



# Annual Report 2008

20th Judicial Circuit and  
Ottawa County Probate Courts  
Ottawa County, Michigan

[www.miottawa.org/Courts](http://www.miottawa.org/Courts)

# The 20th Judicial Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts 2008 Annual Report

The 20th Circuit and Probate Courts in Ottawa County have selected “Access to Justice: Responding to the Community”, one of the Courts’ strategic planning priorities, as the theme of the 2008 Annual Report. The Report highlights many Court initiatives which demonstrate continuing efforts to serve the public in a courteous and transparent forum for the resolution of legal disputes. These efforts to improve public access, allow the Courts to responsibly use available resources in a manner which best serves the public.

The 2008 Annual Report also contains selected caseload statistics to demonstrate the significant work of which judges and Court staff are engaged and their response to thousands of new cases file each year. Financial data is included to provide some context for the complicated mixture of court funding and show appropriate stewardship for the public funds allocated to Court operations.



EDWARD R. POST  
CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE – TRIAL DIVISION

CALVIN L. BOSMAN  
CIRCUIT JUDGE – TRIAL DIVISION

JON H. HULSING  
CIRCUIT JUDGE – FAMILY DIVISION

JON A. VAN ALLSBURG  
CIRCUIT JUDGE – FAMILY DIVISION

MARK A. FEYEN  
CHIEF PROBATE JUDGE – FAMILY DIVISION

STATE OF MICHIGAN



TWENTIETH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT  
OTTAWA COUNTY

KEVIN J. BOWLING, JD  
CIRCUIT COURT ADMINISTRATOR

March 31, 2009

Ottawa County Board of Commissioners  
12220 Fillmore Street  
West Olive, MI 49460

Dear Commissioners:

The strategic planning process is pivotal to the 20th Judicial Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts, as they continually strive toward excellence in daily operations. The 2008 Annual Report's theme – Access to Justice: Responding to the Community – is a particularly important strategic issue.; Second paragraph – The term, access to justice, has many definitions.

Access to justice has many definitions. It may refer to physical access to court buildings. It may also refer to the ability to do business with the Courts, in-person or accessing the Courts using technology such as the Internet. Another interpretation of access to justice applies to the ability to use Courts' services for the benefit of youth, families and Ottawa County citizens – young and old.

Also associated with the concept is the public's perception of how individuals are treated when one comes into contact with the Courts; this perception reflects on the Courts' responsiveness to the community. It is critical because the perception may translate into a belief whether one has been fairly treated. Such a perception is important during the best of times but perhaps even more so, during tough economic times when individuals dealing with Court matters are already under significant, personal stress.

The 20th Judicial Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts are diligent in ensuring individuals experience access to justice on a quality level. The 2008 Annual Report conveys many ways the Courts have upheld this strategic issue, effectively responding to the community.

Sincerely,

*Edward R. Post*

Hon. Edward R. Post  
Chief Judge, 20th Circuit Court

*Mark A. Feyen*

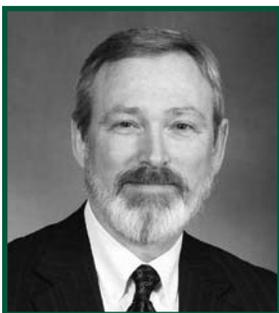
Hon. Mark A. Feyen  
Chief Judge, Probate Court

# 20th Judicial Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Court Judges



From left to right: Hon. Edward R. Post— Chief Circuit Judge, Hon. Jon A. Van Allsburg — Circuit Judge, Hon. Jon Hulsing — Circuit Judge, Hon. Calvin L. Bosman — Circuit Judge, and Hon. Mark A. Feyen — Chief Probate Judge

The Circuit Court has four (4) elected judges who preside over the courtrooms, trials and a variety of civil and criminal hearings. The Probate Court has one (1) elected judge who handles all Probate matters and assists in the Family Division of the Circuit Court. The Chief Judges are selected by the Supreme Court for two year terms.



## Circuit and Probate Court Administrator

The Court Administrator provides a clear vision and leadership for all Court employees. He is also responsible for all administrative functions, strategic planning, caseload, personnel and financial management of the Courts and is directly accountable to the Chief Judges.

Kevin J. Bowling, JD, MSJA  
Court Administrator

## *Strategic Planning Works!*

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In 2004, the 20th Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts embarked on a rigorous and ongoing strategic planning process. At that time, the Courts developed their mission and vision statements, which continue to be the driving force of the Courts' daily operations.

A mission statement expresses the fundamental purpose of an organization. The 20th Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts express their mission as follows:

### **Mission Statement**

**To administer justice, provide restorative services and apply the law with equality, integrity and timeliness through trained, courteous staff in a manner that inspires public trust.**

A vision statement defines a preferred future of an organization. The Courts' vision statement reflects the Court's ideal as follows:

### **Vision Statement**

**Through strong leadership and skilled staff, the Courts will consistently provide exemplary service by:**

- **Assuring accessibility to innovative, restorative, continually improving and efficient, professional service.**
- **Using state-of-the-art technology to maximize efficiency and effectiveness.**
- **Providing comprehensive, public education about court functions.**
- **Developing and nurturing strong, positive, collaborative partnerships.**

Although the Courts are driven by their mission and vision statements, the five strategic issue teams – Resources, Access to Courts, Efficient/Effective Services and Operations, Positive External Relations and Employee Opportunities and Satisfaction – keep the strategic plan alive on a daily basis. Through the efforts of each team, the Courts, the County and perhaps, most importantly, the public, have reaped significant benefits as reflected within the pages of the 2008 Annual Report.

