



57th District Court – Allegan County State of Michigan

113 Chestnut Street, Allegan County Building, Allegan, MI 49010

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District Court Clerk's Office, Judicial Staff and Probation

Pictured from left to right

First row: Magistrate Daniel W. Norbeck; Judge William A. Baillargeon, Laurie Tange

Second row: Michelle Carpenter, Kelly Miklusicak, Kayla Williamson, Alli Dangremond, Julie Reamer, Julie Springer, Chris Gates, Jackie Hicks, Aimee Kragt, and Hickory Buell

Third row: Amber Browneye, Rebecca Hoskinson, Cesilia Rocha-Solis, Mary Jo Ash, Lauren Miner, Abby Maki, Mark Ponitz, Katie Kurdelski, Theresa Delventhal, and Carole Carr

Not pictured: Judge Joseph S. Skocelas, Audrey VerBeek, Cindy Cook, Nancy Eaton

57th District Court 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

DISTRICT COURT JUDGES



HONORABLE WILLIAM A. BAILLARGEON, Chief District Judge, was appointed by Governor Jennifer Granholm on March 5, 2009 to fill the vacancy left by the retirement of the Honorable Stephen Sheridan. Prior to this appointment, Judge Baillargeon served as Circuit Judge for Allegan County's 48th Circuit Court from 2007 – 2009. Judge Baillargeon was elected in November 2010 to complete Judge Sheridan's term through 2012., then re-elected again in November 2012, 2018, and 2024 for six-year terms.



HONORABLE JOSEPH S. SKOCELAS, District Court Judge, was appointed by Governor Jennifer Granholm on April 26, 2006 to fill the vacancy left by the retirement of the Honorable Gary Stewart. Judge Skocelas was subsequently elected in November 2006 to complete Judge Stewart's term through 2008, then again in November 2008, 2014, and 2020 for six-year terms.

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Message from the Chief Judge

As Chief Judge of the 57th District Court for Allegan County, the honor once again falls to me to present the annual report for the year 2024. The court has continued to fully and faithfully serve the people of Allegan County and State of Michigan in all capacities.



This year we welcomed a new court administrator, Laurie Tange. She has been an extraordinary asset and has already demonstrated her ability to address the needs of the court and staff. She has also, as an Attorney Magistrate, been able to assist in some of the core functions of the court and thereby has made our ability to serve the public even more efficient and effective. It was not so very long ago that we said farewell to our longtime district court administrator Linda Lenahan and we were convinced that there was no one that could fill her shoes. While it is true no one could hope to fill the shoes of Linda in such a short time, we are confident that with Laurie we have an individual who will be just as dedicated and determined to make the 57th District Court the very best in the State. (I will once again extend kudos to Linda for her vision and planning that has made succession in administration so efficient.)

Both the civil and criminal clerical sections have continued to maintain their usual level of excellence. I do not want to in any way minimize the work they undertake to create and maintain the accuracy of documentation and reports while at the same time serving the public with a warm smile and professionalism. They have made excellence a daily norm.

