

2025

Annual Report



GUERNSEY COUNTY

PROBATE/JUVENILE COURT &
JUVENILE PROBATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2024, the Probate/Juvenile Court continued its goal of providing justice for our most vulnerable citizens, and giving direction for our local youth, while maintaining consequences for their actions.

The caseload of both the Juvenile and Probate Courts remain consistent with prior years.

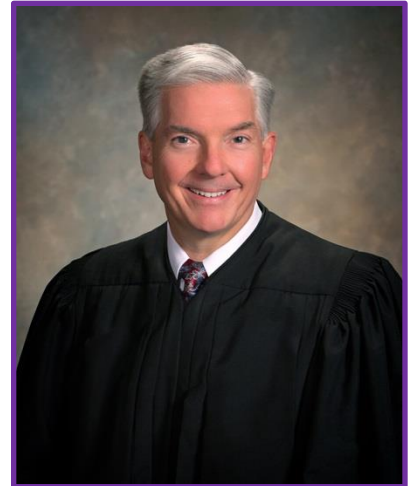
The Juvenile Court continues with its Sexting Education Awareness Diversion (S.E.A.D.) Program in the local middle and high schools. In addition, we continue to provide the Drug Education Awareness and Responsibility (D.E.A.R.) Program in our local schools in conjunction with the Guernsey County Prosecutor's Office. We are also continuing our Thinking for a Change Program and Smoking/Vaping Cessation Program for at-risk youth. The Court is making every effort to be proactive in the schools to lessen the chances of local youth being brought before the Court on delinquency or unruly charges. By having Court officials in the schools, it is my belief that we can identify children and families at-risk and assist them with referrals to other agencies for help.

The CARTEENS Program continues to provide positive traffic law education for first time juvenile traffic offenders. We have received a great deal of positive feedback from the youth who complete the program.

The Juvenile Court is maintaining efficient and timely resolution to the cases that are brought before the Court, with only one case pending at the end of the year beyond the Supreme Court of Ohio's timeframes.

The Probate Court also continues to be busy with a steady flow of guardianships, adoptions, and estate work. Total filings for 2024 were 576 cases. The Court continues to offer its Guardianship Training Program for families. In 2024, we trained 95 family members who are guardians of their loved ones.

The Court continues to seek financial assistance from the Supreme Court of Ohio to complete the ongoing Online Index Books project. We were not successful in the last grant application cycle with the Supreme Court of Ohio; however, we have reapplied again this year for funding. This last phase of our project will cost nearly \$200,000, and funding for these types of projects is highly competitive. Our effort continues.



One of the responsibilities of the Juvenile Court involves the enforcement of child support orders issued by this Court. Our Magistrate, Peter Cultice, conducts hearings every other Friday for the enforcement of delinquent child support orders. Over the last ten years, this Court has been responsible for the collection of over twenty-four million dollars in child support from Juvenile Court orders. This money has supported numerous children in Guernsey County and assisted in the reimbursement of government services provided by the Department of Job and Family Services to families in Guernsey County.

During 2024, our Court staff remained largely intact. However, John Davis, our Elementary School Truancy Prevention Officer, decided to retire after many years of service to the Court and the county. He will be missed by everyone here at the Court. With his departure, the Court will be evaluating candidates for his position in 2025.

I have continued to maintain my statewide involvement with the Ohio Judicial Conference through the Probate Law and Procedures Committee, Juvenile Law and Procedures Committee, and the Judicial Advisory Group. I have remained on the Board of Trustees of the Ohio Association of Juvenile Court Judges, where I was recently elected to serve as Secretary. In addition, I am completing my second year as Secretary/Historian for the Ohio Association of Probate Judges. My work also continues on the Ohio Supreme Court's subcommittees for Probate Judges' curriculum and time standards. This work is challenging because we are reworking the Probate Judges' curriculum for continuing education and establishing timeframes for the completion of Probate cases in Ohio. I enjoy my work with the Supreme Court and fellow Ohio judges as it provides me the opportunity to learn best practices from around the state. It also provides me with the opportunity to have input with the Legislature on proposed changes to Ohio law.

I look forward to continuing to provide justice for all of the citizens of Guernsey County in 2025.

