

**KNOX COUNTY PROBATE-JUVENILE COURT**  
**2024 ANNUAL REPORT**



**Judge Jay W. Nixon**

COURT OF COMMON PLEAS  
KNOX COUNTY, OHIO  
PROBATE-JUVENILE DIVISION

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JAY W. NIXON, JUDGE  
CHRISTINA L. REHIELD, MAGISTRATE

DIANE S. RANDALL  
COURT ADMINISTRATOR

JEREMY E. PAYNE  
DIRECTOR OF PROBATION

**2024 ANNUAL REPORT**

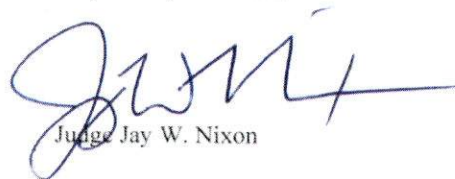
I am pleased to present the 2024 Annual Report of Knox County Probate/Juvenile Court for your information and use. This report includes information about the programs offered by the Court and Juvenile Probation Department to the youth of our county as well as statistical information regarding the number and type of cases filed. I hope this report is informative and useful.

Knox County Probate/Juvenile Court appreciates the dedication and experience of the Knox County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Knox County Public Defender's Office, Knox County Job & Family Services, private attorneys, as well as every law enforcement agency of Knox County, including the Knox County Sheriff's Office, the Mount Vernon City Police Department, the Fredericktown Police Department and the Danville Police Department.

The Court would also like to thank the following for their assistance and cooperation in helping the Court and juveniles of Knox County: Mount Vernon City Schools, Centerburg Schools, Danville Schools, East Knox Schools, Fredericktown Schools and The Learning Center. Also, Behavioral Healthcare Partners, The Children's Resource Center, Muskingum County Juvenile Detention Center, The Ohio Department of Youth Services, and all participating foster parents and counseling agencies.

In conclusion, I would like to personally express my sincere thanks to the Court staff for their continued service and dedication. With everyone working together, the Court is able to provide a high level of quality service to the citizens of Knox County.

Respectfully submitted,



Judge Jay W. Nixon

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Knox County Probate/Juvenile Court is to provide efficient, quality judicial services to the people of Knox County. Through the process of seeking the truth, the Court's goal is to firmly and fairly adjudicate and dispose of all matters brought before it. After disposition, every effort is made to enforce the Court's orders to ensure public safety. In addition, the Court strives to use all available resources to achieve the rehabilitation of our youth to make them more productive citizens of our community. Ultimately, the primary goal and mission of the Probate/Juvenile Court of Knox County is the attainment of Justice.

## **Knox County Probate/Juvenile Court Staff**

**Judge Jay Nixon** is a native of Mount Vernon, Ohio. He attended Ohio University, graduating in 2003 with a B.A. in Psychology. He attended law school at the University of Dayton, graduating cum laude in 2009. Judge Nixon returned to Mount Vernon after law school to work at the firm of Zelkowitz, Barry & Cullers until he was appointed Magistrate of Knox County Probate/Juvenile Court in February of 2015. Following the resignation of Judge Springer, Judge Nixon was appointed to the bench of the Probate/Juvenile Court in November of 2018. He was elected to the position of Judge in 2020 with his term beginning February 9, 2021.

**Magistrate Christina Reiheld** has resided in Knox County for more than ten years. She obtained her B.A. in History in 1998, and graduated summa cum laude from the University of Akron, School of Law in 2003. After practicing as a judicial law clerk for Judge Lynn Slaby on the Ninth District Court of Appeals and Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor with the Supreme Court of Ohio, Magistrate Reiheld served children and families for more than ten years as a private practice attorney and guardian ad litem. Judge Jay Nixon appointed Magistrate Reiheld to the Knox County Probate/Juvenile Court in January 2019.

**Court Administrator Diane Randall** has been with the Court since 1996. Diane manages the staff and operation of the Court as well as the financial duties. She is a 2011 graduate of the Certified Court Management Program and 2017 graduate of the Certified Court Executive Program through the Supreme Court of Ohio.

