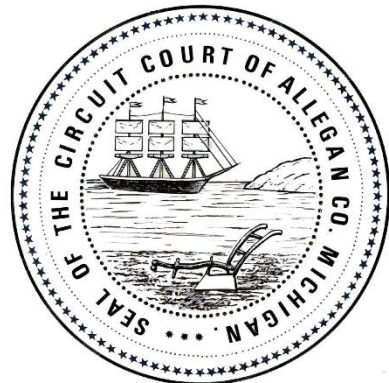


# 48th Circuit Court

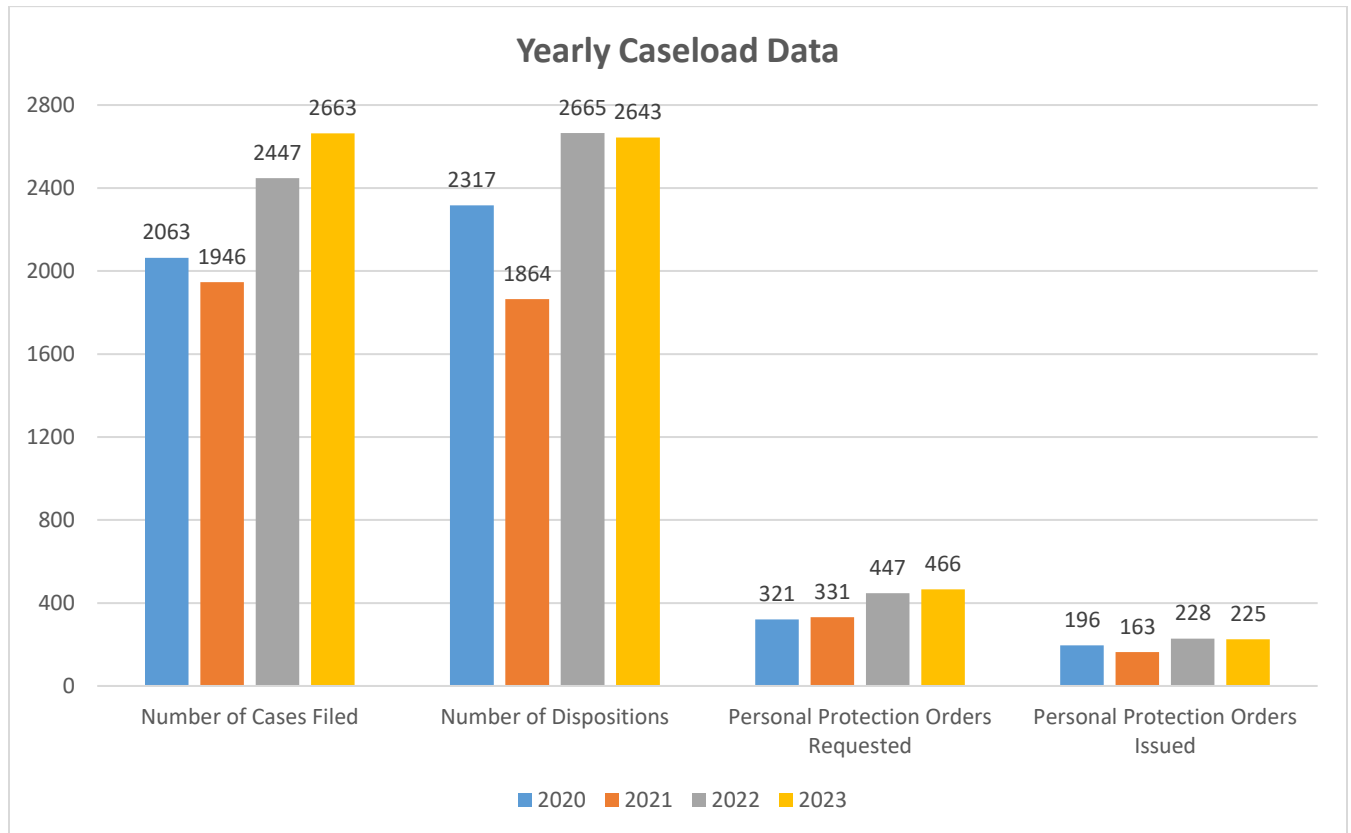
## 2024 Annual Report

Thursday, June 6, 2024

Criminal and Civil,  
Friend of the Court,  
Family Division



# Circuit Court Statistics

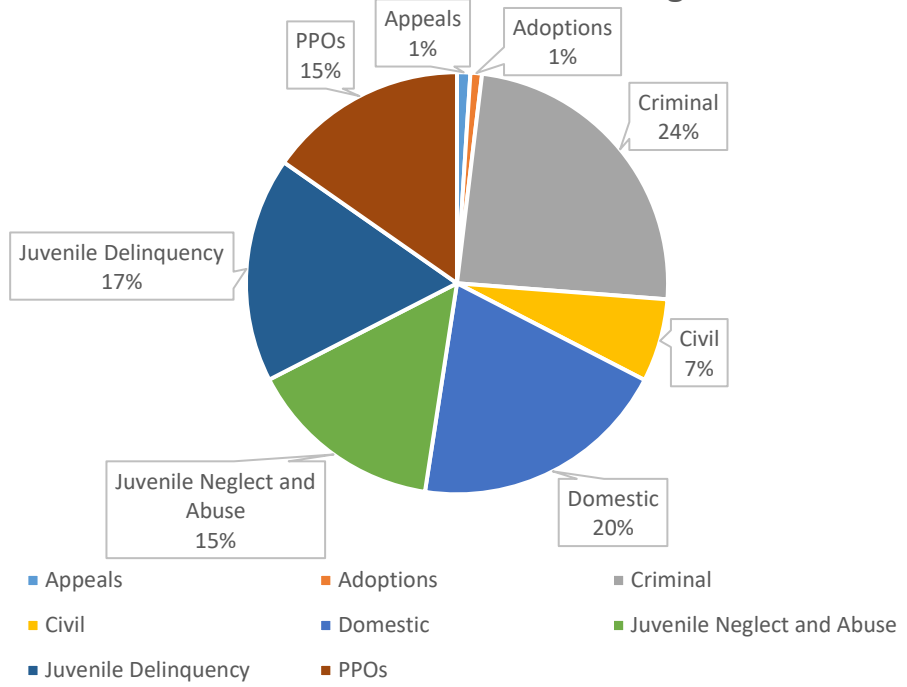


Circuit Court continues to see a high number of case filings and dispositions. 2023, was the highest year on record with 2,663 new cases filed.

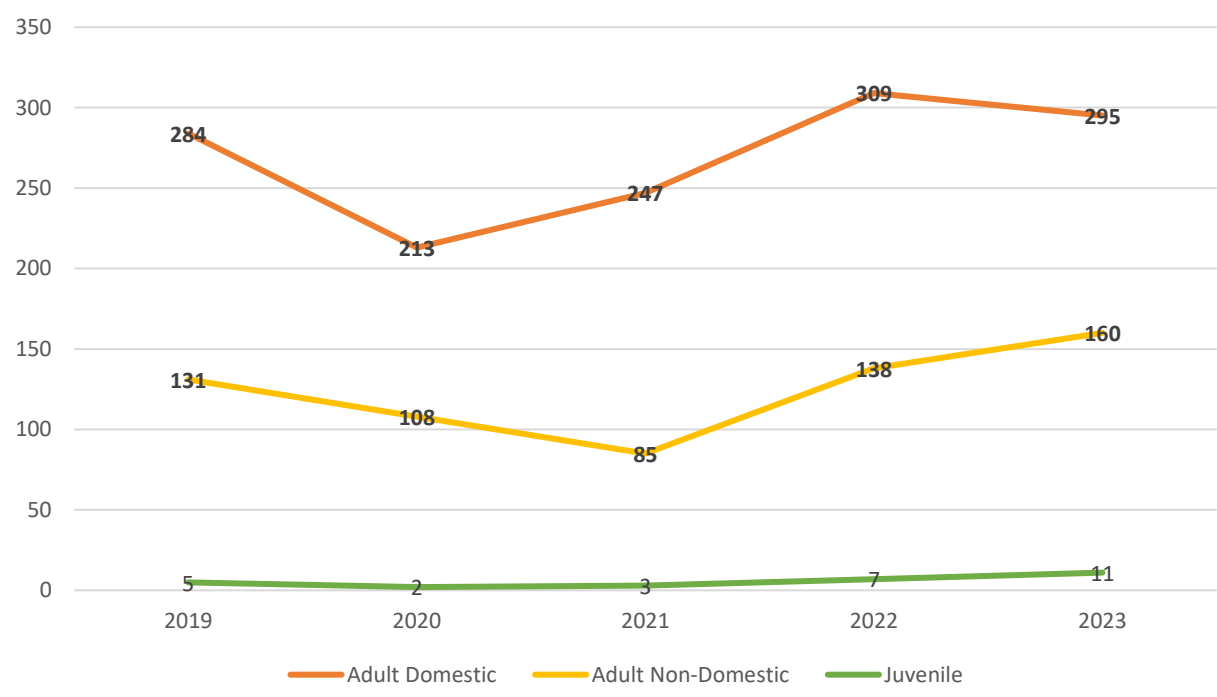
Following disruptions caused by COVID, we reported a backlog of 118 jury trials in 2020. In March of 2022, Circuit Court had a backlog of 79 trials. In March of 2023, this number was 82 despite Circuit Court conducting 26 jury trials in 2022. In March of 2024, this number was 83 despite Circuit Court conducting 38 jury trials in 2023.

In 2023, 2,663 cases were filed in Circuit Court, which includes all case types. 741 of these cases were felony cases, which is an increase from the prior year with 685 felony cases.

