

Delaware County Probate/Juvenile Court  
Judge David A. Hejmanowski  
2024 Annual Report

## Message from the Judge

Annual court reports aren't just a thing we do for fun or to show off the work of the court. Statistical report is essential to a well-functioning court system. Statistics tell the true story of the court's work – without any framing, any spin, any commentary or any filter. And longitudinal statistical reports, as we present here, also paint the full picture of how functional programming is, where additional court funding will be needed, and where improvement in processes is necessary.

Statistical reports can also provide a fascinating addendum to history. Future generations will look back and see that as the pandemic came to a close and restrictions on large group gatherings were lifted, this court's marriage license applications soared to record numbers in 2022 before quickly returning to normal levels in the following years. Similarly, estate filings surged during that period before returning to more normal levels in 2024.

Our probate statistical reporting also tells programmatic stories. While the court has only 90 active guardianships of adults in the 50s or 60s, there are 154 open guardianships of adults in their 30s and 40s and 294 of adults in the 20s and 30s. This is precisely the surge in guardianship numbers that we anticipated a decade ago and the reason that this court led the effort to establish a Guardianship Services Board and a permanent Court Visitor program in the county.

While there were 98 full administrations of estates in 2024, there were 115 releases from administration and another 43 summary releases. These numbers suggest that the work of local counsel to provide sound estate planning advice and presentations like the Good Deeds program that this court provides along with the Clerk of Courts and County Recorder, are having the desired effect in educating the public on wise estate planning practices.

Our traffic court statistics in the juvenile docket provided several welcome indications. Both seat belt violations and citations for driving under the influence reached decade low-water marks, though violations for speeding, right of way violations, loss of vehicle control and assured clear distance continue to be far too common. This has led to programmatic efforts to increase driver training as a part of court intervention when citations are issued.

The county's continued rapid population growth can be seen in our case statistics as well. The number of total filed delinquency and unruly charges is up by nearly a third since 2020 and our felony filing numbers hit the second highest total in our reporting period.

Court statistics also tell of the herculean effort from our court staff. Our clerks handled more than 14,000 phone calls, served over 10,000 documents, and processed 65,000 entries in 2024! Our school liaisons and mediators handled over 500 school truancy mediations – at no charge to our local school districts. Our restitution docket monitored more than \$10,000 in restitution payments to victims. And, perhaps most importantly, the court maintained a 101% 'clearance rate' last year – meaning that despite our increasing case numbers, we continue to move cases through and out of the court system just as fast as they are coming in.

We hope that you will find these statistics enlightening and educational just as we will use them to guide our own long-term, strategic planning.

## **Employees of the Probate/Juvenile Court**

### **Judicial**

David A. Hejmanowski, Judge  
Kari Childs, Magistrate  
Thomas C. Clark, II Magistrate  
Robert Rice, Magistrate  
Benjamin Suffron, II, Magistrate  
Joe Varvel, Staff Attorney/Magistrate

Katie Stenman, Court Administrator

### **CASA**

Tammy Matias, CASA Coordinator  
Meagen Belcher, CASA Assistant  
Coordinator  
Melanie Kempton, CASA Assistant  
Coordinator  
Beth Anne Chesnes, CASA Assistant  
Cheyenne Debren, CASA Assistant

### **Clerical Services**

Renee Lovelien, Clerical Services  
Department Head  
Janet Ritter, Probate Office Manager  
Debora Thomas, Judicial Services  
Manager  
Nicole Cox, Juvenile Clerk  
Rachel Dennison, Juvenile Clerk  
Dyan Fox, Juvenile Clerk  
Betsy Galvin, Probate Clerk  
Randi Holzer, Juvenile Clerk  
Jill Jutte, Probate Clerk  
Marilyn Kinniard, Juvenile Clerk  
Melanie Layton, Records Clerk  
Lisa Murphy, Probate Clerk  
Danielle Orsburn, Juvenile Clerk  
Lisa Patterson, Probate Clerk  
Karen Peaks, Probate Clerk  
Rene Ray, Receptionist

### **Fiscal**

Karen Wadkins, Fiscal Coordinator  
Angela Riley, Court Services  
Analyst/Training Coordinator  
Jessica Berry, Fiscal Specialist

### **Intake**

Lisa Williamson, Director of Court  
Services/Interim Chief Probation Officer  
Stacy Blair, City School Liaison/Intake  
Supervisor  
Sara Miller, Assessment Center  
Supervisor  
Melanie Bange, Mentoring Coordinator  
Brittany Gates, Intake/Diversion Officer  
Mersadie Grady, Intake/Diversion  
Officer  
Vikki Hardwick, County School  
Attendance Officer  
Amy Marzich, School Liaison  
Sharon Moran, Family Advocate  
Megan Pentz, Intake/Diversion Officer  
Lauren Pitzer, Family Advocate  
Sydnee Rees, Assessment Center  
Specialist  
Ashley Stevens, Assessment Center  
Specialist  
Anna Travis, Safe Harbor Coordinator  
Josh Williams, Family Advocate  
Coordinator

### **Mediation**

Kira Crawford, Mediator  
Dodie Davenport, Mediation  
Coordinator

### **Probate**

Teresa Tackett, Court Visitor Program  
Manager/Probate Court Investigator  
Donna Bukovec, Adoption Assessor  
Tina Nichols, Court Investigator

### **Probation and Treatment**

Gia DeGirolamo, Deputy Chief  
Probation Officer  
Josh Johnson, REI  
Coordinator/Probation Officer  
Michelle Leighty, Probation Officer  
Kim Romosor, Treatment Court  
Coordinator/Probation Officer

## Probate Statistics

Type of Filing	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Estates	546	542	602	653	663	610
Guardianship of Minors	35	27	24	20	36	14
Guardianship of Incompetents	70	64	63	70	94	83
Conservatorships	1	0	0	0	0	0
Testamentary Trusts	7	2	5	11	5	7
Civil Actions	15	14	24	28	18	16
Adoptions	41	34	44	46	45	35
Mental Commitment	2	3	1	5	3	1
Minor Settlement	8	14	15	14	27	5
Wrongful Death	12	7	13	14	23	24
Registration/Correction Birth Record	6	4	3	8	8	8
Change of Name	126	117	153	157	167	148
Marriage Applications Granted	781	871	876	989	900	916
Miscellaneous Filings*	99	116	135	98	116	98
	<b>1749</b>	<b>1815</b>	<b>1823</b>	<b>2113</b>	<b>2105</b>	<b>1965</b>

\* Miscellaneous filings include: Disinterment, Wills for Deposit, Administrative Orders, and other filings not specifically reported to the Ohio Supreme Court.

Age of Adult Wards Under Guardianship 2024 <i>(as of 12.31.24)</i>	
Age Range	
18-30	294
31-50	154
51-70	90
71-89	57
90+	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>603</b>

Types of Adoptions Filed 2024	
Adult	10
Private	6
Private - Agency	4
Adoption Preplacement	0
Public Agency	4
Re-finalization	0
Stepparent	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>

<b>2024 Marriage Licenses Issued Monthly</b>	
January	34
February	66
March	49
April	85
May	96
June	86
July	84
August	102
September	109
October	95
November	49
December	62
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>917</b>

<b>2024 New Estate Case Actions</b>	
<b>TYPE OF ESTATE</b>	<b>Total</b>
Ancillary Administration	10
Full Administration	98
Probate Will	253
Release From Administration	115
Real Estate Transfer	25
Special Administration	3
Short Form Release	4
Summary Release	43
Taxes	0
Wrongful Death	15
Will for Record Only	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>581</b>

<b>Types of Probate Hearings Scheduled in 2024</b>	<b>Number of Hearings</b>
Adult Name Change	1
Adult Adoption Hearing	6
Private Agency Adoption	3
Pre-Placement Adoption	0
Private Placement Adoption	10
Public Agency Adoption	5
Foreign Adoption Re-finalization	2
Stepparent Adoption	22
Appointment of Co-Guardian	40
Appointment of Fiduciary	13
Appointment of Guardian	120
Appointment of Trustee	2
Case Review Hearing	42
Evidentiary Hearing	1
Hearing	131
Pre-Trial	2
Trial	11
Non-Oral Hearing	0
Status Conference	15
Insolvency	4
Minor Claim	6
Minor Claim & Dispense Guardianship	2
Minor Claim with Guardianship	1
Minor Name Change	30
Will Admission	0
Allowance of Claim Fiduciaries	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>

<b>Results of Probate Scheduled Hearings in 2024</b>	<b>Number of Hearings</b>
Continued	93
Failure to Appear	3
Dismissed	25
Informal Hearing	0
Heard	381
Non-Oral Complete	8
Vacated	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>552</b>

A Total of 1045 Inventory and Accounts were filed and reviewed by non-oral hearing during 2024.