JUDGE DAVID B. BENNETT
GUERNSEY COUNTY PROBATE/JUVENILE COURT

CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	1 - 2
Contents.....	3
Employees.....	4
Juvenile Court Summary.....	5 - 6
Supreme Court Report 2024 – Juvenile Division	
Local CASA Program.....	7
Juvenile Probation Summary.....	8
Programs Operated Under the Juvenile Court & Juvenile Probation.....	9 - 11
Alternatives to Adjudication.....	12
Probate Court Summary.....	13
Supreme Court Report 2024 – Probate Division	
Local Guardianship Program.....	14
Fiscal Report – General Division.....	15
Fiscal Report – Juvenile Probation.....	16
Fiscal Report – Probate Court.....	17
Contact Information.....	18

EMPLOYEES

Magistrate

Peter Cultice

Juvenile Court Division

Tim Welch, Court Director

Amy Weaver, Deputy Clerk

Debbie Bennington, Deputy Clerk

Mary Caldwell, Deputy Clerk

Veronica Mourer, Deputy Clerk/Court Reporter

Megan Deutschman, Deputy Clerk

Dale Lyons, Bailiff, Courthouse Security

Tom Galbreath, Bailiff



Juvenile Probation Division

Travis Stevens, Chief Probation Officer

Kayla Wolfe, Probation Officer

Josh Snyder, Probation Officer

Noah Burris, Probation Officer

Tiffany Lowry, Probation Clerk

Kim Charlton, Multi-System Youth Coordinator

Ashley Tyo, School Engagement Coordinator

John Davis, Elementary School Truancy Prevention Officer

Brenda Mourer, Grants Administrator

Probate Court Division

Patricia Nichols, Court Administrator

Deana Schick, Deputy Clerk

Brenda Allen, Deputy Clerk

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)

Kayla Wolfe, CASA Director

Jaynie Vasko, Volunteer Coordinator

B.J. Yates, Volunteer

Cheryl Gadd, Volunteer

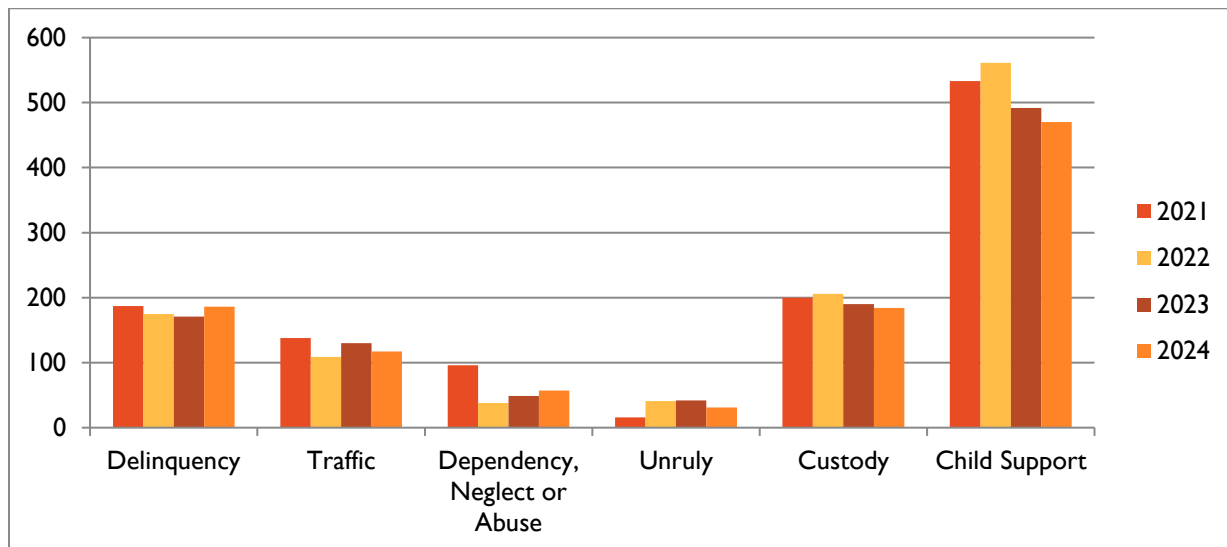
Lisa Langley, Volunteer

JUVENILE COURT

The Juvenile Court is a division of the Common Pleas Court of Guernsey County, and it is located on the second floor of the Courthouse.

Its purpose is to provide care, protection, and mental and physical development for the children in the Court's jurisdiction; to protect the welfare of the community, and to protect the public interest by treating children as persons in need of supervision, care, and rehabilitation.

