



## FRANKLIN COUNTY MUNICIPAL COURT

375 South High Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215-4520

Chambers of  
**Judge Mark Hummer**  
Administrative & Presiding Judge  
Telephone: 614/645-8207

March 31, 2022

Franklin County Municipal Court Clerk  
Citizens of Franklin County

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In accordance with section 1901.14 of the Ohio Revised Code, it is my pleasure to provide you with the 2021 Annual Report of the Franklin County Municipal Court.

From all indications, the Franklin County Municipal Court remains the largest and busiest municipal court in Ohio. We continually strive to improve our services to every citizen who appears in this Court and to be wise and efficient stewards of taxpayer resources. We appreciate the financial support that we receive in these difficult economic times and hope that this continued support is a reflection of your trust in the way we conduct our operations and expend taxpayer dollars.

The increasing complexity of the laws and the desire to meet the needs of every citizen who appears in this Court present substantial challenges to our judges and staff. As you will see from the details in the report that follows, our judges, and staff remain fully committed to meeting the needs of our citizens and our community. We continually strive to improve our services and fulfill our obligation to fairly interpret the laws of Ohio.

Please feel free to contact me or Court Administrator Emily Shaw at (614) 645-8214 if you have any questions or would like any additional information.

Yours truly,

/S/ Mark Hummer

Mark Hummer  
Administrative and Presiding Judge

Enclosure

# **THE FRANKLIN COUNTY MUNICIPAL COURT**

**375 South High Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215-4520  
614-645-8214**



## **2021 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Franklin County Municipal Court traces its origin to the creation of the Columbus Municipal Court in 1916. Now, the geographic jurisdiction of the Court is all of Franklin County and those portions of the City of Columbus that extend beyond the boundaries of Franklin County. The Court has 14 judges in the General Division and one judge in the Environmental Division. Judges serve six-year terms, unless appointed or elected to fill a vacancy. Annually, they elect one of their peers to serve as the Administrative and Presiding Judge.

The judges who served the Franklin County Municipal Court during the year 2021 Administrative and Presiding Judge Ted Barrows and Judges James Green, Andrea C. Peebles, David B. Tyack, Mark A. Hummer, James P. O’Grady, Cindi Morehart, Cynthia L. Ebner, Eileen Paley, Jodi Thomas, Jarrod Skinner, Jessica D’Varga, appointed Judges Michael King and Gina Russo, and Environmental Court Judge Stephanie Mingo.

Judges preside over civil, criminal, and traffic cases, conduct both jury, and court trials. In jury trials, judges interpret the law and the jury determines the facts. Court trials are the most common trials in this Court. In these trials, judges have the dual role of interpreting the law and determining the facts. The judges also conduct criminal arraignments and preliminary hearings on felony cases; set bond on criminal charges; issue search warrants; and impose sentence when a defendant is found guilty of a traffic or criminal charge. The judges hear civil cases with an amount in controversy of \$15,000 or less, and cases that are transferred from the Small Claims Division to the General Division of the Court. Other civil disputes resolved in this Court included evictions, rent escrow proceedings, and proceedings to aid in the collection of judgments.

The Environmental Division has exclusive jurisdiction to enforce local codes and regulations affecting real property, such as fire and building codes. The Environmental Division has injunctive powers, and there is no monetary limit on those cases that fall within the Division’s exclusive jurisdiction.

Each week a different judge is assigned to the Duty Session to handle a variety of responsibilities, such as applications from law enforcement officers for search warrants, probable cause hearings, and civil wedding ceremonies.

## **ASSIGNMENT OFFICE**

The Assignment Office provides the Court with case management, case flow, and administrative support on all assigned judicial cases for the 14 Judges of the General Division and the Judge of the Environmental Division from the time of judicial assignment through termination, any post-sentence case management, which would include probation hearings, sealing of record hearings and any post-judgment case management for civil cases. The Franklin County Municipal Court is entitled through R.C. 1901.33(A), to appoint an assignment commissioner, deputy assignment commissioners, and other court aides. The office currently consists of an assignment commissioner, one assignment supervisor, six case coordinators, one unassigned case coordinator, and four full-time assignment clerks.

The Assignment Office is responsible for the assignment of cases to the judiciary, by random assignment or single assignment. The Rules of Superintendence for Municipal Courts, promulgated by the Supreme Court of Ohio, requires that cases be assigned to judges in a random manner. Random assignment occurs at the time a defendant enters a “not guilty” plea in criminal and traffic cases, and upon the filing of a motion or an answer in civil cases (Local Rule 1). The Court also employs a single assignment system (Local Rule 8). This means that when a person is charged with a criminal or traffic offense and already has a pending criminal or traffic case, or the person is on probation to this Court, the new case(s) will be assigned to the judge who is presiding over a current pending assigned case(s) or who presided over any previous case(s) with current active probation.

The Assignment Commissioner, Assignment Supervisor, and Case Coordinators assign all cases ripe for assignment, schedule all judicial pre-sentence and post-sentence hearings, review pleadings, and motions, prepare and monitor the judicial civil motions lists and case updating reports, as well as prepare the Form A and Individual Judicial Reports for the judges to be submitted to the Supreme Court of Ohio. Assignment Clerks will update, research, and prepare all case files for the assignment case coordinators to schedule, as well as logging and docketing sealing of record reports, update case information for notices, motions, and judicial entries. All staff members perform case updating in the current database system for attorneys, suburban prosecutors, and case pleadings.

Staff will verify jail status and research defendants for single assignment, by determining if a defendant has pending and/or probation which would change the random judicial assignment of a newly assigned criminal, traffic, and sealing of records cases. The office reviews and updates civil case information and sends notice of filing on certain motions, entries, and objections per Ohio Rules of Civil Procedure and Local Rules. The Assignment Office services a public counter which is staffed by the Assignment Clerks. Personnel will assist Court and Clerk staff, Prosecutors, Attorneys, and the general public. Assistance includes providing case information, such as schedule dates and locations, accepting new attorney database registration and/or changes, notice of appearance of counsel, party address changes, scheduling court dates, notary service, and directions within the building, and other court information.

The Assignment Commissioner manages the single case judicial appointments made to the Supreme Court of Ohio, in conjunction with the Court Administrator, from the Court’s request, appointment, and through the termination of the case(s), and any subsequent post-sentence hearings. Appointments occur when there is a judicial court recusal on an assigned case(s). In 2021 the court had six cases that required judicial appointments, four special appointments for bench conflicts, and three general requests for judicial seat coverage.

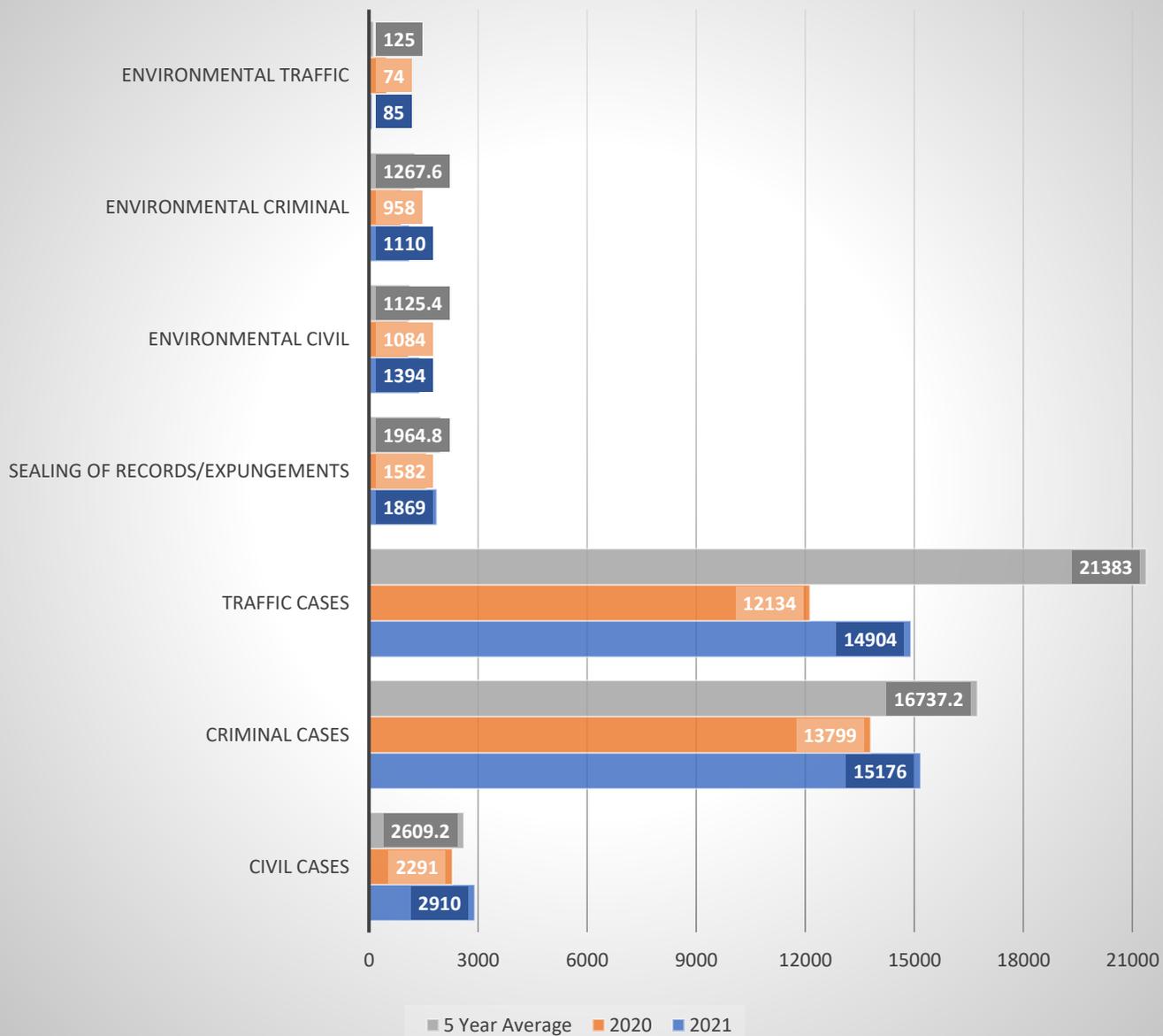
The Franklin County Municipal Court has four General Division judges operating five specialized docket programs (Local Rule 8). The specialty dockets are the CATCH - Changing Actions to Change Habits;

MAVS - Military and Veteran's Docket; h.a.r.t. - Helping Achieve Recovery Together; L.I.N.C. - Learning to Identify and Navigate Change; and Recovery Court. All pre-sentence and post-sentence hearings are scheduled in the Assignment Office by the case coordinator assigned to the judge who is elected to operating that particular program (Local Rule 8). The case coordinator will carry-out case transfers between the referring judge and the program judge within the database and update case files. Coordinators will transfer cases back to the referring judge when defendants are not accepted or they decline to participate in a program.

On all assigned cases, parties are notified of pending hearing dates by mail for all initial hearings or by fax for incarcerated defendants. All subsequent hearings scheduled for civil cases are issued by mail and when requested for criminal, traffic, and sealing of record cases, otherwise, in-court notification is used for criminal, traffic, or sealing of record cases. In 2021, the assignment office received, processed, updated, and managed 1,742 completed motions, and at the end of 2021, there were 389 pending motions on assigned judicial civil cases.

