



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Stark County Family Court

Website:

<https://www.starkcountyohio.gov/family-court>

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From the Judges

The 2023 annual report demonstrates the ongoing work of a most dedicated staff. A court's mission is established by its judicial leadership, but it is staff's unwavering commitment to the work that allows for ongoing achievement. 2023 again proves that Family Court staff continuously work to promote a safe and healthy community by protecting and supporting children and families.

Meaningful policy development remains a primary focus of judicial leadership. Informed decision making considers, both, the needs of the community and the data required to assess policy effectiveness. In addition to our internal processes, we continue to be grateful for the work of our system partners whose resources are necessary for family stabilization and success.

The Judges of this Court remain steadfast in our commitment of improving outcomes that impact families. This commitment is demonstrated by the following report.



Judge Jim D. James



Judge Rosemarie A. Hall



Judge Michell L. Cordova

2023 Overview

Court filings returned to pre-pandemic levels in 2023. Notably, Family Court saw a spike in misdemeanor delinquency filings. Additionally, compared to 2022, there was a reduction in cases bound over to the adult system. However, juvenile commitments to the Department of Youth Services were at a 10-year high.

Family Court released its recidivism report which was conducted by Case Western Reserve's Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education. Results are promising, as Family Court continues to demonstrate a reduction in juvenile delinquency recidivism. Recidivism report highlights are included in this annual report, and the full recidivism report can be found on Family Court's website.

In partnership with the Commissioners, the Stark County Auditor's IT staff, Clerk of Courts, Common Pleas General Division, and Probate Court, an updated case management system was selected for implementation. This case management system will improve the speed and accuracy with which cases move from the Clerk's office to the various county courts. This undertaking has been long overdue and will be a tremendous upgrade to the antiquated system currently in use. This new technology will serve as the groundwork for years to come.

In compliance with ORC2151.18, the following is Stark County Family Court's 2023 annual report.

STARK COUNTY CENSUS

Knowing Stark County's census information allows a better overall understanding of the court's data.

Stark County's total population, according to 2020 Decennial Census data, is 374,853. The county is the 8th largest by population in Ohio.

- 21.5% of the population is under the age of 18
- 78.5% of the population is over the age of 18
- The median age in Stark County is 42.1

Demographic Information

- Population that identifies as "one race" - 93.7%
- Population that identifies as "two or more races" - 6.3%

One Race

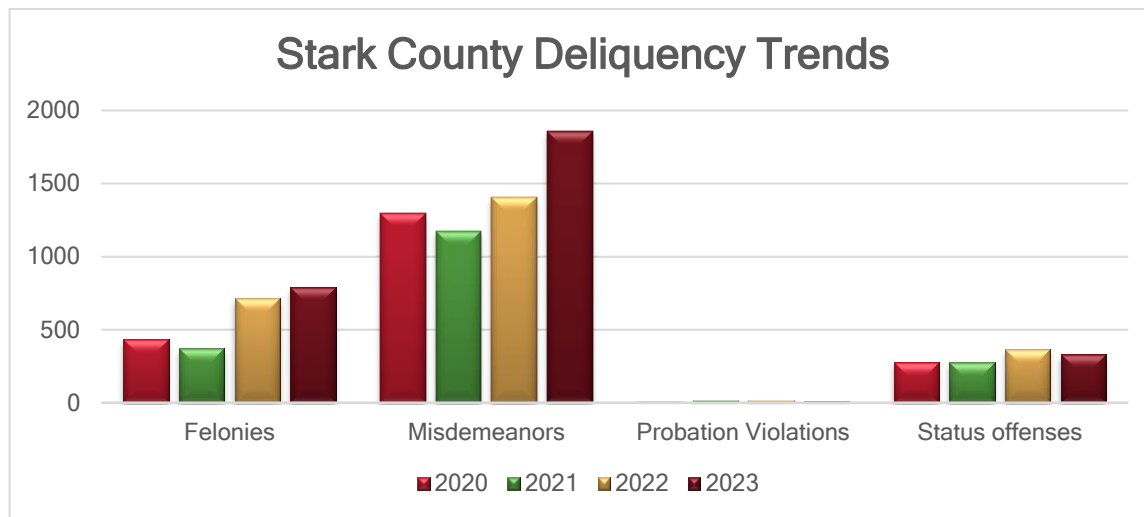
- White - 85.6%
- Black or African American - 8.1%
- Asian - 1.0%
- Hispanic or Latino - 2.4%

Families & Living Arrangements

- Total Households- 154,426
- Persons per household- 2.37
- Language other than English spoken at home- 3.1%
- Marital Status- 48.3% Married

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau

JUVENILE DIVISION REPORT



For the second year in a row, delinquency filings are at pre-pandemic levels. This certainly indicates the effects of pandemic lock-downs are now in the past.

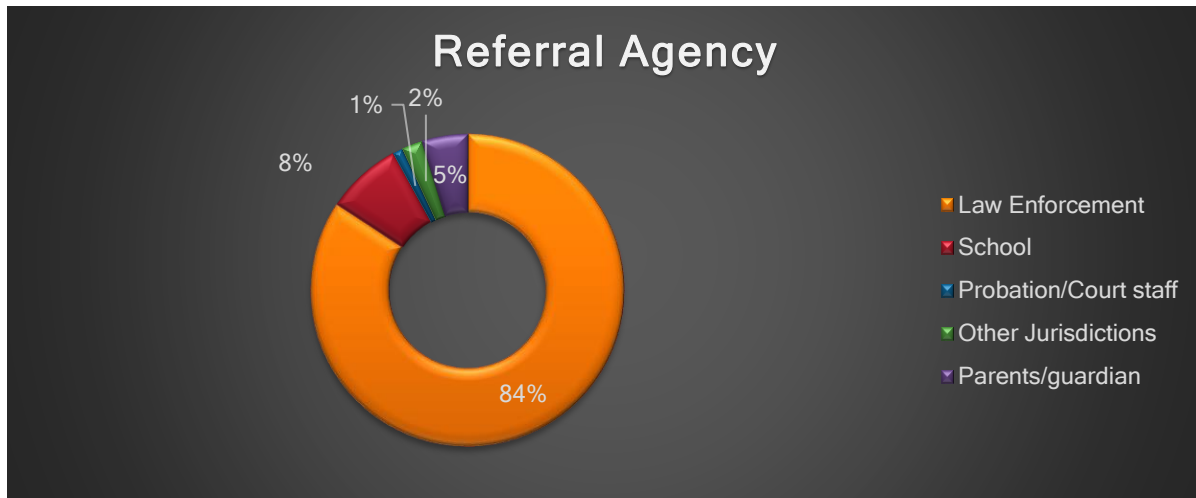
In 2023, Stark County Family Court processed 2,866 cases alleging delinquency.

Adult Offenses

Stark County Family Court processes some adult charges. These charges typically involve Contributing to the Delinquency or Unruliness of a Minor, which is a misdemeanor offense. In some cases, these charges are brought forth with Truancy charges and parents unwilling to send a child to school. In 2023, the Court processed 77 adult cases.

Referral Sources

Delinquency charges come to the court from a referral source, as the following chart depicts. The descriptor, “Other Jurisdictions”, are cases transferred to Stark County from other courts. This occurs when a youth is charged in another county, but resides in Stark.



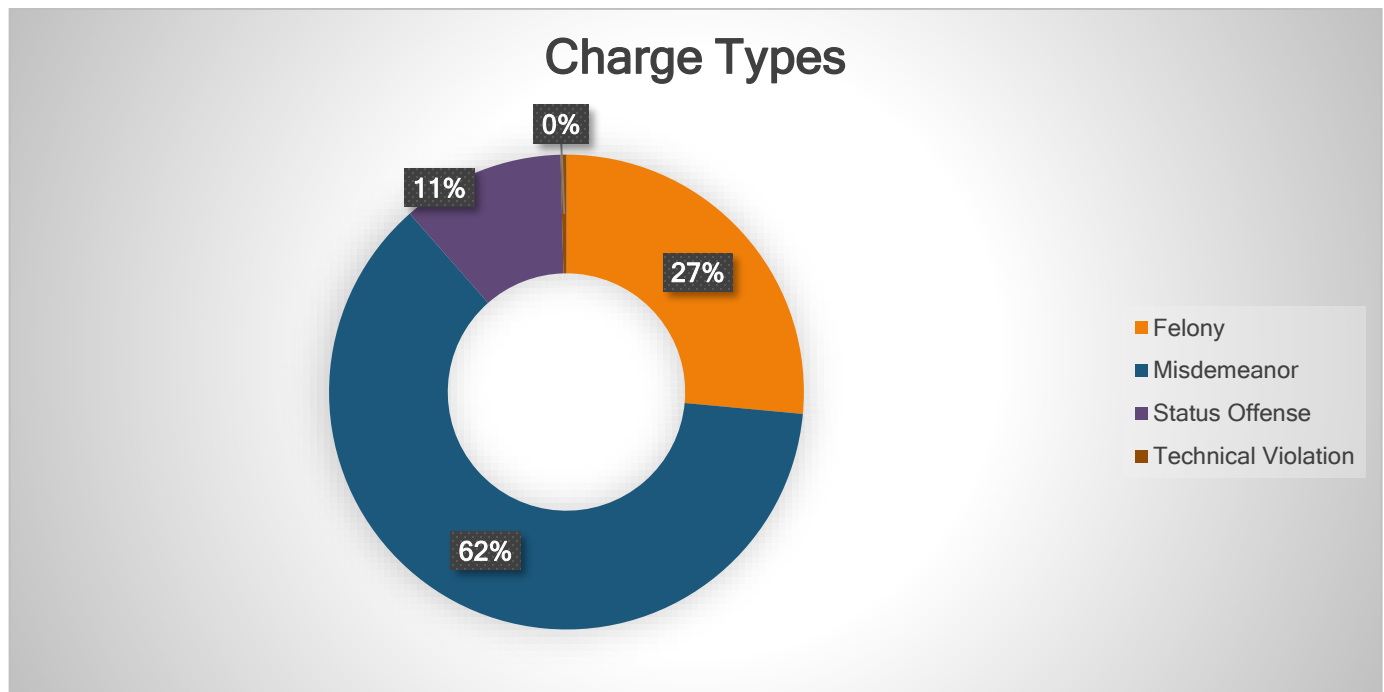
Charges

In 2023, there were 2,866 referrals alleging delinquency. A referral to Family Court is presented as a “charge type”. The most commonly known “charge types” are felonies and misdemeanors. However, Family Court also processes status offenses and technical violations.