Among the duties of the Juvenile Court include: Delinquent/Unruly Children (Truancy); Dependent, Abused, Neglected Children (Guernsey County Children Services); Traffic Offenders; Custody, Visitation, Child Support, Paternity involving unmarried, and in some cases, married persons, who are living separate and apart; and Juvenile Civil Protection Orders.



CASE TOTALS *THE SUPREME COURT OF OHIO REPORTS*

- 2024 – The total number of cases in all categories pending beginning of period, new cases filed, cases transferred in, reactivated or redesignated was 1,230.
- Highlighted areas include: Delinquency = 186; Traffic = 117; Dependency, Neglect or Abuse = 57; Unruly = 31; Custody = 184; and Child Support = 470.

CASE TOTALS CONTINUED
THE SUPREME COURT OF OHIO REPORTS

- 2023 – The total number of cases in all categories pending beginning of period, new cases filed, cases transferred in, reactivated or redesignated was 1,225.
- Highlighted areas include: Delinquency = 171; Traffic = 130; Dependency, Neglect or Abuse = 49; Unruly = 42; Custody = 190; and Child Support = 492.

- 2022 – The total number of cases in all categories pending beginning of period, new cases filed, cases transferred in, reactivated or redesignated was 1,314.
- Highlighted areas include: Delinquency = 175; Traffic = 109; Dependency, Neglect or Abuse = 38; Unruly = 41; Custody = 206; and Child Support = 561.

- 2021 – The total number of cases in all categories pending beginning of period, new cases filed, cases transferred in, reactivated or redesignated was 1,356.
- Highlighted areas include: Delinquency = 187; Traffic = 138; Dependency, Neglect or Abuse = 96; Unruly = 16; Custody = 200; and Child Support = 533.



LOCAL CASA PROGRAM (COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES)



The Court Appointed Special Advocates Program is affiliated with, and under the direction of, the Guernsey County Court of Common Pleas, Juvenile Division.

Its Mission is to speak for the best interests of the abused, neglected, and dependent children in the courtroom.

The Agency promotes and supports quality volunteer advocacy for children to provide each child with a safe, permanent, nurturing home.

The Volunteers serve as a fact finder for the Court by completely researching the background of child abuse, neglect and dependent cases.

They speak for the child in the courtroom, focusing exclusively on the child's best interests. A CASA Volunteer provides carefully researched information to help the Judge make decisions.

The Volunteers continue to monitor the child during the life of the case, helping to ensure that he or she will be raised in the best possible environment.

In 2024, the total number of children that were served by volunteers was 91. The total number of new children assigned to CASA/GAL volunteers or staff was 29, with the average length of time that the volunteer was assigned to a child at 15.3 months. The total number of children served whose cases were closed/discharged was 54, including 19 where reunification was achieved. In addition, 4 of the children in closed cases were adopted.

Among the requirements to become a CASA Volunteer, include:

- Must pass a criminal background investigation.
- Must be 21 years of age or older.
- Complete a face-to-face interview with the CASA Program Director.
- Pass all requirements.
- Complete 40-hours of training.

Established through the Guernsey County Juvenile Court in 1991, the local CASA Program had a Director, a Volunteer Coordinator, and 3 Volunteers during the 2024 calendar year.

JUVENILE PROBATION

The Juvenile Probation Department is located on the ground floor of the Courthouse, and is responsible for performing many duties beyond the supervision of the juveniles on probation.

The Staff is involved in facilitating and participating in many programs to encourage the growth and support to the youth they encounter.

Everyday duties include: attending court hearings; completing risk assessments, providing referrals; making school, home, and community visits; attending trainings; informal hearings; and advocating for the juveniles they are involved with, as appropriate, to help ensure their success and well-being.

Additional Important Facts:

- There are currently 3 Probation Officers and 1 Supervisor.
- There is a female (Kayla Wolfe) that deals with gender specific issues. She also handles the sexually aggressive youth.
- The Probation Officers meet with the youth a minimum of once a week, but usually 2 to 3 times per week, generally at school.
- There is an additional person (John Davis) who handles truancy and prevention/education issues in the elementary schools in the county.
- There is also one person (Ashley Tyo) who handles truancy issues in the Rolling Hills and East Guernsey Local School Districts (Middle School & High School).
- Finally, there is a single person (Kim Charlton) who provides educational outreach for juveniles and families in an effort to change the behaviors of the child, and assist the families in developing healthy relationships. She also teaches the Parent Project and Thinking for a Change Programs.

