



Third Judicial Circuit  
of Michigan

# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT





## **Coleman A. Young Municipal Center**

Civil Division  
Family Division-Domestic  
2 Woodward Avenue  
Detroit, MI 48226



## **Wayne County Criminal Justice Center**

Criminal Division  
5301 Russell Street  
Detroit, MI 48211



## **Lincoln Hall of Justice**

Family Division - Juvenile  
1025 E. Forest Avenue  
Detroit, MI 48207



## **Penobscot Building**

Family Division - Friend of the Court  
645 Griswold  
Detroit, MI 48226



## **Mediation Tribunal Association**

Case Evaluation  
211 West Fort Street  
Suite 1150  
Detroit, MI 48226

# The Third Judicial Circuit of Michigan



**Our Mission** is to serve the community by providing accessible and equal justice for all.

**Our Vision** is to be an exemplary and innovative Court leading with integrity in providing justice and public service.

## Our Core Values (a focus on **LEAD**ing)

**Leadership** - We show unwavering commitment to upholding justice while guiding, inspiring, motivating, and collaborating with others in the court community.

**Excellence** - We strive to achieve high standards by being proactive and ensuring services to court users are efficient, accessible, and understandable.

**Accountability** - We build the public's trust by being transparent, open, and responsible for our conduct.

**Diversity** - We embrace, respect, and value everyone while ensuring a fair and inclusive environment.



## THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF MICHIGAN

2 Woodward Avenue, Courtroom 701  
Detroit, MI 48226



Dear Judges, Court Employees and Staff, Partners and Stakeholders,

As we reflect on 2025, I am honored to address you as Chief Judge of the Third Judicial Circuit of Michigan. While I assumed this role in 2026, this report highlights the important work accomplished over the past year and the foundation upon which we will continue to build as we serve Wayne County residents.

A central priority for our Court is strengthening jury services. Jurors are essential to the administration of justice, and we remain committed to making their experience efficient, respectful, and service-oriented. From operational improvements and clearer communication to enhanced technology and amenities, we continue to invest in processes that reflect the value of our residents' time and civic participation. You may notice monitors throughout our court

buildings that display information about courtroom locations and matters, making it easier for them to find the information they need.

We also reaffirm our unwavering commitment to access to justice for all. Equal access, regardless of background, income, or circumstance, is fundamental to public trust and confidence in our courts. Our programs, partnerships, and service initiatives are designed to ensure that every resident of Wayne County can meaningfully engage with the justice system.

One way this engagement is possible is through our specialty court programs. They include Adult Drug Treatment Court, Mental Health Court and Veterans Treatment Court. All programs are designed to support resident needs and with long-term recovery, community resources and better outcomes, alongside judicial oversight. Some of the stories coming out of these programs are incredibly heartwarming, such as Symone, a Detroit youth that overcame the stigma of mental health and behavioral challenge at home and in school to become a 4.0 student and talented singer.

Equally important is the well-being of the more than 500 employees who serve this Court with professionalism and integrity. Their dedication sustains our daily operations and advances our mission. I deeply appreciate their hard work and commitment. Our court has invested in technologies and tools to help them be more efficient.

I also extend sincere gratitude to former Chief Judge Patricia Perez Fresard and Chief Judge Pro Tem Leslie Kim Smith for their leadership through December 31. I look forward to working collaboratively with our judicial leadership team, including Chief Judge Pro Tem Helal Farhat, as we continue serving the public with excellence.

You will see other changes throughout 2026 designed to increase operational efficiency, modernize our court and expand community engagement. A new website was released in early 2026 that will make it easier for Wayne County residents, attorneys and stakeholders to find the information they need with the help of an A.I. powered search tool. We're also expanding the 10 Minutes to Justice program that started in August 2025, where our judges visit city council and township board meetings to provide a brief overview of our services, history and juror roles.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward Ewell Jr." in a cursive script.

Edward Ewell, Jr., Chief Judge



## THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF MICHIGAN

2 Woodward Avenue, Courtroom 1019  
Detroit, MI 48226



Dear Judges, Court Employees and Staff, Partners and Stakeholders,

I am proud to recognize the extraordinary dedication of our judges, and employees. The Third Judicial Circuit of Michigan remains the busiest court in the state, handling nearly 60,000 cases, or nearly three times more than any other circuit court in Michigan. Our judges deliver justice under significant demands and with comparatively limited resources, especially given the workload. That workload grows across most divisions each year. We sent more than 220,000 summons to Wayne County residents in 2025.

Members of our Bench handle this workload with professionalism, diligence, and an unwavering commitment to fairness and timely case resolution. I greatly appreciate our partners at Wayne County for their continued support and understanding of these challenges as we continue to find ways to become more efficient.

I also extend my sincere appreciation to our administrative leadership, led by Executive Court Administrator Frank Hardester, Deputy Court Administrators and Erin Lincoln, Alisa Shannon, and ToieLynn Smith. Their expertise and tireless efforts ensure that our operations run effectively and that we continue to serve the residents of Wayne County with excellence, responsiveness, and integrity. These leaders and other members of our Executive Court Administrative Team set an example for our more than 500 employees who understand their role as public servants.

Third Circuit Court remains committed to investing in technology where feasible. Enhanced audio, video and ADA assistive equipment expands our ability to provide greater access to justice for all. These upgrades also supports judges, referees, staff, and the legal community, while positioning the Court to meet future demands.

In my role as Presiding Judge of the Family Division – Domestic Section, I have seen firsthand the positive impact of restructuring the Friend of the Court, which has significantly improved service delivery and outcomes for families navigating difficult circumstances.

Our community engagement is strong. Through initiatives such as Law Day, Reunification Day, Adoption Day, and student mock trials, we foster public trust, civic education, and understanding of the judicial system. Adoption Day is a celebration of families in Wayne County and the work of our court's Adoption Unit, which handled 219 new filings in 2025.

The strength of our court lies in its people who work each day to ensure that justice is delivered fairly, efficiently, and with respect for every person who enters our courthouse. I am confident that through continued collaboration with our partners and the community, and following the leadership of Chief Judge Edward Ewell, Jr., we will remain a court that Wayne County residents can trust and depend on.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Helal A. Farhat".

Helal A. Farhat, Chief Judge Pro Tem

Frank Hardester  
Executive Court Administrator  
(313) 224-5261  
Frank.Hardester@3rdcc.org

Honorable Edward Ewell Jr.  
Chief Judge

Honorable Helal A. Farhat  
Chief Judge Pro Tem



## THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF MICHIGAN

2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 711  
Detroit, MI 48226

Website: [www.3rdcc.org](http://www.3rdcc.org)

Email: [info@3rdcc.org](mailto:info@3rdcc.org)



Dear Court Team:

As the busiest court in Michigan, and one of the busiest trial courts in the U.S., our work touches the lives of thousands of Wayne County residents every year.

I want to extend my sincere gratitude to every member of the Third Circuit Court family for the hard work that made this year's progress possible. I would also like to recognize former Chief Judge Patricia Perez Fresard and former Chief Judge Pro Tem Leslie Kim Smith. Under their leadership, we modernized the Court, helped secure employee compensation increases, and further strengthening access to justice for all residents.

I look forward to working with Chief Judge Edward Ewell, Jr. and Chief Judge Pro Tem Helal A. Farhat as they begin their leadership roles in 2026. Their commitment to service will help guide us for many years.

These 2025 accomplishments helped to ensure that justice is administered fairly, efficiently, and with integrity.

### **Community Outreach and Education**

- Expanded public education in Wayne County communities through the "10 Minutes to Justice" initiative
- Hosting numerous school visits and student engagement programs from Law Day to mock trial competitions

### **Human Resources Initiatives**

- Creation of a dedicated training position to support employee development
- Expanded recruitment efforts to address staffing needs across the court while further reducing vacancy rates
- Implemented HR software updates to improve efficiency and employee services

### **Operational Improvements**

- Ongoing support and improvements within the Friend of the Court
- Enhanced operational capabilities with Docket Support Services and Facilities and Procurement

### **Technology Enhancements**

- Expanded Zoom room capabilities to support hybrid proceedings
- Installation of ADA assistive devices to improve accessibility in courtrooms
- Public address system improvements to enhance courtroom communications
- Implementation of digital docket display systems to improve information access for court users

As Helen Keller once said, "*Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.*" That statement is reflective of the daily teamwork I see around our court. Thank you for contributing to the best interests of Wayne County residents.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank Hardester".

Frank Hardester, Executive Court Administrator

# Table of Contents

<a href="#">Organizational Chart (Administration)</a> .....	8
<a href="#">Third Judicial Circuit Judges</a> .....	9
<a href="#">Third Judicial Circuit Referees</a> .....	10

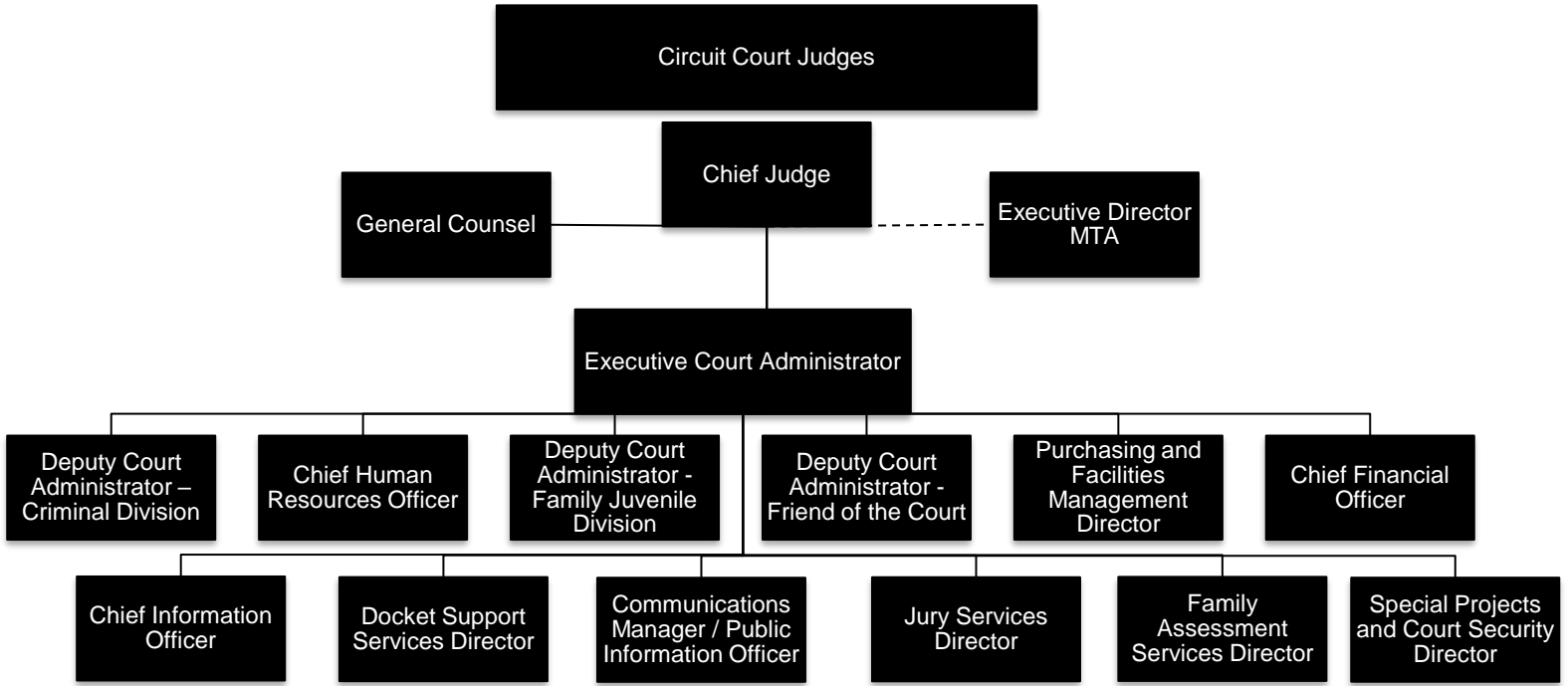
## ***Departments***

<a href="#">Budget &amp; Finance</a> .....	11
<a href="#">Docket Support Services</a> .....	14
<a href="#">Family Assessment Services</a> .....	15
<a href="#">Office of the General Counsel</a> .....	21
<a href="#">Human Resources</a> .....	23
<a href="#">Information Technology Resources Bureau</a> .....	24
<a href="#">Jury Services</a> .....	26
<a href="#">Purchasing &amp; Facilities Management</a> .....	27
<a href="#">Special Projects &amp; Court Security</a> .....	28
<a href="#">Mediation Tribunal Association</a> .....	29

## ***Divisions***

<a href="#">Civil Division</a> .....	30
<a href="#">Criminal Division</a> .....	31
<a href="#">Family Division – Juvenile Section</a> .....	35
<a href="#">Family Division – Domestic Relations Section</a> .....	47
<a href="#">Family Division – Friend of the Court</a> .....	52
<a href="#">Court Events</a> .....	57
<a href="#">Employee Events</a> .....	59
<a href="#">Staff Retirements</a> .....	60
<a href="#">In Memoriam</a> .....	61
<a href="#">History of the Bench – Chief Judges</a> .....	63

# THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF MICHIGAN ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



# Third Judicial Circuit of Michigan – Judges

## CIVIL DIVISION

Sheila Ann Gibson, Presiding

David J. Allen  
Annette J. Berry  
Kevin J. Cox  
Charlene M. Elder  
Edward Ewell, Jr.  
Patricia Perez Fresard

John H. Gillis, Jr.  
Adel A. Harb  
Dana M. Hathaway  
Catherine L. Heise  
Susan L. Hubbard  
Muriel D. Hughes

Edward J. Joseph  
Qiana Denise Lillard  
Kathleen M. McCarthy  
Leslie Kim Smith  
Martha M. Snow  
Brian R. Sullivan

## CRIMINAL DIVISION

Donald L. Knapp, Jr., Presiding

Charise L. Anderson  
Chandra W. Baker-Robinson  
Christopher M. Blount  
Nicole L. Castka  
Bradley L. Cobb  
Kiefer J. Cox  
Paul J. Cusick

