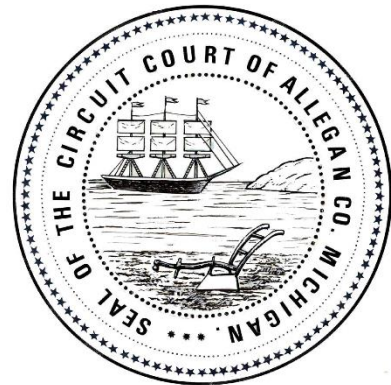


# 48th Circuit Court

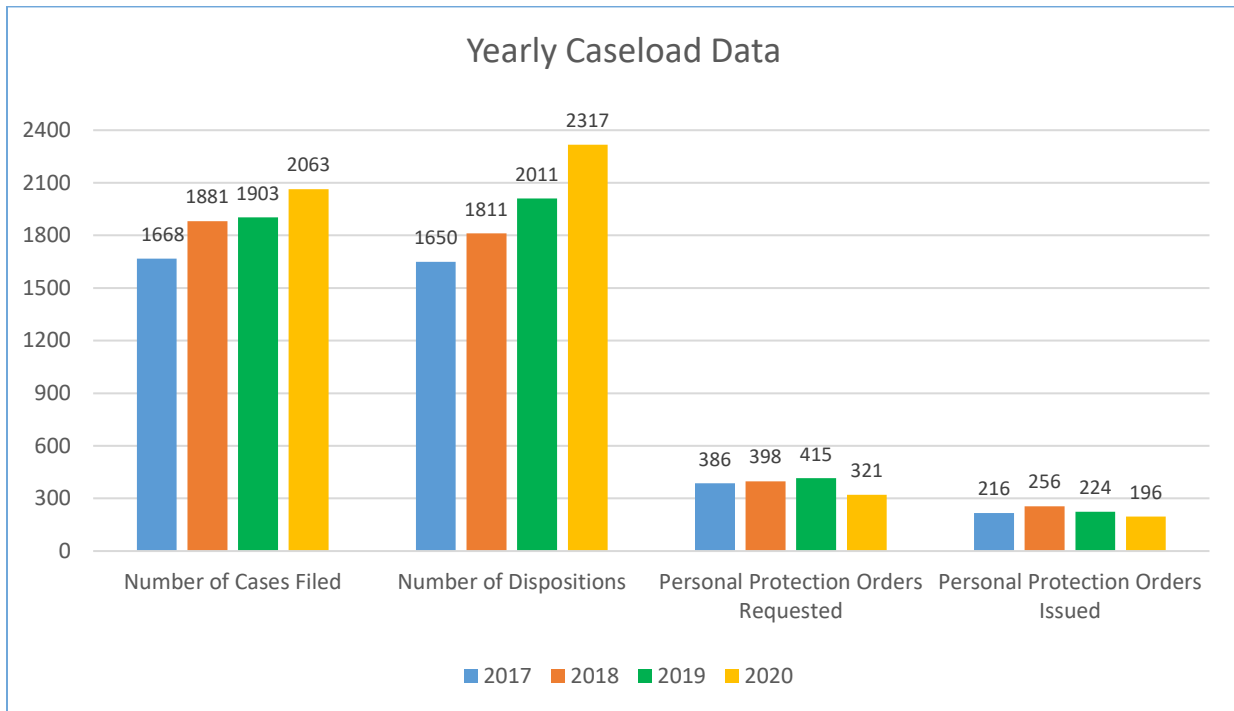
## 2020 Annual Report

Thursday, June 10, 2021

Criminal and Civil,  
Friend of the Court,  
Family Division



# Circuit Court Statistics

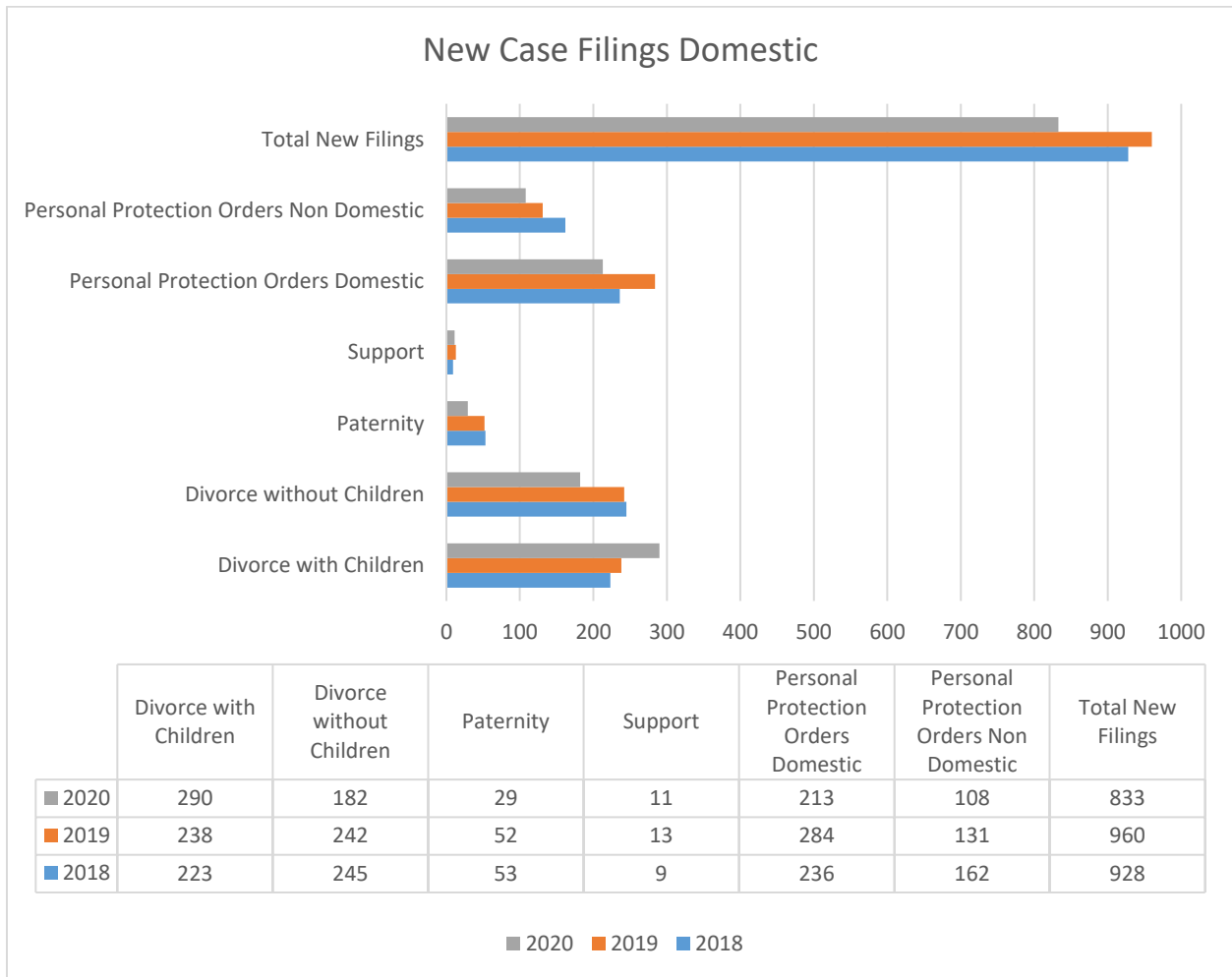


Circuit Court continues to see an increase in case filings and case dispositions. Despite another year of COVID-related challenges, Circuit Court remained open and conducting business throughout the year. Looking back at the 2020 Circuit Court Board Report, we reported that 2019, was the busiest year on record for Circuit Court. As you can see from the statistics above, 2020, now holds the title for the busiest year on record for Circuit Court.

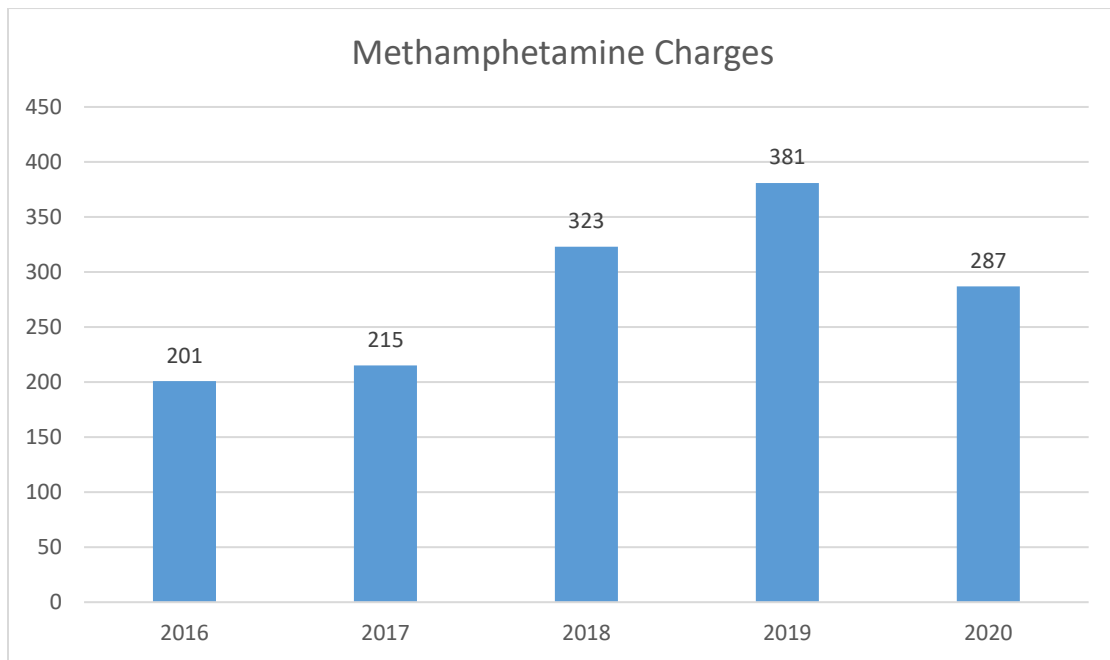
Zoom and YouTube remained vital tools for the courts in 2020. As of February 17, 2021, Judge Bakker and Judge Kengis have spent over 30,000 minutes (500 hours) on Zoom. Collectively, their YouTube channels have been viewed over 23,000 times, and have over 400 subscribers. In addition to hearings conducted on Zoom, the Judges also conducted in person proceedings, when permitted.

