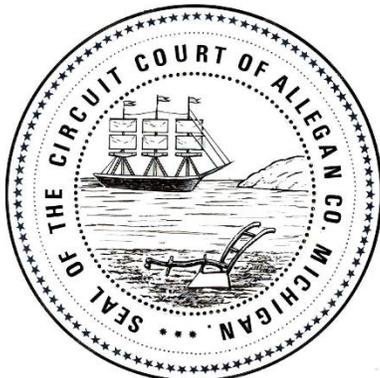


# 48th Circuit Court

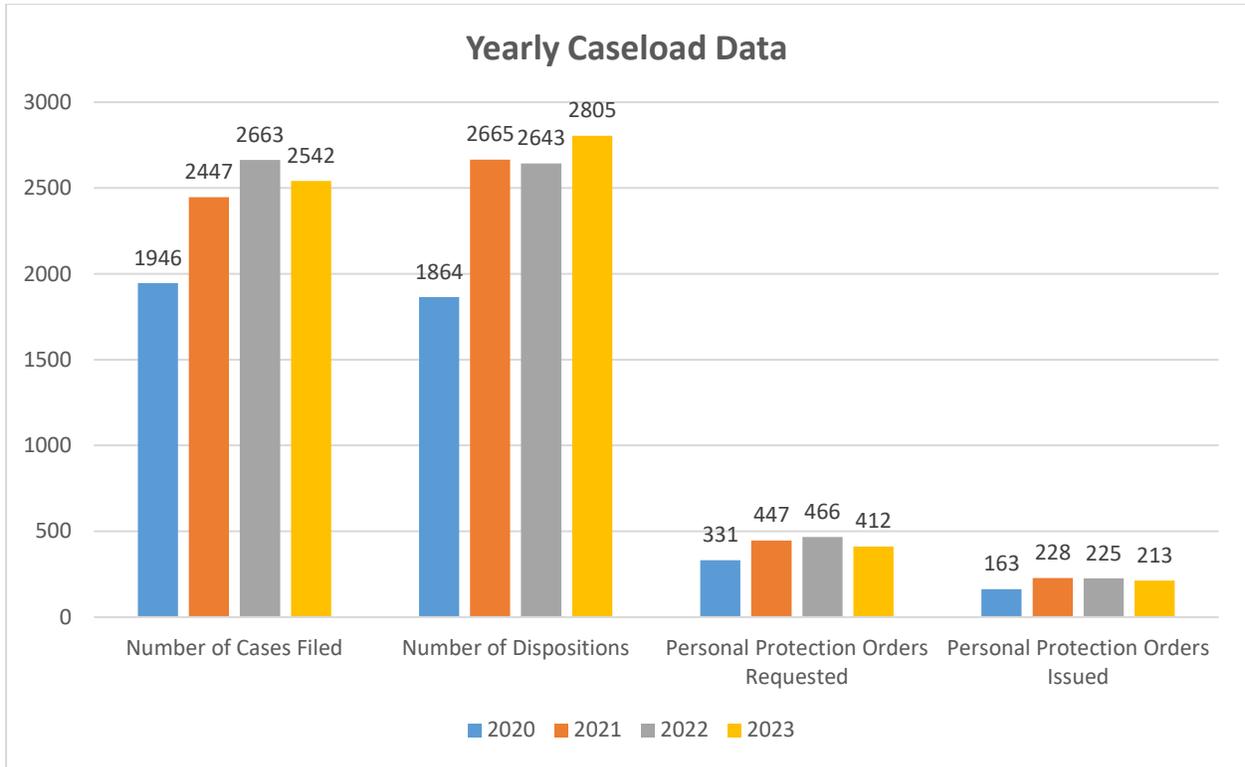
Criminal and Civil,  
Friend of the Court,  
Family Division

## 2025 Annual Report

Thursday, June 12, 2025



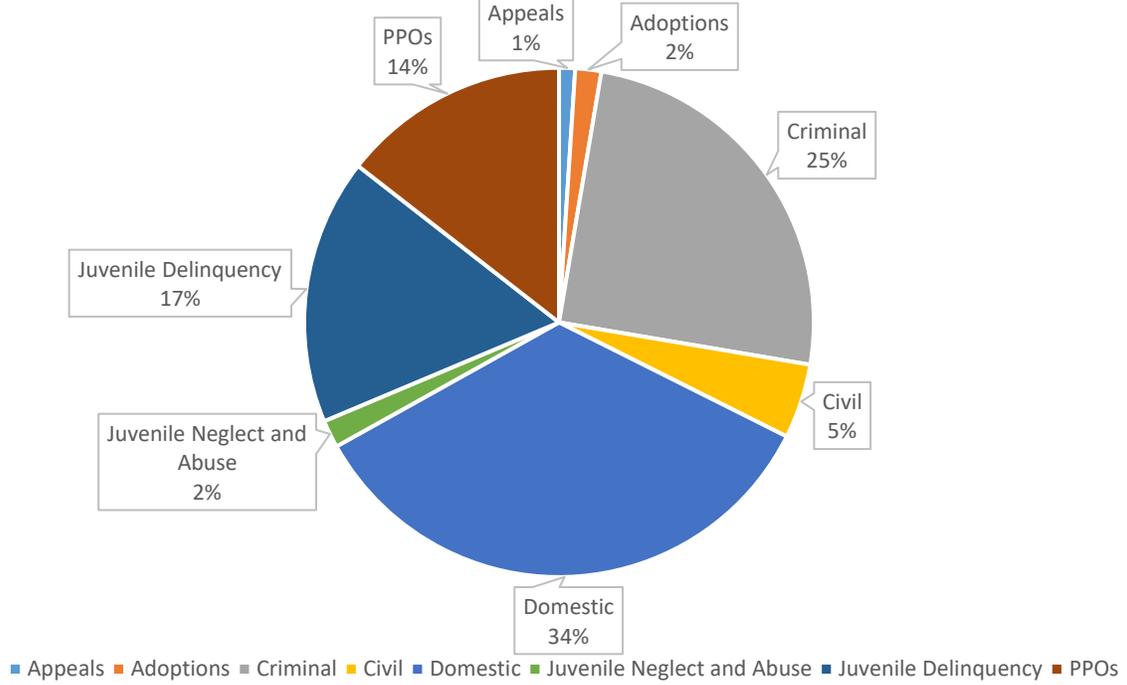
# Circuit Court Statistics



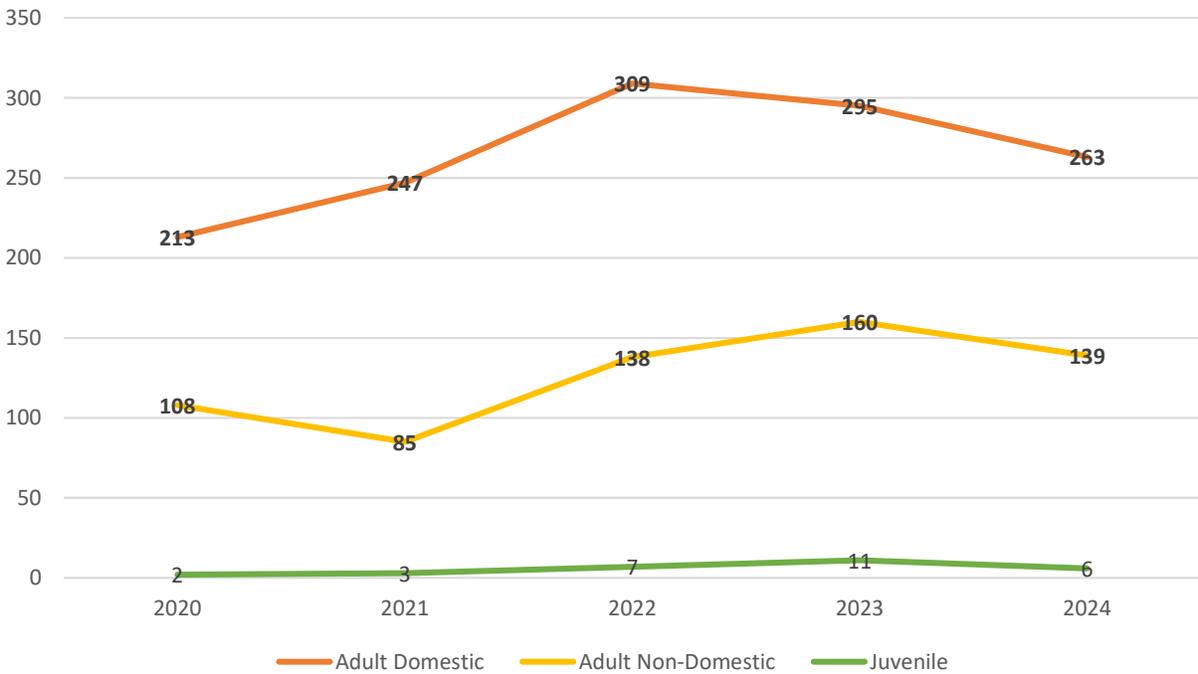
Circuit Court continues to see a high number of case filings and dispositions. In 2024, 2,542 new cases were filed. 712 of these cases were felony files of which 31 were capital level offense. Additionally, we had a record setting year for dispositions with 2,805.

The court continued to work on the jury trial demand, conducting 26 trials in 2024.

