
Washtenaw County Trial Court

JUVENILE DIVISION

2016 Report



YOUTH DEVELOPMENT | COMMUNITY SAFETY | VICTIM RESTORATION



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Meet Some of Our Partners:



washtenaw area
council for children
safe kids, sound community



washtenaw county
children's services
4125 Washtenaw Ave. Ann Arbor, MI 48106



WORDS FROM THE JUDGE



Greetings,

Welcome to the Washtenaw County Juvenile Court.

A place where we prioritize youth development, community safety and victim restoration. I am happy to see your engagement with our local juvenile justice system and appreciate your work in this community whether you are a service-provider, citizen, parent or even child—all together, we make up Washtenaw County.

This report was created to provide you with a snap shot of the services and programs provided through the Juvenile Court. The following pages include information about our adoption, child welfare and delinquency dockets and the demographics of the young people and families that we serve. These statistical numbers are a reflection of your community and we work to ensure justice in every case.

Here at the Juvenile Court, we uphold our mission and purpose with pride: to protect children; support families; develop the skills and competencies of youth; restore victims; and protect the safety of children, families and the community at large. So let's work together to spur on success for our young people, holding them accountable for their actions while building a strong infrastructure for them to heal, to grow, to learn and to lead.

Keep up the great work,

Judge Julia B. Owdziej



WHAT WE DO

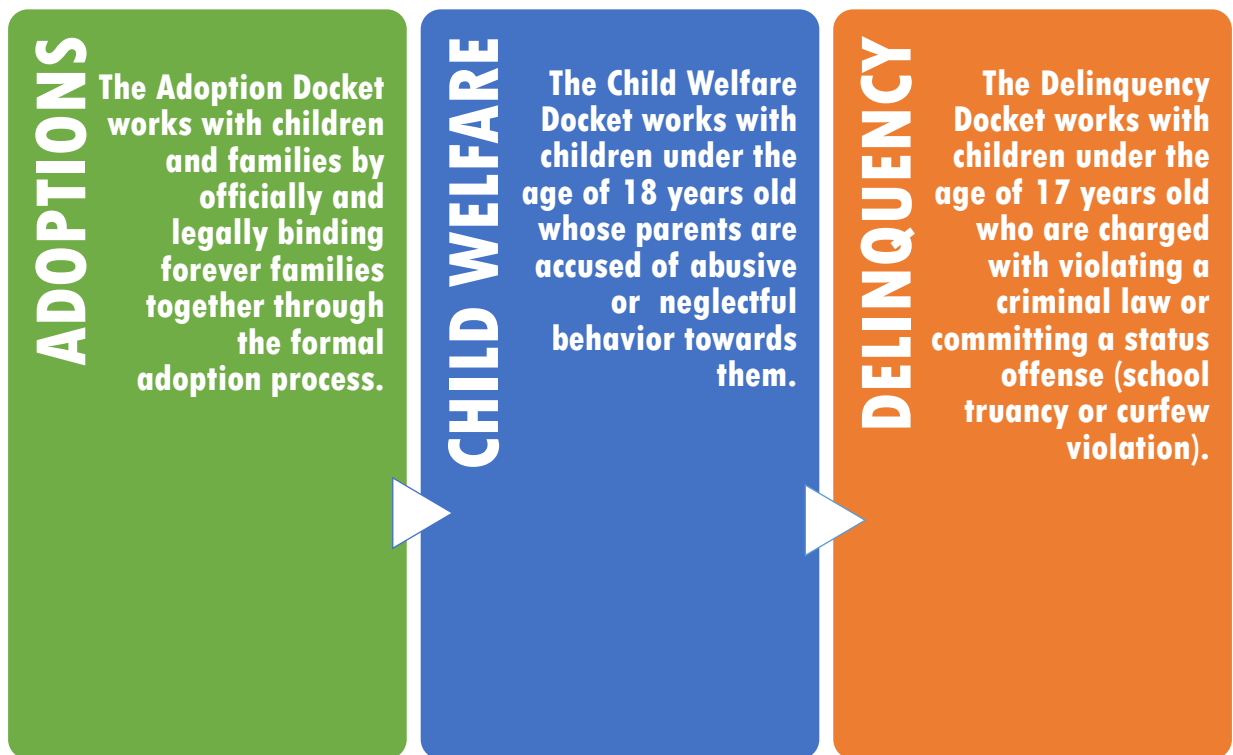
Youth Development

Community Safety

Victim Restoration

The Juvenile Court works actively to protect children from abuse and neglect in their homes and in the community and seeks to hold youth accountable for their delinquent behavior by teaching youth how to overcome barriers that lead to delinquent behavior.

The Juvenile Court has jurisdiction over the following serviced programs each made available to the children and families of Washtenaw County:



The following pages describe the court's work in the adoption, child welfare and delinquency arenas, outlining the demographics and programming opportunities for young people and their families associated with each caseload. Here at the Juvenile Court, we value the protection of children, the support of families and the safety of our great community and recognize that we are one partner among many organizations that advance opportunities for young people and their families.

ADOPTIONS

The Washtenaw County Juvenile Court is responsible for processing all petitions for adoptions.

There are numerous types of adoption options facilitated by the Juvenile Court which include:

- Adult
- Direct Placement
- International
- Non-Relative
- Permanent Ward
- Relative
- Safe Delivery of Newborn
- Stepparent Adoptions

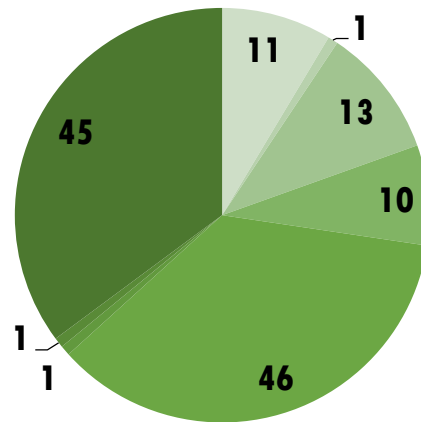
Each case and child is unique, but each finalized adoption results in a legally recognized, forever family. The process of completing an adoption typically includes any of the following: the consent of both parents and the establishment and termination of parental rights, legal name changing, birth certificate amendments and great celebration.

