2010 Annual Report

Oakland County

Sixth Judicial Circuit Court
Oakland County Probate Court

Looking Back | Moving Forward . . .

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Acknowledgments

The Circuit Court and Probate Court would like to thank the following persons and organizations for their role in the preparation of this annual report:

Marcia Travis for managing the project, and a special thank you to Karen Koshen for her assistance with design and expertise in editing.

The managers and supervisors of the offices highlighted in this report for their input with regard to office functions and accomplishments.

Mike Zack, Economic Development & Community Affairs; Beth Sayles, Sayles Studio; John Meiu, Detroit Legal News Publishing LLC; and Phill DeBarr, Circuit Court Data Tech Unit; for their pictorial contributions.

The Oakland County Circuit and Probate Courts provide timely and efficient administration of justice in a manner that promotes and sustains the public's confidence in the judicial system.

Message from the Chief Judges

On behalf of our judges and employees, we are pleased to present the 2010 Annual Report of the Circuit and Probate Courts in Oakland County. Courts exist to provide citizens with a forum in which their disputes can be heard and resolved. As members of the judiciary, it is our high calling when resolving disputes to uphold the rule of law and promote the fair and impartial administration of justice.

Nanci J. Grant
Circuit Chief Judge

Judges, by virtue of the functions we perform, are the most visible members of the justice system, but we could not fulfill our duties and responsibilities without the support, dedication, and hard work of our employees. The women and men who serve in our courts help to ensure that all who seek justice have equal access and that their cases are processed efficiently. Working together, our judges and employees continue to further the administration of justice through advancements in docket management practices, partnerships with justice system stakeholders, and innovative technologies.

This Annual Report chronicles the achievements realized by the Circuit and Probate Courts in 2010. As you read these pages, be mindful that the achievements were accomplished in the wake of declining financial resources and a downsizing of staffing levels. It is a testament to the creativity, knowledge, and dedication of our judges and employees that the Courts continue to fulfill their functions with the professionalism and accuracy that our citizens have come to expect. It also speaks volumes about our judges and employees that we are able to be leaders and innovators even in the midst of a challenging economic environment.

Linda S. Hallmark
Chief Probate Judge

2010 was a challenging year for us, but we know that challenges create opportunities and opportunities pave the way for achievement. Our judges and employees have never shied away from challenges and that will be evident as you read this Annual Report. In addition to a description of our accomplishments in 2010, you will also see information about the Courts' divisions and the functions they perform. Information about programs and services offered by the Circuit and Probate Courts is also provided. Lastly, for those who like details, you will find caseload, financial, and other statistical data.

Undoubtedly we will face new challenges in 2011. We may not be able to predict what those challenges will be, but we can say with certainty that our judges and employees will rise to the occasion. No matter the challenges, we will never waver from our commitment to uphold the rule of law and advance the fair and impartial administration of justice. We hope that this Annual Report is informative and helpful; but most importantly, we hope it conveys our commitment to past and continued excellence.

Very truly yours,

Nanci J. Grant
Chief Circuit Judge

Linda S. Hallmark
Chief Probate Judge

Judges of the Circuit Court

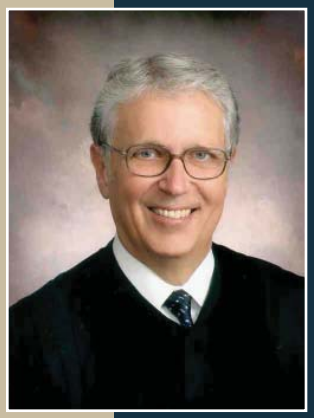
Left to right, front row: Judges Nanci J. Grant, Rudy J. Nichols, Edward Sosnick, Denise Langford Morris, and Joan E. Young. Middle row: Judges Cheryl A. Matthews, Martha D. Anderson, Mark A. Goldsmith, Colleen A. O'Brien, Mary Ellen Brennan, and Michael Warren. Back row: Judges Wendy Potts, Rae Lee Chabot, Shalina D. Kumar, Lisa Gorcyca, Leo Bowman, Daniel Patrick O'Brien, and James M. Alexander. Not pictured, Judge John J. McDonald.

Judges of the Probate Court

Left to right: Judges Elizabeth Pezzetti, Eugene Arthur Moore, Linda S. Hallmark, and Daniel A. O'Brien.

Judicial Retirements

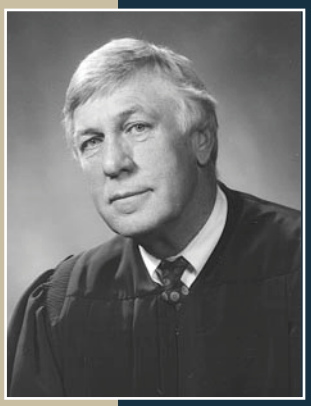
The Honorable Eugene Arthur Moore



After serving on the Probate Court bench since 1966, Judge Eugene Arthur Moore retired in December 2010. He was appoInted Chief Judge from 1989-1992, 2004-2005, and in 2010. As probate judge, he presided over the administration of decedent estates, guardianships, conservatorships, trusts, and mental health hearings. He served on the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the Michigan Probate Judges Association, and the Children's Charter of the Courts of Michigan. Judge Moore was an Adjunct Professor of Law at the Detroit College of Law for over 20 years teaching on Probate Procedure and Juvenile Law. He was a past instructor for the Michigan Judicial Institute and National College for Juvenile Justice. Judge Moore was an elected member of the Judicial Tenure Commission and served for many years on the Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect.

"Judge Moore was a dedicated member of the Oakland County Probate Court bench for 44 years," says Judge Hallmark. "Throughout that time, his commitment to the law and improving the services offered to families and youth were greatly appreciated."

The Honorable John J. McDonald



Governor John Engler appointed Judge McDonald to the Oakland Circuit Court in 1993. Prior to becoming judge, he was a public school teacher in Detroit, an account executive in private industry, an Assistant Prosecutor, an attorney in private practice, and an Oakland County Commissioner. He served as a Circuit Court Family Division judge from 1997 - 2001, at which time he returned to the Civil/Criminal Division (formerly the General Jurisdiction Division). Judge McDonald was a liaison with the Circuit Court's Mediation Selection Committee, a member of the American Judges Association, Michigan Judges Association, Oakland County Bar Association, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and American Judicature Society.

"Judge McDonald was extremely respected by his colleagues, lawyers, and litigants who appeared in his courtroom," commented Circuit Chief Judge Pro Tem Shalina Kumar. "He is a wonderful judge and, more importantly, a wonderful human being. He will be sorely missed."

The Honorable Mark Goldsmith

In July 2010, Judge Mark Goldsmith retired from the Oakland County Circuit Court to fill a federal judgeship in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan.

Judge Goldsmith was appointed to the Circuit Court bench in 2004. He served in the Civil/Criminal Division. Prior to becoming a judge, he partnered at the Detroit-based law firm Honigan Miller Schwartz and Cohn specializing in commercial litigation. He is admitted to practice law in Michigan, Texas, and New York, and also before the U.S. Supreme Court, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, U.S. Court of Military Appeals, U.S. Air Force Court of Military Review, and numerous U.S. District Courts.

Attorney Alan Schwartz commented: "Mark Goldsmith was at all times a person of great character, ability, and respected in every sense from those who had the privilege of knowing him and working with him."

The Circuit and Probate Courts provide greater access to legal information and services that improve court practices, court efficiency, and service to the public.

Letter from the Court Administrators

Kevin M. Oeffner
Circuit Court Administrator

Rebecca A. Schnelz
Probate Court Administrator

Elected Officials and Citizens of Oakland County:

The pages of the Annual Report that follow are designed to provide the public with general information about the courts and their programs, projects, and accomplishments. Also included is statistical information on caseload volume and trends. We welcome your comments and invite you to make suggestions regarding other information you would like to see available here.