### Breakdown of 2024 New Filings

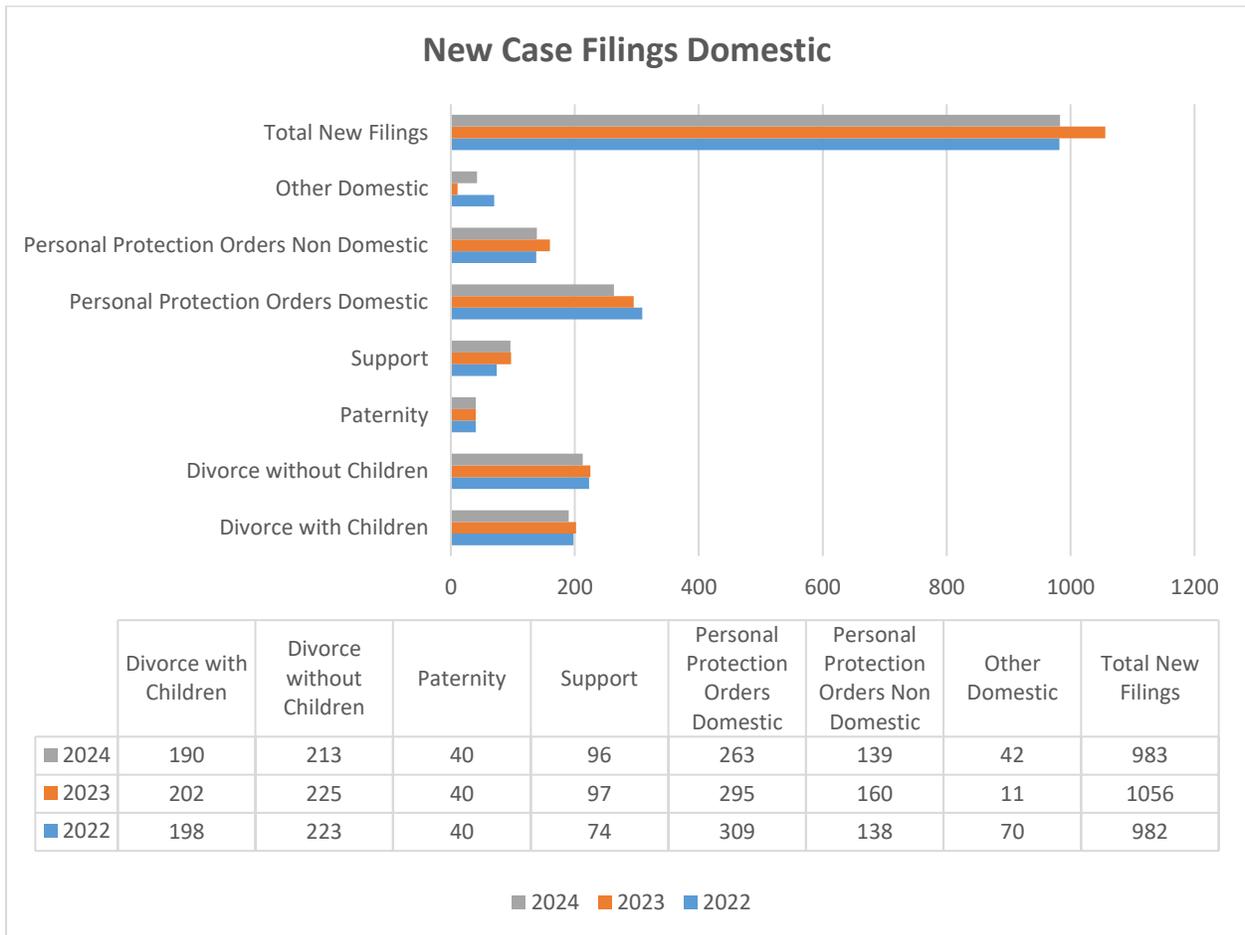


### Personal Protection Orders



2024 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 Prepares for 2025 Growth

2024 was a year of preparation for growth in 2025, with many changes and additions. First, we had the retirement of Judge Buck, Chief Probate and presiding Family Court Judge. Then the court prepared to welcome his replacement Judge Clearwater. Additionally, the Circuit Court welcomed Judge Jipp to the bench as she filled the newly created judgeship. Circuit Court was grateful for the support of the County and Board of Commissioners in providing the additional staff needed to add a third Circuit Court judge, as well as the beautiful new courtroom needed to accommodate the third judge.



Hon. Emily W. Jipp  
Circuit Court Judge

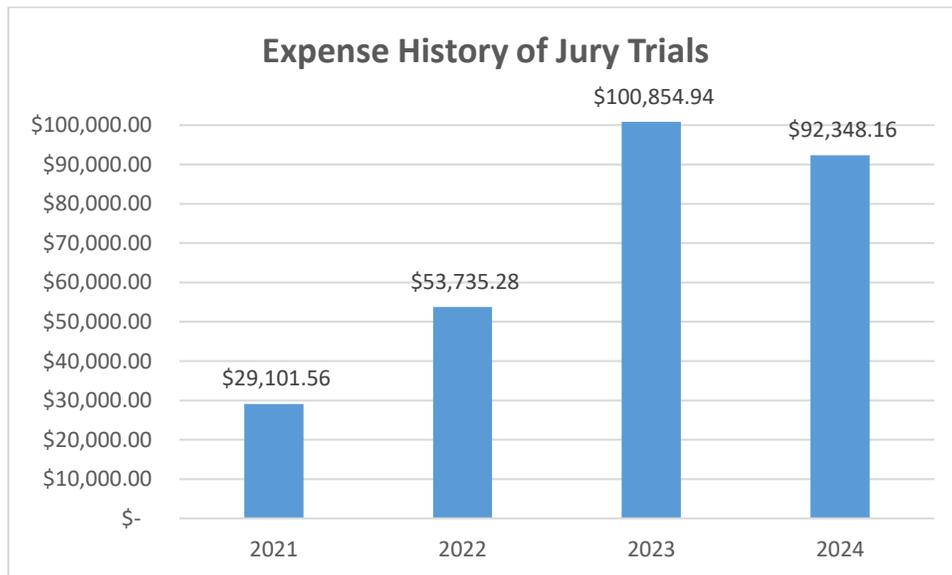


Hon. Jolene A. Clearwater  
Chief Probate Judge  
Presiding Family Division Judge

# Circuit Court Jury Trials

2024 saw a slight decrease in jury trials with 26 trials held. 15 of these cases were handled by Judge Bakker, and 11 by Judge Antkoviak. With the assistance of our jury management system, we summoned 4,880 Allegan County residents with a one step process – summons and questionnaire sent together. Of those 4,880 summoned in 2024, we confirmed 2,441 as available jurors. The remaining 2,439 were either disqualified (1,383), excused (542), undeliverable (113) or unfortunately did not respond (312). 345 citizens were actually seated on a jury panel for the 26 jury trials conducted in 2024.

There is a significant cost to the courts for conducting this many jury trials each year. Jurors are provided a small stipend, mileage reimbursement, and meal allowance per reporting day. These expenses are tracked and charged on the jury line item under the Circuit Court activity in the general fund. In addition to the direct costs summarized below, there is a significant indirect cost for each jury trial as well with “all hands-on deck” for circuit court staff, prosecutors, defense attorneys, witnesses and victims, as trials take place in addition to normal day to day operations for the court.



We received some unexpected news from our partners in Berrien County regarding our jury management software solution. After several years of hosting this Tyler Technology product on their servers for 6 partnering counties in southwest Michigan, Berrien was terminating this solution. This forced the courts to request a capital project to have a direct solution with Tyler. In addition to being directly hosted by the vendor in 2025, the courts will also be upgraded to the Enterprise Jury Management System – the latest in jury management software. This should continue to improve communication with the public regarding jury duty, as well as make it easier to fill out one’s questionnaire and report for service as needed.

# 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 SSSPP is completely grand funded through SCAO. Our state FY2025 award amount was \$115,000 for the court and \$10,000 for the local MDOC probation office for their joint support in the program.

## 2024 Statistics

- 2 Successful Participant Graduations
- 2 Unsuccessful Participant Discharge for non-compliance

## Current 2025 Statistics

- 25 current Participants (as of April 14, 2025)
- Received 12 referrals for potential participants
  - 8 referrals not recommended
  - 1 recommended referral sentenced into program
  - 4 recommended referrals pending (scheduled for sentencing)
  - 0 graduations or discharges for non-compliance

The Swift and Sure program continues with success into 2025, even with some personnel changes in December of 2024. The court hired Katie StJohn, a new Swift and Sure coordinator, as Efrain Avila vacated his position. Efrain was instrumental in his role and revamped the program while here. The entire Circuit Court team would like to thank Efrain for his dedication to the program and its participants.

# Allegan County

## Friend of the Court (FOC)

The FOC Office continued to provide services to parents throughout 2024. 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.

The most significant challenge to the FOC Office in 2024, was the renovation of the Office space which began in August 2024 and continued through the remainder of the 2024 calendar year. However, after successfully working remotely for several months, the department staff are enjoying their new office area. Additionally, the renovation increased square footage, accommodating our two newly created positions – a domestic relations referee and a custody and parenting time specialist. While additional revenues are covering the salary and fringe costs of these FTEs, the FOC is grateful to the county for the additional office space and referee hearing room. The FOC is excited to provide better services to the residents of Allegan County with these new additions. In addition to new staff, there were two staff turnovers in 2024. One of the vacancies remained unfilled until January 2025.

### **Progress Towards 2024 Goals**

**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 trained all of their co-workers in using MI to improve customers relations and outcomes in 2024. In addition, Jessica provided MI training to Circuit Court staff in November 2024.

**Community Outreach Efforts** – The FOC continues to conduct community outreach. Staff attended the following events: Books, Balls, & Blocks, outreach to the Hispanic community, Veterans Stand Down, and a community substance abuse recovery event. In addition, staff attended a training session for area employers to help employers understand the role they play in Michigan’s child support program.

**Increase referrals to the Gain Employment Maintain Support (GEMS) Program** – The FOC submitted an article about GEMS for the Administrator’s Digest. We continue to refer parents to the GEMS program. This is a success story from our GEMS program:

*Devon (not the participant's real name) was an Allegan GEMS participant who faced reduced work hours, full responsibility for rent and utilities after a breakup, and increasing financial stress. He began working closely with his career coach, who helped him catch up on rent and avoid homelessness. In addition, he attended financial literacy classes, created a budget, and realized the need for a livable wage. Now, Devon is updating his résumé and exploring better employment opportunities while making consistent, on-time child support payments.*

**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. Although this goal was not reached, the FOC's performance in this area is on an upward trend.

### **Performance Statistics**

The FOC distributed a total amount of support of \$13,007,928.22 in 2024. The majority of support was distributed to parents with minor children. This represented an increase of \$187,757 over 2023 distributions.

Through a cooperative agreement between the Court and the Sheriff 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 is being established. The deputy attempts to resolve FOC bench warrants without arrest whenever possible. The FOC Office collected \$13,034.16 in bench warrant fees which, in addition to reimbursement from the Cooperative Reimbursement Program Contract, help fund this position.

FOC Facilitators resolved 70% of custody issues outside of the courtroom through facilitative gathering information conferences.