Adoption Filing Trend

The total number of adoption petitions

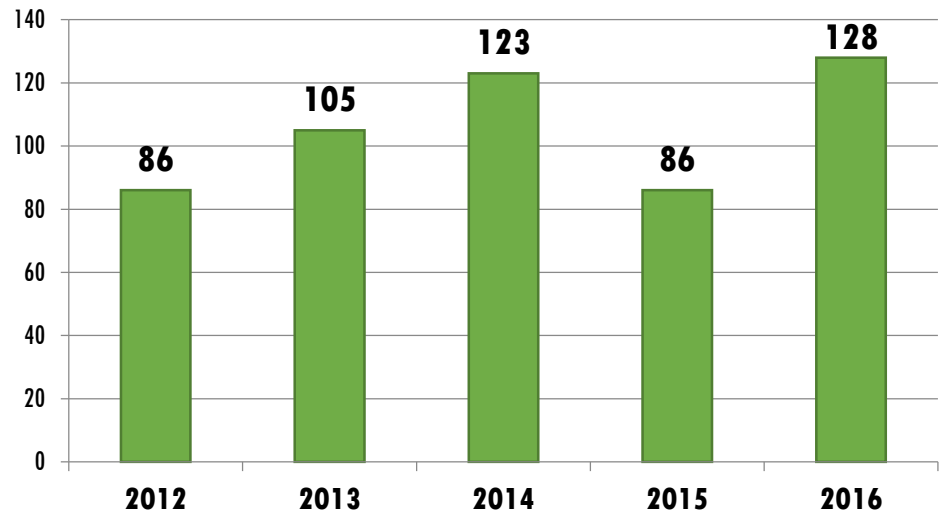
filed has fluctuated over the past four years. The significant increase in filings between the years of 2015 and 2016 is attributed to the increase in stepparent adoptions, totaling **15** in 2015 compared to **45** stepparent adoptions in 2016. Of the **45** stepparent adoptions, **23** of these children were formally adopted by same-sex families. Upon the legalization of same sex marriage step-parent adoptions became available to all. For many of these families the non-birth parent was present since the day of the child's birth but was denied adding their name to the birth certificate. Step-parent adoptions allow for both parents to be on the birth certificate and have equal legal rights to their children.

In 2016, the Juvenile Court facilitated a total of 128 adoptions



- Adult (11)
- International (1)
- Direct Placement (13)
- Relative (10)
- Permanent Ward (46)
- Non-Relative (1)
- Safe Delivery of Newborn (1)
- Stepparent (45)

Adoption Filing Trend 2012 - 2016



SAME-SEX STEPPARENT ADOPTIONS

What does the word "family" mean to you?

The word **family** can have many different meanings and can evoke many different emotions. For 23 couples in Washtenaw County, 2016 marked the year in which their family was not only official in their hearts but also official in documentation and state recognition, legally binding together their forever family. These 23 couples were granted stepparent adoptions as same-sex couples.

Same-sex couples face many obstacles in the legal arena, especially in regard to family recognition. One parenting related obstacle is listing both parents' names on a child's birth certificate. When both names are not listed, this lack of formal and legal documentation can cause turmoil in the event of a medical emergency or enrolling a child in school. These events call for legal and documented familial relationships.

Many same-sex couples in Washtenaw County have chosen to formally adopt their children for such security reasons. The Hunter-Veatch family is one of the families that walked through the adoption process and took the precautionary measure of listing both parents on their boys' birth certificates. They also hyphenated the family name to leave no room for question that the Hunter-Veatch family is a valid and legal family.



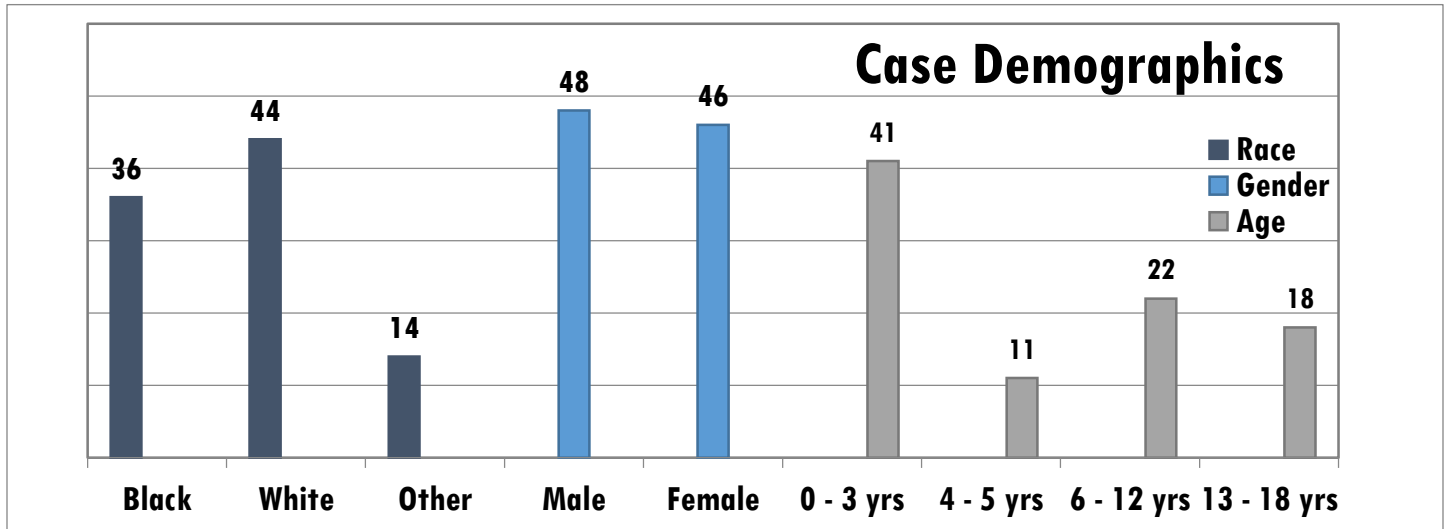
“We chose to navigate the adoption process for the kids. So that they would not feel as though their family is not a valid family. We are a valid family.”
- Erin Hunter

The Hunter-Veatch Family: Sarah Veatch and Erin Hunter pose with their sons Callan and Micah Hunter-Veatch

Many same sex couples in Washtenaw County who have completed the adoption process want their community, especially other same-sex couples, to know that regardless of the paperwork and the financial commitments of the process, every same-sex couple can formalize their family through legal adoption for the sake and security of their children, ensuring a better and more equitable opportunity for them and their futures. Family is forever and the process of formal adoption only strengthens the inseparable bonds of a family's love.