**Chief Deputy Clerk, Lisa Moreland** has been with the Court since 2000. Her duties include handling probate estates, civils, and trusts and assists with the financial duties. Lisa is a 2022 graduate of the Certified Court Management Program through the Supreme Court of Ohio.

**Deputy Clerk Amy McCann** started with the Court in 2013. Her duties include handling and processing all traffic, delinquency, unruly and adult contributing cases.

**Deputy Clerk Angie VanWinkle** joined the Court in 2017. Her duties include handling Probate Guardianships and Neglect/Abuse/Dependent cases.

**Deputy Clerk Jaime Hilberg** joined the Court in November 2020. Her duties include Intake, Marriage Licenses and processing Child Support cases and Probate cases.

**Deputy Clerk Hannah Campbell** started with the Court in April 2023. Her duties include handling child support, custody and visitation cases.

**Bailiff Gil Borchers** has been with the Court since January 2016. His duties include Security of the Courtroom and management of hearings and recordings of court proceedings.

## **Juvenile Probation Staff**

Director of Probation **Jeremy Payne** has been employed with the Knox County Juvenile Probation Department since September 2005. Jeremy is responsible for the management of staff and the operation of the Juvenile Probation Department. He also oversees the Drug Court Program which is certified by the Ohio Supreme Court. He is a 2017 graduate of the Certified Court Management Program.

Assistant Director of Probation **Melinda Marmet** has been with the Juvenile Probation Department since 2003. Melinda is responsible for assisting the Director of Probation with department operations and staff management, as well as overseeing the Mental Health Court Program. She is a 2021 graduate of the Certified Court Management Program through the Supreme Court of Ohio.

Probation Officer **Kevin Holley** started working for the Knox County Juvenile Court in 2012. Kevin is responsible for overseeing Probation's sexual offender caseload as well as other youth placed on probation. He is also an instructor for the Thinking for a Change program.

Probation/Truancy Officer **Tami Mills** returned to work for Knox County Juvenile Court in 2021 after previously being employed by the Court. She is responsible for managing a caseload of youth on reporting probation as well as the truancy cases that have been filed with the Court. She is also a Licensed Social Worker and an instructor for the Thinking for a Change program.

Probation Officer **Ashley Groves** returned to work with Knox County Juvenile Court in 2024 after previously being employed with the Court. Ashley is responsible for managing a caseload of youth on reporting probation.

Intake Specialist and Probation Department Clerk **Erica White** has been with the Knox County Juvenile Court since December 2017. Erica was hired to oversee several different tasks. She does intakes, social histories, administers drug screens, and oversees the non-reporting caseload to make sure court deadlines are met.

Transportation Officer **Mike Cunningham** joined the Court in July 2019. His duties include transporting juveniles to and from detention centers and appointments and serving legal documents to clients of the Court. He also processes DNA and fingerprints of youth that are filed with the Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

## **Probation Programs and Services**

The Knox County Juvenile Probation Department employs a Director of Probation, Assistant Director of Probation, three Probation Officers, Intake Specialist/Probation Clerk and a Transportation Officer.

### **Intake**

The intake process is twofold, upon filing of a complaint by the prosecutor's office, it is determined whether the case should be scheduled for an Official Hearing before the Judge or Magistrate or scheduled for a Diversion Hearing with the Director of Probation. In general, first-time offenders who have committed a nonviolent offense may be eligible for a Diversion Hearing. All other offenses are scheduled for an Official Hearing.

The second part of the intake process occurs once the youth has been to an Official Hearing and placed on Probation. This part of the process is to explain what was ordered in court, getting demographic information from the youth and parents, obtaining medical releases, the rules of probation and other release of information forms signed.

### **Diversion Hearings**

Diversion Hearings are unofficial hearings held by the Director of Probation and the Youth along with the Parents. Youth and parents must be willing to agree to the terms of the diversion contract and complete those terms within the number of days specified. The terms of diversion could be to complete a certain number of hours of community service, seek counseling, write a letter of apology, and/or attend the court's contracted fitness program. If the youth complete the terms of the diversion contract, the case is dismissed.

### **Reporting Probation**

One of the most common dispositions in the Juvenile Court for youth that have entered an admission to the charges against them or found guilty during a trial is for that youth to be placed on probation.