*...to administer justice...*

### *Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Helps Individual Cases Settle*

In accordance with the MCR 2.410, the 20th Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts adopted Local Administrative Order 2002-1, entitled, "Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Plan", effective August 14, 2002.



Alternative Dispute Resolution means "any process designed to resolve a legal dispute in the place of court adjudication." ADR includes settlement conferences, case evaluation, mediation, domestic relations mediation, and other procedures provide by local court rules or ordered on stipulation of the parties, e.g., arbitration, summary jury trial. All civil cases are subject to ADR processes unless otherwise provided by statute or Michigan Court Rule.

The 20th Circuit Court's ADR process had 265 hearings scheduled in 2008. Of those, 169 settled between the time notice of ADR was sent and the actual ADR date and 96 continued through the ADR process, via case evaluation. The outcomes of these case evaluations resulted in 37 cases accepting the awards recommended by the panelists and 59 cases rejecting the proposed awards and going to trial. ADR has also been proven successful in the Ottawa County Probate Court. A new program focused on applying mediation to difficult family disputes in the context of guardianship cases has resulted in numerous agreements. This program is a collaborative effort with Mediation Services of Holland, Michigan.

### *Felony Collections*

During 2008, a total of \$926,388.96 was paid to the 20th Circuit Court in the form of fines, costs and restitution by persons convicted of a felony. Of that amount, \$460,590.21 represents restitution paid to crime victims. A large percentage of that restitution figure has been paid directly to Ottawa County residents and businesses.

It remains the goal of the 20th Circuit Court to hold defendants accountable for their crimes against citizens of Ottawa County, and to aggressively pursue, in every practical manner, those who are assessed monetary sanctions as a result of their criminal behavior.

## *College Interns Gain Life Experience and Learn About the Courts*

In 2004, the 20th Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts embarked upon a joint Strategic Planning Initiative. Through this process, a college internship program was born and continues to grow.

The purpose of a quality internship is to provide a practical learning experience within the justice system, which benefits the student, school and our Courts. Additionally, it allows the intern to complete the internship requirements for his/her college degree.



The goal of the Court's Internship Program is to expose future professionals to the criminal and civil justice systems. The internship learning opportunity focuses on observation and practical experience in all areas of the Circuit and Probate Courts. Interns learn about the respective functions of the Friend of the Court office, Trial Division, Juvenile Probation, Juvenile Detention, Juvenile and Adult Drug Treatment Courts and Probate Court. Supervision of interns is provided by senior staff members in an effort to significantly contribute to the development of the student.

The Internship Program provides students with a hands-on learning experience and offers additional staff assistance at no cost to the County. Internships through the Courts are unpaid positions. The goal of the Courts' Internship Program is to expose future professionals to the criminal and civil justice systems.

In 2008, the Strategic Issues Team – Resources – moved to refine and expand the Internship Program, strengthening the benefits of the program for the students and Courts, alike. Throughout the year, the Program has grown, while providing learning experiences for both.

The Court makes every attempt to balance the student's primary interest request with the Courts staffing needs and supervision availability in determining assignments. Anyone interested in pursuing an internship can view the eligibility criteria and obtain an application on the County website ([www.miottawa.org/CourtsLE/20thcircuit](http://www.miottawa.org/CourtsLE/20thcircuit)).

## *Assisting Self-Represented Litigants: The Self-Help Center*

“The Times They Are A Changing”. The title of the song written by Bob Dylan in the 60’s aptly describes a trend toward increasing numbers of self-represented litigants in the courts. The 20th Circuit Court is responding by opening a Legal Self-Help Center in the new Ottawa County Courthouse. Staffed by volunteers, the focus of the Center will be to provide accurate legal information, simplified forms and community resources to improve the litigant’s ability to represent him or herself. Providing assistance to the self-represented improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the court process. Staff and courtroom time is saved, which is an element of an effective case management plan.

In addition, the entire community benefits from the assistance provided in a self-help center. Litigants navigate the court system more effectively and efficiently, which minimizes their time away from work. Litigants who are prepared are more likely to leave court with clearly written orders, which helps facilitate order enforcement by local authorities. These and other positive outcomes increase the public’s trust and confidence in the court and in their county government as a whole.



## *Courthouse Learning Center: Designed to be an Educational Destination*

The new Ottawa County Courthouse in Grand Haven offers not only beauty in its architectural design; increased efficiency through improved technology and facilities; and accessibility to all, but will also become an educational destination for children and all members of the Ottawa County community through a Courthouse Learning Center.



The Center will focus on four major learning areas: 1) The history of the County/Court buildings; 2) The history of the Law; 3) The history of the Courts; and 4) How the Courts Affect You. Although there is not a designated space within the Courthouse for the Center, the plan is to utilize areas such as the corridors, vestibule and the jury assembly room for exhibits that highlight each of these topics, throughout the Courthouse. Exhibits will be rotated throughout the year to keep the materials fresh and maintain an ongoing educational process for the public.

The planning committee is working with members of the community, the Tri-Cities Historical Society, area libraries, educators, the Courts and County departments to make this center educationally meaningful and a visual delight in an effort to truly represent the rich history of Ottawa County and its Courts.