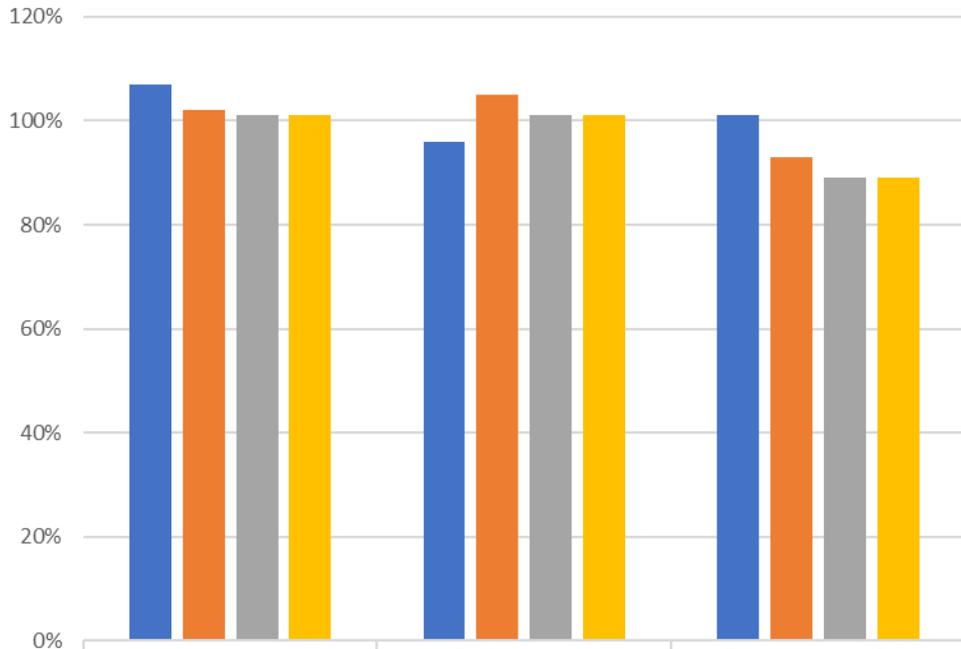
In 2021 the Assignment Office scheduled approximately 92,000 hearings and mailed approximately 355,500 hearing notices to parties, which was only a reduction of 9.1% in hearings scheduled and a decrease of 8.7% in hearing notices issued to parties from the previous year. Additionally, the Court saw a 13.8% increase in new and reactivated cases from 32,277 in 2020 to 37,448 in 2021. For all case-type categories, the graph below shows an increase from 2020. The top number in each category indicates the five-year average. The most significant decrease is still in traffic case numbers.

## New Judicial Assignments and Reactivated Cases



The office has the responsibility to prepare management reports for the judiciary, such as case statistic reports, hearing statistics, and monthly statistical reports for each judge for submission to the Ohio Supreme Court. The office also prepares the individual judge’s daily docket court sheets, board-sheets, and the judicial civil motion’s list. The chart below shows the 2020 and 2021 clearance rates for the Court by division and the 5-year clearance average.

### General and Environmental Clearance Rates Comparisons



	General Division	Environmental Division	Environmental Civil from Form A
■ 2020	107.00%	96.00%	101.00%
■ 2021	102.00%	105.00%	93.00%
■ Previous 5 Year Average	101.00%	101.00%	89.00%
■ Current 5 Year Average	101.00%	101.00%	89.00%

The Environmental Division saw the largest increase over 2020, but the Environmental Division – Civil Form A cases saw the largest clearance rate decrease. All five-year averages for all divisions remained the same as the previous five-year average.

### **BAILIFFS**

Bailiffs coordinate activities in the courtrooms, schedule cases, provide docket management, provide information to the public about the status of cases, and act as liaisons between their assigned judge or magistrate and attorneys, court personnel, and the general public. Each judge has an assigned courtroom bailiff, there is an unassigned bailiff who rotates among the judges to provide courtroom coverage when a judge’s bailiff is absent, and there is a duty room and two arraignment bailiffs. Each magistrate also has a bailiff.

### **COURT ADMINISTRATION**

Court Administration oversees the administrative and operational functions of the Court. It carries out the non-judicial policies of the Court. In addition to providing overall support and direction to the Court’s 260 employees, some of its specific functions include personnel management, budgeting, and fiscal management, purchasing, liaison with other courts and agencies, public information, appointment of counsel, court services, court security, interpreter services, vehicle immobilization, and volunteer services.

The Court Administrator is the chief non-judicial officer.

The Court's General Fund Operating budget for 2021 was \$20,429,897 with an additional \$805,817 Secure Facilities Fund budget and \$665,389 Computer Fund budget.

**Breakdown of General Fund Operating Budget 2021**

Personal services	\$17,855,428
Materials and supplies	65,000
Services	2,019,469
Other expenditures	490,000
Total General Fund Expenditures	\$20,429,897

**COURT REPORTERS**

Court Reporters make a verbatim record of court proceedings, prepare a transcript from the record of court proceedings upon request, and maintain records of exhibits introduced at court proceedings. The Court has an obligation to provide a transcript of all proceedings upon request of a party, and there must be a court record of all pleas and waivers. In 2021 the Department was staffed with 1 chief court reporter, 8 full-time court reporters, and 4 part-time court reporters and they provided 236 transcript and/or DVD requests.

**COURT SECURITY**

Court Security was established to maintain a safe environment in the courthouse for elected officials, Court employees, and all others having business in the courthouse. The staff consists of a security director, three supervisors, 1 control room operator, and 18 security officers on the first shift, plus a control room operator on each of the second and third shifts. In addition, the Court contracts with a private security company to provide daylight, evening, weekend, and holiday coverage.

During 2021 approximately 493,002 visitors to the Court were screened at the Court's entry points by security officers. These officers responded to 352 building incidents. Columbus Police Liaisons made 351 arrests in the building.

**COURT SERVICES**

The Court Services Unit assists in the day-to-day duties of the Duty Room, Court Services public counter, bailiff coverage, and vehicle sanctions. This Unit of the Court consists of 5 full-time and 1 part-time employees.

The Judges are assigned to the Duty Room on a weekly rotating basis. The Duty Judge approves Magistrate decisions, rules on motions filed on all non-assigned civil cases, performs civil ceremonies, signs search warrants, hold hearings for show cause, exemption requests, objections to a Magistrate's decision, and warrant set asides, and performs myriad of other miscellaneous duties.

For 2021 the Duty Room handled:

- 36,500 civil files signed in the Duty Room, an increase of 40.9%.
  - a. 3,943 or 11% of those files sought approval of Magistrate decisions.
  - b. 582 or 1.6% of those files sought hearings for show cause, exemption requests, and objections to a Magistrate's decision.

- 219 civil ceremonies were scheduled with 412 or 53.2% of those civil ceremonies actually taking place.

Court Services helps defendants resolve matters such as extensions of time to pay fines and court costs, delaying the start of court-ordered incarceration, issuance of or change in limited driving privileges, withdrawal of warrant or order-in that has been issued, assistance with impounded vehicles, assistance with Bureau of Motor Vehicle (BMV) problems, and continuance of a court date.

For 2021 Court Services handled:

- 1,465 people for an average of 5.91 people a day. Of those who came in 681 people or 46.5% could not be assisted or were directed to the correct place.
- 207 people or 14.1% wanted their warrants set aside.
- 87 people or 5.9% wanted to be put on time payments for their fines and costs.
- 12 people or 1% wanted to either change their driving privileges or wanted to get driving privileges.
- 125 people or 8.5% wanted their fines and costs changed to community service.
- 270 people or 18.4% wanted a continuance for either their court date, driver intervention program, dates sentenced to jail, or fines and costs.
- 83 people or 5.7% came in for miscellaneous matters.

State law mandates the immobilization or forfeiture of vehicles operated by defendants who are convicted of the following offenses: repeat OVI offenses (operating a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or drugs) and driving under certain court or BMV related suspensions. Immobilization or forfeiture of vehicles involved in suspension cases related to the Financial Responsibility Act or wrongful entrustment of a vehicle are at the Court's discretion.

This Unit also acts as a liaison and is responsible for the communications to and from the court, law enforcement, and defendants to ensure compliance with the Court's orders involving the defendant's vehicle.

For 2021 Vehicle Sanctions handled:

- 3,708 OVI cases filed representing an increase of 0.7%.
- 4,766 Driving Under Suspension cases filed representing a decrease of 11.6% from 2020.
- 391 or 8.2% of the Driving Under Suspension cases were related to driving under an OVI suspension. Driving under an OVI suspension requires a 30-day immobilization of the vehicle.
- 400 vehicles were released representing a 6.5% decrease from 2020.
- 162 vehicles were relocated representing a 1.2% increase from 2020.
- 78 vehicles were immobilized representing a 4.8% decrease from 2020.
- 32 cases were filed where the Prosecutor and Court were seeking forfeiture of the vehicle, a decrease of 51.5% from 2020.
- 2 vehicles were forfeited representing an 81.8% decrease from 2020.
- According to law enforcement 5 vehicles that were order immobilized could not be because of the non-compliance of the defendant. There cases were referred back to the assigned Judge and a ruling was issued.
- 41 Wrongful Entrustment cases were filed representing an increase of 22%

## **ENVIRONMENTAL DIVISION**

In the Environmental Division, which is commonly referred to as “The Environmental Court”, Judge Stephanie Mingo has continued to successfully integrate a series of unique sentencing strategies to combat vacant and abandoned properties, along with chronically offending landlords in Franklin County. The impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic on the Environmental Division was unprecedented. Included within the Court's unique jurisdiction is the enforcement of Public Health codes and regulations. This required the Court to adjudicate several cases involving the implementation of protocols designed to prevent and slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus in various commercial establishments.

Under the jurisdiction of the Environmental Division, nuisance abatement cases filed within the County come before the Environmental Judge. These cases can involve derelict hotels, businesses violating health department orders, liquor establishments in violation of the law, drug houses, and other residential and commercial properties conducting illegal and nuisance activities. Nuisance activities can range from illegal drug sales, underage alcohol sales, operating contrary to health department orders, prostitution, and general violence. The Environmental Division also hears cases involving environmental crimes, violations, and similar matters filed within the County. Some examples of these cases include animal abuse and neglect, dog fighting, vicious animals, wildlife violations, poaching, littering, dumping, overweight trucks, hazardous waste transportation, unlicensed tire transportation, air pollution, water pollution, hoarding, health, zoning, code enforcement, and park district violations. In 2021, 3,026 new criminal cases and 633 new civil cases were filed within the Environmental Division.

As the only Court in the County hearing code enforcement cases, the Environmental Division utilizes unique techniques to ensure our communities and neighborhoods are restored from the negative and often hazardous impact of nuisance properties. Property owners are ordered to bring their properties into compliance under the supervision of the Court’s Chief Environmental Specialist and the Field Services Staff of the Environmental Division. Penalties range from daily fines, jail time, and community service hours to be completed within the Court’s Community Cleanup Crew program. Property owners are supervised by Environmental Division staff and are assigned reasonable compliance plans and timelines until compliance is achieved.

The Environmental Division operates two courtrooms simultaneously with Magistrate Ben Hoelzel conducting civil case conferences and Judge Stephanie Mingo presiding over civil and criminal hearings. An additional Environmental Specialist was added to the Field Services Staff, and a Magistrate’s Bailiff was added to the Division staff in November of 2021. These additional staff members were much needed additions to an ever-growing caseload and realm of responsibility of the Environmental Division.

In 2021, the Environmental Division along with the Court’s Probation Department provided supervision to all non-code enforcement related cases that resulted in a probation sentencing. A dedicated probation officer is assigned to supervise these cases with the Chief Environmental Specialist and the Environmental Division’s Field Services staff providing field investigations and inspections for those cases. The Chief Environmental Specialist in conjunction with the field service staff members routinely conduct investigations and inspections to ensure compliance with the law, the conditions of probation, and other terms of sentencing.