Prentis Edwards, Jr.  
Wanda A. Evans  
John C. Gillis  
Tracy E. Green  
Bridget Mary Hathaway  
Nicholas J. Hathaway  
Anne Marie McCarthy

Cylenchia LaToye Miller  
Kelly A. Ramsey  
Mark T. Slavens  
Regina D. Thomas  
Margaret M. Van Houten  
Shannon N. Walker  
Darnella D. Williams-  
Claybourne

## FAMILY DIVISION – DOMESTIC

Helal A. Farhat, Presiding

Yvonna C. Abraham  
Eric W. Cholack  
Melissa A. Cox  
Susan A. Dabaja

Christopher D. Dingell  
Lawrence Elassal  
Alexis A. Glendening  
Nicole N. Goodson

Mary Beth Kelly  
Carla G. Testani  
Regina Triplett

## FAMILY DIVISION – JUVENILE

Karen Y. Braxton, Presiding

*Sheila Ann Gibson (2025 Interim Presiding)*

Todd E. Briggs  
Jerome C. Cavanagh

Judy A. Hartsfield

Aliyah Sabree  
Adrienne G. Scruggs

# Third Judicial Circuit of Michigan – Referees



## **FAMILY DIVISION – DOMESTIC RELATIONS**

Stephanie Witucki, Chief Referee

Alicia Bianchi  
Diane Biggar  
Gwendolyn Davis-Yancey  
Eric Gloudemans  
Jared Hocker  
Rosanne Hostnik

Michael Kwarcinski  
Christina McPhail-Stockdale  
Erika Morgan  
Eric Ratkowski  
Christine Rodriguez  
Lynn Ruhlman

Lee Rutila  
Stacey Selleck  
Hulen Simpson  
Edrick Thompson  
Pamela Tracy  
Neal Unger



## **FAMILY DIVISION – JUVENILE SECTION**

James A. Catchings, Jr., Chief Referee

Kathleen Allen  
Nicole Brown  
Wanda Cal  
Anthony Crutchfield  
Leslie Graves

Edward Hill  
Dawn Hoffmann  
Laura Kellett  
Sean Kerman  
LaChelle Logan

Daniel M. McGuire  
Brandi Taylor  
Lisa Winer

## Budget & Finance



**Mia Grillier**

*Deputy Chief Financial Officer*

**Kevin L. Martin**

*Deputy Chief Financial Officer*

The Office of Budget and Finance provides strategic leadership for the Court's financial operations, ensuring accuracy, transparency, and strong stewardship of public resources. The office oversees the full spectrum of fiscal activities, including management of the general fund, grants and contracts, as well as fiduciary accounts.

Its work also encompasses the administration of accounts receivable and accounts payable, the preparation of comprehensive financial statements and reports, and the coordination and overseeing of collection activities and processes. The department managed an annual budget of approximately \$153 million, including \$48.7 million in grant funding in FY 2025.

### **The Accounts Payable Unit**

The Accounts Payable Unit is responsible for processing payments to all contractors and vendors that provide goods and services to the Court. The department continues to work with our Information Technology Services Bureau team to automate the payment processes for high volume requests from vendors who provide language interpretation services and additional contractual services that are otherwise processed manually.

Implementing the automated payment system for these high-volume requests represents a significant technological improvement, considering the Court has successfully implemented automated payment processes for per diem court reporters, transcript fees and court officers.

Although the Accounts Payable Unit processes vendor, contractual, and attorney fee payments for all Court divisions, the payment of attorney fees for services rendered at the Criminal Division transitioned to Wayne County's Indigent Defense Services Department in fiscal year 2023-24. The Accounts Payable Unit transitioned payments processing to Wayne County's new Oracle Fusion system in October 2025, representing another operational upgrade.

### **Court Collections**

The Collections Unit, which is responsible for the collection of court-imposed costs, fines, and fees, is one of the top priorities of the Court. More than \$1.4 million was collected in court costs and late fees in the Criminal Division in 2025. Additionally, the unit:

- Mailed out 15,062 delinquency notices
- Established an additional 665 payment agreements; bringing the total payment agreements initiated by the Collections Unit to over 4,300
- Completed its departmental transition to the new Criminal Justice Center
- Began accepting child support payments for Friend of the Court cases

## **The Budget Unit and Grants Accounting Unit**

The Budget Unit and Grants Accounting Unit are responsible for managing and analyzing performance of the Court's general fund, capital fund, and grant funded programs for short and long-term planning. This includes preparing and submitting annual budgets, annual five-year capital improvement plans, and quarterly revenue and expenditure projections to Wayne County in accordance with deadlines required by the county.

The Grants Unit is responsible for all financial requirements set forth in the terms and conditions of all Court grant awards, including adherence to applicable federal and state laws, guidelines, financial reporting requirements, and regulations. It met the financial responsibilities for the following grants in 2025:

- Friend of the Court
- Child/parent legal representation
- Family Assessment Services with Child Care Fund
- Three Juvenile Division Child Care Fund programs
- Two Juvenile Division Specialty Court Programs
- Four Criminal Division Specialty Court Programs
- One federal COVID-related award
- Several smaller grants

The total available funding managed by the Grants Unit for these programs exceeds \$48.7 million, with approximately \$36.7 million for our Friend of the Court, and \$12 million for other grants.

The Financial Services Unit (FSU) provides financial support to the Friend of the Court (FOC). The primary function of FSU is local receipting of child support. It processed 9,581 transactions totaling approximately \$4.3 million in 2025 compared to 8,657 transactions and approximately \$3.8 million in 2024. The annual range was in excess of 24,000 transactions and approximately \$7.7 million before the COVID pandemic in 2020.

The reduction in volume is the result of the partial closure of court facilities to the public due to the coronavirus. In-person payment options became available to FOC customers in January 2022. Those customers are also provided with online payment options, as well as Pay Near Me or MoneyGram options at such retailers as 7-Eleven, Family Dollar, CVS, and Walmart stores located in various Wayne County communities. Ancillary functions include suspense management and arrears adjustments in accordance with State of Michigan and other applicable authoritative guidelines.

## **Other 2025 Accomplishments**

The Budget and Finance team played a critical role in strengthening the court's financial operations in 2025, supporting both internal initiatives and long-term organizational stability. Through collaboration, modernization of financial systems, and a continued focus on employee development, the team helped position the Court for sustained operational success.

One of the most significant accomplishments of the year was the team's active participation in the implementation of the Court's new financial system, Oracle Fusion. The system successfully went live on October 1, 2025, and achieved initial operational readiness within the planned timeframe and budget. This transition represented a major modernization effort and required extensive coordination, training, and preparation to ensure a smooth launch. Other accomplishments included:

- Adding several new hires in the department to support demand
- Assisted with securing a salary increase for court employees in collaboration with the Chief Judge and Executive Court Administrator, reflecting a commitment to both workforce retention and fiscal responsibility.

- Supporting ongoing educational opportunities for staff made available from the Government Finance Officers Association, the Institute of Finance and Management and through other sources. Two members of the Accounts Payable team were recognized during the year as accredited Accounts Payable Specialists.
- Strengthening internal collaboration through scheduled team meetings to ensure greater communications and engagement.

## **2026 goals**

A primary focus for Budget & Finance in 2026 will be finalizing the implementation of the Oracle Fusion financial system. While the system went live successfully, it also introduced several operational challenges that are typical of large-scale system transitions. The team has committed to resolving the most critical implementation issues by the end of the first quarter of 2026, including:

- Resolving discrepancies with check processing
- Eliminating access issues
- Completing the reconciliation of budget figures between Oracle and JDE Edwards
- Developing several additional reporting tools to support staff needs
- Designing and creating Oracle-based reports that support data analytics and management reporting, which requires collaboration with Oracle and our colleagues working for Wayne County

Budget & Finance also plans to finalize the Fiscal Year 2026 and 2027 funding agreements. The department will examine the overall funding strategy and philosophy while reviewing both Party A and Party B analysis, comparing the data to the adopted budget and the funding agreement framework.

Staffing stability also remains a priority. The department plans to fill all remaining vacancies and reduce reliance on external consultants. This includes filling existing open positions as well as hiring a departmental Chief of Staff. The department will develop a cost benefit analysis to evaluate the financial and operational benefits of external consultants, with the goal of reducing those external expenses by 25 percent.

Training and organizational development will also be emphasized in the coming year. A major initiative will be the completion of desk manual procedures and job aids for each employee and position within the Budget and Finance department. This project is expected to be completed by the end of the first quarter and will be led by the Chief of Staff. The department will also develop targeted training initiatives to strengthen knowledge in accounting and finance while supporting long term succession planning.

Additional areas of focus in 2006 include:

- Improving budgeting accuracy through more frequent and detailed financial forecasting
- Automating Accounts Payable invoice processing
- Automating General Ledger account reconciliations
- Researching options for more effective financial reporting dashboards,
- Automating compliance monitoring and expanding auditing support tools
- Researching the value of purchase cards to help streamline purchasing processes
- Strengthening collaboration with court administrators through quarterly meetings and other strategies

These priorities reflect the department's commitment to strengthening financial operations, improving efficiency, and ensuring the court has the financial infrastructure necessary to support its mission in the years ahead.

## Docket Support Services



**Nancy Hames**

*Director of Docket Support Services*

In 2025, Docket Support Services focused on strengthening operational efficiency, improving transcript production, and enhancing organizational structure to better support the Court's evolving needs. The department expanded the contract court reporter pool, significantly increasing transcript production capacity and service coverage. As a result of enhanced monitoring, strengthened accountability measures, and workflow improvements, the number of overdue Court of Appeals transcripts was reduced to one of the lowest levels in recent years.

DSS also initiated a structured cleanup of civil and domestic dockets, concentrating on non-service cases, lack-of-progress matters, and dismissals lacking formal order entry. This long-term effort, which will continue over the next one to two years, is designed to improve data integrity, reporting accuracy, and overall case management reliability.

Internally, the department undertook significant operational improvements. The DSS suite was decluttered and reorganized, eliminating years of accumulated materials and creating a more professional and efficient work environment. New functional workspaces were designed and built to better support staffing needs and streamline workflows.

To enhance collaboration and consistency across divisions, five employees were relocated from LHJ to CAYMC to help align and merge processes. Critical staffing adjustments were implemented to strengthen performance standards, reinforce accountability, and improve departmental effectiveness.

Finally, DSS submitted a comprehensive departmental reorganization plan to Human Resources aimed at preserving institutional knowledge, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and ensuring long-term operational stability. Implementation of the plan is anticipated in the first quarter of 2026.

### **Looking Ahead to 2026**

In 2026, Docket Support Services will continue advancing initiatives focused on efficiency, cost management, and modernization. The department will roll out Language Line services court-wide as a more cost-effective and flexible approach to providing interpreter services where appropriate. This initiative is expected to enhance accessibility while improving fiscal stewardship.

We will continue refining transcript production processes to strengthen tracking mechanisms and further improve timeliness and accountability. DSS has also begun transitioning civil case notices from traditional mail service to electronic delivery, promoting cost savings and more efficient use of staff time.

Additionally, we are making measurable progress toward automating docket status reports for the judiciary, increasing transparency, reducing manual reporting burdens, and providing more timely access to case management information.

## Family Assessment Services



**Michelle Chiaravalli, MSW, LMSW**

*Director Family Assessment Services*

Family Assessment Services (FAS), formally known as the Clinic for Child Study and Family Assessment Mediation and Education provides services across the Family Division in both the Domestic and Juvenile Sections.

The majority of services provided in 2025 utilized remote meeting technologies, although there has been an increase for in-person assessment requests. All requests for in-person assessment were accommodated.

FAS has maintained an active and long-standing internship program with local universities for psychologists enrolled in their Ph.D. programs. Practicum students can have a hands-on experience in wide range of assessments and psychological testing. Students primarily come from the University of Detroit Mercy and Wayne State University. In addition to the above, FAS had three social work master's level interns, and one criminal justice bachelor level intern from Wayne State University.

Throughout 2025 FAS has continued to fully implement Juvenile Justice Reforms, including full implementation of the Youth Assessment Screening Instrument (YASI) and Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument – 2 (MAYSI-2) for determining youth appropriate for diversion services, and for dispositional recommendations for all youth adjudicated for a delinquency offense. In September 2025 FAS began doing all assessments for youth placed on any level of probation, these assessments then follow the youth to their assigned services within the County programming.

### **Juvenile Services**

#### ***Delinquency - Assessments***

- Diversion Assessments - FAS receives official petitions from the prosecutor's office and the petitions are screened based on a list of offenses eligible for diversion, agreed upon with the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office. These youth will be contacted and the YASI Screener along with the MAYSI-2 will be completed. Based on the results of the assessments and use of an Outcome Matrix, youth will be diverted or the petition will be forwarded to the official docket. If diversion is recommended, a diversion agreement will be signed and the youth and family will be referred to the Court's Diversion program (Juvenile Status Unit). Youth and families may receive immediate referrals for services from FAS as well.
  - The Youth Assessment Screening Instrument (YASI) includes predictive risk for future court involvement, mental health concerns, adverse childhood experiences (ACES) items as well as the youth's strengths. The assessment provides an early opportunity to determine the juvenile's strengths, the risk of recidivism, as well as any needs for mental health and/or substance use treatment.

- Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument – 2 (MAYSI-2) assessment. The MAYSI-2 is a brief behavior health screening tool designed especially for juvenile justice programs and facilities. It identifies youths 12-17 years old who may have important, pressing behavioral needs. Its primary use is in juvenile probation, diversion programs and intake in juvenile detention or corrections.
- Competency and Criminal Responsibility assessments are completed to determine if a youth is competent to stand trial based on statutory requirements and/or if they were criminally responsible at the time of the offense.
- Psychological Assessments for Designated Cases are completed to aid in treatment planning for youth who are being charged as an adult within the juvenile system.
- Juvenile Mental Health Court (JMHC) assessments are completed to determine if referred youth meet the eligibility criteria for JMHC.
- Predisposition assessments, including YASI, MAYSI-2 and dispositional matrix (may include psychological testing) are completed to provide treatment and dispositional recommendations for all adjudicated youth. As of October 1, 2024, this assessment is required for all youth adjudicated in the juvenile court prior to moving to disposition.