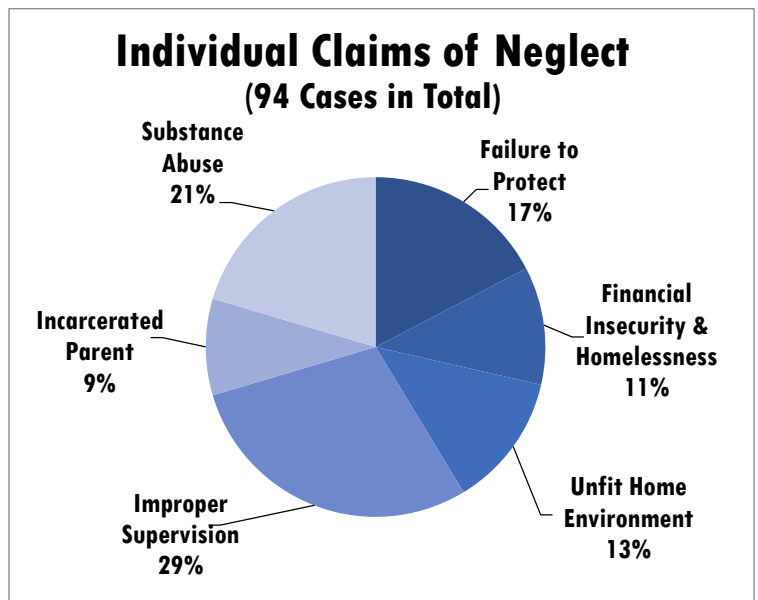
CHILD WELFARE

Families that are involved in the child welfare branch of the court are typically accused of or associated with the abuse or neglect of a child, 17 years of age or younger. In 2016, there were 94 new child abuse and/or neglect cases filed in Washtenaw County. Of these 94 cases, the children tended to be White; slightly more males than females; and very young (55% under the age of five).



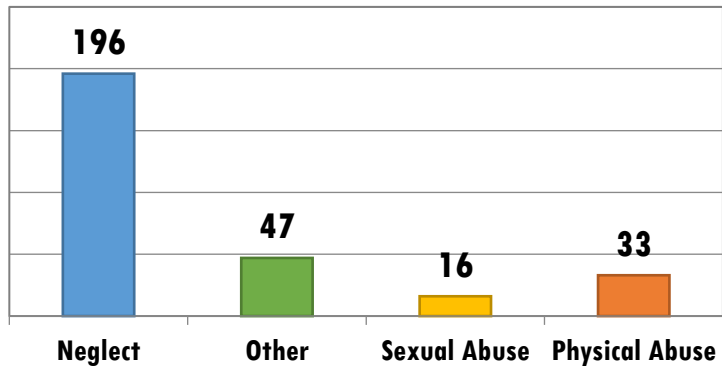
*Other was used in this representation to include Biracial, Asian and Hispanic children

There can be multiple reasons why a child is removed from the home and enters the child welfare system. Of the 94 new children petitioned in 2016, the vast majority had one or more allegations of neglect by a parent or guardian. The most frequent aspects of **neglect** were improper supervision by a parent or guardian, substance abuse in the home and a parent or guardian's failure to protect a child from confirmed danger.



CHILD WELFARE

Multiple Reasons for Removal (within the 94 cases filed in 2016)



Cases that involve aspects of **physical and/or sexual abuse** include when a child is a victim to the abuse as well as when a child is exposed to the abuse of another. The trauma of observing and directly experiencing physical abuse are equal concerns to the safety of a child and can significantly impact their development and ability to thrive.

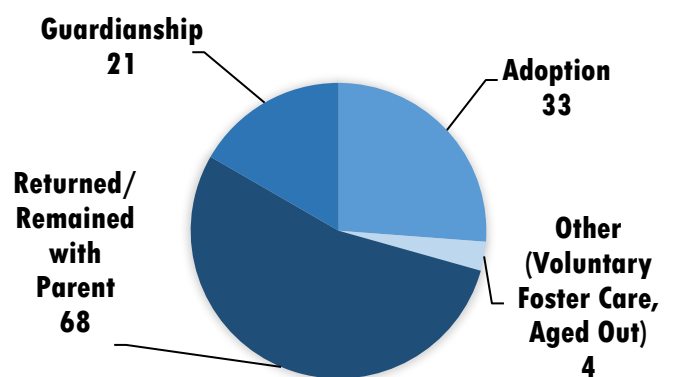
In 2016, 88% of physical abuse cases were victimized and 12% were exposed. Of the sexual abuse cases in 2016, 37% were victimized and 63% were exposed to

Cases that are classified as **other** often involve one or many of the following factors: a parent has had previous children removed from the home, parental rights are terminated, there is a death of a child in the home due to the actions or neglect of the parent, a child is adopted, a parent denies lifesaving medical consent for a child, or a child is left with no guardian after the death of a parent.

Cases Closed

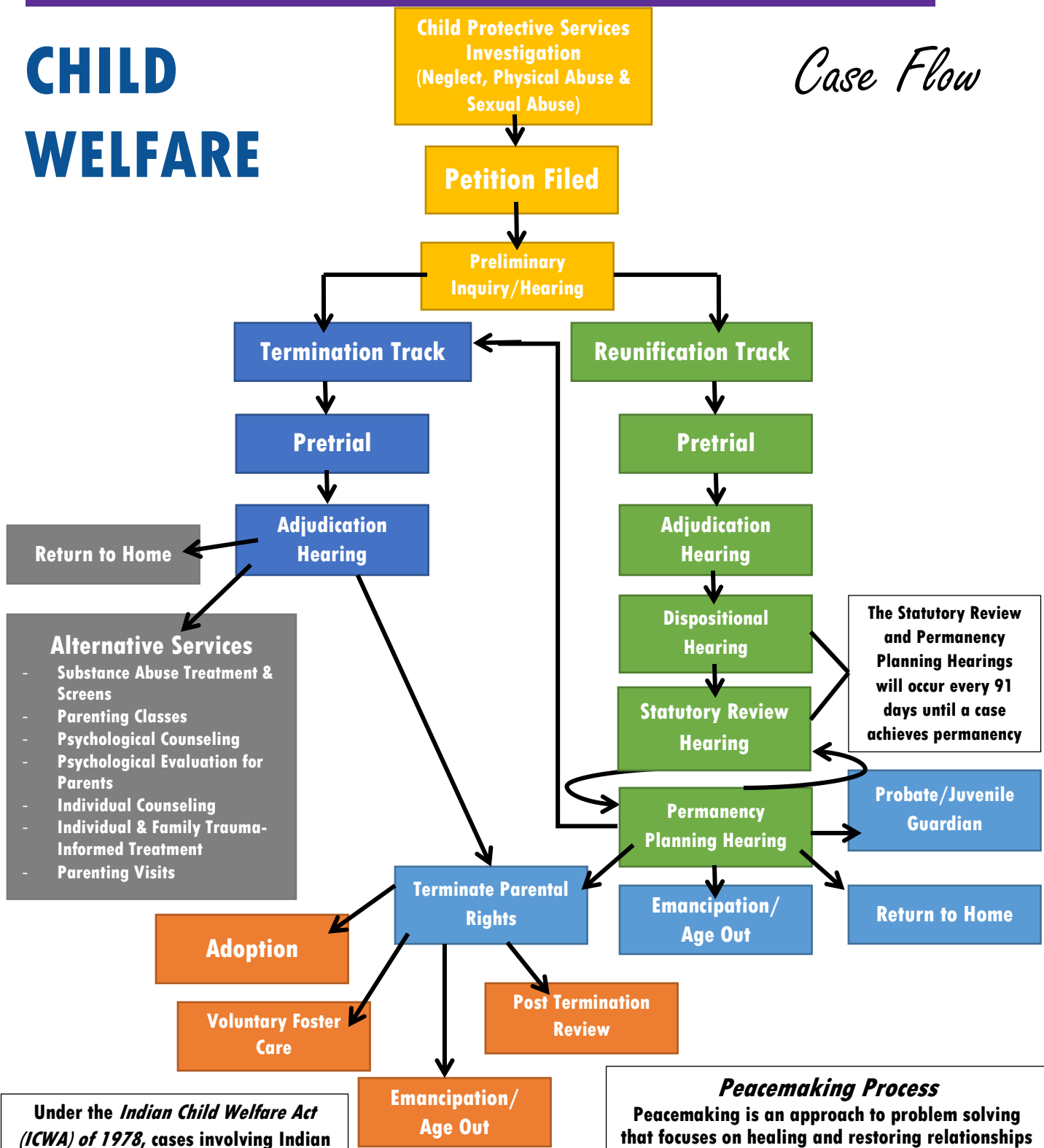
Of the 151 child welfare cases closed in 2016, the largest portion of children were reunified or remained with their parents (68), followed by children being adopted (33) and others granted guardianship (21) and therefore placed with a family member or fictive kin. Four children emancipated out of the system now living independently or in voluntary foster care. An additional 22 cases were opened in Washtenaw County and transferred to the child's county of residence and three were referred to Diversion for case management services rather than undergoing the formal child abuse and neglect court proceedings to address chronic absenteeism from school.