The Environmental Division has continued its education and outreach programs throughout Franklin County, despite the COVID-19 Pandemic. Judge Mingo and the Environmental Division communicated remotely with many neighborhood groups and associations, area commissions, block watches, and community leaders in an effort to stay connected during the pandemic. The Environmental Division also

maintains its website – [www.EnvironmentalCourt.us](http://www.EnvironmentalCourt.us) – to provide helpful information to the public and to serve as a resource for area agencies.

In the face of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Environmental Division has taken steps to adjust protocols and Court procedures to keep citizens as safe as possible when attending Court. This has been balanced with adjustments in scheduling to continue to accommodate an increasing caseload that is expected in the wake of the pandemic. As we head into 2022, the economic impact of the pandemic in our most vulnerable neighborhoods is likely to lead to an increase in housing and building code complaints. In addition, the alarming spike in violence in our community, especially instances concentrated in certain localities, has already led to a dramatic increase in nuisance abatement cases involving illicit drugs and violence.

### **JURY COMMISSIONER’S OFFICE**

The Jury Commissioner’s office to work with its software provider, the Board of Elections, and the Courts Technology department to load a new list of prospective jurors to serve for each calendar year. The Jury Commissioner’s office summonses the required number of jurors needed to cover every courtroom, including all 15 judges and six magistrates daily. There are approximately 80 potential jury trials every day in the Municipal Court. The Jury Commissioner’s office will arrange and assign prospective qualified jurors to courtrooms when called upon for a scheduled jury trial. The Jury Commissioner’s office tracks demographics for every two-week reporting group and for the calendar year to ensure there is a true sampling of all cognizable groups in Franklin County.

Jury service is a two-week commitment. Jurors are paid \$15 a day for their attendance when they report to court. Jury service is limited to two weeks, except in those cases in which additional days are required to reach a verdict. Jurors are provided vouchers to the three local parking garages to help defray parking expenses. Jurors are also provided with bus passes for the COTA bus line.

Starting on March 16, 2020, jury service in the Municipal Court changed from 65 jurors reporting each day, to on-call jury service, where four groups of 25 jurors are randomly generated within the two-week period; the on-call practice is still in place. Jurors now have the opportunity to qualify themselves and start receiving daily text and phone messages for their two-week commitment. With 90 to 100 jurors available every two weeks, a juror may only need to report once within their service period. Instead of jurors reporting every day and waiting in our assembly room for a potential trial, the on-call process allows them to only report when needed for the voir dire process and if selected, the trial. In 2019, a full year of reporting each day, juror payroll was \$168,090.00 and the juror utilization rate was 13.65%. In 2021, a full year of on-call, juror payroll was \$19,665.00 with a juror utilization rate of 75.47%.

### **LANGUAGE SERVICES**

During 2021 the Court employed two full-time Spanish language interpreters and one full-time Somali, MayMay, and Swahili language interpreter and contracted for one part-time Spanish and one part-time Somali language interpreters. Together they completed an estimated 5,236 requests for service (4,660 in Spanish and 576 in Somali, MayMay, and Swahili). The Court has multiple contracts with outside vendors to provide foreign language and ASL interpreters. There were 1,325 requests for interpreters in 43 other languages, 1,256 requests were filled by onsite interpreters and there were 69 requests in languages of lesser diffusion like Tagalog, Indonesian, Zomi, Burmese, Khmer, Krio, Kinyarwanda, Soninke, Yoruba, and Mandinka that were covered through remote interpretation. The foreign languages for which interpreters were most requested were Spanish, Somali, Nepali, Arabic, French, Mandarin, Russian,

Tigrinya, Amharic, and Kinyarwanda. Additionally, the Court filled 144 requests for American Sign Language and Certified Deaf interpretation and Captionist. The Interpreter Services Program continues to offer a mentoring program and training opportunities for judiciary interpreters to better serve the Court and all parties.

The Interpreter Services Program (ISP) continue to implement the Language Access Services Needs Assessment and Language Access Plan created with the recommendations from the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). These two valuable resources assist the ISP to improve services offered to limited English proficient (LEP) individuals and deaf and hard of hearing persons. By implementing the final recommendations from the NCSC, the ISP has improved its programs and operating procedures, streamlined the requesting and scheduling processes to save valuable public resources and provide the most qualified interpreters. The ISP continues to promote effective communication throughout the courthouse to better assist the prompt and organized scheduling of interpreters, which represents a large part of the ISP's work.

In accordance with the Court's Language Access Plan and the Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio, this Court uses certified, provisionally qualified and registered court interpreters as well as telephonic and video interpretation. Adhering to these standards ensures that communication between the court and litigants is not hampered due to limited English proficiency.

The ISP continues to offer a mentoring program to encourage area interpreters to shadow the full-time interpreting staff. During 2021, this court following all Covid-19 protocols has been able to continue to offer in-person as well as remote interpretation to better serve all LEP parties. The ISP using remote equipment has been able to provide interpretation during hearings and trials always following all CDC recommendations. The ISP worked very closely with certified, provisionally qualified and registered interpreters making sure all recommendations were followed.

The ISP's mission is to have interpreters who provide ethical and professional services in a uniform and transparent manner. The ISP routinely monitors the performance of on-site and remote interpreters, for accuracy, completeness, transparency and confidentiality, and abiding by the Code of Professional Conduct for Judiciary Interpreters and Translators. The dedication and professionalism of contracted ASL and foreign language interpreters who serve the bench and all LEP parties on daily basis are essential to our ability to offer all parties access to justice and equal protection under the law.

Franklin County has a growing diverse community and with this diversity comes expanding needs to provide court services in multiple languages. In 2021, the Court completed an estimated 528 requests for service in Nepali. The Court continues in its effort to recruit, mentor and train Nepali interpreters to serve the members of the Bhutanese-Nepali community in Franklin County.

The primary languages requested in order of use are Spanish, Somali, Nepali, Arabic and French. Due to the rise of case filings with parties who speak African languages, the ISP has dedicated efforts to recruit interpreters who speak Kinyarwanda, Krio, Soninke, and Yoruba.

For certain languages and dialects where qualified on-site interpreters are not available, the Court continues to rely on telephonic and video interpretation. There were 69 telephonic and video interpretation calls to assist with parties who spoke Tagalog, Indonesian, Zomi, Burmese, Khmer, Krio, Kinyarwanda, Soninke, Yoruba, and Mandinka.

The ISP continues to translate waivers, forms, signage and informational material for the courtrooms, Self Help Center, Probation and Small Claims Departments.

The ISP would like to recognize the continuous support of the National Center for State Courts in how to face the many challenges this year brought our court. Also, the ISP would like to recognize the continuous support of the Supreme Court of Ohio for providing remote interpreting in languages of lesser diffusion.

The ISP follows the recommendations of the Supreme Court's "Court Interpreter Bench Notes" while working with remote interpreters and has acquired better equipment through technology grants to better assist the court and parties with these special languages.

In 2021, the ISP continued to collaborate with Community and Court Interpreters of Ohio (CCIO) and the Supreme Court of Ohio to present language neutral and language specific trainings in Legal Terminology, Ethics in the Remote Setting as well as Meta-Ethics for the Judiciary Interpreters of Ohio. Due to Covid-19 all training was offered via Zoom.

### **LEGAL RESEARCH**

The Legal Research Department was reorganized in 2021. The part-time Law Clerk positions were eliminated in favor of a full-time Staff Attorney supervised by the Director. The department researches and prepares memoranda on issues pending before the Court, maintains research and reference materials, reviews new case law to ensure the Court's compliance with the decisions, reviews pending legislation that may affect the Court, and advises the judges and employees regarding new legal developments and applications of current law to court procedures. The Director also serves as a parttime magistrate and liaison to the Court's Self Help Resource Center.

### **MAGISTRATES**

The Court employs five full-time General Division magistrates, and one part-time magistrate who preside over traffic arraignments, landlord-tenant actions, wage garnishments, small claims cases, and other civil matters. The Court also employs one Environmental Division magistrate who presides over criminal and traffic arraignments and hearings, all civil pre-trials and status conferences, other civil hearings, and manages the civil docket of the Environmental Division. Judges may also refer specific cases to magistrates to take testimony, make legal rulings, and render decisions that are subject to final approval by the referring judge. Magistrates have the authority to accept guilty and no contest pleas and to impose penalties in misdemeanor traffic cases. Magistrates may hear minor misdemeanor criminal cases or civil cases tried without a jury as well as contested criminal cases and civil jury trials with consent of the parties.

### **DEPARTMENT OF PRETRIAL AND PROBATION SERVICES**

The Department of Pretrial and Probation Services (DOPPS) serves the Franklin County Municipal Court Judges under the immediate direction of the Court Administrator. At approximately, one hundred staff, the DOPPS is the largest division of the Court. The vision of the DOPPS is *excellence in rehabilitation through evidence-based practices* and the mission is to *promote community safety by reducing recidivism, changing offender behavior, and fostering accountability through effective use of evidence-based practices*. The DOPPS follows an evidence-based paradigm that utilizes validated risk assessment tools and a differentiated, risk-based supervision construct. The DOPPS works with those under its supervision to achieve agreed upon goals aimed at reducing risk and gaining compliance with court-ordered conditions.

The assessment-driven, supervision goals and requirements can include any of the following: residential programming, cognitive-behavioral based interventions, and behavioral health assessments, educational programs, counseling for mental health and/or substance abuse needs, and random urinalysis.

This year, in collaboration with the Judges of the Court, the DOPPS continued its commitment to becoming a data-driven department. Because of this commitment to transparency and to routinely evaluating our outcomes, the Department continues to prepare and share with stakeholders, a quarterly evidence-based practices (EBP) outcomes dashboard report. This report helps inform our practices and any additional training or resource needs we may have. It also helps ensure that we are meeting our goals of risk-reduction and public safety.

The year 2021 proved to challenge many of our efforts due to the continued impact of COVID-19 and the need to continually adjust practices. Despite the challenges, the Department continued to provide support to the Judges and those under our supervision. We learned that many of the adjustments that were made to help ensure the safety and health of our employees and Department users, proved beneficial and removed barriers that can impact success. We look forward to continuing to evaluate these modified approaches and retain practices and process that move us closer to our goals.

### **Staff Overview**

The DOPPS is proud to have highly trained and professional staff. In 2021, twenty-nine percent (29%) of the probation officers held a Master's Degree. Twenty-four percent (24%) of the probation officers held a license in Counseling, Social Work or Chemical Dependency, twenty-four percent (24%) of the probation officers are State Certified Trainers for the Supreme Court Judicial College, and seventy-seven percent (77%) of the probation officers are certified in one either Thinking for a Change, UC-CC, Equip or the Duluth Model of Batterer Intervention.

### **Professional Development**

The Department's Training and Development Project Manager, is a position that is funded through the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections, Bureau of Community Sanctions grant. Some of the goals of this function are to assist the Department in the implementation of and fidelity to its strategic plan, and to assist in the development of staff. The Department continues to prioritize Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) of staff, however, the 2021, CQI process was halted in light of COVID-19 and modified practices.

In 2021, in-between COVID, we were able to send four more people through the University of Cincinnati's CBI-CC (Core Curriculum) Facilitator Training. This training was to coincide with our Thinking for a Change (T4C) groups that we were placed on hold due to COVID. As with T4C the CBI-CC is designed to provide a thorough intervention that broadly targets all criminogenic needs. It relies on a cognitive-behavioral approach to teach participants strategies to manage risk factors and places heavy emphasis on skill building activities.