### Breakdown of 2023 New Filings

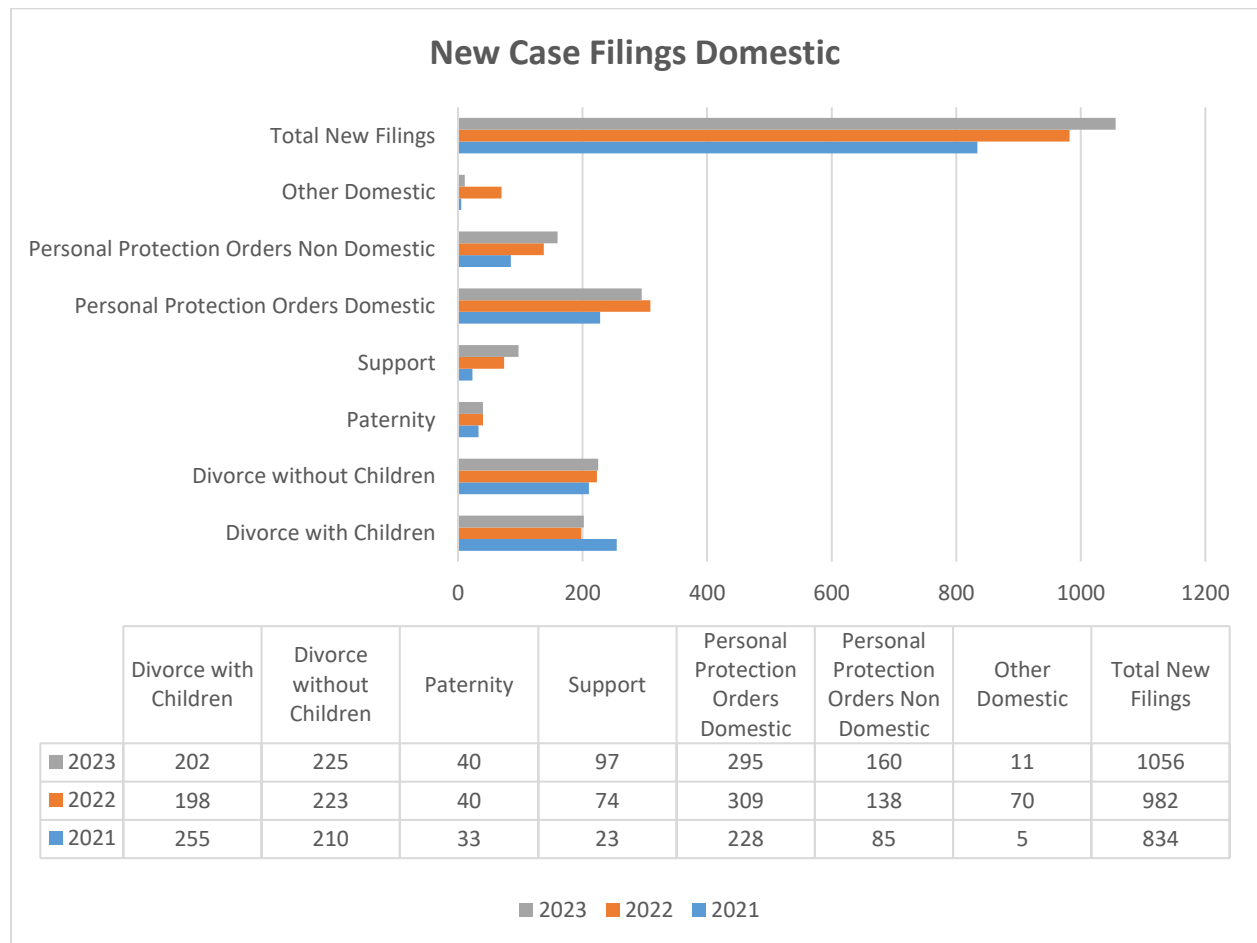


### Personal Protection Orders



2023 was another busy year for domestic cases as well, with numbers staying fairly consistent over the past 3 years.

Statistics relating to the domestic docket can be deceiving. Unlike other case types, the court dedicates significant amounts of time to these cases in years following the filing date, in some cases, the court remains involved with the family for over 18 years. For example, the court remains responsible to hear requests for changes to custody, parenting time, and child support. To put this into perspective, the Friend of the Court typically has around 5,000 open cases at any given time.



# Circuit Court Judicial Changes

On June 30, 2023, Judge Roberts Kengis retired from the bench.

We are extremely grateful for the support of the County and the Board of Commissioners in permitting expenditures to have visiting judges come in and assist during this time. Retired Judge Timothy Hicks from Muskegon County and Retired Judge Laura Baird from Ingham County played a vital role covering cases during this time.

Following his appointment, Judge Matthew Antkoviak was sworn in to the bench on August 24, 2023.

Judge Margaret Zuzich Bakker agreed to take on the additional duties as Chief Circuit Court Judge after only a short break.

In 2023, Allegan County Circuit Court received approval to add a third Circuit Court judge beginning in 2025. We are very excited for the addition of a new judge. The Circuit Court sincerely appreciates the county's willingness to move forward with all of these changes.



**Judge Roberts Kengis**



**Judge Matthew Antkoviak**

# Circuit Court Jury Trials

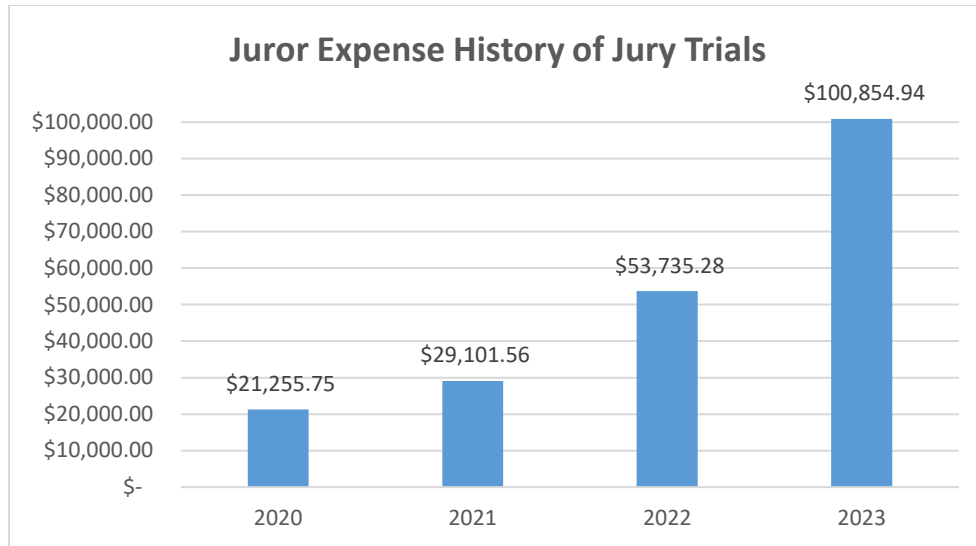
2023 was a record setting year with a total of 38 jury trials being called up in Circuit Court. Of these 38 cases, potential jurors were called in 34 times. 18 of these cases were handled by Judge Bakker, 11 by Judge Kengis, 4 by Judge Hicks, 4 by Judge Antkoviak, and 1 by Judge Buck.

With the assistance of our new jury management system, we summoned 4,950 Allegan County residents with a one step process – summons and questionnaire sent together. Citizens are then required to respond to the questionnaire within 10 days. There is a very easy way of doing the questionnaire online. There are additional online tools and resources for citizens, including a way to email the court directly with any questions or concerns. Additionally, the system also allows for jurors to postpone their service to later dates if there are pre-arranged commitments that conflict with the initial dates of service. This allows them to take ownership of their service dates while increasing confirmed juror percentages.

Of those 4,950 Allegan County citizens summoned in 2023, we confirmed 2,084 as available jurors. The remaining 2,866 were either disqualified (643), excused (441), exempt due to age or military obligation (627), undeliverable (132) or unfortunately did not respond (371). 427 citizens were actually seated on a jury panel for the 38 jury trials conducted in 2023.

Managing jurors and their needs is still a full-time job for a Circuit Court employee, but our attendance rates are 95-100% for reporting days. Prior to COVID, the courts averaged about 12 trials per year. In 2022, we had 26 jury trials, 11 of which occurred in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter between the beginning of September and mid-December. This exponential rate continued into 2023, with another 11 trails in Q1 and finishing the year with a record 38.

There is a significant cost to conducting these many trials, both directly and indirectly. In addition to “all hands-on deck” for circuit court staff, prosecutors, defense attorneys, witnesses and victims, jurors are provided a small stipend, mileage reimbursement, and meal allowance per reporting day. Below is a summary of the expenses paid to jurors for jury trials. These expenses are tracked and charged on the jury line item under the Circuit Court activity on the general ledger.



# Clean Slate

Circuit Court spent a considerable amount of time working to respond to the Clean Slate legislative changes in 2023. In collaboration with the Circuit Court Clerk’s Office, we were able to work through reports to determine where data was inaccurate or incomplete causing the system to prevent the set aside.

Counties were offered the opportunity to apply for state funding to pay for overtime wages to assist with these initial reports. We were awarded funding which was used to assist in review of the reports, which contained approximately 6,000 charges. No employees were mandated to complete the work and instead we were able to offer the opportunity and the workload was split amongst those employees who expressed an interest. This funding was used to completely cover the overtime hours necessary to complete the work in a timely manner.

Clean slate legislation for juveniles took effect on December 31, 2023, after the effective date was pushed back from earlier in the year. However, courts did not receive the necessary reports until April 1, 2024, which are currently being worked. The initial reports also required a large amount of time be dedicated to finding missing data and there were approximately 12,000 charges and tickets in the first report.

# Swift and Sure Sanctions Probation Program (SSSPP)

The Swift and Sure Sanctions Probation Program is an intensive probation supervision program that targets high risk felony offenders. SSSPP participants are closely monitored by the court program coordinator and the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) probation agent. The participants are subjected to frequent random testing for drug and alcohol use and are required to attend frequent meetings with MDOC probation and the SSSPP coordinator. To improve probationer success, the program promptly imposes graduated sanctions which include small amounts of jail time for probation violations. The 48<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court grant for SSSPP has increased from the previous year to FY24 (\$133,000).

## 2023 Statistics

- **8 Successful Participant Graduations**
- **1 Unsuccessful Participant Discharge for non-compliance**

## Current 2024 Statistics

- **18 current Participants (as of April 8, 2024)**
- **Received 24 referrals for potential participants**
  - **11 referrals not recommended**
  - **9 recommended referrals sentenced into program**
  - **4 recommended referrals pending (scheduled for sentencing)**
  - **0 graduations or discharges for non-compliance**

The Swift and Sure program had some personnel changes in the year 2023. Circuit Court Judge, Robert A. Kengis, retired in August and incoming Judge Matthew Antkoviak took over for the program. In December of 2023, a new Swift and Sure coordinator was hired as Aaron Arredondo left employment to complete law school. The entire Circuit Court team would like to thank Judge Kengis and Aaron for their years of dedication to the SSSPP.



The future is bright for the Allegan County Swift and Sure Sanctions Program. Our goal is to increase the program numbers while ensuring each participant is receiving the proper services to set them up for success in life. Previous annual reports have shown that SSSPP graduates are less likely to commit further offenses than standard probationers within three years of admission into the program. With continued funding, we hope to continue to change lives as this program has been a proven cost-efficient way of reducing recidivism and an effective alternative to long prison terms.

Efrain Avila  
Swift and Sure Coordinator

# Allegan County

## Friend of the Court (FOC)

The FOC Office continued to provide services to parents throughout 2023. In-person meetings and hearings are available for many court users. FOC staff continues to use technology, such as electronic signing of documents, telephone meetings, two-way communication through MiChildSupport accounts, and remote hearings conducted using the Zoom platform, to provide robust services to parents with a FOC case. Many court users appreciate the availability of these alternate means of doing business with the FOC Office. There were two staff turnovers in 2023. Training for two new employees is ongoing.

### Progress Towards 2023 Goals

At the beginning of 2023, several goals were established. The goals and progress made towards those goals are discussed in this section.

**Grow the ACT program** – The Specialized Enforcement Officer has continued to build partnerships with community partners. Progress: the FOC has established a referral process with OnPoint to provide case management services for individuals that have child support orders and have substance use disorders, mental health disorders, and/or lack housing. This will permit the FOC to accept more cases into the court’s ACT program. In addition, the FOC has been able to secure some resources for parents with support obligations, through a new program that is funded by the Office of Child Support and Michigan Works. This program, GEMS, is discussed in a later section of this report. Resources may include vehicle repairs, securing identification documents and/or drivers licenses, resume writing, job search and career training, technology packages, etc.

**Implement the Gain Employment Maintain Support (GEMS) Program** – The FOC Office worked with the Michigan Office of Child Support and West Michigan Works! to implement the GEMS program in 2023. This cooperative effort provides referrals for parents with support orders to a career coach at West Michigan Works! The career coach assesses the parent’s barrier(s) to obtaining and maintaining employment. Services may include resume writing, interviewing skills, and job search. Support is provided to remove barriers to employment. For example, the career coach may provide assistance with getting a license reinstated, arranging for vehicle repairs, or locating employers that will accept applicants with a criminal history background. In addition, participating parents may earn incentives for accomplishing mini-goals set with the career coach. This program is funded by the Michigan Office of Child Support and West Michigan Works! A recent quarterly report is attached. The largest barrier to employment for parents in Allegan County GEMS program is transportation.

**Provide an Orientation session for parents with a FOC case** – Over the summer of 2023, the FOC director worked with an intern to develop a PowerPoint presentation for use for an

orientation program for parents with a FOC case. Sessions will be offered in person and via Zoom. The first session will be offered in May 2024.