The Courts have not remained unaffected by issues in the economy. We are exceptionally proud to have worked with the Judges and employees of the Oakland County Circuit and Probate Courts in facing the challenges that arose during 2010. Without their commitment to the public, as well as their ingenuity and hard work, the programs and accomplishments described in this report would not have been possible. We look forward to meeting 2011 with the same dedication and professionalism.

Very truly yours,

Kevin M. Oeffner
Circuit Court Administrator

Rebecca A. Schnelz
Probate Court Administrator

Family Counselor Supervisor Mary Kaye Neumann (right) organized a change in the SMILE program to allow parents to complete the mandatory program on the same day as the Early Intervention Conference right in the Friend of the Court office. Chief Assistant Friend of the Court - Financials Claudia Martello (left) and Chief Assistant Friend of the Court - Operations Pam Sala (center) have used the newly designed room to facilitate several training sessions for Friend of the Court staff.

FOC RESPONDS TO BUDGET CUTS

The Friend of the Court (FOC) has been required to eliminate several positions during recent years due to declining county revenues that have resulted in budget cuts. The cuts were difficult to make, especially during a time of increasing demand for Friend of the Court services. However, staff members of the FOC stepped up and saw "a glass half full" in the new space that became available in the building.

Two new programs were implemented in 2010 in the "SMILE room" at the FOC, which formerly was used as a referee hearing room. Family Counselor Supervisor Mary Kaye Neumann has been involved in the SMILE program since she came to work at the Friend of the Court. Start Making it Livable for Everyone is an award-winning program that has been assisting Oakland County parents through the difficult process of divorce for over 20 years. In years past, SMILE was scheduled for a few weeks after the Early Intervention Conference at a location outside of the Friend of the Court. Parents had to make a separate trip to attend the mandatory SMILE program, which was held twice per month in a very large group setting. Additionally, volunteers had to be recruited to present at every SMILE session. Mary Kaye proposed moving the program in-house. FOC family counselors now facilitate daily sessions of SMILE in smaller group settings that allow for more questions between the participants and the presenters. Besides the live discussion facilitated by FOC family counselors, parties are welcomed by a recorded video of program founders Circuit Court Judge Edward Sosnick and family law attorney Richard Victor. The change has been well received among participants.

In addition, the Friend of the Court has been able to implement a robust staff training program using the SMILE room facilities. The Friend of the Court works closely with state and federal child support officials. Through the use of technology, staff has been able to participate in group training sessions that are offered at the state and federal level with local leadership providing insight into the special requirements for our Oakland County caseload. Trainings that have been offered include Compassion Fatigue: the cost of caring, Myers Briggs fundamentals, financials for non-financial workers, and new alert functionality in the MiCSES program. The FOC staff was able to participate in a training regarding fatherhood initiatives that was offered via the internet through the National Child Support Enforcement Association.

Additionally, the interstate child support department participated in a "webinar" offered through the federal Department of Health and Human Services. High expectations continue for next year. A class that will provide instruction on the use of CPR and the automatic defibrillator is scheduled for February 2011.

OakEDMS: A PAPERLESS TRAIL

While many courts have embraced selective components of electronic technology to achieve efficiencies, the Sixth Circuit Court in Oakland County, Michigan, has developed a comprehensive Electronic Document Management System (*OakEDMS*) that has made paper documents and paper processing obsolete. This fully digital document system has increased efficiencies, reduced costs, and facilitated a truly paperless courtroom. This paperless process started as an idea over 15 years ago, and today the County has paperless court proceedings in most of its 24 circuit courtrooms.

The journey began in 1993 with the introduction of scanning documents filed with the Clerk. As the volume of documents and users increased, additional functionality was added. Under the guidance of Oakland County's EDMS Advisory Team, *OakEDMS* carefully matured into a combination of custom applications and packaged software.

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OakEDMS, now in its third generation, includes a custom designed Workflow system. The Workflow application allows documents to be routed based upon rules to relevant personnel and agencies. The application not only allows clerks to index, process, and forward documents, it allows members of the Bench to create electronic orders, including Judgments of Sentence. These documents are delivered instantly to multiple locations across the network. Real-time orders have provided further efficiencies that have contributed to cost savings and streamlined processes. Having developed a robust document repository for use by court personnel, the Advisory Team determined that outside users could also benefit, which gave rise to *Court Explorer* – a custom web-based application that allows anyone to view the Register of Actions and purchase copies of public documents.

In 2006, together with the OakEDMS and Court Explorer products, the Court piloted an electronic filing project. Today all of the Civil Judges in the Sixth Circuit Court mandate eFiling in their assigned cases. Paper is not accepted, printed or stored in these cases – the electronic record is the official court record. Any interested party, including the public, can review all case files in their electronic form utilizing the County Clerk's Office public terminals. To date, Oakland County has in excess of 18,000 eFile cases, 11,000 users, and has processed more than 700,000 documents. The electronic service of documents within the eFiling program has also even beneficial for Court and Bar alike.

BUSINESS PROCEDURE REDESIGN

The Probate Court is constantly evaluating its business procedures and processing methods to look for areas of improvement. New technology or changes to statutory and court rule requirements can necessitate major revisions to procedures and priorities. The current focus of much of the evaluation, however, lies in continued streamlining and finding new efficiencies in light of staff reductions and fewer resources.

During 2010, staff members from the Probate Court's Guardianship and Conservatorship Unit worked with supervisors to completely review and redesign the procedures the court uses for processing petitions for the appointment of a guardian of a developmentally disabled individual. To accomplish this task, the work group reviewed every aspect of the process and worked in teams to problem solve and look for new and better ways to accomplish every step. The teams worked together to revise each process and created new written procedures for the staff and information sheets for the public.

The efforts of the group resulted in a new scheduling system for hearings on developmentally disabled guardianships. The new method improves the Court's ability to serve the public by increasing the speed with which hearing dates are set for new petitions. In addition, efficiencies were developed in the defense attorney appointment system for the DDP petitions that allow attorneys earlier notice of hearing dates and increased preparation time.

Efforts of work groups such as these are invaluable to the court's focus on improving service to people that access the courts. Consistency, timeliness, and accuracy are all improved by utilizing the combined knowledge and experience of staff members to create better business procedures.

ADOPTION PERMANENCY STUDY

In early 2008, the Court was challenged to determine a solution for the large number of children whose parents' parental rights had been terminated and who had been committed to the state but who had not found a permanent home.

Rather than create a special docket for the children who had been in the child welfare system the longest, the Court realized that to achieve permanency for all of the children who became Michigan Children's Institute (MCI) wards in Oakland County, it would have to change the system in which the children found themselves.

The plan was to design a two-year pilot program with specific features that would allow the court at the conclusion to evaluate whether the program itself or parts of it should be implemented by the entire Family Division.

At the June 2008 Family Division Judges meeting, the judges reviewed the Permanency Docket proposal and approved the following approach:

- Judge Martha Anderson would hear a specialized "Permanency Docket" for children committed to MCI after April 1, 2008, with adoption as their permanency goal. In addition to the cases where she had terminated parental rights (TPR) and committed the child, she would hear the cases where a referee had recommended the TPR order. (The 'pilot group'.)

CHILDREN BY AGE AT TPR	
AGE AT TPR	TOTAL CHILDREN
AGES 0 – 3	154 (44%)
AGES 4 – 8	95 (27%)
AGES 9 – 17	100 (29%)
AGES 0 – 17	349 (100%)

- Judges Alexander, Bowman, Hallmark, Matthews, Moore, Pezzetti, and Young would hear the cases where they personally heard the TPR petition. (The 'control group'.)

- At the conclusion of the two-year period, the pilot group and the control group children's cases would be compared and contrasted to see how the permanency docket cases fared.

The Pilot group had five basic components:

Expedited Post-Termination Review – Although the court rules provide for post-termination review hearings every 91 days, the cases on the permanency docket have their first post-termination review hearing 30 days after the termination of parental rights. The goal at the 30-day hearing is to have an adoption worker assigned and present at this hearing.