## **Juvenile Court Statistics**

<b>Traffic Citations Received</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Speed	312	326	238	237	219	246	251
Assured Clear Distance /Hit Skip	140	131	78	110	103	132	102
Operating Vehicle Under Influence	8	17	18	20	18	16	8
Failure to Control	55	60	56	54	73	47	44
No License/Permit, Suspended or Restrictions	47	61	56	39	31	27	42
Seat Restraint Violations	28	31	13	24	15	14	7
Failure to Yield/Right of Way	70	92	55	66	70	75	55
Use of Wireless Electronic Device/Texting	4	4	1	0	0	3	9
Distracted Driving - New law 2019		15	14	5	8	2	4
Traffic Control Signal Violations	36	45	23	37	31	25	32
Improper Driving Actions*	49	52	43	51	43	67	57
Miscellaneous Actions	74	35	21	17	27	31	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>869</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>638</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>632</b>

\*Encompasses various charges including lane violations, improper turns, and reckless ops.

## Unruly/Delinquency Charges

In 2024, 879 delinquency and unruly charges were filed. The charges resulted in the creation of 285 formalized cases. These matters resulted in 189 adjudicated charges involving 110 youth. The remainder of the charges were handled by diversion, case dismissal, or may still be pending. In addition, there were 58 violations of a court order or violations of probation involving 28 individuals heard during the year.

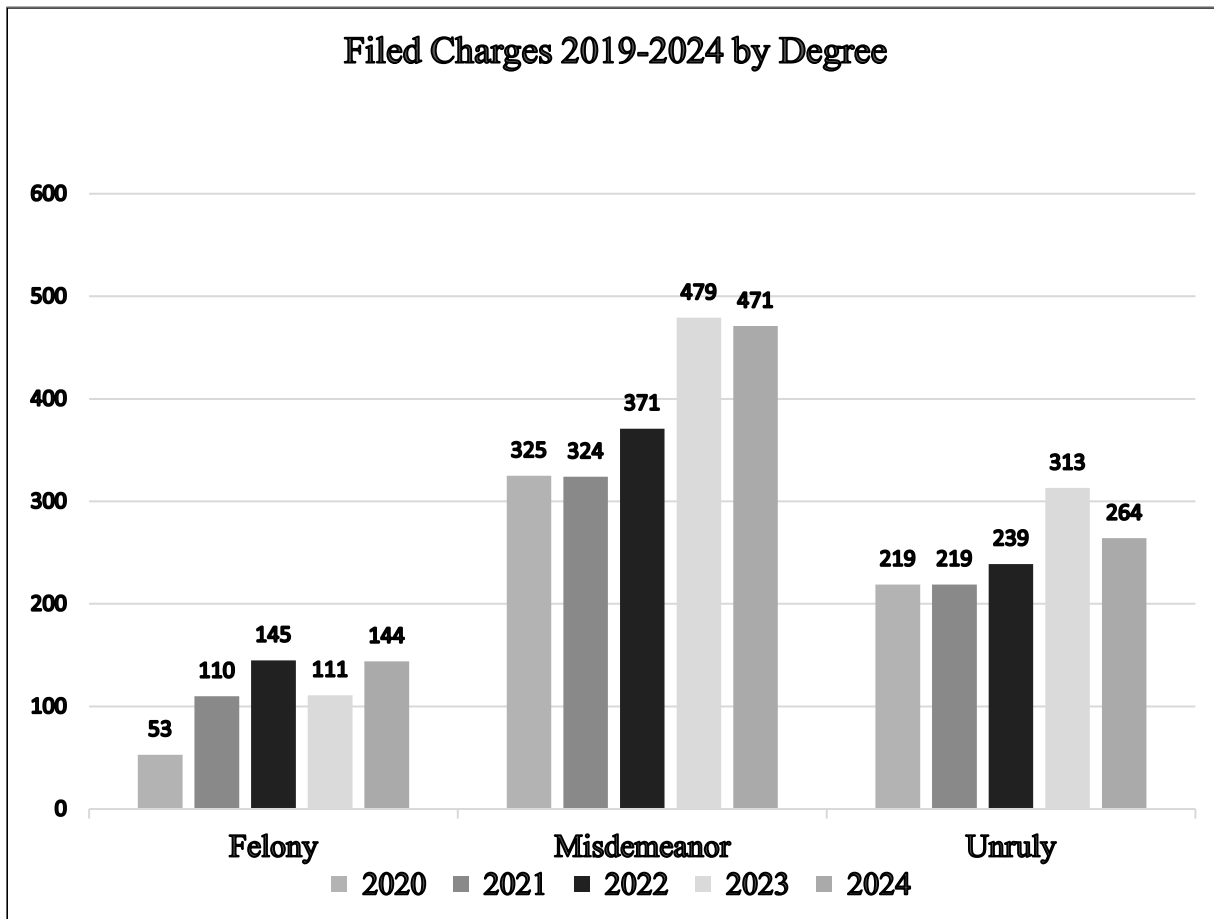
<b>Charges Filed and Adjudicated in 2024 – some charges remain pending into 2025</b>		
	Number of Charges Filed	Number of charges adjudicated
Aggravated Murder & Murder	3	-
Aggravated Vehicular Homicide	1	1
<b>Assault and Menacing</b>		
Assault	71	25
Menacing	11	7
Strangulation	1	1
<b>Sexual Offenses</b>		
Rape/Sexual Battery	8	3
Pandering/Illegal Use of a Minor	27	8
Sexual Imposition	4	2
Disseminating Material Harmful to Juveniles	1	1
Voyeurism/Public Indecency	4	1
Kidnapping, Restraint, Extortion & Coercion	3	2
<b>Property Offenses</b>		
Criminal Damaging	32	3
Criminal Mischief	15	2
Vandalism	4	2
<b>Robbery, Burglary, Trespass, and Safecracking</b>		
Robbery/Burglary	9	2
Criminal Trespassing	14	1
Possession of Criminal Tools	11	-
<b>Theft and Fraud</b>		
Theft	49	9
Misuse of Credit Cards	3	-
Identify Fraud/Falsification/Forgery/Counterfeit	4	-
Receiving Stolen Property	26	12
Unauthorized Use of a Vehicle	1	-
<b>Offenses Against the Public Peace</b>		
Disorderly Conduct	129	31
Harassment – Telephone/Other /Intimidation	5	2
Inducing Panic/False Alarm	5	1
Terroristic Threats	1	-
<b>Offenses Against the Family</b>		
Domestic Violence	37	4

Violating Protection Order	1	-
<b>Offenses Against Justice and Public Administration</b>		
Obstructing Justice	13	8
Tampering with Evidence/False information	11	-
Resisting Arrest/Failure to Comply/Escape	14	10
<b>Conspiracy, Attempt and Complicity, Weapons Control, Corrupt Activity</b>		
Weapons Control/Possession/Conceal	10	2
Complicity / Attempt to Commit	6	9
<b>Offenses Drugs/Alcohol</b>		
Trafficking of Drugs	1	1
Possession of a Controlled Substance	15	2
Possession of Drugs / Drug Paraphernalia	26	5
Offenses Involving Underage Persons / Alcohol	38	4
<b>Other Offenses</b>		
Unruly Child	215	25
Prohibitions Relating to Tobacco	5	-
Habitual / Unruly Truant	39	3
Curfew	1	-
Other Offenses	5	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>879</b>	<b>189</b>

