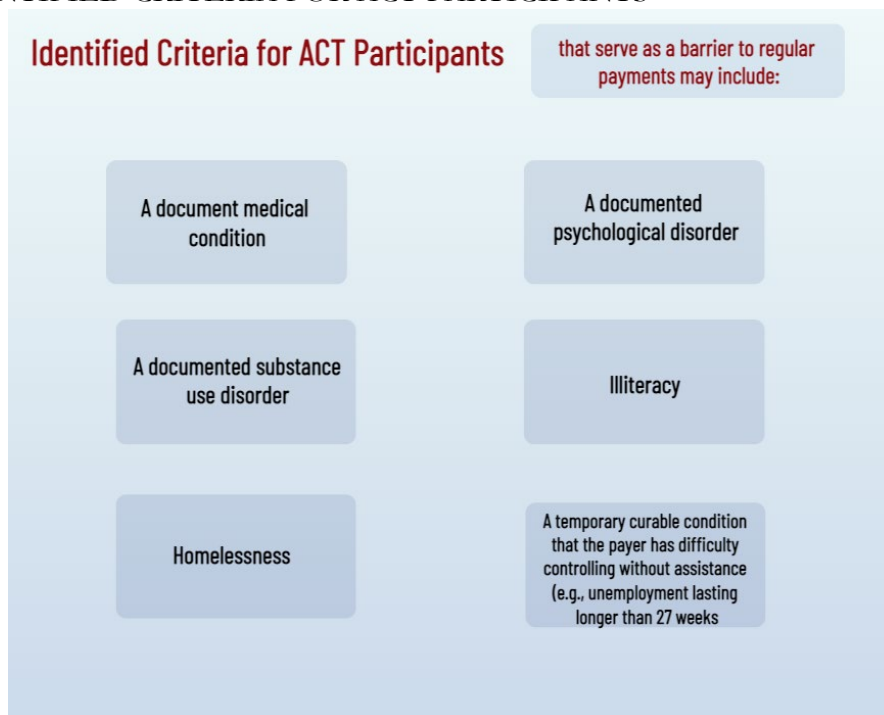
Alternative Contempt Track (ACT) Program

In January 2021, the State Court Administrator’s Office approved the 20th Circuit Court’s Administrative Order 2021-01 “Alternative Contempt Track Docket” plan. The program was continued and expanded in 2022.

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 9: 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.

Overall services provided to ACT participants in 2022 include:

- 2 participants received counseling for substance abuse
- 1 participant was admitted to substance abuse treatment center
- 2 participants are receiving counseling through Ottawa County CMH
- 4 participants received MI Works referrals
- 1 participant received adult education services/GED
- 2 participants have steady gainful employment
- 3 participants received housing assistance referral to Good Samaritan
- 2 participants received referral to obtain mobile phones via MDHHS.
- 1 participant was able to get a primary doctor and received medical care

Child Support Payments for 2022:

- Court reduced monthly payment amounts for 4 participants who were fully participating in ACT.
- 3 participants began making monthly payments as ordered.
- \$2,765.33 collected from ACT participants
- \$19,560.10 arrears were forgiven through arrears program and/or waiver from custodial parent for one participant.

This year had more referrals to the program, but **some** prospective participants were unwilling to voluntarily participate. On a positive note, some participants currently in the program were able to receive the services they needed and had success in reducing barriers to non-payment of child support.

Transportation, homelessness, and **substance abuse and** mental health issues continued to be the biggest barriers to overcome for current ACT participants. Although some ACT participants were able to qualify and obtain a housing voucher, they were unable to find affordable housing or were not able to qualify due to a poor credit score and/or criminal record.