Scheduling Order and Standardized Court Report – Two scheduling orders have been created, one for children whose home for adoption has been identified (FID) and another for children who are not in an identified home (NFI). The scheduling order was developed using DHS policy and with the cooperation of the adoption forum group.

The standardized court report, for use with the foster care report, assures that the court can review the information easily since the information is in the same location each time. Since the report includes the dates for the completion of the reasonable efforts toward adoption, including the family adoption assessment, the child assessment, the subsidy request, and the request for consent from MCI, the report functions as a checklist for the court to easily see what has and has not been completed.

Court Adoptions Caseworker Involvement – The barrier to permanency addressed by this component is the communication disconnect between the court and the agency, with essential tasks undone until they re-emerge at the court hearing. Two adoption caseworkers, Julie Berz and Gabriele Osooli, and their supervisor, Palmer Sesti, assumed the responsibility of managing the special docket, in addition to their other duties. They communicated with the agency workers and independently followed case progress of the case. A monthly calendar was prepared to show all of the hearing dates available and cases assigned to them for weekly electronic distribution to the referee or judge and

chambers, the adoption staff, the court reporter, as well as the DHS liaison and the deputy registers.

Casework Staffing – Caseworkers discussed the cases in advance of the hearings each week. As a part of this process, a draft order is prepared for the judge or referee which has suggested findings (reasonable efforts) and orders.

Specialized Database – The data has been entered into an Access database that includes a switchboard component so that information may be added, edited, and reports run regarding specific queries.

Highlighted Findings:

- The 349 children in the pilot and control groups are very similar in their age, in their placement at time of termination of parental rights, in their relationship to the person adopting them, and in the agencies facilitating their adoption, but the pilot group finalized adoptions at 150% the rate of the control group..

- The Court's ability to measure actual progress toward any child's adoption is directly related to the quality of the reports received from the agency.

- The case oversight techniques used in the Permanency Docket's pilot group effectively manage the docket.

ASSIGNED BUDGETS TASKS

For the past few years and into the foreseeable future, both the Circuit Court and Probate Court have been asked to make budget cuts to help Oakland County meet its budget shortfalls due to the poor economic climate and the further deterioration of its revenue base.

For your information and edification, provided is a summary of our assigned budget tasks since 2008. The reduction measures used by both the Probate Court and Circuit Court to meet these tasks were approved by the respective benches and adopted by the County Executive and the Board of Commissioners for FY2009, FY2010, and FY 2011.

As you can imagine, this was not an easy task for anyone. However, it was an important and necessary step for the courts to do their part in meeting the difficult financial situation

BUDGET TASK SUMMARY	Probate	Circuit
Assigned in 2008 for 2008 – 2010	$ 372,388	$ 2,661,981
Assigned in 2009 for 2010 – 2012	$ 417,131	$ 4,148,153
Assigned in 2010 for 2011 – 2013	$ 148,776	$ 1,271,618
Assigned in 2011 for 2011 – 2014	$ 59,589	$ 507,877
Total Tasks	$ 997,834	$ 8,589,629

the county is facing over the next several years. Unfortunately, it appears we have not seen the end of these necessary cost-saving measures. Under the current poor economic picture, driven in large part by job losses and the negative trend in the real estate market, a trend of declining property values will continue to have a severe negative impact on Oakland County's tax base into the foreseeable future. Consequently, the Probate and Circuit Courts, along with all other county departments, have already identified additional budget reduction measures into 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014. It is important to memorialize these reductions in budget allocations and resources for our readers.

The Circuit Court cost-saving measures included: video equipping courtrooms, downsizing the Business Division, downsizing the Psychological Clinic, downsizing the Civil/ Criminal Division, downsizing Youth Assistance, generating additional revenue by establishing new fees, as well as including reimbursement of Family Counselors' personnel costs in the Friend of the Court Cooperative Reimbursement Program (CRP).

The Probate Court cost-saving measures included: implementing a new defense attorney appointment system for mental health matters, utilizing a larger number of volunteers to perform required guardianship reviews, video equipping two courtrooms, and eliminating student positions, court reporter positions, and clerical positions.

Budget tasks were determined based upon individual court's general fund budget as a percentage of the overall county general fund budget. For Circuit Court, the percentage was 13.95%, and for Probate Court, the percentage was 1.71%.

Circuit Court - Civil/Criminal Division

The Civil/Criminal Division of the Circuit Court is composed of fourteen judges who are elected for a six-year term in nonpartisan elections. The judges hear civil cases with damages in excess of $25,000 and criminal cases involving felony and high misdemeanor charges. Civil/Criminal Division judges also preside over appeals from the district courts and administrative agencies as well as some appeals from Probate Court. Assisting the judges within the division are judicial staff attorneys, judicial secretaries, court clerks, and court reporters. Support is also provided by the following departments:

"The Civil/Criminal Division is striving to improve the administration of justice by building on our success of judicial excellence, innovation, and customer service. To save taxpayers money, we are voluntarily not filling a vacant judicial seat. Despite dwindling budgets, we work hard to improve our service to the public through eFiling, the paperless courtroom, alternative dispute resolution programs, the drug court, and similar innovative initiatives."

The Honorable Michael Warren
Presiding Judge of the Civil/Criminal Division

Administrative Support Staff – Richard Lynch, Manager Civil/Criminal Division, supervises the division's legal and administrative support staff. Handling a variety of legal matters, research attorneys prepare proposed opinions for judges and research issues that provide the basis for procedure and policy. The administrative section works with judicial staff to ensure the effective and timely resolution of cases.

Case Management Office – This office is primarily responsible for coordinating alternative dispute resolution (ADR) programs for the Circuit and Probate Courts. The office works closely with the State Court Administrative Office, Oakland County Bar Association, and Oakland Mediation Center on program development and implementation. Case evaluation and mediation are two processes the Court uses to settle cases prior to trial. The CMO provides support by scheduling cases and evaluators at the appropriate time in the life of the case. They support the Civil Early Intervention Conference and Discovery Master programs designed to enhance the effectiveness of ADR programs by identifying issues early in the case and resolving discovery matters. Case Management personnel perform a number of administrative duties to ensure the efficient processing of cases which include reassignment of cases, receipt and processing of praecipes for the weekly motion call, and requests for the Judge-On-Line program.

Clerk Support – This unit is responsible for training and development of the judicial and floating clerks. Brenda Beiter is the Court Clerk Supervisor and she is assisted by Katherine Siebenaler. In addition to assisting court staff, they work closely with area law schools and paralegal programs on internship programs that provide valuable service to the Court and experience to students in the community. The unit also supports the visiting judge program by scheduling judges and tracking cases assigned to both the civil and family division visiting judges.

Criminal Case Support – This unit handles the assignment of judges on all felony criminal cases. They are responsible for the appointment of counsel for indigent defendants at case initiation as well as for post-conviction matters on appeal. They also work with the Oakland County Sheriff's Office and other county and state agencies on effective management of the jail's inmate population.

Jury Office – The Jury Office coordinates jury operations and obtains jurors for the Circuit and Probate Courts. Rebecca Young serves as the Supervisor and is assisted by Deborah Fahr. The unit tracks juror utilization rates to ensure a sufficient number of jurors are available for trials while imposing the least hardship on those summoned for jury duty. Orientations are conducted in the morning for new jurors outlining what can be expected during the course of their stay. Several of the judges participate in this orientation to welcome the jurors and explain courtroom procedures.