**Provide information to parents about resources in Allegan County** – Two monitors have been installed in the hallway outside of the FOC Office. One monitor plays videos in a loop. The videos cover topics such as the availability of mediation, protecting children on social media, accessing a MiChildSupport account, and 211 services. A second monitor displays numerous flyers for different parent resources in Allegan County, e.g. programs from MSU Extension Office, Community Action Agency resources, early childhood programs, and other community resources are shared with the public. The monitors were provided by IS and the FOC office coordinator updates the content on these monitors on a regular basis.

**Review and update the FOC website** – Reviewing the website and ensuring updated information is on the website is an ongoing project. Working with IS, the FOC now has several forms that are available for parent use that allow for completion and submission of forms to the FOC Office electronically. This can save parents time and money.

### **Performance Statistics**

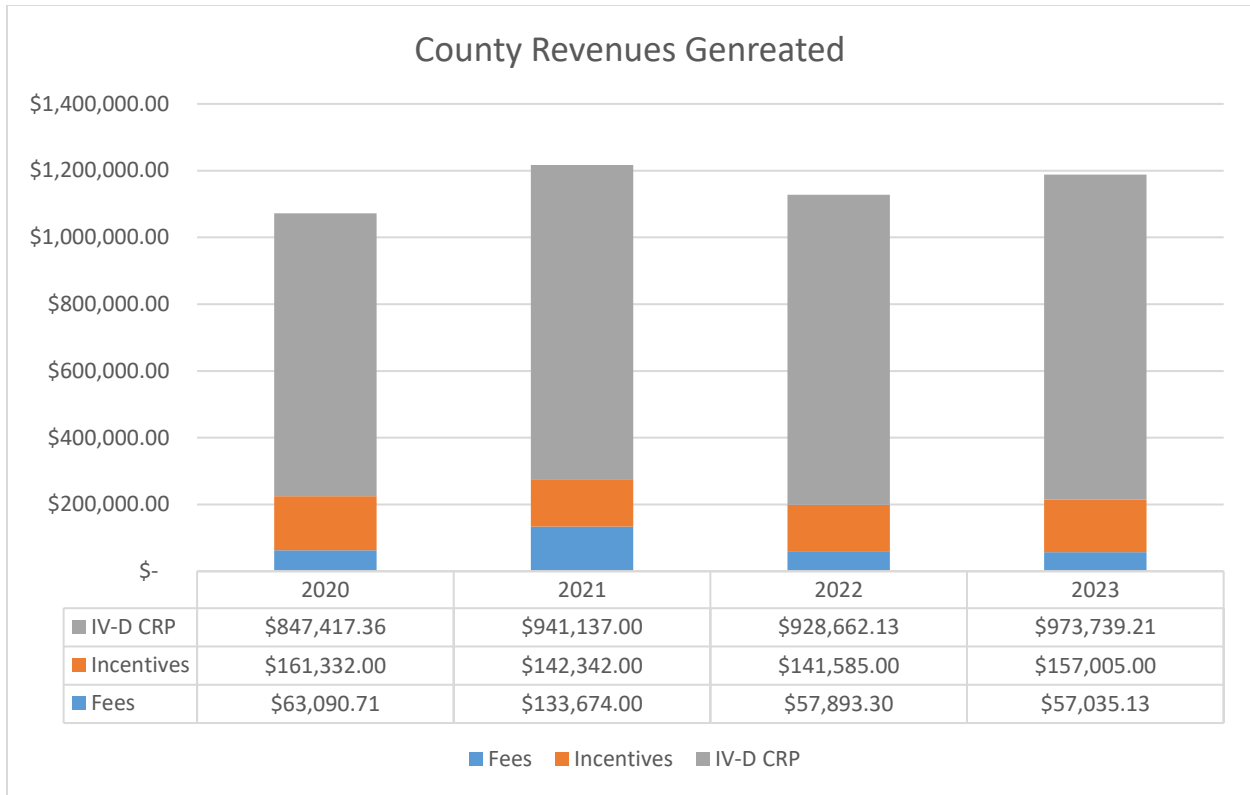
The FOC distributed a total amount of support of \$12,820,171.51 in 2023. The majority of support was distributed to parents with minor children.

Through a cooperative agreement between the court and the Allegan County Sheriff's Office, a Sheriff's Deputy is dedicated to enforcing bench warrants issued for failure to pay child support. This Deputy also serves process for cases where paternity and support are being established. The deputy attempts to resolve FOC bench warrants without arrest whenever possible. The FOC office collected \$8,793.48 in bench warrant fees which, in addition to reimbursement from the Cooperative Reimbursement Program Contract, help fund this position.

FOC Facilitators resolved 65% of custody issues outside of the courtroom through facilitative gathering information conferences.

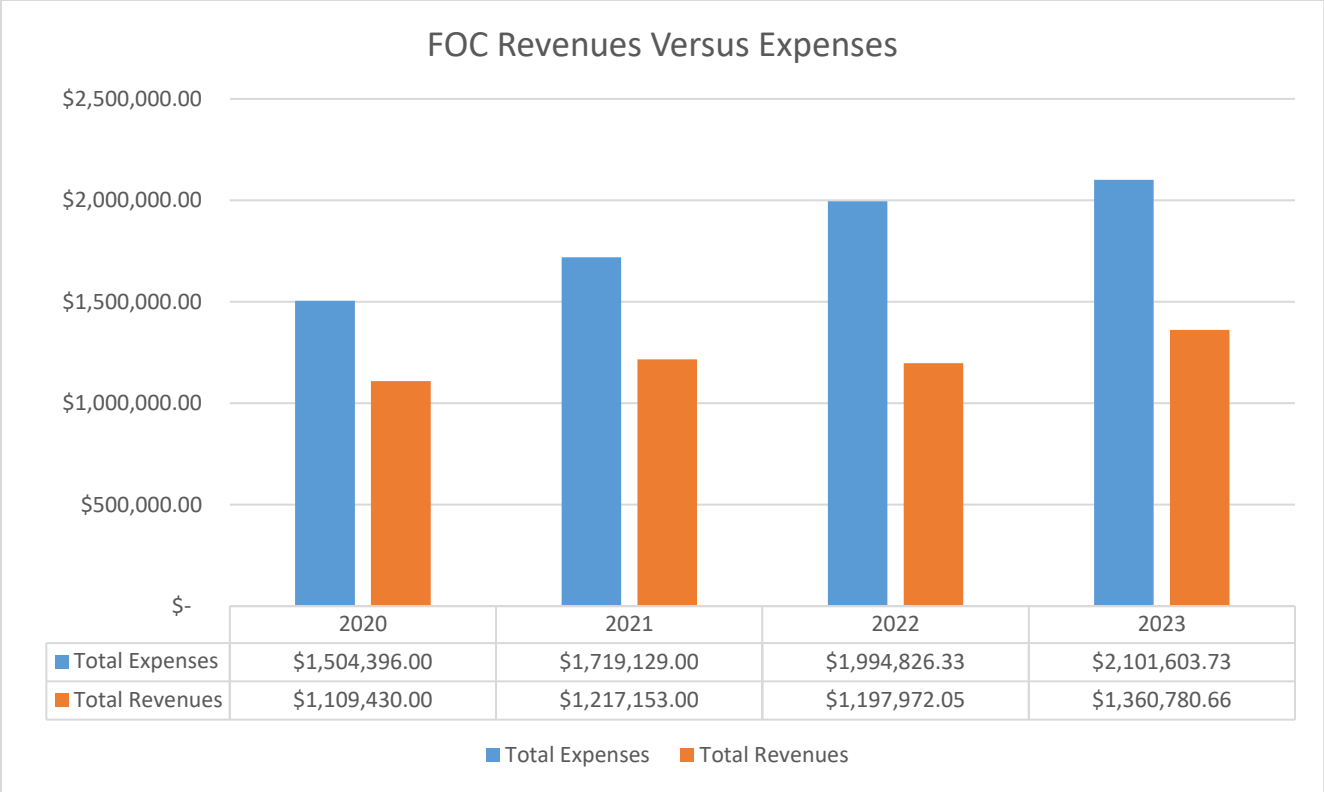
FOC Enforcement Officers have an average of 1,106 court cases each. They are responsible for monitoring support payments and initiating enforcement of the court's custody, parenting time, and support orders. In 2023, the Enforcement Officers issued 223 custody and parenting time notices and 318 bench warrants. These activities were in addition to monitoring and responding to case alerts, meeting with parents to help resolve disputes, sending income withholding notices, making referrals for mediation services, and calculating support and drafting consent orders for parents. FOC staff had 42 parents under FOC supervision for child support enforcement. This is the highest number ever seen in FOC supervision.

In addition, FOC staff conducted child support reviews in several hundred cases. FOC staff sent out 2,917 National Medical Support Notices.



### **Revenue Classifications**

1. IV-D CRP reflects the revenue for IV-D services. It is the total amount of reimbursement received under the Cooperative Reimbursement Program (CRP) contract. The CRP is a federal payment allocated to the county general fund. This amount is directly related to the number of expenditures by the FOC Office. CRP revenues for 2023, were \$973,739.21.
  
2. Incentive reflects the performance-based federal payment allocated to the county general fund. It is the total amount of incentives received pursuant to the federal IV-D program. 42 USC 658A 45 CFR 305.35. The FOC earned \$157,005.00 in incentives in 2023. This represents an increase of more than \$15,000 compared to incentives earned in 2022.
  
3. Fee reflects the statutory collections allocated to the county general fund. It is the total amount of semi-annual service fees, which is \$2.25 received by the county treasurer and not the service fees collected and sent to the state treasurer. Fees were collected in the amount of \$57,035.13.



**Revenues versus Expenses**

Altogether, with some other revenues streams, the FOC earned revenue of \$1,360,780.66. This represents an increase of \$162,808.61 compared to 2022, revenues of \$1,197,972.05. While expenses increased from 2022 to 2023, expenses increased by \$106,777.40, a lower amount than the revenue increased: 2023 expenses were \$2,101,603.73, compared to 2022 expenses of \$1,994,826.33.

## **2024 Friend of the Court Goals**

The FOC has identified the following goals for 2024:

**Train FOC staff in Motivational Interviewing** – In 2023, two FOC staff members, Jessica Castañeda and Kari Pinnell, were certified to train others in using Motivational Interviewing (MI). This training and certification was covered by a grant. When staff use MI in their interactions with a parent, staff are listening more actively, acknowledging the parent’s challenges and strengths, and working with the parent towards a plan that helps the parent comply with court orders. Jessica and Kari will be training their co-workers in using MI to improve customers relations and outcomes in 2024.

**Community Outreach Efforts** – The FOC will increase its attendance at community events. For example, attending the Stand Down event for veterans and parent educational events.

**Increase referrals to the GEMS program** – The FOC will increase referrals to the GEMS program. Strategies for this include sharing information about the program with other county courts and departments to increase awareness of the GEMS program, using MI to increase parent interest in participation, and sharing information about GEMS with Allegan community agencies.

**Increase the percentage of child support cases that have a support order to 83%** - The FOC currently hovers around 80% of open child support cases having an order established. In order to earn the maximum incentives allowed, the FOC must consistently maintain a support order percentage of 80%. The FOC will be proactive in making sure its data is correct by reviewing open cases to determine if they should remain open or be closed. Closing cases that do not need to be open will improve this percentage.

# Alternative Contempt Track (ACT) Program

The Circuit Court's Alternative Contempt Track (ACT) docket is an intensive supervision program for parents that are not paying their child support obligation due to underlying issues such as poverty, mental health disorders, substance use disorders, physical disabilities, etc. A Specialized Enforcement Officer works with individuals to identify barriers to regular support payments and locate appropriate resources/services for the parent to remove barriers to regular support payments. These parents meet on a regular basis with the Enforcement Officer and have monthly court meetings with Judge Bakker.

