



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Stark County Family Court

Website:

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

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Canton, OH 44702



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2024 Overview

2024's court filings did not demonstrate radical spikes or decreases. In fact, filing numbers were, overall, relatively stable in comparison to previous years.

Building on last year's Recidivism Study by Case Western Reserve, Family Court has continued to divert first time and low-level misdemeanor offenses. The Court again contracted with Case Western to compile 2024 numbers, expanding on the original study. At the time of this publication, that study was not completed. The Court will publish those findings when they become available.

In conjunction with the Commissioner's Office, County IT, Clerk of Courts, Probate, and the General Division of Common Pleas, work continued on the development of a unified case management system, with e-File capabilities. Progress, to date, is due to the combined efforts of those previously mentioned. The projected "go-live" date falls within the 4th quarter of 2025.

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

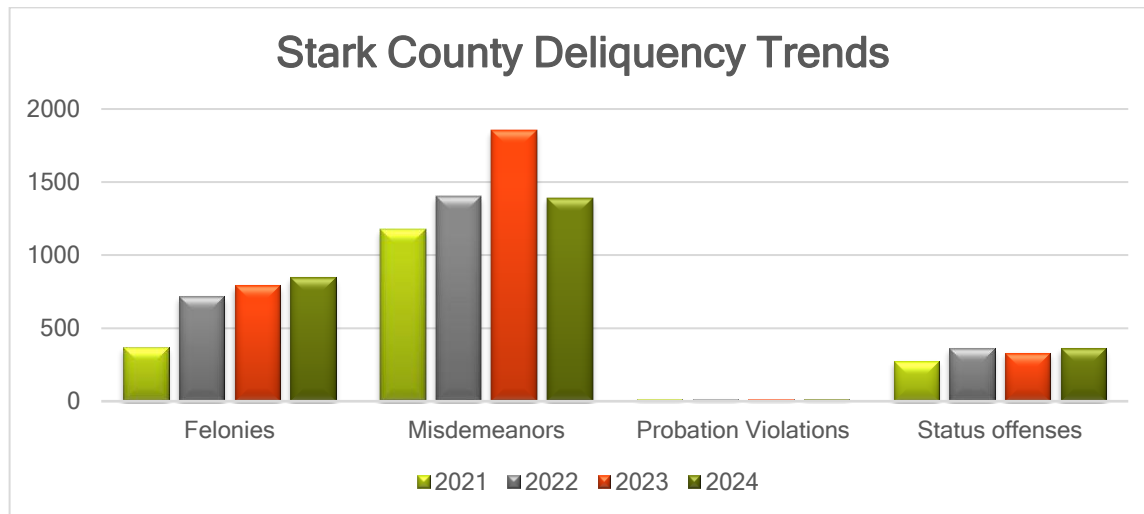
- White - 85.6%
- Black or African American - 8.1%
- Asian - 1.0%
- Hispanic or Latino - 2.4%

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



Overall, Stark County saw a slight increase in felony filings and a return to previous years' levels with misdemeanors.

In 2024, Stark County Family Court processed 2,602 cases alleging delinquency. Approximately 200 less cases than the prior year.

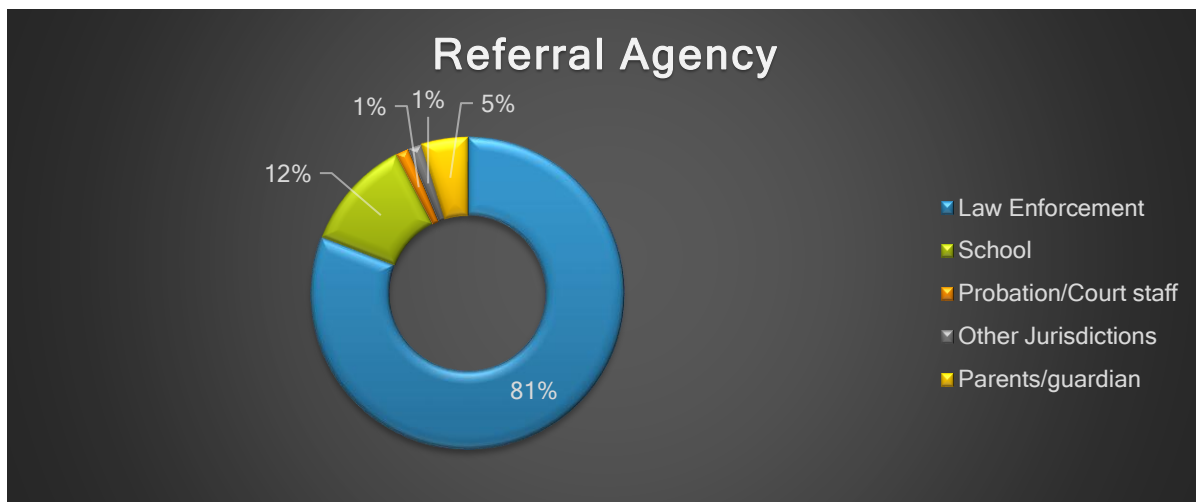
Adult Offenses

Stark County Family Court has jurisdiction over some adult charges. These charges typically involve Contributing to the Delinquency or Unruliness of a Minor, which is a misdemeanor offense. The majority of these cases in 2024, were brought forth with Truancy charges alleging a parent's/guardian's failure to send a child to school. In 2024, the Court processed 225 adult cases. This represents a 34% increase to this filing type.

Referral Sources

The following chart depicts the referral sources for delinquency filings.

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.



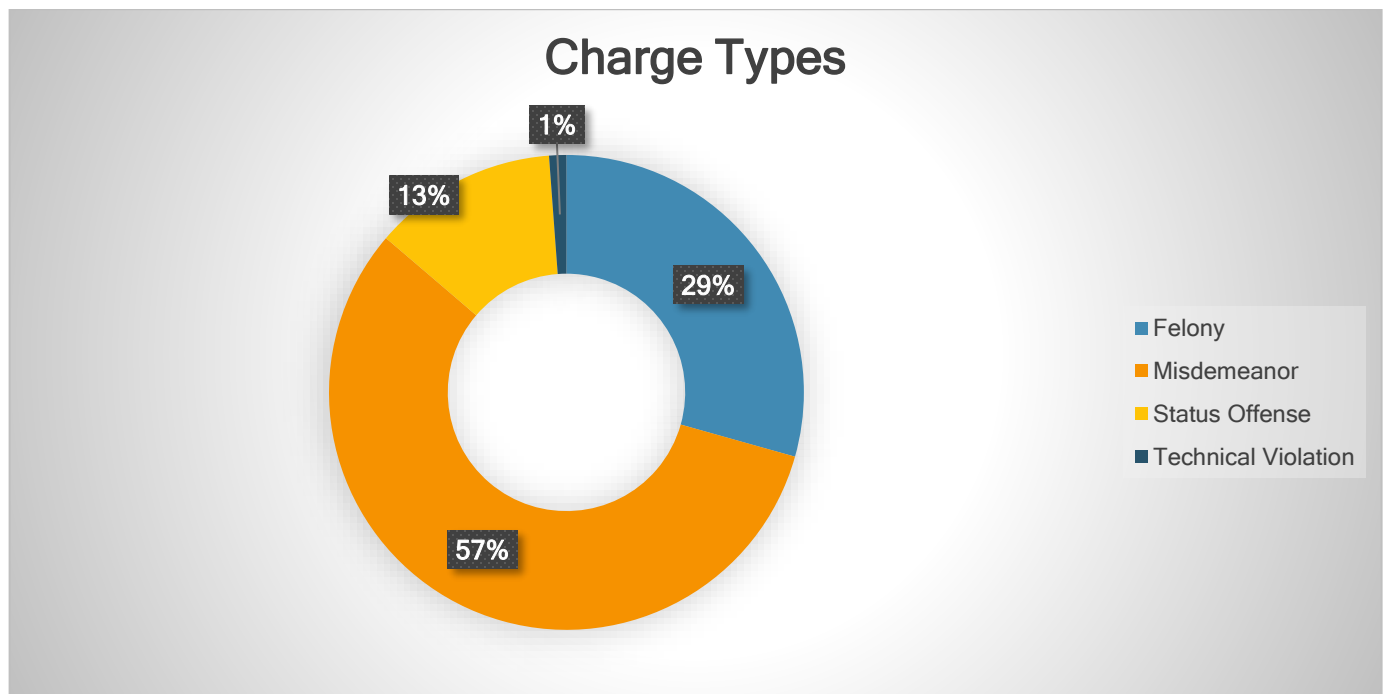
Charges

In 2024, there were 2,637 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 353 unruly complaints filed with the Court in 2024.