As reported last year, the Michigan State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) created a 4 phase reopening plan, which is mandatory. The courts continue to meet bi-weekly to examine the community data and ensure compliance with the plan. Most notably, certain phases create limitations on the ability to conduct jury trials. In 2020, Circuit Court was able to briefly resume jury trials, and was able to complete 7 trials during this time. The number of jury trials needing to be rescheduled is growing by the day (118 currently), and will continue to be a struggle for the courts to schedule them amongst an already full docket. The jury trials which were conducted took great care and planning to ensure the safety of the public and the staff. Upon arrival, all jurors participated in a COVID screening and had their temperatures checked. One of the largest challenges, which still exists, is finding the space for all jurors who appear for service, as there

needs to be social distancing. The courts have worked to utilize space in other areas of the courthouse, and also located space off-site in the Griswold Auditorium. Other precautionary measures have been taken, such as masks being worn unless an individual is speaking, chairs being wiped down when jurors are moved, and microphone sleeves are used in the witness box and changed after every witness. Jurors were polled after each trial, and all have reported complete satisfaction with the strategies implemented by the courts.



In 2020, there were 1,117 Felony Cases charged overall. Of the 1,117 total cases, 698 cases were bound over from the 57th District Court. 287 of the 1,117 were drug cases, of which 230 were methamphetamine specific cases. This only reflects situations where a defendant is charged with a crime involving methamphetamine, but there are many situations where the underlying cause of a crime is related to the use of methamphetamine. Methamphetamine use destroys families and communities, and it is the most destructive drug this Court has seen. \*The court anticipates the drop in 2020, to only be a result of slowdowns in the system due to COVID closures and delays, not that the meth related cases are actually decreasing in the county.



Felony collections in Circuit Court has been a daunting task over the past few years. Collections on these cases are very difficult as some defendants go to prison, rehab, or are put under the supervision of the Michigan Department of Corrections Adult Probation. After sentencing, they have little contact with the court. In addition to these challenges, Allegan County did not have a dedicated collections department, so there was not a dedicated person or department to oversee these matters. However, in 2010, the Supreme Court approved a proposed plan to implement court collections programs and collections-related reporting requirements statewide. The final recommendations included adopting the proposed administrative order and that the Supreme Court work with court staff, agencies, and associations to amend or enact legislation that enhances the courts' ability to enforce and collect court-ordered financial obligations. Finally in 2015, The State Court Administrative Office published an Ability to Pay guideline, which provides tools and best practices on a defendant's ability to pay.

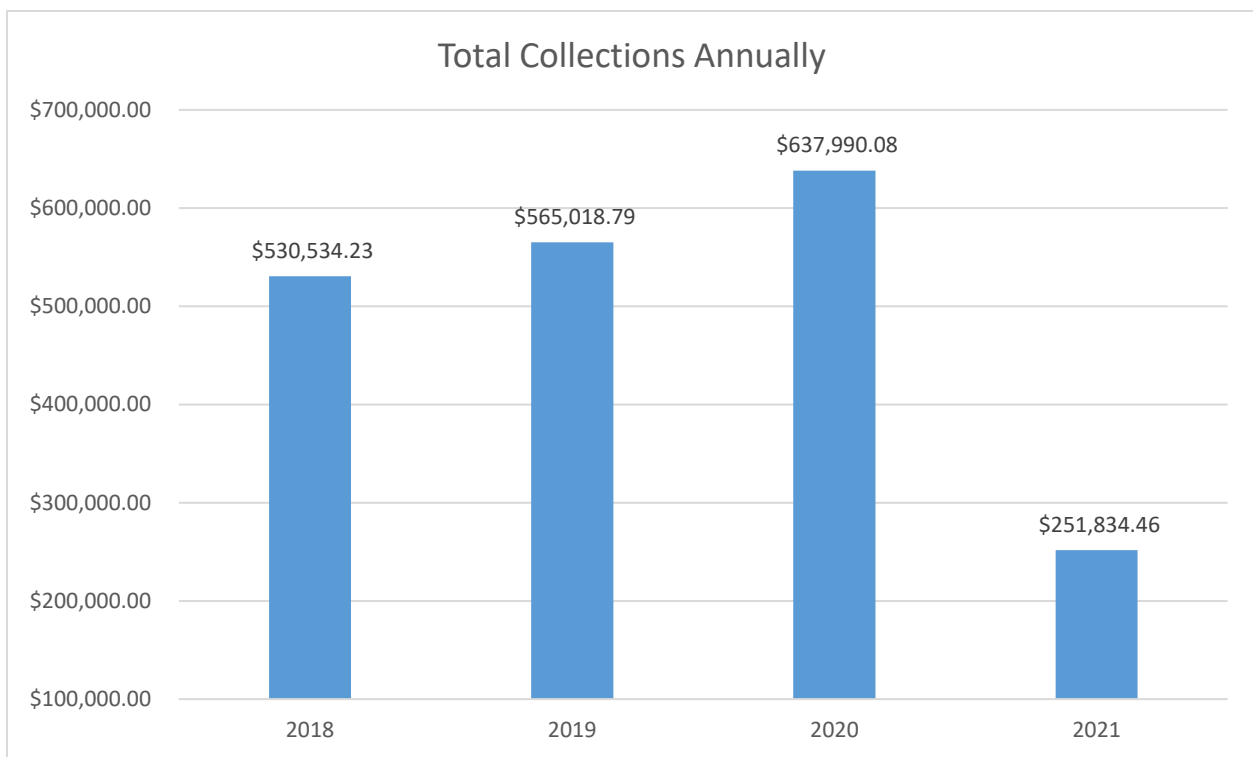
In 2015, Circuit Court took on the task of contacting delinquent accounts and began Allegan’s first collection efforts. This responsibility is still overseen by the office of Circuit Court Administration and Finance. However, it is only one of many tasks the Court Financial Officer and Receptionist oversee and help was needed. Solutions ranged from hiring a collections person to researching software programs to organize and manage collections.

Earlier this year, the COLLECT system was installed. This software works with the current circuit court case management system (JIS/AS400), to track and manage the collections process. Within the first month of implementation, the cost of the software had exceeded an astounding Return on Investment of over a factor of 10. We are on track to have our best collection year!

COLLECT implemented on 03/25/21.

COLLECT COST: \$3,000 for DMC software, 1 time

COLLECT collections made in first 30 days: \$34,089.72



As the above graph shows, our collections efforts are continuing to improve. We are hoping with the addition of this new software to have our best collection year.

# Swift and Sure Sanctions Probation Program (SSSPP)

The Swift and Sure program continues to serve participants by holding them accountable for their actions and reinforcing positive healthy behavior. By the end of March 2020, the program had to suspend testing of substances, however, the participants maintained communication with the Swift and Sure team and testing was resumed later in 2020. As a result of the smaller budget for fiscal year 2021, the program has a maximum capacity of 16 participants with hopes that we can continue to grow the program moving forward. The program currently has 11 participants with hopes of receiving participants from the Drug Court treatment program and from referrals that the program continues to receive weekly. Since April 1, 2020, the program has had 14 graduations (successfully discharged) and 5 revocations of probation (unsuccessfully discharged).

Before COVID-19, we would test participants at the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) office near the jail, but we have since changed the location to the courthouse since the MDOC office is currently not open to the public. The program continues to have monthly meetings to ensure we are on track with the budget as well as discuss any participants that require further rehabilitation services such as Michigan Rehabilitation Services or Pathways, Arbor Circle. The program remains flexible during this time of uncertainty utilizing Zoom as a way to communicate and collaborate while maintaining social distancing.

During the pandemic, some participants struggled with relapses and negative influences in their lives, but some participants thrived by being promoted to new positions earning higher salaries while one participant bought a new house. For some, securing stable housing and eliminating negative people in their lives was their biggest victory in a long time, but nonetheless was still celebrated and encouraged. I would like to thank the Swift and Sure team as well as court/county leadership for their support of specialty courts and programs that are a cost-efficient and an effective alternative to prison.