On average, there are 100 juveniles on probation at any given time.

Drug Screens Administered to Youth

2024 – 495 Total screens administered - 322 Positive
291 THC; 30 Positive for prescribed medication; 1 THC/MDMA

2023 – 468 Total screens administered - 258 Positive
257 THC; 1 Ethanol; 1 Methamphetamine

2022 – 373 Total screens administered - 238 Positive
228 THC; 1 Ethanol; 7 Amphetamines/Methamphetamines
2 Positives due to medication

CURRENT PROGRAMS OPERATING UNDER JUVENILE COURT & JUVENILE PROBATION

Thinking For A Change – This is an evidence-based program from the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections. It is an integrated cognitive behavioral change program, which focuses on social skills, cognitive self-change, and problem solving. The main goal is to teach individuals how to stop, think, and make better choices, which will lead to avoiding conflict and poor decision-making. It is currently being used with local high school and middle school students; however, several area counseling agencies also use it with adults. This program is provided through the Guernsey County Juvenile Probation Department.

Parent Project – The Parent Project is an evidence-based parenting program consisting of two different curriculums: Changing Destructive Teen Behavior, and Loving Solutions. Changing Destructive Teen Behavior is curriculum for parents of youth ages 12 to 21 who are out of control behaviorally, sexually active, violent, involved in gangs, or involved with drugs and/or alcohol. It provides parents with the tools and support to maintain consistency, structure, appropriate discipline techniques, and incorporate tough love. It also provides parents with information on how to connect with community services, such as mental health providers, law enforcement, and the court systems.

Loving Solutions – This curriculum is for parents of youth, ages 5 – 11. It is a more traditional parenting course, which teaches parents consistency, structure, and basic milestones for young children, such as how children of this age think, grow, and learn. It specifically covers appropriate discipline for this age group, and how it should be set-up, incorporated, and utilized in the home. It also provides parents with information on how to work with community supports, such as schools and mental health providers. These programs are provided through the Guernsey County Family and Children First Council.

Sexting Education Awareness Diversion (S.E.A.D.) – Places special emphasis on preventing sexting by minors, and to address the potential negative impact it can have on their legal, social, emotional, educational, and career goals. It is a 3 to 5-day program that is presented to middle school and high school classrooms within the county. The program is designed to approach the complex issues around sexting from an educational standpoint. In addition to sexting, the local program also discusses the topics of bullying, cyberbullying and harassment.

CURRENT PROGRAMS CONTINUED

Drug Screens – Any juvenile placed on probation is subject to random drug and alcohol testing at any time as part of their probation terms. A juvenile on probation for a drug or alcohol offense is screened much more frequently. Probation uses instant 8-panel screens, as well as 10-panel screens that are sent to the lab for confirmation and levels.

Detention – The Guernsey County Juvenile Court contracts with the Sargus Juvenile Detention Center in St. Clairsville, Ohio, and the Muskingum County Juvenile Detention Center in Zanesville, Ohio. The Court has 3 contracted beds at Sargus, and 2 contracted beds with 1 floater bed at Muskingum JDC. Juveniles can be sentenced to detention for up to 90-days.

Electronic Monitoring – Guernsey County Juvenile Probation uses Track Group Services for EMHA. The units used will monitor the juveniles through a GPS system. The juveniles that are placed on EMHA have certain zones set-up, which determines where they can be. Probation Officers are able to monitor those youth who are placed on EMHA through their work computers, and also through an APP on their cell phones.

Oakview Juvenile Residential Center – Oakview is a facility that the Guernsey County Juvenile Court uses for males that have been adjudicated on a felony charge. They are placed there for a minimum of 6-months, or until they complete the program. While they are there, the juveniles will have a mental health assessment, drug and alcohol assessment, and attend individual, group and family counseling appointments. They also have in-house schooling, as well as community service work and assigned duties inside the facility. This is usually the last option for the Court before having to send a juvenile to the Ohio Department of Youth Services.