**2024 Filed Complaints by Zip Code/Gender/Age at Case Filing Date**

City Name	Zip code	F	M	U N	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	1 9	Total
Bronx, NY	10460		1										1			1
Amlin	43002		1								1					1
Ashley	43003	4	12					2	4	1	1	2	4	2		16
Centerburg	43011			1									1			1
Delaware	43015	98	99			4	3	19	32	27	46	36	28	1	1	197
Dublin	43016	1	2							1			1	1		3
Dublin	43017	1							1							1
Galena	43021	7	23				2		4	5	7	8	4			30
Johnstown	43031	1	1								1		1			2
Lewis Center	43035	19	21					2	1	3	12	12	9	1		40
Marysville	43040	4											4			4
Heath	43056		1											1		1
Ostrander	43061	1	2								1	1	1			3
Plain City	43064		1									1				1
Powell	43065	13	25	1			1	1	1		8	17	11			39
Reynoldsburg	43068	1	2								1		2			3
Sunbury	43074	9	27			1		2	3		12	5	8	5		36
Urbana	43078		1								1					1
Westerville	43081	3	9							1	5	6	1			12
Westerville	43082	19	19	1	1	1			3	2	7	17	8			39
Westville	43083	1			1											1
Worthington	43085	2	1								2	1				3
Canal Winchester	43110		1									1				1
Grove City	43123	1									1					1
Pickerington	43147	2											2			2
Columbus	43203		1									1				1
Columbus	43204		2									1	1			2
Columbus	43206	2	1			1				2						3
Columbus	43207	1	5								3	2	1			6
Columbus	43211	2	5							1	3	1	2			7
Columbus	43212			1										1		1
Columbus	43213	1	4						2	1	1	1				5
Columbus	43215		1										1			1
Columbus	43217		2											2		2
Columbus	43219	1	3									4				4
Columbus	43224		1					1								1
Columbus	43227	2	2							1	2			1		4
Columbus	43228		5								2	1	2			5
Columbus	43229	2	2								1	3				4
Columbus	43230		2										1	1		2
Columbus	43231	1	5								2	1	3			6
Columbus	43232		3								2		1			3
Columbus	43235	3	1							1		3				4
Columbus	43240	6	6					1	3		2	3	2	1		12
Marion	43302	1								1						1
Marengo	43334	2					2									2
Mount Gilead	43338		1						1							1
McConelsville	43756		1										1			1
Springfield	45503		1									1				1
Lima	45805		1						1							1
Milwaukee, WI	53209	1											1			1
Tempe, AZ	85281	1										1				1
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>521</b>

Total Charges Filed by Type						
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Felony	174	53	110	145	111	144
Misdemeanor	605	325	325	371	479	471
Unruly	266	219	219	239	313	265
<b>Total</b>	1045	597	653	755	903	879



## 2024 Statistics as Reported to the Ohio Supreme Court

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	T	V
	Delinquency	Traffic or Abuse	Dependency, Neglect	Unruly	Adult Cases	Permanent Custody Motion for	Custody, Change of Custody, Visitation	Support Enforcement	Parentage	U.I.F.S.A.	All Others	Total	Visiting Judge
Pending beginning of period	69	37	15	14	8	1	6	1	0	0	2	153	0
New cases filed	285	547	63	18	79	2	11	2	1	0	14	1,066	0
Cases transferred in, reactivated, or redesignated	163	61	16	41	28	3	3	5	0	0	0	320	4
Total cases	517	645	84	127	115	6	20	8	1	0	16	1,539	4
<b>TERMINATIONS BY:</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>K</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>V</b>
Trial by Judge	1	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	6	0
Trial by Magistrate	4	1	18	1	0	0	5	1	0	0	1	31	0
Dismissal by party, judge, or prosecutor	87	63	18	45	64	1	5	6	1	0	1	291	1
Admission to judge	18	350	10	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	380	2
Admission to magistrate	113	140	20	21	15	0	3	0	0	0	0	312	0
Certification/Waiver granted	1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	1	0
Unavailability of party for trial	150	50	10	35	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	272	0
Transfer to another judge or court	63	14	1	4	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	85	0
Referral to private judge	X	X	X	X	X	X	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Interlocutory appeal or order	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other terminations	4	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	13	21	0
TOTAL Terminations	441	620	80	106	107	6	15	7	1	0	16	1,399	0
Pending end of period	76	25	4	21	8	0	5	1	0	0	0	140	1
Clearance Rate	98%	102%	116%	94%	100%	120%	107%	100%	100%	0%	114%	101%	75%
Time Guideline (months)	6	3	3	3	6	9	9	12	12	3	6	X	X
Cases pending beyond time guideline	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0
Overage Rate	0%	0%	0%	29%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%
Number of months oldest case overage	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	X	0
Number of informal cases	113	0	4	1,757	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,874	0

### Cases Involving Abused, Dependent, or Neglected Children

Abused Neglect Dependent Charges Filed 2024			
<b>Description of Individual Charges</b>	<b><u>Charges filed</u></b>	<b><u>Adjudicated</u></b>	<b><u>Pending</u></b>
Abused Child - Exhibits Injury	15	1	2
Abused Child - No Conviction Required	8	1	2
Abused Child - Child Out of Home Abuse	18	0	1
Abused Child - Victim Sexual Activity	16	0	0
Abused Child- Acts Causing Injury	37	3	2
Neglected Child - Injury by Omission	50	2	3
Neglected Child - Lack Parental Care	50	2	3
Neglected Child - Special care	17	0	0
Neglected Child -Abandoned	3	0	0
Neglected Child-Parental Refusal	49	2	2
Dependent Child - Residential Status Act	17	4	0
Dependent Child - Residential Status Danger	17	3	0
Dependent Child- Environmental Condition	61	37	4
Dependent Child- Homeless	7	0	0
Dependent Child- Parental condition	49	6	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>23</b>

<b>Motion for Permanent Custody</b>	
Filed 2024	4
Carryover-Open 2023	1
Granted 2024	4
Dismissed/Denied 2024	0
Carryover into 2025	1

### Number of Juvenile Hearings Scheduled in 2024

Type	TOTAL
Adjudication/Disposition	81
Bridges Initial Hearing	1
Case Review	413
Change of Plea	79
Child Support Hearing	8
Civil Protection Order	7
Competency Hearing	25
Compliance Review	163
Contempt Hearing	6
Detention Hearing	41
Detention Review	55
Dispositional Hearing	192
Evidentiary Hearing	47
Family Treatment Court	6
Formal Arraignment	557
Hearing	33
In Camera	21
Jury Trial	13
Motion Hearing	98
Non-Oral Hearing	59
Pre-Trial	1081
Probable Cause	64
Restitution	7
Sealing/Expungement	61
Show Cause	4
Specialized Case Review	15
Status Hearing	123
Suppression Hearing	6
Traffic Formal Arraignment	609
Treatment Court	60
Trial	513
Violation of Court Order/Probation	61
Total	4509

### Results of Scheduled Juvenile Hearings 2024

	Total
Continued	584
Denied	94
Dismissed without Hearing	48
Failure to Appear	187
Heard	2497
Hearing Type Converted	102

Informal	465
Non-Oral Completed	26
Vacated	506
<b>Total</b>	<b>4509</b>

#### Juvenile Court Processes Completed in 2024

- The Court issued 526 summons to appear in 484 cases.
- The Court issued 26 warrants and 25 outstanding warrants were executed or recalled.
- There were 527 appointments of a public defender.
- A guardian ad litem was appointed in 155 cases.
- Approximately 198 public records requests were processed.
- In the Juvenile Division, 23,477 docket entries were filed.
- In the Probate Division, 41,408 docket entries were filed.

Phone Calls Handled 2024			
	Probate	Juvenile	Main
Incoming	6650	1787	1987
Outbound	2020	2027	76

Document Service Types			
2024	Probate		Juvenile
Certified Mail	303		469
Sheriff Service	0		379
Subpoena	29		757
Personal	0		91
Electronic Service	2580		6274
Publication	22		22

#### Clerical Services

The Clerical Services Department assigns staff in both the Probate and Juvenile Courts. Each department operates independently and follows local rules created for each Court. Clerical staff are involved in all areas of the court by processing filings from the beginning to the end of the case. One of the core functions of the Clerical Services Department is to maintain accurate and complete records of all court proceedings. The Clerical Services Department receives case filings and documents in person, by facsimile, mail, and via E-filing. Cross training between probate and juvenile clerical staff is on-going, with a goal of providing uninterrupted services to both courts as needed.

