

48th Circuit Court

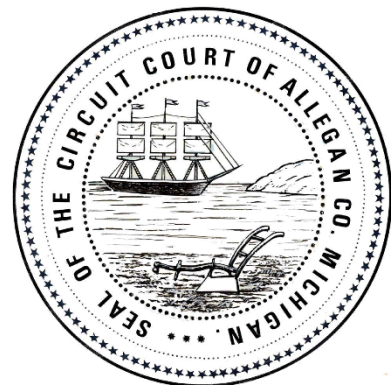
2021 Annual Report

Thursday, June 9, 2022

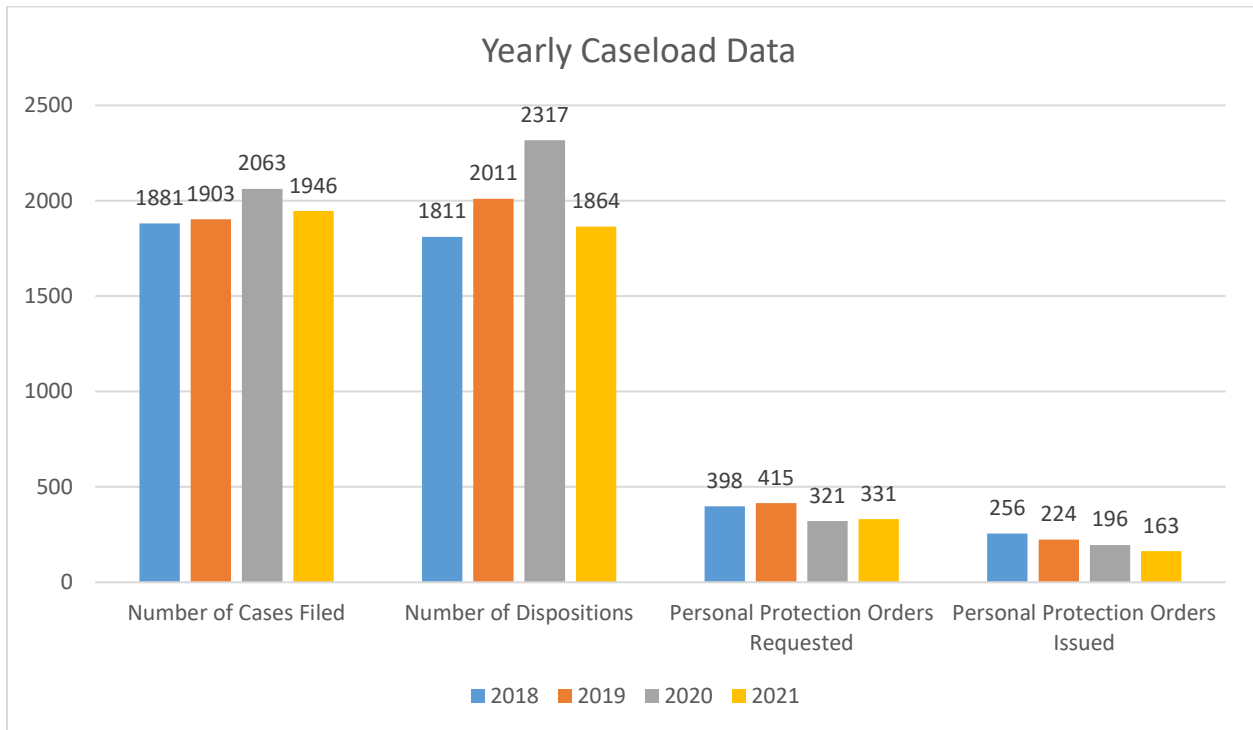
Criminal and Civil,

Friend of the Court,

Family Division



Circuit Court Statistics



Circuit Court continues to see a high number of case filings and dispositions. Despite yet another year of COVID-related challenges, Circuit Court remained open and conducting business throughout the year.

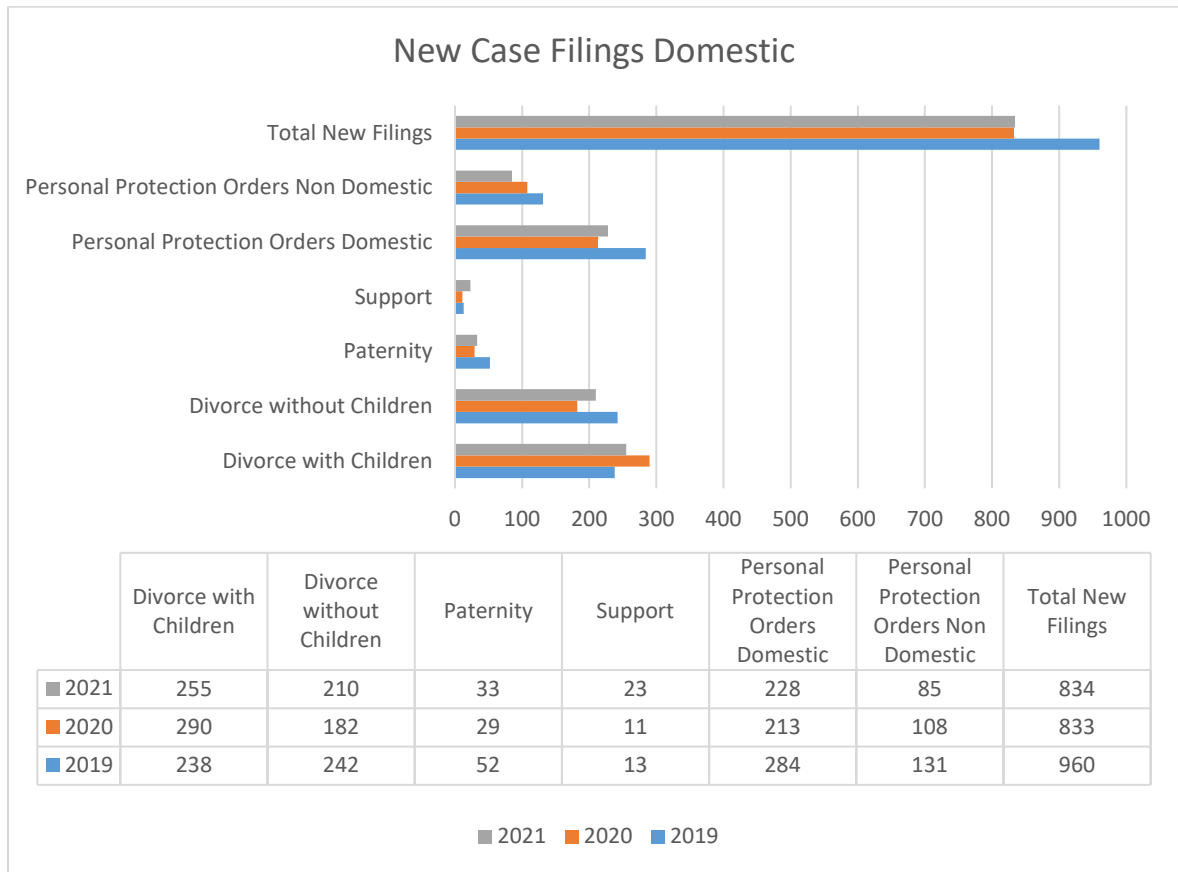
Zoom and YouTube remained vital tools for the courts in 2021. Circuit Court continued to abide by state mandates related to the pandemic response, as well as the recommendations of the Allegan County Health Department. Masks and social distancing were required through 2021. Additional mitigation tools such as remote work remain options for departments, which has been well received by the majority of employees.