In 2023, nine new participants were admitted into the ACT Program. There were 5 successful discharges from the ACT program. ACT Program participants paid more than over \$13,000 in payments.

Allegan FOC has one of only two ACT Programs in the State of Michigan. Allegan Courts have been asked to present to other FOC offices on the benefits of an ACT Program. Several participants experienced successes in obtaining driver's licenses and participating in treatment for mental health and substance use disorders.

Not all ACT participants are able to work. The ACT program refers parents with disabilities to Michigan Rehabilitative Services. Four ACT participants were found eligible for benefits from the Social Security Administration.

## **2023 Breakdown**

- 21 CASES referred to ACT
  - 15 cases interested of which 9 cases were admitted
  - 6 of those interested had other pending criminal charges and were unable to be admitted due to those pending charges
  - 6 were unable to be contacted/did not respond to contact attempts
- 6 NEW participants admitted into the program---representing 9 cases
- 4 participants admitted into the program for another year—representing 6 cases
- 3 participants representing 4 cases were unsuccessful discharged for non-compliance
- 1 participant passed away unexpectedly
- 5 successful discharges (includes those admitted in 2022, and those admitted for another year) representing 7 cases
- Current number of ACTIVE ACT participants as of April 3, 2024
  - 7 participants representing 11 cases

- 2 participants have cases in other counties
- 4 participants were referred to LEAP (Learn Earn and Provide) program—now known as GEMS (Gain Employment Maintain Support). 2 of those participants began participating in GEMS and continue to work with GEMS.

### **ACT Payments**

- Total collected from Act participants in 2023: \$13,348.70

### **Challenges faced by ACT program and participants in 2023:**

2023 proved to be a difficult year for participants. Transportation, housing, mental health, substance use and unemployment were the biggest challenges facing the majority of the participants and referrals in 2023. Although ACT received numerous referrals, many had pending criminal charges and were unable to be accepted into ACT due to those pending charges based on the current MCL.

Homelessness continues to be the #1 challenge among the participants and referrals of the ACT program. During 2023, 8 participants at various times found themselves homeless, couch surfing, living in their cars, tents when able, or staying at shelters in Holland or Kalamazoo when able. One participant was living in a storage unit until they were no longer able to afford the unit. All the participants were referred to the OnPoint Homeless Assistance Program. Of those 8 participants, 1 participant found transitional housing with Building Men for Life after living for several months at the Holland Gateway Men’s Shelter (formerly Holland Rescue Mission). A second participant was able to move from transitional housing to their own home. The other participants—some of which have been discharged from the program—continue to struggle with housing.

### **Success Stories from 2023**

Even through the challenging times many participants found success. 2 participants were able to work to get their driver’s licenses reinstated. Another participant was able to get their identifying documents (birth certificate, social security card, ID) to be able to apply for jobs. Other participants began receiving mental health treatment and substance use disorder treatment from OnPoint and other supportive services. 2 participants were finally approved for Social Security Disability Insurance which is a garnish-able income and will now be able to maintain their support payments. Others have applied for SSI/SSDI with the assistance of their supportive service. 2 other participants were approved for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and had their cases inactivated due to their incapacitation.



**Future program goals:**

- Continue to collaborate with local community agencies/resources
- Obtain referrals from county/state probation agents and others who work with individuals who may have support cases in Allegan who are struggling to pay their support
- Work to grow payee participation in the program
- Continue to spread the work about ACT
- Continue to grow the ACT program as other job duties allow

**ACT program participant remarks:**

“Having support and help with resources to better myself and for my children has been the most helpful thing about ACT....”

~2023 Successful ACT Discharge

“I appreciate Jessica and Judge Bakker and everyone else who has helped in my journey. Thank you all so much....”

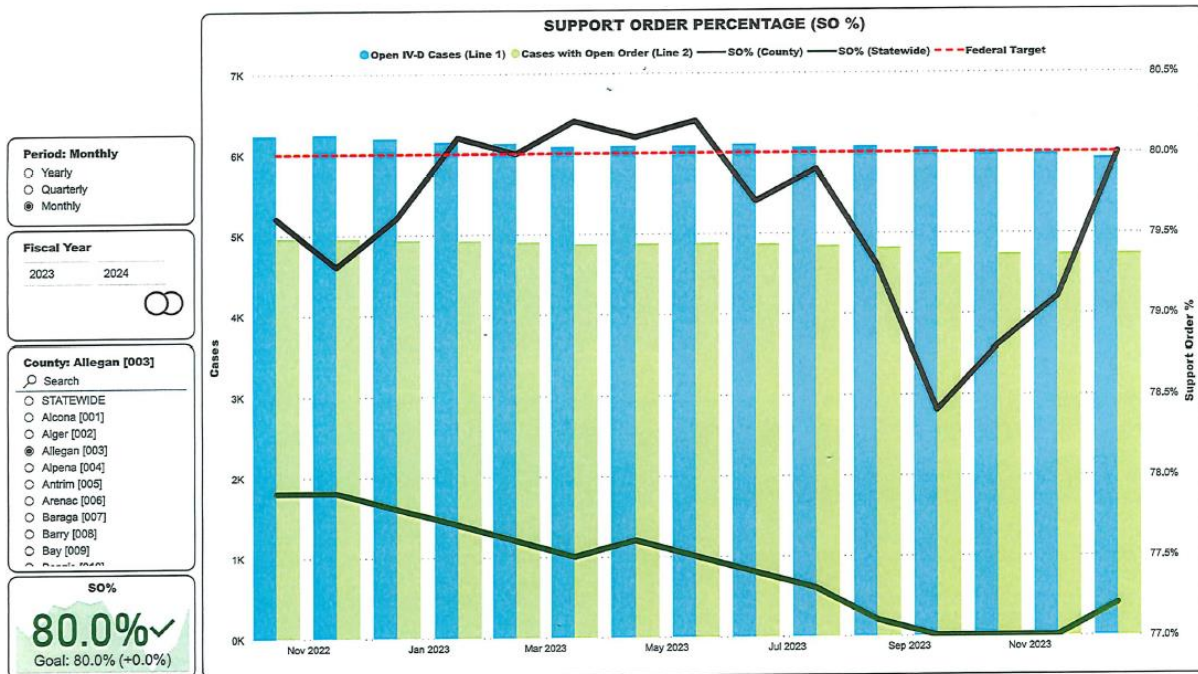
~2023 Successful ACT Discharge

Jessica Castañeda  
Specialized Enforcement Officer

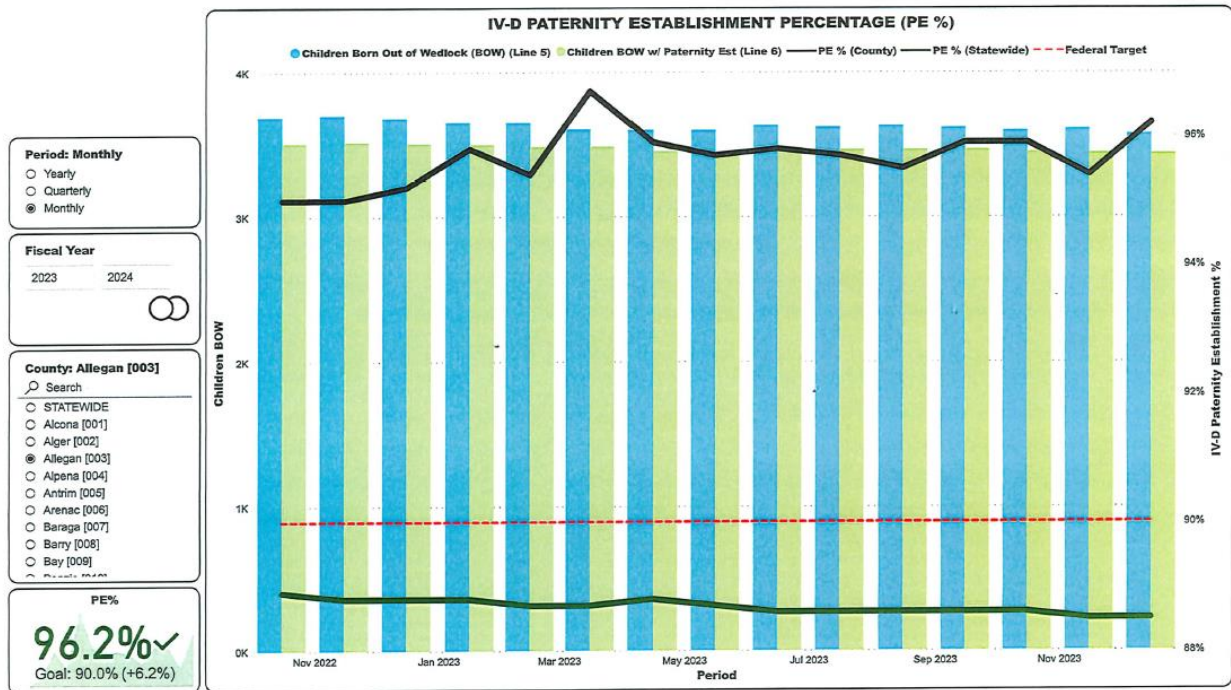
## Summary of Attachments

The FOC earns incentive monies based on five performance factors. Tables for these five performance factors are attached. Tables for 2023 are attached and tables from 2021 and 2022 have been provided for comparison.

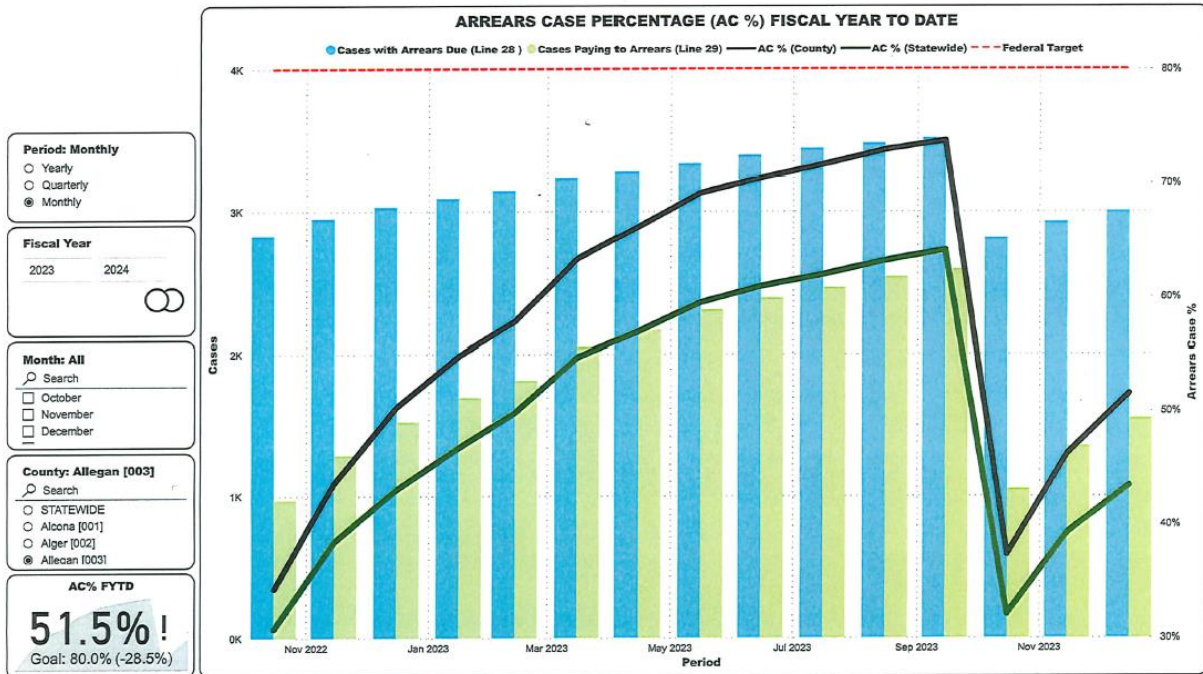
**Attachment A – Support Order Percentage** – This measurement shows the number of cases that have a support order established, divided by the number of cases that need to have a support order established. The FOC must have a support order percentage of 80% to earn the maximum amount of incentives available. In 2023, the FOC reached an 80% support order percentage. This was a very small decrease from 2022, when the FOC earned a support order percentage of 80.2%. The FOC exceeds the state average of 77.2%.