Court Foster & Residential Placement – The Juvenile Court will work with Guernsey County Children Services, and other agencies and resources to find solutions for youth. The Court uses several residential placements, depending on the needs of the child. The most common used by the Court is Allwell Behavioral Health Services Residential, Cornell Abraxas (substance abuse), The Village Network, and Gender Specific (females). The Court will utilize a residential placement if there are several concerns with a child's behavioral or mental health issues that cannot be addressed appropriately by the family.

CURRENT PROGRAMS CONTINUED

Department of Youth Services – DYS is the juvenile corrections system for the State of Ohio. DYS is statutorily mandated to confine felony offenders, ages 10 to 21, who have been adjudicated and committed by the Juvenile Court. During their stay, youth are engaged in programming that is designed to address their criminological and behavioral needs. Each of the facilities also operates a year-round school that offers general curriculum, as well as vocation opportunities.

Smoking/Vaping Cessation Program – The purpose of this activity is for the Multi-Systems Youth Coordinator to provide education and awareness to the dangers of smoking and vaping, and to educate families how Ohio tobacco law can apply to their child. The program is designed to divert these cases from being filed with the Court. The program is also made available to youth that are currently on probation and have been cited for a tobacco/vaping incident.

Drug Education Awareness & Responsibility (D.E.A.R.) Program – The purpose of this activity is for the Multi-System Youth Coordinator/Prosecutors Office to provide education and awareness to school age youth on the effects of drugs and alcohol use. By completing this program, students will gain a thorough understanding of the short-term and long-term health impacts of the most commonly abused drugs. In addition, students will have a better understanding of the potential legal ramifications for someone that uses/abuses drugs.

CARTEENS Program – First time juvenile traffic offenders are now required to complete the 4-H CARTEENS Program. This is a joint effort between the Ohio State University Extension Office and the Guernsey County Juvenile Court. The program is conducted by 4-H professionals, teen leaders, and their program partners. The purpose of the program is to offer traffic safety education with a goal of reducing the number of repeat offenders and increase awareness of Ohio traffic laws.

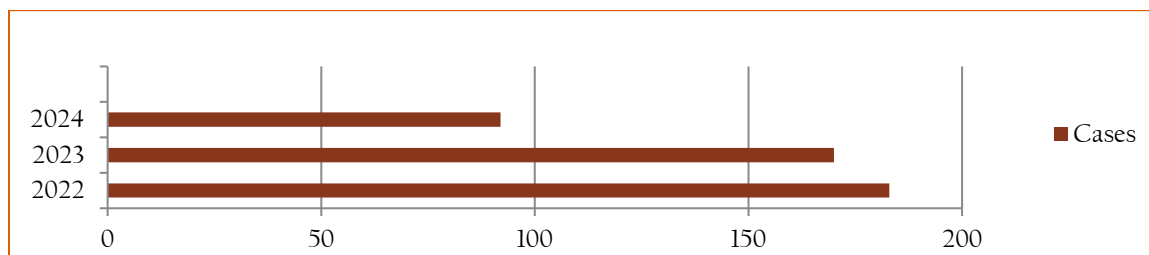


ALTERNATIVES TO ADJUDICATION

Grade K – 6 Prevention – The Prevention Officer receives referrals from schools within the county on students and/or families that have been red flagged for attendance or behaviors within the school. The Prevention Officer makes contact with the family and child. They address the problems and concerns in a meeting with the school to establish conditions in order to correct the issues. All parties will then sign an informal contract that states the recommendations in order to alleviate the filing of charges with the Juvenile Court.

2024 – Worked with **92** total cases (91 Successful and 1 Unsuccessful).

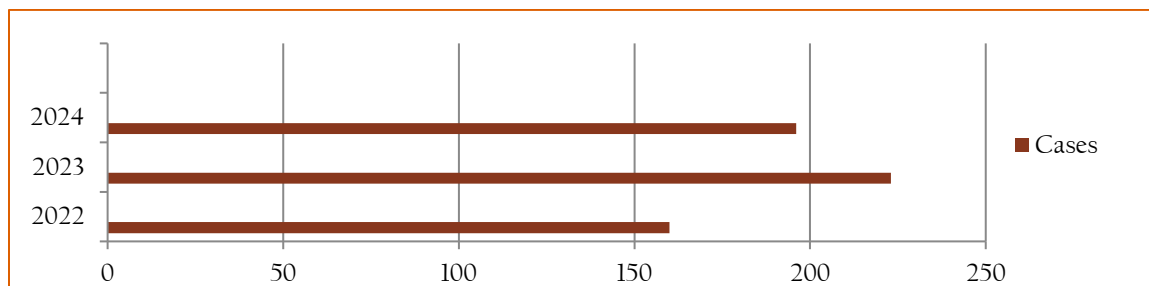
2023 – Worked with **170** different cases. **2022** – Worked with **183** different cases.



