



**2014 Annual Report to Ottawa County Board of Commissioners
20th Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts
Kevin J. Bowling, JD, MSJA – Court Administrator**

Good afternoon Commissioners and thank you for the opportunity to present the 2014 Annual Report for the 20th Circuit Court and the Ottawa County Probate Court. As Court Administrator I have the privilege of working with a remarkable group of dedicated public servants, including judges, a great leadership team, managers and frontline staff, as well as competent attorneys and collaborating agencies throughout the County. Together, we have provided another year of excellent service to the citizens of Ottawa County. The state of the Judiciary is certainly good!

Each of you have been provided with a copy of my comments, some supplemental performance data, and a copy of the Courts' Strategic Plan. You are also invited to visit the Court and State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) websites, which provide more statistics and performance measures – so in the short time available, I will simply provide a few highlights and respond to any questions you may have.

<http://www.miottawa.org/Courts/>

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

ANNUAL REPORT 2014

2014 Theme – “Making a Difference”

- “Four years ago, we launched an ambitious plan to measure court performance and speed the implementation of innovations that increase efficiency and improve service to the public,” said Young. “Being allowed to stay on as Chief Justice allows us continuity to build on that record of success and move ahead with further reforms to make Michigan’s judiciary a national model.”
- “Continuing efforts to adopt best practices, implement technology, and re-engineer our courts are absolutely critical if Michigan is to remain a leader in court innovation and in improving service to the public.”



Chief Justice Robert P. Young, Jr.

Making A Difference

Each year, the Courts provide some context for the Annual Report by including a “theme”. In 2014, our theme was “Making a Difference”. In recent years we used the Courts’ strategic planning process to re-engineer policies, better align staff structures and improve business process. During 2014 we turned our focus to “Making a Difference” as part of a collaborative process among court staff, the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO), and the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). Our renewed focus on performance measures and public accountability, as well as the County’s 4-C’s Initiative, helps us provide better service to the public, be better partners in the justice system, and further evolve as high performing courts.

The Chief Justice’s recent comments, after being re-appointed to lead the judiciary, echo our efforts at continuous improvement, but locally we also think about how the Courts impact individual lives.

- We think about the families who have a home to live in and food on the table because one of our locally elected judges or attorney referees made difficult decisions and FOC staff enforced child support orders.
 - We think about the elderly parents who struggled with seeking the help of the Probate Court to ensure much needed hospitalization for a mentally ill adult child.
 - We think about the victims of crime leaving a Circuit Court sentencing hearing feeling they have been heard and finally obtained justice.
 - We think about the youth in our many Juvenile Services programs who benefit from caring staff, mentors, and positive reinforcement as they seek direction for their lives.
- It is really at this individual level where we “Make a Difference” everyday...

WHERE DO WE LEARN ABOUT COURTS?



Making A Difference

It is easy for Court staff to assume the public understands why we have courts in our society – until we see their “deer in the headlights” expression when they are summoned to court as a litigant or witness or juror.

Then we quickly realize that all they know about courts is what they learned from Judge Judy or Law & Order...

PURPOSES OF COURTS

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=SAHB06PNADQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SAHB06PNADQ)

1. Do justice in individual cases
2. Appear to do justice in individual cases
3. Provide a final resolution of legal disputes
4. Protect individuals from the arbitrary use of government power
5. Make a formal record of legal status
6. Deter criminal behavior
7. Rehabilitate persons convicted of crimes
8. Separate persons convicted of crimes from society



Making A Difference

For this reason, I wanted to add something new to our Annual Report... This is something you may find helpful and something you can share with constituents who may be unclear about the purpose of courts in society. The link included in your materials will take you to a brief YouTube video describing these eight purposes of courts.

I invite you to review the video clip and call me if you have any questions.



Of course, Courts can only provide optimal performance for the community when there is strong, inspirational leadership and this is exactly what our Chief Judges Ed Post and Mark Feyen provide.

John Quincy Adams was once quoted as saying, “If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”

Here in Ottawa County we are fortunate to have this type of judicial leadership.

In addition to Chief Judge Post, who handles criminal and civil cases, and Chief Judge Feyen, who handles probate, juvenile, neglect/abuse, and drug court cases, we have an outstanding group of talented circuit judges who work extremely well together.

Jon Van Allsburg – handles appeals and domestic cases; as well as being our Business Court judge

Jon Hulsing – handles a busy criminal and civil docket, and

Kent Engle – is our “roving judge” – spending 3 days per week in Grand Haven and 2 days per week in West Olive handling domestic, juvenile and neglect/abuse cases.