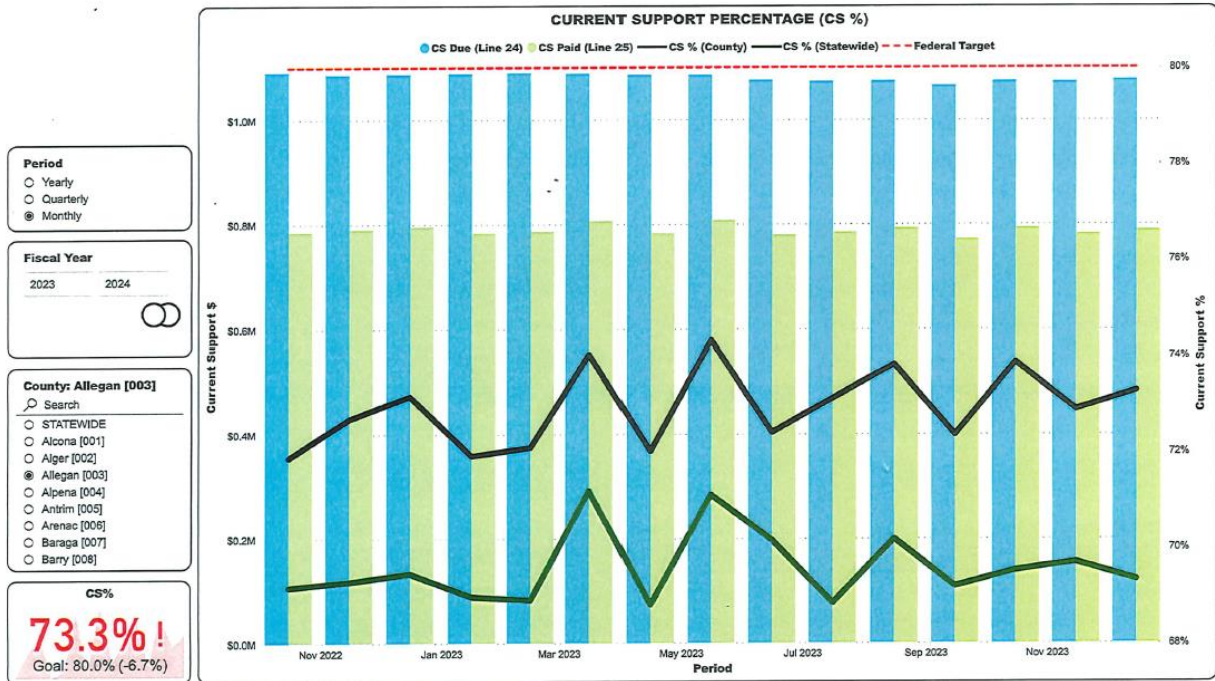
**Attachment B – Paternity Establishment Percentage** – This factor measures the number of children born out of wedlock (BOW) that have paternity established, divided by the number of children BOW that need to have paternity established. The FOC must have a paternity establishment percentage of 90% to earn the maximum amount of incentives available. The statewide paternity establishment percentage is about 89%. The Allegan FOC had a 96.2% paternity establishment rate in 2023. This is fairly steady and well above the 90% goal.



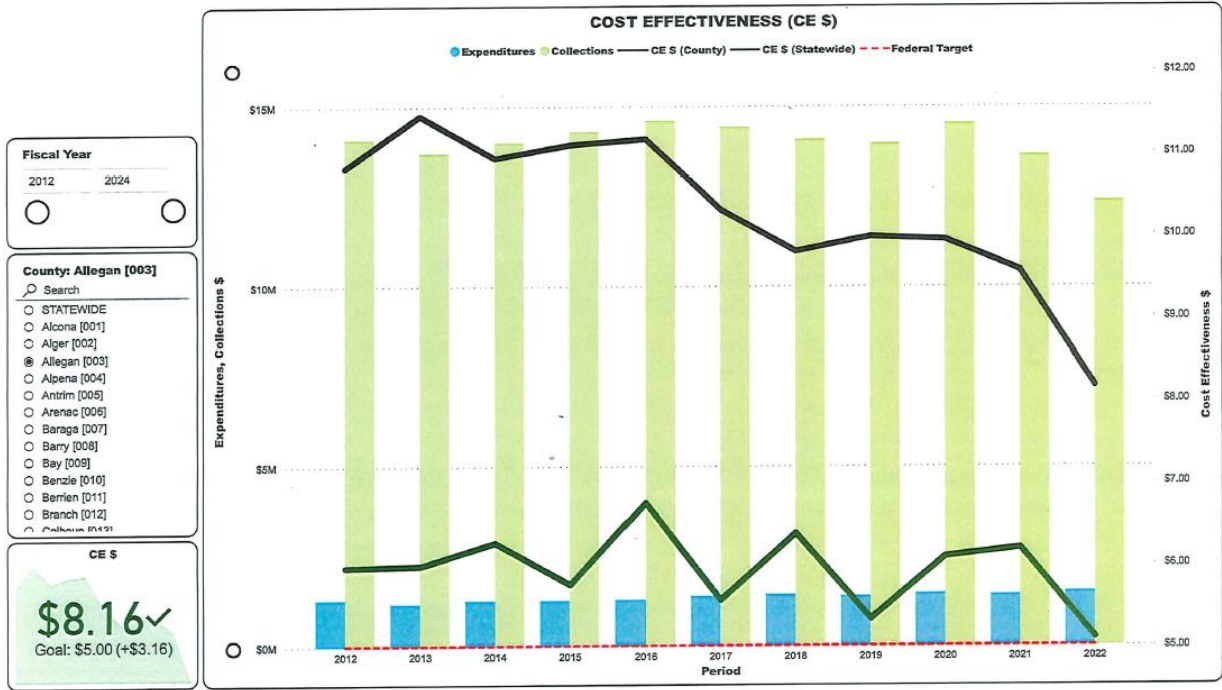
**Attachment C – Arrears Case Percentage** – This performance factor measures the number of support cases with past due support owed with a collection of past due support, divided by the number of support cases with a past due support balance owed. This is a cumulative percentage that increases throughout the year. The Allegan FOC exceeds the statewide average for the arrears case percentage.



**Attachment D – Current Support Percentage** – This factor measures the amount of current support collected in the month it is due, divided by the amount of current support due in a month. Allegan FOC exceeds the statewide average for current support percentage. Allegan FOC is below the goal of 80%, but the office continues to look for ways to improve their performance in this area.



**Attachment E – Cost Effectiveness** – In order to earn the maximum incentives available, the FOC must have a cost effectiveness ratio of at least \$5.00, that is for every dollar spent, the FOC must collect at least \$5.00 of support. The Allegan FOC collects \$8.16 for every dollar spent. Allegan outperforms the statewide cost effectiveness rate, which fell below \$5.00 in 2023.



**Attachment F – Flyer for the GEMS program.**

### How can GEMS help me?

As a GEMS participant, you will be able to receive the following services:



**Career Coach:** Receive one-on-one attention and referrals to needed services. You can meet with your career coach in-person, on the phone, and online at least once a week to support your progress.



**Job Leads and Career Planning:** Get help finding job leads that fit your skills. Hear ideas and strategies that job seekers use to get hired. Learn about ways to earn better wages and advance your career.



**Support Services:** You may receive help with things like work-related expenses, transportation, licensing fees, job training, and GED or English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, if available. You also may be able to get job retention and career advancement services for up to six months after entering employment.

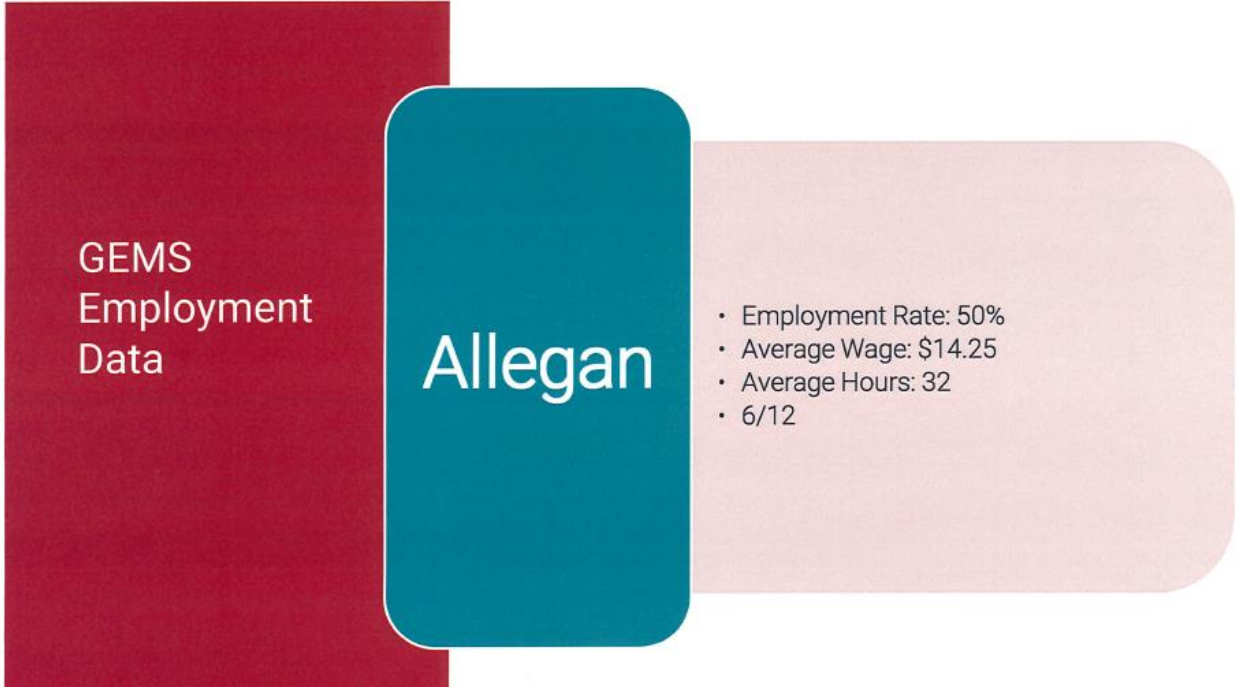


**Incentives:** The Friend of the Court may reinstate suspended licenses, review your child support order to see if it can be lowered, lift bench warrants, and reconsider other enforcement actions that are in effect. Michigan Works! may provide financial incentives when you reach specific milestones in the program.



**On-the-Job Training:** On-the-job training can help job seekers re-enter the workforce. GEMS offers a wage reimbursement to employers to train you on new skills.

**Attachment G** – Data for the GEMS program from October 1, 2023 through March 31, 2024.



# Allegan County Legal Assistance Center (ACLAC)

Allegan County Legal Assistance Center's mission is to provide free legal assistance education to all Allegan County residents about the appropriate legal processes and procedures, offer access to proper tools, and assist with paperwork thereby, more effectively accomplishing justice for all.

ACLAC can provide tools, resources and information to aid in competent self-representation in civil court matters such as: divorce, personal protection, child support, civil motions and orders, guardianship, parenting time, landlord-tenant matters, custody, small claims, court-fee waivers, and paternity.