A **status offense**, defined as “unruly”, is a charge that would not be criminal for an adult (over the age of 18). These include actions such as curfew violations and not listening at home. Unruly charges are not arrestable offenses on their own. Truancy charges are not counted here as they are highlighted in the “Truancy” section of this report. Status offenses can be referred to the Court by parents or law enforcement. There were 257 unruly complaints filed with the Court in 2023.

A **Technical Violation** is a complaint against a youth for not following court orders after a case is disposed. These violations can come from law enforcement or Probation Officers. In 2023, there were 12 technical violations filed with the Court. 11 from Probation, 1 from law enforcement.

The following graph illustrates the 2023 charge types. Misdemeanor charges continue to yield the highest percentage of delinquency charges in Stark County.



The most common **misdemeanor offense** charges were:

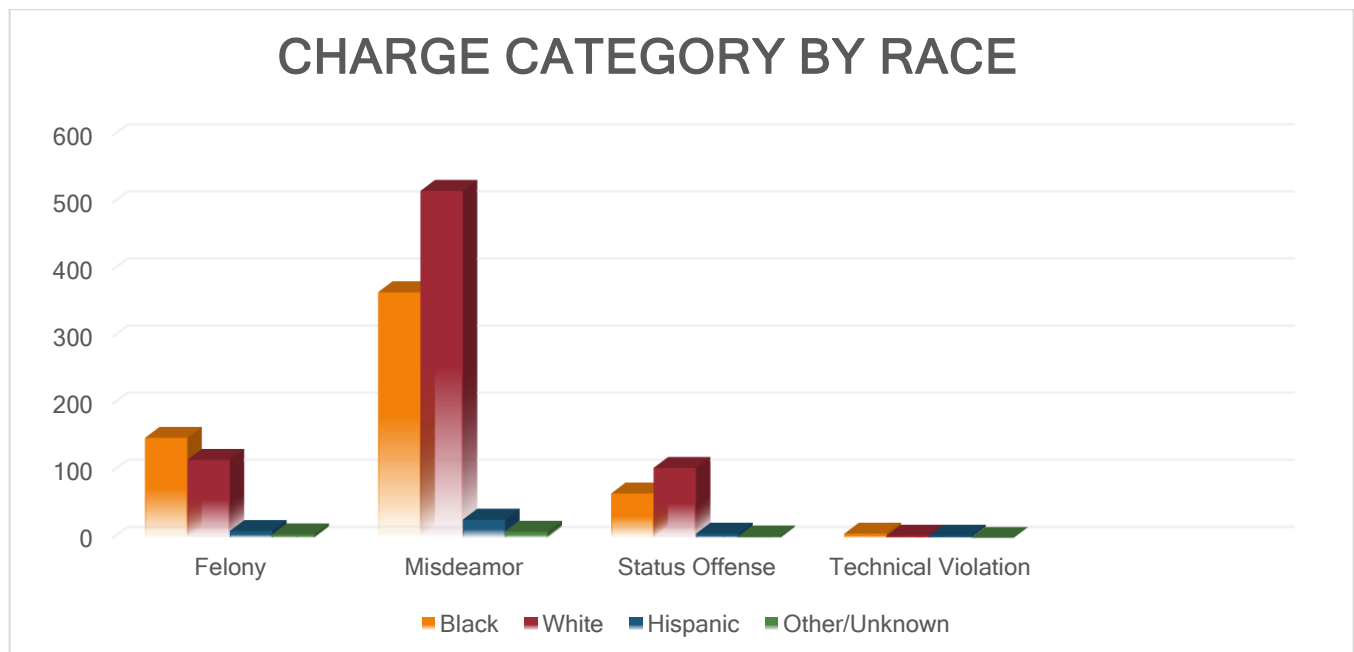
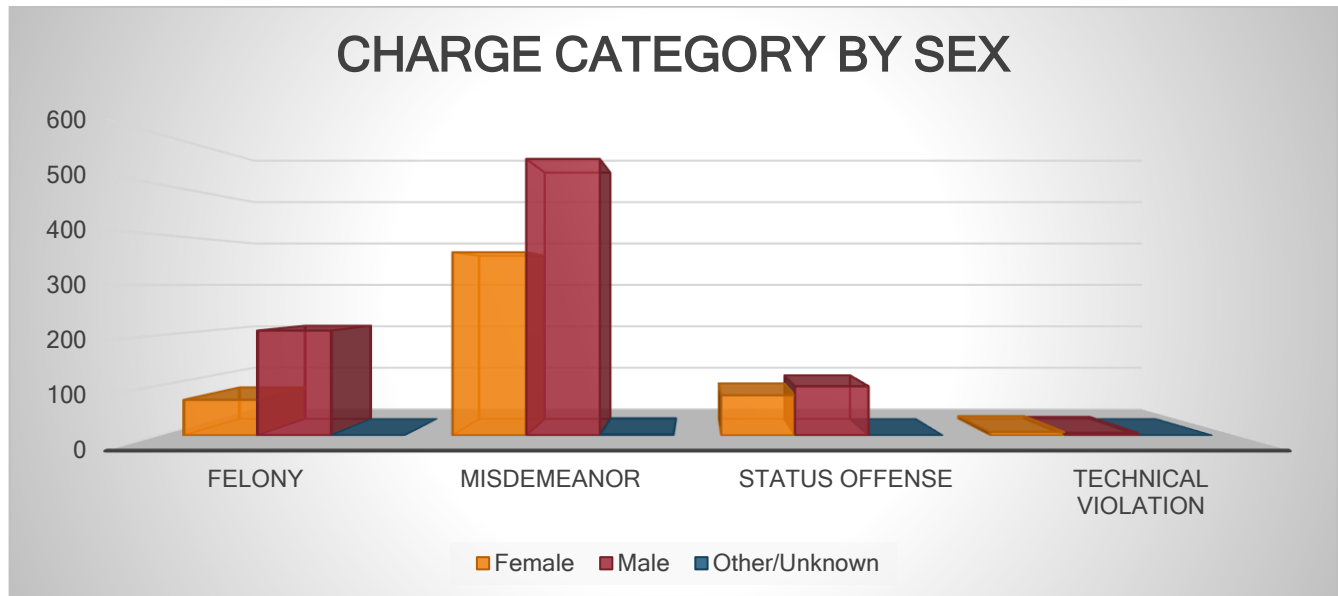
Domestic Violence	299 complaints
Obstructing Official Business	280 complaints
Assault	185 complaints

The most common **felony charges** were:

Receiving Stolen Property	96 complaints
Felony Assault	60 complaints
Felonious Assault	55 complaints

Charge Demographics

The following illustrates the 2023 charge demographics.



Stark County Family Court Recidivism Study

Family Court contracted with the Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education to conduct a recidivism analysis for the Juvenile Division. The goal was to examine characteristics of youth, focusing on first time entrants and understand the impact patterns had on recidivism. The following depicts the overall results of the analysis, with the full report available on Family Court's website.

Stark County Juvenile Division Youth Recidivism



Of the 222 youth who recidivated:

Nearly 80% were
between 13-16 years old



Just over two-thirds
were Male.



Just over half were White;
45% were Black



When comparing youth who recidivated to all youth:

- The age groups and sex were proportionate
- Just under two-thirds of all youth were White, but constituted just over half of those who recidivated
- Black individuals represented approximately 35% of all youth, but accounted for 45% of those who recidivated

Youth were assigned to one of four sentencing groups based on their initial intake.



CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY
Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel
School of Applied Social Sciences
Begun Center for Violence Prevention
Research and Education

Formal and Informal Case Processing

Upon a “referral source” filing a complaint demonstrating the allegation of a charge, the court determines whether the charge will be managed through *formal* or *informal* case processing.

Rule 9 of the Rules of Juvenile Procedure states “In all appropriate cases formal court action should be avoided and other community resources utilized to ameliorate situations brought to the attention of the court.” To affirm this rule, the Family Court Judges established criteria which allows for the informal processing of a case. The criteria used is based upon the offense type, a juvenile’s history with the court, and age. The informal case processing is managed by a practice known as Diversion. A case managed through diversion interventions does not create a juvenile record.

Formal case processing, is the traditional method of a judicial hearing officer deciding upon the disposition of a case. A case processed formally does create a juvenile record.