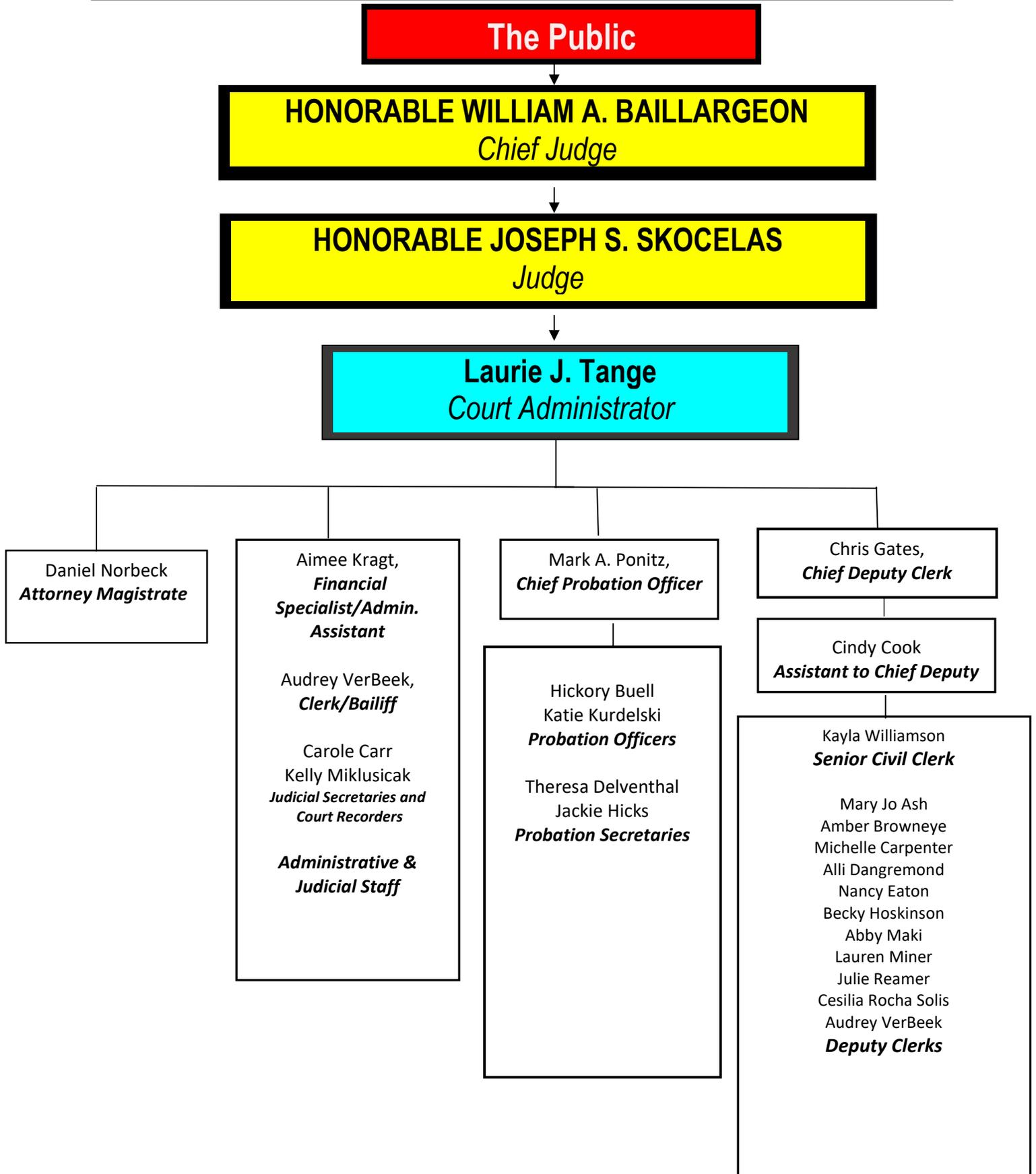
While our probation department experienced the loss of a senior probation officer it has nevertheless continued to provide superb supervision for our courts and specialty problem solving courts.

The construction at the courthouse was able to proceed with remarkably few issues as it related to the ability of the court to function and conduct hearings. Although the buildout in the District Court is insufficient for functional jury trial needs and has safety concerns that have yet to be adequately addressed, the court does commit to working with the county and its contractors to resolve those issues to the extent it is possible to do so.

Respectfully,

Judge William A. Baillargeon
Chief District Court Judge

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



JURISDICTION

DIVISIONS	JURISDICTION	FACTS TO KNOW
<p>CIVIL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil suits up to \$25,000 • Small claim suits up to \$7,000 (effective 1/1/24) • Landlord tenant disputes, garnishments, and land contract summary proceedings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil suits can be filed by either an individual or a business • Corporations must have attorney representation outside of small claims • Parties must represent themselves in small claims cases – attorneys may not be involved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRIMINAL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michigan statute violations • City/village/township ordinances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All felony cases such as murder and criminal sexual conduct are heard by a district judge through the preliminary exam stage only • Domestic violence, retail fraud, disturbing the peace are examples of misdemeanor violations
<p>TRAFFIC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michigan statute violations • City/village/township ordinances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating while intoxicated, reckless driving, expired operator’s license are examples of misdemeanor traffic offenses • Speeding, careless driving, no safety belt are examples of civil infraction violations