ACT Success Story –

One ACT participant received regular counseling from Ottawa County CMH. She quickly gained employment after entering ACT and has been employed with the same employer to date. She suffers from depression and anxiety and, although she has had setbacks with her mental health, she has not missed work. She enrolled with Michigan Works with the goal of continuing her education and was able to qualify for several education grants. This participant reported improved confidence about her future and feeling better overall. She has not missed a child support payment since entering the program and having her payment reduced to an affordable amount. The program provided her supportive services which allowed her to get back on her feet. Her goal is to secure affordable housing so that she can exercise more parenting time with her child. Another goal was to timely file her taxes which she had not done for several years. Upon filing, the tax refund payment was applied to her arrears balance allowing her a fresh start in paying toward her current child support obligation.

Online Dispute Resolution Program Evaluated by Pew Charitable Trust

In 2021, the FOC worked with the University of California, Davis and the Pew Charitable Trust to evaluate the effectiveness of the “Online Dispute Resolution” (ODR) software platform used to help resolve parenting time disputes. The FOC had previously 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.

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 evaluation made several determinations and some recommendations to enhancements to the program. With regard to the outcomes determined with the ODR platform, the evaluation found:

Outcomes

Parties who used ODR were significantly more likely to reach agreement than those who did not

Of the matters handled through ODR, 29 of 49 (59.2%) reached a resolution. By comparison, only 6 of 53 (11.3%) matters not handled through ODR reached an agreement. A similar difference emerged when ODR users were compared with parties who were offered another dispute resolution mechanism—of the 15 matters in which informal resolution or mediation was used but ODR was not, only 4 (26.7%) resulted in a stipulation or informal resolution.

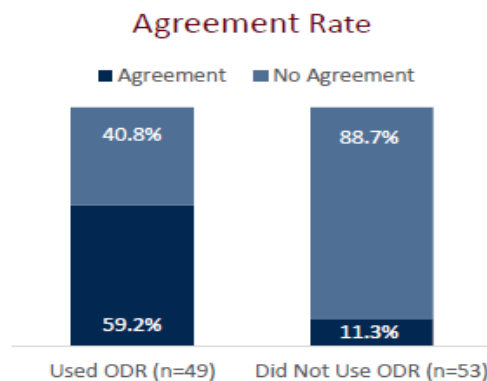


FIGURE 10: ODR AGREEMENT RATE

A lower percentage of matters that used ODR required a hearing compared with those that did not use ODR

Of the matters that used ODR, only 18.2% required a hearing, compared with 28.0% of those that did not use ODR. This observed difference was not statistically significant. Overall, hearings were relatively uncommon, with only 23.4% of matters requiring a hearing during the evaluation period. In the majority of matters that did not reach agreement with FOC assistance, the parties did not file a motion for a hearing, ending the FOC’s involvement with the matter.

Family Division - Juvenile Court and Juvenile Detention Center



Caseload Facts

The Juvenile Court and its staff made a concerted effort to ensure appropriate programming was available for delinquent youth, family, caregivers, and related agencies in 2022. To professionally assess and manage delinquency cases, Juvenile Court staff provided a variety of services within the community. Juvenile Court caseloads were higher in 2022 than at any other point since 2018 (+14.2%). 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 12% 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.