Diversion

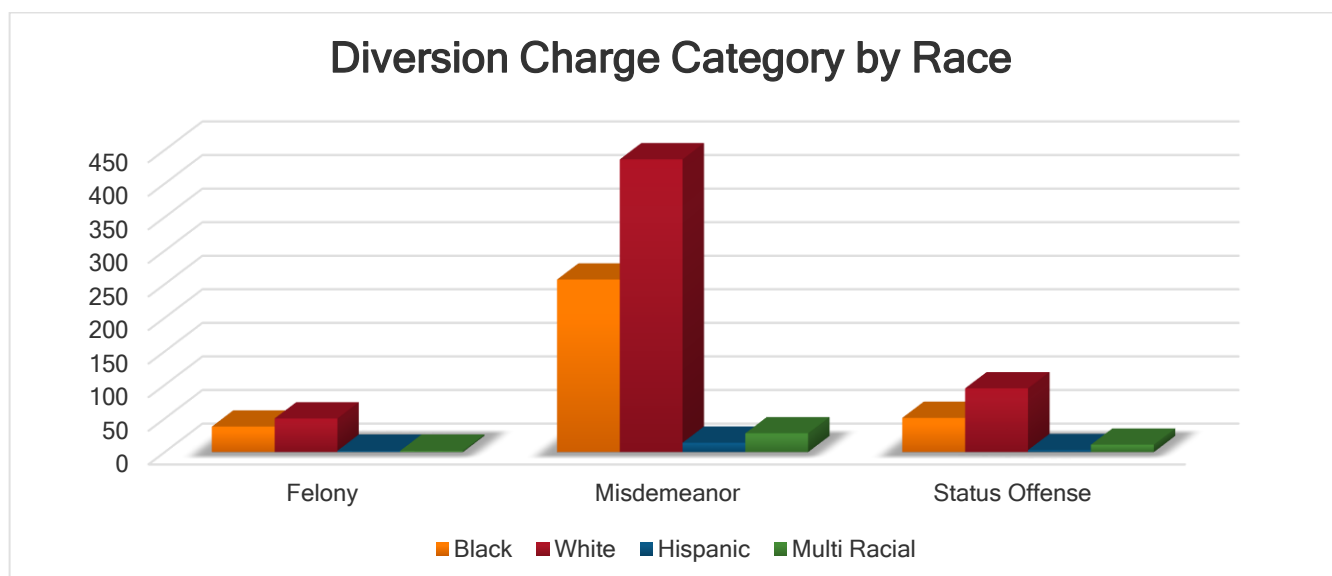
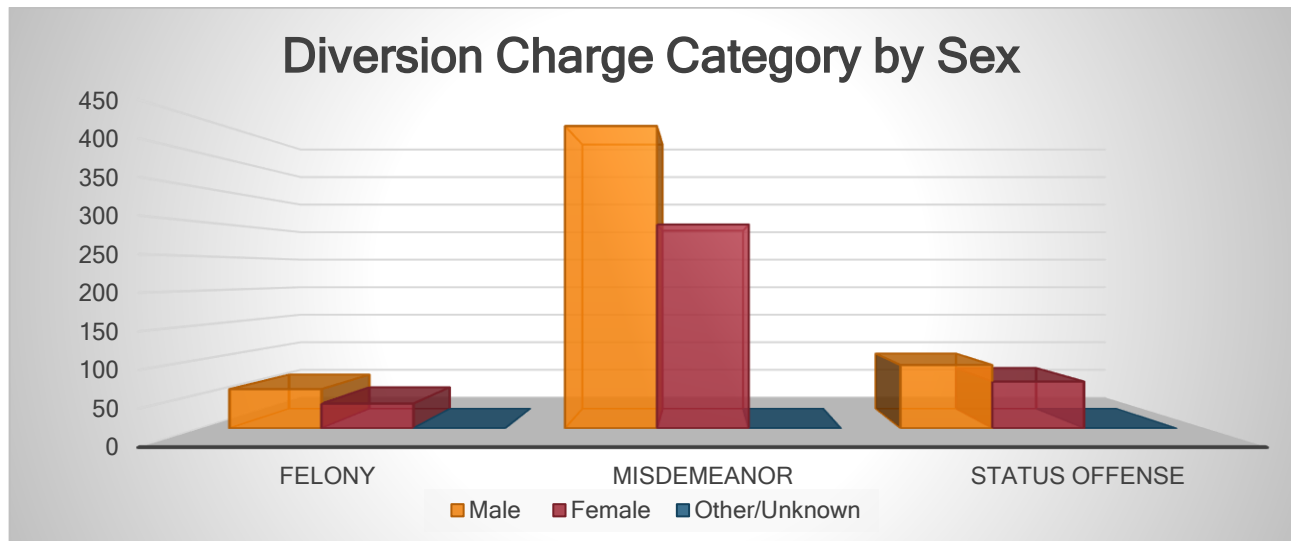
The standardized definition of diversion, as provided by the Ohio Supreme Court is “redirection of youth from the formal processing of juvenile court which occurs prior to the youth’s initial appearance before the Judge”. Best explained by the Anne. E. Casey foundation, (and adopted in the Ohio Supreme Court’s May 2021 Juvenile Diversion, Toolkit for Judicial Use), “The purpose of diversion is to redirect youth from involvement in the formal juvenile court system in an effort to hold youth accountable for their behavior without resorting to legal sanctions, court oversight, or the threat of confinement to mitigate future risk and subsequent delinquent behavior. By creating informal alternatives to court processing, diversion interventions serve as an opportunity to reduce the criminogenic effects that entry into the juvenile justice system and incarceration have on long-term youth development such as increased recidivism, stigmatization, and increased criminal-justice costs.”

1,368 cases were assigned to the Diversion program in 2023. This accounted for 1,098 youth being seen by Diversion Officers. The average age of youth receiving diversion intervention was 14.78; 82% of diversion cases closed successfully; 4% closed unsuccessfully; 1% received additional criminal charges during the life of the diversion case; and 13% of the diversion cases were unsuccessful, and returned for formal court processing.

The most common charges managed by the Diversion Department were:

Unruly (not including truancy)	211 complaints
Obstructing Official Business	152 complaints
Domestic Violence	130 complaints

Diversion Charge Demographics



Truancy

The passing of House Bill 410, in 2016, decriminalized truancy. In so doing, Family Court has continued to work with the Educational Service Center, Care Team Initiative, to develop and implement interventions designed to mitigate formal habitual truancy charges.

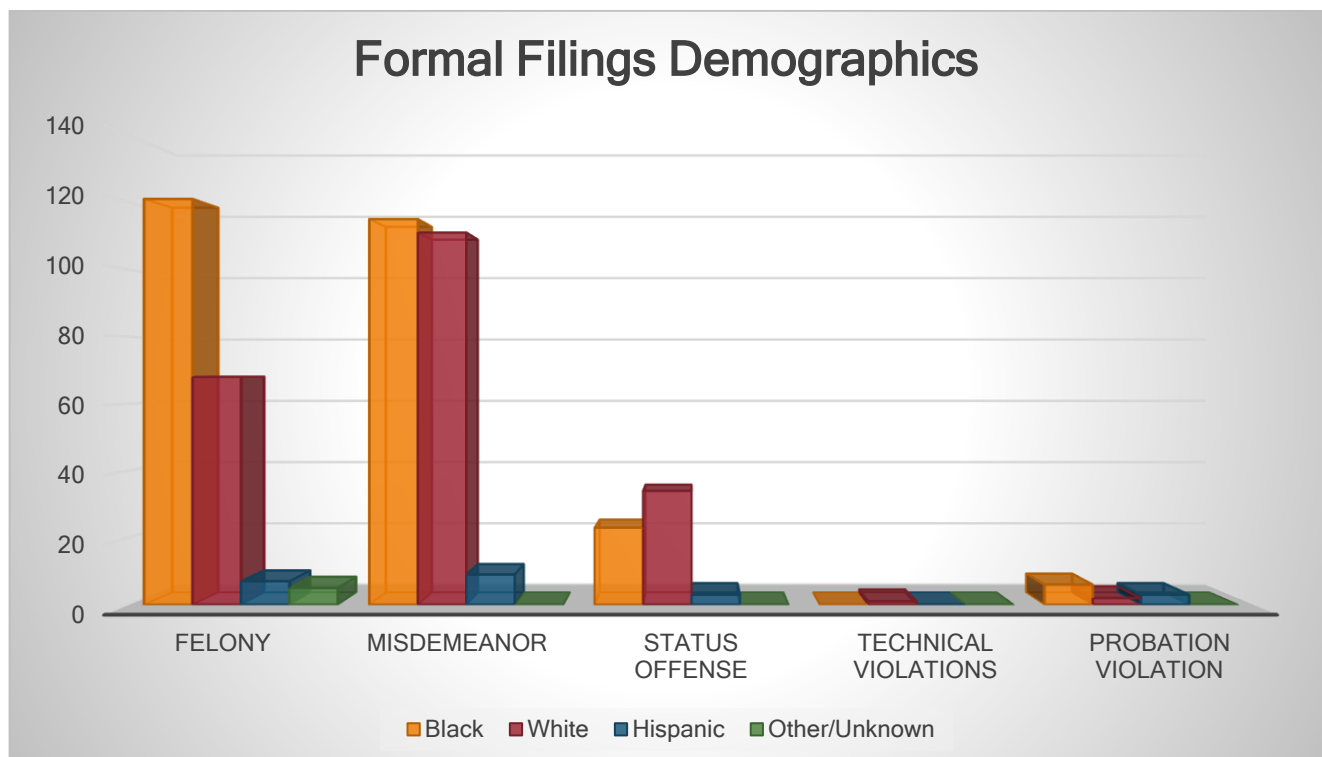
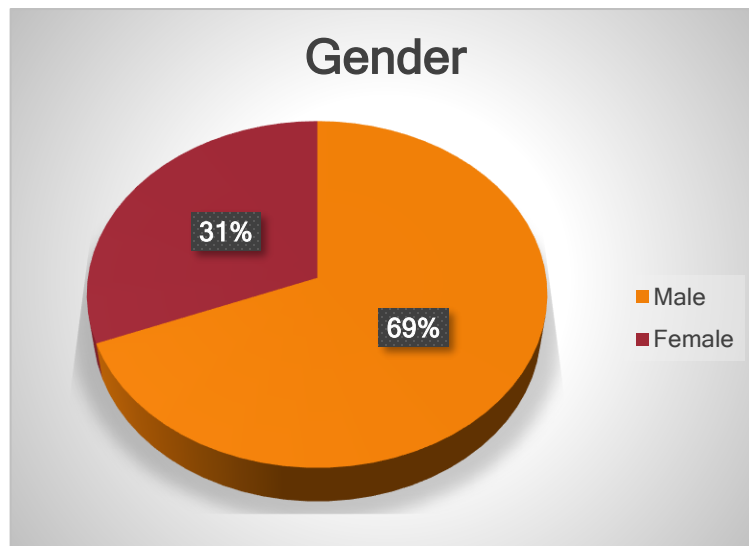
The Truancy Family Support serves as the liaison between the Court, the school based C.A.R.E. Team, and the school's truancy officer. The FSS participates at all levels of court intervention aimed at reducing truancy by providing support to the family of a truant child prior to, and immediately following, a truancy hearing. After a hearing, the FSS works to connect the youth/family to the school's C.A.R.E. Team and/or makes community service connections.