### ***Delinquency - Treatment***

The Sexual Awareness Information and Treatment (SAIT) program was developed in 1989 to assist probationary youth before the Court for Criminal Sexual Conduct offenses, as well as at-risk youth in the community. This program was initially based on a psycho-educational model, but was later expanded to be a comprehensive treatment program for juvenile sex offenders.

The SAIT program is conducted in individual outpatient therapy. Youth are required to attend and participate in weekly group therapy sessions for a total of 21 weeks and must repeat the full program if they complete less than 17 sessions. If substantial progress regarding inappropriate sexual behavior or other emotional issues is not apparent at the completion of SAIT, youth are referred for additional individual treatment sessions.

The SAIT program is designed with curriculum appropriate for youth in the 11-to-18-year age range. Treatment sessions currently occur remotely, allowing youth to progress at their own pace with a therapist. They are not required to wait for a group to start.

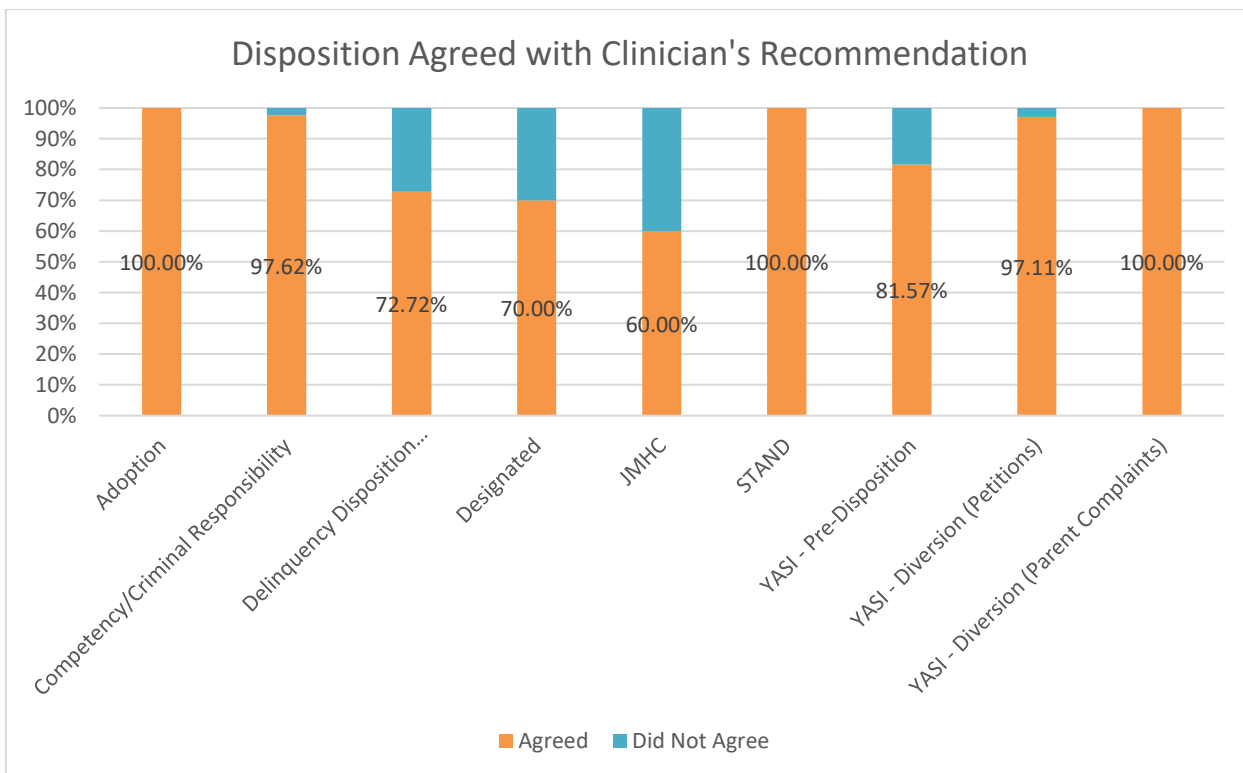
## SAIT/Criminal Sexual Conduct (CSC) Recidivism – Felony Convictions

Closure Year	Date Reviewed	Total Successfully Closed	No Felony Convictions	Felony Convictions	CSC Convictions	Recidivism %
2024	January 2025 <i>1-year post closure</i>	39	37	2	2	Felony: 5.13% CSC: 5.13%
2022	January 2025 <i>3-years post closure</i>	21	21	0	1	Felony: 0% CSC: 5%

Competency Restoration is provided when a youth is found not competent to stand trial and there is a reasonable belief that a youth can be restored to competency through education and treatment in the allotted statutory timeframe. Individual services cover all the areas of a competency evaluation.

### Child Welfare Cases *(cases arising out of abuse/neglect petitions)*

- Best Interest assessments determine if it is in the best interest of the child(ren) to have their parents' rights terminated or if reunification is recommended.
- Permanency planning assessments occurs after parents have been working on a plan to reunite with their family; however, little to no progress has been made. The assessment is used to determine a permanency plan for the child(ren).
- Custody and Parenting Time evaluations are completed to determine custody and parenting time after the Neglect Proceedings have concluded.
- Adoption Home Study assessments are completed per statutory requirements when guardians and family members petitioning the Court to adopt youth in their care.



*Chart 2: Review of data:*

1. *Delinquency case differences seem to be related to primarily higher level of disposition than recommended in the assessment.*
2. *JMHC differences are due to families deciding they do not want to participate in the program after the assessment found they qualified for the program.*
3. *Designated case differences are between the matrix and sentencing guidelines.*

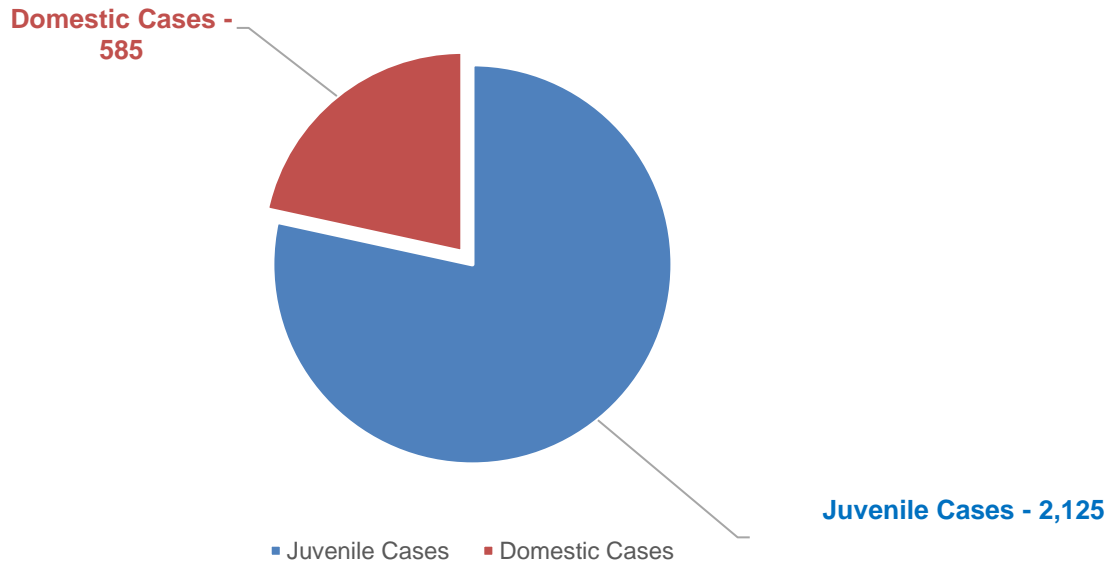
**Domestic Services Provided (cases arriving out of custody and parenting time disputes)**

- Court-ordered evaluations, psychological testing, and/or mediation for families where the parents are in conflict regarding custody and/or parenting time are some of the domestic services provided by the Court. The Dispute Resolution Unit (DRU) partners with Wayne Mediation Center and serves the increasing need for mediation and alternative dispute services in Domestic Relations. DRU also coordinates both Court-funded and grant-funded family education programs.
- Coordination of supervised visitation is monitored by FAS via the Access and Visitation Grant from the State Court Administrative Office. The Court has contracted with Western Wayne County-based non-profit Growth Works, Inc. to conduct supervised parenting time. Growth Works served 225 families in 2025.
- Wayne County Dispute Resolution Center received 488 cases from the Court in 2025. Of those, 486 achieved final results:
  - 1 conciliated
  - 232 were mediated to agreement
  - 49 were mediated to partial agreement
  - 142 were mediated without agreement
- There are two online parent education programs for divorced/divorcing and “never married” parents who live apart. Links are available on the Court’s website. Those programs include:
  - Children in Between
  - OnlineParentingPrograms.com (website)

Data was only received from OnlineParentingPrograms.com, 62 parents completed the program in 2025.

- The Co-Parenting, Communication, and Coaching (3C) Program is an intensive parenting program. It is conducted as a live online training. A total of 191 parents completed the 3C program in 2025. Participant satisfaction surveys consistently indicate very high satisfaction with this program with parents indicating that they “wish this information had been available sooner.”

## 2025 CASE REFERRAL DISTRIBUTION BY FAMILY DIVISIONS SECTIONS



### 2025 Referrals (Includes 2024 referrals for comparison)

Types of cases by year	2024	2025
Family Assessments for Protective Hearings Referrals	336	372
Custody Assessments Referrals – Juvenile	1	2
Adolescent Assessments for Delinquency Disposition Referrals (Includes psychological testing and YASIs)	82	71
Adolescent Competency Assessments Referrals	62	47
Adolescent Criminal Responsibility Assessments Referrals	60	47
Adolescent Designated Assessment Referrals	10	22
Adolescent Assessments for S.T.A.N.D. Referrals (Includes YASI)	20	12
Adoption Assessments	14	23
YASI Assessments (Post-Petition, Diversion, Pre-Disposition without psychological testing and Follow-up YASIs)	1395	1438
JMHC (Includes YASI)	54	23
Clinic Treatment Unit Served (Sexual Awareness and Information Treatment)	76	65
Competency Restoration Served	3	3
Custody/Parenting Time Evaluations – Domestic	320	394
Custody Only Evaluations - Domestic	16	16
Psychological Custody Only Evaluations – Domestic	4	0
Psychological Custody/Parenting Time Evaluations – Domestic	67	43
Parenting Time Only Evaluations – Domestic	115	128
Psychological Parenting Time Only Evaluations – Domestic	14	4
Psychological Only – Domestic	0	0
Emancipation – Domestic	1	0
Total	2650	2710

*\*We continue to have increases in cases across several referral types.*

## **2025 Family Assessment Services Highlights**

- *August 2025* - Raven Dominguez was awarded her Ph.D. in Psychology.
- *September 2025* - Raven Dominguez became a Qualified Forensic Mental Health Examiner.
- *September 2025* – Transitioned to providing all required assessments and documentation to Juvenile Youth Services with Wayne County.
- *September – December 2025* - All applicable staff completed YASI Booster training. Supervisors attended additional coaching training.
- *October 2025* –Cassandra Malaric and Mellannie Porch-Doneghy became Certified Domestic Mediators.
- *October 2025* – Implemented use of the Juvenile Sex Offender Assessment Protocol – II (J-SOAP-II) for all youth charged with a criminal sexual conduct offense.
- *November 2025* – Angela Anatalio became a Qualified Forensic Mental Health Examiner.
- *December 2025* - Upgraded to YASI 2.0 platform.

## **Goals for 2026**

- Implementation of a consent calendar.
- Update Dispositional Matrix with assistance from Wayne State University Center for Behavioral Health and Justice.
- Continuing further implementation of Juvenile Justice Reform.
- 95% success rate in meeting due dates for Court reports across all units
- Identify and increase the number of FAS clinicians trained and certified as Qualified Forensic Mental Health Examiners.
- Re-establish the evidenced based Building Strong Adolescents parenting group for youth being diverted.
- Reestablish Kids First Program for Domestic Cases.
- Develop partnerships with evidenced based programming in the community, including but not limited to an agency to do LifeSkills programming.
- Explore the implementation of a Multisystemic Therapy program for the Court with a community organization.

## Office of the General Counsel



**Frances Yturri**  
*General Counsel*

The Office of General Counsel serves as the official legal advisor to Third Circuit Court. Among other duties, the General Counsel's office:

- Provides legal research and writing assistance to judges.
- Drafts proposed local court rules, local administrative orders, and docket directives.
- Negotiates, drafts and reviews contracts, and prepares requests for proposals.
- Establishes memoranda of understanding between the Court and vendors, outside agencies, labor unions, and other governmental entities.
- Provides legal representation to the court, judges, and staff, and coordinates representation by outside counsel when necessary.
- Oversees the Wayne County Legal Self-Help Center and the Law Library.
- The Office of the General Counsel serves as a liaison between the Court and the State Court Administrative Office, Wayne County Corporation Counsel, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, and the Michigan Attorney General's Office.

### **Staff Members**

- Frances (Fran) Yturri - General Counsel
- Dolores Aguilera - Administrative Assistant

### *Attorneys specializing in general civil law:*

- Julie Dale - Associate General Counsel
- Amanda Cunningham - Associate General Counsel

### *Attorneys specializing in criminal law:*

- Kimberley Reed -Thompson - Associate General Counsel
- Sauda Ahmad-Green - Research Law Clerk III
- Josef Funchess - Research Law Clerk III
- Linda Sims - Research Law Clerk II
- Lisa Bey - Administrative Assistant

### *Attorneys specializing in family juvenile/domestic law:*

- Susan Moody – Associate General Counsel
- Benjamin Dietlin – Research Law Clerk I

**Self Help Center**

- Lynn Reeves - Supervising Navigator/Law Librarian
- Sonya Powers – Navigator
- Michelle Schefsky - Navigator

The Self-Help Center operates at the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center in Detroit with weekday hours from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in courtroom 1901.

The Center works closely with the Detroit Bar Association and the Salvation Army's William Booth Legal Clinic to help individuals when their legal needs exceed the resources available at the Self-Help Center. 9,126 residents received assistance at the Self-Help Center in 2025.