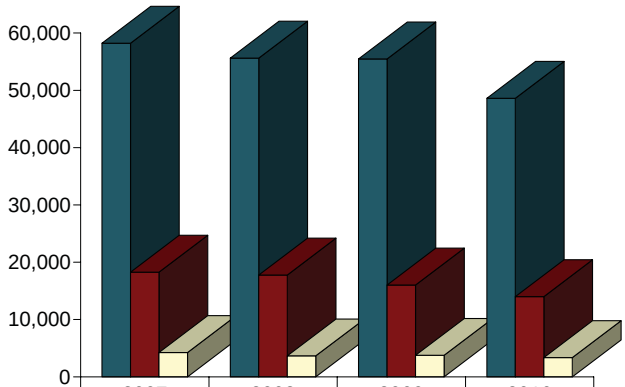
Circuit Court - Civil/Criminal Division

Accomplishments

Jury Office

- Processed jury functions and provided jurors to courts for 104 civil trials, with an average trial duration of 3.15 days as well as 205 criminal trials, with an average trial duration of 2.49 days. Of the criminal trials, 79 were capital offenses.
- Summoned 48,612 citizens for jury duty. That number was reduced after excusals for legal exemptions. After determining the number needed to accommodate the daily requirements of the courts, 13,998 jurors were required to report for jury service. Of that number, 3,359 were selected to sit as jurors.
- Total juror fees and mileage paid: $600,749
- Average cost per jury: $1,944

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT FOR JURY TRIALS



	2007	2008	2009	2010
Summoned	58,226	55,614	55,488	48,612
Reported	18,272	17,761	16,013	13,998
Impanelled	4,233	3,651	3,748	3,359

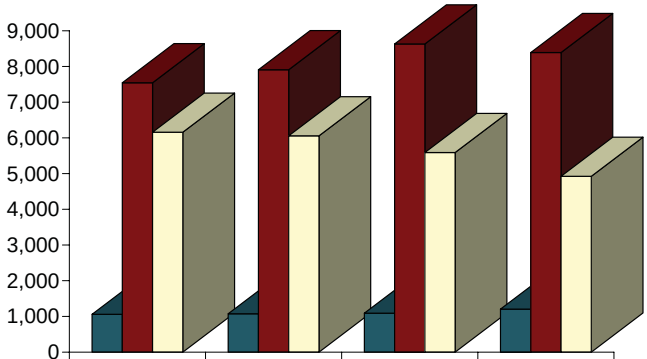
Criminal Case Support

- Processed 4,350 requests from defendants for court appointed attorneys at the trial level.
- Processed 5,200 record checks on offenders prior to sentencing.

Visiting Judge Programs

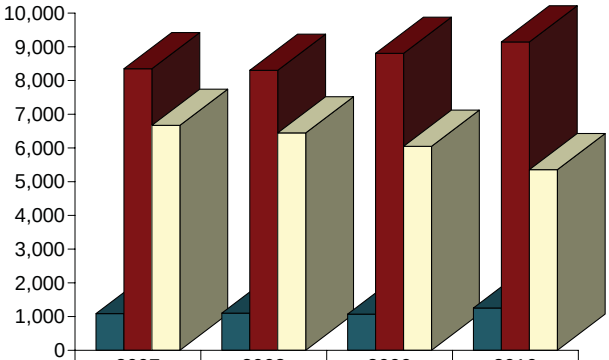
- Heard 18 jury trials and 4 bench trials over the course of 107 trial days.
- Reviewed 1,440 petitions for Personal Protection Orders and held 781 hearings.

NEW CASE FILINGS



	2007	2008	2009	2010
Appeals	1,059	1,073	1,090	1,204
Civil	7,544	7,909	8,631	8,391
Criminal	6,159	6,057	5,590	4,924

DISPOSITIONS



	2007	2008	2009	2010
Appeals	1,088	1,101	1,072	1,255
Civil	8,350	8,302	8,805	9,144
Criminal	6,670	6,446	6,049	5,356

Circuit Court - Family Division

The Circuit Court Family Division, overseen by Lisa Langton, Deputy Court Administrator, includes the Friend of the Court operations, the Judicial Support unit, and the Court Services unit.

Friend of the Court – Administered by Friend of the Court Suzanne Hollyer, this operation provides case management and enforcement services on domestic relations matters. Referees, family counselors, and investigators work in teams to assist the litigants in the management and enforcement of complex family law matters.

"Since the implementation of the Family Division of the Oakland County Circuit Court on January 1,1998, our judges have provided fair, accessible, and expeditious services to families. Our aim is to further increase the efficiency and accessibility of our services by utilizing technology such as Judge-On-Line and eFiling. Further, our judges meet regularly throughout each year to discuss policies and to educate ourselves on emerging issues of law to better serve those who use the court."

The Honorable Elizabeth Pezzetti
Presiding Judge of the Family Division

Judicial Support – This unit is headed by William Bartlam, Manager of Judicial Support/Judicial Assistant, and consists of the Juvenile Referees, Juvenile Intake, and Juvenile Adoption areas. In Mr. Bartlam's role as Judicial Assistant, he is also the lead legal advisor for the Probate and Family Division areas.

Court Services – Led by Pamela Davis, Manager of Court Services, this unit provides juvenile and intensive probation casework services, clinical services through the Court Psychological Clinic, community diversion efforts through the Youth Assistance program, and also includes both the Juvenile and Adult Drug Treatment Court programs.

Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court – Also known as OPTIONS (Owning the Problem - Trusting In Our New Skills), this court integrates drug treatment services with juvenile justice system case processing by including therapeutic intervention to subtance-using youth and their families. The team, comprised of Presiding Judge Mary Ellen Brennan, court staff, defense counsel, substance abuse, and mental health professionals, works together using a non-adversarial approach. As of December 2010, 101 youth had graduated from the program and 592 youth and family members had been served.

Adult Treatment Court – This court offers alternative sentencing for non-violent adult felony offenders who have a history of drug and/or alcohol dependence. Judge Joan Young presides over the male participants in the program and Judge Colleen O'Brien presides over the female participants. As of December 2010, 91 participants had graduated from the Adult Treatment Court. Jacqueline Howes-Evanson serves as the supervisor for both the Adult and Juvenile Drug Treatment Court programs. Created in 2008, the RESTORE Foundation was established to financially support the Oakland County Circuit Court Drug Court programs.

Circuit Court - Family Division

Friend of the Court

The Friend of the Court (FOC) is responsible for assisting in domestic relations cases by investigating and enforcing issues involving custody, support, and parenting time. Forms to assist parties in making requests of the Friend of the Court are available on the website at www.oakgov.com/foc.

Friend of the Court referees hold hearings to enforce and modify Family Division orders regarding child support, custody, and parenting time. Early Intervention Conferences conducted by FOC referees offer divorcing clients an opportunity to meet with the referee assigned to their case early in the divorce process. This service is unique to Oakland County.

Accomplishments

- Implemented a communication strategy with the help of IT that encouraged the use of the website and other self-help tools by litigants. The result was over 6,000 fewer visits to the building by members of the public and a decrease in returned mail (returned due to an invalid address) of over 11,000 pieces.
- Held 2,980 Early Intervention Conferences (EIC) with parties going through the divorce process. These conferences allow parties in divorce proceedings access to the FOC referee early in the divorce process. The referee uses the EIC to assist in the settlement process and provide information about services available at the Friend of the Court.
- Answered 73,144 calls by the FOC switchboard, provided case-specific information at the front desk to 38,495 clients, and met with 135,387 clients in person. Interviewed 1,490 non-custodial parents for Job Placement/Work First referrals. Job placement services are available to all non-custodial parents who are ordered to pay support and who are unemployed or underemployed.
- Held 21,504 hearings by FOC referees to enforce custody, parenting time, and support.
- Started providing the award-winning SMILE program on site immediately after the EIC. The SMILE program assists parents in going through the divorce program by encouraging better communication and reduced conflict.
- Initiated a new program to contact parties by mail who have a new case but who were never married. The program is to provide general information about effective management of their FOC case.

Judicial Support Services

The Judicial Support staff assists the judges of the Family Division in the following areas:

- Adoptions and confidential intermediary services
- Child abuse and neglect cases
- Juvenile delinquency and juvenile traffic cases
- Juvenile Court intake
- Personal Protection Orders
- Safe delivery of newborns
- Waiver of parental consent to abortion

In these areas, support staff schedule cases, prepare files, create documents, maintain both public and confidential records, serve summons and other process, and distribute court orders and other materials.