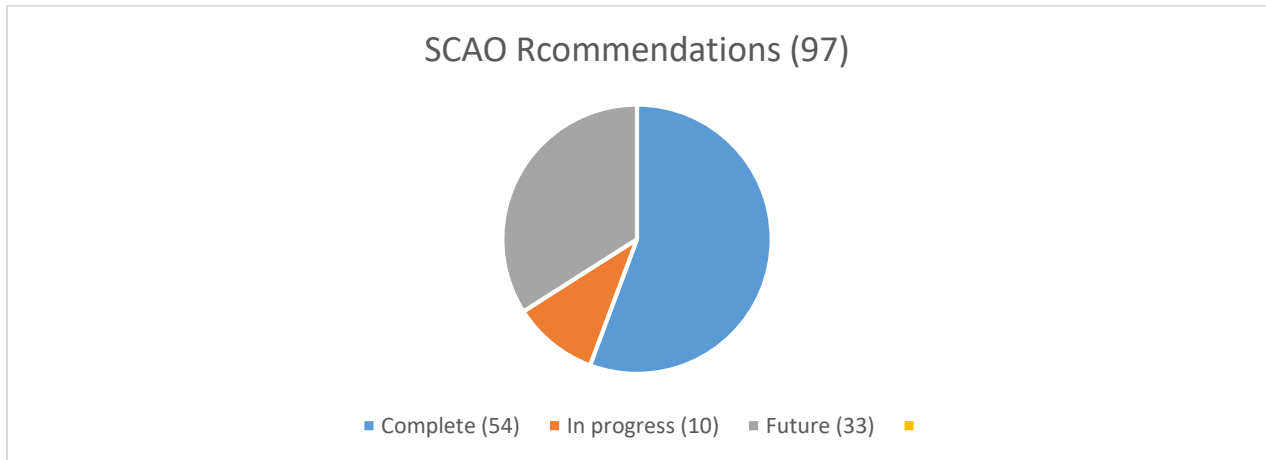
Specialty Court Coordinator  
Aaron Arredondo

# Allegan County

## Friend of the Court (FOC)

As you may recall, in 2018, the FOC welcomed the Friend of the Court Bureau (FOCB) into the office to review all practices and procedures. This review was initiated by a request from the Honorable Margaret Zuzich Bakker, after learning about the option for assistance from the State Court Administrator's Office. Throughout 2018, analysts from FOCB met with all FOC staff members, interviewed local attorneys, and examined all office procedures. Following completion of this review, a detailed 140 page report was provided which outlined all recommendations.

Throughout 2019, the FOC spent much time dedicated to reviewing, prioritizing, and implementing these recommendations. During the beginning of 2020, progress stalled due to COVID-19, but work on these recommendations has again commenced. To date, 54 of the 97 recommendations have been completed, and 10 more are in progress.



The FOC was very sad to see Erin Stender leave her role as Circuit Court Administrator, and was again saddened to see Brian Patrick leave this role. Additionally, the FOC experienced turn over in 4 different positions during 2020, but was able to successfully hire new teammates, despite COVID-19.

# Adapting in 2020

At the end of March 2020, the FOC “panic packed” and went home. Bags were packed with things we hadn’t looked at in years, not knowing when we’d be able to return or what we may possibly need. Remote work was a complete unknown for FOC staff, as state limitations on off-site use of the FOC’s MiCSES system had historically prevented staff from being able to work from home. For the past year, the FOC office has adjusted, adapted, and thrived with remote work. The FOC office has remained open to the public at all times during the pandemic by creating skeleton crews to work in the office on a rotating basis. These measures kept staff safe and able to keep working throughout the ongoing pandemic.

**The FOC expresses sincere appreciation to the county leaders in their efforts to adapt and for the measures taken to ensure the stability of court and county operations during this time. Although many people unfortunately lost their jobs during this pandemic, your efforts kept us working and we are extremely grateful. The FOC would also like to ensure the Board is aware how quickly Facilities and Information Services responded to requests to ensure the safety of the FOC.**

The state paid for Zoom licenses for attorney referees, with the FOC receiving two licenses. These licenses were vital in keeping the office running.

Attorney Referee, Jaclyn Jelsema conducted court hearings and establishment appointments via this license, totaling 19,030 minutes and serving 1290 participants April-December 2020.

Friend of the Court, Jennifer Brink was able to conduct meetings to ensure ongoing operations of the office, totaling 4,200 meeting minutes, and serving 527 participants July-December 2020.

Despite the challenges in 2020, 418 referee hearings were held on domestic matters, mostly virtual, with the assistance of Family Court Referees Jolene Clearwater and Craig Sewell.



# Alternative Contempt Tract (ACT) Program Stats

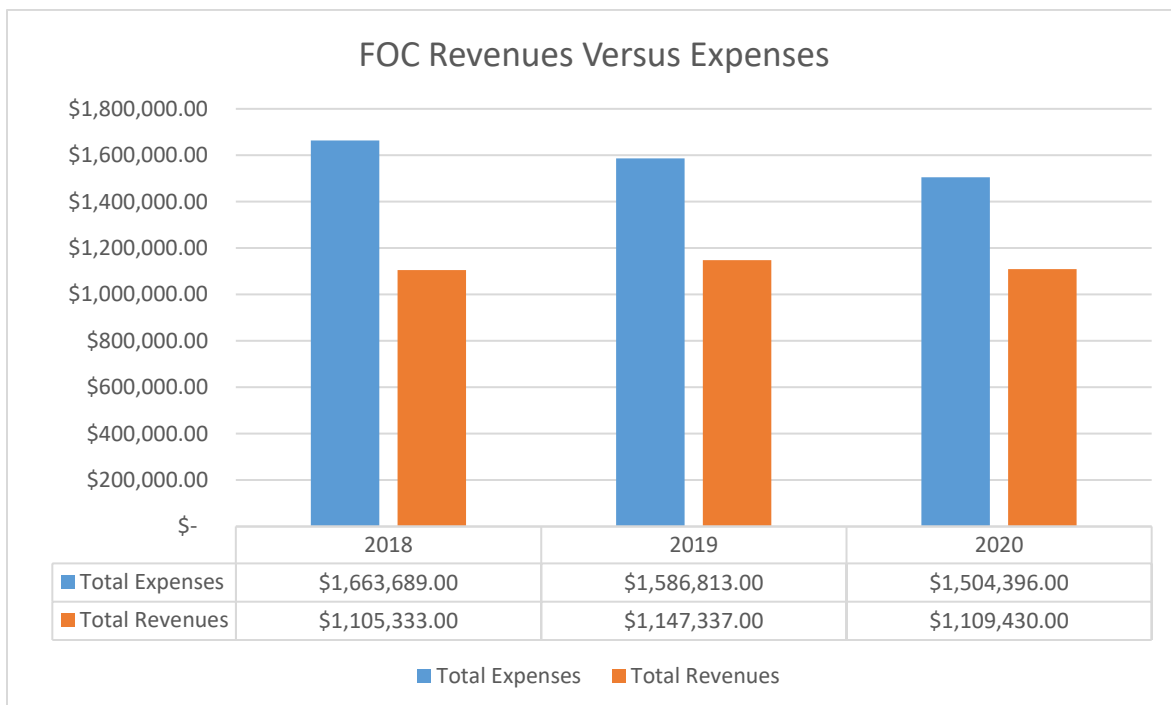
- As many participants enter the program following an arrest, the ACT program was negatively impacted during COVID-19. Additional difficulties were experienced with limited access to other services in the community.
- 13 cases were referred to the program, and 5 new individuals were admitted into the program.
- 8 successful discharges, 6 unsuccessful discharges, 5 participants were re-admitted for a second year upon their request.
- Although participation in the program was down, \$22,580.95 in child support payments was collected from the participants in 2020.
- Success story of the year:
  - o One participant was discharged early from the program, after paying off her case in full. With the help of the ACT program, she completed job training, earned her CNA license, and was approved for the Futures for Frontlines program and will be enrolling in Lake Michigan College to pursue a degree in nursing.
- Services received based on qualifying factors
  - o 4 participants received counseling
  - o 3 participants received MI Works referrals
  - o 1 participant received adult education services/job training
  - o 2 participants applied for and received Medicaid
  - o 2 participants applied for and received food assistance
  - o 2 participants received temporary emergency shelter at a homeless shelter
  - o 2 participants received substance abuse counseling
  - o 1 participants approved for services with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS)
  - o 1 participants referred to the Allegan Co. Homeless Assistance Program (HAP)
  - o 1 participant received CNA after completing job training
  - o 1 participant qualified and was approved for Futures for Frontliners and has applied to a local community college
  - o 3 participants have steady gainful employment
- \$23,665.92 in support collected from ACT participants in 2019