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 2024, there were 35 technical violations filed with the Court. 12 from Probation, 22 from law enforcement, and one from the Parole Department of the Ohio Department of Youth Services.

The following graph illustrates the 2024 charge types. Misdemeanor charges continue to yield the highest percentage of delinquency charges in Stark County.



The most common **misdemeanor** charges were:

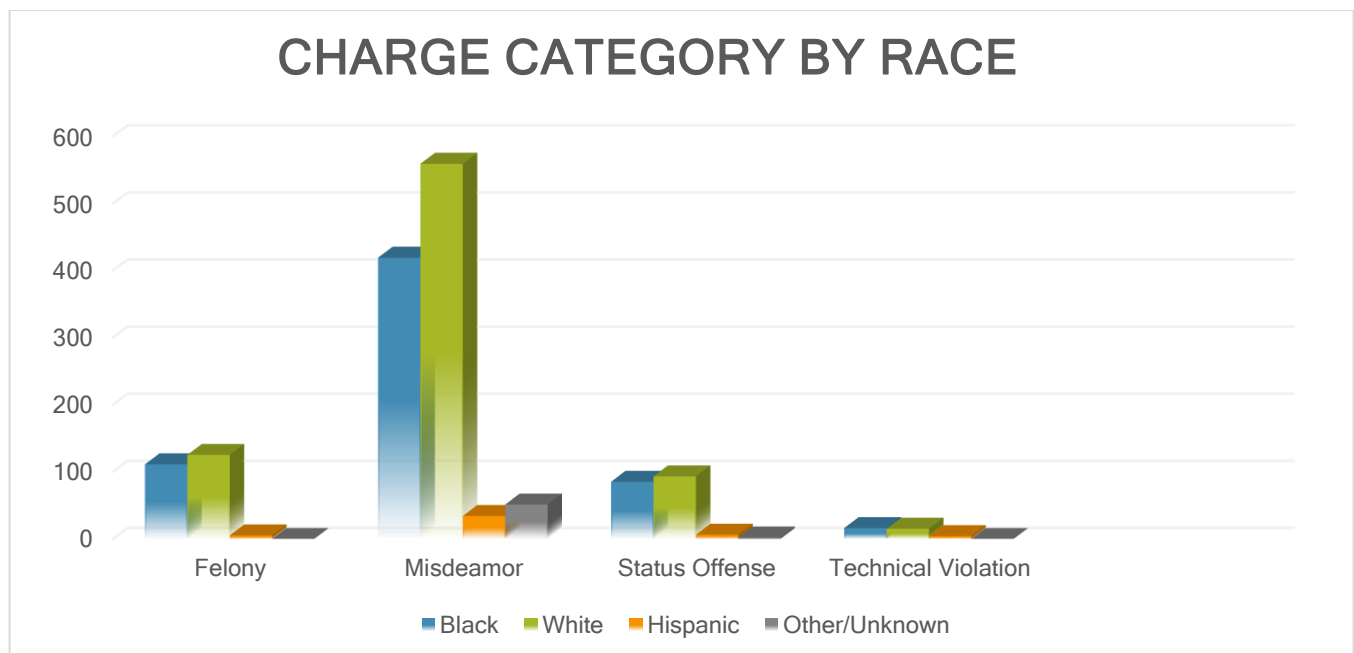
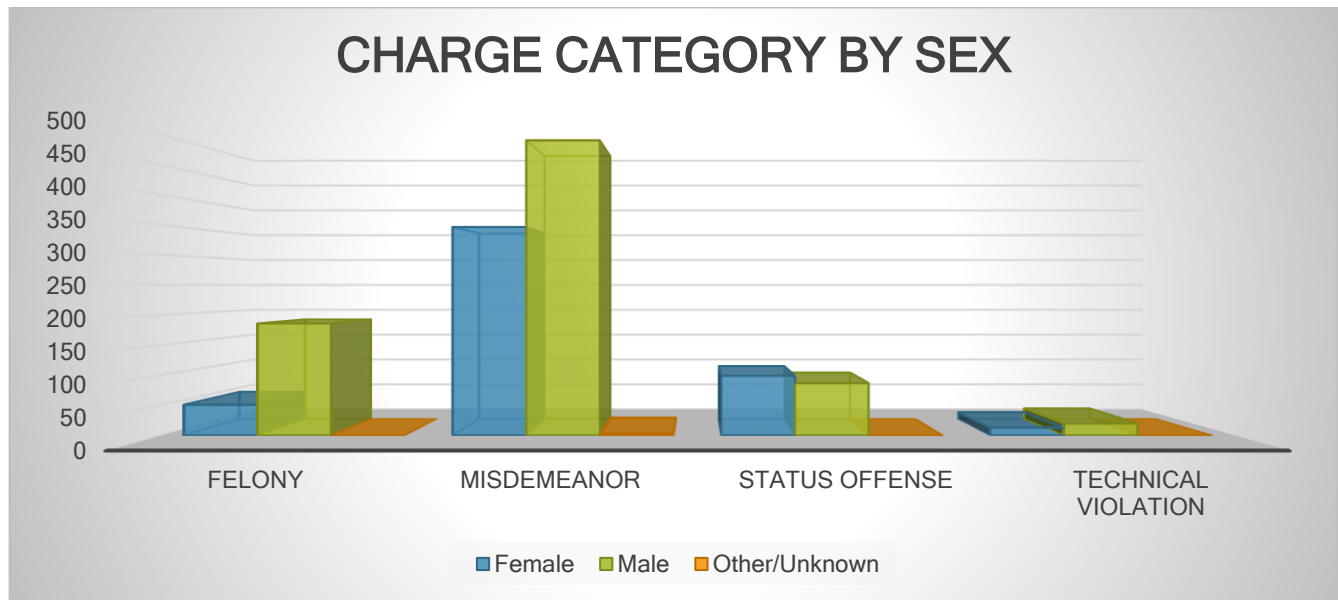
Disorderly Conduct	262 complaints
Domestic violence	253 complaints
Contributing to the Unruliness or Delinquency of a Child	224 complaints

The most common **felony charges** were:

Conspiracy to Commit Grand Theft (Gun specification)	208 complaints
Felony Assault	53 complaints
Receiving Stolen Property	48 complaints

Charge Demographics

The following illustrates the 2024 charge demographics.



Formal and Informal Case Processing

Upon a “referral source” filing a complaint, 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 type of offense, a juvenile’s history with the court, and age. The informal case processing is managed by a practice known as Diversion.

Formal case processing is the traditional method of a judicial hearing officer deciding upon the disposition of a case.