Juvenile referees assist judges by conducting hearings and recommending decisions in these actions. Juvenile referees represent the Court 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. They authorize the detention of juveniles and removal of children due to risk of harm. Referees review all complaints and petitions referred to the Court. They evaluate each matter and make decisions involving diversions or authorizations of petitions. Referees act as the trier of fact in cases involving delinquency and involving abuse and neglect of children. They recommend treatment plans for children and parents and monitor delinquents and children in foster care, which may include recommendations for the termination of parental rights.

The attorney appointment specialist maintains a database of attorneys qualified by education and experience for representing indigent parties. The specialist matches eligible attorneys to requests made for appointed counsel in Family Division and probate cases and then processes all pertinent documents relating to the appointment.

In 2010, 2,729 attorney contacts were made resulting in 2,454 appointments. The decrease in numbers is due to a change in the way appointments were made.

SUMMARY OF FAMILY DIVISION ACTIVITY

NEW FILING ACTIVITY

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Juvenile/Adoptions				
Delinquency	3,636	3,574	3,179	2,714
Child Protective Proceedings	490	483	299	325
Juvenile Traffic Tickets	348	268	213	112
Adoption Petitions	444	435	428	419
Subtotal	**4,918**	**4,760**	**4,119**	**3,570**
Domestic Relations				
Without Children	2,515	2,357	2,520	2,544
With Children	2,371	2,268	2,428	2,495
Paternity	1,007	1,019	978	1,058
URESA	284	353	74	77
Support	1,583	1,554	1,415	1,387
Other	269	189	252	255
Subtotal	**8,029**	**7,740**	**7,667**	**7,816**
Personal Protection Orders				
Domestic	1,875	1,853	1,886	1,892
Non-Domestic	896	841	791	830
Juvenile	57	56	57	35
Subtotal	**2,828**	**2,750**	**2,734**	**2,757**
Miscellaneous Family				
Name Change	437	444	486	478
Other	47	47	47	31
Subtotal	**484**	**491**	**533**	**509**
Total New Filings	**16,259**	**15,741**	**15,053**	**14,652**

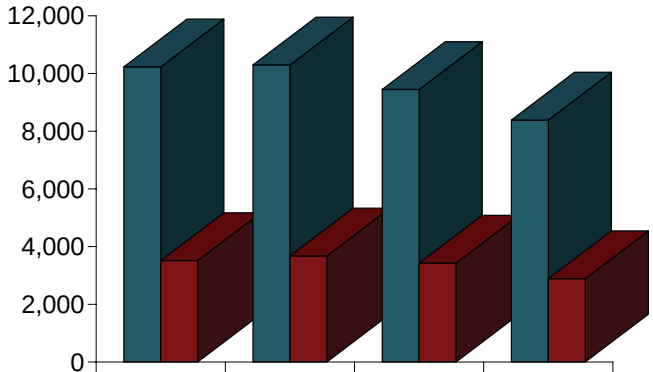
Accomplishments

- On July 12 the juvenile intake staff added new responsibilities to their regular duties. HAVEN is no longer distributing the Personal Protection Order (PPO) information to all petitioners. Since July, the intake staff has served 1,418 petitioners.

  To prepare for "opening day," the staff in intake, deputy registers, adoption staff, and caseworkers practiced being PPO petitioners, so that instructions could be created and easily used by the public with "some assistance" from the intake staff. With staff input, the instructions were drafted and redrafted to work well.

  HAVEN remains a presence in the courthouse to assist victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

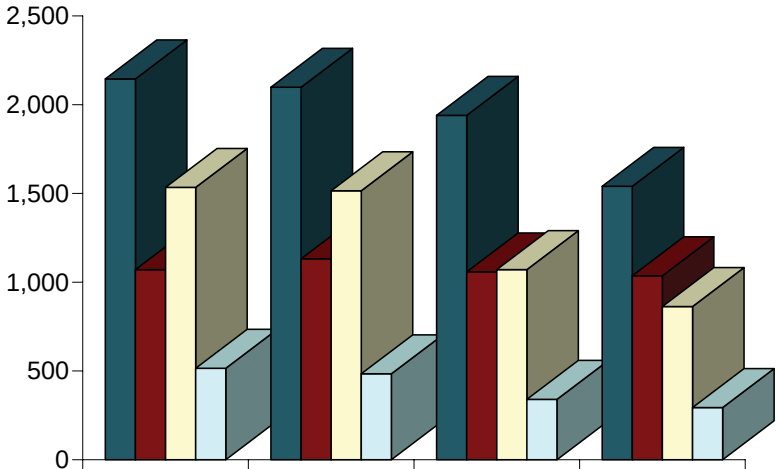
JUVENILE HEARINGS vs PRELIMINARY INQUIRIES HELD



	2007	2008	2009	2010
Juvenile Hearings	10,231	10,296	9,448	8,387
Preliminary Inquiries	3,516	3,675	3,428	2,888

- Since 2005 the Adoption Department has completed transferring information on old adoption cases from 18,000 index cards to the computer system. This was a huge job that was done when all of the other work was caught up. The staff challenged themselves to complete this task before the retirement of their supervisor who is leaving adoptions after 36 years with the county.

CHILDREN IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM



	2007	2008	2009	2010
Informally Resolved Cases	2,145	2,098	1,940	1,540
Delinquents (Court/DHS)	1,071	1,132	1,058	1,036
Child Protective Proceedings	1,534	1,515	1,071	863
Cases in Progress	515	484	340	294

Court Services

The Court Services operation is comprised of the Casework Services unit (Juvenile Probation), Psychological Clinic, Youth Assistance, the Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court Program, and the Adult Treatment Court. Over 90 employees are responsible for providing direct services to clients, performing case management, conducting research and program development, providing education, developing community resources through volunteer coordination, and promoting public awareness.

Casework Services – The Casework Services Juvenile Probation unit is responsible for all delinquency cases authorized for the Court by the Intake Department and assists cases through the adjudication process when necessary. Upon adjudication, the Casework unit is responsible for making recommendations regarding disposition. During post-disposition, it assists in implementing court orders, including the monitoring of probation, restitution, community service, restorative justice, parent education, and counseling.

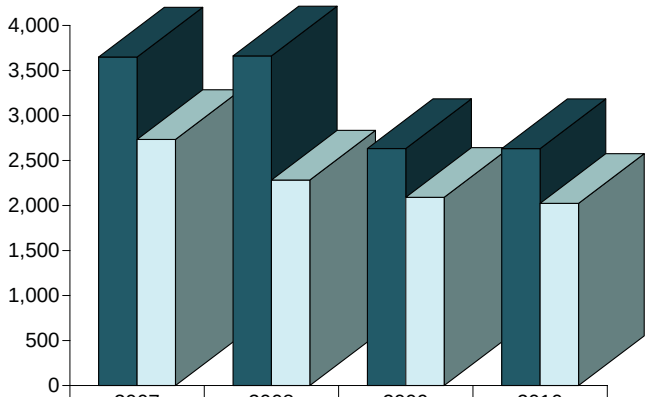
Youth Assistance – As the prevention arm of the Court's continuum of services, Youth Assistance uses a two-pronged approach to strengthen youth and families. Professional staff placed in 26 field offices throughout the county provide family-focused casework to at-risk youth referred by the police, schools, and the intake unit of the Court. Staff work with a volunteer board of directors in each community that identifies needs, plans, and implements primary prevention programs. Youth Assistance has a unique tri-sponsorship structure where staff is hired by the court, but each local program is also sponsored by the school district and municipalities.

Psychological Clinic – The Clinical Services unit, also known as the Psychological Clinic, is responsible for aiding jurists in making informed decisions by providing forensic evaluations of children and families who are involved with the Court. The clinic offers specialized treatment services to clients, and clinicians are available for case consultation with Court staff and others. It also conducts and coordinates training and research, including program evaluations and staff development. In 2010, the Psychological Clinic received over 800 referrals.

Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court Program – The Juvenile Drug Court program is also known as OPTIONS, an acronym for Owning the Problem, Trusting In Our New Skills. The program's mission is to "promote public safety and reduce juvenile drug crime rates by helping substance abusing juvenile offenders and their families achieve drug-free lifestyles and healthy family relationships." The OPTIONS program is a joint effort between the justice and public health treatment systems. Various incentives and sanctions (penalties) and frequent random drug screening are utilized to ensure compliance with program guidelines.

Adult Treatment Court – Like the Juvenile Drug Court program, the Adult Treatment Court (ATC) is a positive alternative of intensive probation and substance abuse treatment instead of long terms of incarceration for non-violent, felony offenders whose substance abuse leads them to commit crimes. The ATC seeks to break the cycle of recidivism and enhance public safety and the lives of its participants.

YOUTH ASSISTANCE



	2007	2008	2009	2010
New Referrals	3,650	3,662	2,633	2,632
Consultations	2,734	2,283	2,091	2,024

Accomplishments

- The Intensive Casework Unit achieved a 94% success rate with youth placed on Intensive Probation Orders or Intensive Aftercare Orders during this year. That equates to a recidivism rate of only 6% for the year. To recidivate, a youth would return to Court on a subsequent criminal charge during the year. Of the 126 cases referred, only 8 youth returned to Court on new criminal violations, thanks to this unit's efforts.

- The Casework Unit also collaborated with the Oakland County Children's Village, Crossroads for Youth, and Oakland County Youth Assistance in developing a new and comprehensive Aftercare Program for youth returning home from placement.

- The Psychological Clinic's former long-term employee and contracted co-facilitator of the Clinic-sponsored ADEPT group (After Divorce: Effective Parenting Techniques), Jim Windell, published his 14th book titled "Take Control of Your Divorce: Strategies to Stop Fighting and Start Co-Parenting." This new book will be used with participants in the ADEPT group, which is designed for couples involved in high-conflict divorces.

- Youth Assistance (YA) staff has always served status offenders, but in the past year its role has become more integral to the Court Intake process. In keeping with the philosophy of using the least restrictive services when families request that the court accept an incorrigibility complaint, they are being directed to explore the appropriateness of YA services prior to the complaint being accepted.

- The Youth Assistance Coordinating Council was awarded a Brooksie Way mini-grant in order to provide health and fitness activities for the Mentors Plus Program. Community partners, MSU Extension, Oakland County Parks and Recreation, and Houston Fitness helped to create a summer worth of well-rounded activities for the mentors and mentees to enjoy together.

- The Juvenile Drug Court (JDC) celebrated its 100th graduate on November 30. To date, the program has completed 101 participants. After nine years of faithful service to the JDC program, Judge Edward Sosnick, founding Jurist of the JDC, successfully mentored and handed the reigns to Judge Mary Ellen Brennan as of September 1.

- The JDC successfully acquired procured grant funding through the State Court Administrative Office to service youth with mental health issues who are not eligible for services under Community Mental Health criteria. If not for these funds, these youth might not otherwise receive much needed services.

CASEWORK UNIT ACTIVITY

	Beginning Cases	New Cases	Closed/ Dismissed	Ending Cases	Total Served
Standard Probation	571	462	413	620	1,033
Consent Calendar	284	468	472	280	752
Intensive Probation	73	140	123	90	213
Early Offender Program	6	13	9	10	19
Status Offender Program	21	3	24	0	24
Others *		404	166	238	404
Totals	955	1,490	1,207	1,238	2,445

**Others include: No Shows, Courtesy Supervision, Pending Adjudications, Under Advisement, and cases where No Disposition (or Adjudication) had been entered.*

Probate Court Estates and Mental Health

The Oakland County Probate Court maintains jurisdiction over estates, which includes the probating of wills and the administration of testate estates (with a will) and intestate estates (without a will) by personal representatives The Court interprets wills and trusts in the event of uncertainty or conflict and determines the heirs in intestate estates. The Court also handles trusts, guardianships, conservatorships, mental health proceedings, and civil matters related to estates. The Oakland County Probate Court is the second largest Probate Court in Michigan, staffed by Probate Court Administrator Rebecca A. Schnelz, Probate Register Jill Koney Daly, and fifty employees.

"In 2010, my first year as Presiding Judge of the Estates Division of the Probate Court, I was fortunate to have the support of many experienced mentors, including retired Chief Judge Eugene Arthur Moore, current Chief Judge Linda Hallmark, and Judge Elizabeth Pezzetti. Many of the same challenges that faced us in 2010 will continue in 2011, with budget control issues again dominating court administration concerns. We welcome Judge Kathleen Ryan to the Estates Division, and look forward to her input as we confront these challenges."

The Honorable Daniel A. O'Brien
Presiding Judge of Probate Estates

Within the Probate Court, much of the activity takes place in the clerk's office as staff processes paperwork, sets court hearings, and directs files into court for hearings. Aside from decedent estate and trust matters, it also handles the paperwork and oversight of guardianships and conservatorship of adults and minors, manages the guardianship review process, and files wills for safekeeping. All legal records of the Probate Court are a matter of public record and are available for review by the general public.

Another important function performed by the Probate Court is the handling of proceedings under the Mental Health Code, including involuntary hospitalization of mentally ill persons and petitions for assisted outpatient treatment (also known as "Kevin's Law"). The Mental Health unit also handles cases involving minors in need of substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation services. Staff is frequently called upon to assist petitioners requesting emergency court orders for immediate transport of an individual to a preadmission screening unit for examination and possible hospitalization for mental health treatment.

The Court also provides informational brochures that explain basic information regarding guardianships, conservatorships, decedent estates, and mental health petitions, as well as information on some of the required duties for fiduciaries. Information and forms are available at www.oakgov.com/probate.

Accomplishments

- Continued presenting "Removing the Mysteries of Probate Court." This free informational series, presented by the Citizens Alliance for the Oakland County Probate and Circuit Courts, is held throughout the year at various locations within Oakland County. The Probate Register joins with a local attorney and trust officer to educate attendees on various probate proceedings.

- Completed training for new Children's Advocates volunteers who will be assisting the Probate Court with minor guardianships. The Children's Advocates aid the court by performing many of the mandatory annual reviews for children in guardianships for free.

- Updated and continued to present free monthly Basic Training classes for guardians and conservators, with the support of the Citizens Alliance for the Oakland County Probate and Circuit Courts. The classes focus on teaching basic statutory responsibilities and allow appointees the opportunity to ask questions about issues they will face. Classes are taught by volunteer attorneys and public administrators.

Probate Court Estates and Mental Health

Several employees in Probate Court Estates and Mental Health were recognized as one of the Most Valuable Persons in the Court because of their work in guardianship and conservatorship matters. Those employees are (front row, left to right): Cass Morgan, Stacey Tuttle, Barbara Henderson, Brenda Gagnon, Carol Esher; (back row, left to right) Gina Hunt, Carol Gray, Charlene Woods, James Hill, Colleen Bagazinski, Heidi Pawley, Paula McDonald, and Maura Hodits.

SUMMARY OF PROBATE COURT ACTIVITY

NEW FILES OPENED	2007	2008	2009	2010
Small Estates	660	675	611	638
Supervised Estates	33	14	21	17
Unsupervised Estates	1,766	1,738	1,713	1,762
Trust-Intervivos	200	225	270	206
Adult Guardianships	830	884	873	939
Minor Guardianships	687	732	607	671
Adult Conservatorships	387	350	351	392
Minor Conservatorships	155	153	134	127
Mentally Ill	2,569	2,507	2,733	2,082
Guardianships (Developmentally Disabled)	213	360	329	353
Reopened Estates and Trusts	211	238	217	217
Protective Orders	46	42	39	39
Civil and Other Matters	88	95	94	86
Total	**7,845**	**7,973**	**7,992**	**8,249**

ACTIVE CASES as of December 31	2007	2008	2009	2010
Estate and Trust Cases	3,959	3,908	4,063	4,124
Adult Guardianships	3,350	3,400	3,497	3,666
Adult Conservatorships	1,641	1,643	1,620	1,669
Minor Guardianships	2,923	2,765	2,571	2,521
Minor Conservatorships	1,538	1,509	1,436	1,266
Guardianships (Developmentally Disabled)	1,673	1,694	1,682	1,728
Civil and Other Matters*	68	65	57	61
Total	**15,152**	**14,984**	**14,926**	**15,035**

* 2008, 2009, and 2010 include Protective Orders.