**Summer Law Clerks**

The Office of the General Counsel organized programing for 20 summer externs from Wayne State University Law School, Detroit Mercy School of Law, Cooley Law School, University of Michigan School of Law, and University of Toledo College of Law in 2025. Externs were hosted by individual judges on the Civil, Criminal and Domestic benches.

These law clerks participated in a variety of educational programs, intended to provide insight into court operations and different areas of the law. Externs attended tours of the Criminal, Civil and Family (Juvenile and Domestic) divisions, and Friend of the Court.

# Human Resources



**Nikki Wright**

*Chief Human Resources Officer*

Human Resources continues to make significant strides in promoting a positive culture and working environment at the Third Circuit Court. We are committed to hiring, retention and job satisfaction. The Office of Human Resources manages all personnel-related activities for the Court's approximately 604 full-time positions, including judges. These activities include full-cycle recruiting, timekeeping, payroll, benefits, employee relations, interpretation of workplace laws and regulations, training and development, negotiation and administration of labor agreements, and support for internal business partners.

The Court continues to celebrate its declining vacancy rate. As of December 2025, the vacancy rate was 8.97% with 89 new hires. This is nearly half the 2024 year-end vacancy rate of 16.42%.

Over the past year, Human Resources partnered with Court administrators to restructure multiple departments including Friend of the Court (FOC), Family Assessment Services (FAS), and Purchasing and Facilities Management, with other departments in the wings. Restructures are intended to facilitate more efficient operations, professional advancement opportunities and pay restructure.

The Third Circuit Court continues to foster good management/labor relations with its labor partners which include American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Locals 3309 and 1905, the Government Administrators Association, and the Judicial Attorneys Association. The Court successfully negotiated restructure agreements with each of the three unions in 2025 which supported increased pay and professional advancement.

HR recognizes the need for additional initiatives to support employee retention and Court culture. The Court held its second annual HR Meet and Greet with approximately 180 employees enjoying conversations, games and friendly competitions. HR also sponsored its first *Be There or Be Square - Walk 1 Square Mile with HR*, and employees enjoyed meditation sessions lead by the Hon. Frank Szymanski.

## **Goals for 2026**

Our goals are aligned with creating a workplace where every individual feels valued, empowered and inspired to contribute to the Court's success and mission of serving our community. We will:

- Further enhance hiring strategies.
- Identify initiatives to improve retention rates.
- Cultivate an engaged workforce.
- Transition HR's timekeeping system from Kronos Central to UKG Ready, offering a more efficient process for employees and managers.
- Collaborate with the Access and Fairness Committee to support educational and professional development.

## Information Technology Systems Bureau (ITSB)



**Mike Gruich**

*Chief Information Officer*

The Information Technology Systems Bureau (ITSB) provides technology support to court staff and our law enforcement partners to meet the court's evolving business needs. The bureau maintains the application and technical operating environment necessary to support the operating and administrative business objectives of the court.

ITSB staff provide standard hardware, software, network, and courtroom technology support. During the past year, the bureau focused on improving system reliability, expanding digital services, and supporting new enterprise and courtroom technologies.

### **Major Projects and Initiatives**

ITSB staff supported the following projects and initiatives in 2025:

- Continued implementation and support of Zoom courtrooms to enhance remote and hybrid hearing capabilities.
- Implementation of docket display systems at the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center (CAYMC), improving courtroom scheduling visibility and public information access.
- Implementation of the Wayne County Oracle system to support Budget and Finance operations.
- Upgrade of the reporting system and dashboards, improving reporting capabilities and data access for court operations.
- Creation and implementation of electronic contracts and service vouchers to streamline Budget and Finance workflows.
- Transition of managed print services from Xerox to Ricoh (Phase I) to modernize printing infrastructure and improve service efficiency.
- Development and implementation of the Pre-Trial system (PRIMS) to enhance case processing and operational efficiency.

In addition to these initiatives, ITSB continued to provide daily operational support, system maintenance, security updates, and user assistance to ensure uninterrupted court operations.

The public can access the court register of actions through the Court's website [www.3rdcc.org](http://www.3rdcc.org).

## Website and Social Media

The Court has a presence on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Twitter: 3rdccorg

Facebook: Third Judicial Circuit Court

Linked In: Wayne County Third Circuit Court

Website: 3rdcc.org

Instagram: 3rdccorg



Through social media, Third Circuit Court publishes holiday closings, emergency closings, and news items related to community, legal and charitable events, performance measure data and accomplishments. The court staff and the public are welcome to visit, follow, and like the court on social media.

To receive Third Judicial Circuit Court's monthly Court Clips newsletter and stay informed of its activities, send relevant contact information (name and e-mail address) to [3CCE-News@3rdcc.org](mailto:3CCE-News@3rdcc.org).

## Jury Services



**Yvette Blackmon**  
*Director of Jury Services*

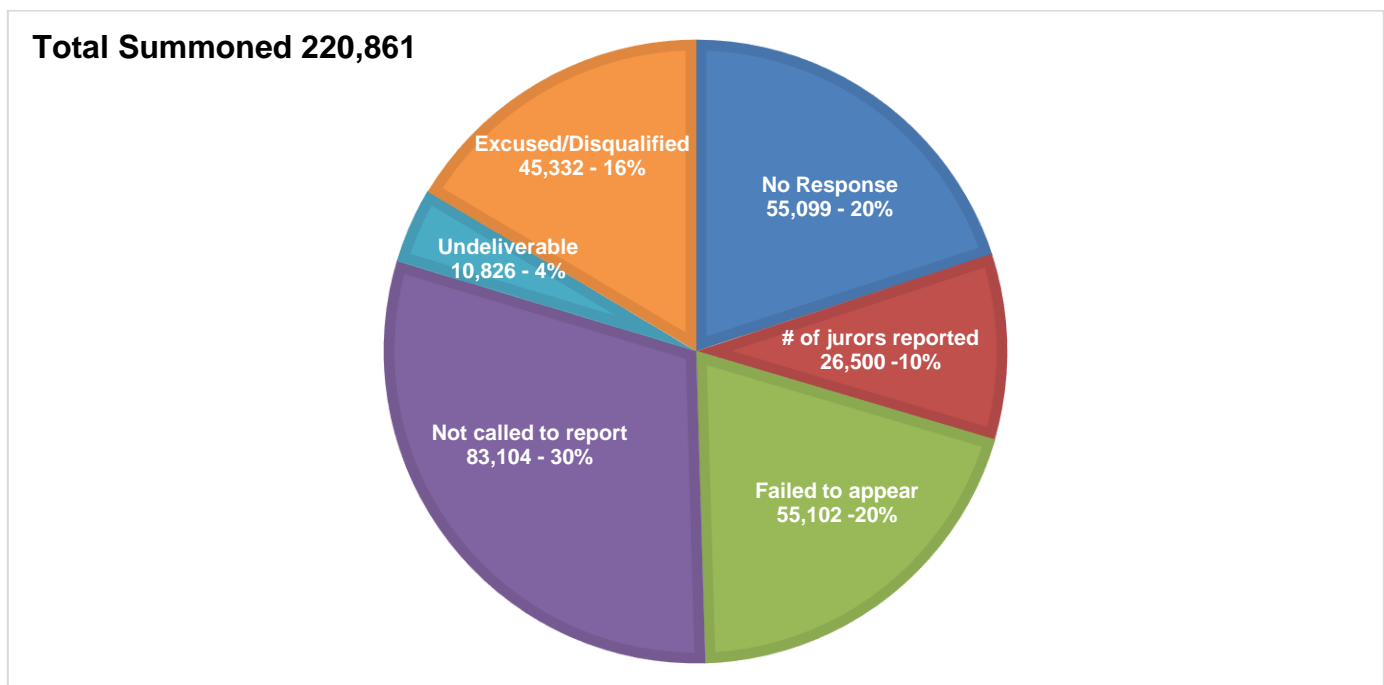
The Jury Services Department coordinates jury operations and obtains jurors for the Third Judicial Circuit and Probate Courts, as well as provide qualification services for all district courts in Wayne County.

The department's responsibilities include developing processes and procedures of regularly collecting and analyzing information regarding the performance of the jury system.

In 2025, the jury services achieved the following:

- Jury system upgrade
- Changed processes that minimized check-in lines
- Opened up a Jury Assembly Space in Lincoln Hall of Justice
- 26,500 jurors reported for service for Criminal, Civil and Juvenile
- Assigned jurors to 881 cases for Criminal, Civil and Juvenile
- Allowed web submissions for district questionnaires resulting in 13,483 questionnaires that did not need any processing by staff.
- Overall Utilization Rate of 83% -The utilization rate is the percentage of jurors that we bring in that actually get assigned to a courtroom. The goal is 70%.

### 2025 Jury Reporting Statistics



## Purchasing and Facilities Management



**Eric Weems**

*Director of Purchasing and Facilities Management*

The Purchasing and Facilities Management Department (Facilities), and its staff of five full-time employees, is responsible for the procurement of goods and services for all divisions of the court. The department:

- Oversees building services and renovations
- Organizes staff moves
- Processes metered mail and inter-office court mail
- Reports equipment repairs
- Transports employees
- Works with internal and external vendors on behalf of the Court
- Creation of Requisitions
- Reconciliation of Vendor payments and invoices
- Mail

Facilities is also responsive to the workplace needs for efficiency, client privacy and safety, and manages projects both large and small throughout four Court locations.

The department has assisted with the transition to the new Criminal Justice Center from Frank Murphy Hall of Justice, which opened up for business in September 2025. Facilities team members aided in ensuring a smooth process for judges and staff. This large undertaking entailed the department assist with such items as equipment purchases and equipment moves, training, and mail delivery. Upfront planning allowed for other services to proceed uninterrupted.

Facilities has assisted the Court with the installation of Zoom technology in the majority of courtrooms in CAYMC. The Zoom Rooms are here to assist the litigants and attorneys with appearing for Court even when the clients can't physically be onsite.

Facilities also assisted with electrical upgrades to power the newly installed monitor boards that were placed in CAYMC as well. These boards serve as a guided to the public as the boards are placed in the elevator vestibules and near the courtrooms on each floor so that the users of the court house can find their destinations quickly.

Lastly, Facilities continuously works with our Budget and Finance team to improve and implement new policies and procedures to help better serve our end users and the community. These processes will aid with vendor payments, budgets, and reconciliations, which all help with the expediency of procuring goods and services all while remaining compliant with local, state, and federal guidelines.

## Special Projects and Court Security



**Kevin Gardner**

*Director of Special Projects and Court Security*

Security remains a paramount priority in ensuring the safety of the judges, employees, and all individuals conducting business with or visiting the Third Judicial Circuit of Michigan. The Court remains steadfast and vigilant in its commitment to safeguarding its staff and the public it serves.

Former Director of Special Projects and Court Security Jan Hiller retired effective January 2, 2026. She was replaced by Kevin Gardner.

Highlights of the Special Projects and Court Security Department for 2025 include:

- Panic button installation was completed and the system is now fully functional at the Lincoln Hall of Justice, Coleman A. Young Municipal Center, and Penobscot Building
- Monthly collaboration meetings were conducted with the Court's security stakeholders
- Conducted incident reviews at all four courthouse locations

In 2026, to reaffirm our commitment to safeguarding staff, the Court will:

- Reinstate the Court Security Executive Committee
- Continue holding Court Security Sub-Committee meetings at each courthouse
- Pursue installation of an upgraded camera surveillance system at the Lincoln Hall of Justice, Coleman A. Young Municipal Center, and Penobscot Building
- Foster and strengthen collaborative relationships with security and risk management partners to proactively mitigate risks
- Complete a comprehensive review and update of security and emergency evacuation protocols
- Conduct evacuation drills for a range of potential incidents
- Continue active-shooter training initiatives
- Provide floor manager training with additional courses being offered in First Aid, AED, and CPR
- Enhance overall preparedness and organizational resilience

## Mediation Tribunal Association



**Lisa W. Timmons**

*Director of Mediation Tribunal Association*

The Mediation Tribunal Association (MTA) is a non-profit agency established in 1979 that provides alternative dispute resolution services for the Third Judicial Circuit Court of Michigan, the United States District Court for the Eastern Division, and many district courts in the County of Wayne.

The MTA is led by its Executive Director, Lisa Timmons, and governed by its Board of Directors. Timmons received the State Bar of Michigan Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Section's 2022 Hero of ADR Award. The Hero Award is presented to an individual for providing exemplary service and represents the ADR's mission of conflict resolution. She is also the immediate past chair of the State Bar's ADR Section.

The MTA Board consists of judges from the Civil Division of Wayne County Circuit Court; a judge from the United States District Court; a neutral director; and two attorney directors, representing both the Michigan Association for Justice (MAJ) and the Association of Defense Trial Counsel (ADTC).

The MTA maintains a roster of over 1,500 attorneys who serve as case evaluators under MCR 2.403. In 2025, there were 12,022 cases set for case evaluation. Those case types included general civil, employment, medical malpractice, commercial, and business court. Dispositions for 2025 are as follows:

### ***Third Circuit Court Case Evaluation 2025 Caseload***

Total Cases Set for Case Evaluation	12,022
Cases Settled Prior to Case Evaluation	664
Cases Settled After Case Evaluation	4
Cases Not Evaluated (Removed for Cause)	2179
Cases Adjourned by the Court	1876
<b>Total Cases Evaluated</b>	<b>7299</b>

### ***Third Circuit Court Case Evaluation 2025 Dispositions***

Total Awards	11,087
Awards Accepted (.73% of total)	81
<b>Total Awards Rejected and Continuing to Disposition</b>	<b>11,006</b>

## Civil Division



**Hon. Sheila Ann Gibson**  
*Presiding Judge*

The Civil Division is comprised of 19 Circuit Court Judges, including Chief Judge Edward Ewell, Jr., and has original jurisdiction in all general civil cases initiated in Wayne County where the amount in controversy exceeds \$25,000. The Civil Division serves as the appellate court for civil appeals from every district court in Wayne County, and for administrative agency appeals. The Division also includes five Business Courts. Our Civil Division is the busiest Civil Division in the state's judicial system. Monthly in-person Civil Bench meetings offer fellowship and collaboration for stakeholders.