NEW CASES FILED

CIVIL DIVISION

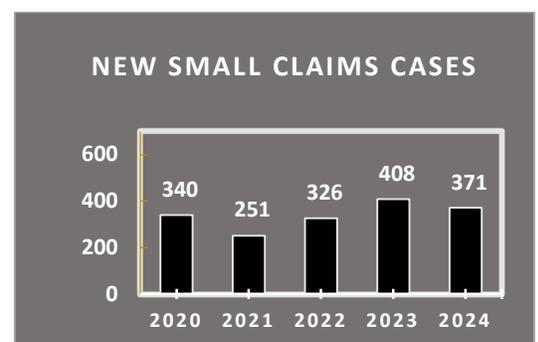
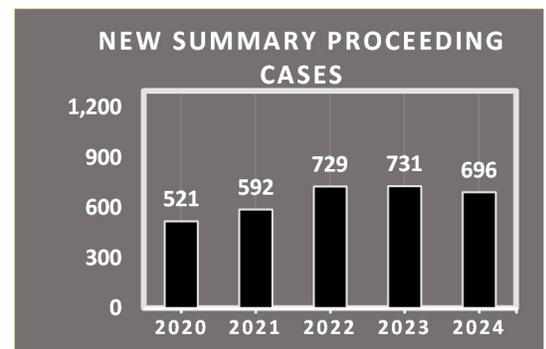
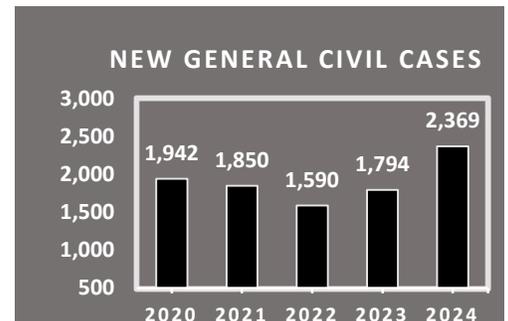
The *Civil Division* consists of the following sub-divisions:

The *General Civil Division* processes all civil cases under the \$25,000 jurisdictional limit; limited claim and delivery civil actions; limited writ of attachment and garnishment; and forfeiture or seizure of certain property.

The *Summary Proceeding Division* processes cases generally brought by a landlord to recover possession of a dwelling when a tenant fails to pay the rent or when the landlord or owner wishes to regain possession of his/her property. Summary proceedings include land contract forfeitures arising when a purchaser does not pay the amount agreed upon in a contract. A landlord may obtain an Order of Eviction to evict a tenant, or land contract vendee.

The *Small Claims Division* processes cases with recoverable maximum monies up to \$7,000.00 (increased from \$6,500 to \$7,000 on 1/1/24). Small claims litigants have the right to remove a case to the General Civil Division or to remove a case from magisterial jurisdiction. Actions are filed in the county in which the cause of action arose, or in which the defendant is established or resides or is employed. Small claims litigants waive their right to a jury trial and cannot be represented by an attorney.

Small claims cases are heard by the Attorney Magistrate.

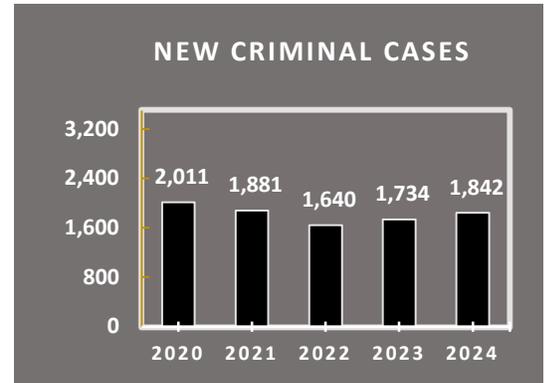


NEW CASES FILED

CRIMINAL DIVISION

The *Criminal Division (including Felony Traffic violations)* adjudicates cases involving violations of Michigan statute as well as violations of local ordinance. The Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, Michigan Attorney General’s Office, local police agencies, and ordinance city/township/village attorneys file felony and misdemeanor cases with the Court. District Court Judges preside over felony cases through the preliminary examination hearing stages only. Effective January 1, 2015, District Court Judges are now able to accept guilty pleas on felony charges. In 2024, five (5) felony pleas were accepted by District Court Judges.

In 2024, the criminal division processed 1,842 new case filings. The Court conducted felony preliminary examinations and waiver hearings and bound over 700 cases to the 48th Circuit Court. This number includes traffic division bind overs, as well.