Our clerical staff believe that it is important to continually seek ways to improve our service to the court and the public we serve. We emphasize the need to stay updated on the latest legal changes and their impact on the Courts by offering training opportunities. Participation in court-wide and departmental team meetings reinforces the importance of education for all staff. Attendance at an annual conference for deputy clerks provides opportunities for networking and learning about the latest practices of other Ohio Probate and Juvenile Courts. Additionally, staff have year-round access to events developed by the Court's training coordinator and are encouraged to participate in Supreme Court training sessions, either onsite or remotely.

The Court's Records Office is dedicated to auditing, reviewing, and preserving filed documents for the Court. By scanning documents, the office has streamlined processes, in turn saving time and enhancing efficiency. Digital images allow for electronic access, eliminating the need to locate physical case files. In 2024, the probate and juvenile clerks scanned 177,678 page images and sent over 242 boxes to the Delaware County Records Center for microfilming. Over one million images were uploaded to microfilm, ensuring historic preservation.

The Probate/Juvenile Court adheres to the Supreme Court of Ohio's standards for language interpreters, primarily relying on certified in-person interpreters for court proceedings. In 2024, the Court scheduled 60 interpretation events at a total cost of \$12,809.63. Most requests (65%) were for Spanish language interpretation, while other languages included Arabic, American Sign Language (ASL), Amharic, Swahili, and Vietnamese.

When an interpreter was needed for a language that did not have a local interpreter or no onsite interpreter was available, telephonic interpreters were utilized for 37 sessions, covering 446 minutes of interpretation.

The Court's websites continue to serve as valuable resources for the public. In 2024, the Probate Court website received 185,068 page views, with the most popular sections being: record search, guardianship, and marriage license information pages. The Juvenile Court website received 26,690 page visits, with record searches, local rules, and hearing details being the top areas of interest. The E-services portal was heavily utilized in 2024, with 15,095 e-filings, 875 e-marriage license applications, and 513 juvenile e-payments processed during the year.

### **Court Visitor Program**

The Court Visitor Program is a guardianship monitoring program through the Probate Court. The program utilizes volunteers to visit with wards and guardians involved with the court. These visitors serve as the court's eyes and ears, by visiting persons under guardianship to see whether they are receiving appropriate care, to ensure that the guardian is current with reporting requirements and to assist the guardian and/or ward with linkage to community resources. The visits are usually conducted at the ward's home to allow the court visitor to observe the ward in the natural environments. The program allows the court to ensure the ward's needs are being met, the ward is safe and being cared for, and the ward is in the least restrictive alternative for guardianship. The Court Visitor program also provides the Probate Court with an additional mechanism for following up on any complaints and/or concerns noted with existing guardianships.

During the course of 2024, a total of 193 visits were conducted. Sixty-five of the wards were age 55 or above and 91 of the guardians were age 55 or above.

## **Intake Department**

### **Diversion**

Diversion is an opportunity offered to a juvenile offender charged with a status or misdemeanor offense. Diversion is a voluntary program in which a complaint is sealed and dismissed upon successful completion of the program. The Diversion Program has been enhanced with a strong evidenced-based approach to better assess youth and to not unnecessarily keep them involved with the Court as it is designed for low risk and generally first-time offenders. The goal is to hold youth accountable without adjudication. Research shows that the more contact the Court has with a youth, the more their criminogenic risk increases. It is the Court's practice for low-risk offenders to have minimal contact, thus a youth in Diversion would receive a minimum one hour of direct service from the Diversion Officer. In 2024, the Court conducted 156 diversion conferences.

At times, the Court will allow youth who are second-time offenders the opportunity to participate in diversion. This is done on a case-by-case basis considering, but not limited to, the following criteria: the age of the youth when the first diversion occurred and the age of the second diversion, the time in between charges, the nature of the second charge and how it relates to the first charge (ex: first charge being an unruly at an early age, and second charge occurring at age 17). In addition to the above-mentioned factors, home and school behaviors, as well as work history in the community are also taken into account to determine youth's likelihood of further recidivism.

Typically, a diversion conference will occur at the court. However, at times, those conferences may occur at the school if the behavior of concern is occurring at the school, or if the court and/or family request the support of the school. Diversions may also be conducted by the Assessment Center staff at the Willis Education Building. This typically occurs for unruly offenses occurring at home. This allows for the family to be linked to other needed services that are available from community partners.

In 2024, the Court continues the practice of diverting disseminating matter harmful to juveniles as long as the disseminating is between two consenting youth. However, if the harmful matter is disseminated to other parties, the case will be formalized.

### **Intervention-in-lieu**

In 2024, the Intake team served 82 youth who qualified for the intervention-in-lieu program. The purpose of this program is to work with youth, through the use of motivational interviewing, to build skills that will support the juvenile in making better choices and strive to keep the juvenile from incurring additional charges. These youth served in the intervention-in-lieu program are not adjudicated. They are given up to six months to complete terms and conditions. If they successfully complete the terms and conditions, their case(s) is/are dismissed immediately and sealed after a period of 30 days. Pursuant to *State ex rel. Cincinnati Enquirer v. Bloom* – the

30 day period gives any potential victim a chance to respond to the notice of record sealing. This gives the youth an opportunity to be held accountable, and not have an official court record.

To qualify for this program, the juvenile shall be charged with a status, misdemeanor, or felony out of a single incident. The youth must have no prior adjudications and had no prior court involvement for a period of one year. Once the juvenile has entered an admission to an offense, the intake officer will meet with the youth to conduct assessments/screening tools. These tools may include: the Ohio Youth Assessment System (OYAS) Disposition Screening Tool, the GAIN-SS (Global Appraisal of Individual Needs- Short Screener), and PEARLS (Pediatric ACEs and Related Life Events Screener). The youth must score a low risk on the OYAS Disposition Screening Tool to qualify for intervention in lieu. Once the assessments are completed, the intake officer will present the court with summaries of the assessments and dispositional recommendations. After disposition, the intake officer will meet face-to-face with the juvenile for a minimum of one hour for the duration of the case. During those meetings, the intake officer will work with the juvenile utilizing motivational interviewing to help reach the program goals. During the time of supervision, the intake officer may utilize incentives and informal sanctions to encourage appropriate behavior and completion of the program.

#### General Intake

The Intake Department also served 58 youth who were placed on general intake in 2024. The purpose of this program is to work with youth to build skills that will support the juvenile in making better choices and will help the juvenile avoid incurring new charges and further penetration into the juvenile justice system. To qualify for the general intake program, the juvenile can have a status, misdemeanor, or felony charge. Once the juvenile has entered an admission to an offense, the intake officer will meet with the youth to conduct assessments/screening tools. These tools may include: the Ohio Youth Assessment System (OYAS) Disposition Screening Tool, the GAIN-SS (Global Appraisal of Individual Needs- Short Screener), PEARLS (Pediatric ACEs and Related Life Events Screener). The youth must be a low risk on the OYAS Disposition Screening Tool. Once the assessments are completed, the intake officer will present the court with a summary and recommendations. The juveniles are given up to six months to complete terms and conditions. After disposition, the intake officer will meet face-to-face with the juvenile for a minimum of one hour for the duration of the case. During those meetings, the intake officer will work with the juvenile utilizing motivational interviewing to help reach the program goals. During the time of supervision, the intake officer may utilize incentives and informal sanctions to encourage appropriate behavior and completion of the program.

#### Truancy

The Court has a dedicated docket to manage the caseload regarding truant and unruly behavior at local schools throughout Delaware County. The purpose and goal of the dedicated docket is to centralize the hearing schedules of the school liaisons, as well as to ensure quick resolutions to cases. The dedicated docket hears cases regarding truancy, unruly activity at school, and adult contributing charges for failure to send children to school. Cases can only be formalized once alternative efforts are attempted to divert the cases from the Court. In that effort, the school liaisons meet with students with attendance concerns and attempt to address barriers to attendance.