- 2025 was the division's busiest year to date with more than 20,000 filings.
- One reason for the increase is the rise in auto negligence and no-fault filings.
- However, in 2025, general civil new filings rose by 849 cases (a 17% increase), Auto Negligence and No-Fault filings increased by 633 cases (6%), and other civil damage cases grew by 364 filings (23%).

	General Civil*	Auto Negligence and No Fault	Other Civil Damage	Other Civil**	Civil Appeals	Agency Appeals	Other Appeals	Total
<b>Pending Cases as of Jan. 1st</b>	3,4057	12,903	1,836	186	65	97	68	18,560
New Filings	5,759	11,866	1,973	527	180	201	127	20,663
Reopened Cases	277	504	133	19	7	11	0	951
<b>Total Caseload</b>	<b>9,441</b>	<b>25,273</b>	<b>3,942</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>40,144</b>
<b>Dispositions Resulting From:</b>								
Jury Verdicts	9	12	5	1	0	0	0	27
Bench Verdicts	10	3	0	1	0	0	0	14
Orders Entered	0	0	0	0	53	96	48	197
Defaults, Uncontested, Settled	2,555	5,715	724	139	0	0	0	9,133
Transferred	117	106	105	0	5	9	0	342
Dismissed by Party	1,976	5,000	873	337	0	0	0	8,186
Dismissed by Court	702	433	65	62	120	135	59	1,576
Inactive Status	85	128	46	2	4	7	0	272
Other Dispositions	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Case Type Change	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Dispositions</b>	<b>5,454</b>	<b>11,398</b>	<b>1,818</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>19,749</b>
<b>Pending Cases as of Dec. 31st</b>	<b>3,987</b>	<b>13,875</b>	<b>2,124</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>20,395</b>

## Criminal Division



**Hon. Donald L. Knapp**

*Presiding Judge, Criminal Division*

The Criminal Division of Third Circuit Court consists of 21 judges and exercises exclusive jurisdiction over all felony and high misdemeanor cases in Wayne County. It also serves as the appellate court for criminal appeals from the county's district courts. Building on the progress of recent years, the division continued to strengthen its operations and respond to evolving demands within the criminal justice system. The division's primary focus in 2025 was:

- Responding to a marked increase in non-capital case filings.
- Achieving a rise in non-capital case dispositions, reducing delays and promoting more consistent case flow across the division.

	Capital	Non-Capital	Felony Juvenile	Criminal Appeals	Total
<b>Pending Cases as of Jan. 1, 2026</b>	420	1,903	9	21	2,353
New Filings	599	7,081	14	44	7,738
Reopened Cases	147	1,117	3	1	1,268
<b>Total Caseload</b>	<b>1,166</b>	<b>10,101</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>11,359</b>

	Capital	Non-Capital	Felony Juvenile	Criminal Appeals	Total
<b>Dispositions Resulting From:</b>					
Jury Verdicts	100	159	0	0	259
Bench Verdicts	9	45	0	0	54
Orders Entered	0	0	0	27	27
Guilty Pleas	468	5786	11	0	6265
Transferred	3	271	0	0	274
Dismissed by Party	11	105	0	0	116
Dismissed by Court	91	1060	2	0	1153
Inactive Status	129	893	2	0	1024
Other Dispositions	0	0	0	0	0
Case Type Change	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Dispositions</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>8319</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>9172</b>
<b>Pending Cases as of Dec. 31, 2025</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>1,868</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2,298</b>



## **Alisa Shannon**

*Deputy Court Administrator - Criminal Division*

The Administration Office of the Criminal Division oversees several key court departments, including:

- Trial Court Services
- Specialty Court Services
- Pretrial Services

It also provides guidance to other court departments that impact the division's operations, such as Jury Services, Docket Support Services, and Collections.

Additionally, this office serves as the liaison for external agencies involved in criminal court operations, including the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, Wayne County Clerk's Office, Wayne County Sheriff's Office, Wayne County Indigent Defense Services Department, Michigan Department of Corrections, Michigan State Police, the State Court Administrative Office, and various circuit and district courts.

The increase in non-capital case filings, along with the rise in dispositions, demanded an expansion of administrative support across the Criminal Division. This included managing the "spin" process to promote greater trial-date certainty, securing courtroom availability, and coordinating the transition into a larger courtroom space. The division also depended on enhanced data-tracking systems to monitor caseload patterns, guide resource deployment, and identify emerging bottlenecks before they disrupted case flow. Together, these administrative efforts strengthened the division's capacity to maintain higher productivity while upholding accuracy, accessibility, and fairness in all case matters.

### **Trial Court Services**

The Third Circuit Court's Trial Court Services Department is responsible for ensuring the precision and accuracy of all warrants within the strict timeframe of 48 hours from their issuance, excluding holidays and weekends. This procedural mandate is rigorously enforced by both the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Michigan State Police (MSP), highlighting the critical importance of second-party verification for all Failure to Appear and Violation of Probation warrants recorded into the Law Enforcement Information Network by Third Circuit Court.

The Trial Court Services Department is also responsible for validating all convictions that have been automatically 'set aside' by the MSP in accordance with Michigan law. Since the inception of the law in 2023, over 31,500 cases have been verified by the staff responsible for validating each case to ensure its accuracy.

### **Specialty Court Services**

The Criminal Division's Office of Specialty Court Services (SCS) oversees the following operations: Hybrid Drug/DWI Treatment Court, Mental Health Treatment Court, and Veterans Treatment Court.

Each program has its own target population as its focus; however, the goals of the programs are similar:

- Reduce drug and alcohol use during program participation
- Retain participants in substance abuse and mental health treatment

- Reduce drug and alcohol related crimes in the jurisdiction and
- Alleviate jail or detention overcrowding by engaging participants in evidence based, effective treatment

SCS achieves these goals through intense judicial supervision and case management, and with the assistance of community partners who provide participants with intensive outpatient and/or in-patient services. These efforts teach participants valuable life skills to help them maintain their sobriety and manage their mental health so that they can be productive members of their community.

The **Hybrid Drug/DWI Court Program** is a comprehensive alternative sentencing program over 18-24 months which targets:

- Non-violent felony offenders as defined by Public Act 45 of 2024 who are addicted to illegal drugs and/or alcohol
- Habitual offenders with no history of violence, weapons, sex offenses or arson

The program involves intensive judicial supervision; frequent and random drug testing; and graduated incentives and sanctions, which are combined with community resources to assist in the achievement of an improved lifestyle and outcomes for participants. Participants appear before the supervising judge at regular status hearings while undergoing appropriate substance abuse treatment.

Referrals are obtained from a variety of sources including judges, the prosecutor’s office, defense attorneys and probation agents. Mandatory exclusions are prior assaultive felony convictions, including weapons offenses, aggravated assault, sex offenders, and arsonists.

**Hybrid Drug/DWI Treatment Court**

Participants from previous year	38
New Participants Accepted	26
Discharged Participants	29
2025 Graduated Participants	24
Active Participants 2025	35

The **Mental Health Treatment Court (MHC)** provides a problem-solving approach to defendants who are seriously and persistently mentally ill and who have not committed a violent offense as defined by Public Act 44 of 2024 over an 18 to 24-month period.

The majority of cases have co-occurring substance abuse disorders as well. Program goals include:

- Reducing drug and alcohol use during program participation
- Reducing recidivism
- Helping defendants improve their quality of life.

Defendants are given an opportunity to voluntarily participate through conditional release in community treatment and court approved service plans; this serves as an alternative to a jail sentence.

Defendants gain the balance needed to sustain their mental health and significantly reduce their criminal activity through intense judicial supervision, appropriate, effective medication, and a wide range of services tailored to the participant. They also find a satisfying measure of achievement and independence while developing strategies to manage their mental illness.

### Mental Health Court

Participants from previous year	16
New Participants Accepted	18
Discharged Participants	12
2025 Graduated Participants	6
Active Participants 2025	22

The **Veterans Treatment Court (VTC)** program is designated for justice involved veterans whose criminogenic behavior is linked to their military service and who have underlying issues; such as mental health and substance abuse. Candidates must have a discharge other than dishonorable to be eligible for VTC.

This specialty court provides an 18-24 month sentencing alternative to non-violent prison-bound felony offenders. Court employees, representatives from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, and community service partners work together to address the various needs of participants. Successful program completion may result in the dismissal or reduction of the original charge, a reduced sentence, no jail or prison time, or a combination of the above.

### Veterans Treatment Court

Participants from previous year	31
New Participants Accepted	25
Discharged Participants	20
2025 Graduated Participants	17
Active Participants 2025	36

### Pretrial Services

Pretrial Services provide precise and timely information to assist judicial officers in Wayne County with making informed pretrial release decisions. Once a pretrial release decision is made, this department is also responsible for monitoring defendants released on bond to ensure compliance with court orders and appearances, thereby supporting public safety. Additionally, Pretrial Services prepares written bond recommendations for the circuit court bench, as well as for judges and magistrates in district courts throughout Wayne County. Third Circuit Court, Wayne County, and the community benefit from the cost savings of decreased pretrial detention when Pretrial Services identifies defendants who can be safely released back to the community pending the outcome of their felony matters.

### Pretrial Services 2025 Statistics

<b>BONDS</b>	
Written Bond Recommendations	1374
Oral Bond Recommendations	0
<b>Total Bond Recommendations</b>	<b>1374</b>
<b>SUPERVISION (Average Per Month)</b>	
Total Defendants Monitored	425
Cumulative Total of Defendants Monitored	481
Compliance Rate with reporting to Pretrial Services	88%
Non-Compliance Rate with reporting to Pretrial Services	12%
Failure to Appear Rate	6%
<b>LEIN QUERIES</b>	<b>54858</b>

## Family Division – Juvenile Section



**Hon. Sheila Gibson**

*Presiding Judge, Family Division - Juvenile Section*

The Family Division - Juvenile Section of the Wayne County Third Judicial Circuit of Michigan, continues to stand at the forefront of judicial service in Michigan. As the largest circuit court in the state, our responsibility to lead with excellence, integrity, and innovation is both significant and constant.

The Juvenile Section is comprised of four Circuit Court Judges, two Probate Judges, and thirteen Referees who preside over a diverse and complex docket. These matters include child protective proceedings; juvenile delinquency cases involving felonies, misdemeanors, traffic and ordinance violations; status offenses; juvenile guardianships; and adoptions. The scope and sensitivity of this work demand not only legal expertise, but also compassion, discernment, and an unwavering commitment to the families and children we serve.

The volume and complexity of cases within the Juvenile Section are unparalleled. Our judges, referees, and dedicated court staff approach this responsibility with professionalism and purpose. Their daily efforts reflect a shared mission: to ensure fairness, accountability, and meaningful outcomes for Wayne County's youth and families. I extend my deepest gratitude to every member of our Juvenile Court team for their tireless service.

Our work is strengthened through collaboration with valued partners, including but not limited to, the State Court Administrative Office, the Wayne County Clerk's Office, the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, the Wayne County Sheriff's Department, the Michigan Attorney General's Office, attorneys, and numerous community-based organizations. These partnerships ensure that the needs of children and families are addressed comprehensively and responsibly.

This year, the Court continued to lead meaningful efforts in Juvenile Justice Reform. Recognizing that youth require developmentally appropriate interventions, we have prioritized evidence-based strategies that balance accountability with rehabilitation.

Our reform efforts include expanding diversion opportunities, strengthening alternatives to detention, enhancing trauma-informed practices, and increasing family engagement in court processes. We have also improved data-driven decision-making to better evaluate outcomes and identify areas for continued improvement.

Through the adoption of Therapeutic Jurisprudence principles, the Court has further strengthened specialized dockets designed to address underlying challenges facing court-involved youth and families. These include:

- Juvenile Drug Treatment Court – STAND
- Juvenile Mental Health Court
- Baby Court Docket

These initiatives reduce recidivism, improve stability for families, and position youth for long-term success. By addressing behavioral health, substance use, and family dynamics within a structured judicial framework, we are creating pathways that support transformation rather than simply imposing sanctions.

In addition to programmatic advancements, during the reporting period, the Juvenile Section successfully passed all audits, demonstrating full compliance with applicable standards and regulations. Passing these audits affirms the strength of our internal controls, and judicial and administrative oversight.

As we move ahead, we remain committed to timely and efficient adjudication, innovative reform, and collaborative problem-solving. Continued grant funding has allowed us to provide enhanced services for youth and families, ensuring that access to meaningful support remains a priority.

The spotlight is often on our Court due to its size and impact — and we embrace that responsibility. We will continue striving to deliver justice in a manner that protects children, strengthens families, and upholds public confidence in the judicial system.

It is an honor to serve as Presiding Judge of this section. Together, we will continue building a Juvenile Court that reflects both accountability and hope for the future.



**ToieLynn Smith**

*Deputy Court Administrator, Family Juvenile Division*

The Deputy Court Administrator's Office of the Juvenile Section is committed to ensuring that the best interests, safety, and well-being of the children and families of Wayne County are at the forefront of all that we do.

Through strategic leadership and operational oversight, our office manages the daily functions of the Juvenile Section, ensuring that services are delivered efficiently, responsibly, and with the highest standards of professionalism. Some of the responsibilities include oversight of Assigned Counsel Services, the Status Unit and 24-hr desk, Specialty Courts, Administrative Operations, the Adoptions Unit, and Referee Intake. Each of these departments play a vital role in advancing the Court's mission to provide timely, fair, and compassionate justice.

The Deputy Court Administrator's Office also serves as a central point of coordination and collaboration among stakeholders at the state, county, and community levels. By fostering strong partnerships with governmental agencies and community-based organizations, we ensure a unified approach to serving youth and families.

In 2025, we continued to focus on process improvement, and strategic alignment with the broader goals of the Court.

The work of the Juvenile Section is complex and impactful. I am grateful to the talented support staff, judges, referees, and managers, whose daily efforts sustain the integrity and effectiveness of our operations.