*...to provide restorative services...*

### *Giving Back: Detention Students Connect With Soldiers Abroad*

Giving back is something often not associated with students in a lock-down facility, but that is exactly what the students at the Ottawa County Juvenile Detention Center have done. Through their World Studies class, students have enthusiastically used web resources such as [www.anysoldier.com](http://www.anysoldier.com) to select United States soldiers serving in either Iraq or Afghanistan. The chosen soldiers have volunteered to accept and deliver packages to other troops who have little or no mail delivered to them and could use a note of appreciation, especially during the holiday season. Over the holidays, students in Detention put together two hundred mini packages that went out in ten boxes to be dispersed by selected soldiers.



Shortly after sending goodwill to soldiers overseas, the World Studies' students completed a baking, outreach project for the Women in Transition facility in Holland, Michigan. Recipes were selected by the students, and they spent two full days mixing cookie dough, dipping chocolate covered pretzels and other goodies. Despite snow storms and school closings, the Christmas treats were able to be enjoyed by other students at the Center and the residents at the women's shelter.

The students' pride in their ability to help others while in detention is a reminder to us all that while helping others, we ultimately help ourselves.

### *The Juvenile Services' Community Report Card*



For a number of years, the Court has used various methods to measure the success of probation. The traditional use of the recidivism variable is challenging because there are several definitions that may be used, none of which is a national measuring standard, and it is an almost impossible method of measuring success or failure. In addition, the Court has sought a way to illustrate the restorative activities used with young people under the Court's jurisdiction.

In May 2008, Doug Thomas, consultant for the National Center for Juvenile Justice, trained staff and worked with management identifying ways to evaluate probation. The goal was to develop a method to measure the court's performance in the area of probation and other Court programs. Mr. Thomas suggested the Court track specific data variables that reflect the community's interest and publish a "report card". He noted this had been done successfully in two other counties within Michigan – Washtenaw and Marquette.

After the training, a team identified variables which are tracked for the Community Report Card. Variables include law violations, drug testing, school attendance, participation in programs, community service hours, restitution compliance and more. The team decided to also expand the evaluation method to all Court programs and formulate the report around the general focus areas of Balanced and Restorative Justice:

- Protection of the Community
- Accountability
- Competency Development

The Court strives to be responsive to the community and assist youth in successfully modifying their behaviors. In an effort to show areas of success, identify /modify areas for improvement and meet requirements regarding performance measures, the Court will continue to track the identified areas and provide the community a report card upon completion of the first year.

### ***Adventures in Mentoring Program Looks to Engage At-Risk Youth***

A new program in Ottawa County offers Court-involved youth the opportunity to engage in a unique mentoring program geared towards developing survival and outdoors skills. This program is coordinated through the Journey Youth Mentoring Program and is a partnership between the 20th Circuit Court, Family Division – Juvenile Services and Michigan State University Extension (MSUE).



The Adventures in Mentoring (AIM) is a concept created through the efforts of Mr. Jim Dreyer, world-record ultra marathon athlete. Over the past few years, Mr. Dreyer has closely worked with Mr. Daniel Mulhern and the Office of the First Gentleman, fostering initiatives in mentoring. Mr. Dreyer approached Juvenile Services in Ottawa County and MSUE because of their successful mentoring partnership and the Court's solid reputation for creative approaches to delinquency programming at the state level.

AIM focuses on recruiting males and females to mentor court-involved youth using a more structured, skill-based method of programming while retaining flexibility. It offers a six-week training program for mentoring teams or matches. The matches learn such skills as orienteering, canoeing, rock climbing, cycling, etc. and test those skills in real world settings through weekend competitions. These mentoring matches are trained together to prepare for an Adventure Race scheduled for late Spring, 2009.

Of course, MSUE and Court staff will be involved, along with Mr. Dreyer, every step of the way as the Court has contracted with Mr. Dreyer's company, Event Marketing Enterprises, Inc., to assist in the training and events. The Court and its partners are encouraged the AIM program has a true point of difference that will assure it is an effective mentoring tool, as mentor and mentee matches team to meet the challenges of Mother Nature's many valuable, life lessons.

For more information on the new Adventures in Mentoring program, visit the Journey 4-H Youth Mentoring Program's website at [www.msue.msu.edu/ottawa](http://www.msue.msu.edu/ottawa).



## *New Victim Services Program Helps Heal the Harm*

Victims of juvenile crime are often angry and confused as to why the juvenile chose to victimize them. The 20th Circuit Court's mission statement – "To administer justice, provide restorative services and apply the law with equality, integrity and timeliness through trained, courteous staff in a manner that inspires public trust." – reflects a need for the court to be responsive to all who enter its doors. In addition, the system is often difficult to understand and navigate without help.

The 20th Circuit Court's Juvenile Services Division, in cooperation with the Ottawa County Prosecutor's Office, is developing a Victim Support Services Program that focuses on assisting and responding to victims of juvenile crimes through various restorative services.

Program planning began in 2008 with implementation scheduled to begin in Spring, 2009. The Victim Support Services Program will work to restore justice through the following objectives:

- *Increase contacts with victims* through the use of letters, phone and face to face contacts.
- *Encourage the use of mediation* by sharing the restorative benefits of mediation with victims and juvenile offenders and closely working with Mediation Services.
- *Increase competency development for offenders* by the use of victim impact panels, community service, service learning projects and pro-social events.
- *Refer to community based services* such as mental health resources, substance abuse treatment, financial planning assistance, employment services, vocational and educational opportunities in the area.
- *Increase the amount of restitution collected for victims.* Work with offenders toward employment and increase victim awareness of the Crime Victims Compensation Fund.

The Court is committed to assist victims through the Victim Support Services Program and an improved sense of peace and community.

