



45TH CIRCUIT COURT
2023/2024 ANNUAL
REPORT

THE CIRCUIT COURT – TRIAL DIVISION

Honorable Paul Stutesman

While the Circuit Court encompasses many areas, such as all Juvenile Proceedings and Friend of The Court actions, this report will be based on the trial division only.

The Staff of the 45th Circuit Court Trial Division consists of Kathryn Griffin, Court Administrator, and Samantha Overholt, Judicial Secretary/Court Reporter.



Technology Advancements

2023 the JAVS recording system was upgraded in each Courtroom. We have also begun the process of moving our Case Management system to the State Judicial Information System and will hopefully be completely done with that in 2025. The use of remote hearings has continued for all our domestic and civil cases for the initial proceedings and in person is only required for Evidentiary Hearings and Trials.

SSSPP Program

Through a grant from State Court Administrative Office (SCAO), the Swift and Sure Sanctions Probation Program (SSSPP) is in the twelfth year of implementation. This intensive probation program is intended to defer high-risk defendants from prison through counseling, substance abuse treatment, and other forms of rehabilitation, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. This program is a collaborative between the Michigan Department of Corrections,

St. Joseph County Community Corrections, Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services of St. Joseph County, the Twin County Community Probation Center and Day Reporting Center, the St. Joseph County Sheriff's Department, and many other treatment providers. The design of the program funnels participants through four phases of intensive supervision, drug and alcohol testing, treatment, and clinical case management to allow participants an opportunity to gain necessary skills for the prevention of recidivism. Program violations result in immediate sanctions, which are a proven component of an effective probation.

Adult Drug Court Treatment Program

Through grants from the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), the Adult Drug Treatment Court (ADTC) continues to provide necessary services to qualifying drug offenders. The ADTC team is comprised of many of the same organizations as the Swift & Sure Sanctions Probation Program, but has a greater focus on treatment, rather than sanctions. There are weekly team meetings followed by weekly court sessions for the participants. During this five phase intensive probation and treatment program, participants gain tools for their recovery process and an understanding of how that relates to criminal behavior. Nationwide, 75% of drug court participants who successfully complete a program remain arrest-free for a minimum of two years following completion.

Associations, Committees and Involvement

Judge Stutesman has been a member in the Michigan Judges Association (MJA) as an Executive Committee member and officer. As a representative of MJA he is currently on several others sub-committees such as the State Bar of Michigan Legislative Council.

Ms. Griffin is a long standing member of the Michigan Association of Circuit Court Administrators (MACCA) and the National Association for Court Management (NACM).

In 2024 Ms. Griffin began training Samantha Overholt, as part of the Courts Succession Planning, to take over the role of Court Administrator. Samantha has done a wonderful job learning that role.

Both MJA and MACCA review and comment on legislation of importance to Michigan's judicial system. In addition they coordinate efforts with the Michigan Supreme Court and works to promote adequate resources for the judicial branch of government. Both Judge Stutesman and Ms. Griffin are appointed to many committees with the State.

Judge Stutesman is actively involved with the Michigan Judicial Institute and has been a speaker and presenter at many of their educational seminars. There are numerous other committees through State Court Administrative Office that he is also involved.

While all revenue sources are handled through the County Clerk's Office, the Circuit Court orders and enforces fines and costs in all criminal cases. Additional revenue comes from the State, from filing fees and court costs assessed by the County Clerk's Office.

Through the cooperation and diligence by County Clerk deputies, the Court has a collection process in place and Order to Show Cause Hearings are conducted bi-monthly to enforce collection.

Case Management

The 45th Circuit strictly adheres to the Michigan Court Rules time guidelines and SCAO Orders regarding caseload management.

All Caseload Data is on the State Court website and is open to public for viewing. There are many aspects to compare the data, including comparison to other similar counties in Michigan. All data can be found on the interactive site: <https://www.courts.michigan.gov/publications/statistics-and-reports/interactive-court-data-dashboard/>

In addition to case timelines and guidelines you can also find our yearly Public Satisfaction Survey results online as well. However for 2023 it was not required by the State. Previous years can be located here: <https://www.courts.michigan.gov/publications/statistics-and-reports/public-satisfaction-survey/>