Diversion

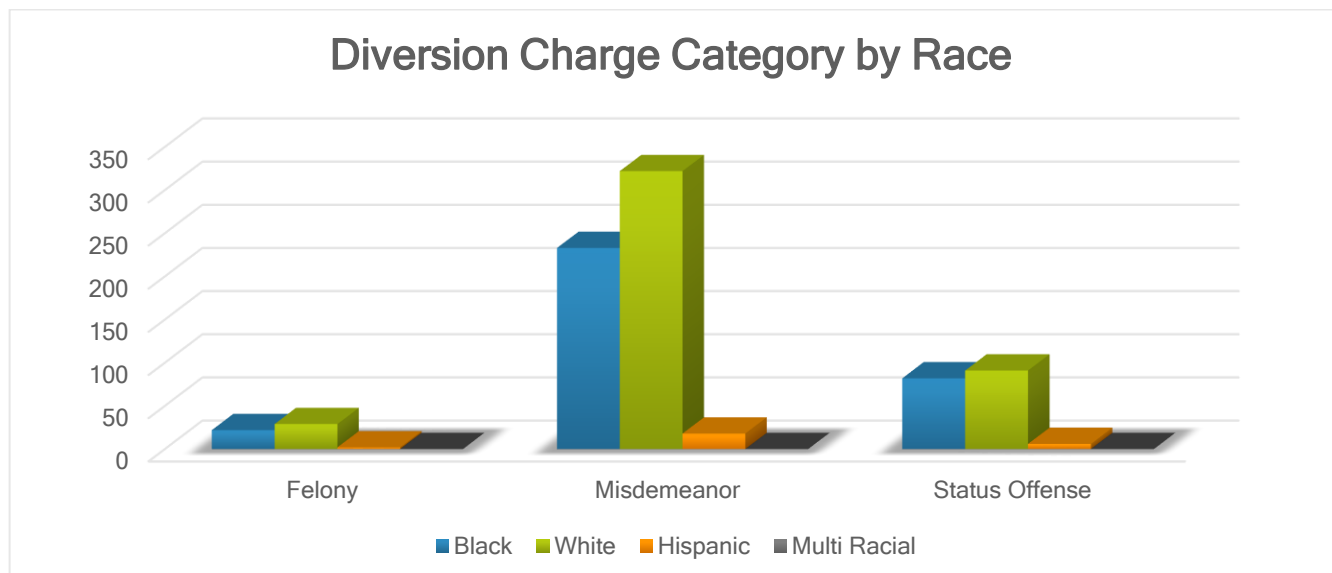
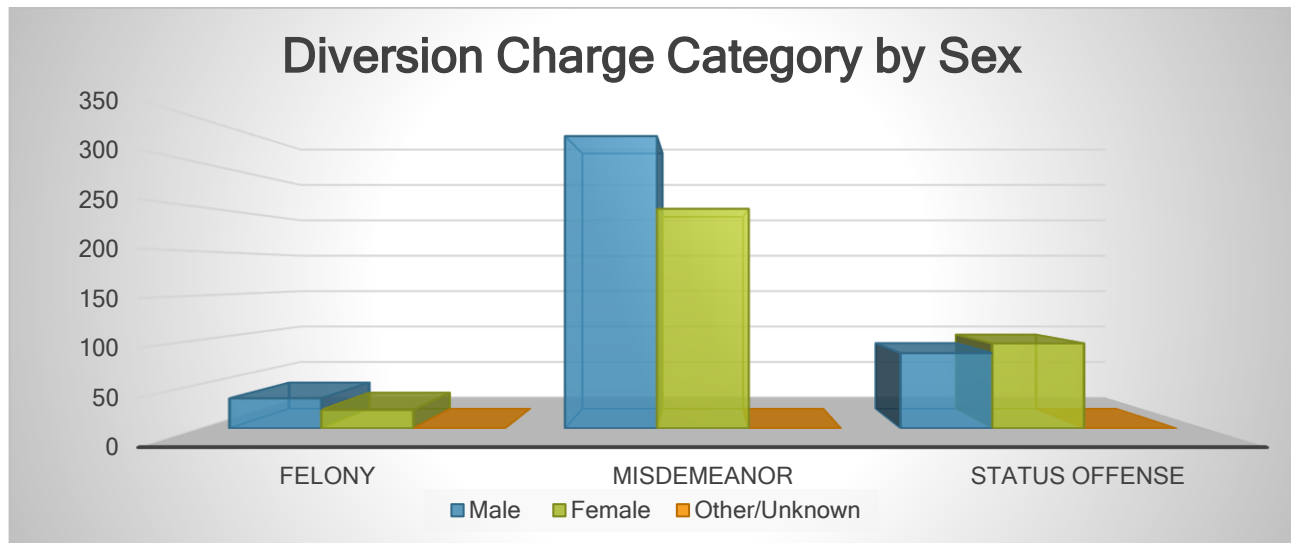
The standardized definition of diversion, as provided by the Ohio Supreme Court is “redirection of youth from the formal processing of juvenile court which occurs prior to the youth’s initial appearance before the Judge”. Best explained by the Anne E. Casey foundation, (and adopted in the Ohio Supreme 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.”

In 2024, 1,166 cases, which accounted for 1,009 youth, were managed by Diversion. The average diversion age was 14.86; 86% of diversion cases closed successfully; 5% closed unsuccessfully; 1% received additional criminal charges during the life of the diversion case; and 9% 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

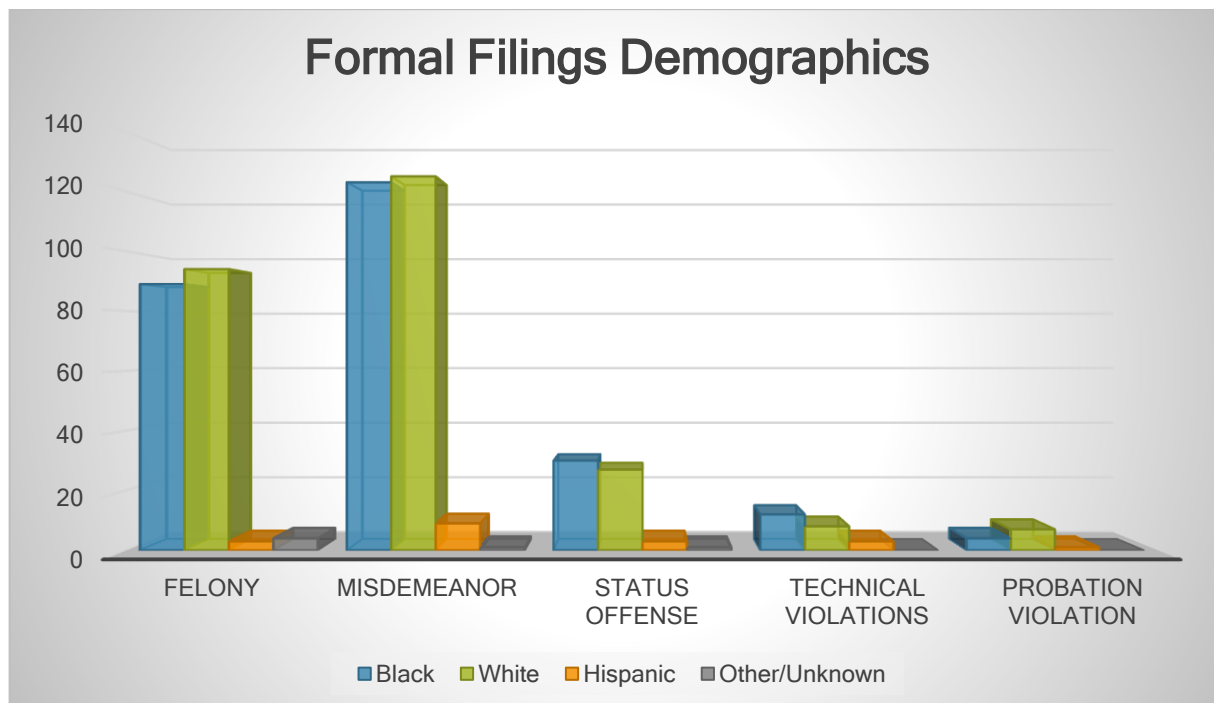
Stark County Family Court, in collaboration with the Stark County Family Council, developed and implemented processes designed to mitigate formal habitual truancy charges.

Family Council and Family Court's Behavioral Health Services Department offers truancy conferences as a service to our county school districts. These conferences are designed to work with the parent/guardian, and age appropriate child, to identify the barriers to consistent school attendance and develop a plan to mitigate said barriers. 235 conferences occurred during the 2023/2024 school year.

110 truancy cases were managed through the Court's Diversion program, while 56 cases were formally processed. Of those, 34 youth were adjudicated as truant.