Business Division of the Courts

The Business Division, managed by John Cooperrider, is responsible for the development and delivery of business and administrative support services for the Circuit and Probate Courts. This division is divided into two primary units of operation in order to effectively manage its diverse and complex responsibilities.

Administrative/Financial Unit – Under the supervision of Tina Sobocinski, this unit is responsible for developing and monitoring the Courts' $60 million budget, processing payments for services (such as court appointed attorney payments), processing personnel transactions, recording attendance and mileage, managing courthouse and satellite office facilities, handling capital improvements, special project requests, and equipment needs of the courts.

In her responsibilities as Presiding Judge of the Business Division/Budget, Judge Rae Lee Chabot assists in identifying assigned budget tasks for the Circuit Court and assists in presenting options for the bench to approve.

The Honorable Rae Lee Chabot
Presiding Judge of Business Division/Budget

Data/Technology Unit – Chris Bujak oversees the responsibilities of this unit, which include the advancement of court automation, handling day-to-day computer and network issues, managing each of the 23 video courtrooms and 8 video referee hearing rooms, and implementing new court technology initiatives. This unit also provides word processing support, including the typing of court documents necessary for the functioning of the court (i.e., court, psychological, and referee reports). In addition, it provides court reporter services for the Court's juvenile referees, creating records of courtroom proceedings, and producing transcripts.

The last area of general responsibility in this division is that of the Court Resource and Program Specialist. Marcia Travis directs the Circuit and Probate Courts' efforts in this regard. Her responsibilities are coordinating special projects and events, public information management, grant writing, and improvement studies on all aspects of court operations to find alternative ways to perform court functions more efficiently and effectively.

After 10 years with the Court Administration Office, Barbara Felder transferred to the position of Judicial Secretary to the Honorable Phyllis McMillen. CIrcuit Court Administrator, Kevin Oeffner, and Business Division Manager, John Cooperrider, wish her well at her farewell luncheon.

Business Division of the Courts

Accomplishments

- Expanded eFiling pilot program by eight civil judges so that now all thirteen Civil/Criminal Division judges have civil eFiling dockets. Also expanded the program to include Family Division DO case types (divorce without children) for three Family Division judges.

- Secured and installed replacement systems for five video courtrooms, including complete replacement systems, new PA systems, and new autolog 7 release for eight other systems. Also installed complete new video systems in three courtrooms.

- Held first Technology Open House at the courthouse on March 3, 2010, under the auspices of the Data-Technology unit.

- Completed contract negotiations, in conjunction with a countywide initiative, culminating in a signed contract on June 11, 2010, with Lexis-Nexis for supplying on-line legal research tools. This move in switching from Westlaw saved the court over $30,000 annually.

- Started preparations to participate in a statewide Judicial Data Warehouse following the judges approval in June 2010. Kickoff meeting was held in October 2010 for working out project specifications.

- Planned and implemented various administrative facility renovations and staff moves. Recent attrition, early retirements, and layoffs due to budget task reductions has resulted in space availability creating opportunities to achieve greater efficiencies and enhance service to the public by consolidating staff and office resources in more logical configurations. These changes included: new jury room for VJ courtroom 2E; creating a court legal wing; consolidating the Data Tech Unit, Business Office, and Case Management staff; and creating a new technology training room.

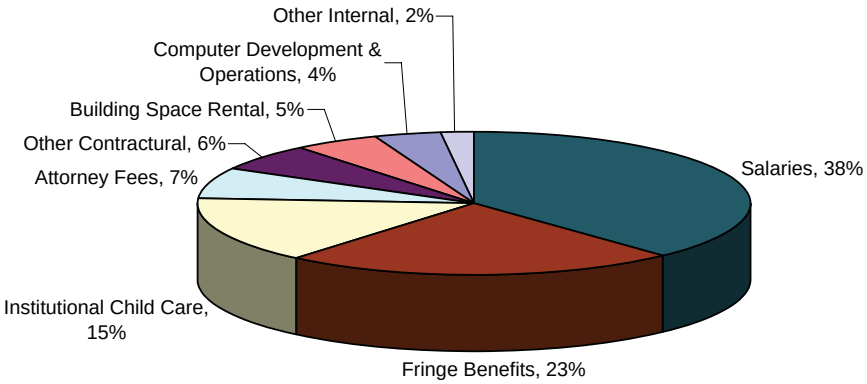
- Prepared and submitted FY2011, FY2012, and FY2013 budgets, which included budget tasks of $428,808, $421,405, and $421,405 respectively for a total of $1,271,618 in cuts over the next three years.

- Developed, prepared, submitted, and monitored five different grants for the Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court and Adult Treatment Court in the amount of over $150,000.

- Developed, prepared, submitted, and monitored five different JAG grants in the amount of over $50,000 used for purchasing various equipment for the court including video conferencing equipment and other courtroom equipment used to improve courtroom proceedings.

- Coordinated various court events including Constitution Day, Adoption Day, State of the Court address, several judicial investitures, Champion of Children Award Ceremony, Court Picnic, Holiday Party, Family Division Summit, Take Your Child to Work Day, and many other events.

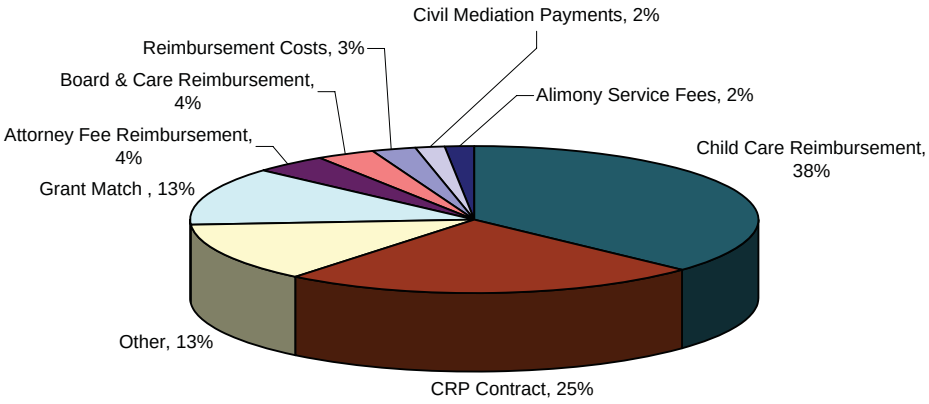
Circuit Court and Probate Court Financial Report



2010 Expenditures: $65,887,331

Expenditures	2008	2009	2010	2009-10 % Chg
Salaries	$27,834,013	$27,195,396	$25,318,689	-6.9%
Fringe Benefits	$15,220,112	$14,070,093	$15,004,024	6.6%
Institutional Child Care	$9,769,263	$9,555,651	$9,786,889	2.4%
Attorney Fees	$5,825,179	$5,259,250	$4,902,812	-6.8%
Building Space Rental	$3,123,488	$3,336,155	$3,024,365	-9.3%
Computer Development & Operations	$2,909,274	$2,940,703	$2,750,476	-6.5%
Indirect Costs	$1,128,355	$1,179,238	$912,824	-22.6%
Professional Services	$681,623	$676,610	$849,787	25.6%
Jury Fees & Mileage	$661,291	$614,569	$632,481	2.9%
Mediator Fees	$588,825	$544,900	$579,900	6.4%
Telephone Communications	$383,157	$374,328	$338,317	-9.6%
Postage/Mailroom	$235,498	$242,021	$199,186	-17.7%
Commodities/Supplies	$272,711	$212,651	$208,158	-2.1%
Transcripts	$214,753	$201,969	$229,401	13.6%
Printing	$198,702	$194,624	$130,463	-33.0%
Visiting Judges	$157,690	$173,828	$125,502	-27.8%
Other	$196,152	$166,834	$182,723	9.5%
Mileage/Leased Vehicles	$187,502	$165,821	$129,086	-22.2%
Equipment Rental	$107,892	$110,687	$135,186	22.1%
Library Materials	$104,287	$104,071	$99,785	-4.1%
Maintenance Charges	$82,603	$107,264	$71,796	-33.1%
Interpreter Services	$122,192	$91,586	$70,924	-22.6%
Furniture/Equipment Purchase	$130,232	$58,239	$20,897	-64.1%
Computer Legal Research	$54,990	$57,470	$57,782	0.5%
Copiers	$72,413	$64,677	$58,939	-8.9%
Insurance	$58,767	$47,360	$35,952	-24.1%
Overtime	$47,357	$31,019	$24,431	-21.2%
Court Reporter Services	$1,050	$3,775	$6,052	60.3%
Operating Transfer/Adjust Prior Years	$0	$0	$503	N/A
Micrographics/Reproductions	$27,082	$0	$0	0.0%
Software Rental/Lease	$0	$0	$0	0.0%
Grant Match	$0	$0	$0	0.0%
Total	**$70,396,452**	**$67,780,789**	**$65,887,331**	**-2.8%**