FOC Enforcement Officers have an average of 1,072 court cases each. They are responsible for monitoring support payments and initiating enforcement of the Court's custody, parenting time, and support orders. In 2024, the Enforcement Officers issued 200 custody and parenting time notices and 332 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.

In addition, FOC staff conducted over 1,000 child support reviews and sent out 2,607 National Medical Support Notices.

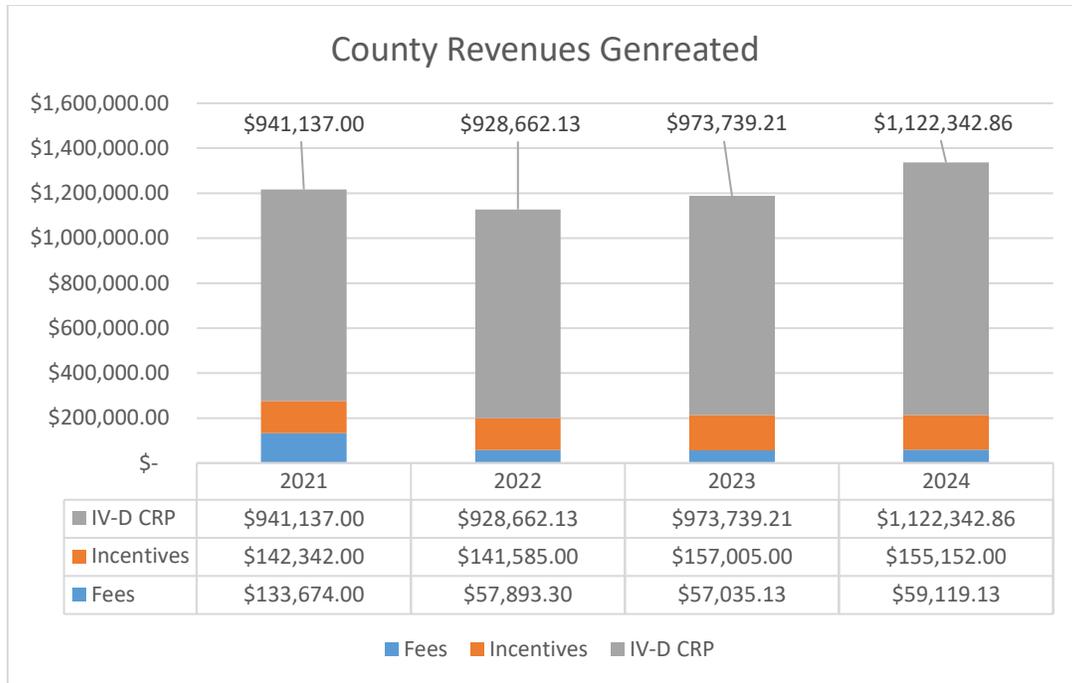
## **2025 FOC Goals**

**Reduce waiting times to obtain a hearing date and eliminate the need for some hearings –** With a full-time domestic relations referee new to the Office in 2025, we want to reduce the time that parents wait to have their support and parenting time disputes resolved. Historically, parents may have waited anywhere from four to five months to have their parenting time dispute resolved. The FOC Office implemented a new alternative dispute resolution tool in 2025, with our new custody and parenting time case coordinator. We hope to resolve some disputes through this process versus parents litigating their dispute. Because we have a dedicated full-time referee, we also hope to provide hearing dates, if needed, within 4 to 7 weeks from the time a hearing need is identified.

**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. With the addition of new staff in 2025, this goal should be attainable. New staff that work in establishing paternity and/or support orders in new cases have already made process improvements in the first few months of 2025 and are working towards clearing a backlog of referrals.

**Increase the percentage of current support collected –** The FOC collects 73% of support in the month that it is due. In order to earn the maximum incentives for this federal performance factor, the Office would need to collect 80% of support in the month that it is due. During 2025, the FOC has a goal that the office will consistently collect 75% of support in the month that it is due. Historically, FOC staff that monitored and enforced support orders also had to initiate enforcement of custody and parenting time orders. With a new position in 2025, a Custody and Parenting Time Case Coordinator, taking responsibility for custody and parenting time enforcement, the support enforcement officers should have more time to proactively take steps to ensure that current support is being paid.

**Review the Court's parenting time policy –** The FOC Office will complete a review of the Court's parenting time policy in 2025. This review is being done to address any inconsistencies in the policy and to reduce the opportunity for conflict between parents.

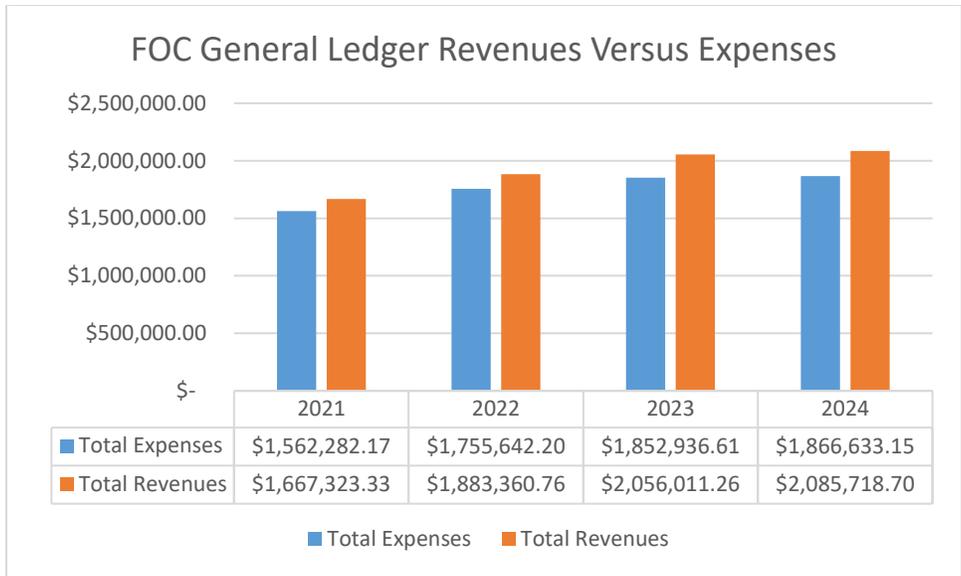


### Revenue Classifications

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 2024, were \$1,122,342.86 – an increase of almost \$150,000 from last year.
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 \$155,152.00 in incentives in 2024.
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 \$59,119.13 – an increase of over \$2,000 from last year.

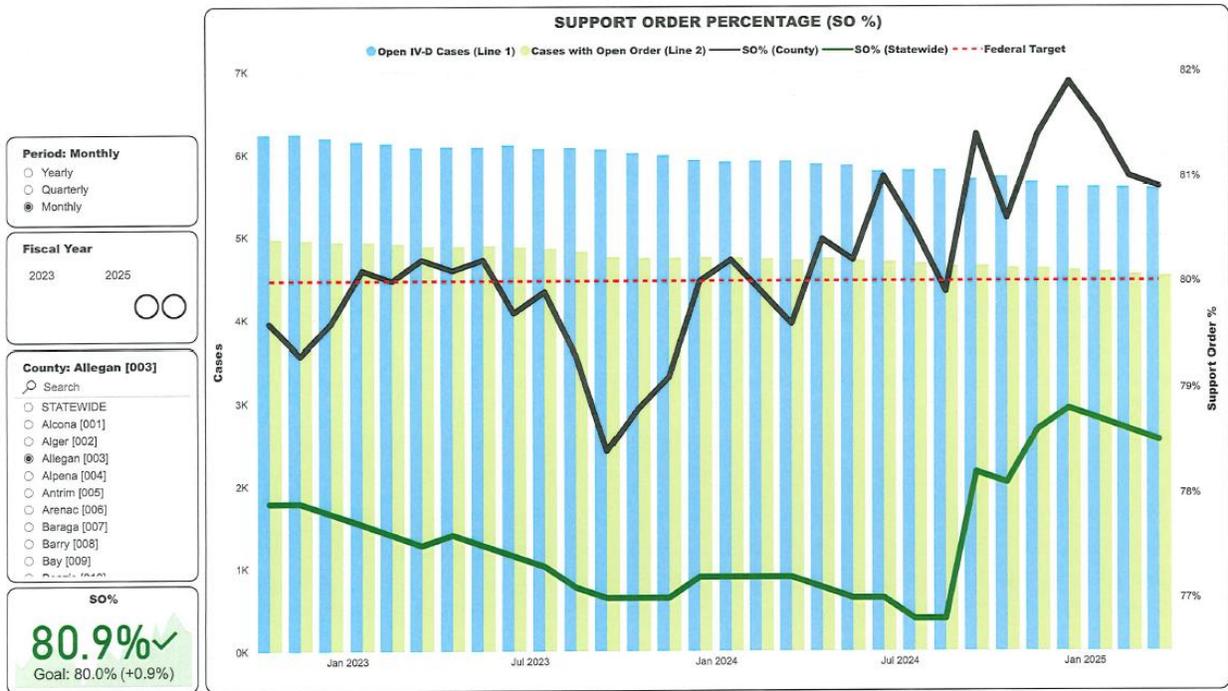
### Revenues versus Expenses

The county general ledger holds two activities for the Friend of the Court, one operating activity (215-290) and one fund activity (216-289). The below graph shows the net combination expenses and revenues for the two activities. The FOC remains one of the largest revenue sources for the county outside of tax revenue.