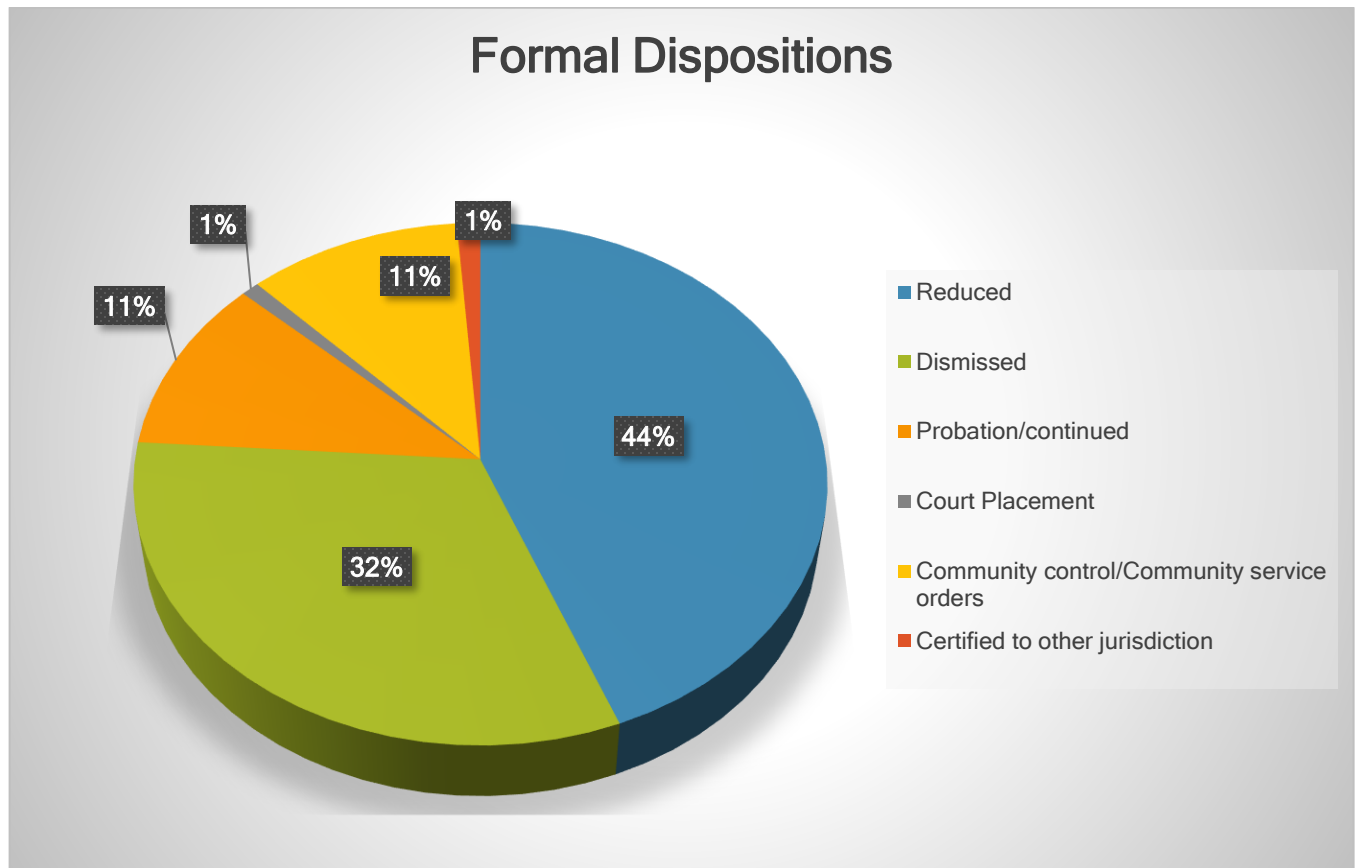
Formal Case Processing

453 youth were responsible for 1,436 delinquency complaints and technical violations formally processed in the Court. Of those youth, 70% were male and 30% were female. Additional demographics are depicted below:



Outcomes for Formally Processed Cases

The following graph represents dispositional orders of formally processed delinquency case. Cases that are formally processed are subject to consequences including, but not limited to; detention, probation, restitution, court placement and/or other custody orders.



It should be noted that in 2024, the Court bound over 2 youth, consisting of 8 cases, to the General Division. This was a sharp decline from the previous two years.

Probation

Probation spent much of 2024 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 criminal risk factors, as well as, for all IV-E eligible cases, working to reduce a child's imminent risk of removal from their home.

The following depicts the Probation caseload for 2024.

Participant Count (new)	118	
Male	87	74%
Female	31	26%
Average Age of Participant	15.4	
Race/Ethnicity		
Latino/Hispanic	1	1%
Black/African American	45	38%
White/Caucasian	47	40%
Two or more races	23	19%
Other	0	0%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0	0%
Hawaiian Native/Other Pacific Island	0	0%
N/A	2	2%
OYAS Risk Level		
Low	43	36%
Moderate	65	55%
High	10	8%

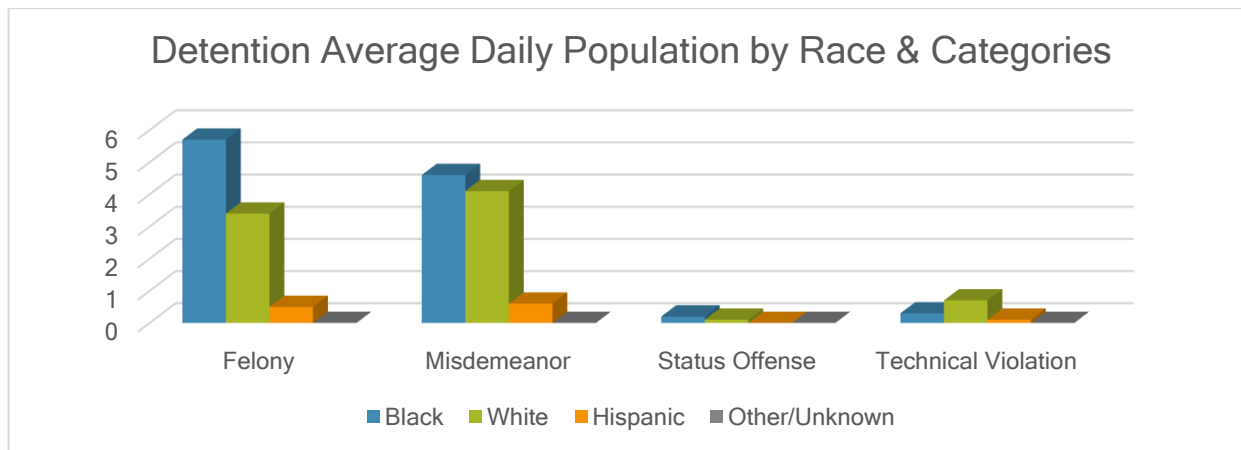
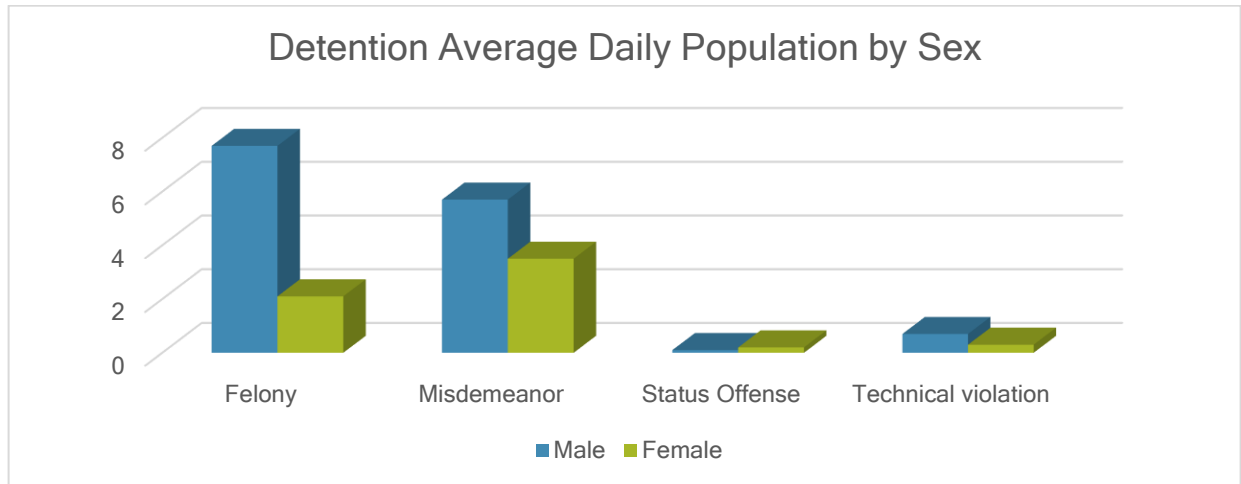
Detention

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 try to 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 2024, Stark County admitted 606 youth into detention.