126 Cases Closed



CHILD WELFARE

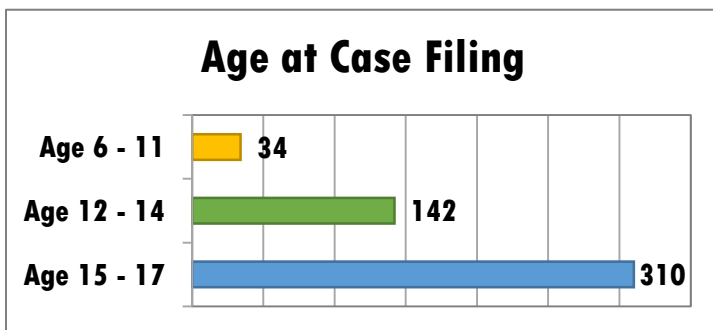
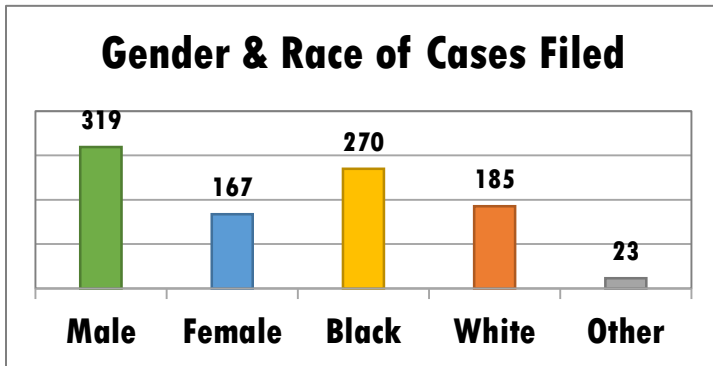
Case Flow



Under the *Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978*, cases involving Indian children may be referred to the tribal court at any time in the process. Even if handled in the state court system, cases involving Indian children have special procedural requirements and higher burdens of proof.

Peacemaking Process
 Peacemaking is an approach to problem solving that focuses on healing and restoring relationships between parties in disagreement. Peacemaking works to find comprehensive and collective resolutions and can be implemented at any point within a Child Welfare case and trial. For further information about Peacemaking, see the Washtenaw County Trial Court's Website: <http://washtenawtrialcourt.org/Peacemaking>

DELINQUENCY



Supervision Types

Young people are assigned to different levels of supervision based on their offenses, their need for specialized treatment, and their risk for future offending. Youth with higher risk scores at the time of the offense are assigned to a more intensive supervision program.

- **Diversion** is an informal supervision program offered to first-time low level offenders and status offenders and does not involve a court trial or formal probation program.
- **Probation** is a formal supervision program ordered by a judge or referee for low or moderate risk repeat or mid-level offenders.
- **Intensive Probation** is a formal supervision program ordered by a judge or referee for higher-risk offenders, often involving house arrest, electronic monitoring and Night Surveillance visits.
- **Juvenile Drug Treatment Court (JDTC)** is a family-focused specialized supervision and treatment program for young people diagnosed with substance use disorders and addiction.
- **Sex Offender Treatment Program (SOT)** is a specialized supervision and treatment program for young people charged with committing sexual offenses.
- **Residential Programs** are available to young people identified as needing a higher level of supervision and treatment than is available in the community.

The Washtenaw County Juvenile Court has jurisdiction over all youth under the age of 17 charged with violating criminal law (those acts, if committed by an adult, would be considered a misdemeanor or felony) and those charged with committing status offenses (illegal only because of the young person's age, such as school truancy, curfew violations or running away from home).

Demographics of Cases Filed

In 2016, there were 486 young people involved in a total of 664 new delinquency cases filed in the Juvenile Court. Of these young people, 65% of them were male and 35% were female; 55% identified as black, 38% white and 4% identified as Asian, Hispanic, biracial or other; and 6% were between the ages of 6 – 11, 29% were between the ages of 12 – 14 and 63% of young people were between the ages of 15 and 17 years old.