If that intervention is unsuccessful in curbing the truant/unruly behavior, a mediation is scheduled with a court-based mediator. During the mediation, a Student Attendance Intervention Plan (SAIP) is created in effort to increase attendance and prevent charges from being filed. Parents and students are provided a copy of the mediation agreement/SAIP immediately following mediation. If there is not an improvement in attendance over the next sixty days, the school can choose to file a charge on the child and/or the parent, depending on the issues at hand in each case. Every effort is made to prevent charges from being filed. It is the collaboration with the school staff, court staff, and the student's family that helps to encourage and improve school attendance.

### School Liaisons

Truancy has always been challenging. Generally, there are underlying issues/barriers for a student's lack of school attendance. For the 2024/2025 school year, mediations for all school districts are being offered in person and via Zoom. The utilization of Zoom mediations to create the SAIP improved the completion/participation rate for several school districts over last three years. The Court has found Zoom/online platforms to be beneficial for working parents. This allows parent to attend but not miss several hours of work. At the informal meeting and at mediation, the goal is to assist families with attendance barriers. School and court staff can link families and students with services such as mental health, family advocacy and case management, and provide needed items like bus passes and alarm clocks to help family reduce barriers and improve attendance. For the 2024/2025 school year, there have been 34 truancy charges and 43 adult contributing charges filed for all districts the Court services which includes Delaware City Schools (DCS), Olentangy Local School District (Olentangy), Big Walnut School District (BW), Buckeye Valley School District (BV), Delaware Area Career Center (DACC), Goal Digital Academy, and Treca. All 34 truancy cases were diverted. To date, there has been 1 truancy adjudication for this 2024/2025 school year.

#### School service statistic for the 2024-2025 school year

<b>2024-2025</b>	<b>DCS</b>	<b>Olentangy</b>	<b>Big Walnut</b>	<b>Buckeye Valley</b>	<b>DACC</b>	<b>Other (online)</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Informal Meeting</b>	366	755	139	103	58	0	<b>1421</b>
<b>Mediations</b>	288	34	57	32	15	4	<b>430</b>
<b>Adult Contributing</b>	24	12	9	5	0	1	<b>51</b>
<b>Truancy Charge</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>40</b>

\*All juveniles charged with truancy were offered diversion.

### Victim Services

The Victim Services Program was established for the Juvenile Court in 1987 to provide information and support for victims of juvenile crime and to ensure that case-related decisions include greater consideration for the victim. In April of 2023, Marcy's Law was amended to

expand the protection of victim's rights throughout the court process and placed many of the victim advocacy functions with the Delaware County Prosecutor's Office. Despite these changes, the court is committed to assisting victims following all disposition hearings with notification of any case reviews, termination hearings, as well as helping to recover any financial losses. Keeping sight of a "balanced approach" ensures that offenders are held accountable to their victims, and that victims regain some degree of wholeness after an offense has been committed against them.

#### Victim Awareness Program

Created in 2008, the Victim Awareness Program helps juvenile offenders understand how their actions affected their victims. Through a series of classes, these juveniles must analyze their actions and participate in exercises geared towards helping them more fully understand the consequences of those actions. The goal of the program is to keep the juveniles from re-offending by helping them understand the impact that their actions will have on others and themselves. The program emphasizes the process of making good choices by giving juveniles tools that can help them be more successful in their daily lives. In 2024, the program conducted 4 sessions of 5 classes each. Of the 17 juveniles who successfully completed the program, only 4 have committed a subsequent offense that created a victim.

#### Restitution Tracking and Compliance Program

In January 2016, the Victim Services Program initiated a new program to better serve the victims of juvenile crime who have incurred financial loss due to a juvenile's offense. The purpose of the Restitution Tracking and Compliance Program is to provide oversight of victim restitution from initial contact with the victim through the final collection process. The goal of this program is to improve compliance of the payment of restitution by juvenile offenders so that the victim realizes financial reimbursement for their loss in a timely manner.

In 2018, a Restitution Docket was established. This docket holds juveniles accountable for making regular payments toward the restitution owed by requiring them to attend a monthly hearing if a monthly payment is not made according to terms agreed upon by the juvenile at the time of disposition. In Fiscal Year 2024, the Court distributed \$10,707.83 in restitution to victims of juvenile crime. Of those funds, \$9,587.50 was paid directly by the juvenile offender and \$1,120.33 was earned and distributed through restitution work.

#### Mentoring Programs

Together Everyone Achieves More (T.E.A.M.), and Mothers Offering Mentoring Support (M.O.M.S.) are modeled similarly; both programs are one-to-one mentoring programs that meet consistently. Community mentors are each screened through two interview processes, complete the County's vetting/disclosure process, and complete training. Mentees and families/guardians meet with the Mentoring Programs to complete a short assessment and liability forms. Once mentors and mentees are matched, the coordinator monitors each match.

T.E.A.M. mentees are students in grades 4-12 who are in need of additional social-emotional support. Mentors provide innovative ways of thinking about life needs and share various free/low cost ideas that students can do within their personal lives. T.E.A.M. matches use a hybrid approach from the tools in Brene Brown's Daring Classrooms and the After School Activities

portion of the Too Good for Drugs curriculum. Goal setting processes are inspired by the 40 Developmental Assets from The Search Institute. T.E.A.M. receives referrals from within the Juvenile Court, Job and Family Services, Family and Children First Council, Delaware Area Career Center Career Based Initiative (CBI) classes, Ohio Rise Care Coordinators, and school district counselors. As of December 2024, there were 8 youth enrolled; 4 students in grades 4-7, 4 students in grades 8-12. Of those 8 enrolled youth, five youth were matched, two mentees were waiting to be matched, and one mentee was in the process of assessments. Throughout 2024, mentoring programs received referrals for, screened, withdrew, or found better fitting services for 21 adolescents and families.

Highlights for matches enrolled in T.E.A.M. have continued to be community focused. Matches have enjoyed a day at the Delaware County Fair, visited local farmer's markets, supported literacy interests (including visiting a plethora of independent bookstores in Central Ohio), utilized many natural play spaces at the Delaware County Preservation Parks, worked on career development skills with Ohio Means Jobs services for resume writing, and supported shopping efforts for the Fight Against Hunger Games.

M.O.M.S. pairs pregnant/new mothers with experienced mothers as mentors. The mentees in M.O.M.S. are determined to need support with independent living and parenting practices. Mentors assist new/expectant families with next phases of parenting, understanding "typical" child development, scheduling/maintaining appointments, and family self-care. M.O.M.S. utilizes Parents as Teachers curriculum for child bonding activities and developmental information. The mentees for M.O.M.S. receive referrals from the school system alternative schooling programs and the Juvenile Court. As of December 2024, six young moms were matched with mentors, and one family was being assessed.

M.O.M.S. matches continue to focus on goals surrounding independent living needs. While meeting with families, Mentors hear mentees express barriers with housing, transportation, and medical support needs (for both parents and children). Mentors work to link mentees with appropriate resources for case management services to support some of these needs. Mentors continue to support activities such as creating family meals using accessible supports (especially WIC), breastfeeding support (including transportation to Dublin for lactation consultant appointments), and visiting spaces in Central Ohio. Mentees also appreciated receiving holiday gifts from The United Way of Delaware County; all gifts were self-care focused for mentees and play-focused for children.

The program has continued to facilitate connection opportunities among mentors quarterly; this is typically completed within the community in a space that matches can access during their individual time. M.O.M.S. volunteers have met at various coffee shops along the Delaware County Coffee Trail and Delaware County District Public Library (Liberty Branch). T.E.A.M. volunteers have met Blue Limestone Park, Boardman Arts Park, and Veteran's Park.

#### Assessment Center:

A preventive and diversionary program of the Juvenile Court, the Assessment Center provides a place for youth and families to obtain needed services in order to reduce the risk of entering the juvenile justice system. In partnership with Delaware City Schools and United Way

Strengthening Families Initiative, the Assessment Center is housed away from the courthouse to further divert youth from the court. Beginning to provide services on November 1, 2019, the Assessment Center opened in the Willis Education Building located in Delaware City.

It is a goal of the Assessment Center to assess youth and families' needs and be able to bridge any gaps in getting services in place for youth and families. Another goal of the Assessment Center is to collaborate with agencies, parents, schools and law enforcement to provide help for families that are struggling with youth's behaviors by providing support and linkage to the right services. And finally, a goal of the Assessment Center is to bring a strength-based, collaborative approach in selecting a plan of how to provide support to youth and families.