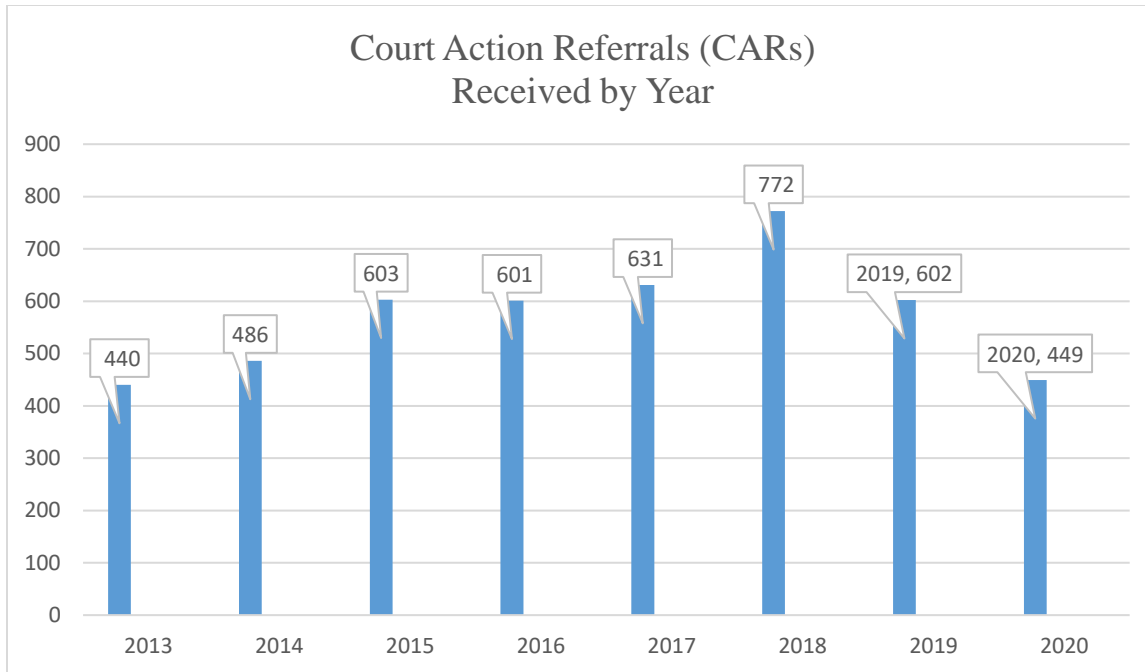
# FOC Financials

The FOC staffs 18 full time employees, including 2 attorney positions. The FOC is in a reoccurring 4 year contract with the state, under the Title IV-D Cooperative Reimbursement Program. This allows for 66% of eligible expenses to be reimbursed to the county. The FOC revenue is the largest source of non-tax revenue for the county and is frequently selected during the annual audit by our audit firm. Revenues come in the following forms:

## Revenues:

1. **IV-D CRP** reflects the revenue for IV-D services. It is the total amount 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 amount of expenditures by the FOC office.
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.
3. **Fees** reflects the statutory collections allocated to the county general fund. It is the total amount for semiannual service fees, which is \$2.25 received by the county treasurer and not the service fees collected and sent to the state treasurer. MCL 600.2538(1).





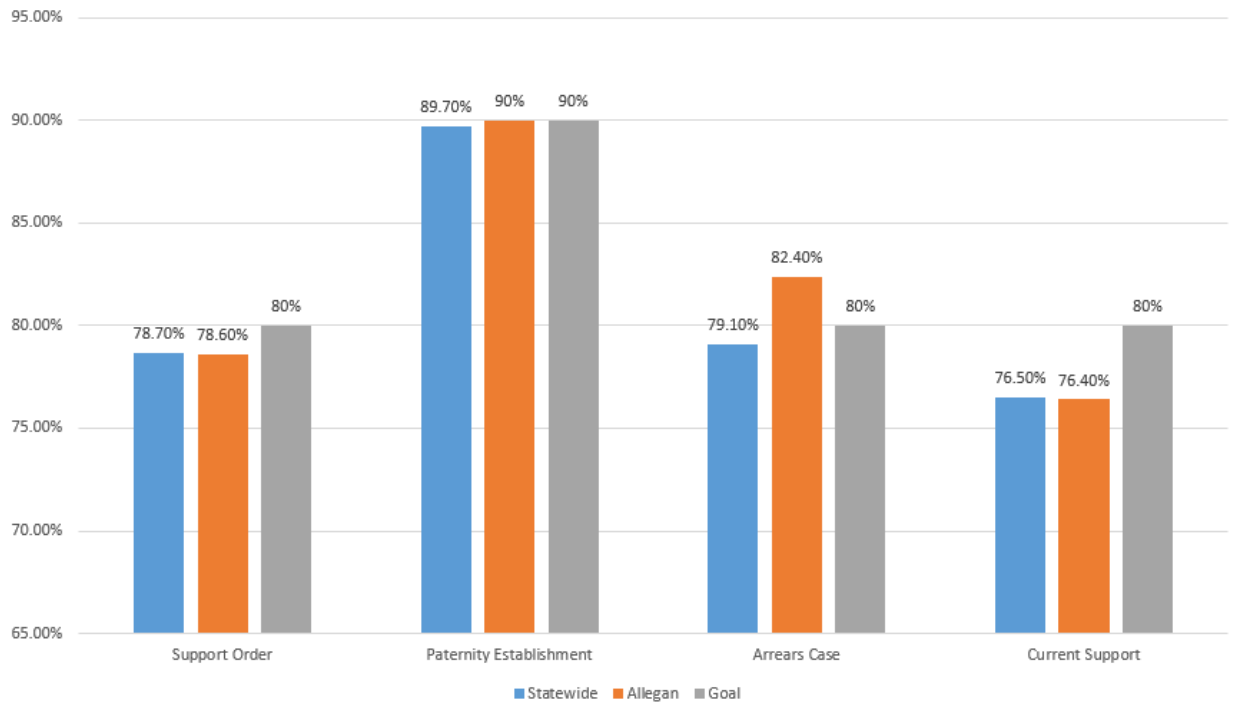
The Establishment unit of the FOC received 449 referrals to begin paternity and child support actions in 2020. Future incentive payments will be based upon meeting separate Contract Performance Standards:

- 1) 75% of the referrals must be worked within 14 days,
- 2) 75% of cases must meet the federal expiration date for service, and
- 3) 75% of the cases must have a final order within 6 months.

The Establishment unit consistently meets and exceeds standards #1 and #3, but needs assistance with standard #2, serving the complaints within the given timeframes.

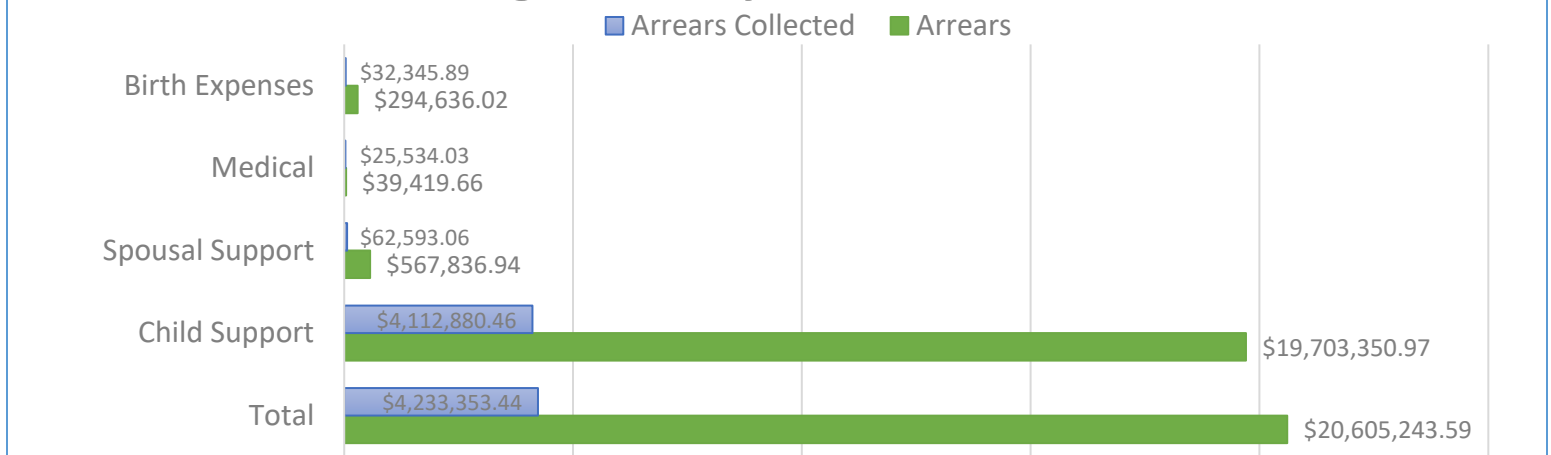
COVID-19 also greatly impacted the Establishment unit. For a period of time, paternity testing was halted by the State, which has caused delays in meeting these timeframes.

### Allegan County FOC Performance Incentive Factors



Due to COVID-19, the state is not considering performance measures for the year 2020, However, Allegan’s performance was consistent with the rest of the state.

## Allegan County FOC 2020 Arrears



In 2020, Allegan County FOC cases had a total of \$20,605,243.59 in arrears, which is money that is past due. For the first time known to date, this number did not increase (the FOC collected more than what was charged in 2020). This is partly due to the additional unemployment and stimulus funds.

2020 total support charged: \$14,737,391.32

2020 total support collected: \$15,294,108.78

198 bench warrants were issued in 2020. Again, this number is low due to COVID-19. From April 2020-December 2020, the state prohibited the issuance of bench warrants for child support matters. This mandate, which has now ended, created a backlog of cases where enforcement is needed.

284 support show cause hearings were conducted by the Circuit Court Judges in 2020.

As of February 16, 2021:

- There were 263 active bench warrants for payors with a known address in Michigan.
  - o 14 in the city of Allegan
  - o 97 in Allegan County
  - o The bond payments alone total \$679,407.
- There are another 118 active bench warrants for payors with a bad address.
- There are another 141 active bench warrants for payors residing outside of Michigan.
- Total of 522 outstanding warrants.
- Allegan FOC is not currently able to utilize other permitted enforcement remedies, such as booting vehicles or placing liens/seizing/selling property.

The FOC appreciates the ongoing conversations and work towards obtaining a bench warrant officer to assist with these arrests and collections.

# Allegan County Legal Assistance Center

## “ACLAC”

Since opening in July of 2012, the Allegan County Legal Assistance Center has served over 19,000 patrons. Even during the 2020 pandemic year, Linda Teeter and Marty Curley along with interns and volunteers, assisted **2,182** patrons with legal needs, giving them access to justice when they could not afford an attorney. There is an array of cases processed with the assistance of the part time staff at ACLAC including divorce, custody, guardianship, landlord/tenant, personal protection order petitions, expungements and many more.