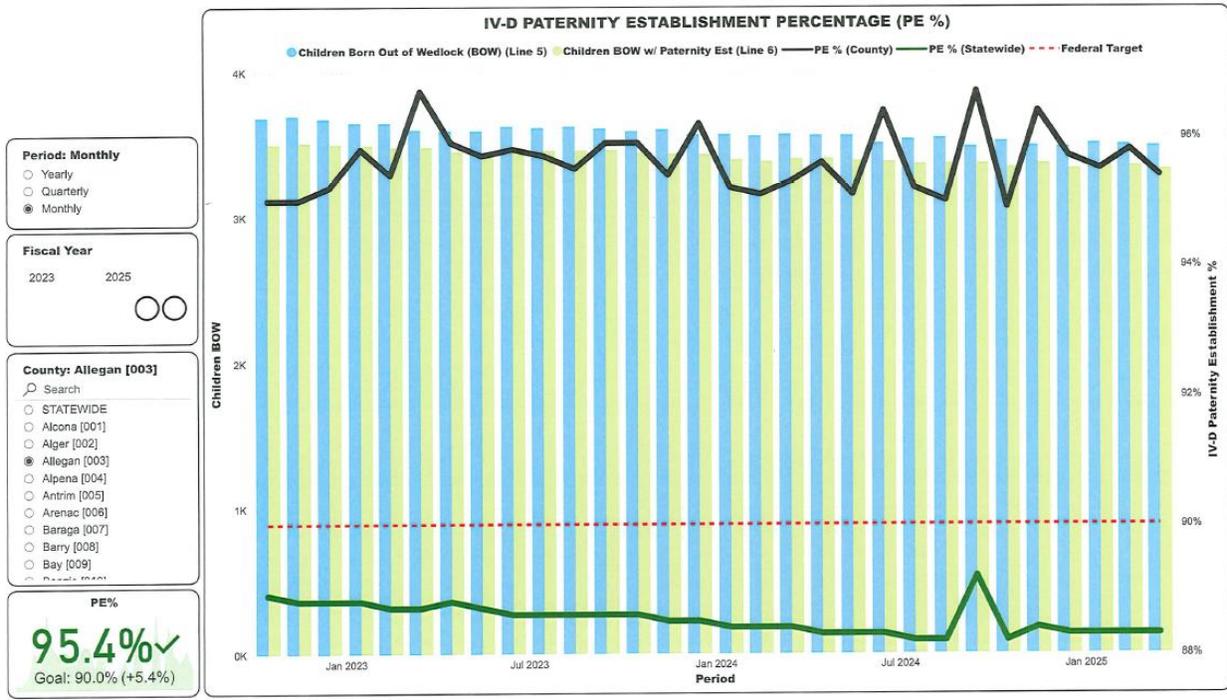
### Additional Performance Metrics

The FOC earns incentive monies based on five performance factors. Tables for these five performance factors are attached.

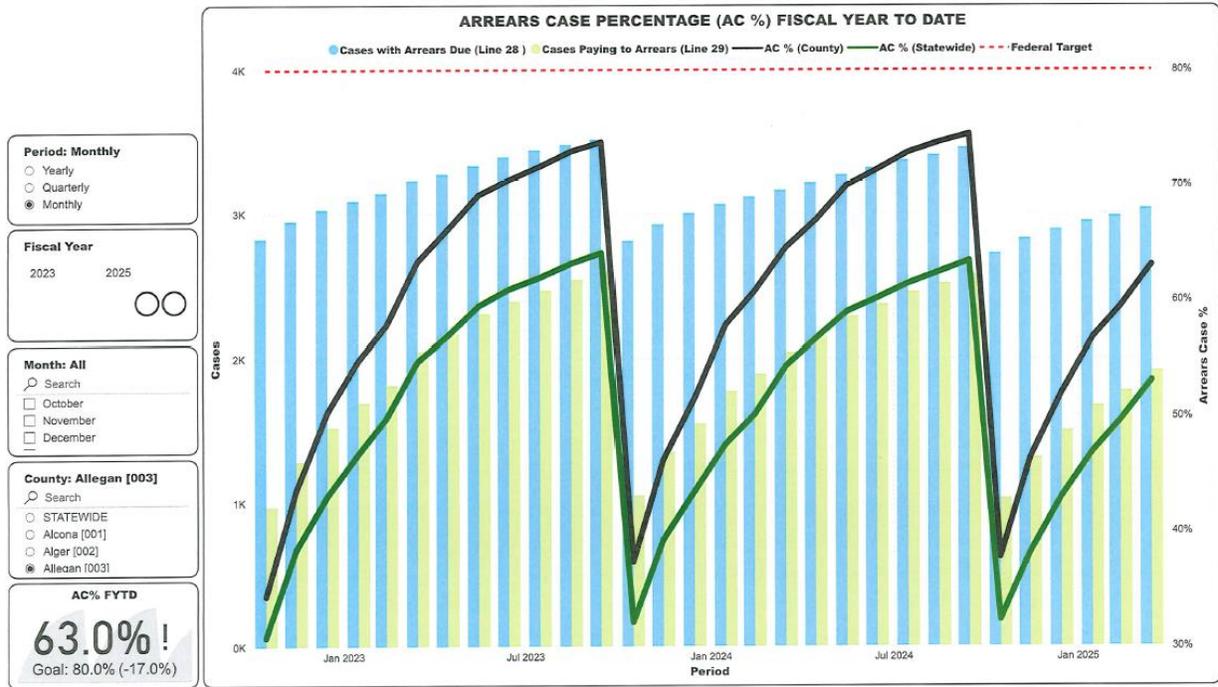


**Support Order Percentage** – This measurement shows the number of cases that have a support order established, divided by the number of cases that need to have a support order established.

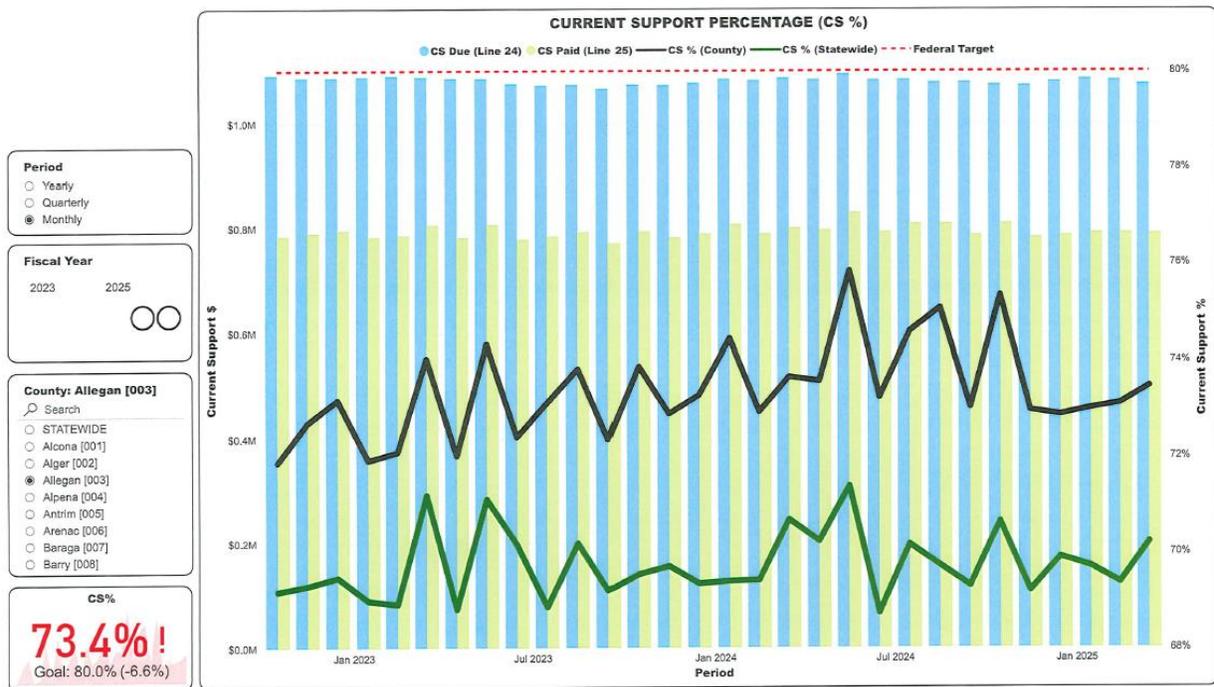
The FOC must have a support order percentage of 80% to earn the maximum number of incentives available. In 2024, the FOC reached an 80% support order percentage. The FOC exceeds the state average of 78.5%.



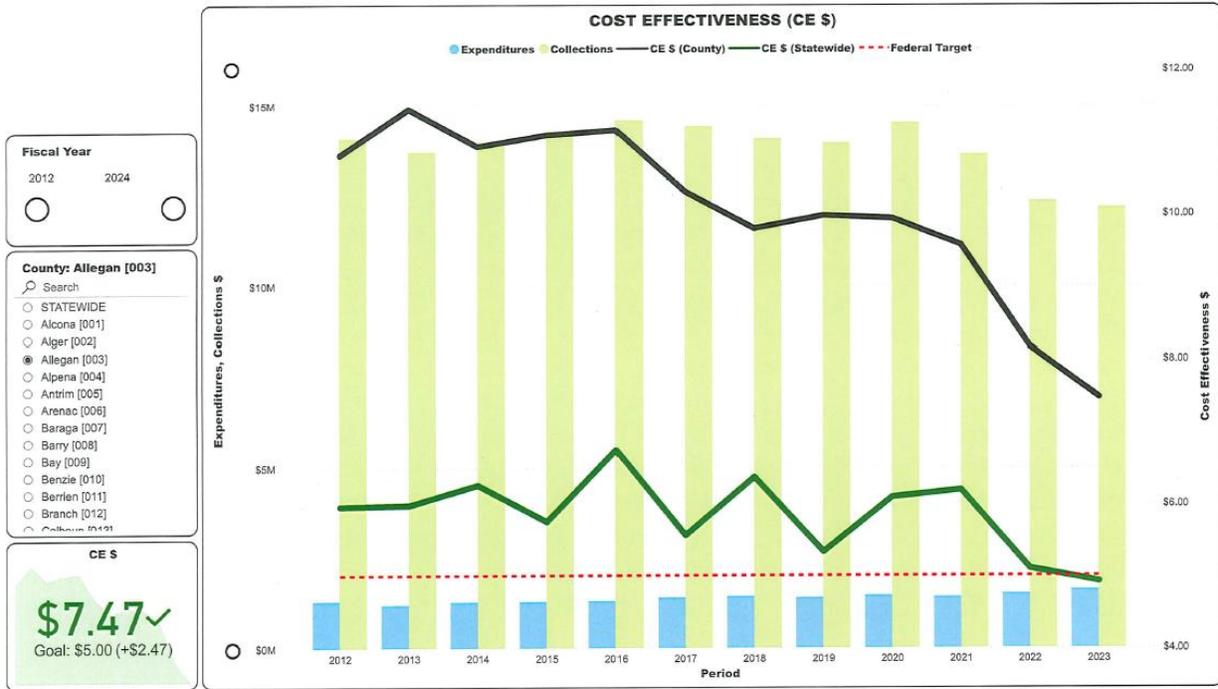
**Paternity Establishment Percentage** – This factor measures the number of children born out of wedlock (BOW) that have paternity established, divided by the number of children BOW that need to have paternity established. The FOC must have a paternity establishment percentage of 90% to earn the maximum amount of incentives available. The statewide paternity establishment percentage is about 89%. The Allegan FOC had a 95.4% paternity establishment rate in 2023. This is fairly steady and well above the 90% goal.