Family Court's Behavioral Health Services Department offers truancy conferences as a service to our county school districts. These conferences, in collaboration with the school, parent/guardian, student, and Care Team Truancy FSS, work to identify the barriers to consistent school attendance and develop a plan to mitigate said barriers. This conference can be incorporated into the Absence Intervention Plan necessitated by House Bill 410.

The 2022/2023 school year efforts to mitigate formal truancy charges demonstrated 235 truancy conferences conducted with 196 students. Of those truancy conferences, 110 were managed through the Court's Diversion Department. The Court handled 56 of those cases formally and 34 youth were adjudicated as truant.

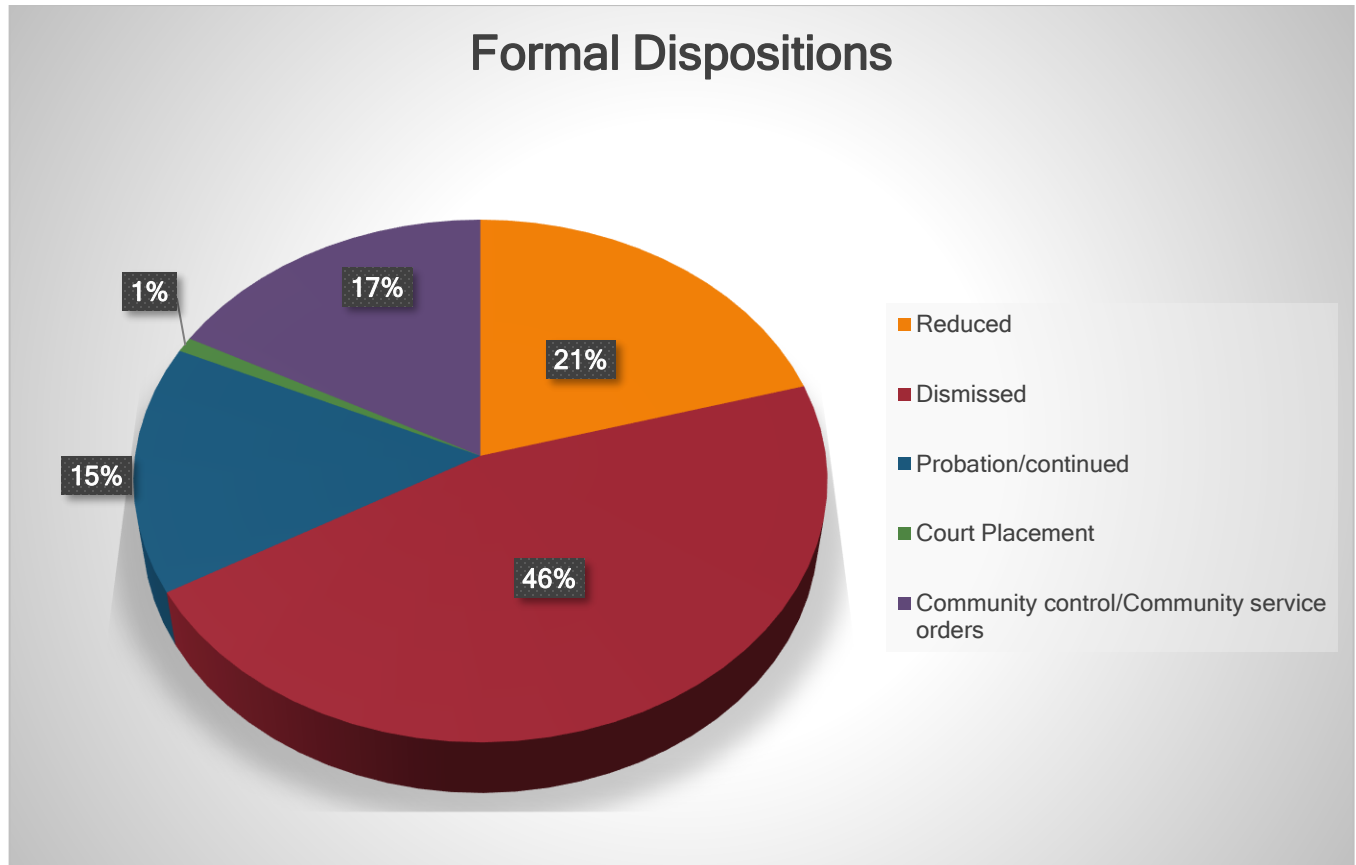
Formal Case Processing

442 youth were responsible for the 1,531 delinquency complaints and technical violations formally processed in the Court. Cases that are formally processed are subject to consequences including, but not limited to; detention, probation, restitution, court placement and/or other custody orders.



Outcomes for Formally Processed Cases

The following graph represents dispositional orders of formally processed delinquency case.



It should be noted that in 2023 Stark County bound over 5 youth consisting of 17 cases to the General Division.

Probation

Probation spent much of 2023 continuing to develop processes and data entry requirements to maintain participation as a Title IV-E Court. As a title IV-E court, Probation Officers work to reduce the criminal risk factors that brought youth to the attention of the court, as well as, for IV-E eligible cases, work to reduce a child's imminent risk of removal from their home.

The following depicts the Probation caseload for 2023.

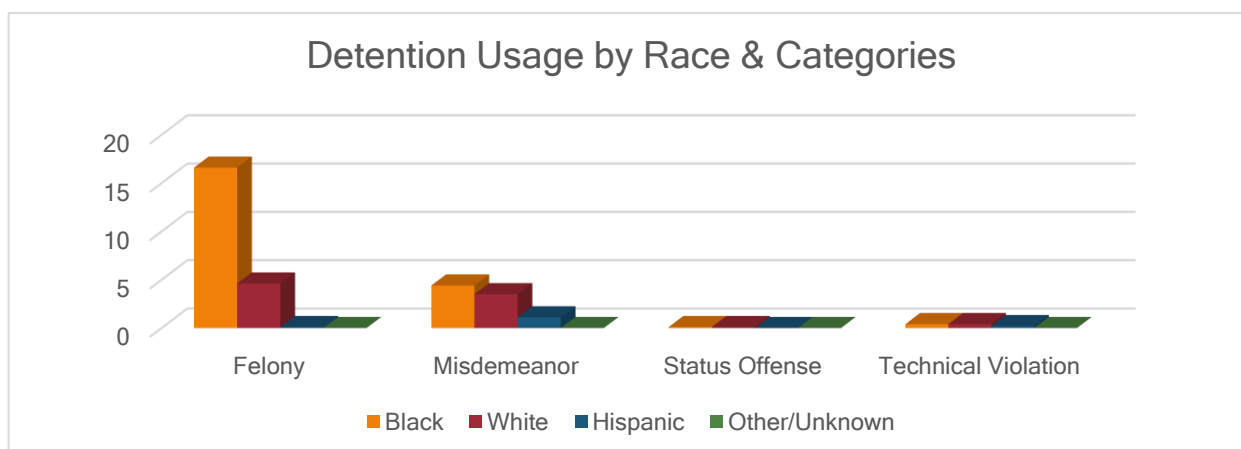
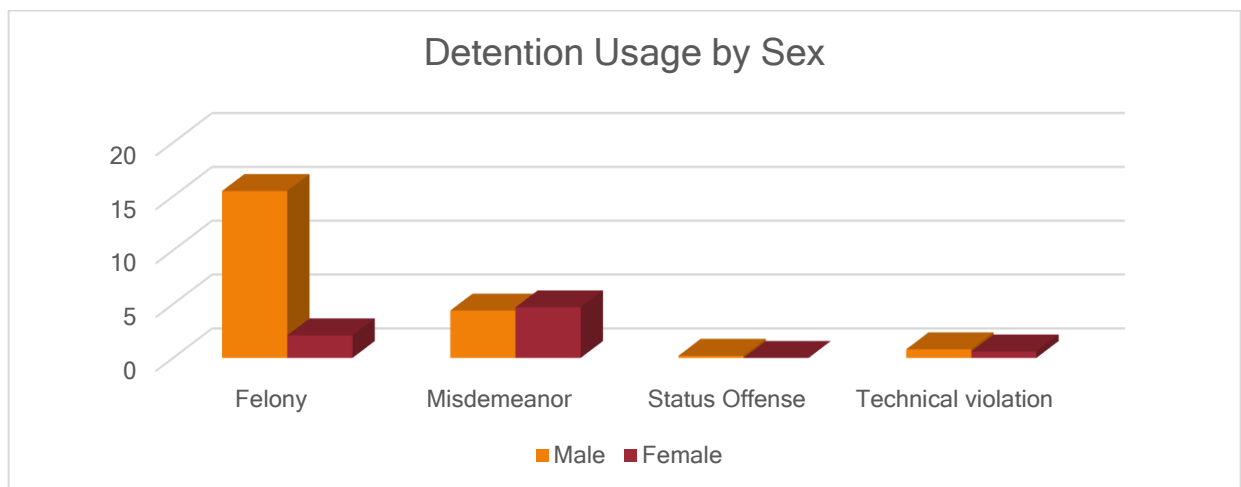
Participant Count	125	
Male	83	66%
Female	42	34%
Average Age of Participant	15.2	
Race/Ethnicity		
Latino/Hispanic	3	2%
Black/African American	43	34%
White/Caucasian	46	37%
Two or more races	31	25%
Other	1	1%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0	0%
Hawaiian Native/Other Pacific Island	0	0%
N/A	1	1%
OYAS Risk Level		
Low	44	35%
Moderate	75	60%
High	6	5%