**“YOUR GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS
ARE DIFFICULT”**



20th Circuit
Chief Judge
Edward R. Post

Making A Difference

When we introduced court staff to our annual theme of “Making a Difference”, Chief Judge Post set the tone with some inspirational comments, a few of his dramatic photographs and a short video clip he shot in Grand Haven.



It was another cold and icy winter in Ottawa County...





...and yet, a few days before our All Staff Meeting, the ship - St Marys Challenger – took more than three hours to traverse the Grand River channel with assistance from the dedicated tugboat – Meredith Ashton.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRSUYQARuEQ>

Judge Post was able to artfully use this video as a way to communicate to staff that often their greatest accomplishments are also the most difficult – especially in the courts where families, finances and freedom are involved!



To assist with the difficult and complex work of “doing justice” the Courts have relied heavily on our strategic planning process to develop a clear path forward. In 2014, judges and court staff carefully reviewed trends which impact our work, solicited recommendations for improvement from court users, and studied our performance data to ensure we are effectively using available resources to serve the public.

STRATEGIC THINKING AND EXECUTION

Organizations that execute well:

1. Know the goals (Mission, Vision, Values)
2. Know what to do to achieve the goals (Strategic Focus Areas; 5 Action Teams)
3. Keep Score (Performance Measures)
4. Are held accountable (SCAO Annual Statistical Review)

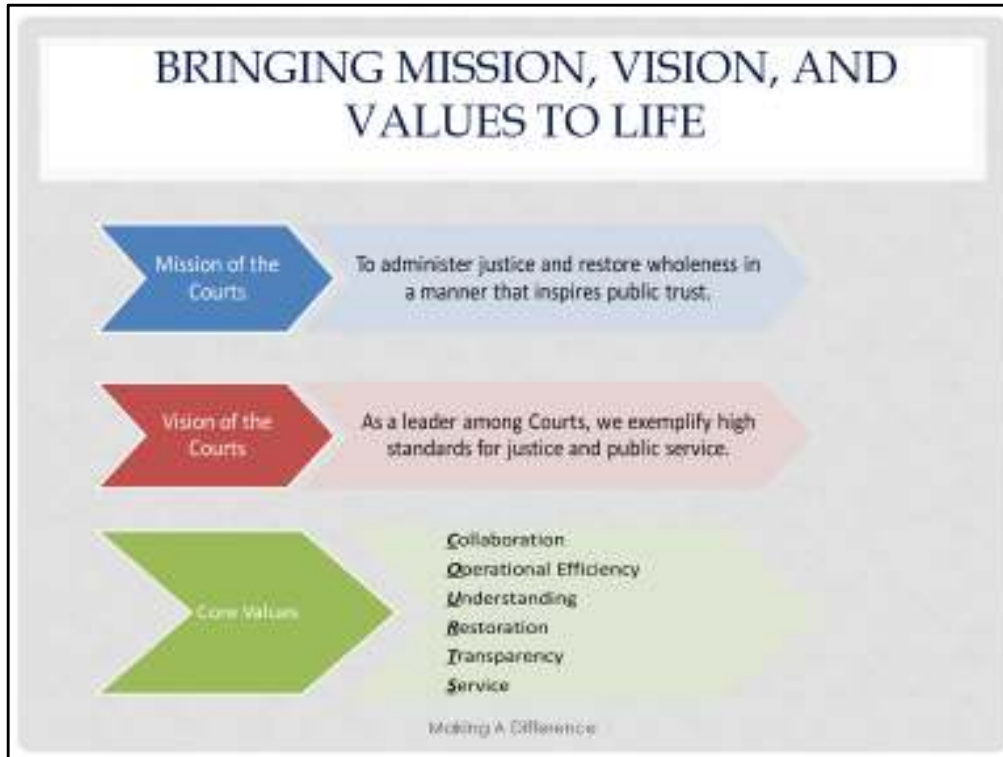


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94e1T15ip54>

Making A Difference

Reviewing the available research and literature on successful organizations, supports our experience with the Circuit and Probate Courts... Research clearly demonstrates organizations that execute well do four things well:

- they know the goals
- they know what to do to achieve the goals
- they keep score
- and they are held accountable.