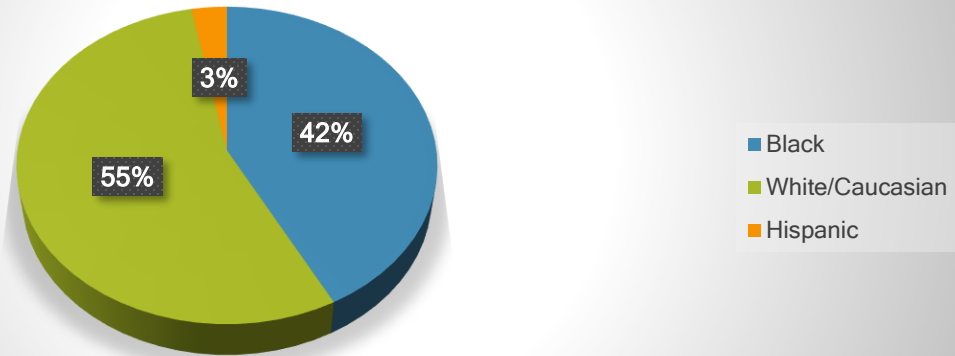
The following graph represents the average daily population in detention based on demographics and levels of charge.



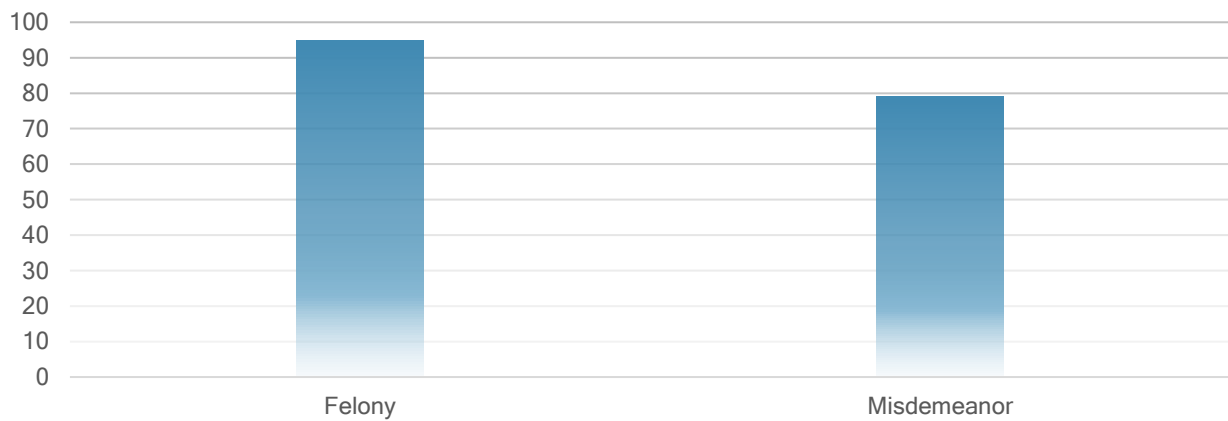
Alternatives to Detention

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 2024, 174 juveniles were supervised on the Pretrial Release Program and averaged 55.4 days on the program.

Pretrial Release Demographics

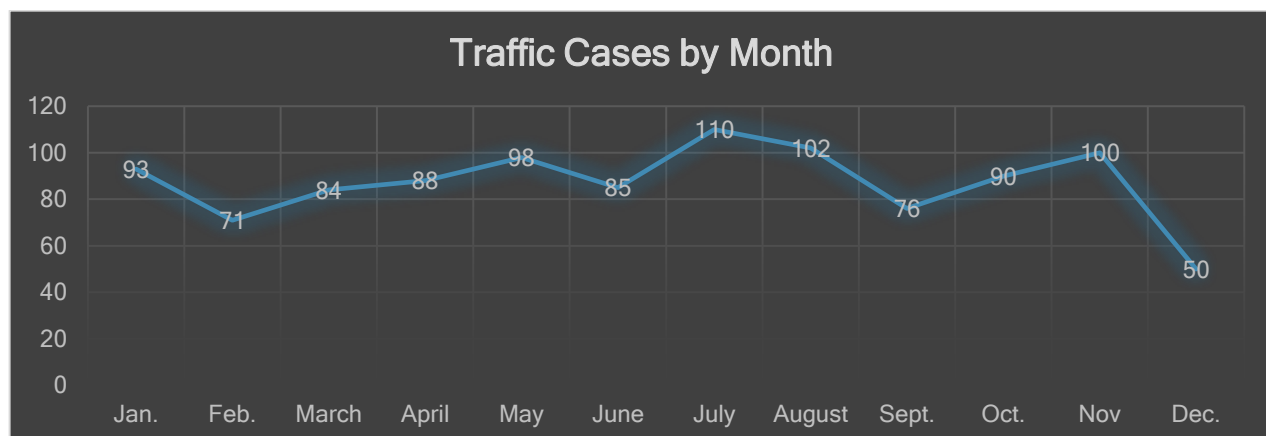
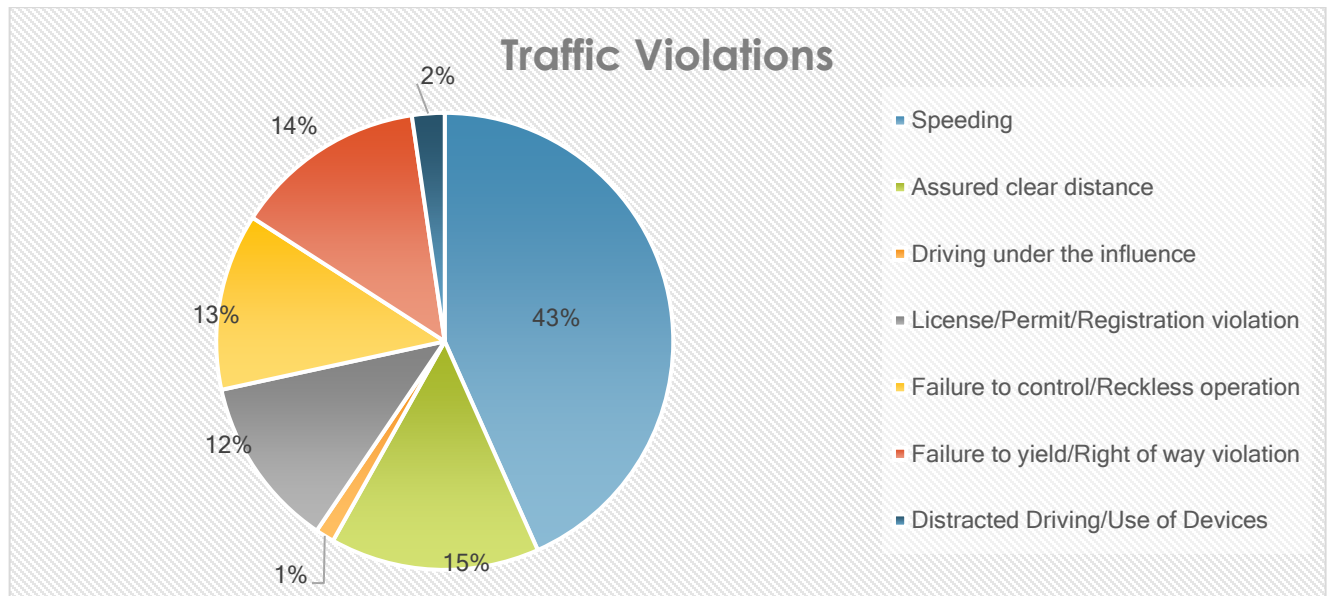