Detention

In Stark County, when a youth is arrested, s/he is placed in detention. Additionally, detention, determined by a hearing officer, may be used during the pendency of a formally processed case, or, as a form of disposition.

Research indicates that detention has no diminishing effect on juvenile delinquency. In fact, detention is considered a contributing factor, exacerbating criminal risk for youth assessed as low to moderate to criminally reoffend. Therefore, hearing officers typically refrain from the use of detention, unless there is a substantial risk of serious harm, a significant public safety risk, or other identified risk factors necessitating its use. In 2023, Stark County admitted 727 youth into detention.

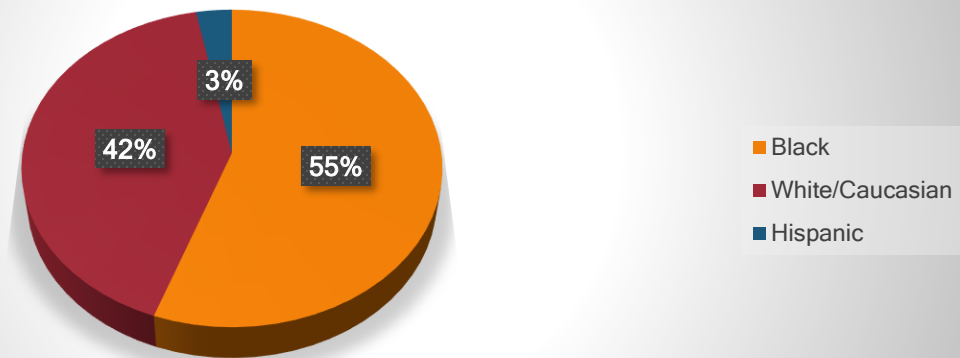
The following graph represents the average daily population in detention based on demographics and levels of charge.



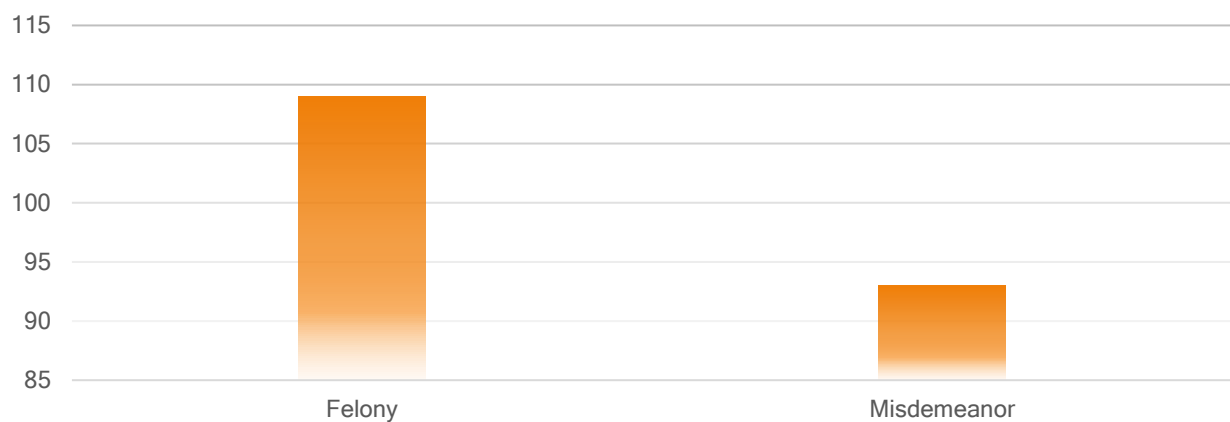
Alternatives to Detention

Stark County Family Court utilizes the Pretrial Release Program as the primary alternative to detention. Juveniles placed on this program are monitored by a continuum, ranging from direct supervision up to, and including, electronic monitored house arrest (EMHA). Pretrial Release is an option available to a hearing officer during the pendency of a delinquency case. In 2023, 204 juveniles were supervised on the Pretrial Release Program and averaged 66.3 days on the program.

Pretrial Release Demographics

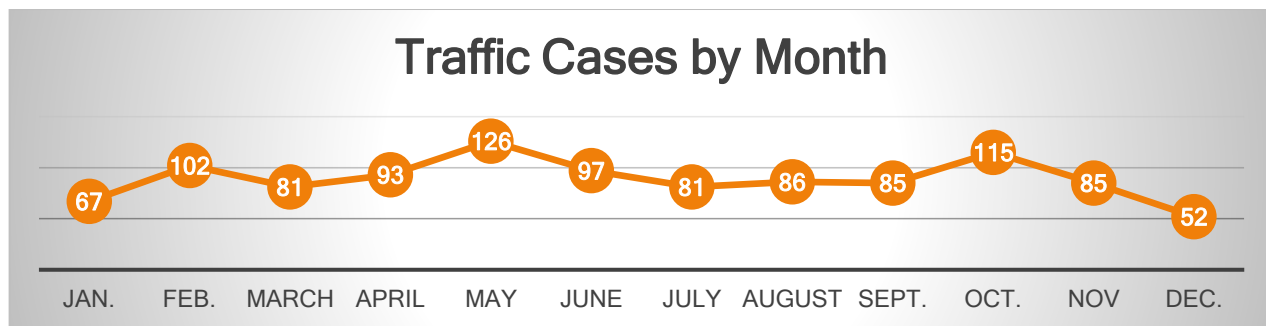
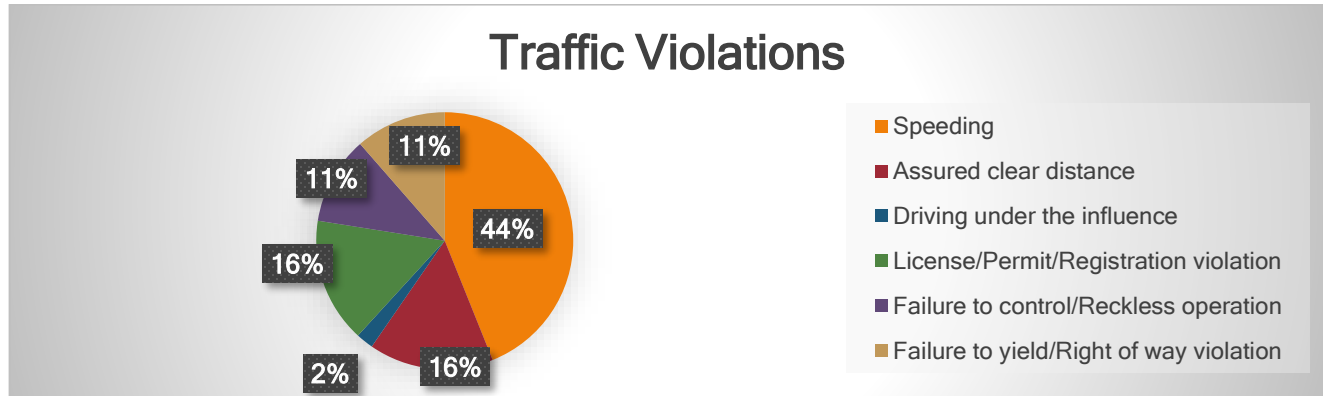


PRETRIAL RELEASE DELIQUENCY TYPES



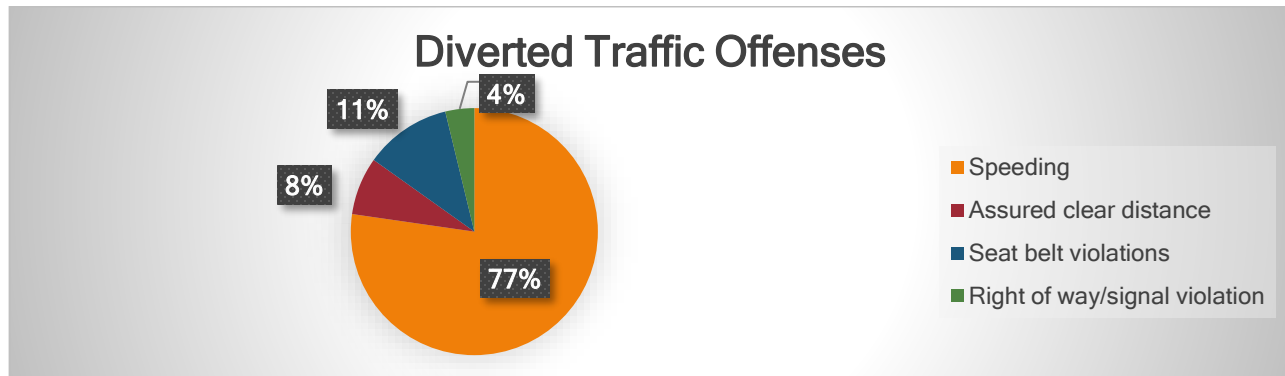
Juvenile Traffic

The Court processed 1,100 juvenile traffic cases in 2023 with \$184,767.26 in fines and costs assessed.