Approximately 80% of those who were assisted at ACLAC had incomes of less than \$40,000 per year, with 22% earning less than \$10,000 annually. The need for the services of ACLAC are obvious, and not only assist the litigants but also provide increased efficiency for the Courts and resources for our police agencies.

ACLAC appreciates the assistance of the County in their location and hope to continue to build this resource and provide quality service to the Allegan County community.



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

## “Judicial and Clerical Staff Zooming into a New Era”

Prior to the pandemic, the Family Division clerical offices were a daily hub of activity with a high volume of traffic. Prosecutors, attorneys, and Department of Health and Human Services caseworkers were constantly in and out of the office area utilizing a conference room attached to the clerical offices. Non-clerical court staff were continuously in this area reviewing court files stored there for the weeks scheduled hearings, securing office supplies, collecting their mail, or utilizing office equipment in this area. Staff from the Friend of the Court, County Clerk, or other departments of the Court or County may be in the clerical area on any given day. This all ended on March 13, 2020.

With the reported severity of the Covid-19 virus, safety of all Court staff was paramount. On March 13, 2020, the Family Division clerical offices were limited to only Court staff. The clerical staff were cleaning their respective work areas and the clerks were not to utilize the work area of a fellow clerk. The clerks were also cleaning the courtrooms. This was done to limit the number of persons entering the clerical offices and Facilities Management was even advised of this decision and therefore they did not need to enter this area for cleaning purposes.

On March 18, 2020, the Michigan Supreme Court entered an Administrative Order which limited all court activity to only “essential functions”. This Order also limited access to courtrooms to no more than 10 persons, including court staff, and required social distancing. The “essential functions” were extremely limited and defined in the Administrative Order. This caused adjournments of nearly the entire schedules of the Judges and Referees within the Family Division. Work from home directives were also implemented by the State at this time. The Referees and clerical staff were able to process cases, engage in on-line training, and conduct the limited number of hearings during this time period.

The court rules governing juvenile matters did provide for utilization of videoconferencing in limited circumstances prior to the pandemic. This changed on April 7, 2020, when the Michigan Supreme Court issued another Administrative Order allowing judicial officers to conduct proceedings remotely, whether physically present in the courtroom or elsewhere, using two-way interactive videoconferencing. Further requirements of the Order were that courts insure proceedings are consistent with a party’s constitutional rights, that there must be a procedure for a party to communicate confidentially with their attorney, that the public be provided access to the proceeding during the proceeding or immediately thereafter, and the proceeding must be recorded sufficiently to allow for the preparation of a transcript. Courts now entered the *Zoom Era!*

The State of Michigan had purchased Zoom accounts for all Judges in 2019. Judge Buck was gracious in allowing Referee Sewell and Referee Clearwater to share his Zoom account after the aforementioned Administrative Order was entered. This allowed for partial schedules to resume but did require a great deal scheduling effort with three jurists sharing one account. The jurists and clerical staff participated in a large number of Zoom trainings, offered by the State Court Administrative Office, and other entities, over the next few weeks. The State of Michigan was investigating purchasing additional Zoom accounts for Court Referees and Magistrates but believed this would take several weeks. To avoid a significant backlog of hearings, the Court also engaged in internal discussions regarding the purchase of additional Zoom accounts for all Referees.

The State Court Administrative Office was able to expedite the purchase of Zoom accounts for all Referees and these were in place by the third week of April 2020, at no cost to the County. This has allowed all juvenile proceedings to be conducted on a full time basis since this time.

The above summary is however not the end of the story but only the beginning of the adjustments by the Judges, Referees, and clerical staff. New procedures had to be implemented for required court functions. One example being juvenile delinquency fingerprinting. This was routinely completed by Courthouse Security when a juvenile would appear for a hearing. New notices and directions on how to complete fingerprinting were drafted as juveniles were no longer physically appearing at hearings.

Zoom hearings are channeled into existing court recording equipment so the hearing can be easily transcribed if necessary. This requires a court recorder to be in the courtroom, typically by themselves, monitoring all recording equipment and complying with all recording standards as they would if all persons were present. The court recorders are also able to monitor and be the host of the Zoom meeting which requires the ability and knowledge of all the Zoom functions necessary to conduct hearings. This includes the important breakout room function of Zoom allowing a party to communicate confidentially with their client. With the referees conducting the vast majority of their hearings remotely, the clerical staff has been invaluable in providing documents, reports, last minute exhibits, and many other support services prior to numerous Zoom hearings.

Many courts in the State publically broadcast their proceedings on You Tube to allow access to the proceedings consistent with the Supreme Court Order. In juvenile matters, due to the sensitive nature of the hearings, the Judges did not desire to proceed in this manner. Instead, the courtrooms have remained open to the public for attendance by a party, if they are unable to participate by phone or videoconferencing, and for the public to view the proceedings. Any person in the courtroom can watch, or participate in the proceedings on a television located in the courtroom. The public is also able to view the proceedings by being in the Zoom hearing using a phone or videoconferencing. If there is party or public participation in the courtroom, the clerical staff is very diligent regarding immediate cleaning of the courtroom.



The above is but a few examples of the changes for the Family Division Jurists and clerical staff. Overall Court staff transitioned quickly and efficiently to the Zoom era. Referees Sewell and Clearwater hosted a training session provided by the State Court Administrative Office, for other courts, regarding how to conduct Zoom hearings in summer 2020. This included excellent PowerPoint materials prepared by Referee Clearwater.

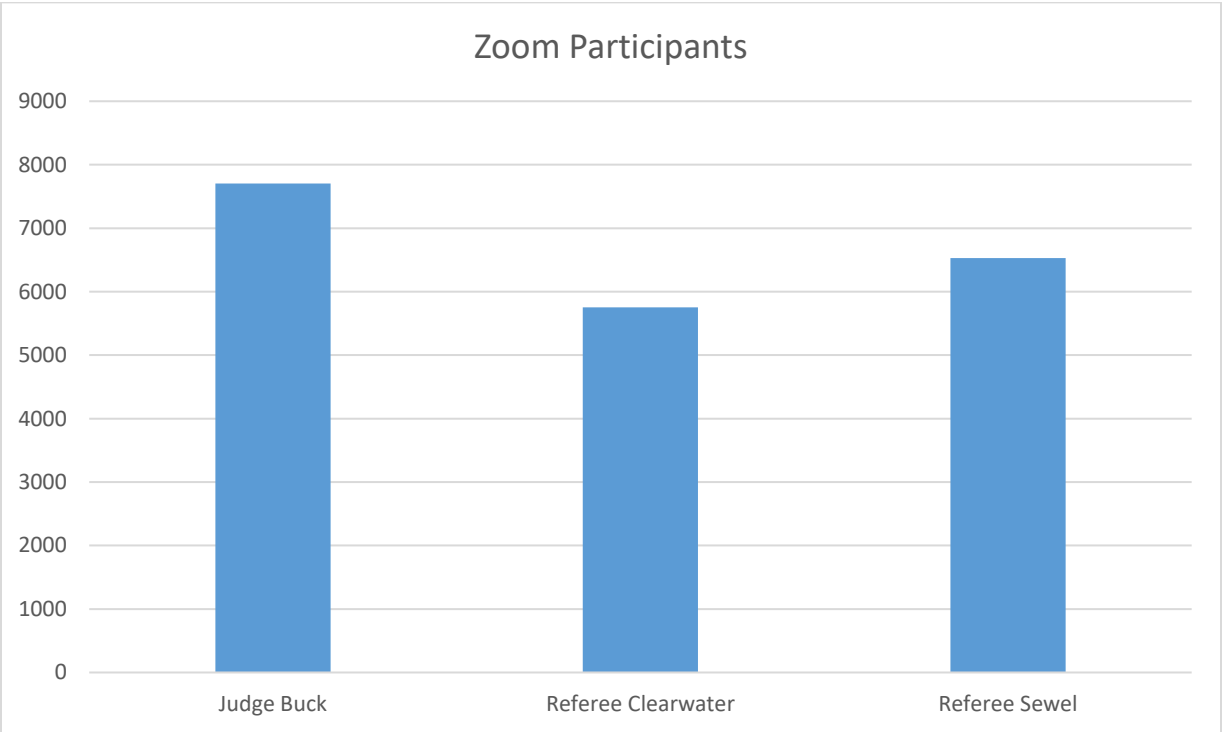
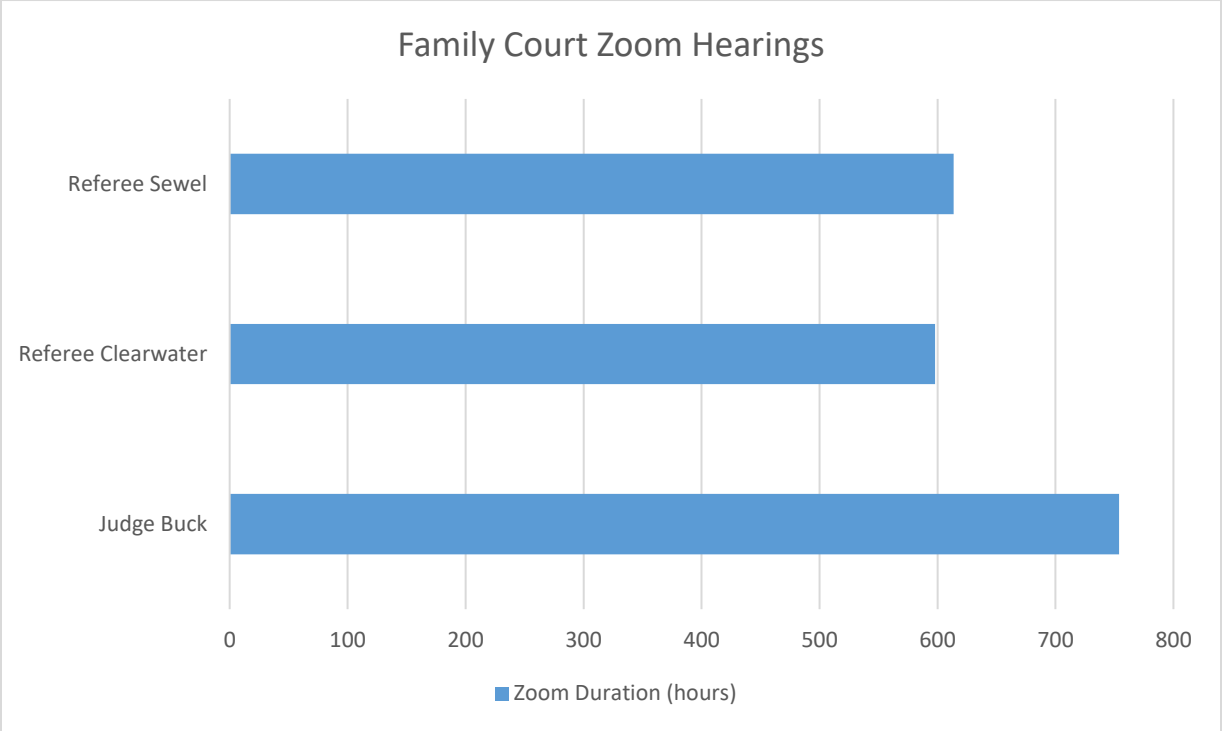
Looking into the future, it is anticipated the Supreme Court will greatly expand the ability of courts to conduct videoconferencing hearings. Although not without some bumps in the road, the feeling across the State is that expansion of videoconferencing has had a positive effect on the legal system. Just two examples include greater participation by parties in hearings and attorneys, not located in the immediate area, do not drive significant distances to attend a brief hearing.