Circuit Court and Probate Court Financial Report



2010 Revenues: $33,110,190

Revenues/Sources of Funds	2008	2009	2010	2009-10 % Chg
Child Care Reimbursement	$13,381,535	$13,425,433	$12,551,986	-6.5%
CRP Contract	$7,191,629	$8,158,717	$8,120,203	-0.5%
Grant Match (Transfer In)	$4,533,549	$4,306,231	$4,257,269	-1.1%
Federal Incentive Payment	$2,611,489	$1,554,267	$1,539,549	-0.9%
Attorney Fee Reimbursement	$1,436,761	$1,298,167	$1,385,070	6.7%
Board & Care Reimbursement	$1,140,489	$1,153,946	$1,184,679	2.7%
Costs	$1,089,579	$914,394	$840,444	-36.6%
Civil Mediation Payments	$633,825	$563,117	$579,850	-5.9%
Alimony Service Fees	$564,512	$543,192	$530,111	-2.4%
Jury Fees	$316,265	$284,715	$342,618	20.3%
FOC Judgment Fees	$267,830	$262,980	$315,660	20.0%
Probate Estate Fees	$243,178	$232,840	$307,010	31.9%
Reimbursement State County Agent	$180,533	$180,533	$180,533	0.0%
Probation Service Fees	$150,601	$176,232	$177,736	0.9%
Other	$142,224	$141,358	$201,256	42.4%
Probate Certified Copies	$129,223	$116,927	$121,283	3.7%
Family Counseling Fees	$101,700	$100,635	$99,910	-0.7%
Mediation Fines	$108,388	$96,750	$95,444	-1.3%
Other Probate Filing Fees	$79,716	$80,407	$84,083	4.6%
Psychological Clinical Evaluation Fee	$83,316	$75,566	$51,864	-31.4%
Processing Fees	$71,366	$69,321	$67,887	-2.1%
CRP State Supplement	$63,246	$66,507	$0	-100.0%
e-Filing Fees	$0	$25,848	$64,969	151.4%
Probate Will Deposits	$14,350	$11,325	$10,775	-4.9%
Total	**$34,535,305**	**$33,839,409**	**$33,110,190**	**-2.2%**

While the Courts provide the highest level of public service and quality of justice, each employee is dedicated to making the Courts function effectively and efficiently.

Letters of Recognition

Chris Cook
Deputy Probate Register II
Probate Court

"Last Friday I came to the Oakland County Probate Court to get a will registered. Mr. Chris Cook waited on me and he displayed nothing but respect and patience. I'm 87 years old and it was difficult to get in the court to take care of registering my will.

Thank you for hiring people who are willing to help!"

Oakland County
Youth Assistance Program
Circuit Court

"I'm happy to say, that with the help and guidance of the Oakland County Youth Assistance program and cooridinator at our high school, our son has been clean and drug free for almost seven months now. He has become a changed person, focused on school life, and positive social activities. He has acknowledged the mistakes he's made and makes a conscience effort to eliminate drugs from his life. My entire family is grateful for the guidance, interaction and continuing support that the Youth Assistance program has provided to all of us. We have our son back again! Please keep up the good work and continue this program at all costs! "

Pam Strzalkowski
Youth Assistance Caseworker II
Circuit Court

"I consider it a privilege to have your insight, acumen, and professional experience not only for my daughter, but for me as well. Your analogies were so perfectly provided that she got it on a level she has never before.

I would like to thank you for your time, attention, professional insight, and providing us with not only resources but insights into the proverbial psyche of addiction mentality. Truly, it was an epiphany and life-altering in understanding more abou the battle of wills versus chemical predisposition."

Vincent Welicka
Referee
Friend of the Court

"I just want to thank you for the role you played in collecting arrearages owed to me from years ago. Being on my own is just one more reason I am deeply appreciative for whatever steps you and your staff took to allow me to start receiving this long, overdue child support. "

Thank You!

A Look Back At "2010"

Data Tech Unit employee Bobby McLaughlin prepares to be dunked at a fundraiser hosted by the Circuit and Probate Courts to benefit the charity "The Brooksie Way."

Sadly for John Cooperrider, Business Division Manager, Michigan went down (34/17) on October 9, 2010. Due to the ongoing Court Administration rivalry between U of M and MSU, John is wearing and eating the appropriate colors.

Chief Judge Nanci Grant poses with Judge John McDonald and Judge Elizabeth Pezzetti who volunteered their time at the grill for the Circuit/Probate Court Picnic. The picnic is an annual event held in June for all circuit and probate staff.

Judge John McDonald retired from the Circuit Court bench in December after 17 years of service. Celebrating his retirement are members of his staff (left to right, front row): Judicial Staff Attorney Jill Matson and Judicial Secretary Cindy Lingle; (back row) Court Reporter Pam Voll, Court Clerk Paula McDonald, and Probation Officer Robert Pinelton.

On September 14, the Circuit Court hosted a Constitution Day program for 300 Oakland County high school students. The event included speakers (left) Bishop Edgar Vann, Pastor of Second Ebenezer Church in Detroit; Judge Michael Warren and daughter Leah (center); and Fox 2 legal Analyst Charlie Langton.

Circuit and Probate staff gathered at the end of the year for a holiday luncheon in the Jury Assembly Room. The event was organized by Business Division Manager John Cooperrider (not pictured), and staff (front row, left to right) Terry Castiglione, Angela Garrett, Vicki Spicer, Chris Cook, (back row) Lisa Czyz, Jean Harroun, Kristy Bills, and Mary Kavanagh.

Peggy Hoffmeyer was recognized in September at her retirement party by Chief Judge Eugene Arthur Moore for 17 years of service with the Probate Court. Positions held by Peggy throughout her career with the Court included General Clerical, Typist I, Typist II, Clerk III, and Cashier.

Michigan Adoption Day was celebrated on November 23 as family division judges participated in nine adoptions at a ceremony in the Commissioners Auditorium. Pictured is Judge James Alexander finalizing the adoption of three children. In conjunction with DHS, the Court placed 406 children with permanent families in 2010.

The Honorable Phyllis McMillen was sworn in as the newest circuit judge at an investiture ceremony that took place on September 30. Chief Judge Nanci Grant presided over the ceremony in the Board of Commissioners Auditorium.

Video conferencing transformed the way the Probate Court communicates in mental health hearings. Judge Elizabeth Pezzetti's courtroom shown above is equipped to handle the new mental health video docket. Now patients placed at the Forensic Center attend their commitment hearings via teleconference communication.

We the People

of the United States
in Order to form a more
perfect Union, establish
Justice, insure domestic
tranquility, provide for
the common defence,
promote the general
welfare, and secure the
Blessings of Liberty to
ourselves and our posterity,
do ordain and establish
this Constitution for the
United States of America.