**Juvenile Statistics – 2025**

	Designated*	Delinquency	Traffic	Child Protective	Total
<b>Pending Cases as of Jan. 1st</b>	17	604	17	360	978
New Filings	26	2,122	399	709	3,256
Reopened Cases	1	133	30	0	164
<b>Total Caseload</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>2,895</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>1,013</b>	<b>4,398</b>
<b>Dispositions Resulting From:</b>					
Jury Verdicts	0	0	0	4	4
Bench Verdicts	1	36	5	370	412
Guilty Pleas/Admissions	29	867	83	291	1,270
Prosecutor Waiver	0	0	0	0	0
Traditional Waiver	0	0	0	0	0
Dismissed by Party	0	115	0	0	115
Dismissed by Court	3	669	30	0	702
Dismissed/Withdrawn	0	0	0	50	50
Consent Calendar	0	0	0	0	0
Transferred	0	86	0	10	96
Diversion/Not Authorized	0	277	0	0	277
Designation Granted	0	0	0	0	0
Inactive Status	0	85	246	0	331
Not Authorized	1	0	0	37	38
Not Charged	0	6	0	0	6
Case Type Change	0	0	0	0	0
Dismissed: Denied after Hearing	0	0	0	0	0
Dismissed: Denied Ex Parte	0	0	0	0	0
Orders Issued after Hearing	0	0	0	0	0
Orders Issued Ex Parte	0	0	0	0	0
Orders Issued after Denial	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Dispositions</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>2,141</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>3,301</b>
<b>Pending Cases as of Dec. 31st</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>1,097</b>

\*These are criminal matters in which the juvenile has been designated as an adult.

**Miscellaneous Family Statistics – 2025**

	Other Family*	Ancillary**	Total
<b>Pending Cases as of Jan 1st</b>	244	0	244
New Filings	1,014	0	1,014
Reopened Cases	0	0	0
<b>Total Caseload</b>	<b>1,258</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,258</b>
<b>Dispositions Resulting From:</b>			
Orders Issued Ex Parte	62	0	62
Orders Issued After Hearing	782	0	782
Transferred	0	0	0
Dismissed: Denied Ex Parte	0	0	0
Dismissed: After Hearing	84	0	84
Dismissed by Party	158	0	158
Case Type Change	0	0	0
<b>Total Dispositions</b>	<b>1,086</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,086</b>
<b>Pending Cases as of Dec. 31st</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>172</b>

\*Other Family includes name change, safe delivery, personal protection filed, emancipation of minors, infectious disease, parental waiver actions, and Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care.

\*\*Ancillary Proceedings includes guardianship and conservatorships, mental illness, as well as judicial admissions matters.

## Adoptions

The Adoptions Unit is responsible for processing all adoptions for Wayne County residents. The unit handled a total of 219 new filings in 2025. Based upon historic data, each individual member of the Adoptions Unit annually reviews more adoption pleadings than many individual counties in the State.

The unit helps ensure permanently bonded families through the timely termination of parental rights, formal placement of children into approved homes, adoption finalization, and efficient post-adoption services. The unit processed 38 voluntary releases of parental rights and 97 requests for release of post-adoption information.

The team is looking forward to working with community stakeholders to implement procedure changes in 2026 that are expected to result in faster finalization of adoptions and permanency for children.

On November 21, 2025 the Family Division - Juvenile Section held its Annual Adoption Day celebration at the newly opened Criminal Justice Center. Five families were excited to allow for public adoption finalization hearings for the newest additions to their forever families. The event was well attended and remarks were given by Michigan Supreme Court Justice Kyra Harris Bolden. Third Circuit Court Chief Judge Patricia Fresard, Third Circuit Family Division - Juvenile Section's Interim Presiding Judge Sheila Ann Gibson, Juvenile Section Probate Judge Judy A. Hartsfield, and Juvenile Section Probate Judge Todd E. Briggs attended.



## Adoptions Data for 2025

<b>2025 Filings</b>	
Voluntary Release of Parental Rights	38
Requests for Release of Post-Adoption Information	97
Pending Adoption Petitions as of January 1, 2025	114
New Filings	219
Reopened Cases	0
<b>Total Caseload</b>	<b>468</b>
Adoptions Finalized	284
Adoption Petitions Withdrawn	2
Adoption Petitions Dismissed	7
Rescissions Granted	0
Adoption Petitions Transferred	0
<b>Total Dispositions</b>	<b>293</b>
<b>Pending Adoption Petitions: December 31, 2025</b>	<b>175</b>

## Juvenile Status Department

### *Status Cases*

The Status Department along with Family Assessment Services provides YASI/MASI Assessments and Youth-Centered Diversion Services for youth that are exhibiting incorrigible behavior in the home, school and or community. Programs such as this have contributed to a reduction in formal delinquency dockets for status offenses, while affording youth the opportunity to redirect their paths toward more positive outcomes.

The Status Department continues to service and accept 17-year-olds with new charges into the JDF. This is in accordance with the October 1, 2021 Raise the Age legislation which has implemented Juvenile Services to include juveniles who are 17 years of age.

This fiscal year the Family Division–Juvenile Section was awarded the Status Offender Project Grant (SOD) from the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO). This funding supports Diversion Program participants by connecting them with community partners who provide transportation, mentoring sessions, personnel development support, peer group services, academic assistance, and parenting groups. These diversion services are designed to meet each youth’s individual needs while holding them accountable for their actions.

### *Designated Cases*

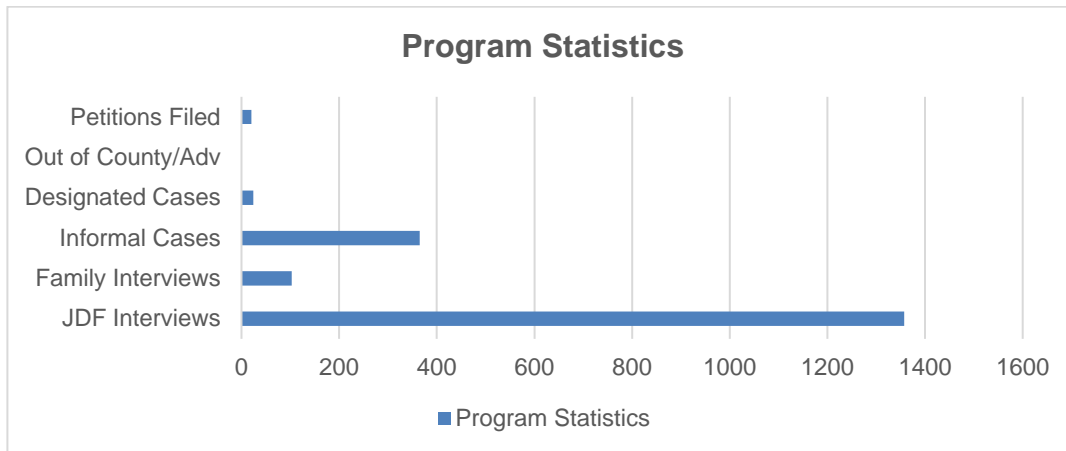
The department provides Presentence Reports and Sentencing Information Reports to judges for youth that have been charged as an adult and pled or been found guilty on a Designated Petition.

### *24-Hour Intake at the JDF*

The Status Department at the Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF) is responsible for screening all youth admitted to the facility, including those with new charges, writs, remands, or holds. (Reference the Diversion Act not Raise the Age.)In addition, the department coordinates transportation for detained youth to and from other counties. The unit also collaborates with the Interstate Compact to facilitate the retrieval and return of youth who have been apprehended outside of their home state with an active writ.

Since the implementation of the Ohio Youth Assessment System–Detention Tool (OYAS-DET) in 2024, all youth are screened prior to admission to determine whether detention is necessary. In accordance with the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2022, this screening process has contributed to a decline in unnecessary detention at the Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF).

The Status Department assists the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services with after hour removals when children are determined to be in an unsafe environment, helps after hours with law enforcement agencies seeking warrants through the on-call Emergency Judge and also assists with the Extreme Risk Protection Order warrant requests.



*Above:*

- Petitions Filed (**20**)
- Out County Cases/ Plea Under Advisement (**0**)
- Designated Cases (**24**)
- Informal Probation (Diversion, Incurrigible) (**365**)
- Interviews on Admittance into Juvenile Detention Facility (**1,357**)
- Family Interviews (103)

### Juvenile Mental Health Court

The Juvenile Mental Health Court (JMHC) is a problem-solving court that combines judicial supervision with community mental health and other ancillary services in an effort to reduce court contact and improve the quality of life for program participants.

JMHC strives to identify youth with mental health concerns and divert them from the formal court docket. The youth and families are connected to appropriate services in the community, to reduce the number of youths with mental health issues who re-offend and increasing adherence to appropriate services for mental health issues by using a multi-disciplinary team approach to develop and monitor service plans and compliance.

The supervising jurist of the JMHC is Judge Judy A. Hartsfield. Youth and families have status review hearings every three weeks and the jurists closely monitor these cases. The jurists reward progress through the program with various incentives and handle non-compliance with graduated sanctions.

Clinical Assessments, Home-Based Therapy, Medication Reviews, and other Clinical Groups are provided by the Family Assessment Unit, Guidance Center, Lincoln Behavioral Services, Black Family Development, Southwest Counseling Solutions, Development Center, CNS, Children's Center, Starfish Family Services, Hegira, Team Wellness, Ruth Ellis and America's Community Council.

These agency partnerships have worked with JMHC for several years, thus allowing JMHC to serve youth who do not receive Medicaid through the use of the Severe Emotional Disturbance Waiver. Home-based therapy provides a therapist in the home for 2-20 hours per week, as needed by the participant. Parent Support Partners work with parents once per week, and Wraparound Services meet with the family several times per

week. Each agency provides psychiatric services. Drug testing, assessment, and treatment referrals are handled through the Court's Case Management Team.

JMHC added a Parent Support Group for parents, as well as an Anger Management group through New Oakland Family Centers, and these are both ongoing.

In 2025, JMHC experienced notable growth. The year began with 29 active participants, and an additional twelve youth have been admitted thus far. JMHC operates with three jurists, each managing their own docket. Two full-time probation officers oversee community monitoring, including tether supervision, and ensure participants comply with the conditions of their court orders. In addition, JMHC employs one full-time case manager responsible for docketing, maintaining participant contact, and coordinating scheduling and system updates.

JMHC's Education Advocacy service provides all participants with a need for education advocacy an assigned attorney advocate from one of the five practicing attorney groups at Juvenile Court.

Juvenile Mental Health Court team members attended the Michigan Association of Treatment Court Professionals (MATCP) conference, which provided relevant information on Problem Solving Courts. Judge Hartsfield, Program Judge, Program Coordinator, Deborah Nelson, and Sonya Ristic, Manager, presented a session on Juvenile Mental Health Courts and the Importance of Educational Advocacy at the NAMI Annual Conference in Novi, MI.

### Juvenile Mental Health Court Statistics 2025 Program Participants

Returning Participants	29
New Admissions	12
Successful Completions	18
Discharged	9
<b>Total Participants</b>	<b>14</b>



### Assigned Counsel Services

The Assigned Counsel Services (ACS) Department is responsible for processing attorney assignments and scheduling attorneys to serve as Emergency House Counsel and House Counsel to represent indigent parties. ACS Attorneys additionally serves in the role of Diversion Conference Counsel for the Juvenile Diversion Program. The department also addresses attorney assignment and payment inquiries and ensures that attorneys are available to courtrooms as needed.

It is the goal of our department to enhance and expand training opportunities for our attorneys, ensuring their continued professional development and capacity to effectively serve the families of our court.

In 2025, ACS added six new attorneys to its Attorney List. As part of its continued commitment to strengthening the list, ACS conducted outreach to several local colleges and universities to expand recruitment efforts.

Additionally, ACS sought to enhance professional development opportunities for attorneys and successfully offered eight virtual training sessions, including training for compensation.

### **Development Opportunities for Attorneys**

Attorney Assignments Scheduled	<b>4,778</b>
Orders of Appointments	<b>262</b>
Request for Emergency House Counsel Assignments	<b>1,455</b>
Notice of Removal of Assigned Counsel	<b>510</b>
Appearances	<b>159</b>
Attorney Assignment/Payment Inquiries	<b>137</b>

### **Baby Court update**

The Third Circuit Court has continuously had a Baby Court docket since 2005. We are extremely proud of the Baby Court docket and our collaborations, which include:

- Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network
- Wayne State University
- Dr. Ann Stacks, director of the Infant Mental Health Program at the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute and an associate director at Wayne State
- The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Child Welfare Division
- ZERO TO THREE, through the Safe Babies Court Team initiative

Our history with this model has proven that early intervention for babies and children at a young age has resulted in less time in out-of-home care, which in turn has a positive impact on strengthening parenting skills and achieving successful reunifications without recidivism. The Baby Court docket continues to serve as a national model, with recent developments further advancing our mission to improve outcomes for infants, toddlers, and families in Michigan.

### **Expanding the Model with Federal and Community Support**

In 2023, Michigan was awarded a federal HRSA (Health Resources and Services Administration) grant to expand early childhood mental health services and improve systems-level coordination across child welfare, early intervention, and judicial systems. The Third Circuit Court's Baby Court docket is a key partner in this initiative, helping to integrate Infant Mental Health principles into child welfare practices statewide. Part of the HRSA grant funded the Community Coordinator position (hosted at Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network), which has focused on building the docket's capacity and program's overall integrity over the past year.

Additionally, our partnership with ZERO TO THREE's Safe Babies Court Team program has been instrumental in driving systemic change. The Safe Babies approach emphasizes:

- Equity and reducing racial disparities in child welfare outcomes
- Strong collaboration across systems to ensure timely access to services
- Centering the voices of families and incorporating their lived experiences into policy and practice

These partnerships have allowed us to expand the impact of Baby Court by creating community-driven solutions, such as the Active Community Team (ACT). This team includes stakeholders from child welfare, legal professionals, therapists, and parent advocates who work collaboratively to enhance the effectiveness of Baby Court and related programs.

## 2025 Docket Highlights

In 2025, there were 12 families on the docket. Of those:

- 5 cases were new and,
- 6 families were reunified quickly

Notably, no cases have been referred back to the traditional docket for termination of parental rights, a testament to the effectiveness of the Baby Court model in supporting families.

## A Collaborative and Therapeutic Approach

A key to this model is a non-adversarial approach to hearings. This requires attorneys to have a deep understanding of children’s attachment needs and the importance of a therapeutic relationship in fostering change among parents who themselves often suffer from trauma.