Diversion

Probation

Intensive Probation

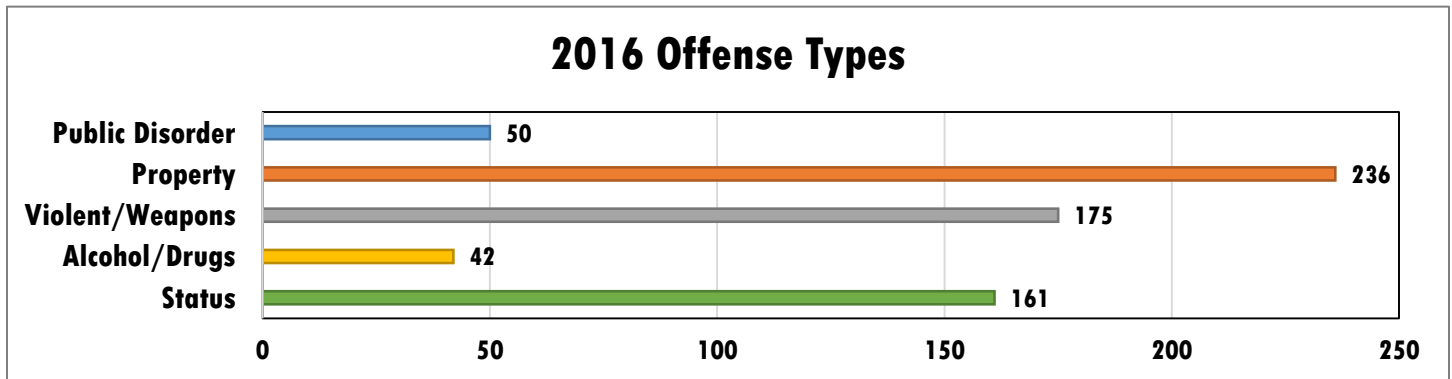
Juvenile Drug Court

Sex Offender Treatment Program

Residential Program

DELINQUENCY

Juvenile offenses can be broken into 5 categories ranging in charge and severity. In 2016, the most frequent charged offense type was offenses related to the stealing, destroying or tampering with another's **property**. This offense can include breaking and entering, shoplifting, etc. The second most frequent offense type was **violent** offenses or crimes against persons. This offense can include assaults, domestic violence, sex offenses, weapons, and resisting/obstructing police.



The third most frequent offense type was **status** offenses, including school truancy, curfew violations and running away from home. The remaining two offense types, **public disorder** and offenses involving **drugs** or **alcohol** were present but less frequent than the other offense types. These less frequent offenses can include disorderly conduct, driving without a license, and possession of marijuana or alcohol.

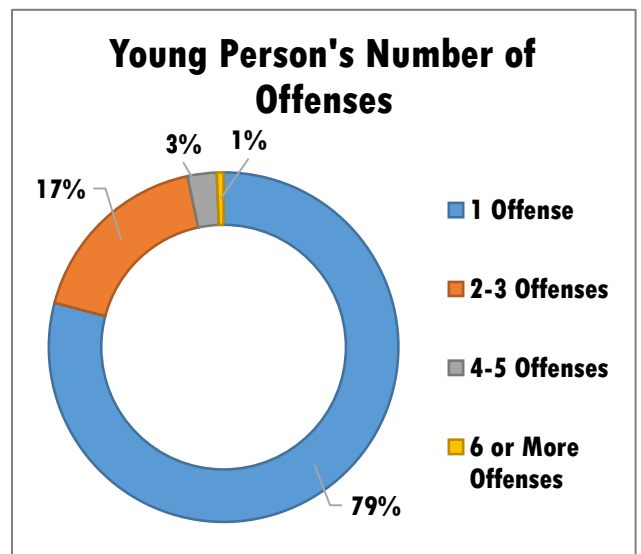
Data from 2016 shows the majority of young people (**382**) committed one offense (**79% of young people**). Less than 4% of court-involved young people (**17**) were frequent offenders with high risk of reoffending, responsible for **85 of the 664** delinquent acts.

Victim Restoration

Victim restoration is the process of a young person paying back the victim(s) of his or her offense. This teaches young people responsibility, integrity and restorative practices.

In 2016, **28** young people were ordered to pay restitution. Seventeen paid the full amount ordered - **\$15,826.16**.

26 of 39 young people completed the Victim Impact Awareness class and **48 of 53** young people composed a letter of apology and delivered it to their victims.