Probation officers are responsible for supervising the youth that are placed on probation by the Court and monitoring compliance with the Court orders and rules of probation. Supervision of the youth is conducted through home, school, and office visits. Officers will also attend school meetings, such as IEP or discipline meetings, and family team meetings, which involve other service providers and the parents. Probation Officers will visit youth if they are placed outside the home in juvenile detention facilities, foster care homes, or residential treatment facilities. Probation Officers are required to maintain regular contact with youth on reporting probation.

Probation Officers are required to attend each scheduled Court hearing regarding a youth. They are responsible for providing the Court with recommendations for dispositions and giving up to date information regarding that youth's progress. Staff of the Probation Department are certified in the Ohio Youth Assessment that was developed by the University of Cincinnati. This assessment determines the youth's risk level, areas needing treatment, and measures progress.

All youth on probation are subject to random drug screens. Instant drug screens are administered on youth. If a positive screen is submitted, that screen is sent to Redwood Toxicology Laboratory for confirmation. If the screen is confirmed positive by the Redwood Toxicology Laboratory, the Probation Officer will file a probation violation on the youth.

The Probation Department provides an on-call officer, (available 24 hours a day), for law enforcement to contact when severe juvenile-related matters occur. A Probation Officer will authorize the youth to be sent to juvenile detention or assist in determining an alternative placement pending a Court hearing.

### **Out of Home Placements**

There are some youths in Knox County who require placement outside of their home in a secure facility. The decision to take a child from his or her home is never easy and is used as a last resort when the community-based services have been exhausted.

### **Ohio Department of Youth Services**

The Ohio Department of Youth Services is the state correctional system for juvenile offenders ages 10-18 who have been found guilty of a felony level offense. The commitments range from a minimum period of 6 months to a maximum period of the youth's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. The Department provides treatment and educational programming to meet each youth's needs. A Parole Officer is assigned to the youth upon release to assist their transition from the institution back into the community.

### **Perry Multi County Juvenile Facility**

The Perry Multi County Juvenile Facility located in New Lexington, Ohio is a 20-bed secured facility for male youth adjudicated of a felony offense. This facility is used as an alternative for the youth who may otherwise be placed in the Department of Youth Services. The facility addresses several areas of need. These areas include substance abuse counseling, mental health counseling, academic, future planning and life skills. The program is a 4-phase program that each youth must work through to successfully complete the program. The "Thinking for a Change Program" is also utilized.

### **Juvenile Detention Facilities**

Knox County Juvenile Court currently uses the services of Muskingum County Juvenile Detention Center and has 5 beds contracted with them.

Youth placed in this detention facility can be placed there by court order for any misdemeanor charge or higher. Sentences range anywhere from 1 to 180 days to be served in detention.

## **Referral Agencies**

- **Village Network**

The Village Network includes Brite Futures Counseling Services and the Children's Resource Center. Brite Futures provides outpatient mental health counseling for the individual, family, and groups. They also provide referred clients with case management. The Children's Resource Center is an inpatient facility that provides the same services for youth placed there as Brite Futures, but the youth live at the facility. They also teach independent living skills.

- **Behavioral Health Care Partners**

Behavioral Health Care Partners provide counseling, case management, and pharmacological management. They are also partnered with the Knox County Juvenile Court in the Mental Health Court specialized docket. They provide a full-time case manager to assist probation with the Mental Health Court caseload.