The Assessment Center has partnered with community agencies such as Delaware City Schools, United Way, Syntero, Delaware Job and Family Services, Family and Children First Council, and Delaware-Morrow County Mental Health and Recovery Board. With these partnerships, we have been able to link services quickly and more conveniently for families. We have been able to utilize the programs these partners have in order to help our youth and families.

The Assessment Center is in the process of building a Restorative Justice program thanks to a grant from the Department of Youth Services. This program will provide an opportunity to help repair harm that has been done to a person(s) or community by allowing a space for the offender and the victim, along with their support person(s) to discuss what happened, and what needs to happen to repair the harm to rebuild a sense of community for all persons involved. There will be three ways to participate in this program: through a referral to the Assessment Center for any at-risk youth that has caused harm to a person or community, with a charge that has an identified victim and the case has been diverted, and finally, for any appropriate case that has a victim and the case has been formalized and disposed of.

In 2024, the Assessment Center had a total of 200 referrals and served 145 youth and families. These families received services from the T.E.A.M Mentoring program, Parent Project, Syntero, Girls Group, Family Advocate program, Family and Children First Council, OhioRise, Family Resource Center, Gracehaven, Food Pantries, United Way's programs, Department of Job and Family Services, Andrew's House Legal Clinic, mental health/drug and alcohol providers, after-school programming and DATA/Flex transportation services. These youth and families were assessed, linked to appropriate services and/or given parenting support, all in hopes to reduce the issues in the home/school or community, ultimately lowering the need to become involved in the juvenile justice system.

#### Parent Project/Loving Solutions:

Parent Project is a nationally facilitated program that was made by parents, for parents of strong-willed and destructive teens, ages 12-17 years old. The program is designed to help empower parents to be able to more effectively manage their teens in the home and build a better parent-child relationship. The program is also designed to provide a parent support group for parents that are trying to make changes in their home and need support to sustain their efforts. The program is a total of 24 class hours and runs for 12 weeks.

We currently have 5 facilitators and offer the program two times per year, typically once in the winter and once in the summer or fall. In 2024, we were able to serve 30 parents with two virtual classes. This year we were also able to facilitate a Loving Solutions program. Loving Solutions is the sister program of the Parent Project for parents of children 5-10 years old who are struggling with parenting. We were able to serve 4 parents/guardians during this virtual session.

#### The CASA Program of Delaware and Union Counties

In 2024, The CASA Program of Delaware and Union Counties continued to experience growth and increased interest in volunteerism. The program added 18 new CASA/GAL volunteers to its roster. These new volunteers immediately began advocating for abused and neglected children in both Delaware and Union counties.

An exciting event took place in 2024, the CASA Program of Delaware County celebrated 40 years of service to the community. A celebration/volunteer event was held at the Meekers Venue and was attended by retired and current judges including: The Honorable Thomas E. Loudon (retired, Delaware County), The Honorable Kenneth J. Spicer (retired, Delaware County), The Honorable Charlotte Coleman Eufinger (retired, Union County), The Honorable David A. Hejmanowski, Probate/Juvenile Judge, Delaware County and The Honorable Rick Rodger, Probate/Juvenile Judge, Union County. Seventy-five people were in attendance (including 55 volunteers) to celebrate this momentous occasion.

#### Volunteer/Case Statistics:

<b>Volunteer CASA Advocates</b>	61
<b>Volunteer Total Case Hours</b>	6,800
<b>Miles Driven by Volunteers for Casework</b>	55,000
<b>Number of Children Served</b>	218
<b>Of Children served:</b>	
<b>Female</b>	109
<b>Male</b>	109
<b>Child Age Range</b>	
0-5	84
6-11	65
12-15	40
16-17	18
18+	11

In 2024, 96 children's cases were closed with a CASA/GAL Volunteer involved. Of those 96 children, following are some important outcomes:

Reunification achieved	41
Adopted	4
Legal Custody (relative)	47
Child turned 18/21	3
Other (case transferred, removed from docket etc. legal custody to non-relative, remained in home)	1

CASA/GAL Volunteers continue to be a strong voice in the courtroom for abused and neglected children. While the National CASA volunteer retention rate is 18 months, the CASA Program of Delaware and Union Counties had a retention rate of 33.8 months in 2024. The CASA/GAL Volunteers in Delaware and Union Counties are very dedicated and committed to ensuring that every child has a voice in the courtroom and achieves a safe and permanent home at case closure.

### Mediation

In 2024, the mediation department was referred 658 total cases for the calendar year, up from 577 in 2023. Consistently, truancy mediations have made up the bulk of the mediation numbers for 2024. Truancy numbers were up from 522 referrals in 2023 to 601 in 2024. The continued goal is to accommodate each school district and their families. The Delaware City School District has continued to utilize Zoom to conduct their mediations, while the Delaware County School districts continue with in-person mediation, held at the school.

Child protection mediation for 2024 was up slightly with the Delaware County Department of Jobs and Family Services referring 34 matters to mediation, up from 31 in 2023. Custody mediation referrals for 2024 were down 3 from 9 in 2023 to 6 referrals in 2024. Juvenile offender mediation referrals have more than doubled for 2024 from 7 in 2023 to 15 referrals for 2024. Delaware City Schools have continued to reach out to us to mediate behavior/peer issues involving students. This year so far we have successfully mediated 2 separate issues for Dempsey Middle School.

In 2024, the mediation department worked closely with Marya Kolman, from The Supreme Court of Ohio detailing its truancy mediation practices and Licking County shadowed the department in action at our county schools. The Supreme Court also invited the department to present our Child Protection Mediation presentation to the Ohio Association of Juvenile Court Judges Winter Conference. Additionally, Lisa Williamson, director of Court Services and Dodie Davenport, Mediation Coordinator, co-presented the Girls Group presentation "Unruly to You, Survivor to Me" to the Juvenile Justice InterCourt conference for 2024 and have been asked to return in 2025.

## 2024 Mediation Statistics

Type of Mediation	Referred	Mediated	Outcomes*	Hours**
Attendance***	601	534	534-F/15-N/5-OT	1,050
Delinquency	15	12	12-F/ 3-N	24
Child Protection	34	13	5-F/8-P/0-N//21-OT	150
Parenting/Custody	6	4	1-F/3-P/2-N/0-OT	35
Informal Peer school/request	2	2	2-F	10
Assessment Center	0	0	0-F/0-P/0-OT	6
Probate	0	0	0-NO	0
TOTALS	658	565	554F/11P/20N/73OTH	1080

\*Outcomes are full, partial, no, or other, including no show or not suitable for mediation.

\*\*Hours are actual hours in mediation and does not include all the pre- and post-mediation work, including but not limited to scheduling, preparing paperwork, and communication with parties and counsel.

\*\*\*Outcomes are full with an SAIP signed (F), partial (P) no mediation including no show (N), or other (student moved out of the district, for example)(OT).

## **Probation**

### **Court Therapy Dog Program**

Now in his fifth year of service, Franklin, Delaware County's court therapy dog, continues to provide an invaluable source of comfort, stability, and emotional support for children and families involved in the justice system. Throughout 2024, Franklin remained active across multiple courtrooms, county agencies, and community spaces. His presence was requested by eight agencies, highlighting the ongoing demand for his services. In the courtroom, Franklin provided essential support to youth during in-camera hearings, accompanied victims during sensitive testimony, and offered emotional grounding during legal proceedings and case reviews. He also worked alongside mental health clinicians to de-escalate high-stress situations and support youth struggling with emotional regulation and trauma.

Outside the courtroom, Franklin continued to participate in community outreach efforts, including school visits, county trainings, and public events. His engagement in these spaces has helped raise awareness of trauma-informed care and the importance of emotional safety in both legal and educational systems. Franklin's ability to connect with individuals of all ages, whether by offering a quiet moment of comfort or a joyful distraction, has made him a beloved fixture throughout Delaware County.

Professionally, Franklin maintains a high standard of training and certification. He holds numerous credentials through the American Kennel Club, including the Puppy STAR Program,

Canine Good Citizen, Canine Good Citizen Urban and Advanced, and Trick Dog titles at both novice and intermediate levels. He is also certified as a therapy dog through No Bad Dogs Ohio, Love on Leash, and the American Kennel Club's Therapy Dog Program. Now in the maintenance phase of his training, Franklin continues to develop his skills to remain responsive to the diverse needs of the individuals he supports.