2022 Family Division Caseload

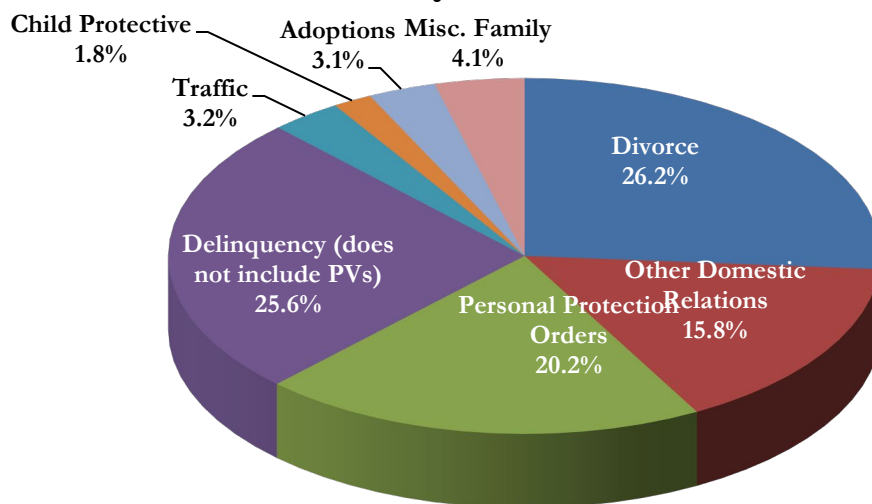


FIGURE 11: 2022 FAMILY DIVISION CASELOAD

On October 1, 2021, the Raise the Age (RTA) law went into effect in the state of Michigan. The law raised the age of juvenile court jurisdiction from 17 to 18 years of age, aligning the state with many others across the country, where the age of criminal responsibility is already 18. Developmental research shows that using evidenced-based and age-appropriate interventions translate into better outcomes for youth.

The 20th Circuit, Juvenile Court worked closely with the Ottawa County IT Department, 58th District Court, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, and the Ottawa County Sheriff’s Office to understand the impact of the new law on the justice systems within Ottawa County. As a result of this collaborative work, the Juvenile Court was able to appropriately plan for the local increase in cases. Since implementation, average monthly caseloads (intake, probation, and detention) within the Juvenile Court hover between 20-25% RTA eligible youth, as predicted during the collaborative planning process.

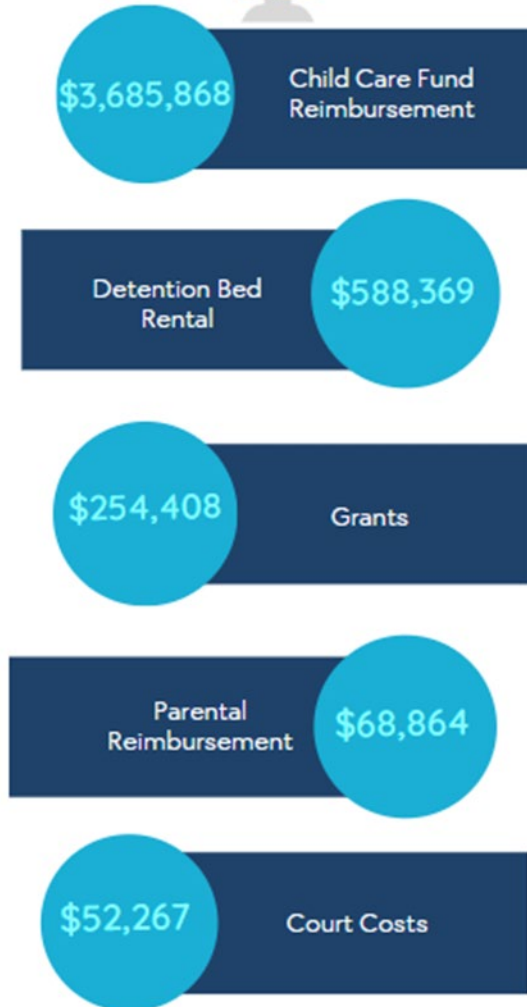
Through supportive Judicial Leadership, Court Administration, County Administration, and a passionate, well-trained workforce, the 20th Circuit, Juvenile Court is able offer a continuum of services that includes evidenced-based, best and promising practices. These programs and services are driven by the court’s use of a risk and needs driven probation model (low, moderate, and high risk) that focuses on: 1) protecting the community; 2) holding the youth accountable; 3) building competency and skills; and 4) specialized/individualized treatment. By focusing on risk, the Juvenile Court was able to easily incorporate 17 year-olds into existing programs and services, and to fulfill the original intention of the Raise the Age Law.