- **The Freedom Center**

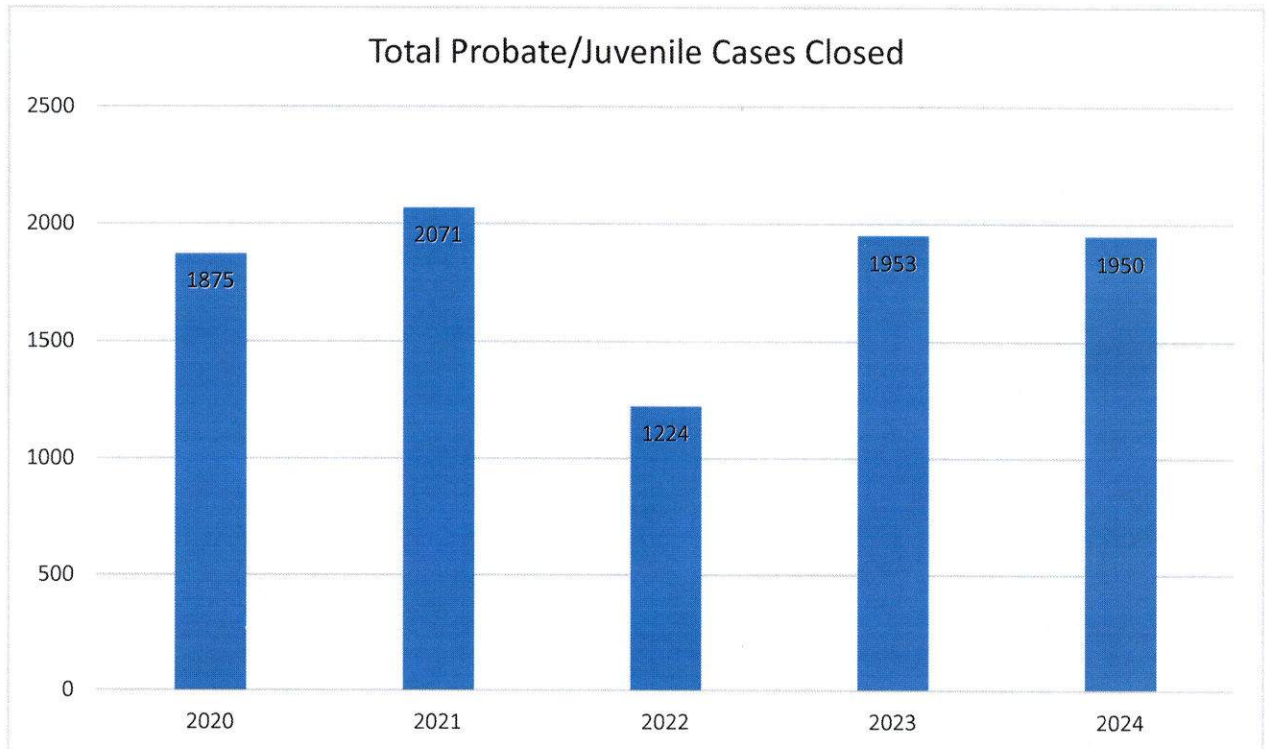
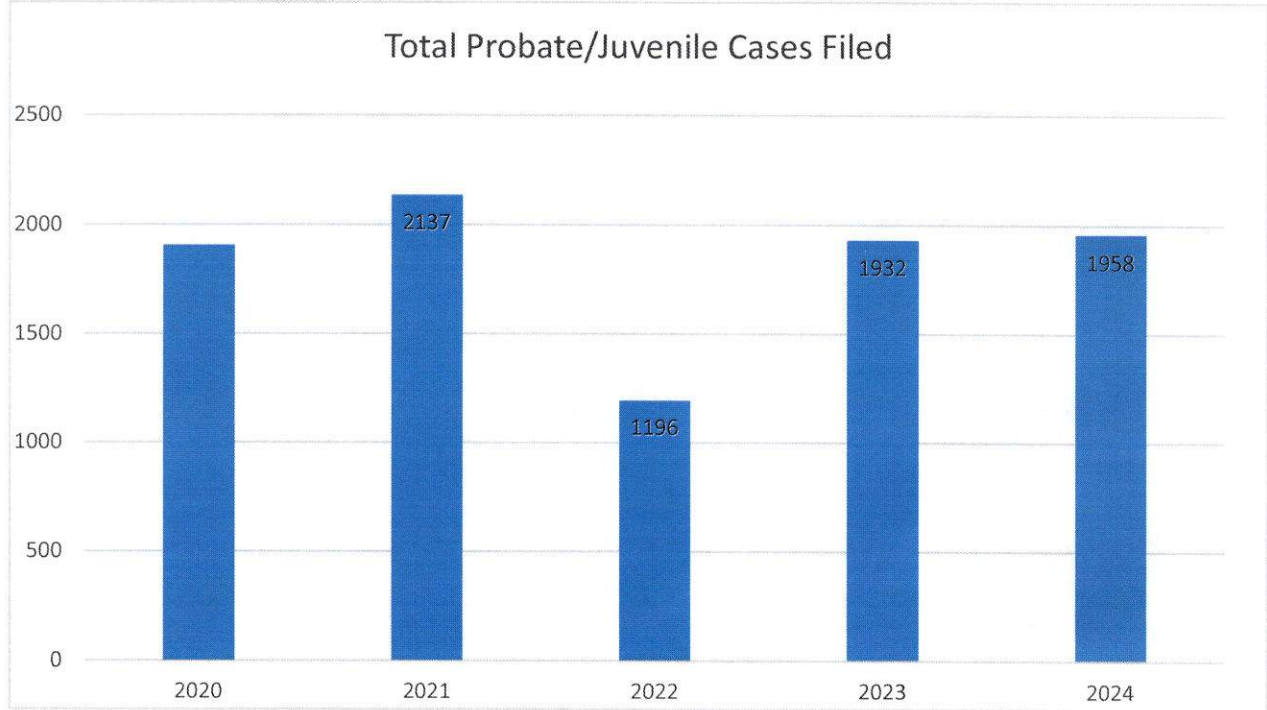
The Freedom Center provides drug and alcohol counseling, both individual and group sessions. They also assist with case management and some mental health counseling. The Freedom Center partners with the Knox County Juvenile Court's Drug Court program which is part of the Specialized Docket. They assess each client referred to, provide recommendations to Juvenile Probation and provide the client with a treatment plan. They also facilitate Parent Project, a program that parents of juveniles may be ordered to participate in.