**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.



**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.



**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 \$7.47 for every dollar spent. Allegan outperforms the statewide cost effectiveness rate, which fell below \$5.00 in 2024.

# GEMS | Gain Employment, Maintain Support

We all want to take the best care of our children. But sometimes, finding decent work and making enough money to support them is tough. Here is a chance to get on a new track for you and your family.

## 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.

## Get involved with GEMS

To be eligible for GEMS, you must:

- Live in a county where GEMS is available.
- Be unable to meet or have difficulty meeting your monthly child support payments due to a lack of employment or limited employment.

To receive GEMS services, **you may voluntarily enroll, or a judge may refer you to the program as part of a court order.** We are happy to help you enroll in the GEMS program. To learn more, please speak with your Friend of the Court caseworker or contact us directly at 877-543-2660.

GEMS is made possible through a collaboration between the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and its Michigan Office of Child Support, the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity, and Michigan Works!

(Rev. 4/24)



# Alternative Contempt Track (ACT) Program

The Circuit Court's Alternative Contempt Track (ACT) Program 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. Our long-time ACT Enforcement Officer retired in January 2025.

Our new Enforcement Officer has set the following goals for 2025:

- Continue a strong working relationship with community resources
- Continue to spread the word about ACT to eventually get more counties on board
- Work to grow payee participation in the program
- Strive to obtain more referrals from other county offices, community partners, and other courts, so more payers are getting on the right track to becoming compliant

During 2024, despite facing significant challenges, many participants in the program have achieved meaningful progress. One individual successfully took the appropriate steps to getting their driver's license reinstated, while another obtained essential self-identifying documentation to pursue employment opportunities. Another one has taken critical action toward stability and started working with OnPoint to retrieve mental health and substance abuse treatment. These milestones reflect the transformative impact of targeted support and individualized intervention. The Allegan ACT Enforcement Officer established a regular meeting with other ACT caseworkers from other Michigan courts that now meets monthly to discuss program challenges and best practices.

Allegan Circuit Court established in the first ACT Program in the State of Michigan. The Circuit Court and FOC continue to be a resource for other Courts looking to implement an ACT program in their court. 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.

## IT STARTS HERE

Participation in ACT is entirely voluntary. For parents who are interested, we invite you to meet with our FOC Specialized Officer. During this meeting, we will take the time to understand your unique needs, collaborate with you to develop a personalized case service plan, and provide the opportunity to sign a participation agreement. The case service plan may include things such as:

- Seeking/Gaining Employment
- Attending Counseling
- Attending Treatment Services
- Attending all ACT court hearings as ordered
- Making minimum monthly support payments

Case service plans and participation agreements are reviewed and approved by the court. Participants are ordered to comply with their case service plans and participate in ACT hearings. The ACT Program length is up to 12 months or as ordered by the court.

Failure to comply with the case service plan can result in sanctions as outlined in the sanctions grid attached to the case service plan.



## PROGRAM BENEFITS

### CHILD SUPPORT COMPLIANCE

ACT participants are provided support and services to assist them in making more frequent and timely child support payments.

### FAMILY CENTERED APPROACH

Participants work directly with Specialized Enforcement Officer in FOC department with a focus on meeting the needs of their family.

### INCREASED PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Participants are supported in overcoming challenges so they can financially and emotionally support their children.

### CONNECTING YOU TO COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Participant and Specialized Enforcement Officer will work together to seek out community resources for assistance.

ALLEGAN COUNTY  
FRIEND OF THE COURT

## ALTERNATIVE CONTEMPT TRACK (ACT) PROGRAM

EMPOWERING FAMILIES,  
CREATING STRONGER FUTURES

## OUR PURPOSE

The Alternative Contempt Track (ACT) Program is committed to supporting parents in overcoming challenges that hinder their ability to financially and emotionally provide for their children. By connecting them with vital resources, education, and support services, we strive to break cycles of hardship and empower families to build stable, nurturing, and self-sufficient futures.

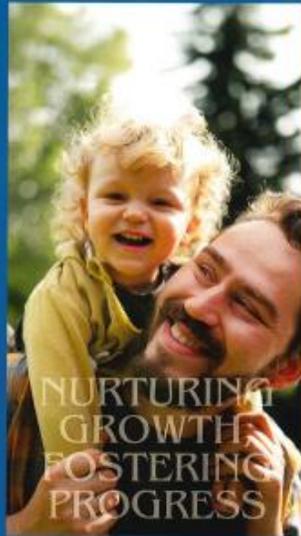
## PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Once a participant has been ordered into the ACT program, participants must comply with their individualized Case Service Plan and all terms of probation. Participants must:

- Meet with Specialized Enforcement Officer as required in Case Service Plan
- Comply with Case Service Plan and terms of probation
- Attend all ACT Program court hearings as required

## ELIGIBILITY FACTORS

Challenge/barriers may include, but are not limited to: chronic unemployment, criminal records — resulting in difficulty gaining employment, mental health issues, homelessness, lack of transportation, substance abuse, or lack of education.



## CONTACT US

ALLEGAN COUNTY FRIEND OF THE COURT  
113 CHESTNUT STREET  
P.O. BOX 358  
ALLEGAN, MI 49010

PHONE: (877) 543-2660

FAX: (269) 673-0322

WEB: [WWW.ALLEGANCOUNTY.ORG](http://WWW.ALLEGANCOUNTY.ORG)

ALTERNATIVE CONTEMPT TRACK  
(ACT)  
SPECIALIZED ENFORCEMENT OFFICER  
PHONE: (269) 673-0334



# Allegan County Legal Assistance Center (ACLAC)

Allegan County Legal Assistance Center's mission is to provide free legal assistance and education to all Allegan County residents regarding proper legal process and procedures. ACLAC offers access to proper court forms, motions and orders, resources and information to aid in self-representation in civil court matters such as divorce, child custody or parenting time, guardianship, small claims, landlord tenant matters and personal protection orders.

All assistance is provided for free by ACLAC staff, interns and volunteers, however there is a small charge for copies.

ACLAC provides these services in person at our new location on the first floor of the Allegan County Courthouse and over the phone as time permits. The hours we are open to assist are:

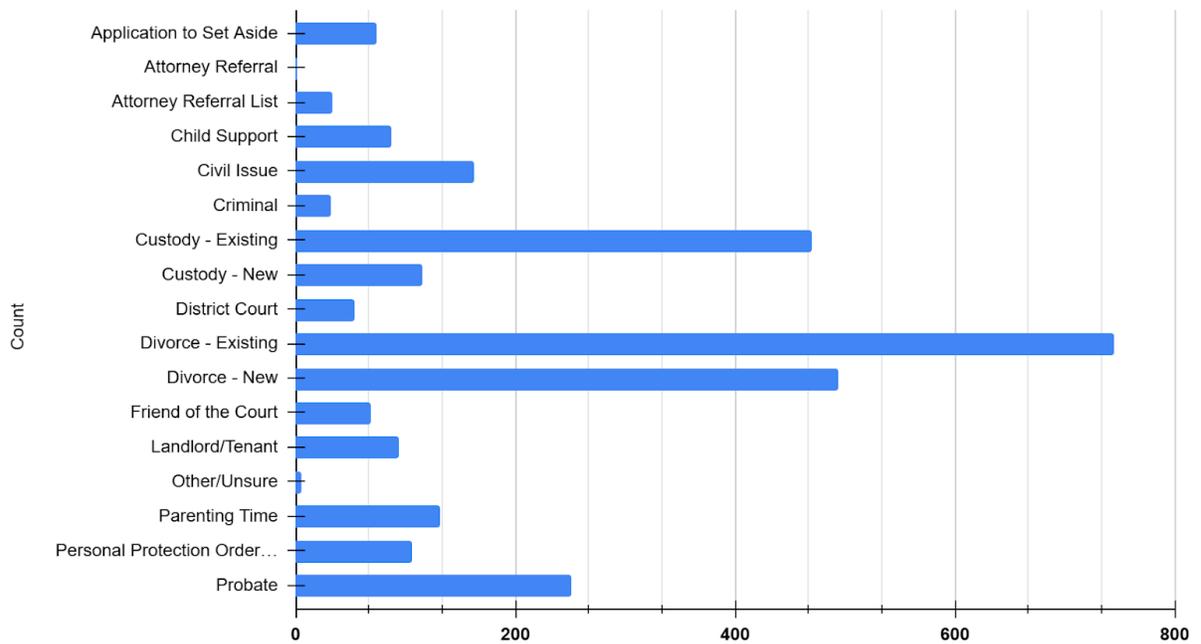
*Monday 9am – 3pm, Tuesday – Thursday 9am – 4pm, Friday 8:30am – 2:30pm*

Statistics for 2024 are as follows:

- 3,281 Patrons served in 2024
- 32,750 Patrons served since opening, July 2012
- 70% of Patrons have income under \$50k
- 30% of Patrons have income over \$50k
- 60% of Patrons are aged 31 – 50
- 21% of Patrons are over 50
- 19% of Patrons are under 30



### Case types assisted in 2024



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

Although this area of the Family Division did not have any staffing changes, reclassifications, or other major personnel action, there were significant legal changes that were implemented as of October 1, 2024, which lead to procedural changes concerning the legal processing of cases within the Family Division. This portion of the report will highlight some of these case processing changes.