We recognize the importance of having highly skilled Lawyer-Guardian ad Litem (LGALs) for the children as well as the parents who appear on our dockets. As a result, the Court has contracted with five law firms to provide representation for all children in Wayne County. These attorneys exclusively represent children and are required to participate in ongoing training and comply with their statutory obligation to meet with the children prior to each and every hearing in their placement. These attorneys file an affidavit with the Court confirming these obligations.

## Training and Professional Development

The Court has played a pivotal role in developing and continuously improving the Baby Court self-paced training program, which now emphasizes the critical importance of equity in child welfare.

### TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



For Early Childhood Court Team members



Bringing an Early Childhood Court to your county



An introduction to Early Childhood Courts

Updated content explores systemic disparities, implicit bias, and culturally responsive practices, providing participants with practical strategies to reduce racial inequities and promote inclusive engagement with families. By addressing the intersection of equity and early intervention, the training equips attorneys, caseworkers, and therapists with the tools to advocate effectively for children and families, reinforcing Baby Court’s mission to create a just and trauma-informed child welfare system.

To register, scan the QR code to the right and complete the registration form. After you complete the registration, instructions appear for self-registration. The first training session introduces the Baby Court, including why Baby Courts were developed. The session also provides evidence for its effectiveness, team member’s roles, and eligibility. It takes about 45 minutes to complete.

A longer training session is required for all attorneys, caseworkers, and therapists who work with parents on the docket. The interactive 9-hour Baby Court Team training follows a family as they move through Baby

Court, from the Child Protective Services investigation to case closure. This training has five modules that describe:

- The need for Baby Court, evidence of effectiveness, and team members' values and behaviors
- Baby Court's commitment to improving equity and reducing racial disparities in child welfare
- Child welfare policy and procedures, the purpose of different court hearings
- Infant Mental Health services and children's developmental needs
- Court reports, testimony, and preparing families

### **Reflections on Progress**

Referee Dawn Hoffmann now presides over the Baby Court docket having taken over the docket from retired Referee Kathleen Allen.

With new initiatives, including the federal HRSA grant and strengthened collaborations with ZERO TO THREE, the Third Circuit Court remains committed to ensuring that families receive the best possible support. By fostering secure attachment, addressing systemic inequities, and prioritizing the voices of families, Baby Court continues to set a standard of excellence for child welfare interventions.

### **Juvenile Drug Treatment Court - STAND**

The Supervised Treatment for Alcohol and Narcotic Dependency (STAND) Program is a Wayne County Juvenile Drug Treatment Court (JDTC) that is designed and staffed to supervise and treat non-violent juvenile offenders who come before the court due to a delinquency offense and have been identified with a substance use disorder. JDTC's are built upon a unique partnership between the juvenile justice system and the drug treatment community. The drug courts are also dependent upon the creation of a non-adversarial courtroom atmosphere where the Jurists, probation officers, court administration and treatment providers work together as a team toward a common goal of breaking the cycle of substance use and criminal behavior. The STAND Program is supervised by Honorable Karen Y. Braxton.

Participants in the STAND Program are provided access to a continuum of alcohol and drug-related treatment services. The program also provides many other services such as family therapy, a parent group, tutoring, and mentoring services. The Court focuses on incentives as a reward for the progress a participant makes. The participants have been awarded for their efforts with incentives throughout the program. Incentives such as gift cards and judicial praise. In addition, gas cards and scheduled transportation services have been provided to our participants and their families to assist with case conference hearings, treatment appointments, mentoring services, community service, pro-social activities and drug testing.

Additionally, the program promotes engagement amongst participants by utilizing pro-social activities. Pro-social activities serve to encourage youth to engage in activities that promote teamwork, foster positive relationships and improve the well-being of the youth and their families. Pro-social activities may include Laser Tag, Top Golf (*right*), Escape Rooms, Softball, Rock Climbing, Roller-Skating, Picnics, and Bowling.



The program lasts approximately one year, but the actual length of the program depends upon the participant's progress. Upon successful completion of the program, a participant's case will be closed and discharged from the court's jurisdiction. After successful

completion of the program, the youth participate in a formal graduation ceremony sharing their successes with family, friends, and other participants.

The STAND program provides intensive judicial intervention and supervision of the youth; a level of intervention not generally available through the traditional juvenile court process. However, the benefits to the participants and their families participating is significant. Not only can the youth be substance free after completion, but the youth are prepared for a productive life without any further court involvement.

The 2025 highlights for the STAND Program included a formal graduation, JDTC team attendance to one state & one national drug treatment court conferences and four pro-social activities that included a Laser Tag, Top Golf, Softball and Bowling.

Some of the measurable outcomes during 2025 were increased attendance and participation, increased incentives, increased program compliance and completion, lower recidivism rates and a decrease in substance use. STAND continues to be a model Juvenile Drug Treatment Court!



*Above: STAND Program JDTC Team - 2025 Holiday Bowling Outing*

## FAMILY DIVISION – JUVENILE

### Juvenile Drug Court Statistics 2025 Program Participants

Returning Participants	<b>19</b>
New Admissions	<b>19</b>
<b>Total Participants in Program for the Year</b>	<b>38</b>

### 2025 Outcomes

Total Participants	<b>38</b>
Discharged Participants	<b>10</b>
Graduated	<b>10</b>
<b>Active Participants at the end of 2025</b>	<b>18</b>

## Family Division – Domestic Relations Section



### **Hon. Helal A. Farhat**

*Presiding Judge, Family Division -  
Domestic Relations Section*

The Family Division – Domestic Relations Section is comprised of 12 Circuit Court Judges. The Honorable Helal A. Farhat serves as the Presiding Judge of the Division. In 2025, Judges William Hultgren, David DiStefano, and Sheila Miller-Martin assisted the Domestic Relations Section on various cases throughout the year.

The Family Division – Domestic Relations Section continued to meet the diverse needs of Wayne County families. Self-representation and out-of-wedlock births continued to shape the work of the Domestic Relations Section in 2025. Cases handled include:

- Divorce
- Paternity
- Custody
- Personal protection
- Emancipation of minors
- Name changes
- Parental waivers
- Infectious disease matters
- Extreme Risk Protection Order Act

Each of these case types may include matters concerning custody, support, parenting time, property, and other issues which often continue to come to the court for adjudication post-judgment. There were 14,177 new case filings in the division in 2025

The newest case type in the Family Division – Domestic Relations Section continued to grow in 2025 compared to 2024. The Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) Act was passed by the legislature and signed into law in May of 2023 to take effect in February 2024. ERPO allows certain individuals to obtain an order allowing law enforcement to seize firearms from the respondent and prohibits the respondent from purchasing or possessing a firearm. ERPO cases are brought in the Domestic Relations Section and heard by its Judges.

In 2024, 80 ERPO cases were filed in the Division. In 2025, there were 169 ERPO cases filed in the Division. It is anticipated that these numbers will continue to grow as more and more people learn about ERPO cases.

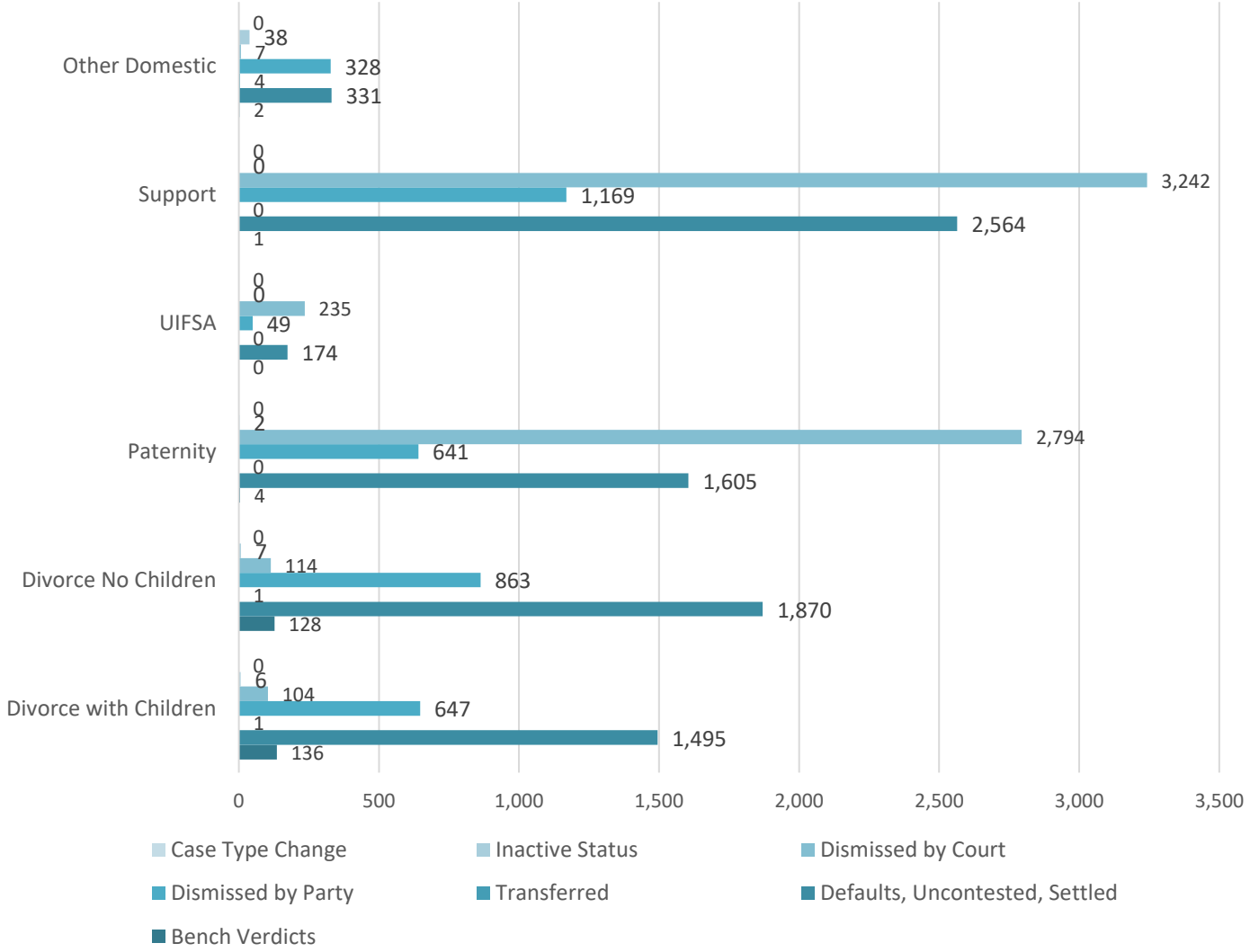
## Domestic Relations Cases in 2025

	Divorce With a Child	Divorce No Child	Paternity	UIFSA*	Support	Other cases Domestic**	Total
<b>Pending Cases as of Jan. 1, 2026</b>	1,431	1,319	5,156	226	6,615	277	15,024
New Filings	2,278	2,987	3,290	330	4,559	733	14,177
Reopened Cases	33	27	10	0	5	37	112
<b>Total Caseload</b>	<b>3,742</b>	<b>4,333</b>	<b>8,456</b>	<b>556</b>	<b>11,179</b>	<b>1,047</b>	<b>29,313</b>
<b>Dispositions Resulting From:</b>							
Bench Verdicts	136	128	4	0	1	2	271
Defaults, Uncontested, Settled	1,495	1,870	1,605	174	2,564	331	8,039
Transferred	1	1	0	0	0	4	6
Dismissed by Party	647	863	641	49	1,169	328	3,697
Dismissed by Court	104	114	2,794	235	3,242	7	6,496
Inactive Status	6	7	2	0	0	38	53
Case Type Change	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Dispositions</b>	<b>2,389</b>	<b>2,983</b>	<b>5,046</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>6,976</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>18,562</b>
<b>Pending Cases as of Dec 31, 2025</b>	<b>1,353</b>	<b>1,350</b>	<b>3,410</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>4,203</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>10,751</b>

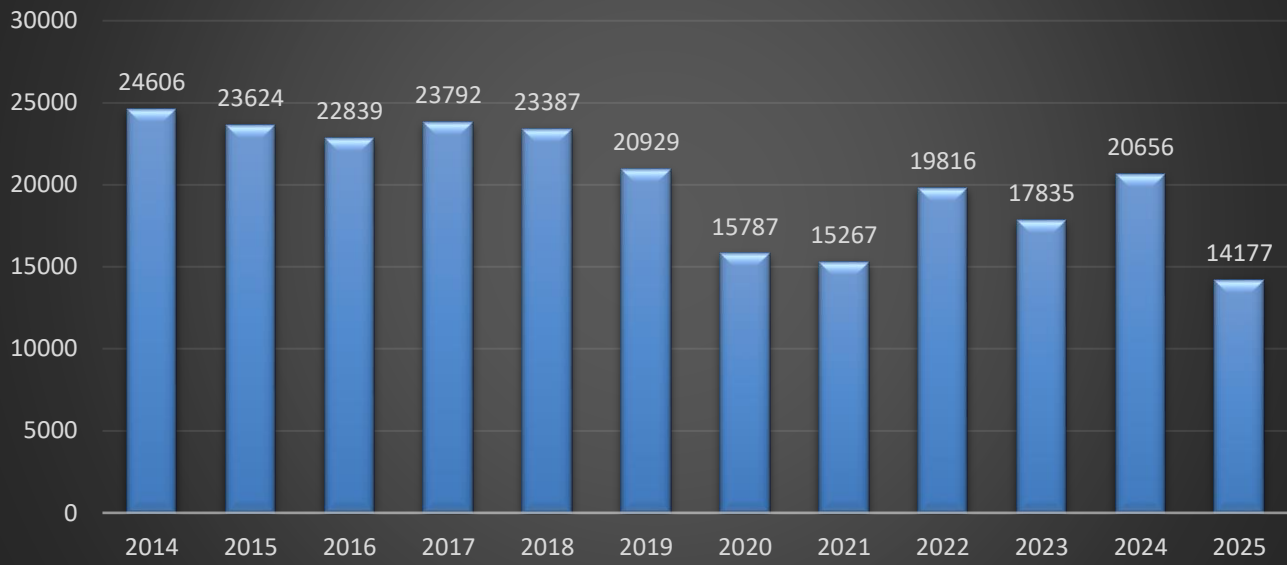
\*These cases were filed under the Uniform Interstate Support Family Support Act and the Court was asked to establish paternity, or to establish or modify child support in matters where the custodial party and the child lived outside of Michigan.