- **Opportunity Knox**

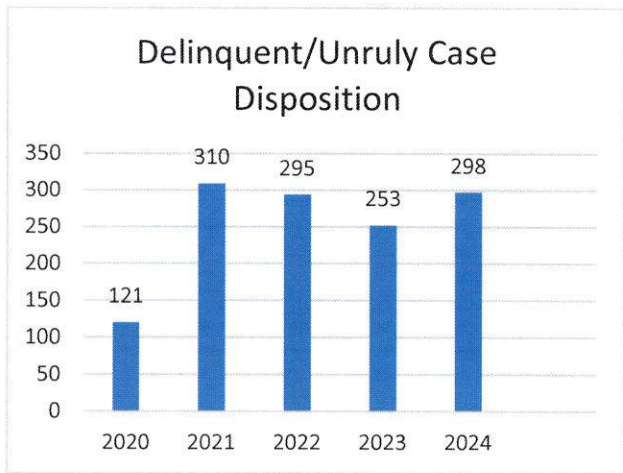
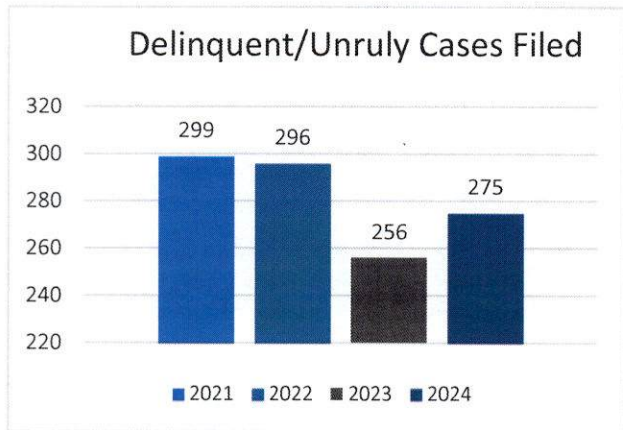
Opportunity Knox helps referred clients with credit recovery for school academics, GED prep, and job placement. They provide a summer work program for referred youth to get job experience during the summer months when they are out of school.

- **Knox Works/Touch Pointe**

Knox Works helps young adults aged 18 and up with job placement, interviewing skills, resume writing, and being an advocate for the client when it comes to getting a job. Touch Pointe focuses on couples and helps strengthen their marriage. This not only creates healthy families but also helps develop proper communication skills. Knox Works/Touch Pointe also provides clients with the Parent Project Program.