This dynamic strategic planning process has resulted in a clear Mission that is understood by our judges and court staff, while helping to achieve justice and providing exemplary public service. The Courts are not perfect, but we understand what we need to accomplish and have a plan to achieve our goals.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2014 COURT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Reviewed and updated of the Courts' Strategic Plan
- Successfully managed and disposed of several thousand active cases, maintaining SCAO approved clearance rates
- Generated more than \$1.3M in grant funds to support court programs
- Completed implementation of the High Performance Court Framework, including evidence based practices and new performance standards to improve customer service and ensure public accountability
- Collected more than \$37M in child support; generating \$381K in incentive payments to the County
- Improved FOC cost effectiveness: collecting \$11.77 for every \$1 spent
- Exceeded \$1M in felony case collections for the 3rd year; including \$500K in restitution payments for victims of crime

Making A Difference

The next two slides highlight a few of the many Court accomplishments achieved during 2014 as a direct result of the “strategic thinking and execution” continually performed by our judges and court employees.

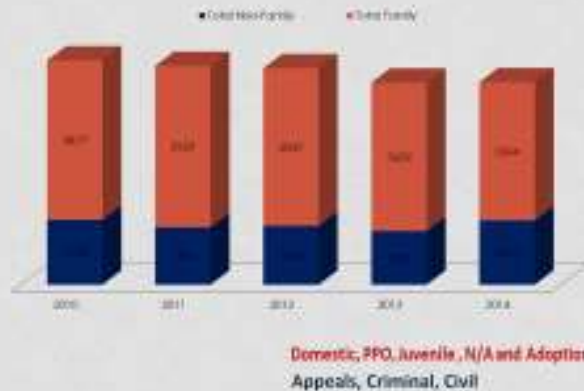
HIGHLIGHTS OF 2014 COURT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Implemented Youth Level Service (YLS) Risk Assessment Program
- Generated \$457K in Juvenile Detention Bed Rental Contracts
- Increased Juvenile Services parental reimbursements and collections by 13%
- Juveniles completed 5,600 hours of community service (Value \$40,600)
- 96.4% of Juveniles in Diversion programs did not reoffend
- Juveniles paid \$27K in restitution to crime victims
- 92% of Juveniles were enrolled in school when case was closed
- Successfully completed a Michigan Supreme Court financial audit
- Developed a Technology Action Plan with NCSC
- Installed "Lady Justice" display as part of Law Day activities
- Hosted the first Domestic Relations Law Summit

Making A Difference

CIRCUIT COURT CASELOADS

20th Circuit Court Caseload Trends

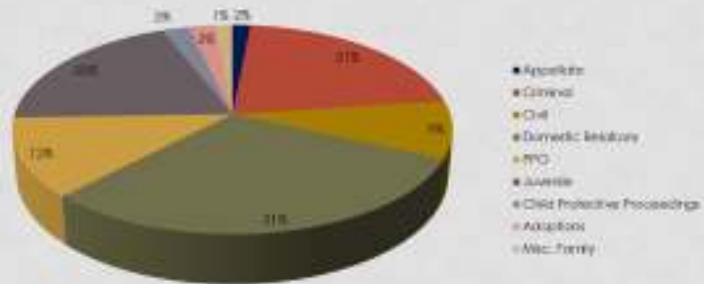


Making A Difference

The following caseload slides highlight the fact that judges and court staff are effectively “doing justice – one case at a time” while nearly 5000 new Circuit cases and more than 1000 new Probate cases are being filed every year. With so many cases being opened, effective caseflow management is a critical component of our daily operations – so we can meet the litigants needs and comply with the Michigan Supreme Court case processing time standards. One of the interesting trends depicted in this slide is that family related cases consistently make up 2/3 of the circuit court caseload.

CIRCUIT COURT CASE DISTRIBUTION

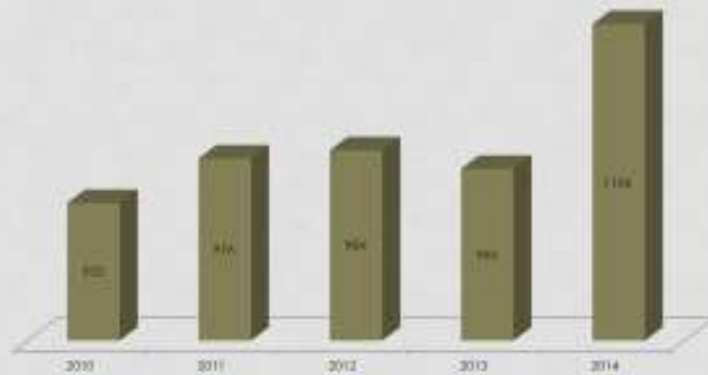
20th Circuit Court
2014 Case Distribution