Juvenile Court Funding

General Fund		Actual FY22 Spend	Under Budget By:
10101490	\$1,712,465	\$1,634,670	
29206625	\$797,822	\$769,785	
29206626	\$400,000	\$202,636	
Total	\$2,910,287	\$2,607,090	\$303,197
Child Care Fund			
29206620	\$4,015,081	\$3,263,668	
29206621	\$501,050	\$213,049	
29206624	\$2,361,610	\$2,276,508	
Total	\$6,877,741	\$5,735,225	\$1,124,516
FY22 Total Board Approved Budget	\$9,788,028	\$8,360,315	\$1,427,713

TABLE 6: JUVENILE COURT FUNDING

**JUVENILE COURT
REVENUE & GRANTS**
2022



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. For youth eligible for Raise the Age (RTA) funding (age 17 at the time a petition is filed), programs and services are 100% reimbursed through a state grant.

- ❖ 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. As the only nationally-accredited center in the state, 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 Court is currently utilizing the Child Parent Legal Representation grant to help provide enhanced legal services in Neglect/Abuse cases. One goal of this grant is to expedite permanency and reduce the number of days a youth remains in out of home care.

- ❖ The County Juvenile Officer grant offsets the salaries of five Juvenile Court positions.
- ❖ The Court is required to assess various costs, including restitution to crime victims, which generates some revenue. In these cases, the fees assessed offset the cost of programs and services offered to court-involved youth.

FIGURE 12: JUVENILE COURT FINANCIALS – FY 2022

Juvenile Detention Center

The Ottawa County Juvenile Detention Center is a 40 bed, 24 hours, 7 days a week facility serving the youth of Ottawa County, and when available, renting beds to other jurisdictions. The Ottawa County Juvenile Detention Center is the only American Correctional Association accredited juvenile detention center in Michigan. Juveniles detained receive education, exercise and treatment services. In Fiscal Year 2022, for Ottawa County youth in the Juvenile Detention Center:

- Total Number of Intakes: 220
- Unique Number of Youth: 129
- Average Daily Population (Youth): 14
- Average Length of Stay (Days): 14

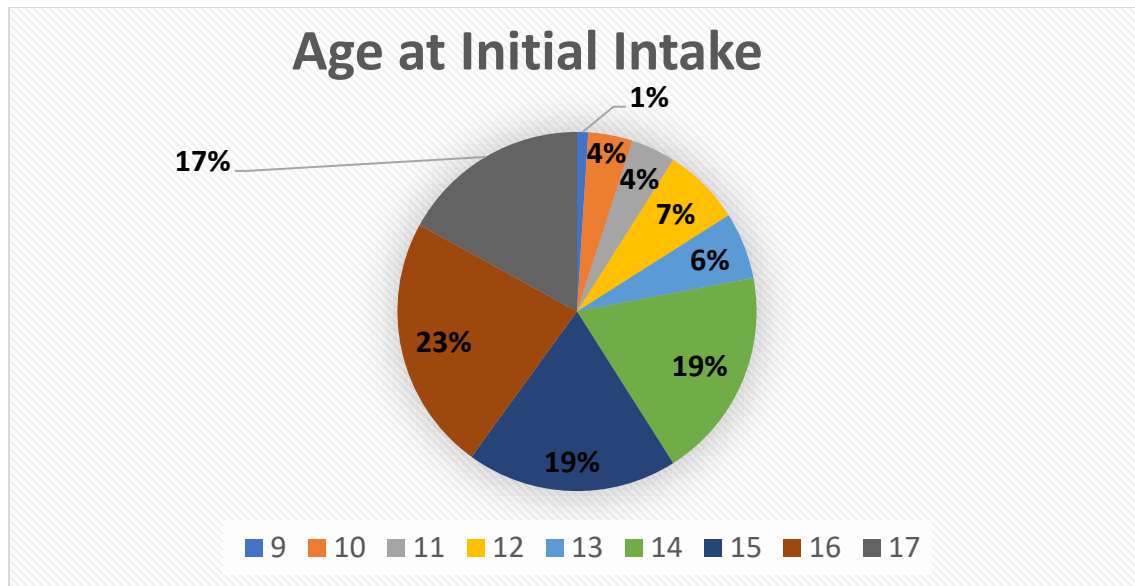


FIGURE 13: JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER: AGE AT INITIAL INTAKE