Circuit Court worked diligently to reduce the backlog of jury trials created by increased filings and COVID. In our 2020 report, we noted over 118 jury trials which needed to be conducted. As of March 2022, this number has been reduced to 79 trials. Jurors continue to be polled after each trial, and all continue to report complete satisfaction with the strategies implemented by the courts.

One of the biggest challenges for Circuit Court in 2021, was a number of retirements in key roles. Following decades of dedicated service to this community, we saw the retirement of Ted Reimer, Director of Cheever, Robin Lyons, Director of Detention, and Chris White, Assignment/Scheduling Clerk. We also saw two transitions in both the Circuit Court

Administrator position and the Friend of the Court position. Also, the beginning of 2022 brought the retirement of Juvenile Probation Officer, Charlie DeVries after 41 years of service.

In 2021, 1946 cases were filed in Circuit Court, which includes all case types. 812 of these cases were felony cases, and there were 287 bind overs for drug related offenses. In prior years we have reported statistics on how many of the drug cases involved methamphetamine. Due to the change in our case management system, this information is not readily available with the available reports in the new system.



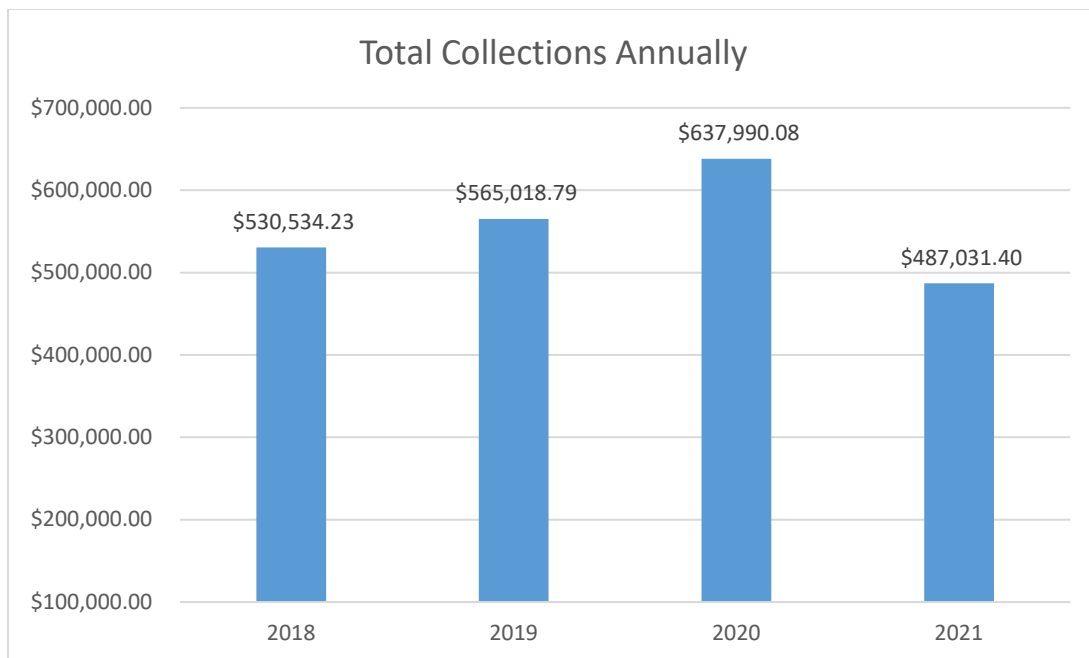
2021, was another busy year for domestic cases as well, with numbers staying fairly consistent over the past 3 years.

One of the biggest changes 2021 brought Circuit Court, was the replacement of the JIS AS400 court management system to the new WebTCS court management system. This meant all circuit court staff and all circuit court clerks had to learn a new case management system on top of the already present challenges and back logs of the pandemic.

Circuit Court Collections

This year felony collections in Circuit Court hit a huge setback with the loss of our recently purchased software system. This was another challenge caused by the new WebTCS court management system being implemented by the state. As you may recall, circuit court collections 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 does not have a dedicated collections department, so there is not a dedicated person or department to oversee these matters. As mentioned in last year's report, the court decided to purchase and implement the COLLECT system to assist with collections. This software works with the circuit court case management system (JIS/AS400), to track and manage the collections process. Within the first few months of implementation, the cost of the software had exceeded an astounding Return on Investment of over a factor of 10.

However after purchasing the software in March, we were notified and forced to upgrade from the AS400 to WebTCS in June. Unfortunately, WebTCS and COLLECT were not compatible. WebTCS comes with some minimal collection resources but no real assistance. Once again the court is faced with limited resources for collections, but maintains dedicated to finding another solution.



Swift and Sure Sanctions Probation Program (SSSPP)

Fiscal Year 2022, was Allegan County's 9th year of participating in this fully grant funded opportunity to slow the prison pipeline. After some financial cuts in FY21, the Swift and Sure probation program saw its biggest grant award for FY22. So far in 2022, there has been one graduation and no unsuccessful discharges. The program continues to test participants for illegal substances and alcohol. Overall, the program continues to grow and add participants each quarter.

The program has monthly meetings to ensure the program is operating efficiently. The monthly meetings also allow staff to ensure the budget is on track as well as discuss any participants that require more of a specialized treatment plan. In 2021, there were an average of 11 participants in the program at a time. There were 10 successful completions, and 1 unsuccessful discharge in 2021.

During the pandemic, some participants struggled with relapses and negative influences in their lives, but some participants thrived by being promoted to new positions, which earned them higher salaries. 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 effective alternative to prison.

Specialty Court Coordinator
Aaron Arredondo

Allegan County

Friend of the Court (FOC)

For most of 2021, the FOC was operating under continuing restrictions due to COVID-19. Even though in-person meetings and hearings were limited, FOC staff continued to provide services using technology such as electronic signing of documents, telephone meetings, and remote hearings conducted using the Zoom platform.

The FOC experienced turnover in three different positions in 2021, but was able to successfully fill these vacancies with new team members. A new FOC director was hired at the very end of the 2021, calendar year.

Performance Statistics

Support arrearage is decreasing. The Michigan child support program has provided both administrative and legal avenues to payers with past-due support that no longer have the ability to pay these arrearages, to request a discharge or forgiveness of some child support arrearages. The total amount of past due support has decreased from \$21,814,736 in 2019, to \$19,889,944 in 2021. This is a decrease of \$1,924,792, and this trend is expected to continue.

The FOC distributed a total amount of support of \$13,684,827 in 2021. Seventy-two percent (72%) of support was distributed in the month it was ordered.

Through a cooperative agreement between the Court and the Sheriff, a Sheriff's Deputy was hired and dedicated to enforcing bench warrants issued for failure to pay child support. This program is just getting off the ground and there are not statistics for the 2021, calendar year. However, initial data from 2022, shows that this program will be a success in collecting past-due child support.

FOC Facilitators resolved 75% of custody issues outside of the courtroom through facilitative information gathering conferences.