All in-person training was also suspended during 2020, however, in 2021, many opportunities opened up for in person as well as virtual trainings. Staff completed a total of 2,591.70 hours of virtual/web-based trainings during 2021. Of which, 1,012.75 of the hours were designated Changing Offender Behavior hours.

The Court is working with StepMobile on the continued development of the Ohio Community Supervision System (OCSS), a web-based, probation case management system. This effort was expedited in 2020 due to COVID 19 and has continued to develop in 2021. One of the many benefits of OCSS is the ability to

conduct virtual interviews with defendants. Staff completed a total of 11,036 video appointments with defendants during 2021 which is a 273% increase in virtual appointments from 2020.

To help ensure meaningful and skill-based interventions with defendants, the Department invested in electronic intervention tools and techniques.

In an effort to support defendants who do not have access to WiFi or cellular data access, the Court applied for and received COVID-related grant dollars to purchase disposable smart phones and data plans in 2020 and have continued to disperse these phones to defendants in 2021. This has proven to be very beneficial.

Training and development goals for 2021 include continued enhancement and utilization of OCSS to best meet the Department's needs, booster trainings for officers on use of the electronic cognitive behavioral interventions, the continuation of its robust continuous quality improvement process, and re-implementation of in-person strategic trainings, to include the evidence based, BriefCASE Training, Mental Health First Aid and Narcan administration training, to ensure staff certifications remain current.

### **Student Development/Internships**

The DOPPS has been committed to providing internship opportunities for several students. The students and the Department identify objectives and expectations to strengthen the internship experience and help both the Department and student achieve a positive and productive partnership in learning, and further develop their professional skills in the field of community corrections.

In addition, the internship provides an opportunity to link the theoretical concepts that they have studied in the classroom setting with practical work-related experiences. It is hoped that their experience fully demonstrates how probation/community control is utilized to promote change and rehabilitation.

The internship orientation process includes an overview of the Court and the Department and includes: the case assignment process, evidence-based practices, supervision structure, and risk levels. There is also a mid-point review, wrap-up session upon completion and a final evaluation of the internship by both the intern and Department supervisor. There were three student placements during 2020. This is a lower number of placements than usual and can most likely be attributed to the hybrid schedules of the Court, colleges and universities.

There were three student intern placements for 2021. These students contributed to the department assisting with various tasks for probation officers, projects and data entry.

In additions, a fourth student was provided a one-day shadow/observation opportunity with a probation officer, and two additional probation officers participated in a Virtual Event for Criminal Justice students through a community college. The purpose of the event was to allow small groups of students at different time slots to speak with professionals in Criminal Justice & Legal fields so they can gain a greater awareness of the duties, highlights and challenges of working in various occupations.

### **Administrative Support Services**

The DOPPS Support Unit upholds the mission of reducing recidivism by ensuring individuals placed on probation are assigned an appropriate officer for successful program completion. Throughout 2020 amidst a global pandemic, this Unit has maintained business-as-usual and effectively changed processes to promote the safety and wellbeing of the clients served, as well as the department as a whole. To maintain social distancing, the reception window has conducted expedited intakes to minimize exposure. Clients fill out their own information and are contacted through their preferred method of communication their next

steps of intake within three business days. All in-custody, holding cell interviews have been discontinued in lieu of the absentee intake process. Clients are instructed to call the next business day, but are also sent a letter about their next steps through USPS to their last known address. This has caused minimal disruption to the intake process, as clients are still able to be assessed and assigned as appropriate.

All team members were able to complete the certification process for the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS), and are now able to move forward with assisting in the completion of the Community Supervision Tool (CST) in 2021.

With the continued development of OCSS, the Support Unit has been responsible for ensuring its success. The Unit operates both out of CourtView and OCSS to maintain accurate records that enables officers to meet the needs of their clients. After the initial transfer of data from CourtView, 60% of all cases (both active and terminated) have been edited for accuracy in OCSS by the unit. This effort will remain ongoing throughout the rest of the implementation of the system, and the Support Unit is equipped for the challenge.

In the early months of 2021, the Unit has begun diligently updating previous processes, such as Violation Hearing communications and case modifications. The ongoing goal for the Support Unit in 2021 is to modernize DOPPS, by digitizing all available information and eliminating the passing of hard files. This is being accomplished through the constant monitoring of caseloads in OCSS, as well as scanning and uploading intake information for ease of use to the officer. By the end of the year, the implementation of OCSS has been completed, and the Unit has standardized all processes associated with the intake of a client, and continues to utilize the system to its maximum efficiency. This includes: scheduling and completing virtual intakes, assisting with the virtual Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA) and ORAS assessments as necessary, and the installation and implementation of the OCSS self-service kiosk.

### **Assessment Services and Community Programming**

The Department's Intake Assessment project began in May, 2018. The goal of this project is to lessen the amount of time between intake and supervision assignment and reduce the number of transfers between officers by having complete assessment information completed prior to case assignment. This project is supported by a variety of funding sources and is in collaboration with Alvis, Inc.

The Department contracts with Alvis for three Assessment Specialists, housed within the DOPPS, whose main function is to conduct risk assessments on defendants, in order to inform their placement within the evidence-based supervision construct. These contracted staff completed approximately 920 assessments in 2021, on cases referred both from intake and other units who required assistance in this area. The average length of time from Intake to Assessment was fifty-six (56) days, slightly up from 2020 due to technological issues (now corrected) with a new case management system. We continue to strive for less days as we are now advancing this system and utilizing it with most Assessments. This number continues to be an improvement from the baseline of seventy-five (75) days that the DOPPS averaged before implementation of this function. The total number of Assessments completed by the entire Assessment team was 1,276 in 2021 with an average time of forty-one (41) days.

The impact on staff time, and the direct linkage of defendants to their assigned officers based upon their assessed risk level has improved dramatically through this process. In 2021, the assessment specialist's continued completing alcohol and drug (AOD) screenings and making referrals to the Special Programs Unit for swift referral to the Department's Tri-C and Anchor4Me programs, in an effort to further more swiftly connect defendants to these valuable programs and develop and expand their function within the

department. The completion of the AOD screenings also assists the receiving officer's ability to refer for further assessment and or programming in a timelier manner. In 2021, the assessors began completing screening for direct referral to the mental health and developmental disability caseloads in an effort to minimize the amount of time between intake and assignment to the appropriate supervision level. Due to the Pandemic, the assessors continued to complete assessments via video to stay in line with social distancing guidelines. This has proven to be beneficial and has improved the show and assessment completion rate for the department.

The DOPPS Special Programs Unit (SPU) is comprised of one Community Resource Specialist (CRS), one Coordinator, and the Courthouse (CH) Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Program Manager and Case Manager. The Community Resource Specialist directly supervises the Department's Special Programs Coordinator and CH MAT staff. The SPU works in collaboration with one another to get those in need of behavioral health treatment linked with the appropriate program and services.

The Community Resource Specialist assists in the management of the Court's Suzanne Hopper Act or Form 95 Process that identifies individuals under supervision with specific mental health diagnoses and convictions and provides notification to law enforcement (approximately fifty-five (55) forms submitted in 2021). The CRS position also oversees the Department's Resource Committee and provides weekly reports to the Court of available community resources. This position along with the Special Programs Coordinator, coordinates placements into the Department's residential treatment programs and participates on planning teams for the Department's halfway house program (HHRP), day programming response (Comprehensive Community Care or TRI C), Safe Housing and the Courthouse MAT programs. Approximately seventy-two (72) screenings were completed in 2021, for residential placement, up from fifty (50) the previous year. Another thirty-five (35) were referred to Tri-C Intensive Outpatient Programming.

An essential function of the CRS is maintaining data and outcomes for the Court's myriad of community programs. In 2021, this position conducted approximately twenty (20) behavioral health and risk assessments both in the community and in the jail to help inform specialized supervision needs and appropriate treatment level of care. In 2020, the SPU also began outreach to public defenders and judges in effort to help ensure that violation hearings are scheduled in a timely fashion. In 2021, the SPU also began to monitor SCRAM violations and became the link between PO's and AverHealth in an effort to ensure all violations are addressed appropriately and in a timely manner.

The CRS also serves as the chair and advisor to the Department's Resource Committee. One of the strategic goals for 2021 was to continue to work with The Carey Group in the creation of a community provider assessment process which will aid the Department in ensuring that the agencies where defendants are referred for programming, follow evidence-based practices and provide quality services. The Resource Committee completed their first Program Fidelity Review (PFI) in collaboration with the Carey Group in 2021 with plans for the completion of more reviews in 2022.

In 2021, the Courthouse MAT (Medicated Assisted Treatment) Program was officially changed to the MARCH program. The MARCH (MAT, Assessment, Referral, Collaboration, and HOPE) Program is funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant and Substance abuse Program (COSSAP) grant. The MARCH Program is an enhancement and expansion of the current services available through the Franklin County Municipal Court's MAT program. The MARCH Program offers services to all court visitors and not just those on probation or who are incarcerated. The MARCH Program is staffed with a team that consists of a Program Manager, MAT Case Manager, MARCH Community Case Manager/Navigator, and Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS).

Program enhancements were focused on increasing the access for court visitors who were in need of linkage to services and other forms of assistance, largely through case management. These enhancements include:

- Drop-In Center: Operating Monday through Friday with scheduled virtual or onsite service providers.
- Two additional MAT Clinic Days: Offered with morning and afternoon options.
- Two jail release days: Tuesdays and Thursdays are the new jail release days with the new time of release at 10:00 a.m. The current process for MAT entry was also changed to reflect the new release days and schedule. Jail release days now coincide with service partners being on site at the courthouse.

The MARCH program also allowed for an expansion of current services to meet the needs of visitors to the court. The expanded services include:

- Increased partnerships and service providers from the community who now provide co-located services within the courthouse on MARCH clinic days. These providers include: Positive Recovery Solutions, Columbus Public Health, Community for New Direction, House of Hope, Ohio Guidestone, Woodhaven Ohio, Lighthouse, IMPACT, Primary One Health, and Franklin County Job and Family Services, Africentric Personal Developmental Shop, BaseCamp recovery, Brightview Healthy, Columbus Springs, Equitas Health, Integrated Services for Behavioral Health, Maryhaven, North Community Counseling Centers, and Talbot Hall.
- Increased service provision because of these partnerships is now available to visitors. These services include: comprehensive screening and assessment for mental health disorders and substance use disorders provided on-site or within 24-hours of a visit at the MARCH clinic, access to Medical Assisted Treatment (MAT) for those who meet criteria and are interested, access to treatment services for mental health, substance use, and co-occurring disorders, needs assessments for other stabilization and social services including housing, emergency assistance, and basic needs.

The MARCH program is promoted regularly to help increase awareness of the services that can be accessed. The Project Director distributes a monthly calendar and sends emails with weekly updates to inform stakeholders about which providers would be available virtual and on site on which days. The program held an official ribbon cutting on October 29, 2021.

During 2021, Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant and Substance abuse Program (COSSAP) BJA grant funding was received to expand the Program. This expanded program is called MARCH or Medication Assisted Treatment Assessment Referral Care and Hope Program.