All of the assistance provided by ACLAC staff, interns, and volunteers is provided free of charge but patrons may be charged a small fee for copies.

Assistance is provided at the ACLAC office which is located in the lower level of the Allegan County courthouse – lower level, by phone as time permits, and via quality video (Zoom) by appointment.

ACLAC continues to be grateful for the support provided by the County and the Board of Commissioners.

#### Hours:

Monday 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Tuesday – Thursday 9:00 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.

Friday 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

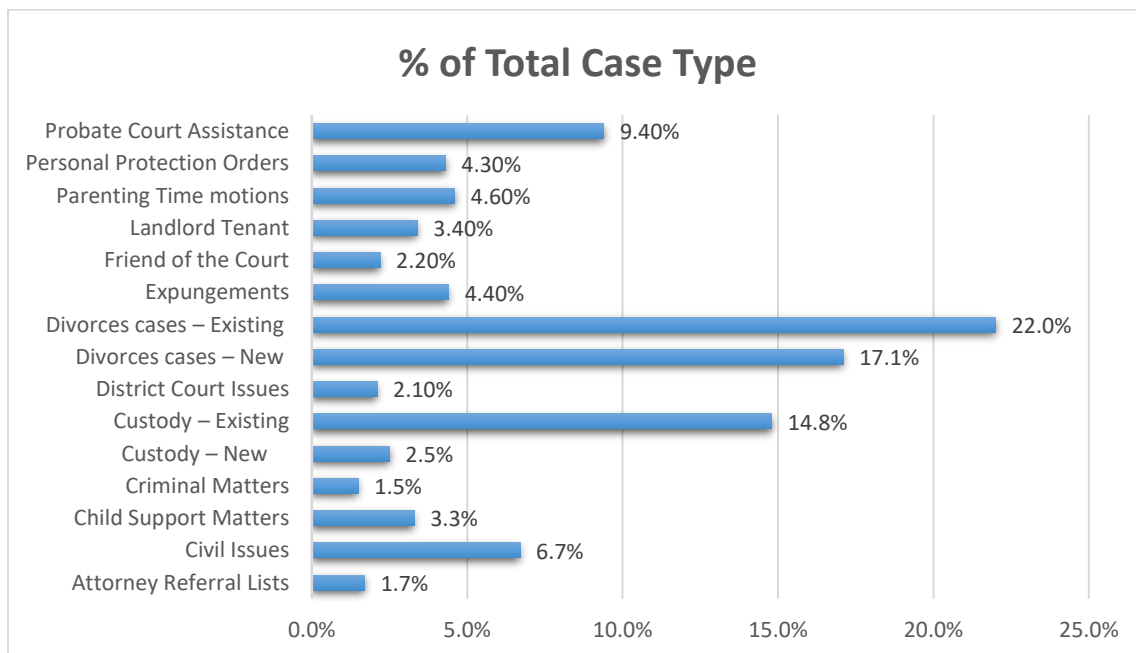
NOTE: The last patron is assisted 30 minutes prior to closing time.



## 2023 Statistics

- **3,210** Patrons served in 2023
- **27,087** Since opening July 31, 2012
- 68% of patrons assisted have income \$40,000 and less
- The age of our client varies, but the majority are between 21 and 60
- During 2023, there were 7 community presentations
- 1 director, 1 assistant director, and 1 part time patron assistant
- 6 interns and 2 community volunteers

## 2023 Statistics by Case Type



# 48<sup>th</sup> Circuit, Family Division

Beginning in December 2023, and throughout 2024, the Circuit Court Family Division is adjusting to several current and upcoming legal changes. These changes have a significant impact on the parties that come before the Court. Three impactful changes will be highlighted below.

## **Background Checks**

The Family Division is now handling requests from the National Instant Criminal Background Check System relating to background checks for firearm transfers to persons under twenty-one years of age. The court must respond to these requests within three days and report whether the juvenile has a “disqualifying juvenile record” that would affect the transfer of a firearm. A policy was implemented to address the scope and depth of the court’s response as all juvenile records are confidential but may be open to certain specified persons or other persons as approved by the court. Interestingly, the court has received more requests than anticipated.

## **Juvenile Set Asides**

As of December 30, 2023, all but certain ineligible juvenile delinquency offenses are now automatically set aside two years after termination of court supervision or when the juvenile turns age eighteen, whichever occurs later. When an offense is set aside, the juvenile is considered not to have been previously adjudicated (convicted), except for very specified exceptions. Additionally, the statute does set forth numerous dos and don’ts on how to address certain situations moving forward. For example, the juvenile is not entitled to be reimbursed for any money paid toward fees, costs or assessments. However, a court cannot collect any unpaid amounts. Curiously enough, in the area of ordered costs, the statute did not address to issue of unpaid restitution. Each court will need to look at other statutory provisions regarding the collection of unpaid restitution to determine if this is allowed.

The majority of courts handling juvenile matters use a state case management system supplied by the State of Michigan. This case management system is supplied by Judicial Information Services (JIS). Fortunately, the JIS system is able to notify the Michigan State Police, who keeps records on the vast majority of juvenile offenses, of the juvenile offenses being set aside on a daily basis. This alleviates what could have been a very time-consuming task for courts handling juvenile delinquency matters. However, the courts are to notify the arresting agency of each offense that is set aside. The court received the first report of cases on April 1, 2024, which covered all historical offenses being set aside. This report contained approximately 6,000 cases which required collaboration with the Circuit Court Clerk’s Office to conduct cleanup efforts.

## **Assessment Tools Required**

The last change to highlight is an upcoming change. As of October 1, 2024, courts are to utilize various screening/assessment tools to assist in appropriate decision making for juvenile delinquency matters. The use of these screening tools is to be used in all areas of delinquency proceedings. The court is required to use a detention screening tool on a juvenile prior to the juvenile being detained. Prior to a court making a decision to have a delinquency charge handled informally through diversion or the consent calendar, the court is to use a risk screening and mental health screening tool to determine if informal action is appropriate, and in the case of juvenile diversion, whether this action is in the best interests of public safety and the minor. Additionally, for cases handled formally by the court, the court must conduct a risk and needs assessment for each juvenile prior to disposition. In these formal cases, a new assessment must be completed every six months, when the juvenile experiences a major life event, or when there is a major change in juvenile proceedings.

The assessment tools must be based on research based and nationally validated standards with guidelines to be developed by the State Court Administrative Office. The Circuit Court Family Division has been using a risk assessment for juveniles for a number of years, however, the assessment has been limited to the juveniles handled formally where a disposition is completed and juveniles in the court's residential program. The Family Division has utilized one of the recognized assessment tools to accomplish this screening, being the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI), but is reviewing other assessment tools to determine the most appropriate assessment tool for our juvenile population in Allegan County.

The assessment and screening tools are designed to assist in determining why the juvenile is at risk. Further, the tools are used to promote consistency, focus resources, assess, and hopefully reduce, out of home placements for juveniles, and direct juveniles to services that match their delinquency charges and risk to the community.

## **Child Care Fund Receives Increased Revenues from State to Counties**

The biggest change to note from 2023, is the legislative change in the child care fund for all counties in Michigan. On 10/01/2021, you may recall the large change in Michigan law as it moved 17-year-olds from adult court to juvenile court. This "Raise the Age" legislation then analyzed the cost incurred by juvenile courts that would have previously fallen to the Michigan Department of Corrections. During this 3-year trial period, family courts had to track expenses relating to 17-year-olds and submit them to the Raise The Age grant for 100% reimbursement. This was a very tedious process and many family court leaders across the state worked tirelessly to find a better solution, including our own Chris Dulac who sits on the executive board for the Michigan Association of Family Court Administrators. In conjunction with the governor's task force regarding juvenile justice reform across the state, the legislature approved an increase in the Child Care Fund from a 50/50 cost sharing ratio to a 75 state / 25 county cost sharing ratio for In-Home Care programming and pre-court involvement services for delinquent youth. Residential care for delinquent cases as well as neglect/abuse cases remain at a 50/50 share. This is a very large revenue increase for Allegan County (estimated \$500,000 for 2023). The state has

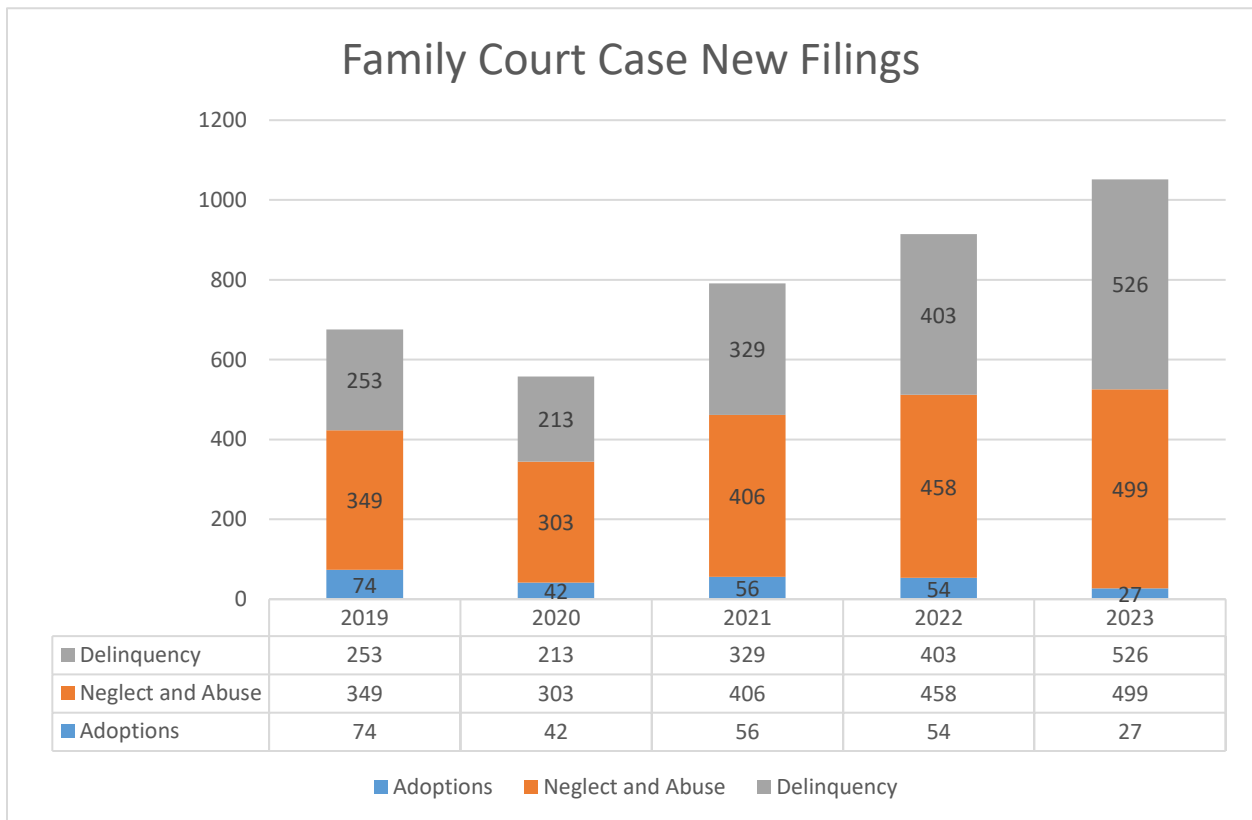
additionally granted these funds in advance of the statute becoming law on 10/01/2024. The goal of the advanced funding is to provide family courts the time needed to increase services, as well as to implement the new requirements of existing services. New requirements include things like assessment screenings for risks and needs, mental health screening tools, and quality assurance audits. Court administration looks forward to working with county administration to ensure a successful transition for these new requirements to ensure we continue to receive increased state funding through the child care fund.