FOC Enforcement Officers have an average of 1,183 court cases each. They are responsible for monitoring support payments and initiating enforcement of the Court's custody, parenting time, and support orders. In 2021, the Enforcement Officers initiated 776 contempt hearings, issued 284 custody and parenting time notices, and issued 253 bench warrants. These activities were in addition to monitoring and responding to case alerts, meeting with parents to help resolve disputes, making referrals for mediation services, and calculating support and drafting consent orders for parents.

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 Specialized Enforcement Officer and have monthly court meetings with Judge Bakker.

In 2021, nine new participants were admitted into the program. Nine individuals successfully completed the ACT docket. During the program, participants are expected to make payments on the past-due support owed.

2021 ACT payments

- Payments for 2021 Discharged Cases
 - 1 participant paid case in full and case has now been closed (arrear only case)
 - 1 participant paid down all arrears on 2 cases
 - 4 participants began making and continue payments (includes sporadic payments)
 - \$23,285.12 collected from ACT participants (includes involuntary payments)
- Payments for 2021 ACTIVE ACT participants
 - \$20,651.59 collected in 2021 from current, ACTIVE participants (included involuntary payments)
 - 5 participants began and continue making payments
 - 1 participant paid arrears and is now current with their support
- Grand total collected from all 2021 Act participants: \$43,936.71

Challenges faced by ACT program and participants in 2021:

Housing and transportation continue to be the most challenging barriers for ACT participants. With no emergency shelter in Allegan County and limited public transportation—it has been difficult getting services for individuals facing homelessness. ACT refers those facing homelessness to the Homeless Assistance Program in Allegan (or similar agency if participant is not in Allegan Co) to begin the process of receiving assistance if eligible.

In 2021, a participant lost their housing and employment due to a mental health crisis. The participant was living in his truck for some time, but eventually was able to get assistance and secured an apartment, and eventually gained full employment with the assistance from

agencies in Kalamazoo County. This participant was successfully discharged from the program, and is now living near the Flint area and secured employment with GM.

Another challenge participants continue to face are certain felony charges which prevent them for accessing some affordable housing situations. This seems to be a recurring issue with many of the ACT participants. Employers are increasingly being more flexible with felony charges as the workforce has dwindled since the beginning of the pandemic. There are more “felon friendly” employers than ever before and this has been beneficial for many of our participants.

Our ACT referrals slowly rose in 2021 compared to 2020. With FOC enforcement officers now being able to request bench warrants be issued on those payers who fail to appear for their show cause hearings – and more child support bench warrant pick-ups – 2021 saw the program grow slightly. The program is moving towards the direction of capacity which is between 15-20 cases.

Success Stories from 2021:

In 2021, more money was collected from ACT participants than ever before—almost double the total collected in 2020. Monies collected include wage garnishment and tax offsets—but many participants have seen significant decreases in their arrears.

One participant was able to pay off almost \$10,000 in arrears between offsets and wage garnishments. This participant has definitely turned their life around and put in the hard work to do so.

Another participant was able to begin having consistent parenting time with their children – which grew to more time with their children – which in turn allowed the children’s grandmother and great-grandmother see the children more often. This same participant had not had employment for well over a year and was able to find employment and begin making consistent payments on their support obligation.

Yet another participant began their own painting business and began making consistent payments and also was able to have their parenting time increased.

A major milestone for the ACT program was the October 14, 2021, graduation where Michigan State Supreme Court Justice Elizabeth Welch was in attendance and gave introductory remarks for those attending the ceremony. The graduating participants also were given a legislative tribute from the state legislature in recognition of their completion of the ACT program – signed by State Representative Mary Whiteford and State Senator Aric Nesbit. Many agencies and providers were also in attendance – from representatives from Michigan Rehabilitation Services, to Arbor Circle Meth Diversion Program, to probation officers. This graduation put Allegan County’s ACT Program in the spotlight. The participants were able to showcase their hard work in changing their lives for the better and ultimately helping to

positively impact the lives of their children. These are only a few of the successes ACT participants have had in 2021, and we look forward to what 2022 has in store!

ACT program participant remarks:

“...being in this program helped me have more time with my children, and allowed my mom and grandma to see my kids...this program didn’t just affect me, but all of us...”

~2021 successful ACT graduate

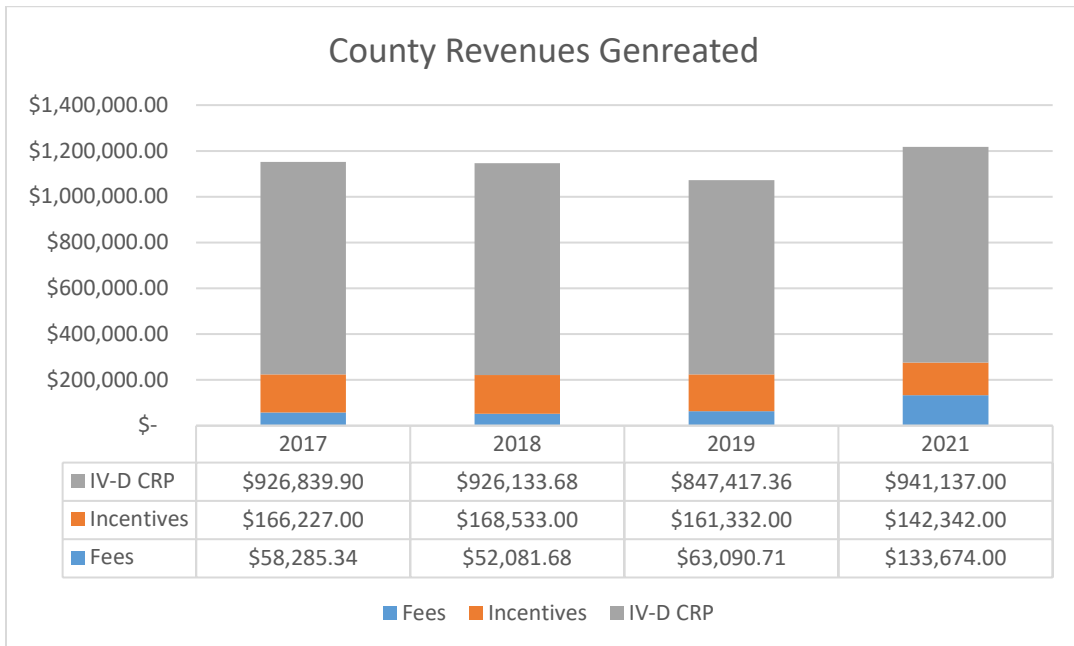
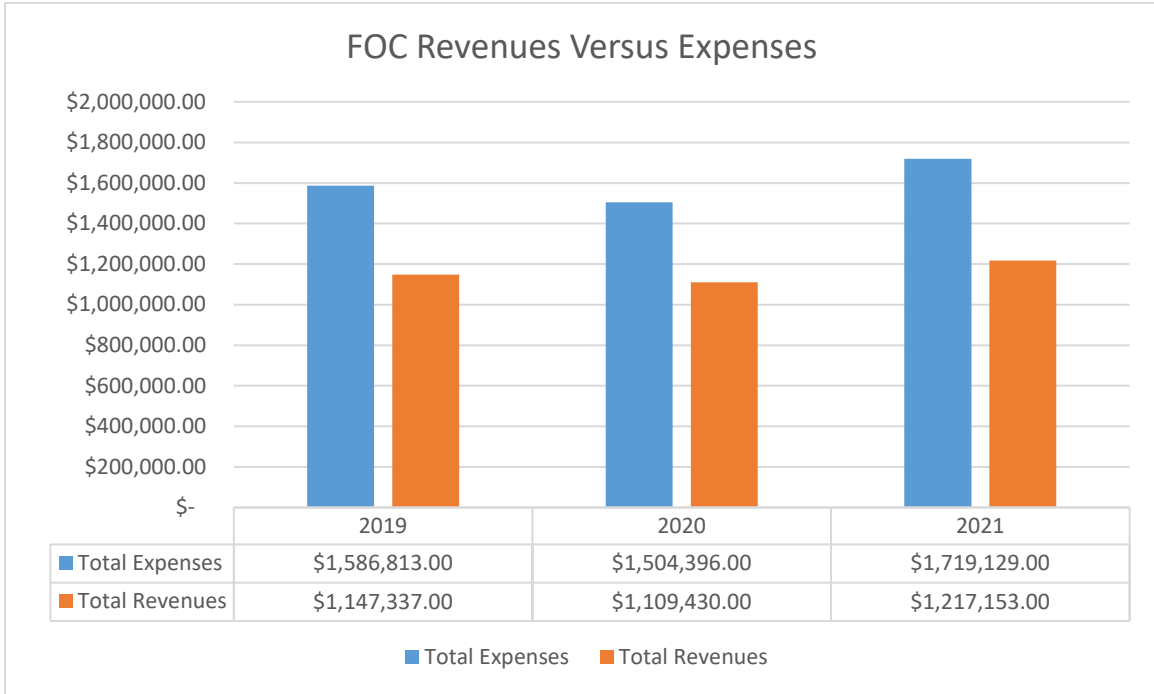
“...I was no longer afraid of going to jail and I finally felt like FOC was listening and helping me get my child support under control....”