## DELINQUENT/UNRULY CASES 2024



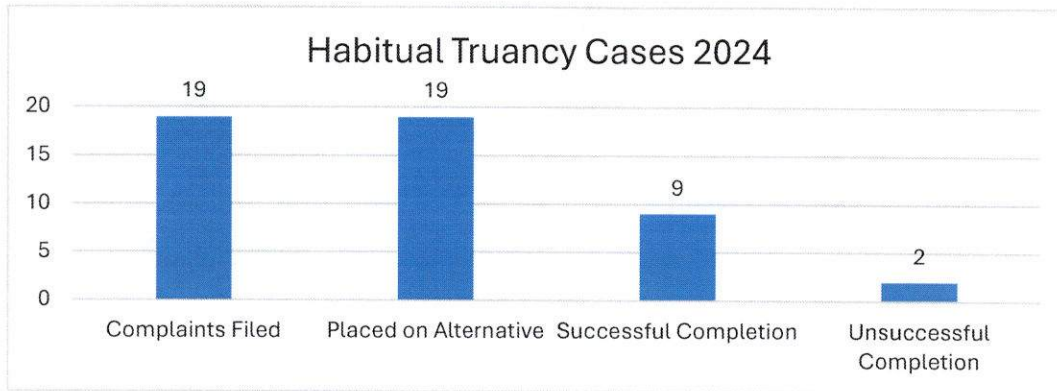
2152.02 (F) "Delinquent child" defined:

"Delinquent child" includes any of following:

1. Any child, except a juvenile traffic offender, who violates any law of this state or the United States, or any ordinance of a political subdivision of the state that would be an offense if committed by an adult.
2. Any child who violates any lawful order of the court made under this chapter or under Chapter 2151. of the Revised Code other than an order issued under section 2151.87 of the Revised Code.
3. Any child who violates division (C) of section 2907.39, division (A) of section 2923.211 or division (C)(1) or (D) of section 2925.55 of the Revised Code.

Official Delinquency Filed	241	Official Delinquency Disposed	263
Official Unruly Filed	34	Official Unruly Disposed	35
<b>Total Cases Filed</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>Total Cases Disposed</b>	<b>298</b>

## TRUANCY CASES 2024



### HABITUALLY TRUANT CASES JANUARY THROUGH DECEMBER 2024

2151.011(B) (18) and 2151.022(B) Habitually Truant “Unruly child” defined:

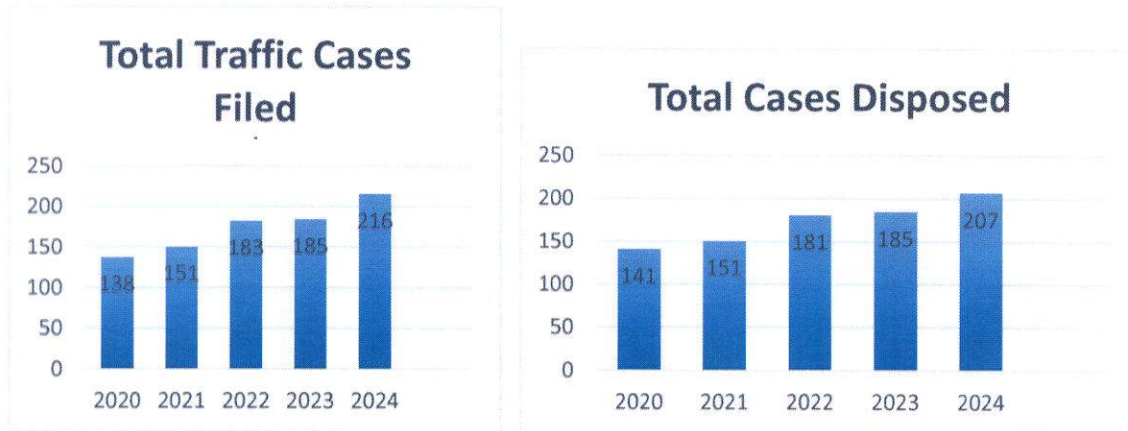
Any child who has been absent without legitimate excuse for said absence from the public school the child is supposed to attend for:

1. 30 or more consecutive school hours
2. 42 or more hours in one school month
3. 72 or more hours in a school year