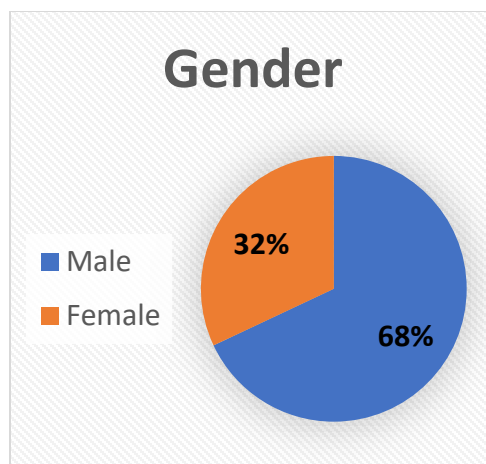


FIGURE 14: JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER: GENDER

Juvenile Court Programs

Restorative Community Service

At the 20th Circuit, Juvenile Court, the Restorative Community Service (RCS) program allows court-involved youth to make a positive contribution to their local community. At its foundation, restorative justice helps juveniles understand the impact of their crime, best repair the harm done, and be held accountable for their actions. In practice, serving the community alongside adult role models in positions of authority, encourages cooperation, connection, and positive behavior change. The Court partners with several organizations throughout Ottawa County to provide this experience for RCS participants.

Community partnerships include:

- Writing letters of appreciation and gratitude to veterans in Ottawa County;
- Packing food boxes for the Commodity Supplemental Food program (CSFP) through the Ottawa County Community Action Agency food assistance program; and
- Assisting in various needs around the Holland Rescue Mission Gateway Thrift Store (e.g. sorting donations, organizing store items and cleaning).

Youth in the Court's secure residential treatment program are required to complete community service hours as part of their treatment. The secure environment limits the options of service activities, so in this setting service focuses on projects that can be completed and sent back to the community agency. In 2022, the Court partnered with Kids Food Basket to decorate paper sacks used for their Sack Supper program, and Color a Smile (a nonprofit organization that distributes cheerful drawings to senior citizens, troops overseas, and anyone in need of a smile) coloring pages.



Youth who were discharged from probation and consent in 2022 completed **1,826** hours of community service in and around Ottawa County.



Restitution

Restoring wholeness directly to crime victims often comes in the form of restitution, a monetary debt ordered to a youth for crimes they've committed. Restitution is intended to hold youth accountable for the financial losses resulting from their actions, not as a punishment. Common restitution requests include compensation for destroyed, stolen, or damaged property, or for counseling or medical bills. Restitution is important not only because of its ability to meet victims' tangible needs but also, to fulfill the Court's mission to instill public trust and restore wholeness. Juvenile Court embody this mission through the restitution process by speaking with victims during the investigative process, with consent calendar and probation cases. Although victims do not always choose to seek restitution, all impacted individuals are provided the opportunity to be heard by a representative of the court.

Of the cases closed in 2022, **47** youth were ordered (through probation) or agreed (through the Consent Calendar) to pay restitution to **53** victims (individuals and businesses). In FY22, the Juvenile Court collected and disbursed \$22,216 in restitution.

High School Graduation

The individual successes of court-involved youth, both small and large, drive court and detention staff to continue their work each day. Nyah Brown, a former resident of the Juvenile Detention Treatment Program, represents what can be achieved when youth reach past their circumstances and strive to reach their goals. The Juvenile Detention Treatment Program offers a 90-to-120-day curriculum, including weekly individual and family treatment coupled with daily groups. Participants must also attend school each weekday; Lighthouse Academy currently partners with the Court to provide educational services to youth in the Detention Center.