The goals of the MARCH Program are to:

- Expand its partnerships to include additional, on-site service providers
- Increase the availability of on-site MAT intervention
- Provide immediate, comprehensive and individualized screening, assessment, and case management services for all Court visitors on a walk-in or scheduled basis.
- Expand a relationship with the Court's Self-Help center.
  - This relationship will also provide assistance with food, housing, and transportation needs, as well as, Medicaid applications.
- Increase case management capabilities and provide a certified peer support specialist

## **Pretrial Services**

The Court continues to embrace the Pretrial Services performed by the Department. The Pretrial Services Unit is supported by a grant from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections, Bureau of Community Sanctions. In 2021, the Unit furthered its goals of providing programming and services in domestic violence cases at the pretrial phase. The Pretrial Officers continued in the use of the Ontario Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (ODARA) tool, utilizing it as part of the pretrial investigation process. The pretrial unit also expanded the use of the Healthy Relationships Pretrial Domestic Violence Program, a unique educational program aimed at providing access to programming and support during in the pretrial phase. This valuable program was able to continue during 2021 using a virtual format.

To guide growth of the Pretrial Unit Officer and program functions, the DOPPS had the opportunity to work with a national consultant to review the program policies and procedures and provide pretrial specific training. This technical assistance will continue into 2022.

The Pretrial Services Unit is staffed by eight (8) bail investigation and pretrial supervision Officers and one Supervisor. The goals of the Pretrial Services Program are to: 1) prepare and provide the Court with Bail Investigation reports that include validated pretrial risk assessment information and release recommendations on eligible defendants who are in custody awaiting initial appearance, in order to provide Judges with the information they need to make informed bail decisions; 2) reduce the overall length of stay for pretrial detainees; 3) to provide appropriate supervision and monitoring of defendants who are released by the Court on pretrial supervision to help ensure that they are engaging in their community-based release plan, making their Court appearances, and not engaging in new criminal activity. In 2021, the Pretrial Services Unit completed 3,077 bail investigations and supervised a total of 2,753 pretrial defendants. This was an increase from 2020 where the unit completed 1,542 bail investigations and supervised 1,384 pretrial defendants.

In response to COVID precautions, in 2020, the FCMC reduced its arraignment days and implemented a video arraignment process. Video arraignment continued throughout 2021, and returned to six days a week in 2021, allowing pretrial services to help facilitate appropriate release of defendants during the pretrial phase.

In 2021, pretrial services began piloting a sequential bail review process to provide updated assessment and release planning information to Judges for defendants who remain in custody greater than three days on a financial bond and also developed a delegated release matrix to maximize pre-booking release for low risk and low-level charged individuals.

## **Investigation Services**

The DOPPS also provides investigation services for the Court. The Investigation Unit is staffed by four officers and is overseen by one probation officer supervisor. In 2021 the Investigation Unit was assigned 45 presentence investigations and 1,860 sealing of record investigations. This represents a significant increase the sealing of record applications processed from 2020, where 1,558 applications were processed. Legal changes enacted in 2019 have continued to result in an expanded opportunity for defendants to seal their records. The Investigation Unit continues to incorporate the Department's risk assessment tools into its presentence investigation reports in order to provide the Court with the defendant's assessed risk level and appropriate supervision placement, should the Court place the defendant on community control supervision.

## **Post Disposition, Differentiated Supervision**

The DOPPS supervision construct is staffed by 51 post-disposition, supervision officers who report to six probation officer supervisors. These evidence-based supervision responses include: Risk-Based (Low, Low-Moderate, Moderate and Intensive) Supervision; Domestic Violence Supervision (includes an extremely high-risk supervision and LGBTQ+ specific responses); Sex Offender Supervision; Specialized Mental Health Supervision, Specialized Soliciting/Human Trafficking Supervision, Electronic Monitoring/Home Confinement, Work Release and supervision of the Court's specialized docket programs. The Court's specialized dockets include: Learning to Identify and Navigate Change (LINK); Military and Veteran Service (MAVS); Changing Actions to Change Habits (CATCH); Recovery Court; and Helping to Achieve Recovery Together (HART) Officers assigned to each of these supervision functions receive specialized training specifically related to the risk level and needs of population they oversee.

During 2021, the Department supervised a total of 10,279 post-disposition cases, including 4,504 new supervision placements. At years end, a total of 11,812 cases remained assigned to, or on warrant status with, the Department. This represents a slight change from 2020, when the Department supervised a total of 10,414 cases with 3,999 new placements.

Supervision outcomes for 2021 reveal:

- 87% of our low-risk defendants completed supervision
- 68% of our low moderate risk defendants completed supervision
- 51% of our moderate risk defendants completed supervision
- 41% of our high-risk defendants completed supervision
- 43% of all of our domestic violence unit defendants completed supervision
- 0.4% of our low-risk defendants were sentenced to jail after a hearing for a technical violation
- 6% of our low moderate risk defendants were sentenced to jail after a hearing for a technical violation
- 5% of our moderate risk defendants were sentenced to jail after a hearing for a technical violation
- 10% of our high-risk defendants were sentenced to jail after a hearing for a technical violation
- 8% of our domestic violence unit defendants were sentenced to jail after a hearing for a technical violation

## **Post Disposition, Specialized Supervision**

### **Domestic Violence Supervision**

In 2019, the Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) incorporated the ODARA to better differentiate defendants by risk level. This tool allowed for the addition of a low and low moderate risk supervision response. Currently, defendants convicted of a domestic violence related offense with a current or past intimate partner are separated into four distinct risk levels: Low, Low Moderate, Moderate or Intensive. Intensive supervision also encompasses the specialized populations of extremely high risk and LGBTQ+ population (Comprehensive Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment -CAP IT Program). In 2020, DVU implemented the use of the ODARA on all cases and began to collect data regarding the use of the ODARA for the purposes of validating the assessment tool in Franklin County.

During 2020, the DOPPS continued its development of the Strategic Enforcement Response Team (SERT), and increased it to two officers to provide a specialized and intensive supervision response. Enhancements were made to the program including: the development of tactics for warrant apprehension; more intentional and comprehensive outreach to survivors through increased community contacts; and a close working relationship with the designated, the Department's designated SERT victim assistant. The

Department has continued to work with the designated batterer intervention program to incorporate regular case staffing's. A group reporting process has been established for defendants in order to increase cohesiveness and professional alliance. A total of 437 community contacts have been made by the SERT team since its inception in 2018. COVID-19 dramatically reduced the number of community contacts; since an additional officer was added in July, 2021, the total number of contacts made in 2021 was 164 community contacts.

The Department continued its work with Dr. Christopher Lowenkamp to locally validate both the ODARA and the Domestic Violence Risk Need Assessment (DVRNA) tools. In December of 2020, 900 cases were given for review for purposes of validation and the results will be used to validate or make necessary modifications to existing risk thresholds and procedures. Those results have been finalized and will assist us in developing a tool to utilize to mirror the results presented in 2022.

During 2020, there was an increased effort to train staff and community stakeholders in the DVRNA tool. Two batterer intervention programs (BIP) worked with the DVU supervisor to train all staff in the use of the DVRNA. Additionally, the DVU supervisor conducted training sessions for staff certification and one of the developers from Colorado, where the tool was created, came to the Court to train staff from a clinical perspective.

Although the pandemic limited in-person interactions, the DVU supervisor was directly involved with the following groups and committees: Firearm Technical Assistance Program (FTAP), Franklin County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, and The Conference on Crimes Against Women National Planning Board (CCAW).

Due to COVID-19, trends in increased violence, higher lethality, and more arrests for intimate partner violence were seen globally as well as here in Franklin County. These issues were largely due to isolation because of stay-at-home orders, increased stressors from financial issues related to the virus, and lack of outside support systems. There were instances of decreased reporting of minor incidents, increased reporting of more serious, potentially lethal incidents, and more serious violence overall.

The Franklin County Domestic Violence Coordinated Community Response (FCDVCCR) group was formed in an effort to streamline batterer intervention programming during the implementation process of evidence-based programming. This group is comprised of probation officers, BIP programs, advocates, and other stakeholders. This group continues to work closely with the DVU towards development of their programs.

In early 2021, new goals for the FCDVCCR group were established and smaller work groups were formed with an eye toward meeting these goals. Those efforts were halted due to COVID in 2020, however, these goals, efforts and work groups-have been reestablished in 2021.

### **Mental Health and Developmental Disability Supervision**

The Department of Pretrial and Probation Services (DOPPS) has two Mental Health Specialized Caseloads to appropriately respond to individuals with a mental health and or developmental disability diagnosis. The purpose is to ensure that individuals receive the appropriate level and type of supervision to best attend to their unique needs.

The Mental Health Specialized Caseload falls under the Intensive Supervision Structure. The Mental Health Specialist will conduct or review the applicable assessment(s), develop a case plan and refer defendants according to their identified criminogenic and responsivity needs. A referral will be made to the

appropriate behavioral health treatment program to address the specific needs indicated by the assessment tool(s) and case plan, as well as, medication and case management services. Regular communication with partner agencies will verify that defendants are receiving the services, support and monitoring they need to be successful in reaching the goals identified through the assessment and case planning process.

In 2021 an additional mental health probation officer was added to assist with the increasing volume of cases. There were 32 cases assigned to the mental health supervision. The developmental disability caseload began in 2021, & there were 4 cases assigned.

### **Human Trafficking/Soliciting**

The Department's Partnership for Advocacy, Care and Treatment (PACT) Program continues to be an essential supervision and program response for defendants convicted of soliciting and who are not participating in the CATCH Court. The PACT Program provides a community response that incorporates specialized and intensive supervision, along with holistic, comprehensive, and coordinated community programming, to assist with the success of this population. The PACT Program is a joint initiative of community partners and provides: individualized and comprehensive bio-psycho-social assessment; specialized case management; alcohol and drug treatment; the option of medication assisted treatment; trauma services; mental health services linkage; and wrap-around services such as, safe housing, transportation, peer mentors, and GED.

The PACT program continues to pilot and collect data on its use of the [Women's Risk Need Assessment \(WRNA\)](#). This gender-responsive risk and needs assessment scoring tool accounts for women's risk factors, or criminogenic needs, associated with recidivism and future misconduct, and assists in the case planning with this specialized population.

In 2021, the PACT program had a total of nineteen (19) clients enrolled in treatment. Two (2) of the participants successfully completed this intensive, two-year program, nine (9) were unsuccessful due to the participants not returning to treatment, eight (8) of these clients are currently actively engaged in the program; three (3) of which are enrolled in the OP level of care and (5) five are currently enrolled in the IOP level of care.

In 2021 The PACT program faced many challenges as related to COVID-19 pandemic. The stress related to the pandemic increased due to external stressors and decreased community resources due to an increased need across all demographics. These stressors have had a negative impact on the mental wellbeing of the clients leading to an increase in numbers of substance use related relapses, and low engagement outcomes. An additional challenge as treatment went to telecommunications, staff had to work with clients to increase access to these services and devices. The telecommunication itself brought challenges in determining the immediate needs and challenges clients presented in treatment. Moreover, the number of clients was negatively impacted due to state regulations in the legal justice system to deter the spread of the virus leading to lower referral numbers for the PACT program. The goal of the program is to provide customized treatment and case management services through the work of various community partners. Those clients who continue to be engaged with their treatment are working very closely with their providers across the PACT Program partners towards successful completion.

### **Electronic Monitoring**

The Electronic Monitoring/Home Confinement (EMHC) Program is a cost-effective sentencing option that permits a defendant to reside in the community while simultaneously allowing for continuous electronic monitoring of a defendant's whereabouts. Judges may impose EMHC as a condition of pretrial release or post-disposition supervision or as a response to non-compliance/probation violation. The EMHC Program

allows defendants the ability to seek or maintain employment, participate in approved programming/treatment and attend to any critical medical needs or conditions.