Grade 7 – 12 Truancy – The Truancy/Engagement Coordinator receives referrals from schools on students who have been red flagged by the school for their attendance. The Truancy/Engagement Coordinator will meet one-on-one with the child to try to determine the reason for the absences from school. The Coordinator will also conduct meetings with the child and parent(s), where informal contracts will be signed which outline the issues and the recommendations to correct the problems that are presented.

2024 – Worked with **196** total cases (126 Successful; 18 Neutral – Moved out of county or enrolled in online school; and 8 Unsuccessful).

2023 – Worked with **223** different cases. **2022** – Worked with **160** different cases.



There were a total of 288 different cases of children placed in alternatives to adjudication in 2024. There were a total of 3 filings for Truancy. There were 217 youth that successfully completed the program, 9 were unsuccessful, and 18 were neutral. There were 5 other delinquency charges filed that were non-school related. A total of 44 cases are still open.

PROBATE COURT

The Probate Court is located on the second floor of the Courthouse, and has over 200 separate duties that it is charged with by the Ohio Revised Code.

Each of Ohio's 88 counties has a Probate Division of its Court of Common Pleas, and their duties range from the issuing of marriage licenses to overseeing testamentary trusts valued at millions of dollars.

The duties of the Probate Court include the following:

- Marriage Licenses
- Administering Estates
- Guardianships
- Conservatorships
- Mental Illness
- Adoption
- Correction of Birth Certificates
- Change in Name
- Testamentary & Inter Vivos Trusts
- Appoint to Boards & Commissions

Case Types	TOTALS FOR 2024		TOTALS FOR 2023		TOTALS FOR 2022	
	Number of Cases Opened	Cases Pending at the End of the Year	Number of Cases Opened	Cases Pending at the End of the Year	Number of Cases Opened	Cases Pending at the End of the Year
Adoptions	11	5	16	5	23	7
Birth Correction/Registration	3	0	2	0	4	0
Probate Civil	13	10	10	4	4	0
Conservatorship	0	0	0	0	0	0
Estates	222	200	231	199	270	197
Guardianship of a Minor	2	14	4	13	4	10
Guardianship of an Incompetent	28	253	28	253	27	258
Guardianship Emergency	4	0	18	0	12	0
Marriage License	246	0	216	0	243	0
Minors Settlement	6	23	0	22	4	23
Name Change	40	0	24	0	27	0
Trust	1	15	6	15	0	12

LOCAL GUARDIANSHIP PROGRAM

The Probate Court is the superior guardian of those placed in guardianships and is responsible for monitoring guardians to make sure that they fulfill their duties.

Guardianship is one of the more restrictive protective services available under Ohio law and is only necessary when individuals are unable to care for their basic needs, finances, or medical issues and when a less-restrictive alternative is not feasible.

People placed in guardianship are especially vulnerable, and there is a great need for willing volunteers, family members, and attorneys to act on their behalf. In many cases, every decision affecting those individuals is in another person's hands. That is why it is so important for guardians to carry out their duties responsibly.

A Guardian holds a unique role with respect to the ward and the Guardian has an obligation to obtain an understanding of the fundamentals of that relationship. Formalized training is one means to gain that competency.

In 2016, the Probate Court adopted Local Rule 66, which requires family guardians to attend a shortened local version of the Supreme Court of Ohio's Guardian Fundamentals Training Program.

This program was developed in conjunction with the Guernsey County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Mental Health and Recovery Services Board, and the Area Agency on Aging Region 9.

The training sessions are offered 4 times per year at various times, and all family guardians must attend this program once during the year.