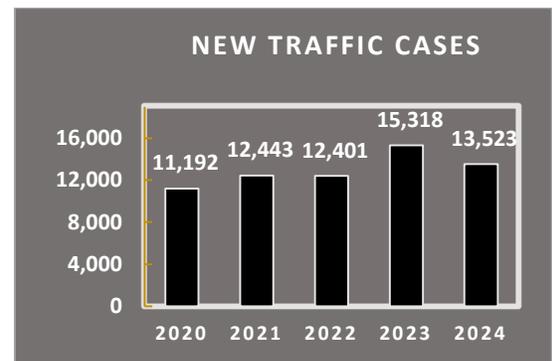


TRAFFIC DIVISION

The *Traffic Division (including non-traffic civil infractions)* adjudicates misdemeanor and civil infraction cases involving Michigan statute violations, the motor vehicle code and local ordinances.

In 2024, the traffic division accepted 13,523 new case filings. The traffic division disposed of 14,808 cases through various dispositions, i.e., guilty plea, admission of responsibility, default, dismissal, warrant, and trial/hearing verdict. In 2024, the Judges disposed of 14 cases by jury verdict (all case types) and 151 cases by bench trial, formal or informal hearing for all case types.

New case filings in the traffic division have increased to pre-pandemic levels.



NEW CASES FILED

TOTAL NEW CASE FILINGS

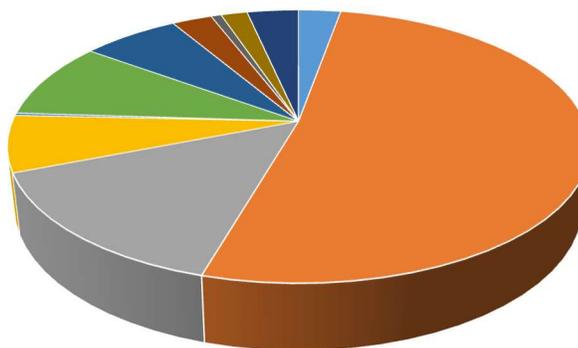
Each year, the District Court prepares and files with the State Court Administrative Office, a caseload report of all new cases filed, re-opened cases, warrants, and dispositions in categories of Traffic, Criminal and Civil cases. The Court uploads these numbers to the State Court Administrative Office's web site.

TOTAL NEW CASES FILED	
Traffic cases filed	13,560
Criminal cases filed	1,805
Civil cases filed	<u>3,444</u>
Total new cases filed	18,809

CASE DISPOSITIONS

TOTAL DISPOSITIONS BY CATEGORY

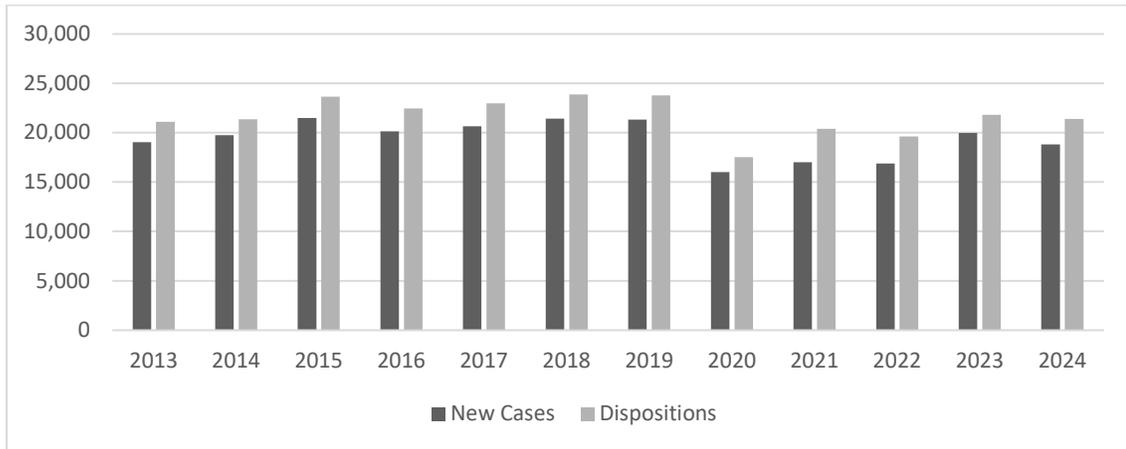
Total Dispositions: 21,403



- Civil Infraction Non-Traffic
- Civil Infraction Traffic
- Felony and Misdemeanor Traffic
- Felony Non-Traffic
- Felony OUIL
- General Civil
- Misdemeanor Non-Traffic
- Misdemeanor OUIL
- Parking
- Small Claims
- Summary Proceedings