Due to the relatively short timeframe of the residential program, it's unusual for a resident to complete their high school education but building on her strengths and prior successes, Nyah did just that! She finished her courses in January of 2023 and though her path to graduation had many stops along the way, she was able to persevere and stay focused on her goals. Nyah truly made the best of her circumstances and used her time to gain another tool in her toolbelt, a high school diploma. Juvenile Court staff encouraged Nyah by pointing out her optimistic attitude and commitment to success. Those who worked closest with Nyah noted she "is a hardworking and determined young lady who is a positive leader both inside and outside of the classroom." Another stated, "she is full of energy, passion, and is extremely intelligent; I am excited to see her continue to reach her goals!"

Now that she has achieved her goal of graduating high school, Nyah is looking toward the future, which will first include general education classes at Grand Rapids Community College. In time, she plans to transition to Grand Valley State University to earn her degree in Criminal Justice. Nyah is focused on reaching her goal of working in Law Enforcement, CSI Forensics, and/or Criminal Law. Congratulations, Nyah!

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.

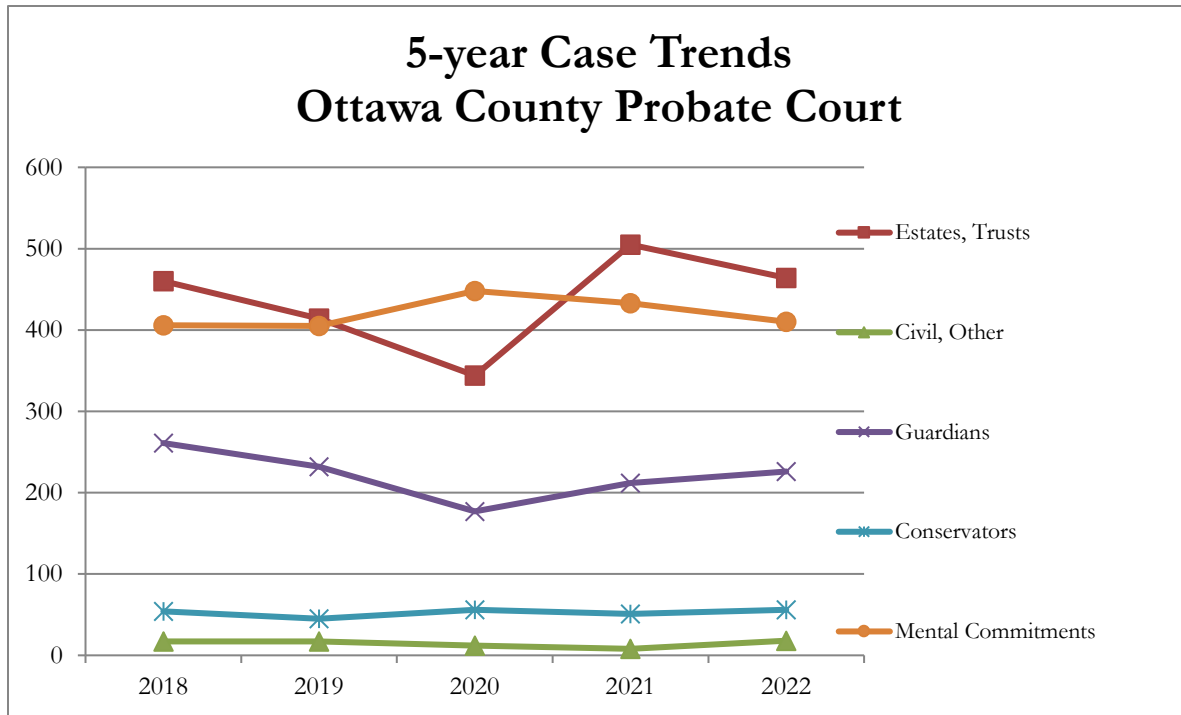


During 2022, the Probate Court continued to experience a stable seven-year trend with more than 1,000 new case filings. Among the new and reopened cases, most categories remained stable with some decreases in filings due to the pandemic restrictions caused by the COVID-19 virus, including estates and 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.