### Juvenile Treatment Court

Delaware County's Juvenile Treatment Court serves as a vital intervention for youth involved in the justice system due to substance use and co-occurring mental health disorders. This Specialized Docket focuses on youth ages 14 to 17 who are at moderate to high risk of reoffending and have a diagnosed substance use disorder.

The program follows a structured, four-phase model centered on accountability, treatment, and support. Through intensive case management, therapeutic services, regular court reviews, drug screening, and community supervision, the Juvenile Treatment Court fosters the development of prosocial skills and lasting behavioral change. A structured incentive system, including verbal praise, certificates, gift cards, privilege advancements, and milestone celebrations, helps motivate participants and reinforces progress.

The multidisciplinary team includes a bench member, probation officers, treatment providers, legal counsel, Guardians ad Litem, and families, all working together to support each youth's recovery journey. The Ohio Supreme Court identifies Juvenile Treatment Courts as evidence-based, problem-solving dockets that promote accountability, sobriety, and personal growth. Delaware County's Juvenile Treatment Court reflects these standards by equipping young people with the tools they need for lifelong recovery and successful community integration.

In 2024, the Juvenile Treatment Court docket served two youth, both of whom carried over into the new year. While the number of participants was limited, the program's intensive, individualized approach allows for deeper engagement and stronger relationships between youth, court staff, and treatment providers. Both participants demonstrated consistent involvement in services and continued progressing through the court's structured four-phase model.

### Family Dependency Treatment Court

This Specialized Docket serves parents involved with Delaware County Job and Family Services due to substance use or untreated mental health needs. It offers a structured path toward recovery, stability, and family reunification. Participation in the program is voluntary and includes adherence to individualized case plans, attendance at regular court hearings, frequent and random drug screenings, and engagement in community-based treatment services. The program also incorporates an incentive structure designed to reinforce progress. Participants may receive verbal recognition, certificates, gift cards, and increased visitation as they achieve recovery milestones.

In 2024, the Family Dependency Treatment Court served four participants. Two participants carried over into the new year, one successfully completed the program, and one was unsuccessfully terminated. These outcomes reflect both the challenging nature of recovery and the Court's commitment to providing intensive, structured support to families navigating complex

needs. Even in cases where completion is not achieved, the program offers meaningful opportunities for growth, accountability, and healing.

The court team includes the bench, Treatment Court Coordinator, service providers, caseworkers, court staff, and a CASA or Guardian ad Litem who advocates for the best interests of the children. Together, this team delivers comprehensive and compassionate support to meet the unique needs of each family.

In December 2022, the Family Dependency Treatment Court earned recertification from the Ohio Supreme Court's Commission on Specialized Dockets, reaffirming its commitment to best practices and effective outcomes. The Ohio Supreme Court recognizes Family Dependency Treatment Courts as collaborative, family-focused programs that promote faster, safer reunification. Delaware County's Family Dependency Treatment Court remains dedicated to helping parents achieve sobriety, stability, and long-term success for themselves and their children.

### Probation Department Annual Report

The Probation Department supervises youth identified as moderate to high risk through the Ohio Youth Assessment System (OYAS). Probation officers utilize evidence-based practices such as EPICS (Effective Practices in Community Supervision), the Carey Guides, and Motivational Interviewing to support behavior change, increase accountability, and reduce recidivism.

The department is involved with three specialized dockets: Juvenile Treatment Court, Family Dependency Treatment Court, and the Juvenile Sex Offender Docket. It also manages the Court's Suspension Alternative/Community Service Program and hosts the Court's Race, Equity, and Inclusion (REI) Coordinator. Delaware County is also a Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) site, committed to reducing unnecessary secure detention by promoting community-based alternatives that balance public safety with positive youth outcomes.

The Probation Department is actively engaged in reimagining juvenile justice to better serve youth and communities. This approach emphasizes restorative practices, equity, and trauma-informed care, aiming to transform supervision into an opportunity for healing and growth. By focusing on individualized support and community collaboration, Delaware County continues to build a more just and effective juvenile justice system.

In 2024, the department served 46 youth, 31 males and 15 females, with 14 identifying as minority youth. Among male participants, 13 successfully completed probation, two had unsuccessful terminations, and two were terminated with neutral outcomes. Among females, nine successfully completed probation, one was unsuccessful, and no neutral terminations were reported.

Of the 14 minority youth served, five achieved successful terminations, with none unsuccessful. At year's end, 14 males and five females remained under active probation supervision. Throughout 2024, the department continued to prioritize alternatives to detention, such as house arrest monitoring, enhanced supervision and contact, access to structured group programming, and an incentive system to encourage prosocial behavior and compliance.

One of the highlights of this year was the Court's partnership with Syntero, a local mental health and wellness provider, to host an LGBTQIA+ community educational training for court staff. This training helped deepen our understanding of the unique challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ youth and gave staff the tools to better support all young people in our care. It is part of our ongoing effort to make sure every youth is seen, respected, and receives the level of care and support they need.

As we look to the future, the Court remains committed to growing its REI work. We are exploring partnerships and creating even more opportunities for staff learning and development. Together, we are continuing to build a court environment where every youth and family feels welcome, safe, supported, and valued.

### **Family Advocate Program**

The Family Advocate program has been serving Delaware County for over 40 years, offering family-directed interventions for at-risk youth and families with multiple needs. The program focuses on understanding family dynamics through direct observation in natural settings, which helps identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth.

Staff provide services grounded in Functional Family Therapy (FFT), which encourages families to view problems from a broader perspective, reduce blame, and take shared responsibility for resolving issues. FFT also teaches families essential skills to improve functioning and reduce recidivism or out-of-home placements.

Two key assessments—the Family Environmental Scale (FES) and Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale (FACES IV)—help measure the social (e.g. conflict) and environmental aspects of the family dynamic. These tools guide goal setting by identifying areas for improvement, such as family cohesion, communication, and family satisfaction. Assessment data is collected during the engagement phase (typically within the first two sessions) and again at termination to measure self-reported progress.

Advocates maintain weekly contact with families to set and monitor individualized goals, with service duration typically ranging from 3 to 12 months, depending on each family's needs. The program's core interventions and delivery methods, including FFT, Motivational Interviewing, and PATHS, have remained consistent. Services are designed to be Strength-Based and Trauma-Informed.

In 2024, the program served 54 families, with each family receiving tailored support to develop and work on specific goals. Progress is tracked through ongoing case notes and highlighted at termination. The program's macro goal is family preservation, specifically, the prevention of out-of-home placements. Of the 45 families who completed the program in 2024, 78% (35 families) were successfully preserved, meaning they remained intact. Of the remaining 10 families, 7 had neutral terminations due to issues such as relocation or level-of care, while 3 families experienced unsuccessful terminations due to out-of-home placements.

### Safe Harbor Programming

In 2020 and 2023, The Ohio Department of Public Safety, Office of Criminal Justice Services was awarded a competitive grant by the Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime. Delaware County Probate/Juvenile Court was one of two courts awarded funds to hire a Safe Harbor coordinator. The three-year grant program focuses on improving the juvenile justice response to trafficked youth through robust training to increase identification of exploited children and youth and reducing barriers to services. The Safe Harbor Coordinator is responsible for developing a multi-disciplinary response protocol and diversion programs for potential and identified victims of human trafficking.

The Safe Harbor Program and the Delaware County Juvenile Safe Harbor Protocol underwent a rigorous review process through RTI International. In December, the safe harbor program description and the response protocol were submitted to the Office of Victims of Crime for final approval.

The Safe Harbor Coordinator presented human trafficking awareness and prevention trainings throughout the state to increase Ohio's capacity to implement the Safe Harbor law and adopt Safe Harbor protocols. The trainings reached over 200 professionals, including law enforcement, health care providers, mental health treatment providers, substance use providers, educators, and court personnel. The Safe Harbor coordinator also provided technical assistance to four Ohio juvenile courts regarding the implementation of Safe Harbor law and increasing staff's ability to identify exploited children and youth.