\*\*These matters are custody actions and other family matters.

## Total 2025 Family Domestic Dispositions



# 10 Year Comparison New Domestic Filings Per year

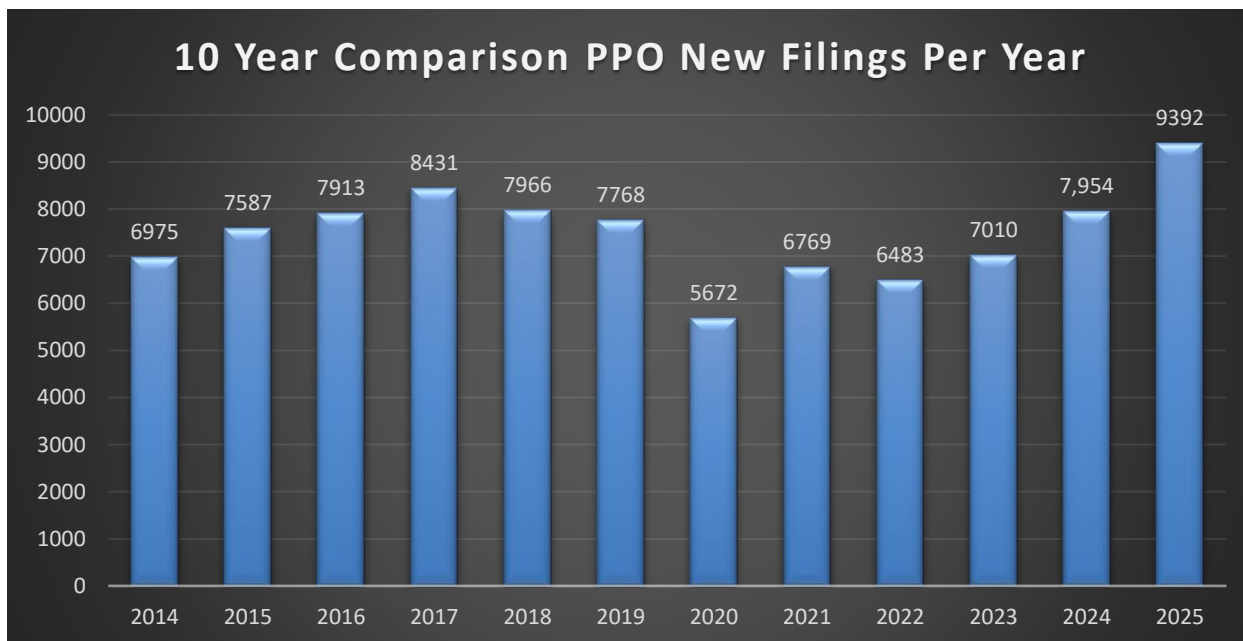


### Personal Protection Order (PPO)

The Family Division – Domestic Relations Section has a Personal Protection Order (PPO) docket to serve the civil personal protection order needs of domestic abuse, violence, and stalking victims. The PPO docket processed 9,392 new cases in 2025.

### Personal Protection Order Statistics in 2025

	Domestic Relations	Non-Domestic Relations	Juvenile	Total
<b>Pending Cases as of Jan. 1, 2026</b>	24	15	0	39
New Filings	6,450	2,865	77	9,392
Reopened Cases	214	144	1	359
<b>Total Caseload</b>	<b>6,688</b>	<b>3,024</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>9,790</b>
<b>Dispositions Resulting From:</b>				
Orders Issued Ex Parte	3,311	783	18	4,112
Orders Issued after Hearing	29	15	0	44
Transferred	0	0	0	0
Dismissed: Denied Ex Parte	3,171	2,106	59	5,336
Dismissed: Denied after Hearing	148	110	1	259
Dismissed by Party	2	0	0	2
Orders Issued after Denial	8	3	0	11
Case Type Change	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Dispositions</b>	<b>6,669</b>	<b>3,017</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>9,764</b>
<b>Pending Cases as of Dec. 31, 2025</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>26</b>



## Family Division – Friend of the Court



**Erin Lincoln**

*Deputy Court Administrator - Friend of the Court*

The Third Circuit FOC is the largest of its kind in Michigan, with 278,729 active domestic relations cases. The FOC is an administrative arm of the Court responsible for investigating, reporting, and making recommendations to the Court on matters of custody, parenting time, and support of minor children. The FOC also provides mediation as an alternative method of dispute resolution.

The FOC's mission of encouraging positive relations and ensuring financial security for the children and families is accomplished through the collective efforts of all of the departments contained therein: Administrative Operations which includes Ombudsman, Order Entry and Document Processing, Case Establishment, Information Services, Legal, the Referee Department and FOC Referee Support Services.

Friend of the Court referees, attorneys, and support staff process referrals to establish paternity and family support obligations. The attorneys assist the Family Division-Domestic Relations judges at review hearings to ensure that the “best interests of the children” are served. Once support is established, the departments work in concert to ensure collections. The Friend of the Court uses many means to collect child support. Over \$211 million in support was collected and distributed in 2025.

### FOC Fiscal Year 2025 Statistics

Caseload-Open FOC Dockets	278,729
Medical Support Notices Issued	41,243
Custody and Child Support Reports and Recommendations	19,081
Hearings Held by Referees	13,722
Child Support Enforcement Hearings	1,279
Bench Warrant Dismissals/Resolution	899
Amount of Child Support Distributed for the Year	\$211,921,800

## 2025 FOC Child Support Outreach

Community Partners	Number of Participants
Salvation Army William Booth Legal Aid Clinic	833
Focus Hope	29
United Auto Workers (UAW)	45
Arab Community Center for Economic & Social Services (ACCESS)	83
Team Wellness Center	14
Free Child Support Help Program	92
Other	143
<b>Total</b>	<b>1239</b>

FOC partners with many organizations to get information about its processes and procedures out to those who use the Friend of the Court Services. The FOC holds monthly, in person, outreaches at following three partner locations:

- UAW Region 1A Local 174 – 1st Friday of the month at 9650 S. Telegraph Road, Taylor, MI 48181
- ACCESS – 2nd Friday of the month at 6450 Maple Street, Dearborn, MI 48126
- Focus: HOPE – 3rd Wednesday of the month at 1400 Oakman Boulevard, Detroit, MI 48238

The Salvation Army William Booth Legal Aid Clinic also holds clinics each Thursday (except the first Thursdays of the month) at the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center. That clinic assisted 833 pro per litigants in 2025.

Additionally, the FOC partnered with the William Booth Legal Aid Clinic to host a free child support help events at Wayne County Community College – Northwest District in November. The clinic assisted 92 individuals with their child support issues.

## 2025 Family Division and FOC Highlights

- Judge Christopher Dingell joined the Family Domestic bench, coming from Juvenile, and has been assisting with the Case Establishment De Novos and Set Aside docket, along with building his own docket of cases.
- Case Establishment met its Contract Performance Standards in CAR (Court Action Referral Processing), Service of Process and Order Establishment, which it had failed the prior year.
- The FOC restructure moved forward with meetings held with staff to explain the changes and interviews conducted for several of the new positions.
- Several overtime projects were finished at the Friend of the Court to reduce backlogs in various departments that were caused by the COVID pandemic and staffing vacancies.
- Case Establishment was able to reduce its number of overtime standards cases from 7,792 to 5,518 from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.
- The Friend of the Court, in conjunction with Human Resources, was able to add approximately thirty-nine (39) new staff members, including five (5) new referees and nine (9) new Friend of the Court attorneys. While lower than 2024's hiring numbers, this was still a big hiring year for the Friend of the Court.

## 2026 Family Division and FOC Goals

- The Family Domestic Division will hire a PPO Coordinator and Assistant PPO Coordinator and review the operations of the Personal Protection Order courtroom in order to gain efficiencies and ensure that the public is being served in the best way possible, including making furniture and other improvements to the courtroom.
- The Friend of the Court will work to implement its restructure plan Q2 of 2026.
- The Friend of the Court will continue work with the Court's Human Resources department to reduce its staffing vacancy rate. The goal is to have a position vacancy rate of 0% by the end of 2026.
- Case Establishment will reduce its cases over time standards by 2,500 cases by the end of calendar year 2026.
- The Friend of the Court will work to meet all the Contract Performance Standards set by the Office of Child Support by October 1, 2026.



***Friend of the Court volunteers at the November Free Child Support Help Event. Pictured from left to right are Friend of the Court staff: Erin Lincoln, Leisha Moore, Derrick Ford, Dayna Crenshaw, Sandra Poe-Wheeler, Dyamone Smith, LaShan Bradley, Dominique Peacock, Heather Lutz, Shani Sanders, Donald Hall III, Myeshia Cole, Lori Kaczmarek and Jillian Fitzgerald.***

Friend of the Court welcomed many new staff in 2025, including this group of new employees who started in April 2025.

# Welcome to the *Team!*



From left to right: **Adil Khan**, Order Entry, **Jennifer Carswell**, Referee Support Services, **Rosalind Smith**, Case Establishment, **Francheska Williams**, Document Processing, **Danyale Williams**, Order Entry, **Ashley Rivers**, Information Services, **LaTraceia Hunt**, Family Assessment Services, **Dyamone Smith**, Information Services, **leisha Moore**, Information Services, **Dylan Jadeed**, Review and Modification.



**Friend of the Court staff attend the 2025 Michigan Family Support Council Fall Conference. Pictured from left to right: Dr. Lindsay Carr, Juanita Hawkins, David McPhail, JaVonne Ransom, Leslie Murphy, Deidra Gilbert, Daydrea Dennard, Renee Nash, Shanita Johnson, Kimberly LePoudre, Victoria Glenn, Vickie Huguley, Jared Hocker, Denise Gaston, Helen Hsu, Shaun McParland, Dyamone Smith, LaShan Bradley, leisha Moore**



**Chief Judge Patricia Perez Fresard administered the oath of office for all FOC staff at the FOC 2025 End of the Year Luncheon.**

# Court Events in 2025

## *Law Day – April*



## *Spring New Attorney Admissions - May*



## *Moot Court - July*



*CASA Volunteer Graduates*



*STAND Graduation*



*Judges Reading Day*



# Employee Events in 2025

## Staff Lunchtime Walks



## Departmental Holiday Parties



## Take Your Child to Work Day



## Staff Retirements

The Court thanks all of our retirees for their dedication and years of service. We wish them well!



*(left to right)* – **Regina Arnold**, 40 years, Senior Domestic Relations Specialist, **Daniel Flanagan**, 30 years, Domestic Relations Specialist, **Catherine Hammond**, 33 years, Pretrial Services Specialist, **Karen Hessler**, 18 years, Official Court Reporter, **Rosanne Hostnik**, 37 years, Family Division Referee



*(left to right)* – **C. Ilene Jenkins**, 38 years, Clinical Supervisor IV, **Samuel Porter**, 31 years, Probation Officer IV, **Kevin Purnell**, 38 years, Probation Officer, **Johnnye Robinson**, 35 years, Manager of Financial Services



*(left to right)* – **Lynn Ruhlman**, 40 years, Family Division Referee, **Maceo Talley**, 32 years, Information Specialist I, **Hon. Deborah Thomas**, 31 years, Third Circuit Court Judge

## In Memoriam - Employees



**LaTraceia Hunt**, Forensic Family Clinician I



**Mark Knight**, Court Reporting Services Supervisor



**Daniel Kromer**, Probation Officer



**Colleen Martin**, Information Specialist II



**Patricia Mitchell**, Judicial Secretary III

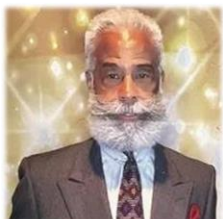


**Denita Schoeder**, Information Specialist II

## In Memoriam - Retirees



**Hon. Uylsses Boykin**, Third Circuit Court Judge



**Charles Keeling**, Senior Clinical Social Worker



**Helen Ross Jackson**, Official Court Reporter



**Hon. Virgil D. Smith**, Third Circuit Court Judge (including Chief Judge)



**Hon. Jeanne Stempien**, Third Circuit Court Judge

*Pictures unavailable:*

- **Joseph Chiesa**, Research Supervisor
- **Mark Curtin**, Senior Domestic Relations Specialist
- **Jeffrey D. Jones**, Account Clerk I

## History of the Bench – Chief Judges



(Some recent Chief Judges of the Third Judicial Circuit: *Left to Right:* Hon. James Rashid, Hon. Michael Sapala, Hon. Mary Beth Kelly, Hon. Timothy Kenny, Hon. William Giovan, Hon. Virgil Smith, Hon. Robert J. Colombo, Jr.).



1/16/67 – 1/14/75 - Hon. Joseph A. Sullivan



1/15/75 – 12/31/77 - Hon. James N. Canham



1/1/78 – 12/31/85 - Hon. Richard Dunn



1/1/86 – 3/16/86 - Hon. Joseph B. Sullivan



3/17/86 – 3/24/86 - Hon. W. Leo Cahalan



3/25/86 – 12/31/93 - Hon. Richard Kaufman



1/1/94 – 9/30/97 - Hon. James Rashid



10/1/97 – 12/31/01 - Hon. Michael Sapala



1/1/02 – 12/31/03 - Hon. Timothy M. Kenny  
(Co-Chief Judge)



1/1/02 – 12/31/07 - Hon. Mary Beth Kelly



1/1/08 – 12/31/08 - Hon. William Giovan



1/1/09 – 12/31/13 - Hon. Virgil C. Smith



1/1/14 – 12/31/18 - Hon. Robert J. Colombo, Jr.



1/1/19 – 12/31/22 - Hon. Timothy M. Kenny



1/1/23 – 12/31/25 – Hon. Patricia Perez  
Fresard



1/1/26 – present - Hon. Edward Ewell, Jr.