### **Sex Offender Treatment Services**

We continue to work with Ron Grooters to provide services relating to juvenile sex offenders. In fiscal year 2023, 35 juveniles received services. There were 31 successful discharges from the program and only 1 unsuccessful discharge (which is based on re-offense, participant drop out, or additional charges).

### **Case statistics**

In addition to managing all of the above changes, Family Court like Circuit Court, had a very busy year.



# Community Probation

## 2023: A Snapshot

### Cumulative Statistics:

<u>Measured Area</u>	<u>Number</u>
Total Cases	115
New Petitions Adjudicated (on current or previous probationers)	19
Probation Violations Adjudicated	44
Community Service Hours Ordered	895
Days Spent at Home	11,797
Days Spent in Detention	1221
Days Spent on a Tether	97
Days Spent in Residential Care	2,329
Total Days on Probation	15,658
Number of Children Taking Medication	48 (41.7% of caseload)
Total Number of Contacts Made	6,960
Number of Recidivists	12 (10.4% of caseload)
Number of Repeat Offenders	11 (9.6% of caseload)
Probationers Released During FY	79
Number Released Who Met Goals	67 (84.8% success rate)

### **Average Probationer:**

<b><u>Measured Area</u></b>	<b><u>Number</u></b>
Average Age	15.1
Number of New Petitions Per Case	.16
Number of PV's Per Child	.38
Average Days at Home	102
Average Days in Detention	10.6
Average Days in Residential Care	20.25
Average Days on Probation	136
Average Grade	9 <sup>th</sup>
Average Number of Contacts Per Case	60.5

### **Did You Know?**

- The average juvenile on probation in Allegan County is a 15-year-old 9<sup>th</sup> grader.
- On average, about 27% of probationers had his /her probation violated this past year.
- The average probationer spends approximately 7.7% of his/her days on probation in detention and approximately 14.8% of his/her days on probation in residential care.
- Of the children released from probation during the FY, approximately 85% were successful in meeting his/her treatment goals.
- Approximately 10.4% of the total caseload includes children who were previously on probation and came back to the court for subsequent offenses.
- Approximately 9.5% of the total caseload includes children who commit new offenses while on probation.
- On average, children on probation are contacted 60 times by his/her probation officer, with 21 of those contacts being face-to-face.
- The average child involved with the court spent approximately 19 weeks (or approximately 4.75 months) on probation.
- Approximately 41.7% of the children who had contact with the court during the previous year were taking prescribed medication.
- The average number of community service hours ordered per case is approximately 8.

# Community Justice Program

The Community Justice program works with youth ranging from 8 to 18 years of age. Several different groups and services are available to the youth when placed on Community Justice. One of those key services is preventative/informational groups led by the Community Justice Officers. These groups are not only offered to youth already on probation but also to kids still in elementary school who are considered at-risk or truant.

Community Justice is currently holding weekly groups in Allegan's three elementary schools as well as in Fennville Elementary. Groups have been held in Plainwell Elementary in the past.

## WHY TRY:

**Why Try** and **Prime for Life** are the groups that are offered by Community Justice. The goal for these groups is to help the youth develop skills to manage emotions, build healthy relationships, and support a better understanding of substance abuse struggles within themselves and their family.

Why Try teaches 10 lessons and concepts, it is a strength-based approach to help youth overcome their challenges and improve outcomes in areas of truancy, behavior, and academics. The youth learn the concepts through activities, YouTube videos, and a workbook.

**Reality Ride-** Each decision we make has a consequence. The decisions we make today directly affect the future.

**Labels-** Negative labels can hurt your future, but positive labels can help you achieve your goals and attain better opportunities. Ultimately, the label you wear depends on you. You can change your label by changing your actions and showing others your strengths and positive traits.

**Defense Mechanisms-** Pressure situations are best handled by maintaining control of your emotions and selecting positive defense mechanisms.

**Motivation Formula-** You can take your challenges and channel them into positive motivation: first to better yourself, and then to turn outward and help others.

**Climbing Out-** When you put the tools from the visual metaphors in action, and when you develop awareness of the positive and negative ways that others can influence you, you will be prepared to avoid negative behaviors and their consequences.

**Jumping Hurdles-** Everyone experiences setbacks, but successful people jump back up and keep trying. They know that there are certain steps they can use to help them overcome their challenges and achieve success.

**Desire Time and Effort-** Anything worthwhile in life requires desire, time, and effort. There are no shortcuts to achieving success. You will get much further in life by working hard than simply relying on your talents or abilities.

**Lifting the Weight-** Living by the law and rules and developing self-discipline will make you stronger, opening the doors of opportunity for the future.

**Plugging in-** Getting help is not a weakness it is strength. Challenges become easier when you have a positive support system to help you overcome them. You have the power to create a support system if you don't have one. You have the power to strengthen a support system if yours is weak.

**The Wall** – When you have a clear vision of your future, you have hope for something better, and life's challenges come nothing by temporary obstacles. When you have a limited perspective, it is hard to see beyond the day-to-day challenges, and impossible to dream of a brighter future.

### **Prime for Life:**

Prime for Life is a highly effective program for helping people of many ages reduce high-risk choices around the use of drugs and alcohol. It is designed to change thinking and drug use behaviors by changing beliefs, attitudes, risk perceptions, motivations, and the knowledge of how to reduce their risk of alcohol and drug-related problems throughout their lives.

Participants in a Prime for Life group will:

- Feel engaged and comfortable sharing their thoughts, feelings, and self-reflection.
- Learn how the combination of influences and personal choices determine outcomes and how to make low-risk choices.
- Be able to self-assess and identify their risk levels and current phase of alcohol and drug use, as well as identify what they value in their lives and make decisions about when and how to protect those values.

Prime for Life is an early prevention program that has been shown to:

- Decrease high-risk alcohol and drug use
- Increase perception of early risk
- Decrease recidivism
- Promote inclusion, openness, and lack of judgement

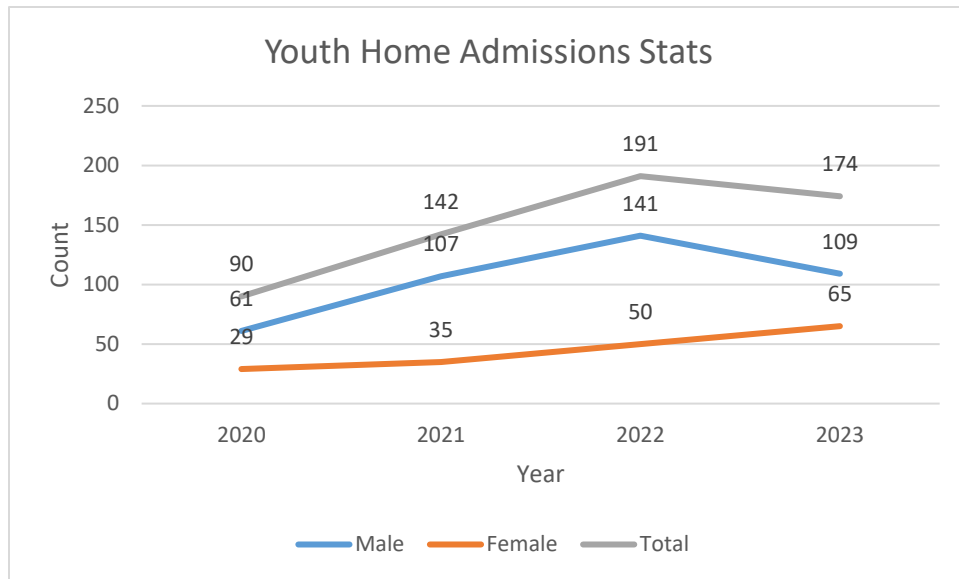


### **2023 Community Justice Statistics:**

- 118 truancy cases across the county
- 52 elementary kids attended the Why Try group
- 15 probation kids ordered Why to Try group
- 20 adoption studies completed
- 19 youth saw Dr. Schmuker for psychiatric services
- Approximately 550 hours of community service completed
- 63 total cases receiving Community Justice Services

# Juvenile Detention

The Detention Program is designed to provide a short-term, physically restrictive, and safe environment for youth, both male and female, ages 10-18 who are detained pending further court action. Youth under the age of 18 who are charged with committing a delinquent or criminal act are processed through the juvenile justice system. The juvenile justice process operates according to the premise that youth are fundamentally different from adults, both in terms of level of responsibility and potential for rehabilitation. In 2023, the detention center admitted 174 youth and the average length of stay was 28 days. The average length of stay was a 6 day increase from the previous year. Release from detention occurs only through posting of bond (if applicable), or by order of the court.



Detention offers daily programming and activities within the framework of a token economy system to help youth learn how to use more appropriate and positive behaviors. Educational programming is provided by the Outlook Academy Monday through Friday during the school year. Classes offered are in math, science, language arts, and history. Detention staff provide support by participating in the classroom, working with G.E.D. students, and supporting residents with high school on-line credit recovery program.

## Reading Intervention Program

It is the goal of the Reading Intervention Program at the Juvenile Center to move students from where they are to where they should be academically. We do this by creating a literate rich environment. Personal reading is required, students and staff participate in book clubs and all students receive intervention services as necessary. Some students enter the program with severe deficits, however, students who struggle with reading typically make significant gains while they are in Detention/Cheever Treatment Center. Here are examples of significant progress made by several residents while at the Juvenile Center.

**Student 1** – Upon arrival, she was struggling within her community and needed hearing and vision care services. Within one school year, her decoding of words improved from 4<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grade levels.

**Student 2** – This student felt very insecure about her reading ability and was reluctant to participate. Over the course of three months, she demonstrated reading growth and competency and her reading scores improved from 4<sup>th</sup> grade to 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Student 3** – Over one and a half months, this student gained two grade levels, from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Student 4** – This student improved his reading skills from a 5<sup>th</sup>-8.5 grade level within two months.

**Student 5** – After one month this student improved from 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade level.

Every year, several students prepare for and/or complete their GED accreditation while at the Center. These students have fallen short of meeting necessary requirements toward their High School graduation and the GED program equips them to take the next steps towards their young adult life. In the year 2023, three of our students were able to complete their GED.

## Youth Home Programming

Programming continues after the school day and on weekends. Residents are involved with creative writing through prompts, followed by an hour of staff led book clubs. Book club is a time for small group interaction and a bit of relaxation before the evening meal. Additional programming during the week includes twice weekly religious services scheduled with Barnabas Ministries, Why Try groups facilitated by detention staff, and weekly music therapy with Louie Morrard. Other daily activities include exercise either in the multi-purpose room or outside, daily living skills such as cleaning the unit and their rooms, doing their laundry, and self-care.



The gardening program kicks off every April by starting seeds on the unit, then transplanting the plants into the garden. The program has several learning opportunities for the residents. They learn about how to take care of a garden from planting, weeding, and harvesting the produce. The garden allows them another activity to be active outdoors, it helps develop responsibility, a sense of accomplishment, and self-confidence. Produce is used by the Juvenile Center's kitchen, residents' families, and local food pantries. The garden produced just over 900 pounds of vegetables last summer.



The Juvenile Center’s food service program continues to provide high quality nutritious food for the residents in both the Detention and Cheever Treatment Center programs. The kitchen was awarded two grants for the 2022 – 2023 school year. The grant application and process were led by Amy Cornell, Juvenile Section Registrar, with the assistance of Kirsten Atchinson, Finance Specialist from the finance department.