## *CHOICE Program Addresses Individualized Needs of Delinquent Teens*

A delinquent act may appear to be the obvious reason a teenager enters the juvenile justice system. However, there may be other, less obvious reasons for the behavior.

Frequently, youth in the court system are dealing with multiple issues in all areas of their lives. Although the problem areas need to be assessed, identification of strengths, abilities, resources and gifts is also important. A component of the Court's treatment program that helps sort this out is the CHOICE Program.



The CHOICE Program is an 8 to 10 week counseling program that provides assessment and therapy services (individual, family and group) to court-involved juveniles and their families. CHOICE services are also available for truancy and runaway issues. Treatment Specialists and Group Leaders work cooperatively with the juvenile's Caseworker to provide appropriate intervention and treatment.

There are seven core elements of CHOICE:

- Individualized/specialized: Match juvenile's needs to services, using proven techniques and methods for the juvenile population.
- Family: Divert juveniles at risk for out of home placement or further escalation into the court system. This is accomplished through intensive support of the family.
- Community: Treat juveniles in the community. Youth can be met in their school or any safe place within the community. CHOICE attempts to remove the barriers to treatment by meeting with families in the home, office or other locations in the community. Adjunct services may include assisting youth, ages 16 and older, in finding employment or job preparation skill building, communication skills and application completion. Transportation is provided, as necessary. In addition, homework groups function in Holland and Grand Haven to assist youth who are educationally struggling.
- Diversity: Value differences and demonstrate cultural/gender sensitivity. Interpreters are provided, as needed; bi-lingual/ bi-cultural staff is also available.
- Strength-based: Approach youth from a strength-based perspective, identifying and utilizing positive attributes on which to build.
- Restorative: Provide an avenue for juveniles to repair the harm done in the community and learn the value of giving back through community service and restorative justice activities.
- Accountability: Juveniles and their families are held accountable for full program participation.

*...apply the law with equality, integrity and timeliness...*

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### ***New Case Management Efficiencies***

In an effort to comply with the Court's Mission and the Michigan Supreme Caseflow Management Standards, the 20th Circuit Court has revised its Case Preparation Orders. These orders are sent to each attorney or litigant in divorce and general civil cases. The order sets forth deadlines for discovery, property appraisals, disclosure of expert and lay witnesses, as well as other applicable time limits. The order also includes scheduled dates for case evaluation, settlement pretrial and trial which are all within the time guidelines set forth by the Michigan Supreme Court. By providing scheduled next action dates, the Court is able to track open cases and keep cases moving through the system in a timely, effective manner.



### ***Attorney Referees Assist the Court in Timely Processing of Cases***

The Court strives to process cases in a timely manner by following mandates set by the State Court Administrative Office. The Court attorney referees assist in maintaining compliance with these mandates by conducting hearings involving domestic relation issues and juvenile delinquency matters. In domestic relations, referees conduct motion hearings and prepare recommended court orders addressing parenting time and child support issues. They also conduct hearings to establish paternity and authorize final judgments of divorce. In the juvenile arena, referees conduct hearings and prepare recommended court orders for adjudication and disposition of law and probation violations committed by juveniles. Referees also periodically review juveniles' progress on probation. Referees review and authorize hundreds of probation violation and law violation petitions each year, as well as, handling all juvenile pretrial matters and authorizing administrative releases from juvenile detention.

Another important aspect of the referee's work involves conducting preliminary hearings in neglect and abuse cases when Child Protective Services seeks temporary removal of a minor child from a parent. In addition, referees conduct court hearings which grant the voluntary release of parental rights for the purpose of adoption.

To qualify as a referee, a person must be a licensed, Michigan attorney and have at least five years of practice experience which includes domestic relations and/or juvenile law. Currently, there are two positions for attorney-referees in the Family Division of the Circuit Court. One referee is employed full time, and two others share the second position. All referees work under the supervision of the Circuit Court Administrator; each day, there is one referee at the County Building in Grand Haven and another on duty at the Fillmore Complex in West Olive.

## Caseload Trends... Circuit Court

Trial Division	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	% Change
Appeals	40	68	64	51	45	-13.3
Criminals	1046	1055	1169	1218	1127	-8.0
Civil	502	468	512	567	630	+10.0
<b>Total Trial Division Filings</b>	<b>1588</b>	<b>1591</b>	<b>1745</b>	<b>1836</b>	<b>1802</b>	<b>-1.8</b>
Family Division	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	% Change
Divorce	1004	1026	987	975	993	+1.8
Other Domestic Relations	609	575	652	590	625	+5.6
Personal Protection Orders	653	666	661	645	695	+7.2
Delinquency (see below for explanation)	2051	2151	2197	2285	1500	*-52.3
Traffic	61	63	48	38	27	-40.7
Child Protective Proceedings	94	115	109	74	101	+26.7
Adoptions	205	234	193	170	163	-4.3
Misc. Family	68	67	66	73	65	*-12.3
<b>Total Family Division Filings</b>	<b>4745</b>	<b>4897</b>	<b>4913</b>	<b>4820</b>	<b>4169</b>	<b>*-16.3</b>
<b>Grand Total Filings &amp; Reopened Cases</b>	<b>6333</b>	<b>6488</b>	<b>6658</b>	<b>6686</b>	<b>5971</b>	<b>-12.0</b>

(\* 2008 Reporting procedures of delinquency cases do not include Probation Violations, which had been included in previous years.)

### Caseload Facts – Trial Division

The Trial Division caseload includes appeals, criminal and civil cases. In addition, the Trial Division handles the domestic relations portion of the Family Division docket.