### **Virtual Court Proceedings**

The COVID-19 pandemic has limited the court's ability to conduct hearings in person both in Allegan County and throughout the state of Michigan. As a result, the Family Court (and all the courts) seized the opportunity to utilize a virtual courtroom via Zoom. Zoom courtrooms allowed the court to continue to conduct hearings remotely, giving the public continued access to the courts and ensuring that litigants were afforded their due process rights. Zoom technology allowed both judges and referees to ensure their safety, as well as the safety of all court staff and parties to the case.

**From April 2020 to April 2021, at the time of the writing of this report, Family Court Hearing Room A conducted 35,333 minutes of Zoom proceedings, which is over 588 hours of virtual court hearings. In those proceedings, there have been 5,614 participants, including litigants, attorneys, caseworkers, and service providers. Additionally, Family Court Hearing Room B conducted 36,817 minutes of Zoom proceedings, which is over 613 hours of virtual court hearings. Hearing Room B interacted with 6,527 participants virtually. Third, in the family court courtroom, Judge Buck had 45,244 minutes of zoom hearings, or over 754 hours of virtual hearings in which 7,706 participants were involved.**





# Community Probation

## 2020: A Snapshot

### Cumulative Statistics:

<u>Measured Area</u>	<u>Number</u>
Total Cases	82
New Petitions Adjudicated (on current or previous probationers)	5
Probation Violations Adjudicated	31
Community Service Hours Ordered	537
Days Spent at Home	10,281
Days Spent in Detention	793
Days Spent on a Tether	188
Days Spent in Residential Care	2,281
Total Days on Probation	13,465
Number of Children Taking Medication	47 (57.3% of caseload)
Total Number of Contacts Made	5,388
Number of Recidivists	11 (13.4% of caseload)
Number of Repeat Offenders	8 (9.7% of caseload)
Probationers Released During FY	38
Number Released Who Met Goals	36 (94.7% success rate)

## Average Probationer:

<u>Measured Area</u>	<u>Number</u>
Average Age	14.3
Number of New Petitions Per Case	.06
Number of PV's Per Child	.37
Average Days at Home	124
Average Days in Detention	9.5
Average Days in Residential Care	27
Average Days on Probation	162
Average Grade	8 <sup>th</sup>
Average Number of Contacts Per Case	66

## Did You Know?

- The average juvenile on probation in Allegan County is a 14 year-old 8<sup>th</sup> grader.
- On average, about a third of all probationers had his /her probation violated this past year.
- The average probationer spends approximately 7.6% of his/her days on probation in detention and approximately 16.6% of his/her days on probation in residential care.
- Of the children released from probation during the FY, approximately 95% were successful in meeting his/her treatment goals.
- Approximately 13.4% of the total caseload includes children who were previously on probation and came back to the court for subsequent offenses.
- Approximately 9.7% of the total caseload includes children who commit new offenses while on probation.
- On average, children on probation are contacted 66 times by his/her probation officer, with 17 of those contacts being face-to-face.
- The average child involved with the court spent approximately 23 weeks (or approximately 5.7 months) on probation.
- Approximately 57% 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 6.5.

\*\*This data is comparable to last year's data, even with the COVID-19 pandemic which prevented face-to-face contact with probationers for nearly 5 months.\*\*

# Community Justice Program

The Community Justice department continued providing surveillance, skill streaming groups, community service and elementary truancy support throughout 2020. Normally, in person visits with youth are provided at a minimum once weekly, however, these visits were discontinued and replaced with Zoom meetings beginning in March until June when outside visits with masks were initiated. The five Why Try groups in the elementary schools that kicked off in January came to an abrupt halt by March. The ten week adolescent Why Try group was a collaborative effort between Community Mental Health and Community Justice. The staff initially faced many challenges with this virtual process, but after a few weeks and a number of “coaching” sessions the group finally came together and learned the value of the curriculum and the power of the group process.

Surveillance	70
Zoom Hearings	209
Elementary Truancy	47
WhyTry Groups	5

Case numbers did drop due to the pandemic, however, the staff were able to focus on training opportunities either with assigned reading or on line courses. A few of the book studies included; *Transforming the Difficult Child* by Howard Glasser, *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel van der Kolk and *The Bullet Journal Method* by Ryder Carroll.

Every summer, the facility garden provides an average of 10-15 community service hours per week between May and August. In spite of the pandemic, seeds were planted, weeds pulled and vegetables harvested. Our facility gardener and Community Justice Officer, Kendall Domeier, successfully provided practical life skills training for 20 youth involved with the court. Changes to normal gardening operations because of the pandemic included; time spent in the building was in a designated area, health screenings and temperature checks were done upon arrival, and transportation had to be coordinated by parents.

The Community Justice Officers were able to provide services to youth and families thanks to the support provided by a number of county departments. Information Services provided technical support and hardware to keep staff working from home, the Health Department provided frequent COVID-19 updates specific to Allegan County and the Circuit Court Administration and Judges encouraged staff to “think outside the box” so services could safely be delivered within the guidelines established.

# Juvenile Detention

*“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul  
than the way in which it treats its children.”*

*~ Nelson Mandela ~*

## **WE ARE OPEN!**

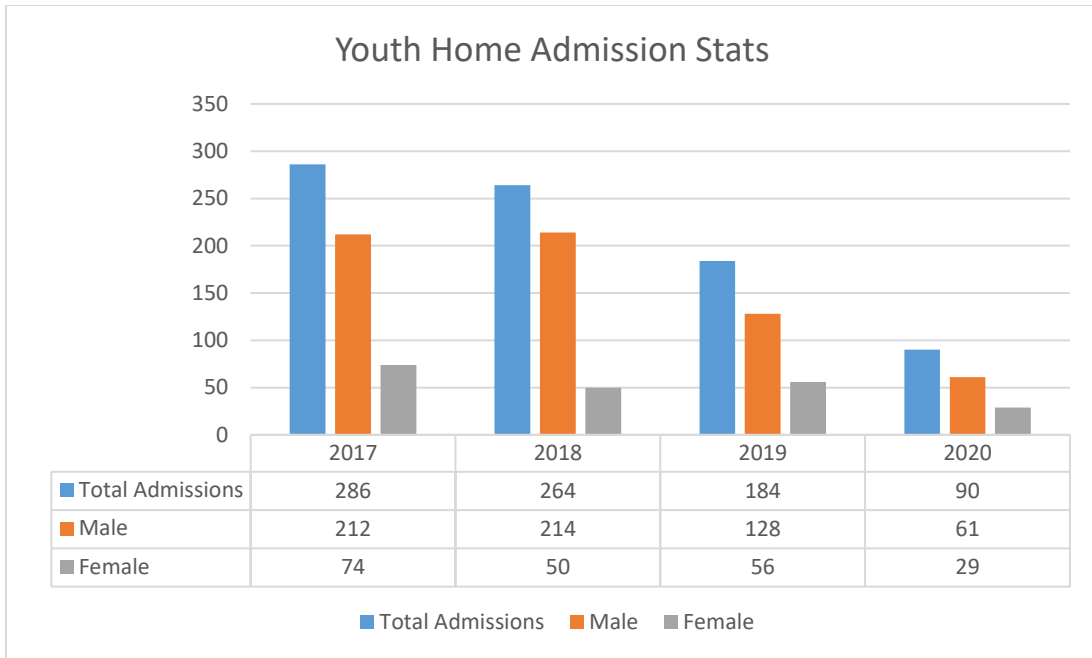
The Juvenile Center continued operations in 2020, in spite of the pandemic. In March, as lock-down orders went into effect and new information impacting procedures and protocols were being shared, facility staff was adjusting to our new “normal” of social distancing, mask wearing, disinfecting, health screening and temperature taking. Schedules were changed, shifts were staggered, a few staff worked from home, and full time positions were left vacant because of the reduced population.