Habitual Truant “Unruly child” Filed	<b>19</b>
Placed in alternative to adjudication under R.C. 2151.27(G)	<b>19</b>
Successful completion of alternative to adjudication	<b>9</b>
Failed to complete alternative to adjudication and adjudicated unruly.	<b>2</b>
Dismissed prior to Diversion Hearing	<b>4</b>
Pending	<b>4</b>

Male Ages		Female Ages	
Eleven	1	Eleven	1
Twelve	0	Twelve	0
Thirteen	0	Thirteen	2
Fourteen	0	Fourteen	4
Fifteen	4	Fifteen	0
Sixteen	2	Sixteen	2
Seventeen	1	Seventeen	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>

## TRAFFIC CASES 2024

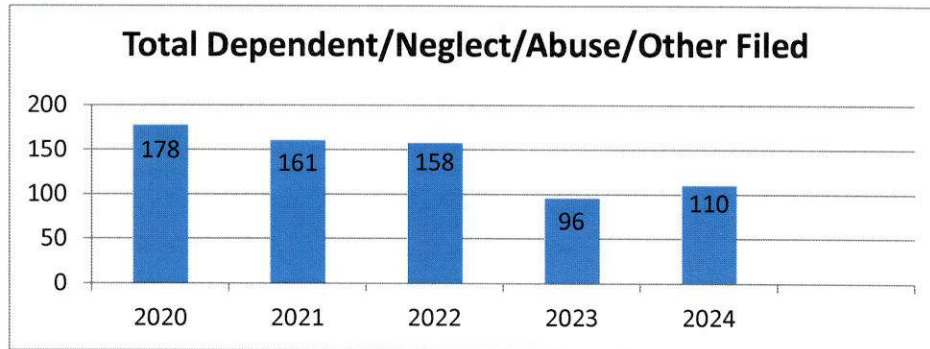


### 2152.02(N) "Juvenile Traffic Offender" defined:

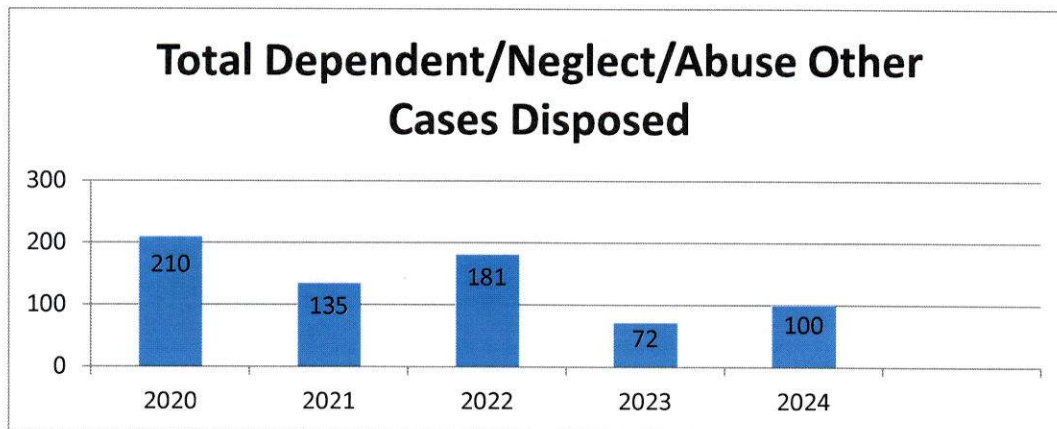
Any child who violates any traffic law, traffic ordinance, or traffic regulation of this state, the United States, or any political subdivision of this state, other than resolution, ordinance or regulation of a political subdivision of this state the violation which is required to be handled by a parking violations bureau or joint parking violation bureau pursuant to Chapter 4521. of the Revised Code.