During 2021 the EMHC Program Officers kept track of the location of 337 defendants as they served 16,896 days on community supervision. Of the 337 defendants, 208 of them successfully completed their EMHC condition (67%) and 32 (16%) of these successfully carried over into 2022. Eighty-Two (82) of the 337 were terminated unsuccessfully (24%).

The 337 defendants placed on EMHC were comprised of 299 men and 38 women. Two hundred and twenty-six (226) of the 337 men successfully completed (67%), 40 of the 337 were still being monitored into 2022. Twenty-one (21) of the 38 women successfully completed (55%).

The defendants sentenced to an EMHC condition served an average of 50 days of monitoring. All of the 14 seated General Division Judges of the Franklin County Municipal Court (FCMC), utilized the services of the EMHC Program at some point during 2021. Defendants placed on EMHC were placed on as both a condition of pretrial release as well as post disposition sentencing. They were placed on for a variety of charges that included but was not limited to: OVI, Domestic Violence, Resisting Arrest, Theft, Menacing by Stalking, Violation of Protection Order, Possession of Drugs and Soliciting.

During 2021, 299 of the 337 defendants (88%) placed on EMHC were declared indigent by the court for purposes of EMHC monitoring payment.

The defendants sentenced to an EMHC condition served an average of 65 days of monitoring. All of the 14 seated General Division Judges of the Franklin County Municipal Court (FCMC), utilized the services of the EMHC Program at some point during 2021. Defendants placed on EMHC were placed on as both a condition of pretrial release as well as post disposition sentencing. They were placed on for a variety of charges that included but was not limited to: OVI, Domestic Violence, Resisting Arrest, Theft, Menacing by Stalking, Violation of Protection Order, Possession of Drugs and Soliciting.

During 2021, 165 of the 206 defendants (80%) placed on EMHC were declared indigent by the court for purposes of EMHC monitoring payment.

With the COVID-19 pandemic necessitating that in-person contact be limited and, in an effort to remove barriers to program eligibility and help ensure that defendants have adequate access to virtual technology, the Department of Pretrial and Probation Services (DOPPS) obtained disposable cell phone and data plans for those without access.

In 2020 the department's GPS vendor (Securus Technologies) improved their active GPS ankle bracelet unit. This new unit's battery life is enhanced over the previous model and the GPS module is able to be obtain a stronger signal and the strap connectors are thicker and connected differently, to allow a more secure fit of the unit.

Electronic Monitoring quickly became an even more valuable resource during COVID as Judges looked to find appropriate alternatives to jail/incarceration. It is anticipated that this trend may continue beyond the pandemic as the potential negative impact of incarceration is considered.

### **Work Release**

The Work Release Program is a jail alternative program that provides residential services to court-ordered individuals. Judges may impose this community response as an alternative to a mandatory jail sentence, as a condition of Pretrial release or Probation supervision or as a response to non-compliance/probation

violations. The program is designed to help facilitate an individual's successful reentry into the community, by providing monitoring, programming and management of an individual's community access. Individuals are confined to the Work Release Program except for verified employment and/or court-approved programming. Program participants are randomly tested for drug and/or alcohol testing. The Work Release Program allows the individual to maintain his/her employment and provides an opportunity for the participant to pay toward court-ordered restitution, fines, costs and child support.

During Fiscal Year 2021, the Work Release Program admitted 122 defendants. These 122 defendants served a total of 2193 days in work release in lieu of jail time. Of the 122 defendants, 117 of them successfully completed their Work Release conditions (96%). Five of the 122 were terminated unsuccessfully (.04%). The 122 defendants placed on Work Release consisted of 89 men and 33 women. Eighty-four of the 89 men successfully completed (94%). Thirty-three of the 33 women successfully completed (100%). The defendants sentenced to a Work Release term served an average of 18 days in the facility. Of the 15 seated Judges here at the Franklin County Municipal Court (FCMC), 14 of them utilized the services of the Work Release Program at some point during FY 21. Defendants were placed on for a variety of charges that included but was not limited to: OVI, Domestic Violence, Theft, Drug Abuse, Aggravated Menacing, Violation of Protect Order, Disorderly Conduct, Assault, Telephone Harassment and Driving under Suspension.

During FY 21, \$47,667 was collected from defendants during their Work Release term. Additionally, the WRP saw a savings of \$103,580 in jail per diem costs during 2021.

In FY 21, the COVID-19 pandemic greatly affected the Work Release Program. The Work Release Program went two months without any participants due to job loss, illness and other employment-related factors. For the Work Release Program, the effects of COVID-19 have reinforced the importance of employment and the impact that unemployment has on the community. It also reinforced the program's resiliency and positive impact it can have on the community even during a pandemic.

### **Behavioral Management System**

An important component of the Department's transition to an evidenced based paradigm is the adoption of a Behavior Management System (BMS). In late 2016, the Court committed to developing and adopting a BMS policy framework and in 2017, a BMS workgroup and policy team were created to develop and approve of a policy framework. The Court commenced a pilot of the BMS in the spring of 2018 and continued it through 2019. Due to changes in staff and the department, the implementation of BMS has been delayed.

### **Community Sanctions Unit**

The Department's Community Sanctions Unit (CSU), helps support and manage many critical functions of the Department. Due to the increased workload and responsibility placed on the CSU, by the end of 2019, the Unit was increased to include four full time officers and one full time Supervisor. One of the functions of the CSU is to monitor defendants who are not placed on Community Control but who are ordered to complete Community Service hours in lieu of their Fine and Court Costs or as a condition of a Plea Agreement. The Community Sanctions Officer monitors the case for compliance with the required hours. Once the completion deadline has passed, the Community Sanctions Officer files a Notice with the Clerk regarding the Completion or Non-Completion of the hours. In 2021, there were 306 cases that were monitored by the CSU for Community Service compliance. This number does not include the volume of cases that were referred to the Unit by a Probation Officer for placement and monitoring of Community Service.

In 2021, the CSU was assigned 1,206 new Provided No Convictions (PNC) cases and continued to monitor 1,758 PNC cases that were carried over from the previous year. The CSU monitors PNC cases for new criminal convictions. In 2021, a total of \$323,282.19 in restitution was ordered in 448 cases, and \$234,592.99 was collected and disbursed. The remaining cases are still paying, revoked, or on warrant status. In addition to these functions, the CSU also assists with the management and supervision of the Department's low risk (Team Supervision) response, as well as, oversight of the Court's Non-Reporting Community Sanction response (NRCS). During 2021, there were 1,194 new cases assigned to the NRCS caseload for monitoring of new criminal activity and compliance with Court-ordered conditions. In 2021 there was a total of 1,644 NRCS cases that were monitored.

The volume of cases received by the Community Sanctions Unit, with community service hours ordered, decreased as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

In 2018, the CSU assumed oversight of the Environmental Court's Community Cleanup Crew (CCC) program. The Clean-up Crew provides an additional sentencing alternative for non-violent offenses and provides defendants an opportunity to restore stabilization to their local communities and improve the environment.

In 2021, the CCC supervised 200 individuals who provided a combined 3,482 service hours of work in the communities of Franklin County. The CCC removed 32.01 tons of solid waste from public alleys, and an additional 9.85 tons of trash from hoarder cleanouts in conjunction with the orders of the Environmental Court, 0.95 tons of trash from waterway cleanups, this brings the combined total of 42.81 tons of solid waste removed from Franklin County. The CCC removed 650 bags of trash from public alleys, and an additional 74 bags of trash from waterway cleanups and 4 bags of trash from special projects, for a combined total of 728 bags of trash. They safely disposed of 58 used needles and recycled 1,641 discarded tires from Columbus and other communities within Franklin County. In addition, we removed and recycled 384 yards of organic waste from waterway cleanups, nuisance abatement cleanups (hoarder houses) and community garden which equaled 16.43 tons of yard waste. The CCC conducted a total of 255 community service projects covering 176.77 linear miles in 2021.

A dedicated community service officer supports the program to scout and schedule projects to complete while building community relationships for future endeavors. Moving forward, the Community Clean-Up Crew looks to expand the program to offer its services to more community partners: area commissions, block watch groups, and neighborhood pride organizations. These efforts will allow the program to have regularly occurring clean-ups in areas throughout the City and County. Other services provided include waste removal from City and County owned vacant properties and graffiti clean-ups that helps to assist the City and County in their efforts to provide clean, safe neighborhoods for their residents.

### **Victim Assistance**

The DOPPS's Probation Assisted Victim Empowerment Division (PAVED), is partially funded by a grant through the Attorney General's Office. Because of the sustained support of this grant, the PAVED Program is staffed with three Victim Assistants and one Victim Assistant Supervisor.

The PAVED Unit continues to strive to be pro-active to ensure that the Court was doing as much as possible to remain compliant with Marsy's Law. PAVED continues to make every effort to reach out to the victims in cases in which a defendant is eligible for early termination cases so that each victim has the opportunity to express their opinion/concern regarding an early termination of the case prior to the case being terminated.

The PAVED staff continue to partner with the GPS/Electronic Monitoring officers to ensure that notifications are made any time a GPS violation occurs. In addition to being good practice, this response helps the Court remain in compliance with Marsy's Law. This notification protocol is initiated anytime an individual removes the GPS tracker, enters an exclusion zone, or allows the GPS tracker's battery to die, including after business hours.

The PAVED Unit also continues to work closely with the 2 Probation Officers assigned to the Strategic Enforcement Response Team (SERT) officers, which are assigned to the extremely high-risk domestic violence offenders. An assigned PAVED victim assistant provides extra support to the victims in these cases.

The PAVED Unit designates a victim assistant to work specifically with the DVUs CAP IT Program. This victim assistant maintains a resource binder for the LGBTQ+ population. This victim assistant works closely with the designated CAP IT Officer to ensure that the victims of same sex domestic violence cases receive a specialized response with appropriate and relevant referrals for this population.

PAVED staff routinely utilize the danger assessment and a stalking assessment tool to help victims of domestic violence and stalking understand the risks they face and develop safety plans. The PAVED Unit continues to collaborate with the City Prosecutor's office Domestic Violence Prosecutors and Victim Advocates to provide a continuity of support for the victims once the defendant has been placed on probation.

In 2021 PAVED staff made 3,554 contacts with victims of crime, and had over 1,600 new cases assigned to the four PAVED staff members.

PAVED staff continues to use the OCSS computer system while waiting for the PAVED module to be completed and launched. PAVED has continued to access Courtview, both the Court side and probation side for every case they encounter.

PAVED continued to have onsite availability every business day, meeting with victims in the PAVED lobby for all office/Court contacts that did not occur in the Courtrooms. While much of the work that the victim assistants perform can be done over the phone or through mailing letters to victims, there are several aspects of the VA's duties that require face to face contact, and cannot be done over the phone or through video appointments. These include collecting documentation of violations of the stay away orders, or other documentation from individuals who have limited knowledge of how to send pictures, screenshots, video evidence or other evidence via electronic means. In addition, VAs cannot notarize any documents/affidavits without meeting with the individual in person.

The Chief Probation Officer (CPO) is responsible for the overall operation of the Department and is supported by the Department's Management Team in facilitation of these efforts. The CPO is also charged with overseeing the Department's operating budget. Careful management and utilization of this budget is essential department operations. Especially with the challenges posed by COVID-19, attention to budgetary constraints was especially important. Probation User Fees provide critical support to many essential DOPPS supervision programs and initiatives. These services include: staff training, contracted programming for indigent Defendants, urinalysis services, defendant bus passes, grant matches, and supervision-related equipment. Defendants paid a total of \$274,923.85 or an average of \$22,910.32 each month in Probation User fees in 2021. This number is down 11.1% from 2020 due to challenges of COVID-19 and a decrease emphasis on financial collections.