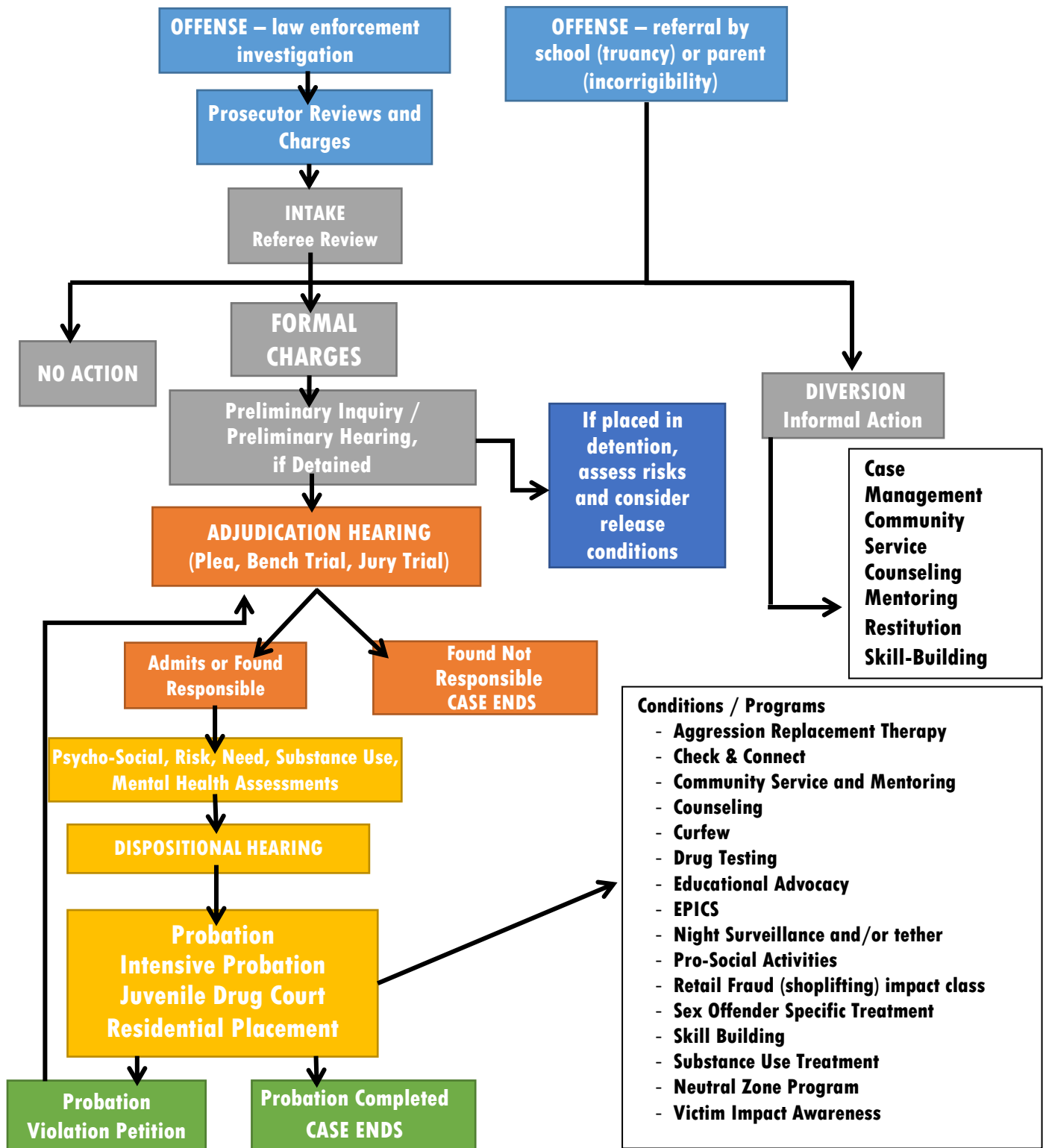


Most Frequent Charges of 2016:

1. **98 Retail Fraud Cases**
2. **92 Truancy Cases**
3. **88 Misdemeanor Assaults**

DELINQUENCY

Case Flow



RISK FOR RECIDIVISM

The use of this new tool, the **Positive Achievement for Change Tool Risk Assessment** was fully implemented in 2016. The PACT is an in-depth assessment of a young person’s risk and protective factors across 11 domains that produces research-validated risk level scores that measure a young person’s risk of reoffending (**low, moderate, moderate-high** or **high risk**) and suggests areas of greatest need for intervention.

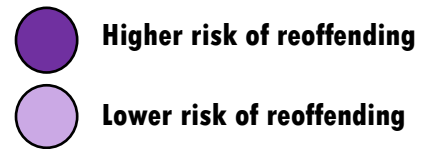
The 11 Domains of Measurement

1. Record of Referrals	7. Alcohol and Drugs
2. School Engagement	8. Mental Health
3. Use of Free Time	9. Attitudes and Behaviors
4. Employment	10. Aggression
5. Relationships	11. Skills
6. Family and Living Arrangements	

Risk Level/Score	Count	Percent
High	<u>9</u>	4.8%
Moderate-High	<u>12</u>	6.4%
Moderate	<u>26</u>	13.8%
Low	<u>141</u>	75%

The chart above displays a count of Initial PACT 2.0 Full Assessments, completed between 01/01/2016 and 12/31/2016

Initial analysis of the PACT data shows that the following three points are the most predicative of a young person’s risk of reoffending:



1. Parental Support

Young people who have consistent parental support are significantly less likely to recidivate than youth who have inadequate or inconsistent support. There is no significant difference in recidivism between young people who have inadequate support and those who have inconsistent support.

Inadequate Support	Inconsistent Support	Consistent Support
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2. School Attendance During the Most Recent Term

Young people who are habitually truant and young people who have some unexcused absences are more likely to reoffend than young people with good attendance. There is no significant difference in recidivism between young people who are habitually absent and young people who have multiple unexcused absences.

Habitual Absence	Some Absences	Good Attendance
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3. Grade Point Average During the Most Recent Term

Young people who are failing in school (GPA below 1.0) are significantly more likely to recidivate than young people who have a GPA 1.0 or above. There is no significant difference in recidivism between groups of young people who have a GPA of 1.0 or above.

Below 1.0 GPA	1.0 – 2.0 GPA	2.0 – 3.0 GPA	Above 3.0 GPA
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PACT analysis conducted by the Curtis Center, University of Michigan

OUTCOMES

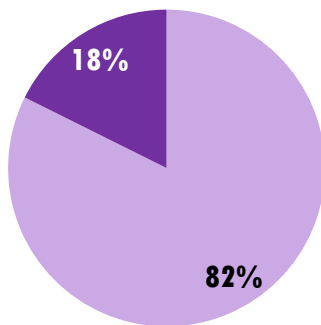
Successful Completion of Supervision

In 2016, 337 delinquency cases were closed in total. Of these 337, nearly **70% of young people successfully completed** their supervision program.

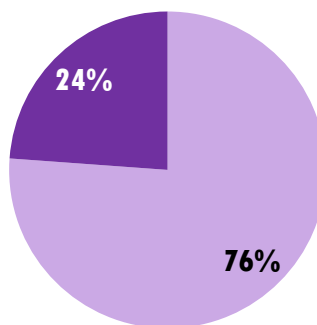
Of the 192 cases closed from formal probation supervision, **21% of young people received 1 or more new petitions** while on supervision.

		Male	Female
White	Successful	80%	77%
	Unsuccessful	19%	22%
Black	Successful	59%	68%
	Unsuccessful	40%	31%
Other	Successful	63%	72%
	Unsuccessful	36%	27%

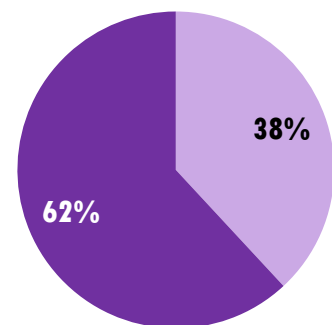
DIVERSION



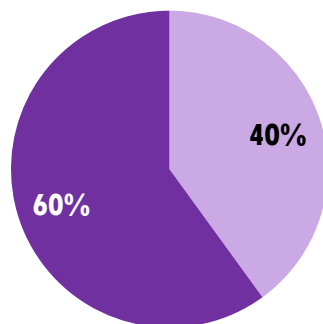
PROBATION



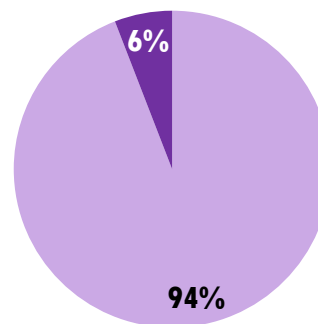
INTENSIVE PROBATION



DRUG COURT



SOT PROGRAM



 **Unsuccessful Completion**

 **Successful Completion**

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS



HORSE FARM

During their time spent volunteering at Starry Skies Equine Rescue and Sanctuary, young people develop skills pertaining to empathy, teamwork, sharing and responsibility in caring for others and animals. The young people are challenged to apply these new developing skills outside of the barn and into their lives, schools and communities.



THE NEUTRAL ZONE

The Neutral Zone provides young people the opportunity to work off probation-required community service hours through a community leadership program where young people have the opportunities for self reflection and identity development, community building and opportunities to craft and tell their stories through digital, media, literary and visual arts.