<b>Official Cases Filed</b>	<b>216</b>
<b>Official Cases Disposed</b>	<b>207</b>

## ABUSE/NEGLECT/DEPENDENCY & OTHER

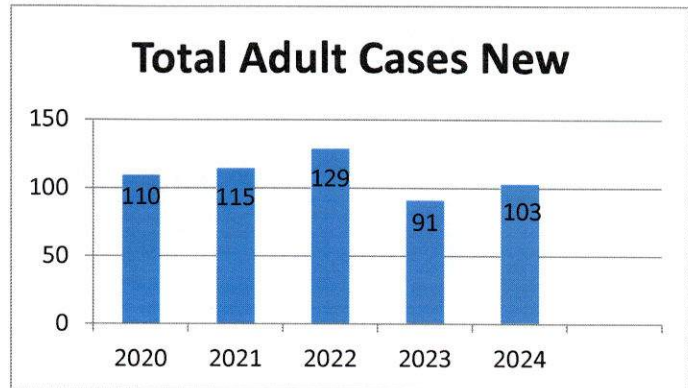


Types of Cases Filed - NEW	Cases
Abuse/Neglect/Dependency	110

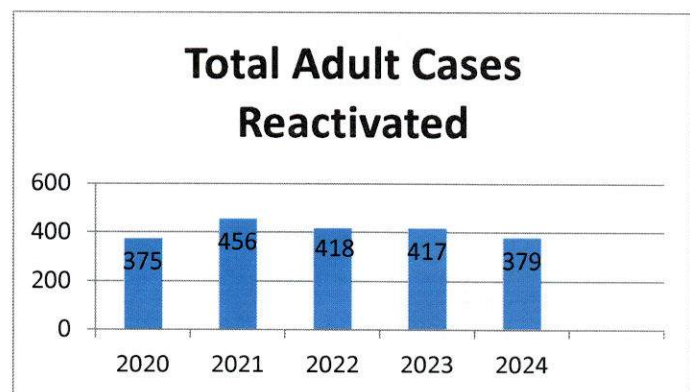


Types of Cases - Disposed	Cases
Abuse/Neglect/Dependency	100

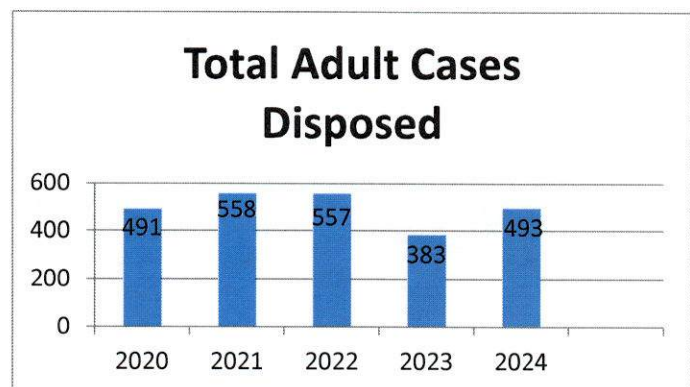
Types of Cases Filed - NEW	Cases
Custody/Visitation	45
Support	39
Paternity	4
Adult Contributing	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>



Types of Cases - Reactivated	Cases
Custody/Visitation	76
Support	298
Paternity	1
Adult Contributing	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>



Types of Cases - Disposed	Cases
Custody/Visitation	118
Support	352
Paternity	6
Adult Contributing	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>493</b>



## **KNOX COUNTY PROBATE COURT**

In 2024, the Probate Court opened a total of 868 cases covering 11 different case types. Listed below are the totals filed.

<b>Case Types</b>	<b>Number of Cases Opened</b>
Estates	<b>325</b>
Guardianships	<b>43</b>
Trust	<b>3</b>
Civils	<b>7</b>
Adoptions	<b>17</b>
Mental Illness	<b>9</b>
Minor Settlements	<b>6</b>
Birth Correction/Registration	<b>12</b>
Name Change	<b>53</b>
Miscellaneous Filings	<b>8</b>
Marriage Licenses	<b>385</b>
<b>Total New Probate Cases</b>	<b>868</b>

Rule of Superintendence 66.01-66.09 became effective on June 1, 2015, making significant changes to guardianships, implementing education requirements for guardians and a stricter outlook on how guardianships should be monitored. While the figure above shows 43 new guardianship cases were filed, the Court is obligated to administer and monitor guardianships, audit over 200 open guardianship cases and send mailings to inform all our adult guardians of these changes. We continue to monitor our guardians to ensure that they meet the new guardianship fundamentals training requirement.

In 2024, 385 marriage licenses were issued through the Court. These figures reflect one or both of the parties being Knox County residents or Out of State residents and the ceremony is being performed in Knox County.