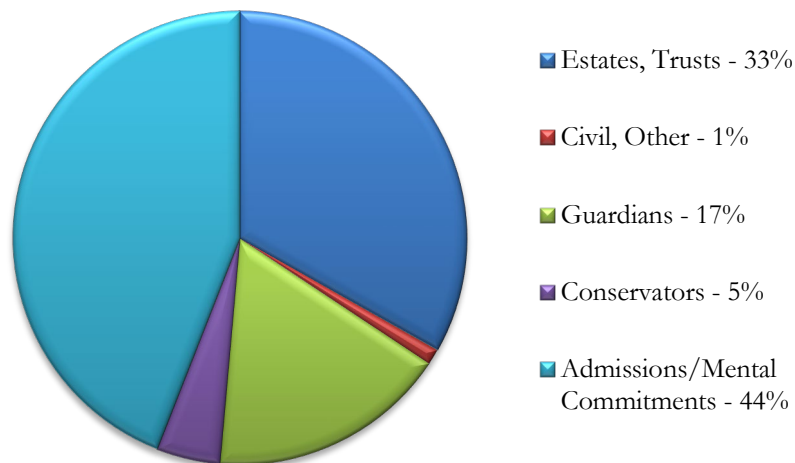
FIGURE 15: 5-YEAR CASE TRENDS, OTTAWA COUNTY PROBATE COURT



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. The Probate Court assists 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.

FIGURE 16: 2022 PROBATE COURT CASELOAD

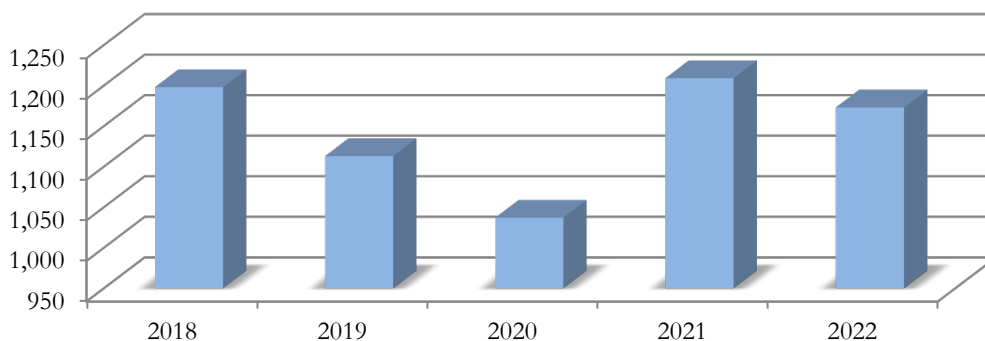
2022 Probate Court Caseload



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 below chart shows the number of new and reopened case filings in the Probate Court in 2022 and emphasizes the significant number of cases for which one judge and six employees are responsible. At the end of 2022, the Probate Court was responsible for 14, 272 open files.

FIGURE 17: PROBATE COURT NEW AND REOPENED CASE FILINGS

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 for Probate Court. The Ottawa County Probate Court has served as the pilot Probate Court for this program. E-filing is now mandatory for attorneys and discretionary for self-represented litigants in Ottawa County. 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 as it is prepared to roll out to other Probate Courts in Michigan.

Quick Guide to the Courts

For Directions to the Courts:

www.miottawa.org/Courts

For General Information:

Call any office listed on this page

For Payment Convenience:

- Make payments online at www.miottawa.org
 - Call any office to pay by credit card
 - Mail payments
 - Pay in person
-

Staff Facts

20th Judicial Circuit Court

4	Circuit Court Judges
116	Full Time Staff
8	Part Time Staff (includes JDC relief)
4	Temporary Staff (includes Bailiffs)
4	Grant Supported Staff
2	Ottawa County Sheriff Deputies

138 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, 2nd Floor
Grand Haven, MI 49417
Phone: 616.846.8141