~2021 ACT participant

“...I never thought I’d be excited to see the judge—but now I look forward to my ACT review hearings to tell the judge all the good things I have done...”

~2021 ACT participant

FOC Financials



Revenue Break Down

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 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. **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.

Please note 2020 was not included due to the state withholding performance incentives during the pandemic

FOC Looking Ahead:

2022 Goals

Grow the ACT program – The Specialized Enforcement Officer will continue to build partnerships with community partners. The Friend of the Court is looking for funding opportunities to provide financial support for this program.

Regular review of reports to improve performance of incentive factors – The FOC earns incentive monies for certain performance factors. Currently, the FOC is not earning the maximum incentive amount because the FOC is not meeting some minimum performance measures. The FOC will start reviewing designated reports on a regular basis to ensure that data that is being reported for performance criteria calculations is accurate.

Employee manuals – FOC staff work with a multitude of statutes, court rules, policies, forms, and software programs. Employees in different functional areas will begin the process of writing desk aids for various tasks. These written desk aids will be used when training new employees and when staff need to cover job responsibilities for an absent staff member.

Friend of the Court Bureau (FOCB) recommendations – The FOC will continue to review and prioritize recommendations the FOCB made in its 2019 Technical Improvement Report for the FOC.

Adopt and implement a makeup parenting time policy – Implementing this policy should provide parents with a quicker resolution of disputes surrounding denied parenting time and should also provide FOC staff with a more efficient process for addressing parenting time complaints.

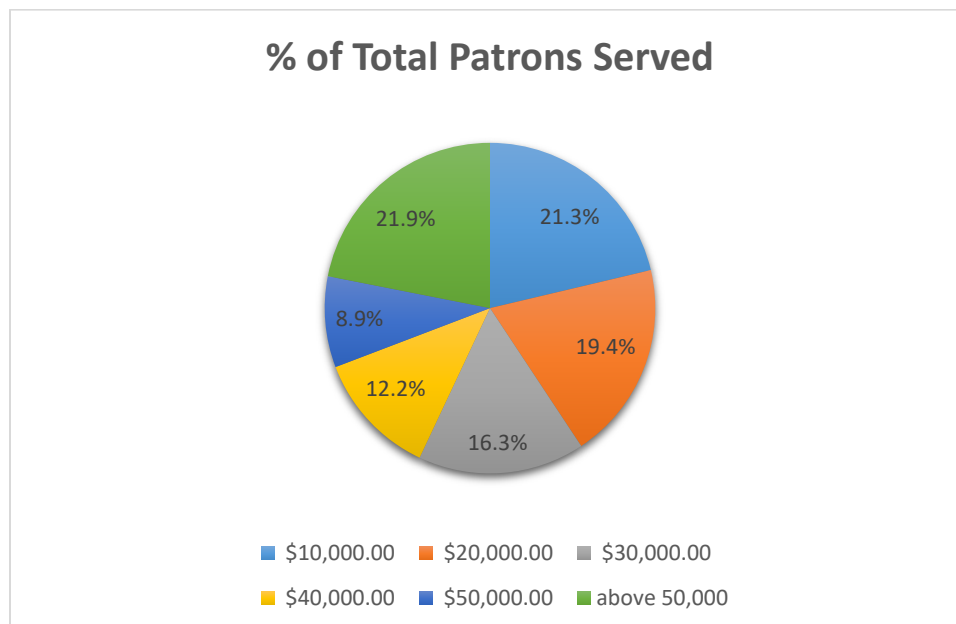
Implement processes to abate and redirect support – Michigan statute provides for an administrative process to abate and redirect support in certain circumstances, e.g. payer is incarcerated or incapacitated, child resides with the payer of support, and child resides with a non-parent. Providing notice and an opportunity to object to parents is authorized by statute and is a faster and more efficient process than established practices.

Allegan County Legal Assistance Center

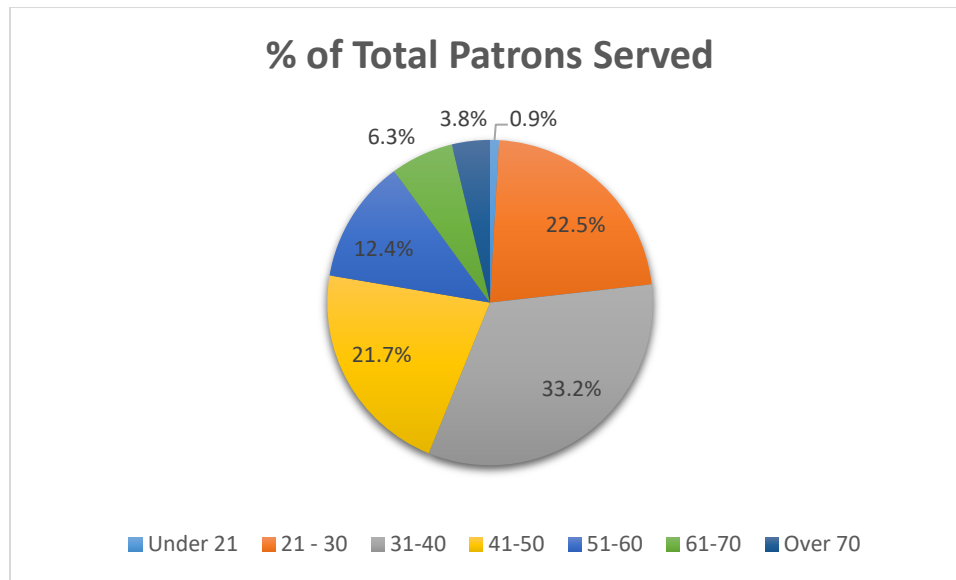
“ACLAC”

Since opening in July of 2012, the Allegan County Legal Assistance Center has served over **21,500** patrons. As the pandemic continued in 2021, Linda Teeter and staff along with interns and volunteers, assisted **3,102** patrons with legal needs, giving them access to justice when they could not afford an attorney. This is a **70%** increase over the 2,182 patrons assisted during 2020. 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.