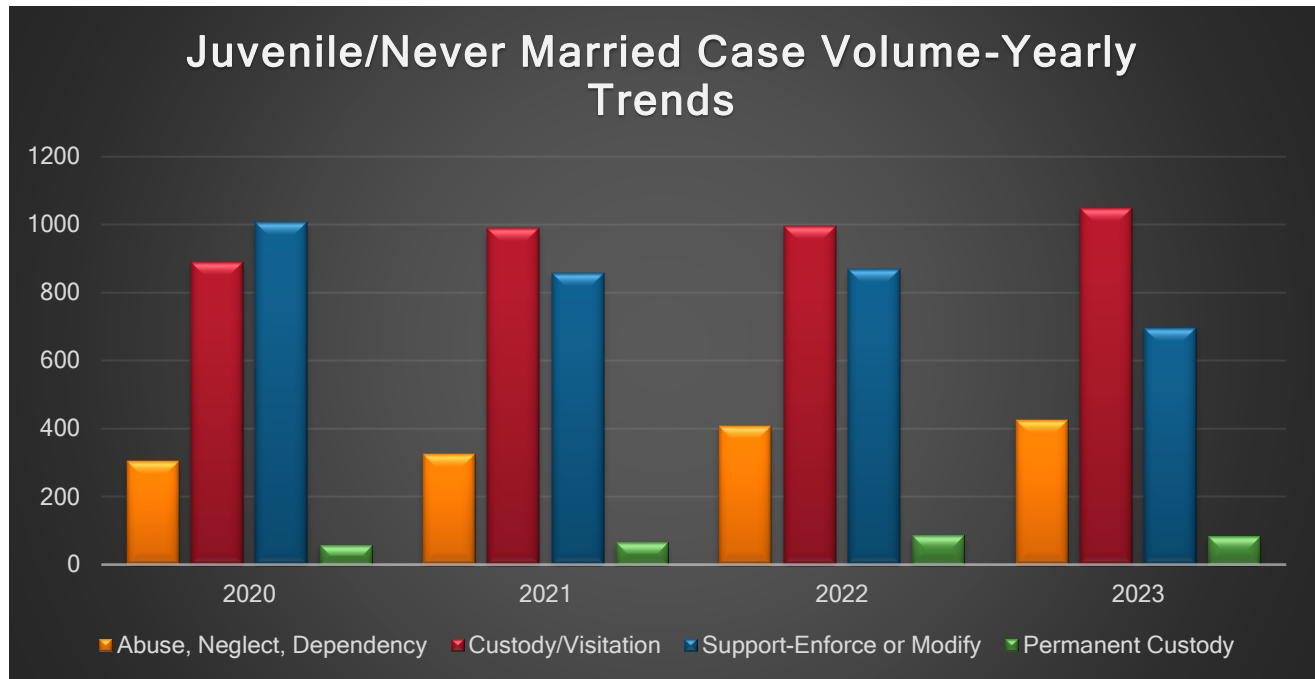
Traffic Diversion Program

Traffic Diversion targets drivers, under the age of 18, with minor, first time traffic violations. Participants in this program complete a driver's training program, as well as, pay all fines and costs. The traffic case can be completed with no points assigned to the participant's record. In 2023, 161 traffic cases were sent through Traffic Diversion, with 93% being successfully completed. Cases not successfully diverted are referred for formal court processing.



Juvenile Court Case Volume

Family Court has jurisdiction over case types that involve custody, child support, and abused, neglected or dependent children. These cases would be filed without a marriage termination. The following demonstrates 4 years of juvenile case volume outside of delinquency hearings.



CASA/GAL

A Court Appointed Special Advocate / Guardian ad Litem, (CASA/GAL) is a trained community volunteer appointed by Stark County Family Court to represent the best interests of a child during a Court proceeding that involves Child Protective Services. In 2023, CASA served 180 Children and 96 Families by 29 CASA volunteers. 86 children were under the age of 5. 70 cases were closed, 40 resulting in legal custody to a relative or third party, 14 ended in adoption, and 13 children were reunited with their family.

B.U.I.L.D. (Boosting Understanding, Interventions & Legal Defense)

Judge Rosemarie Hall secured a 4-year grant from the Ohio Supreme Court focusing on prepetition legal representation and supportive service connection for families in the early stages of a child welfare case, before a child is removed from the home. Research has shown that removing children from their home is a traumatic event in the life of a child. An opportunity exists at the beginning of a child welfare case to provide an additional layer of support to the family. Now in its third year, the B.U.I.L.D. program is aimed at strengthening vulnerable families by providing parental support and legal advocacy while the custodial parent(s) work to correct identified concerns and to avoid involvement of the Family Court System.

The program was developed through collaboration with the Stark County Family Council, Stark County Children Services, Stark County Public Defender's Office, Stark County Legal Aid and 4 private attorneys with extensive family law experience.

Upon receipt of the grant, the B.U.I.L.D. program began its planning and implementation sessions, receiving monthly technical assistance from the Supreme Court.

2023

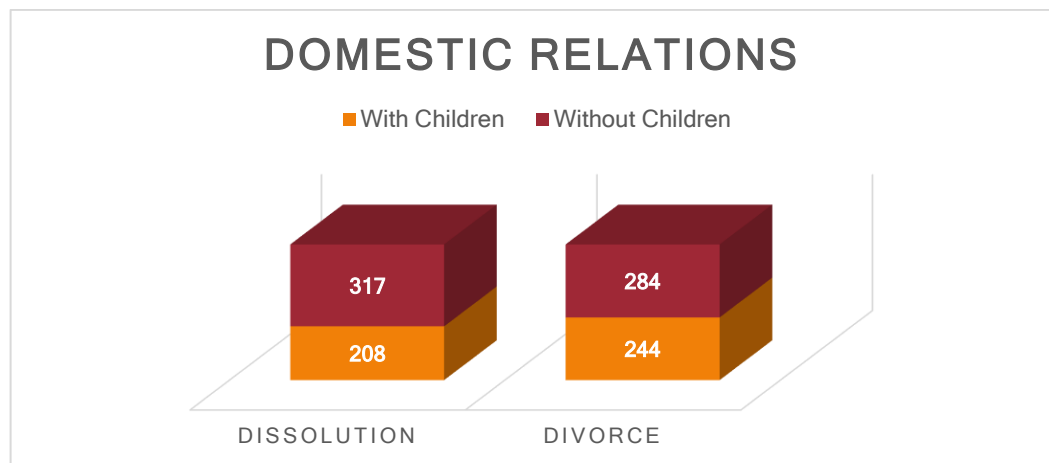
Total Referrals	Did Not Engage	Open cases/total program participants	Cases closed in 2023	Successful closure	Unsuccessful closure
56	2	27/56	27	21	6

Domestic Relations Division

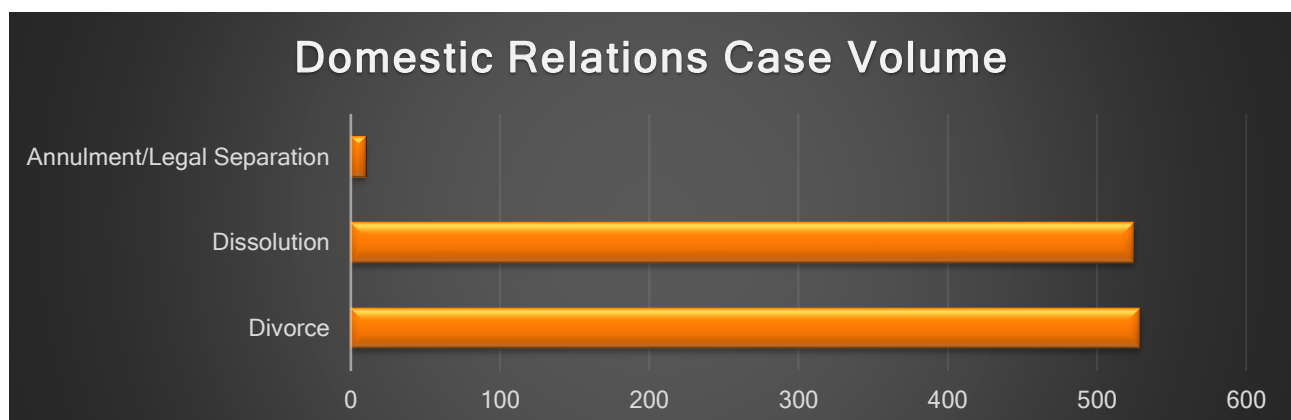
The Domestic Relations Division of the Family Court addresses cases involving domestic couples, including Divorces, Dissolutions, Domestic Violence, Child Support, Child Custody and Visitation. Domestic Relations case types are described on the following pages.