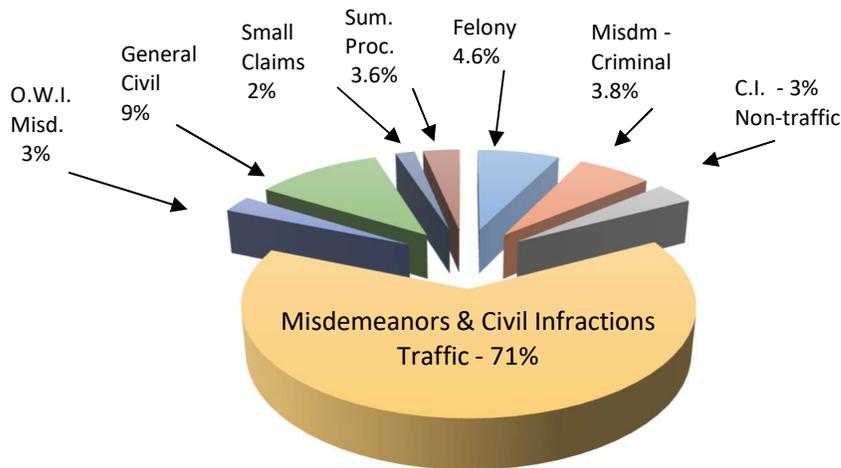
STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

As you can see from the comparison chart below, total new case filings have been increasing and the District Court has continued to diligently dispose of its caseload in a timely fashion.



CASELOAD MIX

The pie chart reflects both the total number of cases filed and the percentages by divisions.



Clearance Rate Ratio of Dispositions to New Case Filing

The ratio of dispositions to new case filings and reopened cases are reflected below.

New Case Filings and Reopened Cases	21,801
Dispositions	21,403
Ratio	98%

PROBATION

The functions of the *Probation Department* are to assist the Judges in determining an appropriate sentence and to supervise probationers ensuring that they comply with the terms and conditions of the orders of the Court. Probation Officers are responsible to refer probationers to qualified treatment personnel and to introduce them to vocational or educational resources.

The total number of defendants placed on probation during 2024 was 314. The total number of probationers being supervised by the Probation Officers for the period ending December 31, 2024, was 396 including diversion programs.

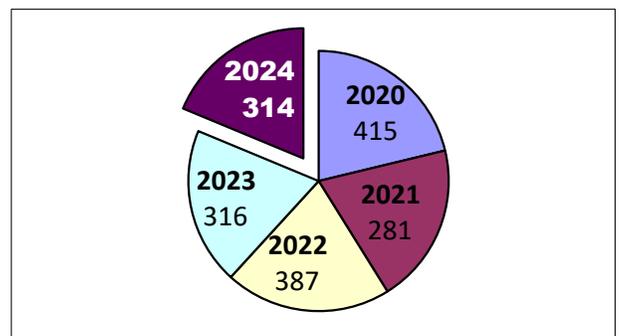
The difference between the total number placed on probation (314) and supervised (396) reflects the number of probationers who completed their terms and conditions of probation and were released. The time span of probation can generally range from a minimum of 30 days to a maximum of two years. Consequently, probationers are continually being released and new probationers added.

The table below reflects the number of probationers placed on probation during the year.

DEFENDANTS PLACED ON PROBATION

Judge	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	TOTALS
SKOCELAS	10	22	17	17	14	8	15	21	6	13	6	13	165
BAILLARGEON	14	1	17	11	13	12	18	11	19	14	13	6	149
NORBECK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	24	23	34	28	27	20	33	32	25	27	19	22	314

The pie chart reflects the total number of cases or individuals that were placed on probation from 2020 through 2024. For the period of 2020 through 2024, the caseload decreased 101 cases. Caseload decreased by 2 cases between 2023 and 2024.



MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT COURT



Mental Health Court Graduate
Michael Milburn and Judge Skocelas

On September 14, 2009, Judge Skocelas and the 57th District Court, teamed with representatives of the Allegan County Sheriff's Department, Allegan City Police, Allegan County Prosecutor's Office, Allegan County Community Mental Health, Michigan State Police, local defense attorneys, and local substance abuse providers to create a Mental Health Treatment Court in Allegan County. The treatment court is fully certified by the State Court Administrative Office as a Mental Health Treatment Court in Michigan. The court operates on grant funding also awarded by the State Court Administrative Office. The program accepts both felony and misdemeanor cases.

Since its inception, 522 defendants have been referred to the program. Of those, 237 were accepted into the program and 285 were rejected. Of the 237 who were accepted, 144 have successfully graduated, and 12 are currently in the program – 4 in Phase I and 8 in Phase II. After acceptance into the program, 81 were discharged unsuccessfully – 58 for cause and 23 for other reasons.

Mental Health Treatment Court is a two-phase program designed for adult offenders charged with one or more criminal offenses and who are having difficulty with mental health issues, are developmentally disabled, or mentally ill defendants with co-occurring disorders (mental health/substance abuse). It involves frequent court appearances and active participation by the participant towards their recovery. It also includes frequent random drug/alcohol screens. The court provides incentives for progress and sanctions for negative behaviors. If the participant fails to follow certain rules, they may be required to report more often to the Court, spend time in jail, or face serious sanctions such as termination from the Mental Health Treatment Court. This court is voluntary; the defendant must consent to participation before he/she can be placed into the court program. The mental health courts share the objective of preventing the jailing of the mentally ill and/or of securing their release from jail to appropriate services and support in the community. In addition, each court gives a high priority to concerns for public safety when arranging for the care of mentally ill offenders.

As required by statute, this court achieved recertification in 2024 from the State Court Administrative Office.

WEST MICHIGAN REGIONAL VETERANS' TREATMENT COURT

The West Michigan Regional Veterans' Treatment Court began operation on February 7, 2014, and was the first fully regionalized Veteran Treatment Court in the State of Michigan. The jurisdiction of the Veterans' Treatment Court is that of both the district and circuit courts of Allegan, Van Buren and Ottawa counties but it also accepts veterans from surrounding counties. It was developed and organized by Judge Baillargeon and the treatment court team to help veteran participants address underlying service related issues that bring them in contact with the criminal justice system. The court currently has 9 veterans participating with new applicants being reviewed by the team for admission as they arise. The court makes sure that veterans are provided proper mental and physical health care and follows up to ensure that they maintain their treatment protocol as well as a complete abstinence from drugs and/or alcohol. Common issues addressed by the treatment court include Post Traumatic Brain Injury, Post-Traumatic Stress Injury and issues related to substance abuse. The goal of the court is to divert veterans from prison or jail, to help them have a more satisfying productive law abiding life by addressing the underlying conditions impacting them and thereby assisting them to restore their sense of honor and integrity. The court has participants from Van Buren County, Kent County, Ottawa County, and Allegan County. We are proud to report that our regional court has already recognized 54 veterans for successfully completing the treatment court program. Many of these veterans continue to visit and support the efforts of their fellow veterans that continue to make up our veteran participant corps.

Partnering with the court from all three counties are county commissioners, judges, prosecutors, probation, law enforcement, mentors, community supervision providers, treatment providers, the Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefit Administration, veteran employment representatives and veterans service organizations service officers. Attorney Magistrate Daniel W. Norbeck is the Administrator/Case Manager for the Veterans Treatment Court. Magistrate Norbeck directs our field agent, Troy McCabe, who performs the remote supervision and substance abuse testing.

As required by statute, this court achieved certification in 2024 from the State Court Administrative Office.

SOBRIETY TREATMENT COURT

In May of 2017, the 57th District Court created a new treatment court specifically designed to address Operate while Intoxicated (OWI) - 2nd offenses. The goals of this new treatment court are to:

- Goal One: Divert offenders from jail.
- Goal Two: Eliminate substance use among substance abusers.
- Goal Three: Reduce OWI Recidivism.

The target population criteria includes:

1. Allegan County resident or residing within the Court's jurisdiction.
2. No history of serious violent behavior or felony weapon charges.
3. Alcohol and/or drug addicted or serious substance abuse pattern.
4. Repeat OWI offender.



The mission of the 57th District Court Sobriety Treatment Program is to promote community safety and reduce alcohol and drug abuse through a coordinated program involving intensive supervision, judicial interaction, treatment, incentives, sanctions and accountability.