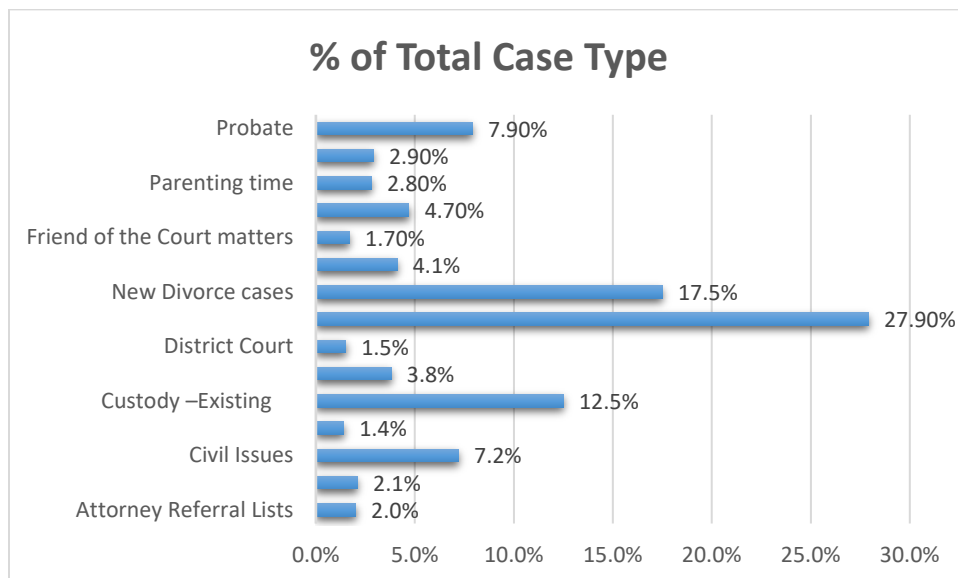
Approximately 80% of those who were assisted at ACLAC had incomes of less than \$50,000 per year, with 21.3% earning less than \$10,000 annually. The need for the services of ACLAC are obvious, and not only assist the litigants but also provide increased efficiency for the Courts and resources for our police agencies.



The age of our cliental varies, but the majority are between 21 and 60.



ACLAC covers a variety of case types.



2021 ACLAC Highlights

- ACLAC office hours were increased: March 13, 2021 ACLAC hours were extended to include Fridays-: open from 8:30a.m. – 12:30p.m.
- May 1, 2021, Jamie Hernandez was promoted to Associate Director, working 24 hours per week.
- ACLAC welcomed a 3rd part time staff member, September 20th. Part Time Patron Assistant, Maria Bartrem.
- During 2021, ACLAC had 4 interns and 1 volunteer assist ACLAC staff while working with patrons.
- ACLAC staff, volunteers and interns participated in 13 trainings during the year. Also, each new volunteer, intern and staff member attended 10 hours of orientation and training.
- Security procedure(s) training was held 3 times, during the year. Allegan County Courthouse Security Director Greg Berens presented these trainings.

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

ACLAC staff:

Linda Teeter, Director

Jamie Hernandez, Associate Director

Maria Bartrem - Patron Assistant



48th Circuit, Family Division

There has been a considerable increase in the number of hearings conducted in Family Court over the years. For example, the average number of hearings conducted by the two Referees from 2014-2018 was 946 annually, and has risen to an average of 1,205 annually from 2018-2021. At the end of 2021, Raise the Age legislation took effect, therefore we anticipate that the number of annual hearings will continue to rise.

Family Court and Circuit Court are in the process to work together to provide coverage for court recording, due to an increased number of hearings across both departments. Court reporters in Family Court play a vital role in completing court orders, operating various technology, and serving numerous parties. Despite the increased demand for all three Family Court clerks to act as court recorders, the staff have handled this increase and all other job duties. All three clerk's maintained 100% on-site presence during the pandemic and the success of the increasing demand in family court is mainly due to their hard work and dedication to the families we serve.

Family Court continues to utilize videoconferencing for court hearings, and has seen increased participation on their cases, as well as lessened demands on the families who would otherwise had difficulties attending court due to a lack of transportation, inability to take off work, or a lack of child care.

Community Probation

2021: A Snapshot

Cumulative Statistics:

<u>Measured Area</u>	<u>Number</u>
Total Cases	93
New Petitions Adjudicated (on current or previous probationers)	9
Probation Violations Adjudicated	30
Community Service Hours Ordered	275
Days Spent at Home	10,964
Days Spent in Detention	269
Days Spent on a Tether	137
Days Spent in Residential Care	1,473
Total Days on Probation	12,611
Number of Children Taking Medication	52 (55.9% of caseload)
Total Number of Contacts Made	5,956
Number of Recidivists	13 (13.9% of caseload)
Number of Repeat Offenders	7 (7.5% of caseload)
Probationers Released During FY	60
Number Released Who Met Goals	48 (80% success rate)

Average Probationer:

<u>Measured Area</u>	<u>Number</u>
Average Age	14.3
Number of New Petitions Per Case	.09
Number of PV's Per Child	.32
Average Days at Home	118
Average Days in Detention	2.9
Average Days in Residential Care	15.8
Average Days on Probation	137
Average Grade	8 th
Average Number of Contacts Per Case	64

Did You Know?

- The average juvenile on probation in Allegan County is a 14 year-old 8th grader.
- On average, about a third of all probationers had his /her probation violated this past year.
- The average probationer spends approximately 2.1% of his/her days on probation in detention and approximately 11.5% of his/her days on probation in residential care.
- Of the children released from probation during the year, approximately 80% were successful in meeting his/her treatment goals.
- Approximately 13.9% of the total caseload includes children who were previously on probation and came back to the court for subsequent offenses.
- Approximately 7.5% of the total caseload includes children who commit new offenses while on probation.
- On average, children on probation are contacted 64 times by his/her probation officer, with 22 of those contacts being face-to-face.
- The average child involved with the court spent approximately 19.5 weeks (or approximately 5 months) on probation.
- Approximately 55.9% 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 3.

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.

A Family Court Success Story: “Samuel”

Samuel had court contact on three separate occasions, the first of which was for truancy. Samuel’s mother passed away from cancer a few years ago, and his father struggled to raise his children without her. While Samuel’s father loved his three children, he was overwhelmed with a full-time job and his role as a full-time parent while grieving for his wife. This situation left Samuel feeling angry and frustrated. When Samuel first came into the court, he was truant continually, using marijuana, and had a very angry and defiant attitude. With court services and support, he was able to successfully complete probationary period, but the change was not long-lasting. His compliance with court services was minimal, and the dysfunction in Samuel’s family was ongoing.