Divorce/ Dissolution

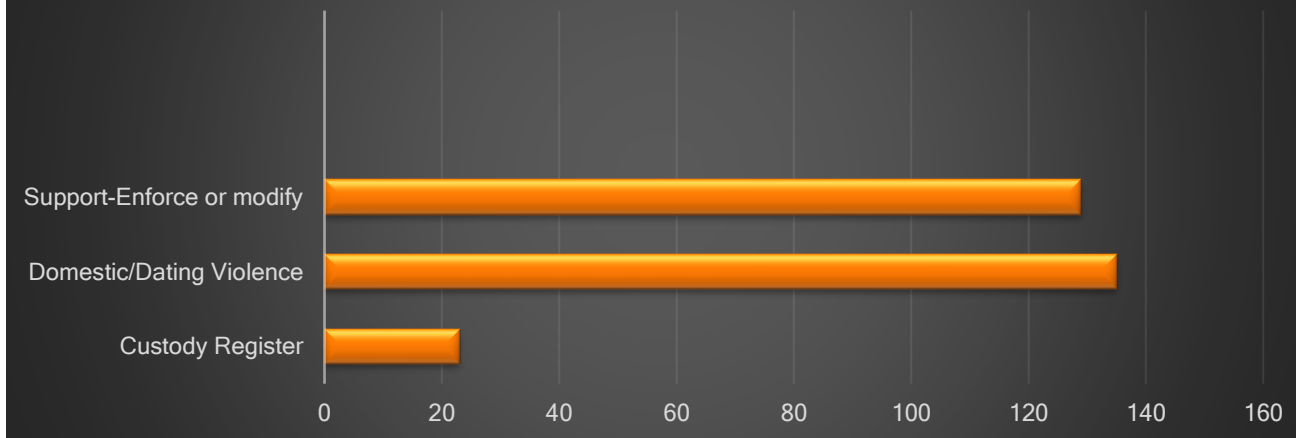
The Domestic Relations Division addressed 1,222 cases in 2023; 529 divorces and 525 dissolutions. The Division heard 135 Domestic Violence Civil Protection Requests.



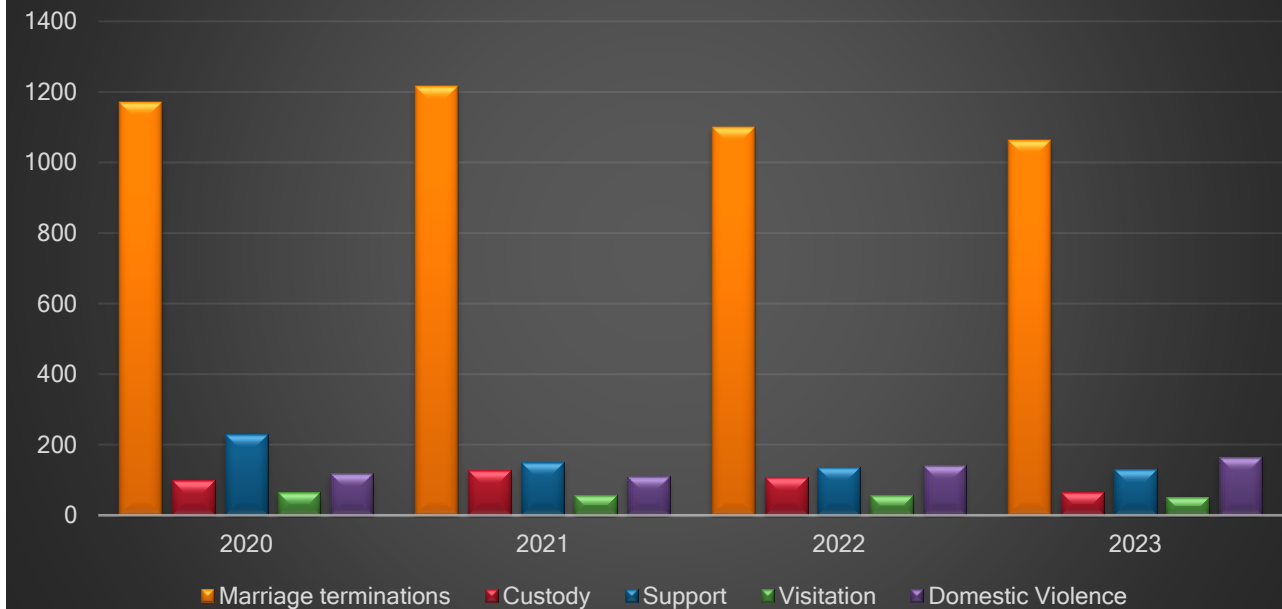
While divorces and dissolutions make up a majority of cases processed by the Domestic Relations docket, other case types are also included. The graphs below represent the volume of cases processed by the Domestic Relations Division in 2023.



Domestic Relations Case Volume-All Others



Domestic Relations Case Volume-Yearly Trends



Clearance Rates

Clearance rates is a metric used to determine the efficiency with which a case moves through the Court. From case filing to case completion, there are time standards from the Ohio Supreme Court that can be tracked. Not all cases can be closed on the same timeline, so case type is taken into effect. The goal is to process cases through the Court without having them listed as “over time”.

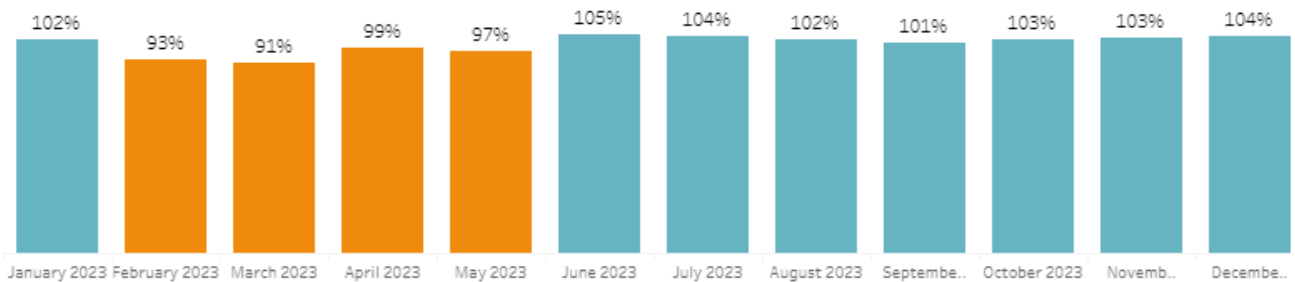
The following graphs illustrate the clearance rates of both the DR and Juvenile Docket from Stark County Family Court. The clearance rate for these dockets statewide are also present for comparison. Rates listed at over 100% show a clearing of backlogged cases.

Juvenile Docket- Ohio Statewide

Clearance Rate, All Case Types, 2023

All - All Judges

Clearance rate is calculated by dividing the number of cases disposed in a given month by the number of cases coming in to the court in the same month. **Orange bars** indicate where the clearance rate is less than the optimal 100%. If a judge is selected and no data is displayed, check the year filter and choose a year in which the judge was in office.

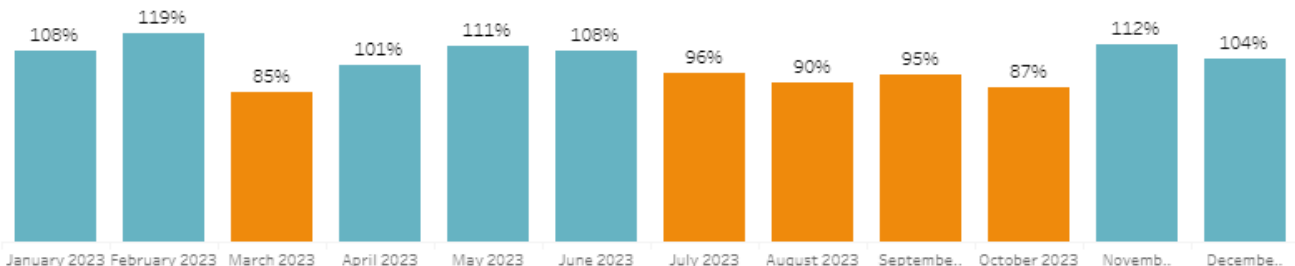


Juvenile Docket- Stark County

Clearance Rate, All Case Types, 2023

Stark - All Judges

Clearance rate is calculated by dividing the number of cases disposed in a given month by the number of cases coming in to the court in the same month. **Orange bars** indicate where the clearance rate is less than the optimal 100%. If a judge is selected and no data is displayed, check the year filter and choose a year in which the judge was in office.