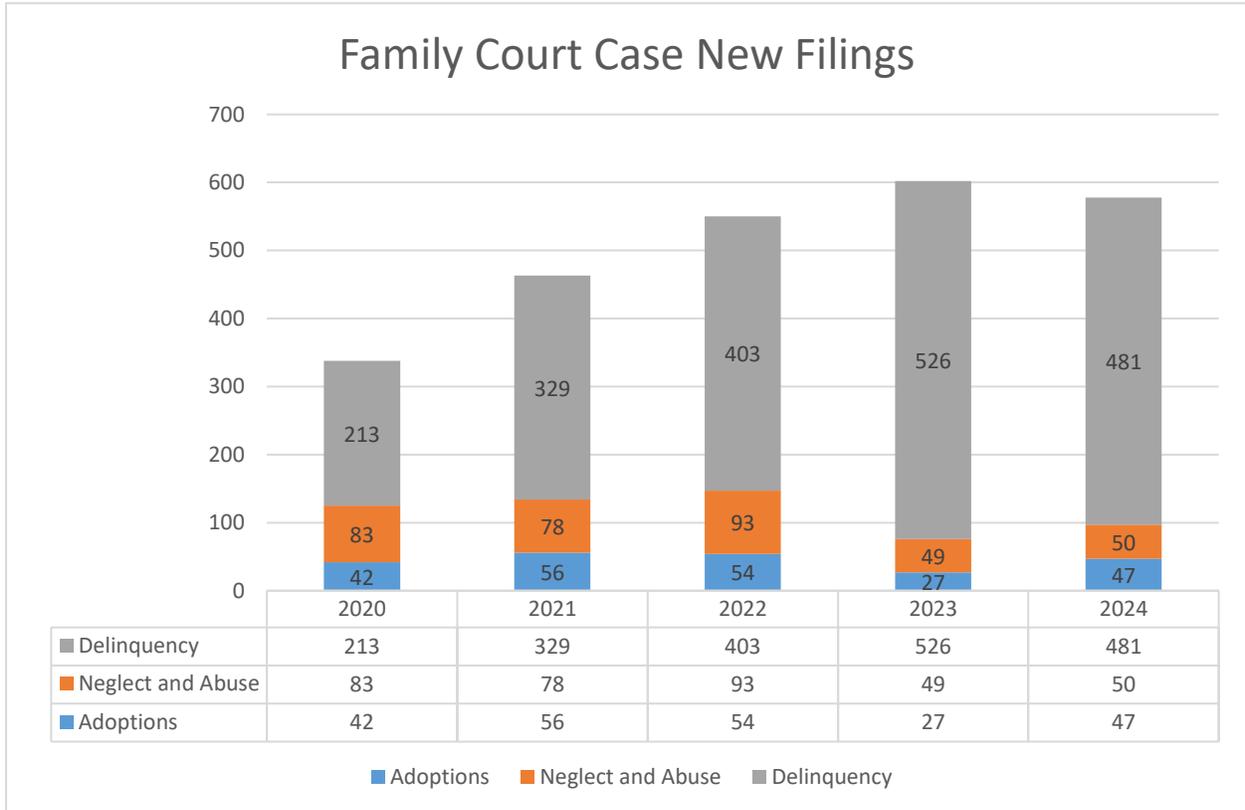
First, in the delinquency area, a number of specialized assessments must be completed at different stages of a delinquency proceeding to assist the court in the decision-making process. Prior to the detention of a juvenile, an Attorney/Referee or probation officer must complete a detention assessment to assist the court in determining whether a juvenile should be detained. Additionally, when the court is making an initial decision on how to proceed with a delinquency matter, a risk and a mental health assessment are completed. The court considers the results of these two assessments to determine the best course of procedural action which best fits the juvenile's need for services. Should the court handle the case utilizing informal proceedings, time limits regarding the length of the informal proceedings were enacted as part of the legislation. Lastly, at the dispositional stage of the proceeding, a risk and needs assessment must be completed. This assessment looks at areas of the juvenile's current status where services could be implemented to avoid further delinquency behavior. The assessment also looks at the need for probation services and the appropriate level and length of probation. If the juvenile remains under the jurisdiction of the court for longer than six months, a new risk and needs assessment must be completed every six months.

The statutory changes modified the court's duty in advising a juvenile of their rights to appeal a dispositional decision of the court or a decision by the court removing the juvenile from the care and custody of their parent. Further, if the juvenile desires to appeal, and the juvenile requests the appointment of an attorney for the appeal, should the court grant the appointed attorney request, the appointment process is now handled by the Michigan Appellate Assigned Counsel System instead of the local court. The local governmental funding unit may then be responsible for the payment of reasonable attorney fees for locally appointed private counsel.

The changes also eliminated a number of fees and costs the court previously ordered in a delinquency matter. Not only were these fees or costs eliminated moving forward, the court is now prohibited from collecting any previously ordered fees or costs that remained unpaid as of October 1, 2024. In a delinquency proceeding, the court is now limited to only ordering restitution and the crime victims' assessment. In protective proceedings, the court can no longer order reimbursement for out of home placement costs, or continue to enforce reimbursement orders after October 1, 2024. The court has determined it can collect reimbursement amounts that were accrued prior to October 1. These changes were implemented with the expansion of reimbursement rate for child care fund expenses from 50 percent to 75 percent as discussed in other portions of this report.

## Case statistics

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



# Community Probation

2024 was a year of growth and transition for the juvenile probation department. First, due to increased child care fund revenues, the department was able to add two new positions and reclassify an existing position. The department now has another Juvenile Probation Officer who will specialize in Truancy involved youth. Additionally, a Clinical Coordinator position was created to assist court involved families in navigating the complexities of the court system as well as matching them with community resources and programming. This person will also help implement the new assessment requirements per the new legislation. The court is very excited for the greater community impact these positions will bring to the residents of Allegan County. Third, an existing Juvenile Probation Officer was reclassified to Lead Juvenile Probation Officer. With the department growing and additional requirements put in place by the state tied to the additional funding, court leadership felt it best that the director of this department have a supervisor to assist in managing the increased requirements. The Lead position still maintains a caseload while assisting with department supervisory needs. Lastly, long time Director and Attorney Referee, Jolene Clearwater, resigned after being elected as the new Probate Court & Presiding Family Court Judge. Judy Kasson, former Chief Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, was selected as Referee Clearwater's replacement.

In addition to staffing changes, several procedural changes needed to be implemented as well. All probation staff met the training deadline of 10/01/2024, for the new state endorsed risk and needs assessment tool, Michigan Juvenile Justice Assessment System (MJJAS). The probation officers will no longer be using the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI). By transitioning from YASI to MJJAS, the department saved over \$4,000 in licensing fees alone. The probation department also uses YouthCenter for electronic case management and also screens for mental health concerns with the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI - 2). All of these tools and requirements are designed to assist the probation officers in creating well rounded case plans for our court involved youth, as well as connecting them with other community resources.

## 2024 Cumulative Statistics

<u>Measured Area</u>	<u>Number</u>
Total Cases	92
New Petitions Adjudicated (on current or previous probationers)	5
Probation Violations Adjudicated	34
Community Service Hours Ordered	685
Days Spent at Home	10,861
Days Spent in Detention	564
Days Spent on a Tether	139
Days Spent in Residential Care	1,713
Total Days on Probation	13,144
Number of Children Taking Medication	47 (51.1% of caseload)
Total Number of Contacts Made	5,152
Number of Recidivists	8 (9% of caseload)
Number of Repeat Offenders	5 (5% of caseload)
Probationers Released During FY	69
Number Released Who Met Goals	63 (91.3% success rate)

## Average Probationer

<u>Measured Area</u>	<u>Number</u>
Average Age	15.3
Number of New Petitions Per Case	.05
Number of PV's Per Child	.37
Average Days at Home	119
Average Days in Detention	6.13
Average Days in Residential Care	18.62
Average Days on Probation	142.8
Average Grade	10 <sup>th</sup>
Average Number of Contacts Per Case	56

### **Did You Know?**

- The average juvenile on probation in Allegan County is a 15 year-old 10<sup>th</sup> grader.
- On average, about 37% of probationers had his /her probation violated this past year.
- The average probationer spends approximately 4.3% of his/her days on probation in detention and approximately 13% of his/her days on probation in residential care.
- Of the children released from probation during the FY, approximately 91% were successful in meeting his/her treatment goals.
- Approximately 9% of the total caseload includes children who were previously on probation and came back to the court for subsequent offenses.
- Approximately 5% of the total caseload includes children who commit new offenses while on probation.
- On average, children on probation are contacted 56 times by his/her probation officer, with 22 of those contacts being face-to-face.
- The average child involved with the court spent approximately 20 weeks (or approximately 5 months) on probation.
- Approximately 51.1% 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 7.4.

# Community Justice Program

As part of the philosophy of the Community Justice Program, and the Restorative Justice Model, one of our goals is to have the youth who are involved with the courts repair some of the damage caused by their actions within the community. One of the ways that this is done, is by having the youth complete community-based Community Service.

Staff work with youth on various community service projects within the community and within the Juvenile Center. The time the youth spend working on these projects not only teaches them a variety of life skills, but it is also a time that they can make connections with adults in their lives and it teaches them how to appropriately interact with a variety of people, which will assist them in many ways on their road to becoming responsible adults and community members.

## **Youth Home Garden**

We have some ongoing work that we consistently schedule for our youth to complete. Some of this service includes working the gardens at the Youth Home, where produce is grown which is used in the Youth Home kitchen and the excess produce is distributed to needy families or donated to food pantries within our community. The youth assist with planting, weeding, watering, and distributing the produce. They also help gather up donated seeds and plants and sort those seeds in the off season to prepare for the next growing season.

## **Allegan County Fair**

Working at the fairgrounds is another ongoing project. Our youth, along with supervising staff, assist with whatever is needed. Youth have painted stalls, fences, set up tables and chairs, they have weeded, raked many, many leaves, and picked up sticks to get the grounds ready for upcoming events. They also have helped with general maintenance as requested. During the week of the Allegan County Fair youth have also helped at booths for Camp Kidwell.

## **Detailing County Cars**

Keeping county vehicles at the Youth Home clean is an additional project that is ongoing. Tasks such as dusting, vacuuming, throwing away garbage and washing windows in the cars are all a part of this community service project.

## **Facility Management**

Community Service is also completed at the Youth Home as youth assist staff with various projects such as landscaping, working in the kitchen, cleaning baseboards, grout,

washing walls, cleaning out refrigerators, dusting clerical supply shelves, and, at times, helping update forms, and decorating the lobby for holidays and celebrations.