SUMMER SPORTS CAMPS

For over 25 years, the Juvenile Court staff with many partners has offered free sports camps for young people throughout the summer, providing them with a safe and positive environment as they learn leadership skills, good sportsmanship and teamwork. The sports camps provide young people the opportunity to participate or volunteer.



COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

In 2016, young people completed over 5,600 hours of community service. Community service hours and projects build positive youth-adult relationships and teach our young people the importance of responsibility and the benefits of giving back to the communities in which they live in.



C.R.E.A.T.I.V.E ARTS & WORKS

Craftsmanship | Rhythm | Expression | Artistry
Trade | Imagination | Virtuosity | Expertise

In this program, young people learn about the themes of cultural awareness, identity formation and how to better their community through writing, poetry, spoken word, painting, drawing and service projects.

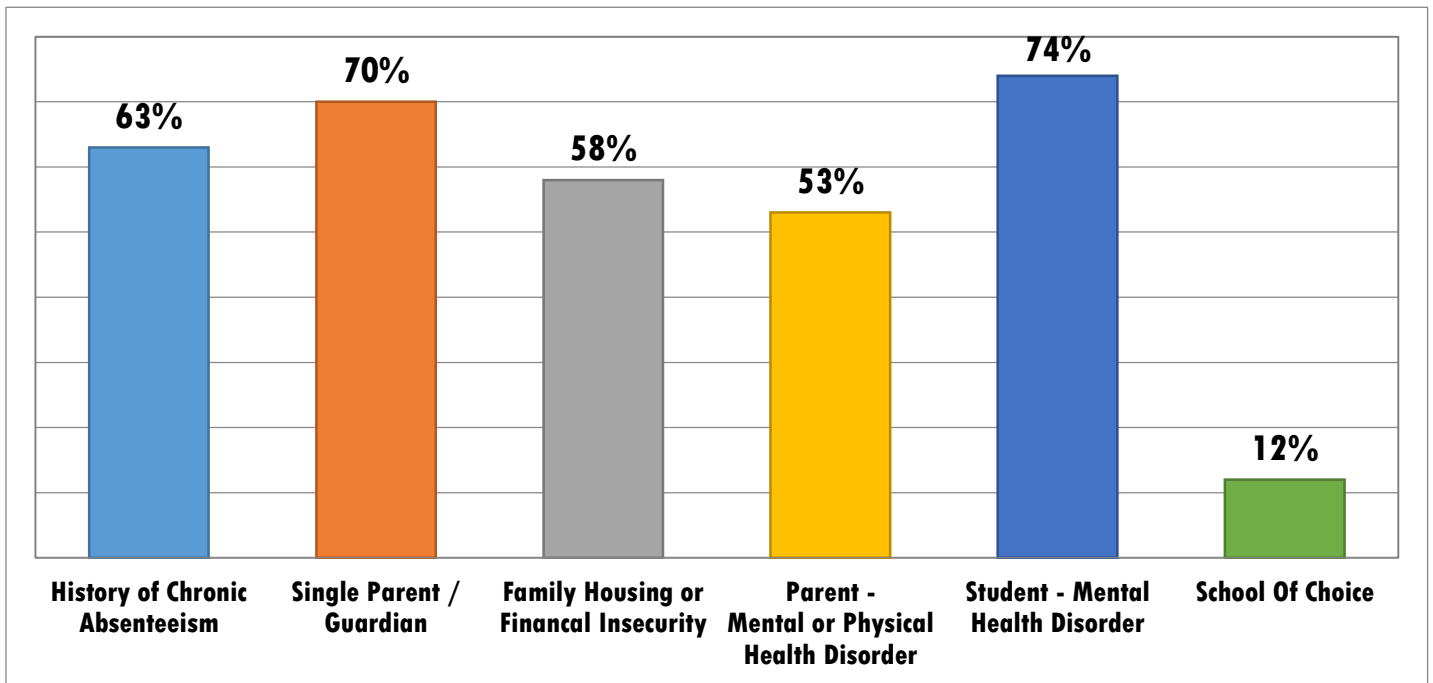
ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL



The School Justice Partnership (SJP) is a forum of community partners all focusing on interrupting the school-to-prison pipeline for young people. (<http://attendancematters.weebly.com>)

SJP works to reduce absenteeism, suspensions and expulsions in order to improve school truancy and educational neglect. SJP was formed, in part, to research and respond with a plan to address barriers to school attendance, especially for students in poverty.

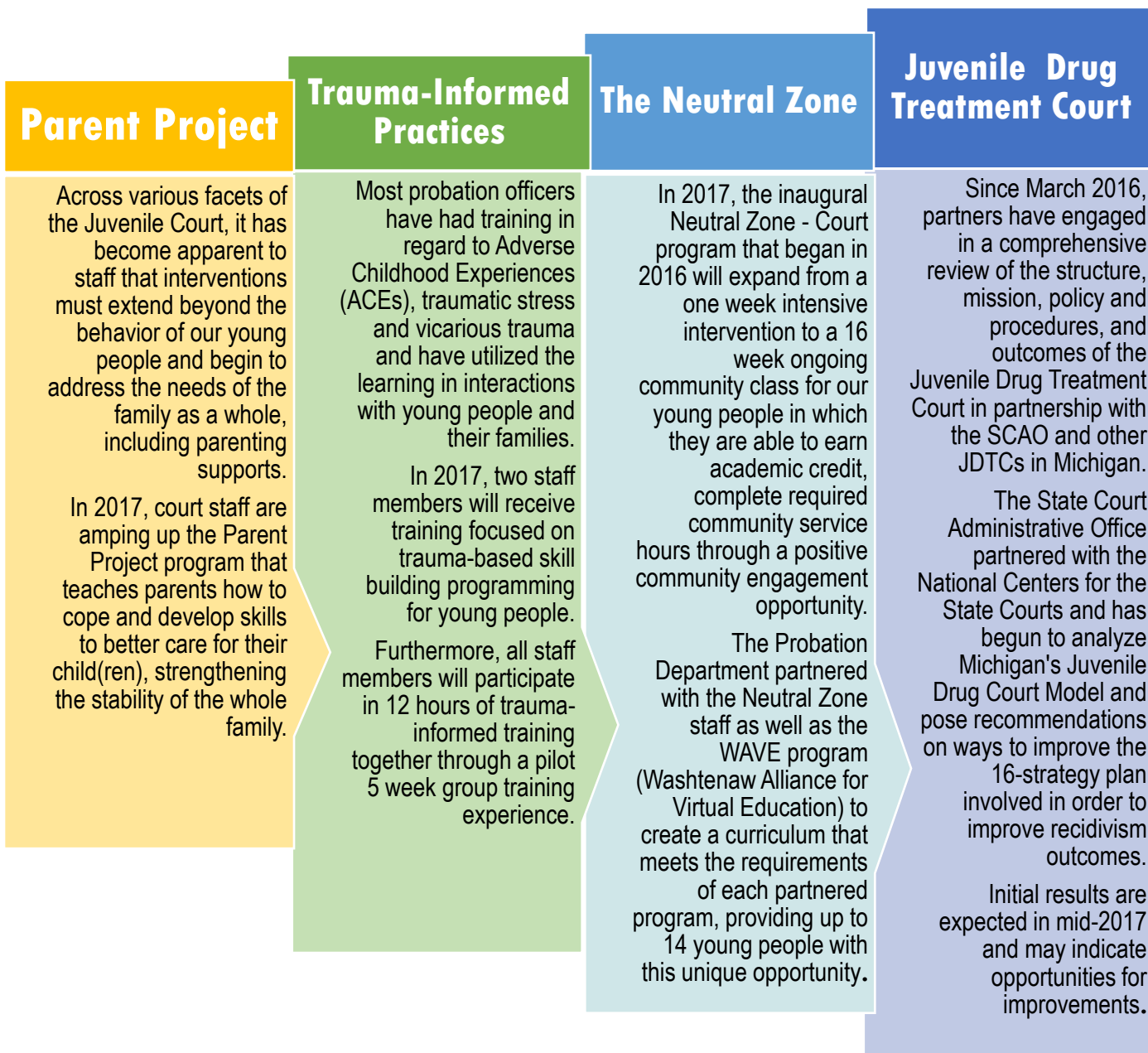
The 2015-2016 school year marked the first year that the Juvenile Court partnered with the Washtenaw Intermediary School District (WISD) and local school districts to pilot the Attendance Protocol. The pilot districts included Ann Arbor Public Schools, Ypsilanti Community Schools and Lincoln Consolidated Schools. The following graph depicts the percentage of students with each risk factor involved in the Year 1 Attendance Pilot Program. These students and families were approached with case management strategies to comprehensively and holistically address the root causes of the surfacing issue of chronic absenteeism.