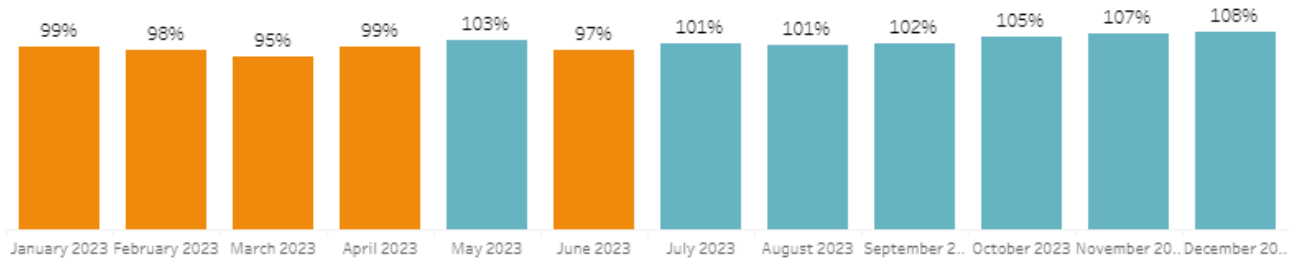


Domestic Relations Docket- Statewide

Clearance Rate, All Case Types, 2023

All - All Judges

Clearance rate is calculated by dividing the number of cases disposed in a given month by the number of cases coming in to the court in the same month. **Orange bars** indicate where the clearance rate is less than the optimal 100%. If a judge is selected and no data is displayed, check the year filter and choose a year in which the judge was in office.

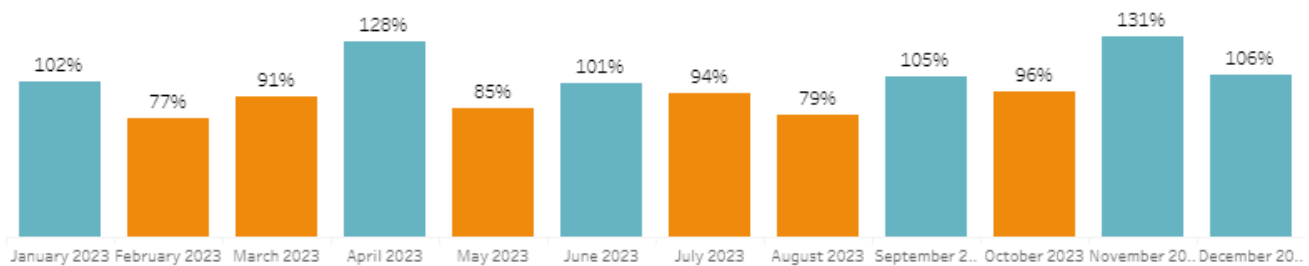


Domestic Relations Docket- Stark County

Clearance Rate, All Case Types, 2023

Stark - All Judges

Clearance rate is calculated by dividing the number of cases disposed in a given month by the number of cases coming in to the court in the same month. **Orange bars** indicate where the clearance rate is less than the optimal 100%. If a judge is selected and no data is displayed, check the year filter and choose a year in which the judge was in office.



Fund and Grant Description:

County General Fund:

The Stark County general fund is primarily funded by sales tax revenue. The fund is additionally comprised of local conveyance and recorder fees, interest income, the Ohio local government fund, and State casino revenue tax. Stark County Family Court receives an allocation after submission of an annual budget to the Stark County Board of Commissioners. A combined 38 full and part-time positions were funded via the general fund, as well as the county portion of the Court's 3 elected Judges. Many other operating expenses are paid through the general fund, such as deputy security, interpreter services, court ordered behavioral health testing, information technology and much more.

Youth Services / RECLAIM:

The Ohio Department of Youth Services grant, better known as RECLAIM, stands for **Reasoned and Equitable Community & Local Alternatives to the Incarceration of Minors**. It is a state-wide competitive grant that is applied for annually, each state fiscal year, and awarded to courts based on a weighted formula of DYS/CCF commitments and felony adjudications. For standardization and comparative purposes of this report, expenses were based upon the calendar year, combined between two state fiscal year funds. Additionally, multiple line items within RECLAIM have been grouped together. The separate allocations received by Stark County, within RECLAIM, are known as the base grant, the subsidy variable, targeted RECLAIM, YE/EVB and JDAI.

In 2023, the RECLAIM grant funded 20 full-time court positions in our supervision, diversion, and behavioral health departments, as well as 18 internal and/or community-based programs providing evidence-based treatment to court involved youth.

Title IV-E Juvenile Administration:

Title IV-E of the Social Security Act provides federal reimbursement for a portion of the maintenance, administration and training costs of foster care children who meet federal eligibility requirements. The federal funding operates as a pass-through which is coordinated by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and open to juvenile courts meeting IV-E criteria.

In 2023, 1 employee was funded via Title IV-E. 10 youth were in a licensed IV-E facility at some point within 2023; 4 of those youth were placed in 2023.

Supreme Court Prepetition Legal Representation Pilot

The legal representation pilot, now known locally as BUILD (Boosting Understanding, Interventions, & Legal Defense), is funded by the Supreme Court of Ohio, and provides resources for advocates, both social and legal, to assist families in the early stages of a child welfare case, prior to a child being removed from the home, and often before an abuse or neglect petition is filed.

In 2023, 1 full-time and 1 part-time position were funded via the BUILD program. BUILD operates in collaboration between the Family Court, Child Protective Services, Family Council, the Public Defender, Community Legal Aid, as well as contracted private attorneys. This grant was intended to operate a maximum of four years, with the annual amount awarded to selected courts decreasing every year until funding was exhausted. Therefore, as the annual award from the Supreme Court decreases, it has become necessary for the Court's Special Projects fund to cover a portion of program expenses.

Family Court Special Projects:

Ohio Revised Code allows for the court of common pleas of any county to authorize the clerk of courts to charge and collect applicable court fees under ORC 2303.20. Special projects funds can be utilized at the discretion of the Judges to pay for a wide range of expenses deemed essential for efficient operation of the court.

Family Court Computerization Fund:

The court of common pleas of any county may determine that for the efficient operation of the court, additional funds are required for computerization, and/or to make available computerized legal research services. Computerization is defined as the adaptation of a system or device, or the conversion of information into a form that can be stored or processed by a computer.

Community Trauma and Loss:

The Community, Trauma and Loss grant was originally awarded to the Family Court by the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton for a two-year period in the amount of \$70,000. In years past, funds have been utilized to advocate and educate the community, and train court staff on the needs of children who have experienced trauma. A minimal fixed amount remains as a resource to the court.

Impact on Various Awards and Grants Received in 2023

The Stark County Family Court continually seeks funding opportunities to reduce expenses charged to the general fund. In 2023, 45% of court expenses were financed with either Federal, State, or privately funded grants.

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

On behalf of the Court, employees volunteer their time to serve on a variety of state and community committees, as well as, community board memberships. The following demonstrates Family Court's ongoing support of its state and county in 2023.

Board Membership

Sisters of Charity •Executive Board - Treasurer •Distribution Committee	Judge Rosemarie Hall
Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District	Judge Jim James, serving as the Presiding Judge
Refuge of Hope	Judge Michelle Cordova, Board President
The Stark County Community Corrections Planning Board	Judge Jim James & Chief Magistrate Matt Kreitzer
United Way	Chief Magistrate, Matt Kreitzer
Stark Mental Health and Addictions Recovery	Court Administrator, Diane Wilson
Stark County Family Council	Court Administrator, Diane Wilson
Multi-County Juvenile Attention System	Court Administrator, Diane Wilson & Chief Probation Officer, Tim Wires
Stark Regional Community Correction Center	Chief Probation Officer, Tim Wires
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	Finance Administrator, Casey McCloud
Ohio Children's Trust Fund, North East Region	Family Engagement Director, Monica Holt-Parish
Project KARE	Magistrate Lori Brown

Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health

Finance Administrator, Casey McCloud

Committee Membership

Supreme Court of Ohio Advisory Committee on
Children and Families

Judge Rosemarie Hall

Supreme Court of Ohio Subcommittee on
Family Law Reform Implementation

Judge Rosemarie Hall

Supreme Court of Ohio Subcommittee on
Responding to Child Abuse, Neglect and
Dependency

Judge Rosemarie Hall

Quality Legal Representation Workgroup for
the Supreme Court of Ohio

Judge Rosemarie Hall

Stark County Bar Association Naturalization
Committee

Judge Rosemarie Hall

Ohio Judicial Conference Juvenile Law
And Procedure Committee

Judge Jim James

Stark County Mental Health and Addiction
Recovery Leadership Advisory Committee

Judge Jim James

Stark County Opiate and Addiction Task Force

Judge Michelle Cordova

Stark County Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition

Judge Michelle Cordova

JDAI State Committee

Judge Jim James & Intake Director,
Adam Film

Ohio Urban Juvenile Court Administrators
Association

Court Administrator, Diane Wilson

Fatherhood Coalition

Chief Magistrate, Matt Kreitzer

Arika's Angels Advisory Board

Chief Magistrate, Matt Kreitzer

Stark State College Criminal Justice
Advisory Committee

Chief Probation Officer, Tim Wires

Stark County, Critical Incident Team,
Steering Committee

Behavioral Health Services Director,
Kim Genis

Stark County Crisis Intervention Management Team	Behavioral Health Service Director, Kim Genis
Stark County Family Council Trauma and Resiliency	Behavioral Health Service Director, Kim Genis
Stark County Family Council, Service Coordination Committee	Finance Administrator, Casey McCloud
Stark County Family Council, Service Review Collaborative	Finance Administrator, Casey McCloud
The Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission, Certified Instructor, Corrections Academy, Stark County Law Enforcement	Behavioral Health Services Director, Kim Genis
Domestic Violence Collaborative	Family Engagement Director, Monica Holt-Parish
Race, Equity, and Inclusion Subcommittee of the JDAI State Committee	Family Engagement Director, Monica Holt-Parish
Stark County Bar Association Family Law Committee	Judges Jim James, Rosemarie Hall, Chief Magistrate, Matt Kreitzer Magistrates Jacque Huntley, Priscilla Cunningham, Vern Infantino, Lori Brown

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