Judge Bosman and Chief Judge Post handle the criminal cases and 80% of the civil cases. Judge Van Allsburg hears 20% of the civil docket, all appellate cases and 50% of the domestic relations case assignments. Judge Hulsing is assigned 50% of the domestic relations cases, and he shares the personal protection order petitions (adult and juvenile) with Judge Van Allsburg.

From 2007 to 2008, the appeals, criminal and civil caseload (new filings and reopened cases) slightly decreased by 1.8 %. Individually, the appeals from administrative agencies, District and Probate Courts declined by 13.3% and criminal filings decreased by 8%. The civil docket, however, increased by 10%.

In addition to managing a diverse and relatively stable docket, the Trial Division is responsible for the public and judicial law libraries (including new acquisitions and maintenance). The Trial Division also manages an active collections program focused on defendants who are ordered to pay restitution, court costs, fines, fees, etc. The outcome of the collections program in 2008 was payment of \$926,389 to the Court. This represents an 8.7% increase in collections from 2007. Approximately 50% of these payments are returned to victims of crime as restitution. Other payments cover statutorily mandated fees and partially reimburse the County for funds expended in the daily operation of the Court.

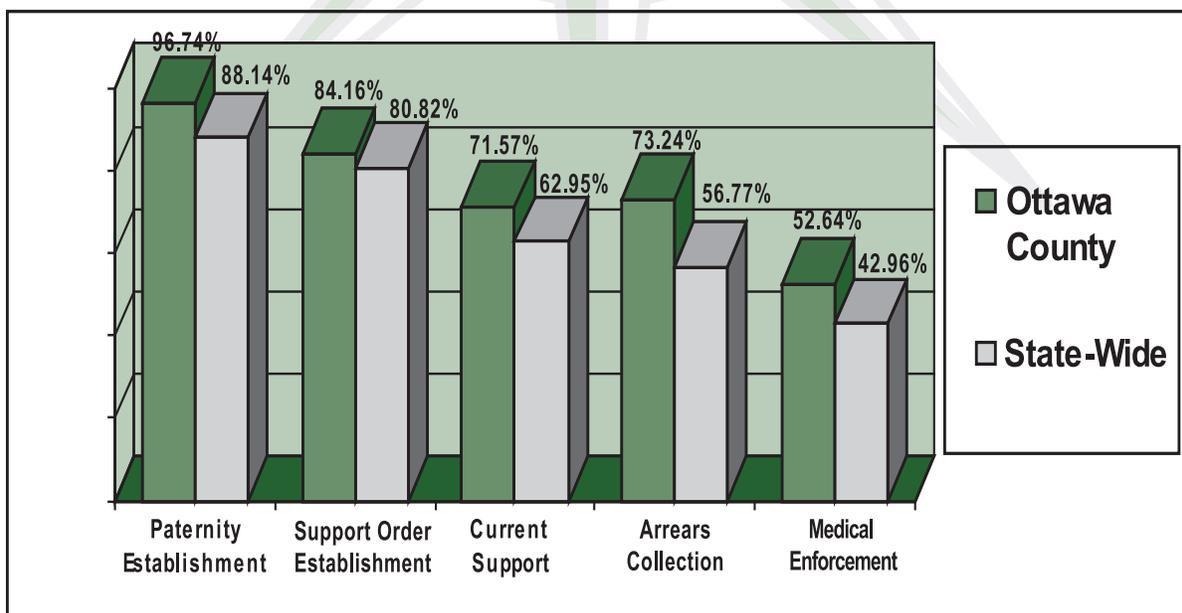
## Caseload Facts – Family Division/Friend of the Court (FOC)

During 2008, the FOC was responsible for a Title IV-D (child support enforcement) caseload of 10,631, including 1,021 cases, which were closed. From 2007 to 2008, the IV-D caseload percentage decreased slightly from 98.87% to 98.70; yet, this percentage continues to show outstanding performance and ensures federal performance incentives owed to the County. Within the same time period, FOC staff continued child support collections in excess of \$30 million dollars. To achieve this level of collection, FOC initiated 7,003 “Show Cause” hearings and had 1,851 Bench Warrants authorized. Two dramatic results from this effort were a 50% increase in collections upon arrest (\$54,644 in 2007; \$109,649 in 2008) and the collection of \$143,513 on “pay or stay” orders (an 83% increase over 2007).

Attention to client service is always a FOC priority and specific activity in this area increased in 2008. For instance, scheduled client appointments were up 20% over 2007 - an increase from 2,549 appointments in 2007 to 3,179 appointments in 2008. The FOC also continued a satellite Holland office to accommodate “walk-in” client visits each Wednesday. The Holland office handled 1,121 client appointments in 2008, a 24.5% increase over the 847 walk-ins assisted in 2007. All the workload increases noted above occurred in 2008 reflecting the 1.8% increase in new divorce filings and the 5.6% increase in other domestic relations filings.

The FOC performance measures continue to show the 20th Circuit office as a State leader in many categories. Percentage comparisons prepared by MAXIMUS, Inc. demonstrate the 20th Circuit’s FOC exceeds State-wide levels in paternity establishment, support order establishment, current support collections, arrears collections and medical enforcement.