### **Park and Ride Cleanup**

The youth home is also responsible for keeping a park and ride area in Saugatuck maintained.

### **Community Connections**

In addition to the ongoing projects, we have also made connections with community organizations, such as local libraries. We organize crafting projects, help clean toys, and do general projects the library may need. We have had youth help schools by doing maintenance, helping at sporting events, or helping with youth sports programs. Our youth have also helped at various camps with cleaning, fundraising, and helping with the horses doing feeding and grooming. One youth in particular was helping with the horse program at Camp Beechpoint, and when she moved back home from the Cheever Treatment Center, she began helping at the ranch to continue her love of horses and to maintain positive community connections. We have also done beach cleanups, and one young lady helped with her band program at the Tulip Time Parade in Holland. Also, a local apartment complex has contacted us on a few occasions to assist elderly tenants, who did not have family help or other means, in moving from one apartment to another. Both the elderly person and apartment management were grateful for this assistance and our youth did a great job and completed the move within the required time frames.

### **Community Service Statistics**

- Number of Youth participating in 2024:
  - 28
- Number of Community Service hours completed in 2024:
  - 668.5

## **Perspective from one of our Community Service partners:**

The Allegan County Fair is very happy to have the Youth from the Allegan County Court System helping out at the fairgrounds annually. The Youth do an amazing job of helping with our off season events and general care of the fairgrounds. We are always pleased with their work and Kendall Domeier is great with the kids and a pleasure to work with.

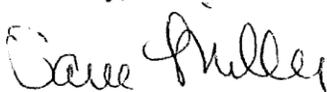
They have put in several hours here at the fairgrounds. Some of the events they have helped with are the Perrigo Picnic and RV Rallies - setting up and covering banquet tables, Michigan Fiber Festival - cleaning and setting up gates, Horse Shows - cleaning stalls and overall keeping the grounds clean by raking, sweeping, painting, etc. When the Youth help with the smaller jobs it gives the Allegan County Fair Grounds Crew a chance to work on building and handling larger projects.

Working here is also educational for the Youth. Some of the kids that come here don't know how to use a shovel, rake, paint brush, or other tools. They learn leadership and working together. This helps them to be able to find other work as they venture into life. Kendall works side by side with them and sets a great example.

They are actually helping us to bring tourism to Allegan. Keeping the fairgrounds clean and sharp looking is definitely one of the reasons events continue to come back. My crew loves to work with the Youth and they find it very interesting to hear their stories. The Youth find the Allegan County Fair very interesting also and they love to hear about the Fair. It is a good match for all of us.

Thank you so much for keeping us a part of this program!

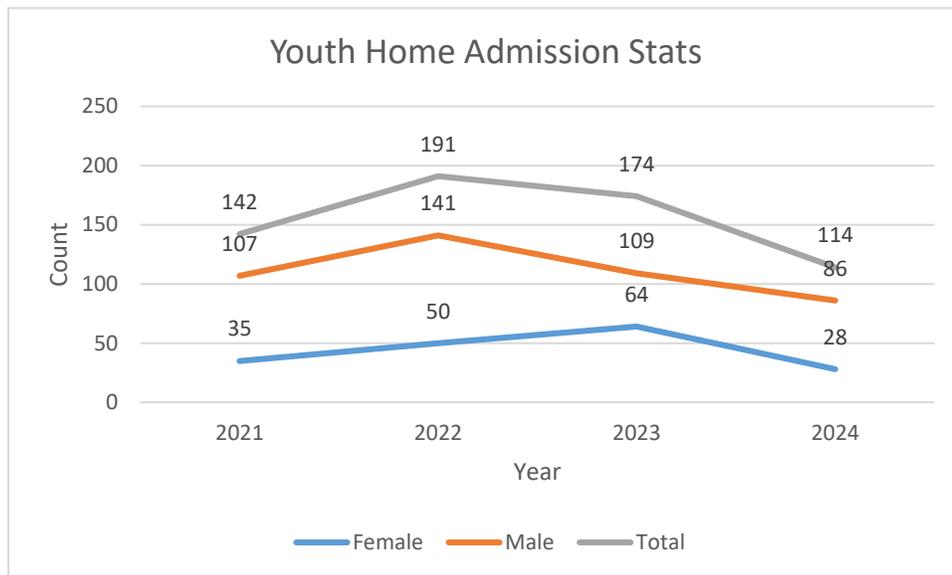
Sincerely,



Saree Miller  
Executive Director  
Allegan County Fair  
(269)673-6501  
smiller@allegancountyfair.com

# Juvenile Detention

The Detention Program is designed to provide short-term, physically restrictive, and safe environment for youth, both male and female, ages 10-17 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. While similar to that of the criminal justice system in many ways—process includes arrest, detainment, petitions, hearings, adjudications, dispositions, placement, and probation. 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 2024 the juvenile detention admitted 114 youth and the average length of stay was 23 days. Release from detention occurs only through order of the court or through posting of bond (if applicable).



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. Programming activities continue after the school day and on weekends. Residents are involved in book clubs, Why Try groups, life skills, cooking classes, recreational activities and hands-on projects.

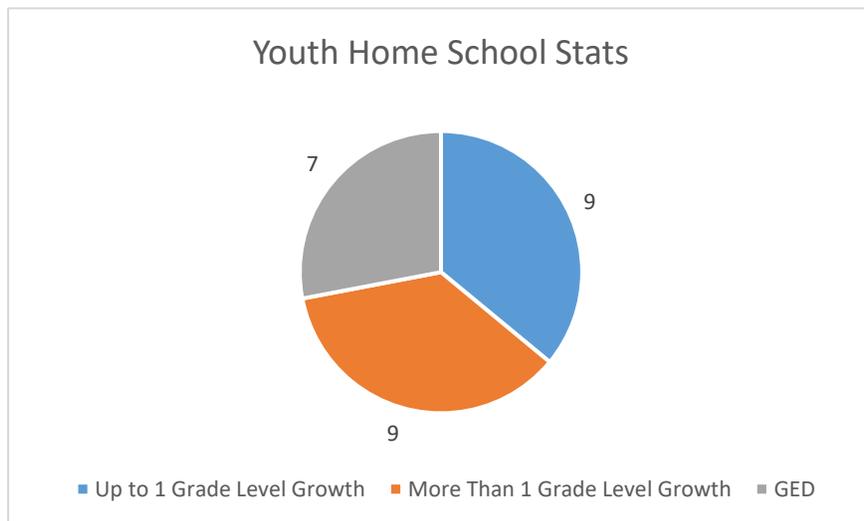
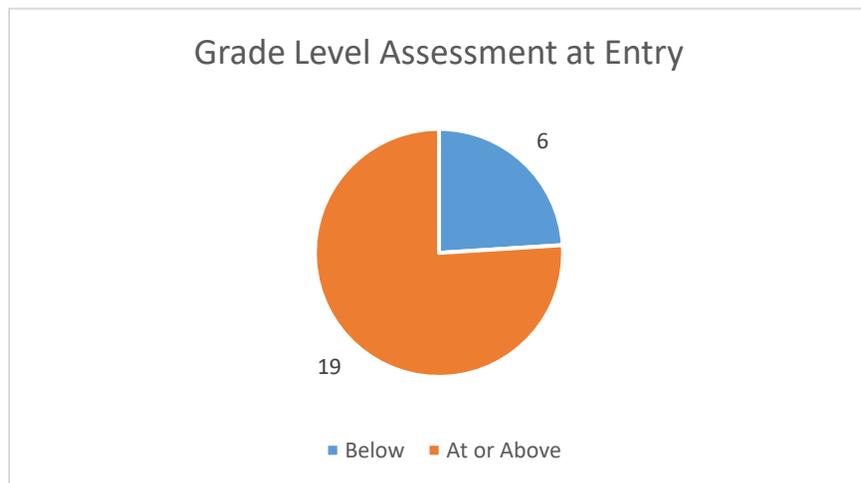
## Education

The educational program at the Detention Center is provided by the Outlook Academy. Residents are expected to fully participate in the education program provided daily during the school year. In most cases, residents will be enrolled in school a few days after admission. Their

prior school is contacted by the Outlook staff for request of records. Students are encouraged to stay on track with their academics and often use a credit recovery program called Edmentum. Residents are screened in the area of reading shortly after admission and will receive individual reading intervention if testing determines they are below their grade level. GED completion is also available for students 16 and older who are significantly behind in credits.

### **Reading Intervention Program**

It is the goal of the Reading Intervention Program 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, student 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 at the Detention Center. Low readings average one school year of growth after 30 days in the program. The following pie chart reflects students who were in detention for at least 90 days.



## Juvenile Detention Programming

### Why Try

“Why Try” is an evidence-based national program used in schools and correctional facilities, to help kids overcome daily challenges and live lives of opportunity, freedom, and self-respect. The curriculum teaches social and emotional skills using a practical, multi-sensory approach. Hands-on learning activities engage the youth while they learn skills needed to improve behavior and academics. The curriculum utilizes a series of ten visual analogies that teach essential life skills: improved decision making, dealing with peer pressure, impulse control, obeying laws and rules, plugging into support systems, and having a vision for the future.



### Gardening

The gardening program kicks off in April by planting seeds to transplant into the garden. The program helps youth learn about growing vegetables, helps them understand where healthy food comes from, and get active outdoors in the garden. Life skills training is tied into the gardening program to encourage the youth to grow and prepare their own food.

### Life Skills

Residents are coached one on one and in group settings to demonstrate competency in several areas. Areas of focus are basic skills of doing laundry, room care and bed making, meal manners, meal preparation, use of basic kitchen appliances, maintaining personal appearance, self-awareness strengths/limitations, managing your time, and being a lifelong learner.

### **Prime For Life**

Prime for Life is a program impacting alcohol and drug abuse for people of all ages. It is designed to gently but powerfully, challenge common beliefs and attitudes that directly contribute to high-risk alcohol and drug use. The program goals are to reduce the risks for health problems and impairment. Prime for Life is provided by On Point staff and by a trained detention staff.