Samuel’s second court contact was for a retail fraud charge. Samuel had once again fallen into a lifestyle that included skipping school and abusing drugs. Samuel and his family utilized court-offered services, and under the supervision of the probation officer, Samuel was able to turn his life around. Despite his son’s success, Samuel’s father continued to struggle in his attempts at parenting, which gave the court some doubts about long-term change within the family.

Samuel’s third and final court contact was for a domestic violence charge against his father. The court feared that Samuel would continue to make poor choices, but Samuel decided that he wanted to make long-lasting change. He chose to go to school regularly, and he is currently attending an alternative high school where he can work at his own pace with less distractions. Although it took three periods of probation, Samuel is blossoming in his most recent court contact. He started this school year with only three credits, but after hard work, and now has fourteen, which leaves him exactly where he should be with the opportunity to graduate early. Samuel began working out after school, which has greatly helped with his ADHD. His workout regimen has also motivated him to stop using drugs, focusing instead on a healthy lifestyle. Samuel is currently looking for a job and met with a military recruiter to explore further career opportunities. For the first time, Samuel is taking pride in the decisions he is making and is looking forward to his future. Samuel has matured significantly over the course of his court contact, and as a result, he has improved his relationship with his father. He has established healthy relationships within the community and has come to appreciate the support of his probation officer. As his probation comes to a close for the final time, the court can finally say there is hope for Samuel as he is feeling the pride and satisfaction of success that he never felt before.

To protect the privacy of the juvenile, all names have been changed.

Probation Officer Retires After 41 Years (in 2022)

This year, Charlie DeVries decided to retire from the court. Charlie is a juvenile probation officer with a dedicated 41 years as an employee of the court. Charlie has gifted the court with invaluable experience and dedication, and he has dutifully served the youth and families of Allegan County. With his retirement, the court loses a vast wealth of institutional knowledge, and an incredible employee. Charlie will be greatly missed. The court is grateful for Charlie's commitment to the mission of family court and recognizes the difference Charlie has made in the lives of Allegan County youth throughout his career. Charlie's replacement is Tim DeWit.

Community Justice Program

Community Justice had another trying year coming back through the Pandemic. The team worked to stay connected with the various programs and families they work with. As caseload numbers increased throughout the year and things started to open back up, programming started to return to normal.

Preventative “Why Try” groups, for at-risk elementary students focusing on resilience and making positive choices, resumed with five groups being completed in various elementary schools, impacting over 50 students. Community Justice Officers were back in the schools supporting the truancy program as well. They were able to meet with clients face to face again, supporting them in and out of the home. Community Service also continued throughout the year, with the team setting up projects and transporting youth to complete their ordered number of hours. Community Justice continued to support the court with various tasks including surveillance of bonds, drug and alcohol screening, adoption studies and in-home surveillance/family support for youth transitioning back into their home post-residential placement.

Over the years, the Community Justice team has built connections and relationships with numerous agencies and departments throughout the county to support them in carrying out their responsibilities with each youth ordered. Whether it be through their work in the school, the home, connecting youth with additional resources, at a community service project or facilitating an educational group, Community Justice’s overall goal is to support and encourage the youth of Allegan County to be safe and effective members of their community. The connections and relationships they have made, help make this possible.

WRAPAROUND

The Community Justice team works closely with Wraparound. Wraparound is a service provided to Community Mental Health (CMH) clients. A caseworker from CMH puts together a team of adults to support identified youth and families to address a multiplicity of service needs. Services can include: mental health intervention, crisis plans, financial support, and referrals to other agencies. The team may consist of teachers, coaches, family members, mentors, volunteers from various churches, wraparound leader and community justice worker, in addition to the identified youth and family member(s). The team meets monthly to review the case, build off the strengths and refer additional services if necessary.

MICHIGAN WORKS:

This past year with the influx of referrals for 17 year olds following Raise the Age legislation taking effect, Community Justice has been working more closely with Michigan

Works than ever before. With this increase, the idea of meeting/completing their educational needs and securing employment is at the top of their to-do list. Michigan Works provides opportunities for getting a GED, interviewing for and gaining employment, and providing transportation. Community Justice provides assistance with attaining state ID's, getting and filling out job applications and providing references.

COMMUNITY SERVICE CONNECTIONS

Community Service remains a valuable lesson for those involved. Community service opportunities help youth build skills, experience new things, create new interests and build relationships with peers and adults in the community. Staff get an opportunity to teach/see work ethic and some youth have even been able to turn a community service project into a paying job after their ordered hours are completed.

For the past three years, the Allegan County Fairgrounds has been a tremendous resource for Community Justice. We have supported the fairgrounds with painting, seasonal cleanup and cleaning/preparing barns and buildings for various groups and activities. This past summer there were over 20 youth that participated in projects at this site.

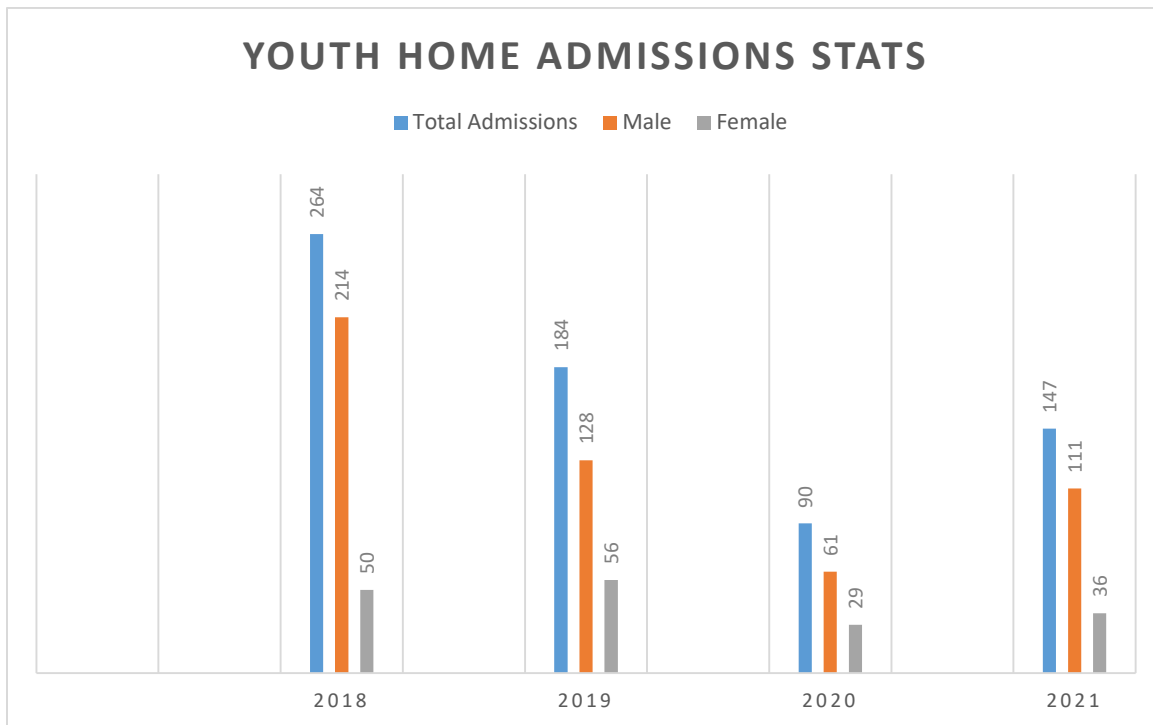
Allegan Transit is another connection that Community Justice had made in the effort to support youth in completing service time. With the staff shortages across the board this past year, they were able to step in and help clean buses so that Allegan County Transportation could continue to run as needed. Approximately 30 hours were completed at this site this past winter.