### Ottawa County Comparison to State-Wide 2008 Performance Levels



## *Caseload Facts – Family Division/Juvenile Services*

Although domestic relations cases and child protective proceedings increased in 2008, the Juvenile Services caseload experienced a decrease in delinquency and traffic cases. Drugs and alcohol continued to be the largest segment of new, juvenile petitions (498) reflecting a 17% decrease from 2007. The next highest number of new petitions was in larceny cases. The filing of 486 petitions involving a larceny represented a 11% decrease from 2007. All other petition categories, e.g., assault charges, property crimes, weapons, breaking & entering and ordinance experienced a decrease in the number of petitions as well. Although arson and criminal sexual conduct charges typically represent a relatively small number of petitions, both categories were lower in numbers. The gender breakdown of the 1,676 petitions filed reflected 68.5% were male and 31.5% were female. This trend is quite consistent with the previous four years.

When Court-involved youth are on probation or otherwise ordered to receive treatment, there is a continuum of programs available designed to assist youth and families in the remediation of behavior. Programs include community-based treatment, community service, anger management, habitual offender group, sex offender program, intensive supervision, a ropes course, gender-specific groups, anger management group, individual/group/family counseling and more. In 2008, the Juvenile Services treatment program (Choice) provided counseling to 227 youth and families; educational alternatives through the Juvenile Justice Institute to 47 youth; residential placement alternative community support and supervision through the Juvenile Community Justice to 37 youth; and substance abuse treatment through the Juvenile Drug Treatment Court to 32 youth and families.

During 2008, there were 705 admissions into secure detention. This translated into 10,555 days of detention compared to 11,289 days in 2007. Most secure detention beds are used by Ottawa County youth; however, beds are also rented to neighboring jurisdictions which have no local, secure placement options. Thus, bed rental revenue generated \$ 405,852 in revenue during the fiscal year of 10/07 to 9/08. The Court continues to develop ways to increase revenue through this contract arrangement with other counties.

### *2008 Attorney Referee Activity*

The Circuit Court Attorney Referees are appointed positions and supervised by the Court Administrator. Each Referee is an independent hearing officer who is cross-trained to conduct hearings in the Juvenile Services Division and the Trial Division of the Court. Based on the assigned docket, a Referee may hear testimony and recommend orders in cases involving juvenile delinquency, abuse/neglect, child support, parenting time, paternity and more.

Delinquency and child protective petitions are scheduled shortly after filing. Domestic relations hearings are typically scheduled within three to five weeks after filing. In 2008, the Court's three Attorney Referees were assisted by three staff attorneys who volunteered to handle cases as needed. This was done to prevent case delays and provide better service to the public and attorneys.

## *Juvenile Services Division (Fillmore Complex)*

DELINQUENCY PROCEEDINGS	2006	2007	2008	% Change
Preliminary Inquiries	562	1190	938	-27.3
Preliminary Hearings*	188	202	154	-31
Pre-Trial Conferences	544	536	422	-27
Pleas of Admission/No Contest Hearings	134	177	145	-22
Original Disposition Hearings	95	54	37	-46
Dispositional Review Hearings	66	58	56	-3.6
Supplemental Dispositional Hearings	446	504	494	-2
Consents/Holds/Other	205	164	128	-28
(*Includes 34 Saturday Prelims)				

CHILD PROTECTIVE PROCEEDINGS	2006	2007	2008	% Change
Preliminary Inquiries	9	5	16	+69
Preliminary Hearings	78	44	44	0
Release/Consent/Emancipation/ Emergency Removal/Other	99	83	63	-32
Pleas of Admission/No Contest Hearings	10	0	0	0
Total Fillmore Complex Hearings	2439	3019	2494	-21

## *Trial Division (Grand Haven)*

DOMESTIC/CIVIL PROCEEDINGS	2006	2007	2008	% Change
Support Hearings	1232	1103	1037	-6.4
Parenting Time Hearings	407	361	336	-7.4
Pro Con Hearings	474	292	348	+16.1
Paternity Arraignments	743	681	677	-.6
Total Grand Haven Hearings	2585	2437	2398	-1.6

GRAND TOTAL OF ATTORNEY REFEREE HEARINGS	2006	2007	2008	% Change
	5024	5456	4892	-11.5

## Caseload Trends. . . Probate Court

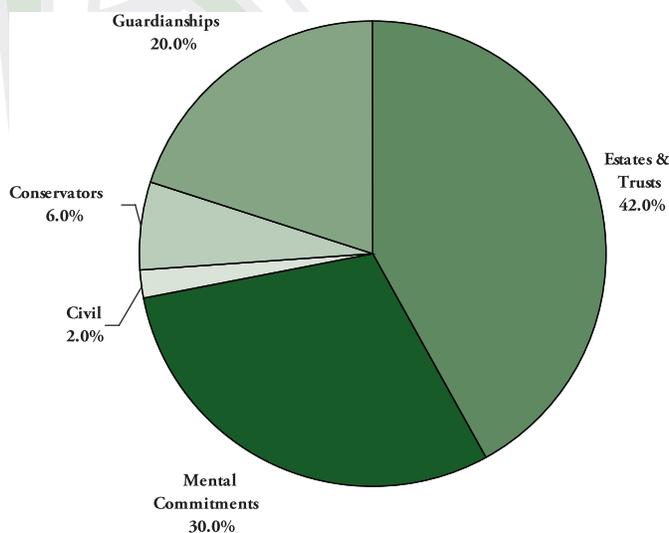
Ottawa County Probate Court Caseload Trends	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	% Change
Estates, Trusts	371	408	332	399	386	-3.4
Civil, Other	15	10	19	9	17	+47
Guardianships	215	208	180	221	186	-18.8
Conservators	75	75	65	58	58	0
Admissions/Mental Commitments	282	302	270	300	273	-9.9
Grand Total Filings and Reopened Cases	743	1003	866	987	920	-7.3

### Caseload Facts – Probate Court

Ottawa County Probate Court experienced a relatively stable caseload in 2008, with civil cases being the single growth area (+47%). Fully, two thirds of the Probate caseload deals with individuals needing the protection of the Court in guardianship, conservatorship and mentally ill cases. At the close of 2008, there were 274 adults and 403 minors with guardians appointed by the Court. In cases where individuals need assistance managing financial assets, there were 133 adults and 164 minors with Court appointed conservators. In addition to the regularly appointed guardians, there were an additional 436 developmentally disabled individuals with guardians supervised by the Court.