### **MI Works**

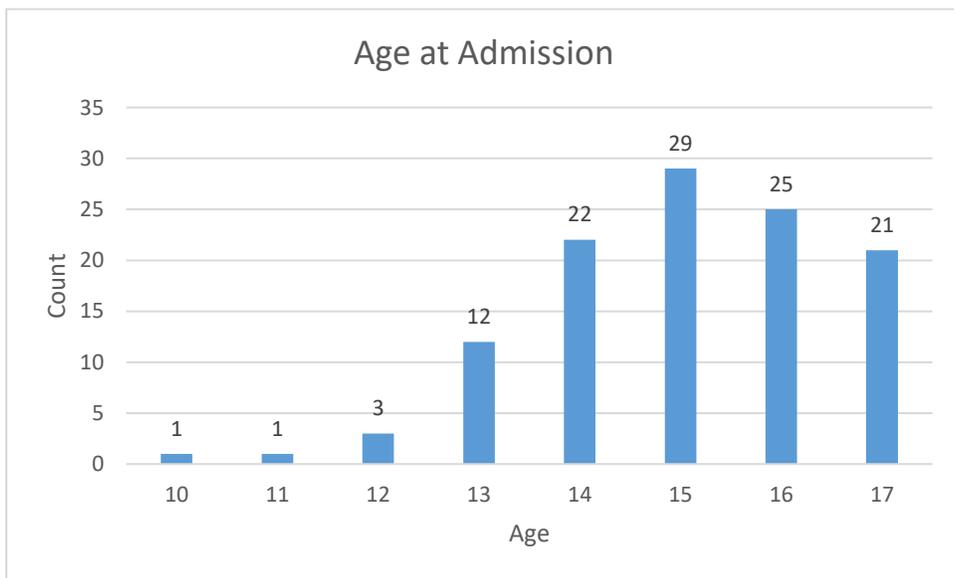
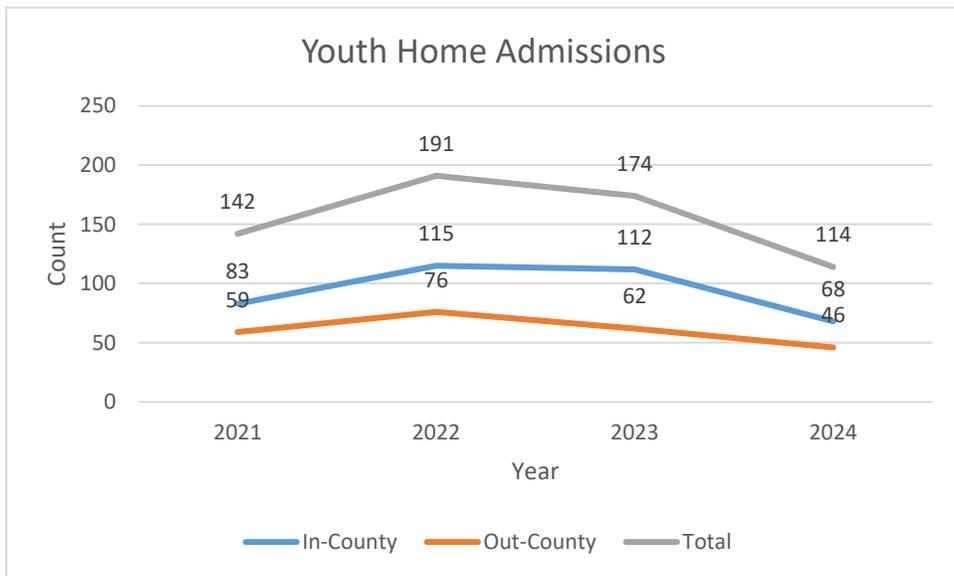
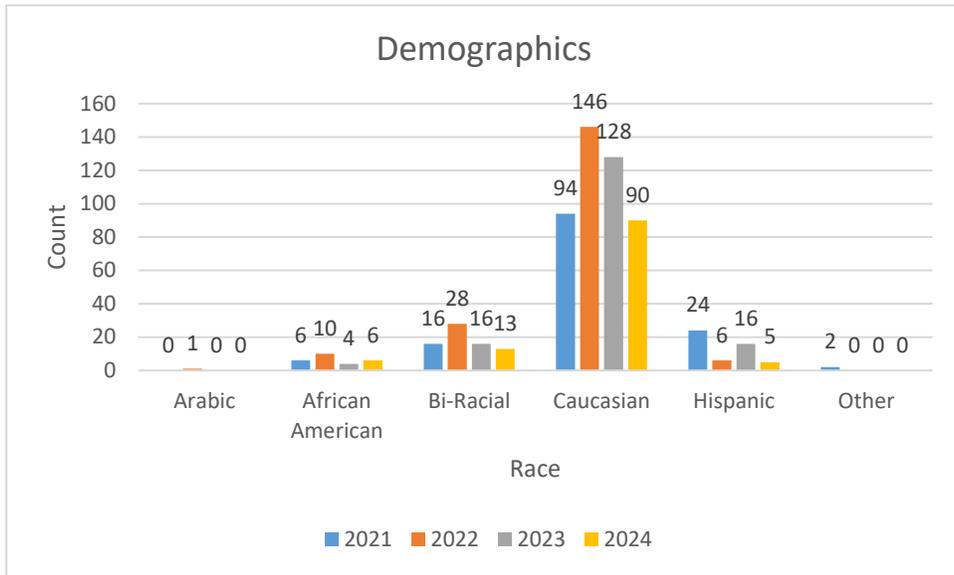
Michigan Works provides tools necessary for life preparation through resume building, interviewing, and employment related strategies. It provides selected 16–17-year-old residents, mostly enrolled in the GED program, information and training as it relates to employment.

### **Music Therapy**

Music therapy is offered to enhance youths' efforts in programs that address social and vocational skill building, conflict resolution, attention control, and problem-solving skills. Music therapy helps residents explore thoughts, feelings and develop healthy coping skills.

### **Barnabas Ministries**

Barnabas Ministries provides our facility with weekly youth groups and mentoring, as well as scheduling local pastors to come in for Sunday afternoon services. Barnabas Ministries supports the residents during holidays with individual care packages and offers an optional pen pal program.



# Cheever Treatment Center

## **What is Cheever Treatment Center?**

Cheever Treatment Center is a combination of a residential and a home-based program that services Allegan County, court-ordered youth, between the ages of 11-18. The program is co-ed, serving delinquents struggling with relationships, emotions, behavior, and academic difficulties. Cheever Treatment Center is a non-secure facility and is appropriate for youth with security needs in the low to medium range. The program allows youth to move from a very supportive/structured environment to one of increased freedom and responsibilities as they learn and demonstrate more effective skills. The length of stay in the program varies based on many factors, including the general functioning of the youth, family dynamics, resident/family motivation, and aftercare options.

## **How do youth get placed in Cheever?**

All youth placed in Cheever are on probation with the Allegan County Family Court. When the probation officer is having continued difficulties with working with the youth in the home, the youth is not following probation terms, or the youth is no longer considered safe in the community, the probation officer, in court, requests a referral for Cheever. If the referral is ordered, the Cheever Director, and our therapist, meet with the youth and parents to assess the appropriateness of the program. Family support and participation are essential to the resident's success at Cheever. After the assessment, Cheever staff attend the youth's dispositional review hearing to give recommendations for placement, or in place of residential placement, other community resources that may be beneficial before considering removal from the home and placement in Cheever.

## **What happens once a youth is placed in Cheever?**

Every youth walking through our doors has unique struggles and needs. The needs of a 14-year-old generally are very different from those of a 17-year-old. Through the use of the MJJAS (Michigan Juvenile Justice Assessment System), Cheever determines risk areas and individual goals for each resident. Every resident has a specific set of goals that become their main focus as they move through the program. Goals may include learning and practicing new behaviors, learning and using coping skills, attending groups and/or therapy, what behaviors/skills they will demonstrate on home passes or in the community, and participating in specific other services that address their needs. The team (court staff and family) then meets every month to review these goals, the resident reports a self-evaluation of how they feel they are doing with their goals and gets feedback from the team. This discussion leads to more/less time off the unit, at home, or in the community.

## **Services we offer at Cheever include:**

- Individual and Family counseling
- Group teachings
  - DBT skills
  - Prime for Life
  - Balanced and Restorative Justice
  - Focus group
- Music Therapy
- Treatment Planning and Goals
- Team and Family Meetings
- Surveillance
- Community Integrative Services
- Life Skills Training
- Additional Services provided by outside resources include
  - Psychiatry (as needed)
  - Education
  - Voluntary Spiritual Life Activities
  - Mentorships
  - Michigan Works Programs
  - Michigan Rehabilitation Services Programs
  - Equestrian Experiences/Therapy
  - Occupational therapy

## **2024 Stats:**

- 16 youths served (8 females, 8 males)
- 280 hours of Community Service completed.
- 260 hours of learning groups held
- 180 family therapy sessions held
- 650 individual therapy sessions held

## **What's New:**

Last year, through Capital funding, Cheever installed new carpeting throughout the unit and purchased new furniture for the dayroom. We also started a new skills group and began using a new therapy model.



**Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) skills group:** This group, new in 2024, teaches residents life skills. The group allows the residents to have an open space to talk about what areas of life they are struggling in and learn ways to change those behaviors. Within the group, we have examples of the skills via media, opportunities to roleplay and practice the skills, or a craft activity to allow the residents to create a reminder of what they have learned. Some concepts learned in the group are communication, anger management, anxiety control, how to move through distress, welcoming and understanding feelings, and self-confidence.

Our therapist, Jessica Duguid, was trained in **Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)** in 2024, through Title I-D funding. EMDR is an evidence-based therapy originally designed for the treatment of trauma and trauma disorders such as PTSD, Complex PTSD, Acute Stress Disorder, and Dissociative Identity Disorder. EMDR is a trauma therapy that can help individuals heal from traumatic experiences and process emotional distress. It differs from conventional forms of talk therapy such as CBT or DBT. It targets deep regions of the brain to reorganize how memories are stored and decrease the negative impact they have on one's life. EMDR makes it easier for individuals to understand their past experiences. It allows clients to be exposed to their trauma, without overwhelming them. EMDR is based on the idea that negative thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are the result of unprocessed memories.

Although it is most widely used for trauma syndrome, EMDR can also support teens struggling with depression, anxiety, personality disorders, and substance abuse problems. It can help process emotional stress that influences underlying mental health symptoms and cravings for drugs and alcohol as well.