## **WE ARE SAFE!**

The Juvenile Center remained COVID-19 free during 2020, however, five staff members accounted for nine incidents of exposure, all of which tested negative, but resulted in fourteen days quarantine per incident.

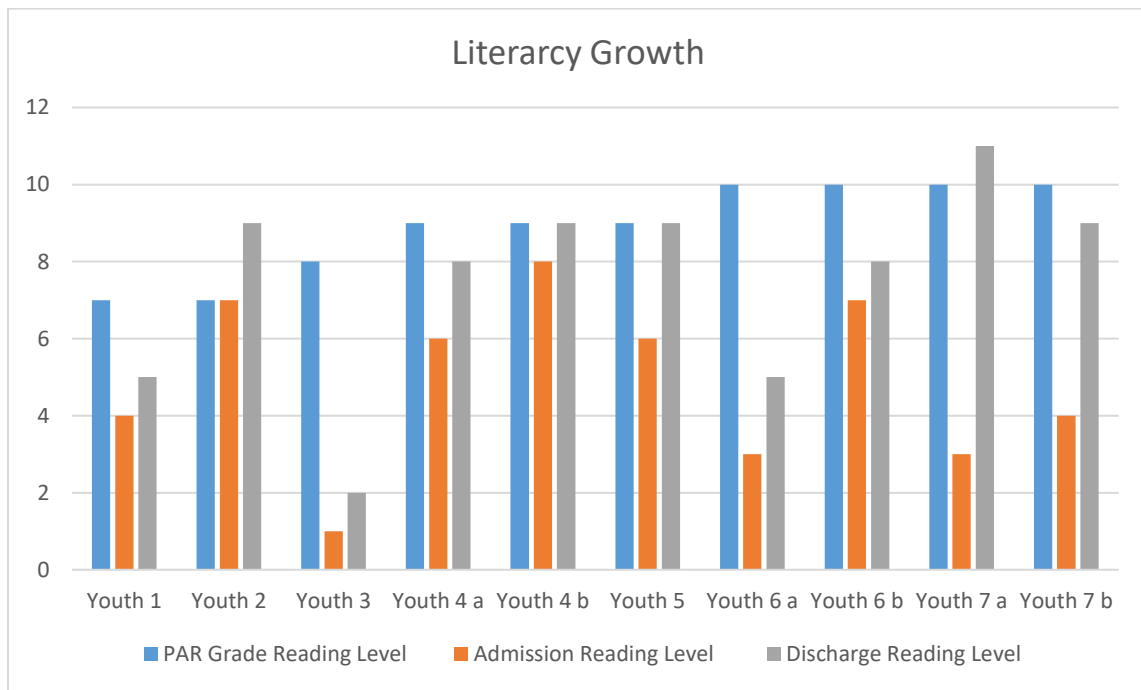
## **WE ARE WORKING!**

The Emergency Order issued by the Governor impacted the number of youth coming into the facility by only allowing juveniles determined to be a substantial and immediate safety risk to themselves or others. The order also suspended the use of out-of-home confinement for technical violations of probation. This resulted in a significant decrease in admissions with ninety total admissions in 2020, thirty-five of those were out of county youth.



### Literacy Growth Among Youth

Upon admission, each secure detained youth is assessed academically. All youth take The Decoding-San Diego Word Test and older youth also take the Eckwell Passage Comprehension Test. Youth Home staff have a strong passion for growing literacy during detention stays. Here are a few examples of that progress this year:



## **NEW PROCEDURES**

A number of new protocols and procedures were put in place in order to comply with suggested guidelines surrounding COVID-19. Prior to the pandemic, new admissions were brought in through the front of the building. To avoid a potentially positive youth walking through a high traffic area, the youth are now brought in through the back of the building directly into the secure hallway. All standardized screening is done at the point of entry. This includes health screening questions, height and weight, a mask is provided, resident showered and placed in isolation for a minimum of three days or until a negative test result is received. While in isolation the youth is screened daily and temperature taken twice daily.

Suggested procedures encourage youth be tested prior to admission, however, testing sites were difficult to find for asymptomatic youth the first several months of the pandemic. This challenge continued until October when the contractual facility nurses began testing twice weekly. Programming has been significantly improved by offering the on-site testing as it reduces time spent in isolation.

## **ALL THINGS ZOOM**

Only essential personnel were allowed in the facility for the majority of 2020 therefore, the staff and youth became familiar with Zoom for all “outside” contacts. This included; Court hearings, family visits, therapy appointments, psychiatric assessments, church services, music therapy with virtual concerts, educational programming, and probation officer/community justice officer visits. The Zoom hearings have proven to be efficient and cost effective given transportation costs have been eliminated.

## **MULTI-DEPARTMENT COOPERATION**

The Juvenile Center staff did a tremendous job managing the restrictions implemented due to COVID-19. The staff kept all programming moving forward including the educational curriculum when our Outlook Academy Staff was not available. Two youth successfully completed the GED in 2020, one of which was from out of county. Detention staff and Community Justice Staff planted and harvested two gardens this year keeping youth busy while teaching lifelong skills.

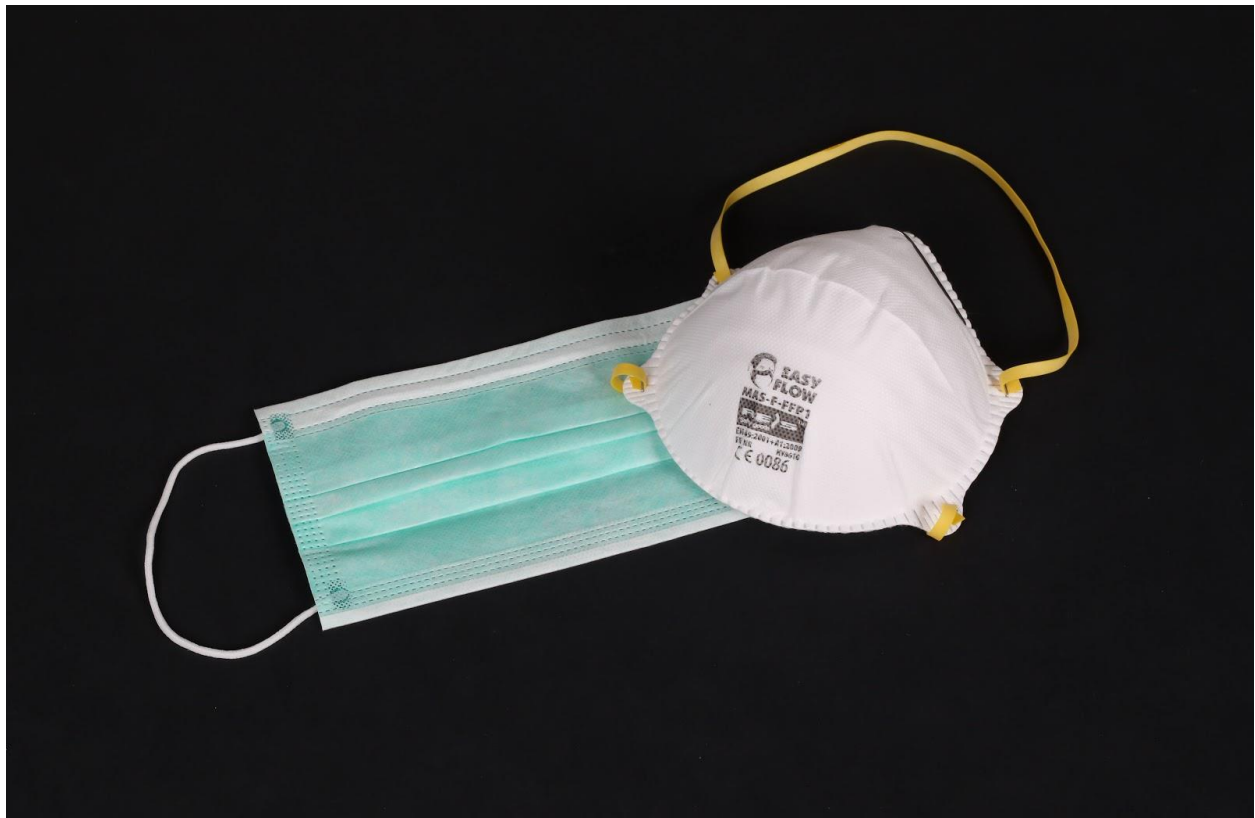
A number of departments played a vital role in the support of the juvenile center. Facilities Management kept us well supplied with disinfectant supplies and face masks. Information Services supervised the completion of the new audio and video systems. The Health Department and Human Resources provided guidance in managing a number of complicated situations and were willing to help after hours and on weekends. The Court followed the Emergency Order by taking a critical look at the level of supervision needed to maintain youthful offenders in the community, therefore, lodging only those youth determined to be a threat in the community and supporting the flexibility needed to keep everyone safe.