The ability of the Probate staff to cope with the influx of new cases is aided by the new County imaging system. Immediate access to all Probate files online has allowed staff to reduce time searching and re-filing case files. The imaging system also allows for more timely and effective public service for interested parties who are seeking case information. In addition, the Court has made excellent use of a temporary employee (two days per week) who is able to provide assistance, especially in the area of mandatory records retention requirements.

It is important to note Ottawa County Probate Judge, Hon. Mark A. Feyen, handles all required Probate matters and assists the Circuit Court by serving as Presiding Judge of the Family Division. He also serves as the Drug Treatment Court Judge for the adult and juvenile Drug Courts.



## Financial Information

As an interdependent branch of government, the Courts generate revenue but do not operate like a for-profit business. Other than case filing fees established by the state legislature, the public is not charged for many court services. Instead, the Courts rely on the Michigan Supreme Court to cover judicial salaries and partially reimburse the County for Court-specific operating expenses through the Court Equity Fund.

During the past five years, the Court Equity Fund disbursements to Ottawa County averaged \$1,160,229 per year. In 2008, the Court Equity Fund payment was \$1,108,749 and it is projected to be \$1,071,718 in 2009. The Juror Compensation Fund is also used by the State to reimburse the County for a portion of Court-related expenditures. In recent years, more than \$35,000/year was paid to Ottawa County from this Fund.

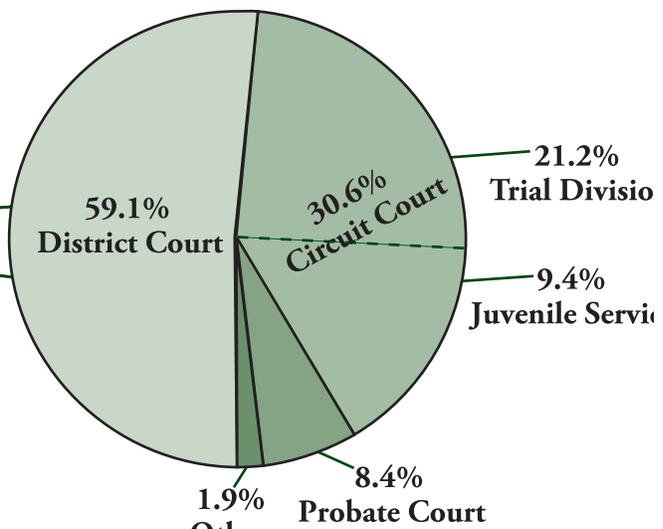
Other Court expenses are paid in part by federal Title IV-D funds (for child support collection); the State's Child Care Fund (Family Division – Juvenile Services programming); and various state and federal grants (e.g., partial Drug Treatment Court funding). The substantial balance is paid through an appropriation from the Ottawa County general fund.

In FY 2008, the County general fund expenditure budget was \$66,173,201; the judicial portion was \$9,920,100 (14.2%). Of the 14.2% expenditure, the Circuit Court Trial Division was allocated 21.2%; Juvenile Services was allotted 9.4%; and Probate Court received 8.4%. The remaining 59.1% went to District Court, with a 1.9% allocation to "other".