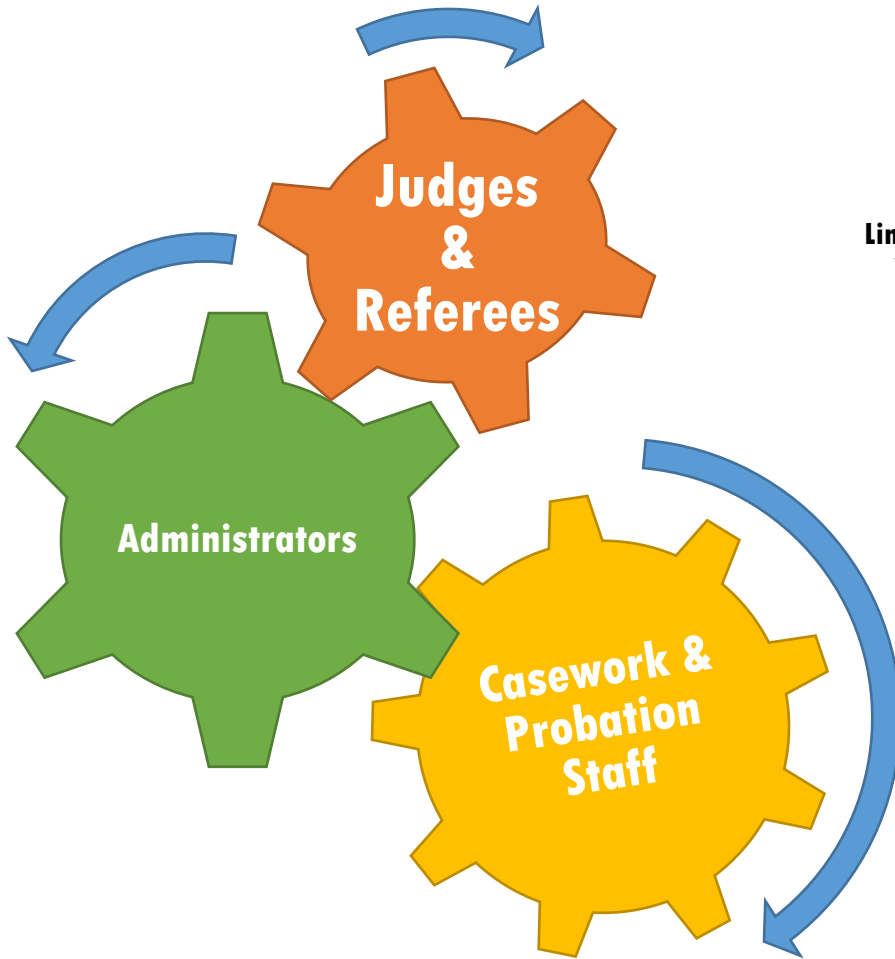
33%
Students Receiving
Special Education

43%
Average Percentage of Days
Missed in Current School Year
at Time of Referral

ONWARD & UPWARD IN 2017



MEET OUR STAFF



Hon. David S. Swartz, Chief Judge
Hon. Julia B. Owdziej, Probate Judge, Juvenile Delinquency
Hon. Timothy P. Connors, Circuit Judge, Child Welfare
Hon. Carol Kuhnke, Circuit Judge, Adoptions

Gail Altenburg, Referee
Susan Butterwick, Referee
Tamala Jones, Coordinator

Dan Dwyer, Trial Court Administrator
Linda Edwards-Brown, Juvenile Court Administrator
William Malcolm, Intensive Probation Supervisor
Deborah Shaw, Special Projects Manager
Donna White, Probation Supervisor

Jessica Ashmore, Probation Officer
Kent Bernard, Probation Officer
NiQuitisha Edmonds, Probation Officer
Steve Hall, CSC Caseworker
Jason Herter, In-Home Intervention Specialist
Monica Hicks, Adoption Caseworker
Zandra Jefferies, Intensive Probation Officer
Paula Madden, Probation Officer
Aaron Miller, Drug Court Probation Officer
JaVonda Palmer, CSC Caseworker
Michele Rutsey, Probation Officer
Thomas Snelling, Intensive Probation Officer
Gina Steffey, Drug Court Probation Officer
John Torres, Drug Court Coordinator
Nathan Vaughn, In-Home Intervention Specialist
Kassie Weiland, Probation Officer
Stacia Zellner, In-Home Intervention Specialist

Compiled and Written by Deborah J. Shaw, MFT, MPA and Krista Malbouef, University of Michigan MSW Intern
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