**Awarded for 2022 – 2023 School Year:**

Breakfast Expansion Grant 2023

Competitive Grant through the National School Lunch Program

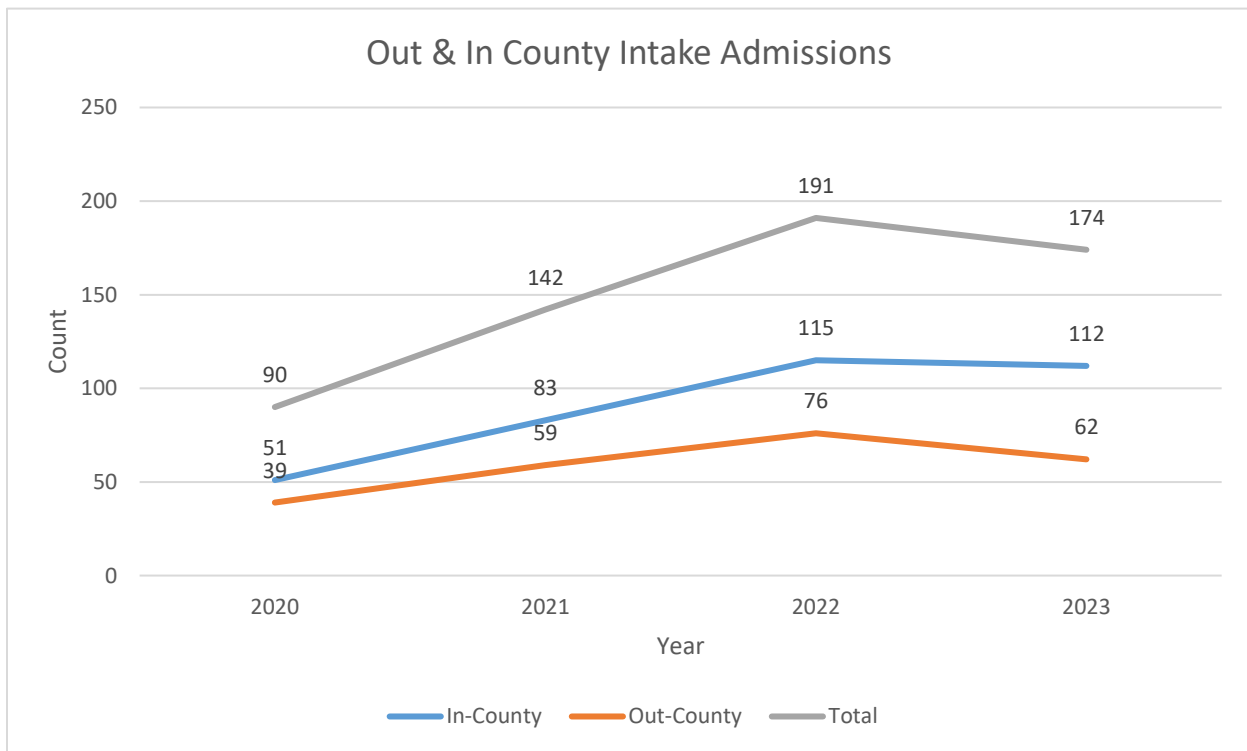
- Awarded \$6,600 for a reach-in freezer.
- Awarded \$728 which was used to purchase an induction cooktop and cookware for Detention’s kitchen and also products to use in a taste-testing event to expose residents to a variety of healthy snack options.

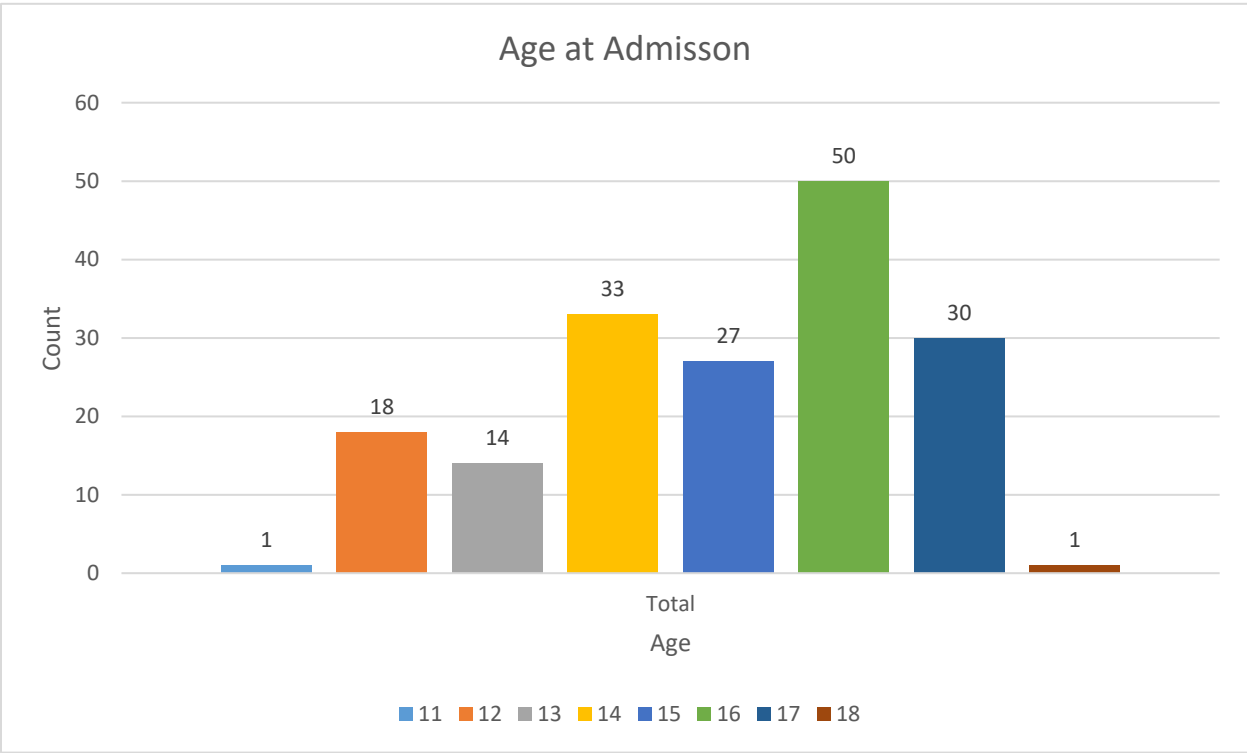
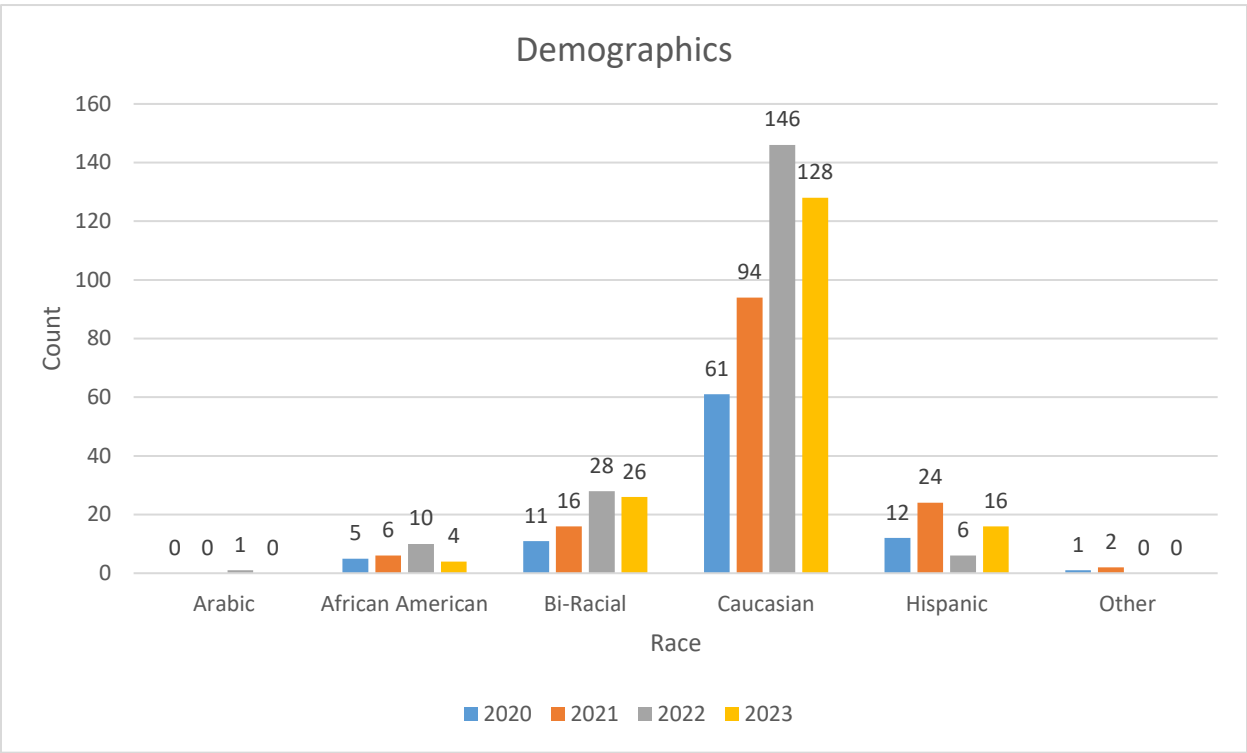
NSLP Equipment Assistance Grant

Competitive Grant through the National School Lunch Program.

- Awarded \$6,435 for purchase of 3 new cafeteria tables on wheels.

**Juvenile Detention Stats**





# Cheever Treatment Center

## Mental Health with in Juvenile Treatment Centers

The connection between mental health issues and adolescents in the juvenile justice system is complex. There are multiple factors at play to identify if mental health issues lead to involvement in the juvenile justice system. Although there are shared risk factors, there isn't a direct correlation between mental health and the juvenile justice system. That said, the juvenile justice system needs to take a best practice approach to properly address the growing need.

The residents we have at Cheever fall within the national average for adolescents in America. Roughly two-thirds of adolescents in detention/treatment centers are struggling with mental health issues. The percentage of adolescents struggling with mental health issues outside the juvenile justice system is significantly less than within the system. Between 9 and 22 percent of adolescents outside the system have similar mental health struggles. The question that is to be answered for juvenile justice centers is, "what services are in place providing opportunities to best meet the juveniles needs?".

## Cheever Treatment Center

Cheever serves the county through working with adolescents of every race/ethnicity, gender and age (11-18). Unfortunately, outside of Cheever, services for adolescents vary by race/ethnicity, gender, and age in the juvenile justice system. Nationally, adolescents of color have less opportunity for treatment of mental health and substance issues. Females also are offered less service opportunities, which is significant due to females entering the system with more mental health concerns than Caucasian males. The adolescents ordered to Cheever are fortunate to have multiple services provided for them without bias.

Cheever provides its juveniles opportunities to improve their mental health. The juveniles are offered psychiatric services, therapy (both individual and family), substance abuse information, and skill building groups. The ability for Cheever's residents being offered specifically the psychiatric, therapy, and substance abuse information puts Cheever well ahead of most juvenile centers. The percentages of the average facility providing these services ranges from 58% down to 1% depending on the service and the facility. Cheever offers 100% of our residents all these services. Cheever understands that when a juvenile's mental health is stabilized, they can better understand themselves and develop empathy for others. Our juveniles are healthier overall thus being safer in the community. The ability we have to offer the proper services for today's juveniles provides the greatest possibility of success for them to return to the community within Allegan County.

## **2023 Cheever Statistics**

- 26 youth served (16 males, 10 females)
- 1040 individual therapy sessions held
- 390 family therapy sessions held
- 240 hours of learning groups held
- 590 hours of community service completed

## **2023 Back to School Drive**

Cheever staff along with community partners were able to complete a back-to-school drive to cover needed school supplies for Cheever, Youth Home, and Outlook Academy students.



## **Looking Towards the Future**

The staff of Cheever consistently evaluate the needs of our adolescents to the services provided. All signs speak to the percentage of adolescents entering the juvenile system in correlation with mental health struggles rising over the coming years. Cheever will continue to adjust to meet the adolescent's mental health needs effectively.