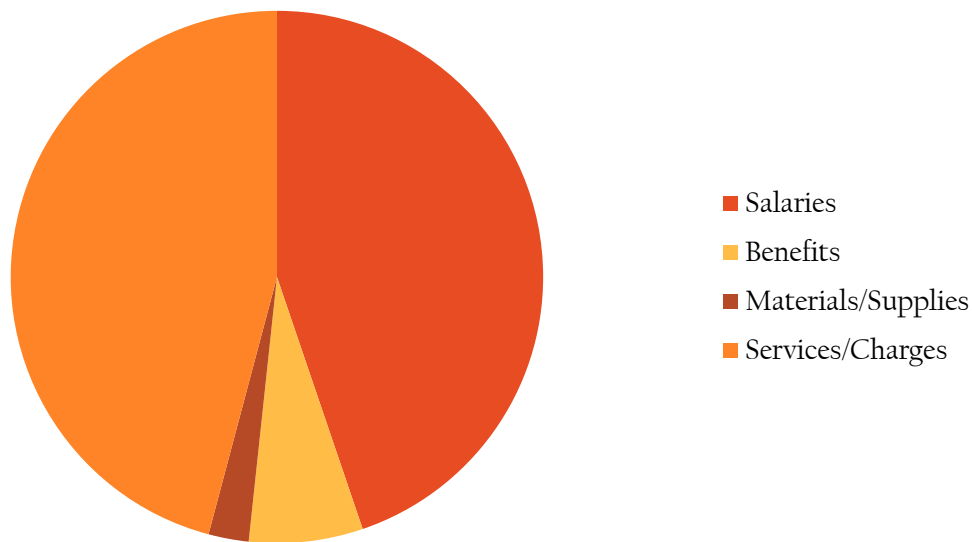
In addition to the initial basic course titled "Responsibilities and Duties of Guardians," several other courses are held with topics of interest to guardians, which were created from suggestions and questionnaires that were completed at previous trainings. In 2024, those topics included: Smart 911 Safety Service; Stable Accounts; Caregiver Stress Management; and Seasonal Stress and Loss Over the Holidays.

This program assists the guardians in complying with the law, as well as helping them learn about the different resources that may be available to them for the benefit of their ward.

FISCAL REPORT

Funding for the Guernsey County Probate/Juvenile Court and Juvenile Probation is received from a variety of sources, with the majority coming from the County's General Fund, and some programs being supplemented with several grants.

2024 Juvenile Administrative Expenses

2024

Salaries	\$387,375.30
Benefits	\$ 59,854.45
Materials/Supplies	\$ 21,129.37
Services/Charges	<u>\$396,739.19</u>
Total Appropriation	\$865,098.31

2023

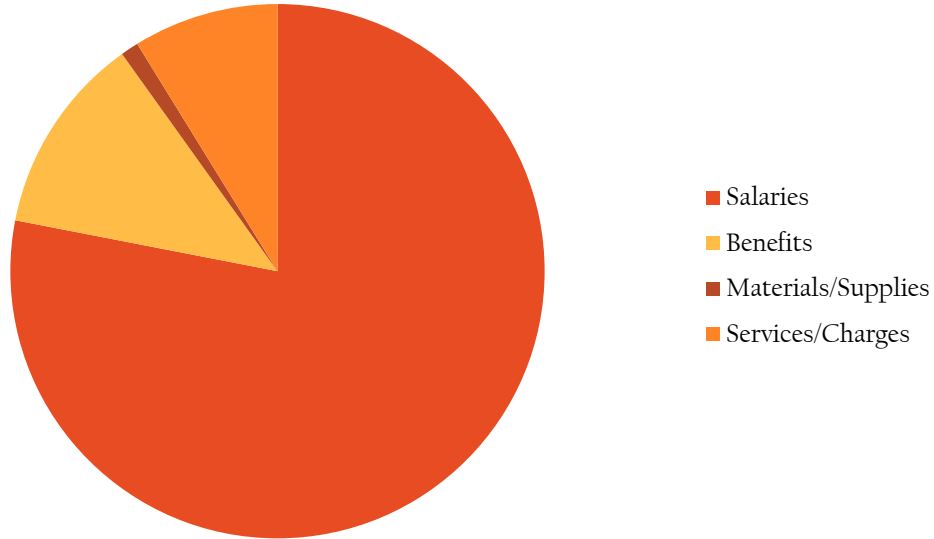
Salaries	\$375,605.95
Benefits	\$ 56,000.94
Materials/Supplies	\$ 17,573.42
Services/Charges	<u>\$379,739.75</u>
Total Appropriation	\$828,920.06