Projects were also completed with the Allegan County Facilities Department. Community Justice assisted with weeding, grounds clean up and painting inside and outside many of Allegan County's buildings. Approximately 50 hours were dedicated over the spring and summer seasons last year.

The community garden at the youth home continued to be another big project for Community Justice and the youth that work with them. Staff have made connections with Kapteyn Farms and other surrounding greenhouses over the years that have generously provided most of the plants to get the garden going. Over the 2021 season, 15 hours a week were dedicated to this project, with about 30 different youth coming in to water, weed and harvest. The garden not only provides for the kitchen at the youth home, but also to some of the families we work with that are in need. Donations are made every year to the Martin Resource Center and Project Hope in Dorr as well.

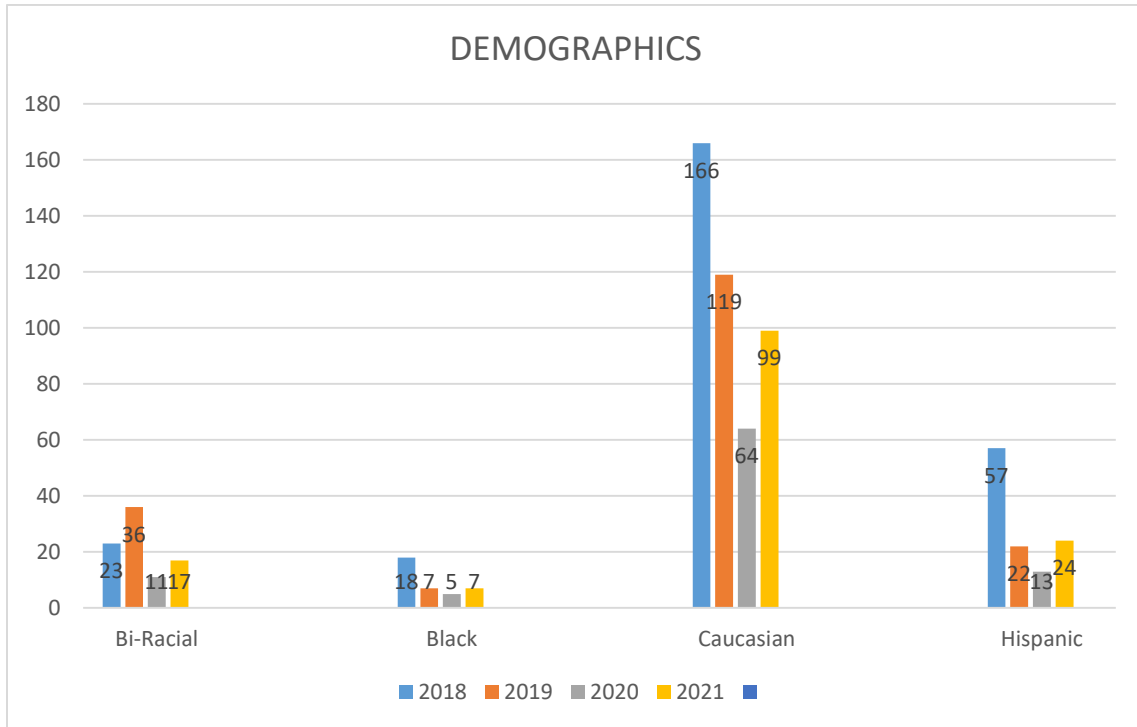
Juvenile Detention

The Juvenile Detention Center continued operations in 2021, during year two of the pandemic. Health and safety procedures and protocols continued, as the “normal” operations of social distancing, mask wearing, extra cleaning and disinfecting, along with residents’ and staff health screening. During the first eight months of the year detention operated with 3 unfilled positions due to the lower census and the pandemic. The last three months of the year the census began to increase, along with the need to fill positions. Detention filled five positions in 2021 with four hires in the last three months of the year. Detention is currently well staffed with only one regular part-time position open. Detentions’ staff training has been focused on policy and procedures, safety and security (de-escalation training and physical management training), to prepare for the increase number of residents.



Intake admissions location was changed during the pandemic from the front of the building to the rear of the building to decrease the risk of a potentially Covid-19 positive youth walking through a high traffic area. Facilities management contracted to have signs made directing intake traffic to the appropriate location. Health screenings continue to be conducted at point of entry into the building, along with the intake process. This process will continue even when the pandemic is over, due to staff finding the procedure safer, in a more controlled space, and less traffic in the control room office.

For the majority of 2021, only essential personnel were allowed into the facility. Zoom continued to play a major role for resident contacts with: family, court, therapy/doctor appointments, probation/community justice, church, and music therapy. The Zoom hearings continue to be efficient and cost effective given current transportation costs. Zoom meetings may become a regular part of operations moving forward in detention.



Programming:

The juvenile detention staff continued to do a tremendous job managing the changes and restrictions in the second year of the pandemic. Each day residents begin their day at 6:45am and it ends at 9pm every day of the week. Staff continued to provide a variety of learning activities for the residents such as leading Why Try and Anger Management groups, various team activities, and a couple new games such as pickle-ball and corn hole toss. Detention and Community Justice staff planted, maintained, and harvested two gardens this year, giving the residents hands-on learning opportunities. Produce was used by the kitchen and donated to local agencies.

School:

Residents attend school Monday through Friday. Outlook Academy staff continue to teach the four main areas of math, science, language arts, and history. Detention staff support

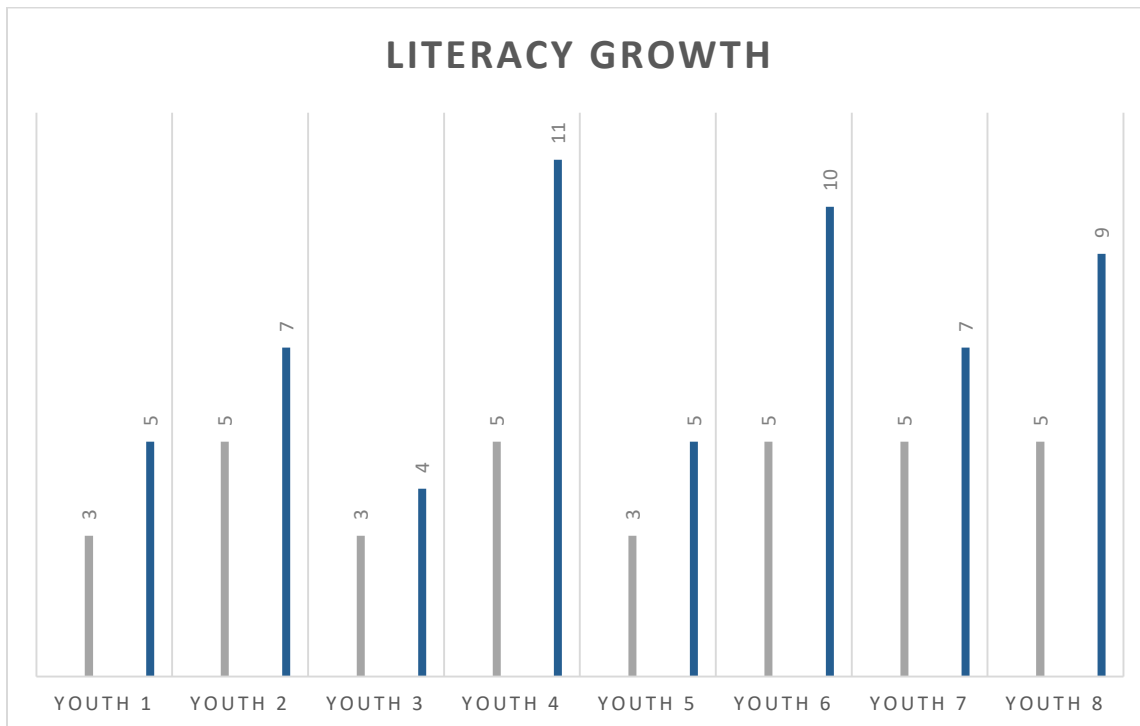
the school program both in the classroom and on the dayroom helping residents' with their G.E.D. courses, school work from their home district, and those in need of one on one support. Detention had three residents complete the G.E.D. in 2021. Detention staff provided structured summer programming for the residents including: hands-on activities, gym class, various groups, book clubs, and computer based classes.