The FCMC DOPPS works hard to leverage its resources, and acquire grant funding to support its many programs and initiatives whenever possible. In 2021, the DOPPS maintained, and in some areas expanded, the external funding streams that support its Pretrial, Victim Assistant, Intake Assessment, Electronic Monitoring, Work Release and other community programming partnerships that benefit our clientele. In all, the DOPPS managed approximately \$4 million in grant expenditures in 2021, exceeding the goals that were outlined in the proposals. The DOPPS was fortunate to receive funding specific to assessment and supervision practices during COVID, from the CARES Act and OCJS. The majority of these grants require an annual application that requires the review and expansion of project goals and objectives to reflect the ongoing evolution of the Department. The DOPPS enjoys a well-established rapport with criminal justice partners across the Franklin County executive landscape which augments these applications and highly collaborative projects.

The Department continues its partnership with Job and Family Services (JFS) for onsite Benefits Specialist assistance, however, during the COVID pandemic, JFS had to remove its two onsite Specialists and instead created a direct, remote referral process. This customized process assists Officers in referring individuals for assistance related to Medicaid, food insecurities, housing needs and child care benefits.

The DOPPS remains committed to: transparency, data collection, analysis and sharing; and strives to ensure that the tools and resources we utilize are appropriate and valid for use with the population of Franklin County. To further this goal, the Department has contracted with a national researcher to locally validate the ODARA and DVRNA assessment tools and with the American Pretrial, Probation and Parole Association, to locally validate the Impaired Driving Assessment Tool (IDA). This project will continue into 2022.

### **SELF HELP RESOURCE CENTER**

The Franklin County Municipal Court Self Help Resource Center assists pro se litigants in navigating the Court. Established in 2016, the Center's main objectives are to improve the quality of filings by *pro se* litigants, increase access to the justice system for individuals who cannot afford attorneys, and provide a positive point of contact between the Court and the community. It can assist Visitors with civil issues in Municipal Court but does not give legal advice. The most common issues addressed at the Center are the sealing and expungement of criminal records and landlord/tenant disputes.

Since its inception, the Center has grown each year. To address the unique needs during the COVID-19, the Center has added a webchat in addition to traditional in-person services at its main office on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor and immediately outside Eviction Court. The Center served a total of 13,026 Visitors in 2021 - an increase of 4,426 people from 2020. The Center has continued to garner national attention and is recognized as an access to justice model as Center staff assist other jurisdictions with opening self-represented litigant services throughout the country.

### **SERVICE BAILIFFS**

Service Bailiffs assist litigants, attorneys, and the Court by delivering court documents to parties and enforcing both pre-judgment and post-judgment remedies. Responsibilities include service of complaints, summonses, criminal and civil subpoenas, garnishments, juror letters, and probation revocation hearing notices. Writs of replevin are enforced through seizure of property to be returned to the rightful owners, and writs of execution through levy and sale of personal property for the purpose of satisfying judgments. These writs are enforced and supervised by the deputy bailiff officers. Additionally, deputy bailiff officers supervise the set-out of tenant's property during the eviction process.

The Service Bailiffs' Department processed or served in excess of 31,798 legal documents in 2021. The department currently employs 13 full-time individuals consisting of 1 chief, 1 deputy chief, 10 deputy bailiffs, and a deputy bailiff/administrative assistant.

**Evictions** 27,084 Eviction related documents served, consisting of:

- **Forceable Entry and Detainers:** 18,617 eviction summonses served
- **Red Tags:** 5,910 Red Tags issued
- **Yellow Tags:** 1,642 Yellow tags issued
- **Set-Outs:** 1,015 Set-Outs completed

**Garnishments:** 1,241 Garnishments served

**Miscellaneous:** 1,563 Miscellaneous filings  
(Small Claims, 28-day letters, Reviver Dormant Judgement, Notice of proceedings, BMV)

**Environmental Summons:** 416 Environmental court summons were served

**Judgement Debtor Exams:** 192 Judgement debtor notices were served

**Criminal Subpoenas:** 1,292 Criminal subpoenas served

**Replevins:** 10 Replevins served

### **SMALL CLAIMS DIVISION AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION DEPARTMENT**

The Small Claims Division Processes Small Claims cases for the Municipal Court and assists individuals and businesses with court forms. Small Claims are claims for money damages up to \$6,000. The Small Claims Court and its processes are governed by Ohio Revised Code Chapter 1925. The Division provides information, forms, instructions, and videos for small claims cases and collections. The Division maintains a user-friendly website that contains all of the information required to initiate and complete a small claims case (<https://municipalcourt.franklincountyohio.gov/Departments-Services/Small-Claims>).

The Division has six full-time employees who support the Court and its magistrates. Division staff initiate new cases, assign magistrates, process notices and summonses, and answer questions about Small Claims Court and other court services. Division staff managed 6,134 small claims cases in 2021.

The Dispute Resolution Department (Department) coordinates and facilitates mediations for the General and Small Claims Divisions. The Division also maintains an online negotiation and mediation platform to facilitate early case resolution. Parties may participate in mediation either in-person, by telephone, or online. The Department managed a total of 2,440 mediations in 2021. These cases were made up of 1,773 General Division/Small Claims Cases, 143 Rent Escrow Cases, 95 Pre-Lawsuit Self Referrals, and 429 Pre-Filing/Online/Check and Account Resolution Self-Referrals.

## **SPECIALIZED DOCKET DIVISION**

### **VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS**

The vision of the Specialized Docket Department is to enhance public safety, rebuild lives, and reduce recidivism through the use of restorative justice programs. We champion innovation, prioritize diversity, strive to contribute to the national conversation, and work to advance the mission of Specialized Dockets and restorative justice wherever possible.

The mission of the Specialized Docket Department is to return contributing members to society by implementing best and promising restorative practices. We provide quality programming to high risk/high need participants to link them with individualized treatment, reduce barriers to success, hold participants accountable for the impact of their behaviors, and encourage independent recovery. We value community and stakeholder investment and involve them through education, engagement, and support.

### **OVERVIEW**

The Specialized Docket Department serves the Judges of the Franklin County Municipal Court and is under the direct supervision of the Court Administrator. The specialized docket department manager is responsible for the overall operation, supervision, and certification, and is charged with ensuring funding and overseeing the operating budget. The manager works closely with the Specialized Docket Judge's Committee and meets bi-annually with the Specialized Docket Advisory Board to set the goals and direction of the department. The department is staffed by eleven coordinators who maintain the day-to-day operations of the department.

In 2021, a total of 1,023 people were served in programs of the Specialized Docket Department. The department is made up of five certified specialized dockets, two educational programs, and the administrative management of the Municipal Court's forensic psychological referrals.

Restorative justice is the philosophical foundation of the department. In the context of the municipal court, restorative justice is a process by which offenders take responsibility for their actions, understand the harm they caused, redeem themselves through the process of recovery, become contributing members of their families and the community, increase public safety by ceasing criminal behavior, and reduce the emotional and financial burden on society. This approach considers the impact of the crime on the victim and the community and gives the person who committed the crime the opportunity to repair the damage of their offenses through their actions and meaningful activity.

Learn more about restorative justice at:

[Restorative Justice: Why Do We Need It?](#)

### **PROGRAMS**

Specialized Dockets are certified by the Supreme Court of Ohio to provide intensive programs, up to two years in duration, to high risk, high need defendants. Admission to a specialized docket requires a referral by a defense attorney, prosecutor, or judge. The defendant must be assessed for eligibility, volunteer, and plead guilty to an active charge to enter the program. Some cases are eligible for sealing and expungement upon successful completion of the program.

The Court established Learning to Identify and Navigate Change (L.I.N.C.) in 2004, adding Changing Actions to Change Habits (CATCH) and Recovery Court in 2009, Helping Achieve Recovery Together (h.a.r.t.) in 2010, and Military and Veterans Services (MAVS) in 2012. The department also provides two

educational programs that are sentencing options: CATCH 101 for victims of human trafficking and Drug Education Program (DEP) for felony drug charges reduced to a misdemeanor. In addition, the department provides administrative coordination for all forensic competency cases.

The specialized dockets, often called treatment courts, are a judicial response based on a treatment team approach. Treatment court is a voluntary program of up to two years. Once a defendant has plead into the docket, the process becomes non-adversarial. The participant is placed on probation for two years which provides the compliance mechanism.

The treatment team consists of the presiding judge, who has final decision-making authority, the coordinators, the designated probation officer, public defender, prosecutor, and representatives of various treatment providers. The treatment teams meet weekly to review new admissions and to review participants' individualized goals and progress. The goal is to build a strong support network, to help participants engage in community treatment, and to find a path to independent recovery. Rewards are frequently used; successes celebrated, and as needed, sanctions that are up to and include limited jail, can be imposed. Participants self-determine their progress through program phases as they demonstrate their ability to internalize concepts and apply coping skills in their daily lives.

The Judge presides over weekly status review hearings which provide participant check-ins. A strong sense of community develops among the participants and the Judge initiates a progress check with each participant to ensure they are receiving individualized care and complying with the agreed upon treatment plan. Due consideration is given to a participant's capacity, barriers, and life events as they progress through the phases of the program at a self-determined pace that may last up to two years. The emphasis is placed on engagement, open discussion, increasing recovery competency, compliance, building trust, and self-efficacy. The Judge and the treatment team ensure that the participant is supported through their recovery process and that expectations are appropriate to the participants' stage of change.

### **SPECIALIZED DOCKET CERTIFICATION**

As a home rule state, the Supreme Court of Ohio requires all specialized dockets to become fully certified. There are two stages to the certification process. First, submission of documentation, including the administrative order, the program description, the participation agreement, and the participant handbook. Secondly, Supreme Court staff complete a site visit to observe the treatment team meeting, the Status Review Hearing, and to provide feedback to the presiding judge and the staff. All certification standards and current practice guidelines must be met or exceeded to receive full certification. The final certification is valid for three years.

In 2021, one specialized docket was due for recertification, CATCH. The docket received initial certification in December. The site visit for final certification was scheduled for 2/14/2022 to observe treatment team and 2/17/2022. CATCH staff participated in training through American University's MOSAIC project to learn how to make the docket more inclusive. The site visit was postponed to allow CATCH staff to implement changes in procedure and to update the Participant Agreement, Participant Handbook, and Program Description. The Supreme Court of Ohio conducted a site visit for h.a.r.t. (Helping Achieve Recovery Together) and Judge Jodi Thomas on 4/14/2021. The docket received final recertification.

Judge Barrows stepped down as the presiding judge for MAVS in September 2021. Judge Skinner is the current presiding judge for MAVS. He served as the back-up judge for MAVS in preparation for replacing Judge Barrows on this docket.

Judge Tyack stepped down as the presiding judge for Recovery Court in November 2021. Judge D’Varga is the current presiding judge for Recovery Court. She served as the back-up judge for Recovery Court in preparation for replacing Judge Tyack on this docket.

## 2021 PRESIDING JUDGES

Judge	Program	Type	Recertification Date
Judge Jarrod Skinner	MAVS	Military and Veterans Service Certified Specialized Docket	2023
Judge Jessica D’Varga	Recovery Court	Substance Use Certified Specialized Docket	2022
Judge Cindi Morehart	LINC	Mental Health Certified Specialized Docket	2022
Judge Jodi Thomas	CATCH	Human Trafficking Certified Specialized Docket	2021
Judge Jodi Thomas	HART	Opiate Certified Specialized Docket	2023
Judge Jessica D’Varga	DEP	Drug Educational Program	N/A
Judge Jodi Thomas	CATCH 101	Human Trafficking Educational Program	N/A

## EDUCATION PROGRAMS

### CATCH 101

CATCH 101 is a 3-day educational program designed as an introduction to human trafficking. It is held once a month. The program includes education, community resources, and an observation of CATCH’s status review hearing. The goal is to offer the program to people who have an active charge in the court and when there is concern that the person may have been trafficked.