The Court received twenty-two referrals in 2024. Nine cases were determined not to be trafficking situations and three cases were confirmed trafficking situations. The remaining ten cases represented both labor and commercial sex trafficking concerns. Court staff offered resources to all youth referred, regardless of a confirmed trafficking situation. Many youth and families accepted supports to address the factors that influence a child's potential exploitation. The Court will continue its efforts to increase awareness and strengthen Delaware County's anti-human trafficking efforts.

### Fiscal Department

#### **Human Resources**

Over the course of the calendar year 2024, the court had eight new hires. Of these, one was an internal promotion, and one other was a newly created fulltime position of Probate Court Investigator. The Probate Court cases regarding Guardianship and Adoption have increased, thus justifying the need for a full-time Probate Investigator. Additionally, a restructure of the Probation/Intake Departments left three positions open at the end of the 2024 calendar year – Intake/Diversion Officer, Suspension Alternative Program Coordinator, and a Probation Assistant/Community Service Coordinator. Ongoing assessment of all programs and caseloads will determine if vacant positions will be filled, or modified, to fit changing needs of the court, programs, and community.

## **Funding**

Funding for the Delaware County Probate/Juvenile Court is received from a variety of sponsors and sources. While the core administrative structure of the court is funded from county funds, the court has been able to supplement many of its programs with grants and contracts, as well as the fees and fines collected.

### ***General Fund***

At the beginning of the 2024 fiscal year, the court received approval for appropriations from the county, including the carryforward requested from 2023, an available budget of \$5,686,329.17. The total general fund expenses totaled \$5,270,763.89. The court requested that \$92,830.48 be carried over from FY2024 to FY2025. These carryover expenses include youth placement costs, guardianship attorney fees, and software licenses. With the inclusion of the carryover requests, the court returned \$322,734.80 to the county general fund. This return is due primarily to unfilled positions that are held on the general fund and the benefits that are associated with those salary costs.

### ***Outside Funding Sources***

A large portion of funding received from outside sources comes from the Department of Youth Services RECLAIM grant. The award to Delaware County for 2024 was \$625,648.70; this program runs from July 1 to June 30. The amount noted above was for the timeframe of July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024. This was a decrease from the 2023 funding by \$204,785.19, as several short-term funded projects ended in the 2023 project period. The DYS RECLAIM grant funded seven court programs in 2024, including a pro-social program held at Stockhands for Healing, and the Restitution Work Program. This grant supported a portion of twelve positions within the Juvenile Court in 2024. As of the end of calendar year 2024, there were three unfilled positions that are supported on the DYS program.

The other large source of outside funding is received from the Ohio Attorney General's Office – Victims of Crime Division, \$167,300.14. There were two court programs funded by this sponsor, the Victim Services program and the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program. After a change in programming due to Marcy's Law, and the understanding that the Victim Services Program no longer required a full-time position, it was determined that the position would remain unfilled, and the program would be dissolved. The 2025 annual report will reflect this change with only the CASA funding being reported as received from the Ohio Attorney General's Office. The CASA program supports a portion of five full-time employees. The calendar year on this project runs from October 1 to September 30. In-kind support is a requirement of this funding, either by volunteer hours or cash support. For the project year of 2024, the CASA program was required to provide \$27,629.81 in in-kind volunteer hours (1842 hours). During the project period, the 69 volunteers provided 7253.67 hours and travelled 60,376.50 miles, totaling an in-kind match of \$149,257.60, more than 5.4 times of the required amount. Additionally, as the CASA program operates in two counties, Union and Delaware, both counties contribute a cash match to fully fund this award. Union County provided

\$104,486.67 in salary support for the two FTEs serving cases originating from that court. The Delaware County Probate/Juvenile Court's general fund supported the remaining salary and benefits of the other FTEs.

### ***Fees and Fines Collection/Disbursement***

Fees and fines are collected by both Juvenile and Probate Courts. These revenue rates are set by local rules and the Ohio Revised Code. At the ending of each month, these revenues are reallocated as prescribed. Of the \$307,694.74 funds collected in 2024, \$225,987.55 were distributed to the court general funds or related court programs, \$35,484.50 to the State of Ohio Reparations Rotary, \$2,125 to the Indigent Application Fee, and \$15,334 to the Delaware County Domestic Violence fund. The remaining balance was held in deposit on cases until their completion. Refunds are issued to filers upon case closure – probate refunds are limited to balances at or above \$25. Any balance below this threshold is transferred to the Indigent Guardianship Fund held by the Probate Court. In the calendar year of 2024, the Fiscal Department processed 304 refunds totaling \$22,836.22.

## **Expenses**

### ***All Budget Lines***

Across all funding codes, the total expense for 2024 was \$6,328,220.83. This is an increase of 3.2% from 2023 or \$198,089.34. A majority of this increase (\$178,971.18) is related to salary and related benefits. As in previous years, expenses for Delaware County Probate/Juvenile Court are primarily salaries and benefits. The court ended 2024 with 52 full-time and 1 part-time employees on payroll and numerous volunteers. Of the total expense, salary and the associated benefits accounted for 82.3%, or \$5,208,750.36. The remaining expenses were used for supply and service purchases. The greatest non-salary related expense is that for youth placement, totaling \$536,888.01. This cost includes the annual detention cost to the Central Ohio Youth Center, respite services, and contributions to the Family and Child First Council. Other items in the service line are broken down below:

<b>Budget Line</b>	<b>2024 total</b>	<b>Includes</b>
Guardianship Attorney Fees	\$ 153,748.21	Support to Guardianship Service Board/ Attorney Guardians
Software	\$ 135,135.87	Case Management Program/SmartBench/Zoom Licenses
Professional Services	\$ 74,816.22	Client Evaluations, Interpreter Services, Probate Help Desk
Attorney Fees - Other	\$ 58,313.80	Out of County Court Fees/CASA Attorneys
Probation Services	\$ 28,603.95	GPS/Drug Screens/Work Restitution Program
Office Services	\$ 26,195.39	Cell Phones/Copiers/Printing
Training/Membership/Travel	\$ 24,034.54	
Vehicle Expense	\$ 16,092.06	
Restitution	\$ 9,587.50	Pass through account - Paid by youth to victims
Mileage Reimbursement	\$ 7,941.21	In-Town travel - Mediators/School Liaisons/Probate Investigators
HR Services	\$ 2,110.85	Backgrounds Checks/Pre-Employment Drug Screens

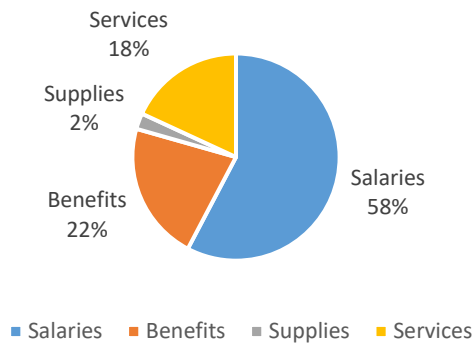
Please note that the services/charges line item does not include any deposit refunds returned to probate cases, monthly state rotary reparations, or month end reconciliation of fees and fines received.

### ***General Fund***

For the calendar year of 2024, the total expenses in the general funds totaled \$5,270,763.86 – this is an increase of \$330,315.49 from 2023 or 6.69%. A majority of this increase is due to the salary adjustments and the associated fringe benefit costs. The annual salary increase for the court averaged at 4.17%; however, with the decrease in funding from the Department of Youth Services and the flat funding for the CASA program, partial appointments had to be made onto the general fund to continue the support of these programs. The decrease in the supplies line is due to the courtroom refresh which occurred in FY2023.

<b>General Fund</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>Change %</b>
Salaries	\$ 2,850,875.08	\$ 3,056,162.10	\$ 205,287.02	7.20%
Benefits	\$ 1,072,081.68	\$ 1,180,736.10	\$ 108,654.42	10.13%
Supplies	\$ 122,650.27	\$ 36,344.70	\$ (86,305.57)	-70.37%
Services	\$ 894,841.37	\$ 997,520.96	\$ 102,679.59	11.47%
Total	\$ 4,940,448.40	\$ 5,270,763.86	\$ 330,315.46	6.69%

2023 Distribution of Expenses - General Fund



2024 Distribution of Expenses - General Fund