Making A Difference

PROBATE COURT CASELOADS

Ottawa County Probate Court Caseload Trends

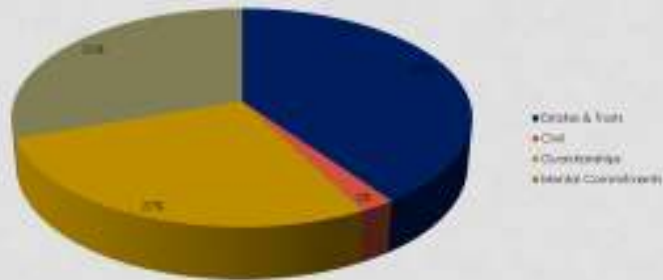


Making A Difference

These Probate caseload trends are a good example of why the Court requested and additional Deputy Clerk in FY2016 to assist with the growing workload

PROBATE COURT CASE DISTRIBUTION

Ottawa County Probate Court
2014 Case Distribution



Making A Difference

DILBERT - "ON STRATEGIC PLANNING"



As I noted earlier, the strategic planning process has been crucial to the Courts' successful performance – even though not all business consultants (like Dilbert) fully appreciate the benefits of strategic thinking and execution.

What sets our process apart from the elaborate Strategic Plans that are written, shelved, and collect dust, is the leadership, energy and passion for continuous improvement that characterizes the Circuit and Probate Courts. It is truly a dynamic and active process, involving judges and staff at every level.



The next nine slides are included to provide further details about our comprehensive strategic planning process, the identified strategic focus areas, and how cross disciplinary action teams of judges and court staff work together resolve issues and improve court operations. A good example of the practical implications of this process is how we are redesigning our Indigent Defense Counsel Plan to comply with new statutory requirements.



Although I will not comment on each slide, I will be happy to answer any questions you may have. Additional information can also be found in the Strategic Plan provided to all Commissioners or on the Courts' website

2015-2017 STRATEGIC PLAN 5 STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

1. Resources and Infrastructure
2. Access, Services, and Programs
3. Timely Resolution and Efficient Operations
4. Community Relations and Collaboration with Partners
5. Employee Development and Innovative Work Culture



Making A Difference

TEAM 1: RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

2015 Priority Projects:

1. Conduct facility assessment at Fillmore
2. Collection Team to develop court-wide methodology
3. Assess/expand internship program
4. Identify/research grant opportunities
5. Research/evaluate use of "cloud" technology
6. Update emergency site plans – each location



Making A Difference

TEAM 2: ACCESS, SERVICES, AND PROGRAMS

2015 Priority Projects:

1. Research/implement digital check-in technology
2. Improve/maintain court pages on County website
3. Assess feasibility of expanding programs/services to county/court locations
4. Improve juror experience through use of technology
5. Develop Court 101 resources to help navigate the court



Making A Difference

TEAM 3: TIMELY RESOLUTION AND EFFICIENT OPERATIONS

2015 Priority Projects:

1. Identify and develop non-judicial/administrative methods of resolving cases
2. Study and improve the timeliness of hearings and length of time it takes to get a hearing date
3. Enhance implementation of video conference technology
4. Develop a plan to digitize records and move to a paperless court
5. Identify/share best practices on delay reduction
6. Conduct annual public satisfaction survey



Making A Difference

TEAM 4: COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS

2015 Priority Projects:

1. Establish a court volunteer program
2. Conduct a needs assessment for a Court Public Information Officer position
3. Conduct a Court/employer summit to identify common issues and improve relations
4. Develop/implement a targeted social media strategy for the Court
5. Develop an inventory of staff members with community connections



Making A Difference

TEAM 5: EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATIVE WORK CULTURE

2015 Priority Projects:

1. Evaluate and develop recommendations to improve the BBS Program
2. Develop an employee orientation manual
3. Plan and launch a manager/supervisor training program
4. Generate team building options for staff to implement in divisions
5. Conduct employee satisfaction survey



Making A Difference

DIVISIONAL PRIORITY PROJECTS

1. Annual Bench/Bar Meeting
2. Annual Law Day/Law Week Activities
3. Co-sponsor Katty Shack/Walk in support of crime victims
4. Annual Domestic Law Summit
5. Annual PACK Mtg (Professionals Advocating and Caring for Kids)
6. Annual Adoption Day Celebration
7. Digital scanning of court files



Making A Difference

ATTACHMENTS

- 2015 – 2017 Strategic Plan
- 2014 Major Initiatives Report
- Juvenile Services – 2014 Community Report Card
- Friend of the Court – 2014 Performance Measures



Making A Difference

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



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Thank you!

Making A Difference

In summary, the 20th Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts are proud of our strong tradition of excellent public service, through which we are “Making a Difference” in Ottawa County. We are also aware of the need for transparency, continuous improvement, and public accountability. The Courts appreciate the continuing support provided by the Board of Commissioners, and we look forward to continuing our strong partnership in public service.