PRETRIAL RELEASE DELIQUENCY TYPES



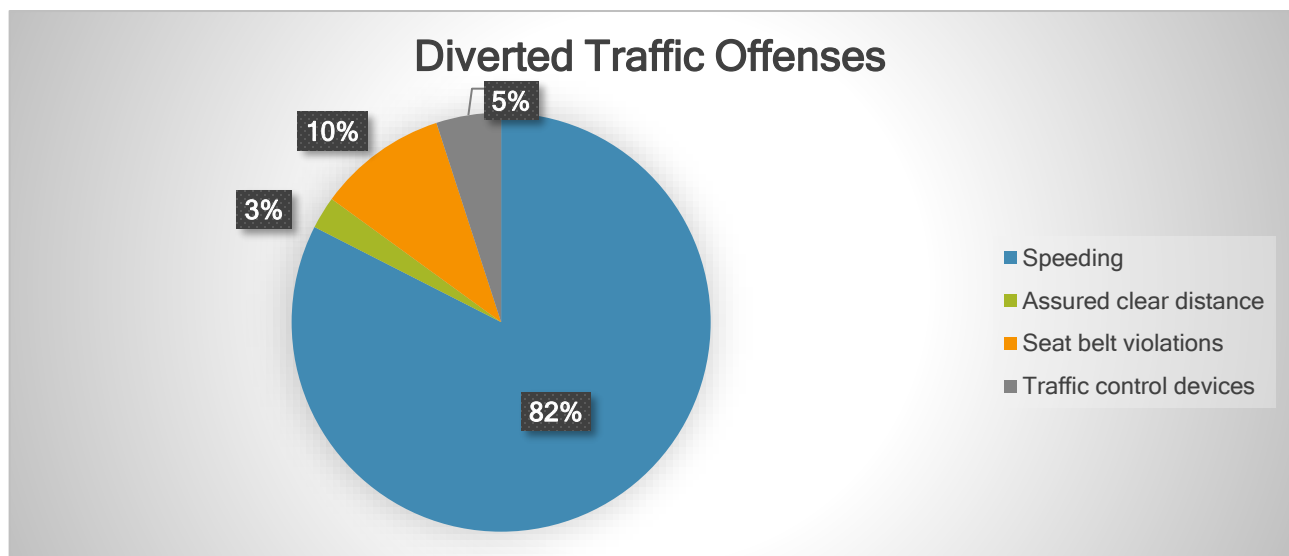
Juvenile Traffic

The Court processed 1,066 juvenile traffic cases in 2024 with \$200,618.95 in fines and costs assessed. The following graphs depict violation types and monthly case totals.



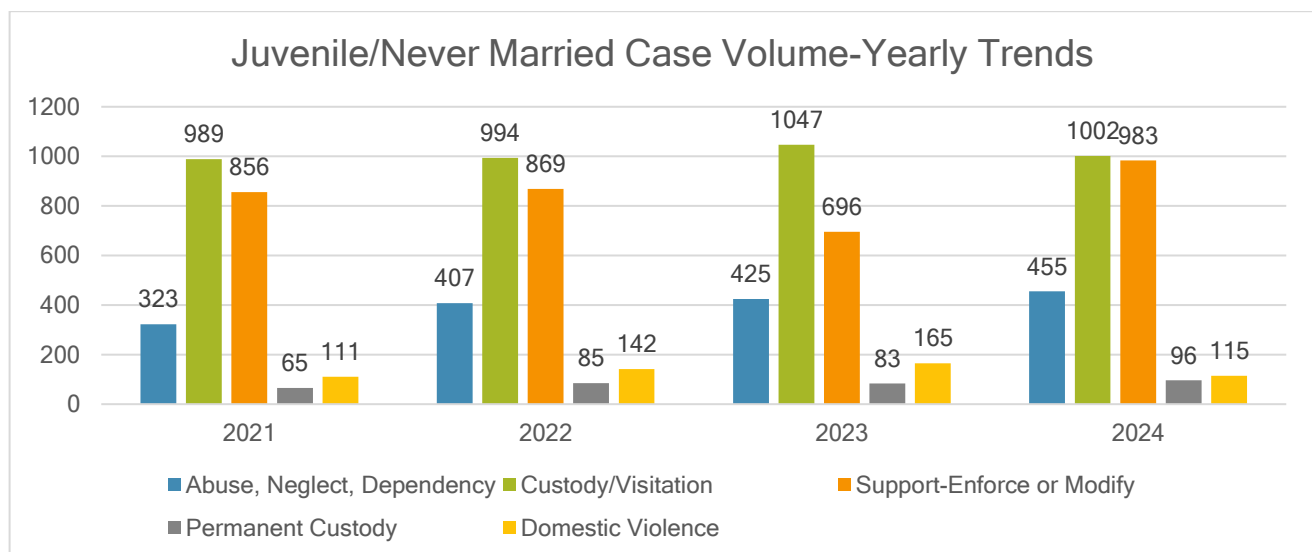
Traffic Diversion Program

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 2024, 132 traffic cases were sent through Traffic Diversion, with 96% being successfully completed. Cases not successfully diverted are referred to 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 2024, CASA served 215 children, 126 families with 30 CASA volunteers. 113 children were 5 years of age or younger. 79 cases were closed, 25 resulting in legal custody to a relative or third party, 39 ended in adoption, 6 youth emancipated, and 9 children reunified with their family.

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

The B.U.I.L.D. program is funded, in part, by a Supreme Court grant. The grant ends in 2025. B.U.I.L.D.'s program design focuses 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. B.U.I.L.D. works to strengthen vulnerable families by providing parental support and legal advocacy while the custodial parent(s) works to correct identified concerns with the goal being to avoid involvement of the Family Court System.

B.U.I.L.D. 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. The following depicts B.U.I.L.D.'s annual case work.

2024

Total Referrals in 2024	Did Not Engage	Open cases/total program participants in 2024	Successful closure*	Unsuccessful closure*
43	12	31/59	36	10

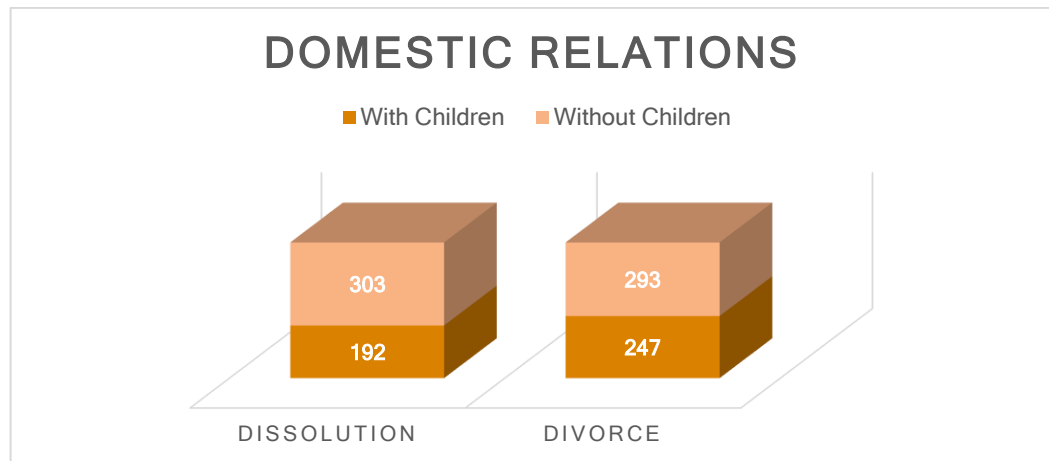
*cases overlapped from 2023-2024

Domestic Relations Division

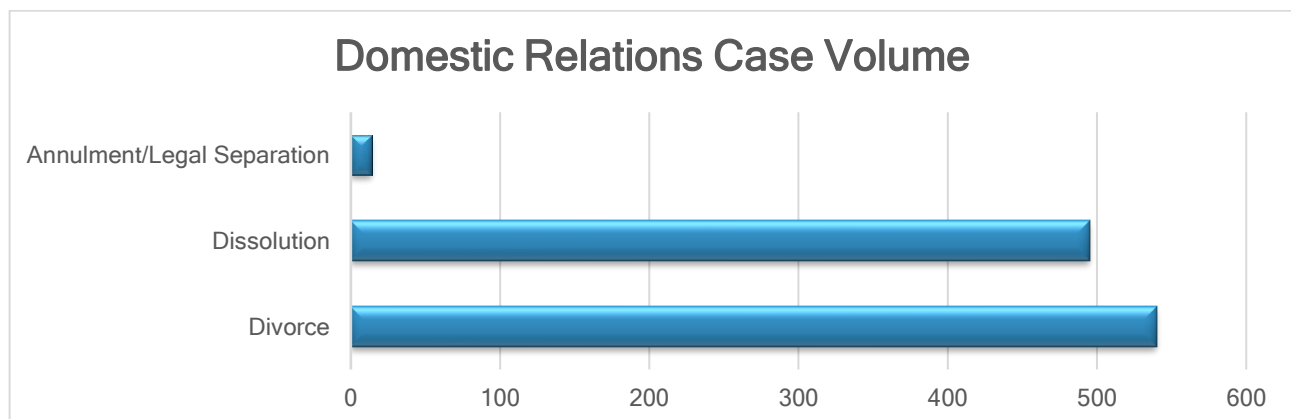
The Domestic Relations Division addresses cases involving domestic couples, including Divorces, Dissolutions, Domestic Violence, Child Support, Child Custody and Visitation. Domestic Relations case types are described on the following pages.