The program is now at full capacity with nineteen (19) current participants both male and female. To date, we have graduated one hundred and six (106) participants and helped one hundred and thirteen (113) participants gain a restricted driver's license. As required by statute, this court achieved certification in 2024 from the State Court Administrative Office.

The program was developed and presided over by Judge Baillargeon. Attorney Magistrate Daniel W. Norbeck is the Administrator/Case Manager for the Sobriety Court and the probation for the participants is overseen by both the 57th District and 48th Circuit Court Probation Department.

REVENUES & EXPENSES

Revenue is generated as a by-product of the fines, costs, and fees imposed by the Judges and Attorney Magistrate. State Constitution and statutes determine how the money is distributed.

The Court maintains and monitors two expense and revenue budgets: the District Court budget and the District Court Probation Department budget. Revenues collected from the District Court Probation Department for alcohol assessments and supervision/oversight costs are combined with the District Court's general fund revenues that are deposited on a monthly basis with the County Treasurer.

REVENUES

AGENCY OR FUND	AMOUNT
Drug Case Reimbursement Fund	0.00
Drunk Driving Reimbursement Fund	23,969.43
Court Costs	95,3820.28
Appointed Attorney Fees	7,976.66
10% Bond Costs	0.00
Crime Victims' Rights Fund	14,765.73
Civil Filing Fees	135,805.00
Miscellaneous Fees	16,911.00
Driver's License Reinstatement Fees	15,478.35
Motion Fees	10,010.00
NSF Fees	75.00
Bond Forfeitures	60,440.00
DNA Sample Fee (Court)	78.00
Ordinance Fine and Costs	57,199.68
Jury Reimbursement	15,530.25
Insurance Fee	5,214.00
Probation Alcohol Assessments	24,085.00
Probation Oversight Costs	95,504.30
Cities, Townships, Villages	23,406.98
DNA fee – Sheriff's Department	195.00
State Treasury – Trust and Agencies	830,466.13
Libraries	521,204.70
Veterans' Court Participant Fees	910.00
Mental Health Court Participant Fees	0.00
Sobriety Court Participant Fees	16,700.00
Interest Earned	0.00
Cash Over/Short	109.95
Credit Card Fees	(5,555.88)

EXPENSES

EXPENDITURE	DISTRICT COURT	PROBATION DEPT.
Salary and wages	1,236,415.63	321,195.28
Employee benefits	415,883.96	122,476.98
Office supplies	12,807.84	3,660.42
Printing and binding	8,381.46	90.45
Books and maps	722.50	0
Probation Assessment Fees	0	3,303.00
Jury	13,082.24	0
Witnesses	0	0
Interpreter fees	12,868.68	0
Court appointed attorney fees	495	0
Memberships and subscriptions	5,628.40	50.00
Other Contractual Services	321.45	0
Travel Expense – routine	371.18	629.80
Education – miscellaneous	0.00	0.00
Education – travel	529.86	221.90
Education – registration	565.00	320.00
Travel – visiting judge	0.00	0
Repairs and maintenance	17,002.99	1,000
Equipment	2,342.82	0
TOTAL	1,727,419.01	452,947.83

CUMULATIVE TOTALS

REVENUES

General fund	1,421,527.43
Jury Reimbursement	3,684.22
Interest	0.00
Credit Card Fees/Cash over/short	(5,445.93)
Trust and Agencies	853,873.11
Libraries	521,204.70
Grant Specialty Courts	48,694.37
Problem Solving Court Transfer to Another Court	805.00
Restitution Payable	88,842.07
Bonds Payable	<u>439,818.72</u>
TOTAL	\$3,373,003.69

EXPENDITURES

Court	1,727,419.01
Probation	<u>452,947.83</u>
TOTAL	\$2,180,366.84

COLLECTIONS

COLLECTIONS TOTAL FOR 2024

JANUARY	\$40,593.58
FEBRUARY	\$54,539.01
MARCH	\$53,744.70
APRIL	\$40,111.57
MAY	\$37,403.48
JUNE	\$32,833.12
JULY	\$34,159.78
AUGUST	\$35,650.47
SEPTEMBER	\$36,692.69
OCTOBER	\$39,215.72
NOVEMBER	\$31,425.12
DECEMBER	\$38,001.50
YEAR END TOTAL:	\$474,370.74