2022

Salaries	\$348,107.50
Benefits	\$ 53,782.73
Materials/Supplies	\$ 14,172.98
Services/Charges	<u>\$373,621.68</u>
Total Appropriation	\$789,684.89

FISCAL REPORT CONTINUED

2024 Juvenile Probation Expenses

2024

Salaries	\$353,594.78
Benefits	\$ 54,630.38
Materials/Supplies	\$ 4,919.03
Services/Charges	\$ 39,869.18
Total Appropriation	\$453,013.37

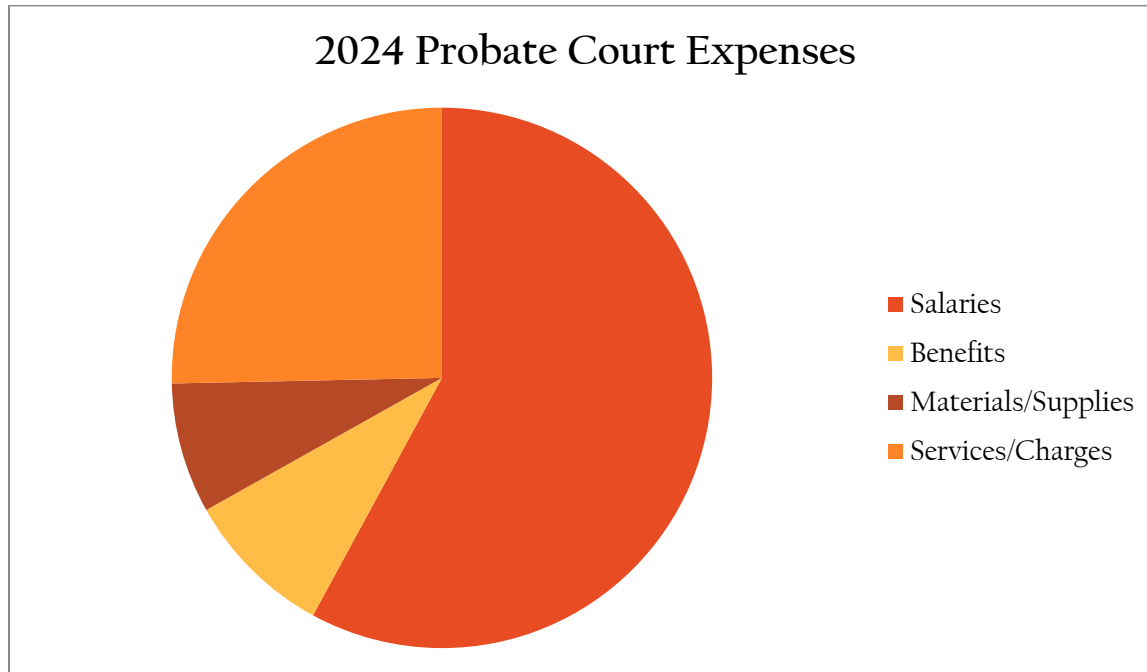
2023

Salaries	\$329,581.04
Benefits	\$ 50,925.72
Materials/Supplies	\$ 2,533.94
Services/Charges	\$ 41,356.40
Total Appropriation	\$424,397.10

2022

Salaries	\$318,493.46
Benefits	\$ 49,215.37
Materials/Supplies	\$ 41,166.60
Services/Charges	\$ 39,759.55
Total Appropriation	\$448,634.98

FISCAL REPORT CONTINUED

2024

Salaries	\$164,855.58
Benefits	\$ 25,470.34
Materials/Supplies	\$ 22,206.34
Services/Charges	\$ 72,099.24
Total Appropriation	\$284,631.50

2023

Salaries	\$160,394.38
Benefits	\$ 23,152.87
Materials/Supplies	\$ 21,466.70
Services/Charges	\$ 50,067.22
Total Appropriation	\$255,081.17

2022

Salaries	\$149,000.08
Benefits	\$ 22,134.19
Materials/Supplies	\$ 16,507.72
Services/Charges	\$ 55,890.40
Total Appropriation	\$243,532.39

CONTACT INFORMATION



Guernsey County Courthouse
801 East Wheeling Avenue
Cambridge, Ohio 43725

Juvenile Court – (740) 432-9266
Probate Court – (740) 432-9262
Juvenile Probation – (740) 432-9229
CASA Program – (740) 439-5697

www.guernseycounty.org

Monday – Friday
8:30 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. & 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M.