Divorce/ Dissolution

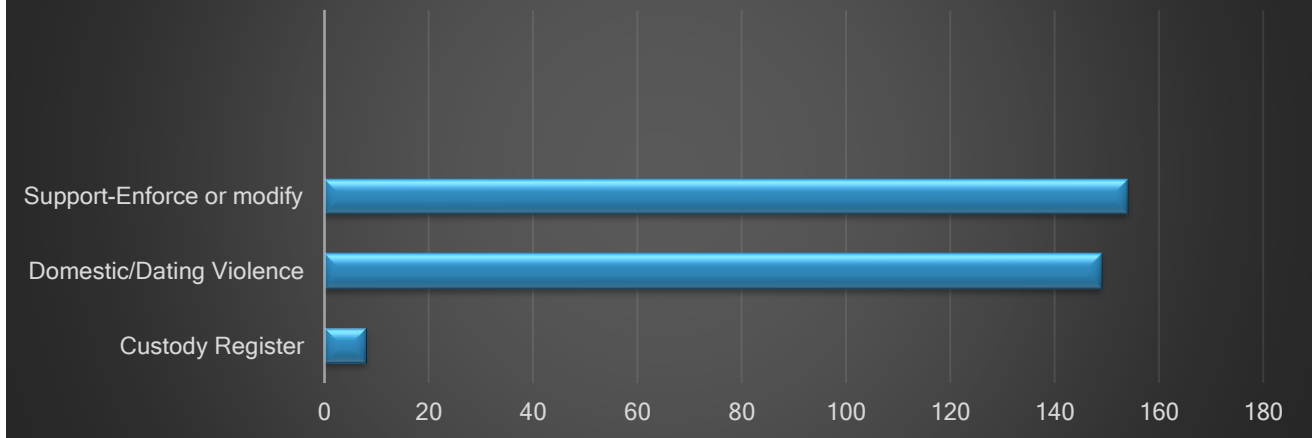
The Domestic Relations Division addressed 1,178 cases in 2024; 540 divorces and 495 dissolutions. The Division heard 120 Domestic Violence Civil Protection Requests.



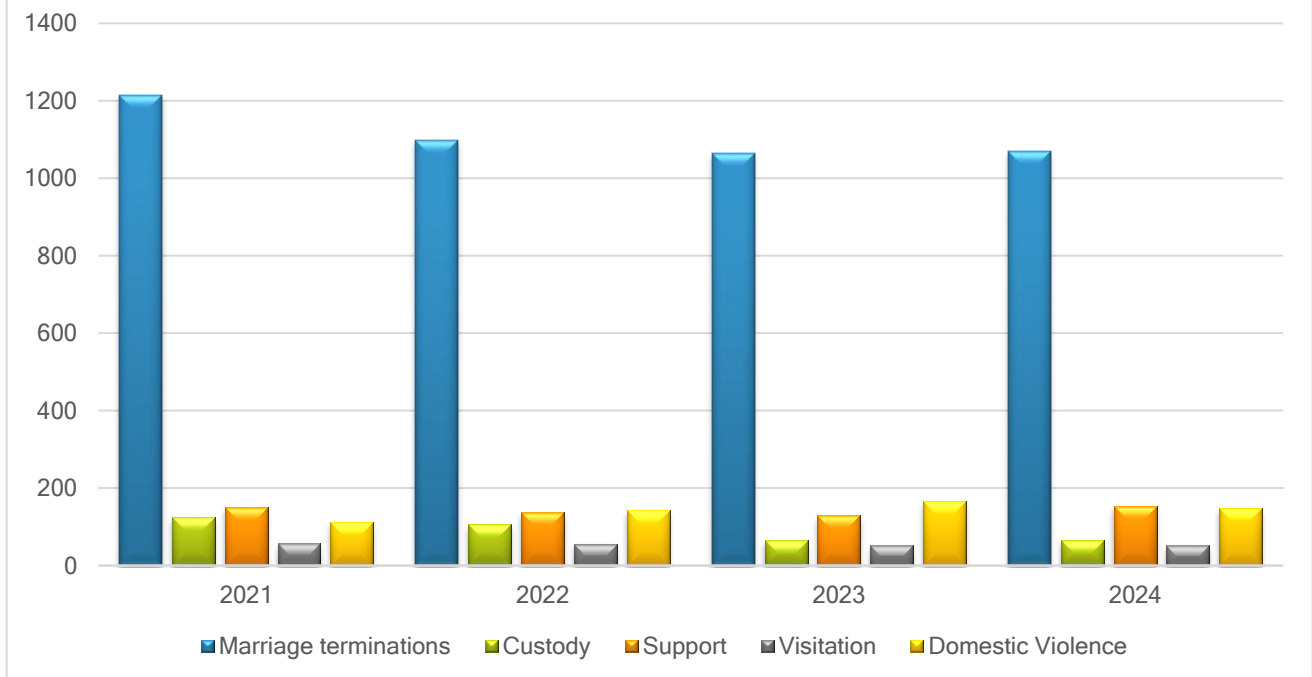
While divorces and dissolutions make up the majority of cases processed by the Domestic Relations docket, other case types are also included. The following graphs represent the volume of cases processed by the Domestic Relations Division in 2024.



Domestic Relations Case Volume-All Others



Domestic Relations Case Volume-Yearly Trends



Clearance Rates

Clearance rates are 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 considered. The goal is to process cases through the Court without having them listed as “over time”.

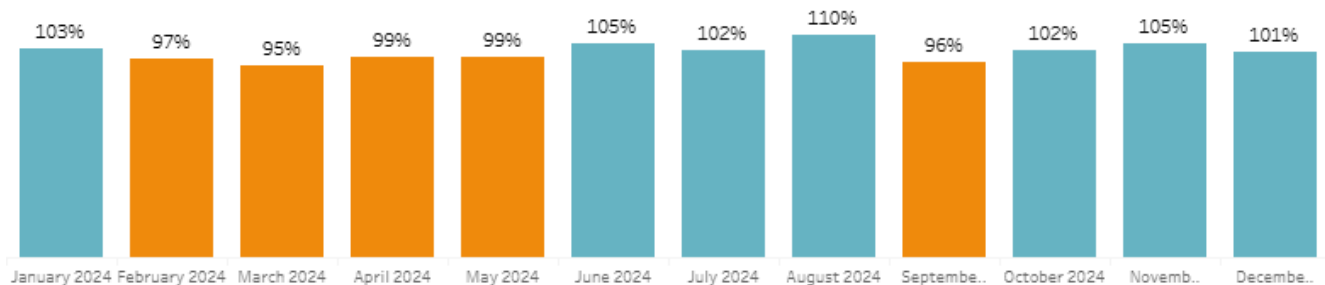
The following graphs illustrate the clearance rates of both the DR and Juvenile Docket from Stark County Family Court. The clearance rate for these dockets statewide are also present for comparison. Rates listed at over 100% show a clearing of backlogged cases.

Juvenile Docket- Ohio Statewide

Clearance Rate, All Case Types, 2024

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.