Following the school day the residents are given thirty minutes of free time before the after school learning continues. Book club and writing activities are directed by our reading interventionists. There are a variety of topics and opportunities for residents to share their writing with the group. Staff will then lead small book clubs based on the residents reading level. Below is an example of a writing prompt response.

Writing Prompt – What beauty do you see around you?

Student response:

“The beauty I find around me that I appreciate is the teachers and staff. I say that because they treat me fair and nice which makes me feel okay with this environment. That is important to me because if they treated me the opposite of that I’d freak out every day and be in lots of trouble. Even though I can’t really see the beautiful smiles of staff and teachers due to covid masks, I know they’re there. Smiling faces and joyful people always rub off on me. A beautiful personality makes whoever a great person”.



Saying Goodbye, Director Retires After 42 years

It is with mixed emotions to announce the retirement of Robin Lyons. Robin's last day working for Allegan County was March 3rd 2022. Robin has been an integral part of the Juvenile Court and has lead the Juvenile Center for the last 42 years. Robin began her career as a college student working as a call-in for detention. Following college Robin was hired full-time and quickly advanced into the Detention Director position. Robin's role was expanded to Director of Detention and Community Resources with the addition of the Community Justice program in 1999. Robin's Community Justice Team took on several new roles as case managers, after hours surveillance, elementary truancy, adoption studies, community service supervision, and conducting Why Try groups in surrounding community schools.

Robin's contributions will always be valued and remembered. Her hard work and commitment to youth and families were always a priority. Robin was an active board member for many years for the "Challenge of Children" annual conference at Hope College. The conference provided free educational resources to families and professionals across Allegan and Ottawa counties. Her love of reading and understanding the impact that literacy skills can have, has made literacy a priority in daily detention programming. This was seen with book clubs for residents, as well as book clubs for staff in order to increase professional development. Residents continue to make significant progress in their reading levels.

Robin's dedication to Allegan County, the Juvenile Court, various agencies, her staff, and all the residents and families she worked with over the years will be missed. A number of qualities that will be greatly missed will be her leadership, kindness, loyalty, humility, and optimism. These qualities were always displayed by the value she placed in relationships with everyone that she interacted with. We wish Robin the best in the next chapter of her life enjoying her grandchildren and traveling.

Cheever Treatment Center



“Every day is an opportunity to make a difference.” Aida Cefo - Cheever Staff

Leadership at Cheever has, and continues to, allow staff to believe in the quote above. As leadership changed in 2021, and we continue to find our “new normal” among the pandemic, the thing that has stayed consistent is staff’s overall commitment to the residents and families we serve. Whether it be an individual passion of staff that they pass on to a resident, a skill they have mastered to support families and residents through conflict, or the relationships they have built with each other, our staff are, and continue to be, the greatest asset Cheever has to offer!

Life is One Big Transition

Throughout life we experience significant moments of change. This past year, the staff at Cheever have experienced one of those moments. Our beloved director of 33 years, Ted Reimer, retired. Ted’s time at Cheever was driven by a passion to surround himself with people who would lift the program up. Ted allowed staff to utilize their passions and interests to build relationships with the residents in the program. The ability to build these relationships is what allows staff to teach Choice Theory. Choice Theory teachings empower residents to have more effective control of their lives. Ted’s legacy is defined by empowering staff to influence hundreds of Allegan County’s youth and their families, thus, creating safety within their homes, schools and the community at large. As of November 2021, Jodi Langlois assumed the leadership role as the new director at Cheever Treatment Center. Jodi made the internal move from supervisor to director, having supported Cheever as a supervisor for the past 15 years, with 21 years overall experience with the program. Though leadership changed, the program’s goal remains the same. We will continue to focus on providing quality treatment to those we serve.

The Vision Lived Out: Cheever Staff

Over the years, Cheever has assembled a staff with different educational and personal backgrounds. This provides the strong foundation that is Cheever Treatment Center. Cheever employs 14 staff. The educational degrees staff have range from bachelor degrees in criminal justice, psychology, social work, English, and ministry to master's degrees in social work and counseling psychology.

Staff also bring diversity in personal interests. These interests include research, analytical skills, recreational activities, teaching, backpacking, fishing, weight lifting, and exposure to new experiences and hobbies. Although every staff brings in a unique skillset, there exists a common thread. That thread being that everyone has a passion for the clients and families we serve, to lead better lives after their time with us.

Some of the ways staff did that in 2021

- ★ they led 288 team meetings to review goals and progress
- ★ they facilitated 576 family meetings to support residents in teaching their families what they are learning at Cheever
- ★ supported residents with approximately 200 medical appointments
- ★ supported families for over 1,300 hours through phone conversations and in home surveillance to help manage conflicts and concerns that arise in the home
- ★ they led over 150 weight lifting sessions and many other physical activities
- ★ supervised over 100 Community Service outings within Allegan County
- ★ engaged with residents through playing endless hours of board games and puzzle making
- ★ supported each other through a difficult year of death, illness, childbirth, pandemic stress and anxiety

Staff thoughts

- Terri Sharrar - 24 years - is proud to be a part of Cheever, prides herself on being a leader and role model to clients and new staff.
- John Arens - 13 years - believes he has been blessed to be a part of a unique and special program. He has utilized his skills in teaching Balanced and Restorative Justice, Focus Group, and the substance abuse group. John feels valued and has been encouraged to find ways to incorporate his passions into the programming at Cheever.

- Krystal Skinner - 7 years - believes it is a privilege to work with the troubled youth of Allegan County. She is proud of the work that the residents and staff complete. Krystal appreciates working with amazing coworkers, developing long lasting relationships, and knowing that her job is making a difference.

- Charles Wolgamood - 5 years - what brings Charles to work each day is knowing so many of our kids haven't had a chance to learn and grow into the kids they could/should be, and being able to try to provide guidance and help with this is something he cares about.



Overall, staff have identified: the improvement they experience residents making, the relationships they build with residents and staff, and the positive work environment at Cheever; as the reasons they enjoy working at Cheever.