The education component focuses on human trafficking, addictive illness, trauma bonding, and recovery opportunities. Representatives from community partners such as Salvation Army, Amethyst, and law enforcement will present information on current community resources available to defendants including case management and hotline numbers.

Judges and attorneys refer defendants who are not interested in the two-year CATCH commitment to CATCH 101. CATCH staff track attendance and report progress back to the referral source.

### DRUG EDUCATION PROGRAM (DEP)

DEP is an educational program that provides expedited court arraignments and prosecution, as well as a reduction in jail time. Participants who have 4th and 5th degree felony drug possession charges are identified by the County Prosecutor’s Office and referred to the program. The felony charges are reduced to a first-degree misdemeanor in exchange for the defendant’s guilty plea. The majority of referrals are

made by the County Prosecutor; however, admission is also open to defendants charged with misdemeanors. Participation in DEP is ordered at the time of sentencing.

In late 2017, the DEP program was streamlined to reduce barriers to successful completion. Currently, a participant must complete one court facilitated education session and six verified recovery support meetings within a thirty-day period. The previous program required three afternoon classes and ten meetings.

The current three-hour educational session is held once a month. The content is practical and intended to motivate change. The curriculum focuses on the disease model of substance use, the recovery model of healing, peer lived experience, and a review of community resources. The revisions to the program have increased participant completion rates significantly.

### **FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGICAL CASES**

The Specialized Docket Department manages all the forensic psychological referrals for the municipal court. The duties include: administrative management of required competency evaluations, probate commitments, forensic restorations and administrative communication with the Judges regarding each case. The average weekly caseload decreased from 97 in 2019, to 78 in 2020 then increased to 93 in 2021; this change is likely attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic.

202 Forensic Psychological Cases in Franklin County Municipal Court	
Defendants Referred for Evaluation	331
Defendants Referred for Out-Patient Competency Restoration	85
Defendants Referred for In-Patient Competency Restoration	57
Defendants Referred for Commitment via Probate Court	47

### **STAFF**

The department is staffed by twelve program coordinators who are highly educated behavioral health specialists with expertise in mental health, substance use disorders, and criminal justice. Additional Coordinator position was approved for the h.a.r.t. docket due to the number of participants. During 2021 the department hired two additional staff members: h.a.r.t Peer Support Specialist and MAVS Peer Mentor Coordinator.

The emphasis on behavioral health staff supports in-house clinical services such as diagnostic assessments that establish clinical eligibility, prognosis, individualized treatment and level of care recommendations which makes treatment referral more efficient. Staff build strong treatment team rapport, coordinate seamlessly with treatment providers, enhance participant engagement, support strength based intervention, develop self-efficacy in participants, provide trauma informed interventions, generate individualized program response, encourage stronger use of rewards to support progress, facilitate group discussion and strong sense of community within the dockets, and incorporate stages of change in the program structure. This approach has led to increased participant retention and increased successful completion rates.

Training and staff development are department priorities. In 2021, the entire department, including the Specialized Docket Judges, attended the virtual Supreme Court of Ohio Specialized Dockets Annual Conference to gain insight and practical knowledge about best practices and innovations. The department manager attended the virtual NASW Ohio Annual Conference. During 2021, staff received over 300 hours of training (an average of 23 hours per person) in best practices, therapeutic intervention, program development, and policy strategy. The Judges and staff also provided numerous professional trainings and

community presentations to expand the broader knowledge of restorative justice.

## **BEST PRACTICES**

The Specialized Docket Department is committed to the development and implementation of best and promising practices. The department generates programming to fill gaps in service, participates in research and pilot projects, and leads innovation that contributes to the development of the field.

In 2021, the Ohio Supreme Court facilitates monthly roundtable discussions for each of the specialized dockets for Coordinators, Managers and court staff to enhance current best practices and implementation of Ohio Supreme Court standards. The entire department, including the presiding judges, attended the Ohio Supreme Court quarterly training series to enhance knowledge of best practices, therapeutic interventions related to mental health, substance misuse and trauma with justice involved individuals and increasing diversity and access to specialized dockets.

NADCP conference in Washington, DC was changed to an in-person event. Due to the health crisis, travel restrictions were in place until March 2021. Staff was unable to register for the conference and make travel arrangements in a timely manner. Two of the specialized docket judges, Cindi Morehart and Jodi Thomas did attend. This is the premiere international event for specialized dockets research and practice. The department goal for 2022 is to bring more people to the conference and submit applications to present on the national platform.

## **STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

In 2021, the Specialized Docket Department provided field instruction for a total of 9 students from various disciplines, colleges and universities. The Court placement provides a highly professional, complex environment at the intercept of criminal justice and behavioral health. Student interns represent varied disciplines including: behavioral health, public health, art and design, statistics/data analysis, and other related fields of study.

The student program places an emphasis on diversity and inclusion. The staff of the Specialized Docket Department strongly believes in providing support to students in this challenging internship experience, interactions can move quickly from meeting with a judge to screening an incarcerated defendant. Students are exposed to evidence-based practice, program development, grant implementation, data analysis, and policy change. Maintaining a strong student internship program ensures that highly skilled professionals are trained to meet the needs of the community.

## **FACILITY**

The 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the Municipal Court Building continues to house the Specialized Docket Department and provide flexible space for status review hearings, education classes, community meetings, and a Medically Assisted Treatment clinic.

The Self-Help Resource Center is also located on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor and this co-location has enhanced specialized docket alumni access to the self-preparation of civil documents including applications for sealing and expungement.

The MAT (Medically Assisted Treatment) clinic is operating out of Courtroom 6A once a week to provide access to medically assisted treatment for defendants recently released from jail. The MAT clinic also assists with referrals and linkage to community partners for ongoing mental health and substance misuse treatment and resources.

## **COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS:**

### **MARCH Project**

The MARCH Project is a collaboration with Probation, Specialized Dockets and the Self-Help Resource Center to expand the operation of the MAT Clinic to increase the capacity for in-custody MAT referrals and walk-in referrals for other court involved individuals. The MAT Clinic will continue to assist with referrals and linkage to community partners for ongoing mental health and substance misuse treatment and resources.

### **Peer Support Specialists**

In conjunction with Franklin County Justice Programs and Policy, two peer support specialist positions were created. This grant continues to support the L.I.N.C. peer position. The h.a.r.t. peer position is being supported by the BJA grant. The department hopes to explore additional funding sources in the future to expand the number of peer support specialists.

## **GRANTS**

### **Mental Health Bureau of Justice Administration (MH BJA)**

The Bureau of Justice Administration awarded the Specialized Docket Department a grant to support the mental health docket. The total award amount is \$421,126 for three years to support the L.I.N.C Peer Support Specialist position and to create a Coordinator I position. The Coordinator I will assist the two Coordinator II's with administrative tasks and data reporting to allow the Coordinator II's to focus on the clinical duties. The grant will also fund a lower risk track and additional recovery supports, such as trauma-informed yoga and the implementation of the case management documentation system, OCSS, in the specialized docket department. In addition, the grant will offset transportation costs through bus passes and parking passes.

### **National Center for State Courts Public Engagement Pilot Project**

The National Center for State Courts in conjunction with University of Nebraska Public Policy Center awarded the Specialized Docket Department and the Self-Help Resource Center \$30,000 to engage the community in deliberative communication with the goal of decreasing disparity in court programs. The Specialized Docket Judges attended training on racial disparity and implicit bias and participated in a community listening session with various community stakeholders.

<b>Specialized Docket Department Programs</b>	<b>2021 Total Participants Accepted</b>	<b>2021 Total Referrals</b>	<b>*2021 % No New Charges</b>
L.I.N.C. - Mental Health	43	89	58%
CATCH - Human Trafficking	43	62	59%
MAVS - Military and Veterans	11	20	100%
Recovery Court - Substance Use	61	101	93%
h.a.r.t. - Opiate Use	187	210	63%
<b>Total in Specialized Dockets</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>68%</b>
DEP - Drug Education Program	174	174	NA
CATCH 101 - Human Trafficking Education	36	36	NA
Forensic Psychological Cases	NA	331	NA
<b>Total</b>	<b>555</b>	<b>1,023</b>	

*\*Percentage of participants, who were discharged (successful, neutral or unsuccessful) in the calendar year and did NOT recidivate (received no new charges) during the time they were enrolled in the specialized docket (up to two years).*

In 2021, the Specialized Docket Department served a total of 1,023 people. The Specialized Dockets and educational programs served 886 participants. There were 331 forensic psychological referrals in 2021. Of the participants who were discharged between January 1, 2021, and December 31, 2021, the recidivism rates are significantly below the national average for high risk/high need defendants.

There is a strong correlation between addiction and criminal activity, studies indicate that a practicing addict is likely to commit an estimated 63 crimes per year. For individuals who receive treatment, this decreases to just six crimes per year. Specialized Dockets are a major part of this solution, particularly in providing the supportive structure that participants need to remain engaged in treatment. In a 2014 national survey of drug courts, programs reported average graduation rates of 50-75%, which is more than twice the rate of successful probation completion rates for individuals with severe substance use disorder. “At least nine meta-analyses, systematic reviews, and multisite studies conducted by leading scientific organizations have concluded that adult drug courts significantly reduce criminal recidivism—typically measured by re-arrest rates over at least two years—by an average of approximately 8% to 14%. The best adult drug courts were determined to reduce recidivism by 35% to 80%.” In 2021, the average % across all five dockets of participants that did not receive new charges was 68%. The national average recidivism rate for drug offenders is 76.9%.

## **2021 PROGRESS**

- All of the Specialized Docket Judges remain actively certified by the Ohio Supreme Court.
- The Specialized Docket Department was awarded an additional federal grant for \$421,126
- The MAVS mentor program was developed, including the mentor handbook and training for mentors
- A web-based case management and data collection system is being developed and implementation is planned for 2022.
- All Specialized Docket Program descriptions have been updated to include current best practices.

- The department was continued work on several innovation and pilot grants to expand best practices.
- Training and community exposure continues to be expanded.

## **2022 GOALS**

The 2022 Specialized Docket Department goals are:

1. Identify barriers and make program and policy changes to increase specialized docket access to underserved populations.
2. Provide culturally specific, trauma competent programming and collaborate to ensure culturally specific, trauma competent community treatment options.
3. Staffing the MAVS and Recovery Court Peer Support Specialist positions through the BJA grant
4. Implement the mentoring program for MAVS
5. Develop a technology infrastructure and data linkage strategy for data sharing and analysis.
6. Develop a system to document contacts with participants in addition to status review hearings
7. Increase community access through cohesive messaging on multiple platforms including community engagement, technology, media, and print material.
8. Increase the use of intensive peer supports in the Specialized Docket Department.
9. Provide and support participant and family centered engagement.
10. Increase access to MAT through the MARCH Project
11. Increase funding and expansion through grants and matching funds.
12. Champion best practices and innovation that contribute to the national conversation.
13. Achieve full staffing with professionals that value the goals and mission of the department and the Franklin County Municipal Court.

For additional information about the Franklin County Municipal Court  
please visit its website at

<https://municipalcourt.franklincountyohio.gov/>