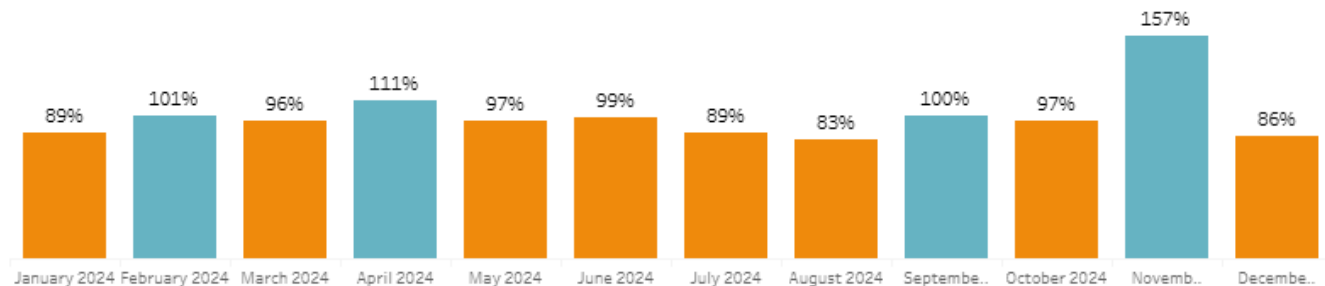


Juvenile Docket- Stark County

Clearance Rate, All Case Types, 2024

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.

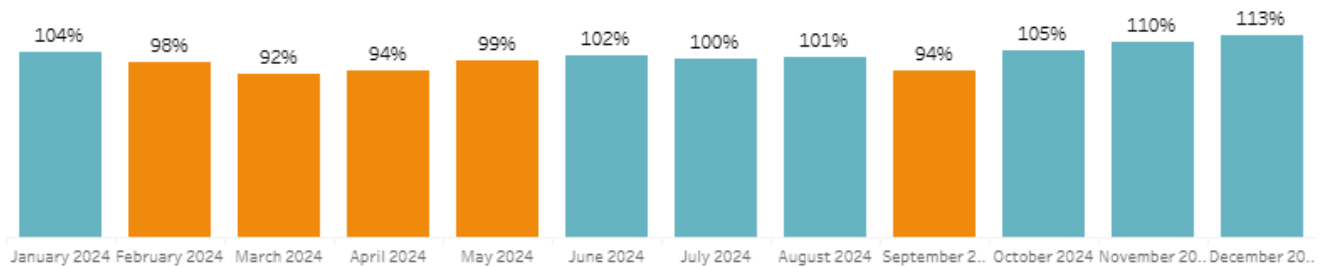


Domestic Relations Docket- Statewide

Clearance Rate, All Case Types, 2024

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.

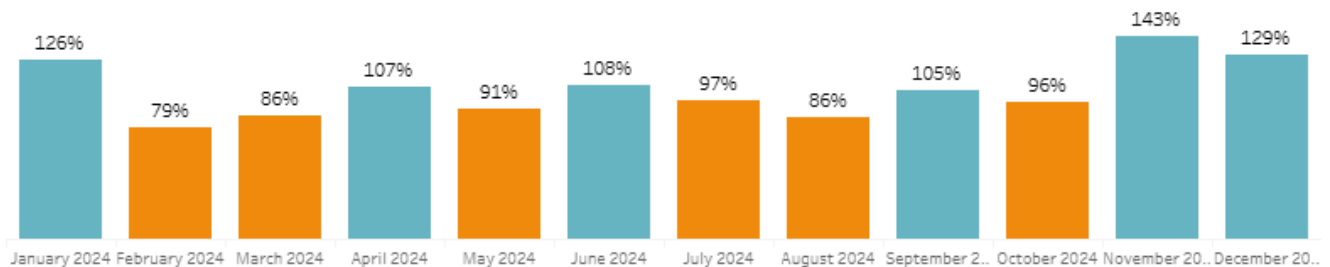


Domestic Relations Docket- Stark County

Clearance Rate, All Case Types, 2024

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.



2024 Budget Detail													
	Community Trauma & Loss Grant	Juvenile Court Gift and Grant		General Fund - Juvenile	General Fund - Domestic Relations		Special Projects Representation	Special Projects - Supreme Court Legal	Supreme Court Legal Representation	Title IV-E Juvenile Administration	Youth Services - RECLAIM (242) January-June 2024	Youth Services - RECLAIM (304) July-December 2024	Total FC Budget
2024 Budget	\$ 10,616.41	\$ 2,402.81	\$ 26,015.06	\$ 3,519,871.20	\$ 868,000.00	\$ 379,242.53	\$ 151,458.04	\$ 112,171.87	\$ 511,977.73	\$	2,881,713.90	\$	8,463,469.55
2024 Expense Detail													
Expense Account Description	Community Trauma & Loss Grant	Juvenile Court Gift and Grant		General Fund - Juvenile	General Fund - Domestic Relations		Special Projects Representation	Special Projects - Supreme Court Legal	Supreme Court Legal Representation	Title IV-E Juvenile Administration	Youth Services - RECLAIM (242) January-June 2024	Youth Services - RECLAIM (304) July-December 2024	FC Expense by Category
Personnel Services	\$ -		\$ -	\$ 1,926,208.67	\$ 720,629.10	\$ 57,225.15	\$ 64,853.99	\$ 15,227.63	\$ -	\$ 583,379.20	\$ 429,472.45	\$	3,796,996.19
Employee Benefits	\$ -		\$ -	\$ 1,091,056.81	\$ 141,703.47	\$ 34,684.40	\$ 37,673.75	\$ 2,835.96	\$ 678.08	\$ 269,911.71	\$ 238,699.08	\$	1,817,243.26
Supplies and Materials	\$ -		\$ 9,051.96	\$ 21,503.63	\$ -	\$ 390.00	\$ 1,559.95	\$ 306.77	\$ -	\$ 5,846.20	\$ 5,406.36	\$	44,064.87
Purchased Services	\$ -		\$ 3,969.18	\$ 315,595.52	\$ -	\$ 51,247.00	\$ 21,735.55	\$ 20,738.92	\$ 185,339.44	\$ 583,005.59	\$ 430,124.93	\$	1,611,756.13
Capital	\$ -		\$ 1,145.00	\$ 11,805.35	\$ -	\$ 2,375.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$	15,325.35
Misc.	\$ -	\$ 2,402.81	\$ -	\$ 7,823.19	\$ -	\$ 25,291.45	\$ 407.36	\$ 61.96	\$ 402.26	\$ 27,932.86	\$ 23,809.32	\$	88,131.21
	\$ -	\$ 2,402.81	\$ 14,166.14	\$ 3,373,993.17	\$ 862,332.57	\$ 171,213.00	\$ 126,230.60	\$ 39,171.24	\$ 186,419.78	\$ 1,470,075.56	\$ 1,127,512.14	\$	7,373,517.01
Figure 1													
2024 Budget and Calendar Year Expenditures by Fund													

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 39 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, competitive, YE/EVB and JDAI.

In 2024, the RECLAIM grant funded 20 full-time court positions in our supervision, diversion, and behavioral health departments, as well as 16 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 Children and Youth (ODCY) and open to juvenile courts meeting IV-E criteria.

In 2024, 3 Court involved youth were placed in a licensed IV-E facility. In recent years, IV-E placement activity from the court has decreased due to fewer youth and families meeting eligibility.

Supreme Court Prepetition Legal Representation Pilot

The legal representation pilot, known locally as BUILD (Boosting Understanding, Interventions, & Legal Defense), is funded by the Supreme Court of Ohio.

In 2024, 1 full-time engagement director position was partially funded via the BUILD program; 1 full-time peer support specialist position was funded out of the County GRF, via a contract with Family Council. 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 required utilizing the Court's Special Projects fund and/or County GRF to cover a portion of program expenses. In grant year 4, ending September 30th, 2024, the maximum award amount from the Supreme Court is \$75,000.

Family Court Special Projects:

The 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.

In 2024, 1 full-time position was funded for the full calendar year via special projects, in addition to 2 additional positions being funded beginning in December 2024.

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 and Additional Gifts and Grants:

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 prior years, 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, although no funds from this grant were used in 2024.

A gift and grant award in the amount of \$2,402.81 was utilized in 2024 to operate Girls Chasing Goals, an 8-week summer program focusing on mentoring and teaching at-risk female youth the importance of using exercise and self-care as a way of gaining a strong sense of self-worth, building character, coping with personal struggles, and living a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

Impact on Various Awards and Grants Received in 2024

The Stark County Family Court continually seeks funding opportunities to reduce expenses charged to the general fund or requiring the use of court assessed fees. In 2024, approximately 39% of court expenses were financed with either federal, state, or privately funded grants.

Stark County Family Court Contact Information

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Jacob Morgan - Assistant Court Administrator

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