# Cheever Treatment Center

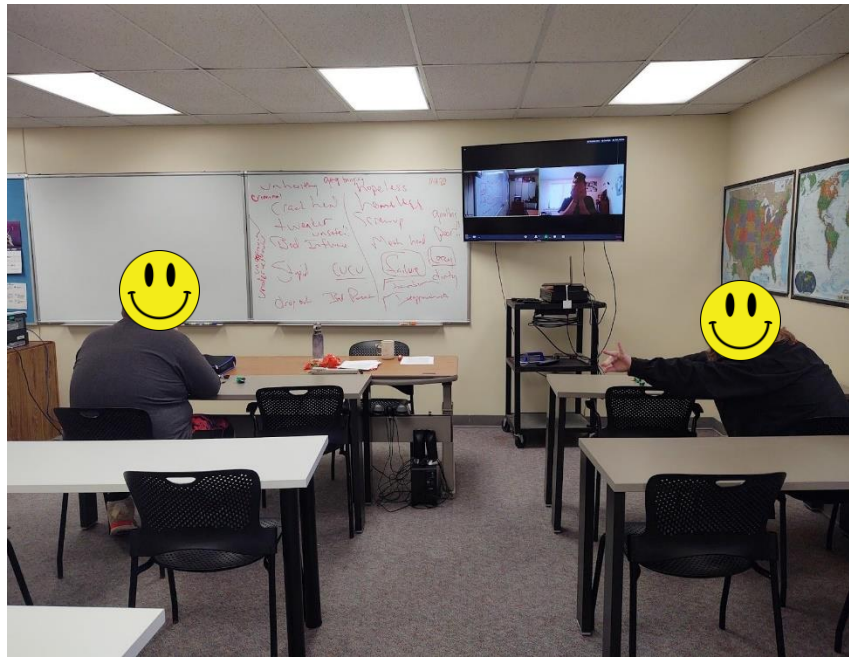
“Working with the difficult youth of Allegan County safely through the pandemic!”

Adjusting to serve through the “new” typical in life



This past year has provided Cheever with the opportunity to demonstrate to our residents what our teaching looks like in real life. Choice Theory teaches us that in life all we have control of is ourselves; the choices we make. Staff have modeled this for our residents throughout the year. Embracing change consistently throughout the year. The changes we have experienced have all been made to implement a safe environment for both staff and the residents. The pandemic has been the source of these implemented changes this past year.

The changes made have allowed Cheever to maintain typical operations benefitting the safety of Allegan County’s residents. We have remained open throughout the pandemic, serving the adjudicated youth of Allegan County. Over this past year, we have created protocols to keep the unit open for treatment of our residents.



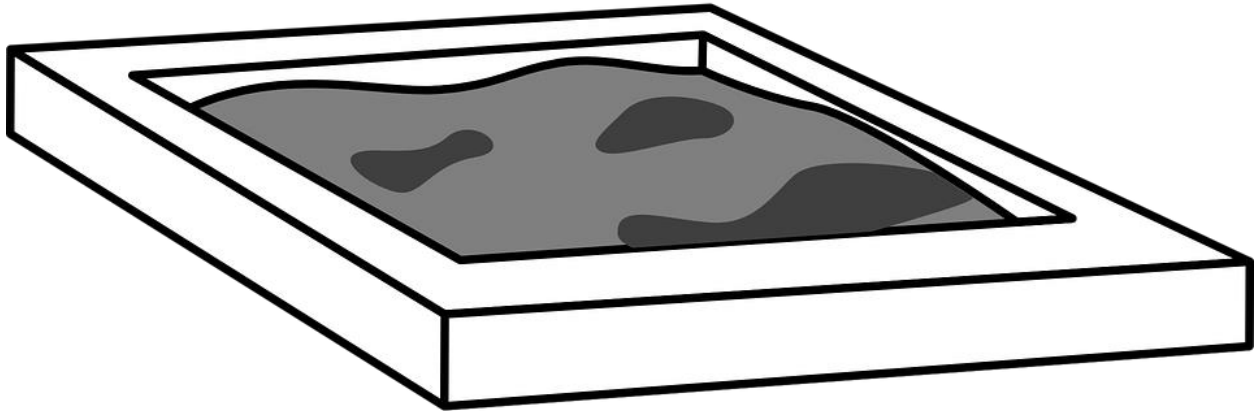
## The “New” Normal

Success this past year has come in multiple ways. First, we have maintained a safe environment throughout this time. The protocols that were incorporated involved proper effective steps in quarantining residents, contact with quarantined residents, movement of residents in quarantine protocol, and handling of quarantined items (clothes, books, papers, etc). Our process in following these protocols has led to Cheever experiencing no Covid related issues over the past year. Secondly, we have made changes to the program in response to the pandemic. We have been able to continue having home assignments for residents. Utilizing the Zoom and Google Meet platforms we have continued family and individual therapy as well as the residents teaching their families what they have learned in family meetings. The Zoom platform allowed residents to visit with their family members as live visits have been on hold. Zoom has also benefited staff through virtual staff meetings, team meetings, family meetings, and review hearings. We are excited because many of these changes have improved our services and will live on after the pandemic. An evaluation of the changes we implemented will have our staff determine our service to the client has improved.



## By The Numbers...Zoom & Google Meet

The year of 2020, was the year of “virtual”. From April through the end of 2020, the majority of Cheever’s meetings were virtual. The residents of Cheever typically have one team meeting a month, two family meeting sessions, two family therapy sessions, weekly individual therapy sessions, one review hearing, and monthly case consultation meetings. Cheever staff have led 441 Zoom/Google Meet meetings over the nine months of the pandemic shutdown in 2020. In addition, we had 39 virtual Supervisor meetings, ten virtual staff meetings, and eight virtual social histories during those nine months. The virtual meetings have continued to be an ongoing process as 2020 moved to 2021 through present day (April).



## One Big Sand Box

The response from the departments within the county has been positive. When our staff have reached out with building issues, Facilities staff and Information Service staff have provided quick response to the needs of our unit. The Health department has provided medical needs in a timely fashion, even as their responsibilities have changed with the Covid testing and vaccination. The Human Resources and the County's Administration team has provided us accurate information and direction regarding staff concerns with maintaining a safe work environment based on the Covid-19 Preparedness, Response, and Safe Workplace plan. Thank you to all departments Cheever has interacted with in 2020. We have remained open and operating through the pandemic with your assistance.

Collaborating with the family court departments has been an essential aspect of the pandemic. Communication is critical for Cheever as we interact with Judge Buck, the probation officers, community justice, and the youth home. Cheever staff have utilized their phones, texting, email, and virtual meeting platforms to provide real time information to these departments. Staff's availability throughout the past year has gone beyond their posted shift times. The combination of flexibility in schedules and new technology being utilized has allowed staff to maintain the high level of services to our clients. The team approach in working with our clients has successfully continued due to the support from the departments we work with. Together we have been able to provide continuity of care at or above our typical level. Thank you to all parties Cheever interacts with. As one, we are servicing our clients more effectively after a year of pandemic protocols.



## Spot Light

Cheever Treatment Center is a home based treatment program. The typical process is for residents to begin living at Cheever full-time, then transition to spending time at their homes as they demonstrate effective change in behavior. These passes typically started with short half-day to day passes, working up to overnights. Continuing with homepasses became a serious struggle for us to overcome.

The safety protocols in place for Covid-19 involve residents quarantining for 72 hours as well as having a Covid-test before transitioning into the Cheever unit. At this point residents were on a quarantine social distance protocol for an additional 11 days. These protocols have been essential in maintaining a safe environment at Cheever.

Maintaining a safe environment quickly came into conflict with one main area of Cheever programming. This main area was the residents' ability to have home passes. The decision Cheever made was to have the residents start returning home on longer passes than typical. Cheever staff, along with community justice and probation, have instituted ongoing support for the resident while they are on their passes. The resident's team has supported them at home through social distance visits outside of the home, additional therapy sessions, phone conversations, text messages, virtual check-ins, and email. This process has been effective allowing the relationship building with their families to continue as well as the residents' ability to continue working towards release from the program. The combined efforts of all involved has created an effective solution.

# 2020 Circuit Court Annual Board of Commissioners Report Infographic

## ZOOM STATS

- Circuit Court: 500+ Hours
- FOC: 400+ Hours, 2,000+ participants
- Family Court: 2,000+ Hours and 20,000+ participants

Provide valuable and necessary quality services to our  
**CUSTOMERS**

- Court offices never closed, business never stopped
- Provided virtual court
- Provided 7 safe and socially distanced jury trials in the fall when numbers allowed

## YOU TUBE STATS

- Circuit Court: 23,000+ views and 400 subscribers
- FOC: 1,726 views and 268 subscribers
- ⇒ 889 views in last 90 days, so traffic is picking up

Maintain our  
**FINANCIAL STABILITY**

- Highest year of collections' revenues and FOC revenue
- Expense Budget surplus of \$700,500, and a NET budget surplus of \$375,800

Support a united and  
**ENGAGED WORKFORCE**

- Set up remote work options
- Allowed flexible scheduling
- Put employee's safety first
- Accommodated employee family needs regarding scheduling and in person availability

Continuously improve our  
**PROCESSES**

- Set up 3 Zoom court rooms, 3 Zoom hearing rooms, and 3 additional Zoom accounts
- Interdepartmental cooperation and team work to ensure safety procedures and remote work needs
- Court business never closed or stopped