**Ottawa County 2008 General  
Fund Budget (Amended) — \$66,173,201**

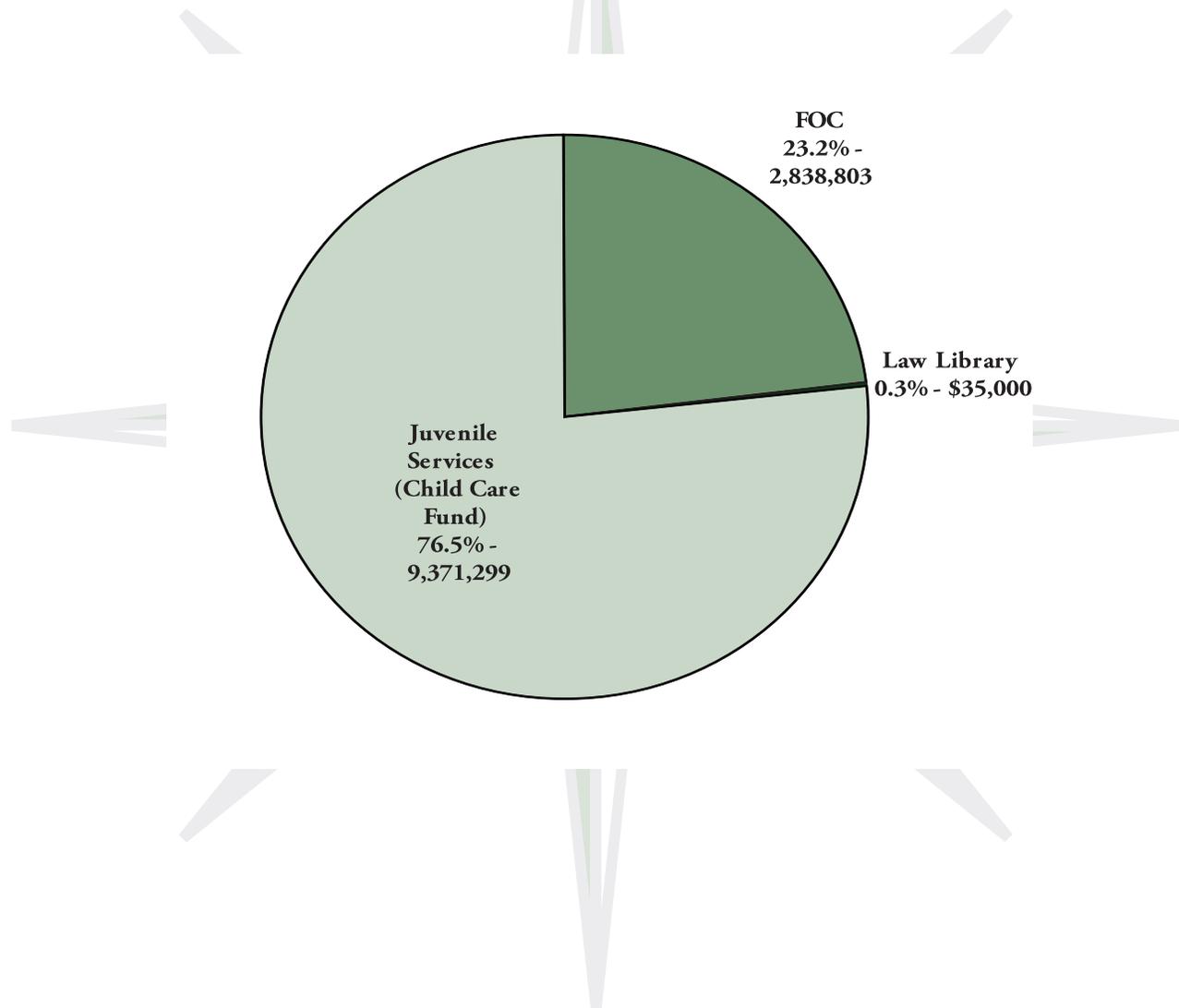


**2008 Judicial General  
Fund Budget (Amended) — \$9,920,100**



The law library and Child Care Fund portion of the Juvenile Services budget are not reflected in the general fund budget allocations. For FY 2008, the 20th Circuit received special revenue funds amounting to \$12,245,102. These allocations were divided as follows: FOC received a revenue operating transfer of \$2,838,803; the law library received funding in the amount of \$35,000; and the Family Division – Juvenile Services received funding for Child Care Fund programs of \$9,371,299.

**Ottawa County 2008 Special Revenue  
Funds Transferred to Circuit Court  
\$12,245,102**



## *About the Cover. . . The Compass Rose*

The Compass Rose has been guiding sailors for centuries. Regardless of whether we are seafarers, we still ask, “Where are we going?” We need a clear plan to guide us to our destination.

Through strategic planning, the 20th Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts are determining the best path to their destination. The 2008 Annual Report is a reminder of why the plan and destination are important.

The judges and courts’ staff are in the business of pursuing justice – one case at a time. By doing so, we make life better for our community, state, nation and world. Perhaps these are lofty goals, but to do less would be a disservice to the rule of law on which our nation was built and to our own potential.



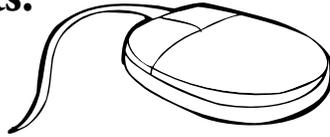
# Quick Guide to the Courts

## For Directions to the Courts:

[www.miottawa.org/Courts](http://www.miottawa.org/Courts)

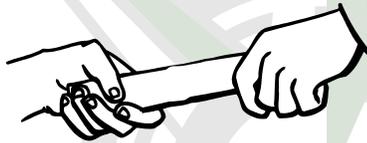


For General Information:  
Call any office listed on this page



## For Payment Convenience:

- Make payments online at [www.miottawa.org](http://www.miottawa.org)
- Call any office to pay by credit card
- Mail payments
- Pay in person



### 20th Circuit Trial Division

414 Washington Ave., Room 303  
Grand Haven, MI 49417  
Phone: 616.846.8320  
Fax: 616.846.8179

### Friend of the Court

414 Washington Ave.,  
PO Box 566  
Grand Haven, MI 49417  
Phone: 616.846.8210  
Fax: 616.846.8128

### Holland Satellite Office

12185 James St. Suite 170  
Holland, MI 49424

### Family Division/Juvenile Services

12120 Filmore Street  
West Olive, MI 49460  
Phone: 616.786.4100  
Fax: 616.786.4154

### Holland Satellite Office

12185 James St., Suite 170  
Holland, MI 49424

### Probate Court

12120 Filmore Street  
West Olive, MI 49460  
Phone: 616.786.4110  
Fax: 616.738.4624

## Staff Facts

### 20th Circuit Court

4 Circuit Court Judges  
112 Full Time Staff  
4 Part Time Staff  
14 Temporary Staff  
4.5 Ottawa County Sheriff Deputies  
(Assigned to Circuit Court)  
10 Ottawa Area Intermediate School District Teachers and Aides  
(Assigned to Juvenile Services)  
148.5 Total

### Ottawa County Probate Court

1 Judge  
5 Full Time Staff  
1 Temporary Staff  
7 Total