

SENECA COUNTY JUVENILE AND PROBATE COURT



2020 Annual Report

Judge Jay A. Meyer

It is an honor and privilege to serve the citizens of Seneca County.



FROM JUDGE MEYER:

2020 was a very challenging year. When the pandemic hit in March, the Court remained open as an essential service and followed the health guidance of the CDC and State of Ohio. I truly believe that access to justice is essential for our citizens.

As non-essential businesses/services shut down and people stayed home, non-essential cases were continued. To assist Courts in these unprecedented times, the State Legislature authorized an extension on time limits to process certain cases.

Consistent with the Governor's health mandates, the Justice Center required masks and social distancing when in the building. Temperatures were taken upon entering the Justice Center. Hand sanitizers were made available and signs were posted to remind everyone to wash their hands and keep a distance of at least 6 feet.

To limit the number of individuals coming into the Court, we utilized technology to hold virtual hearings when appropriate. To that end, the Court encouraged, when possible, contacts with the Court via phone, e-mail, or Zoom. During the first months of the pandemic, much of the Court staff worked from home when possible.

My dedicated Staff worked very hard to keep the Courtrooms, Conference Rooms and public areas clean and sanitary. Their actions, along with the positive response of the public in following COVID-19 guidelines, enabled the Court to manage the virus.

As Judge, I oversee the many and varied functions of the Court and the Seneca County Youth Center. With both part- and full-time employment, the Court employs approximately 52 individuals. The Court operates out of 3 different locations. The Youth Center is a 24 hour a day, 7 day a week facility, and the Probation Officers and Public Guardian are on call 24/7.

The Juvenile and Probate Court are guided by the mission and promise to “serve the citizens of the community with dedication, integrity and professionalism. We will strive to assure the safety, security and best interests of those we serve to the best of our abilities.” I am proud of the work my Staff completed, during uncertain times, to ensure our mission and promise to the community was delivered.

I invite you to review this report and also our website at www.senecajpcourt.com. If you have additional questions, please feel free to reach out via the contact information found on our website.

Respectfully

Judge Jay A. Meyer

The Bench

The Honorable *Judge Jay A. Meyer* was elected by Seneca County Voters to serve as their **Juvenile and Probate Judge** in 2008 and re-elected in 2014 and 2020. Judge Meyer is a graduate of Tiffin Columbian High School. He received both his BA and Juris Doctor from Ohio Northern University. Judge Meyer supports Seneca County youth, families, and the Court's Mission.

Magistrate

Donald S. Bennett was appointed as Magistrate by Judge Meyer in June of 2009. Magistrate Bennett received his Juris Doctor from the University of Toledo College of Law.

Prior to his appointment, he was in private practice for 20 years, concentrating in the areas of juvenile, domestic, and criminal trial practice.



Magistrate

Tiffany E. Cavanaugh was appointed as Magistrate by Judge Meyer in January of 2016. Magistrate Cavanaugh received her Juris Doctor degree from Ohio Northern University.

Mediator

Ms. Cavanaugh also serves as the Court's Mediator. She was appointed by Judge Meyer as Mediator in May of 2013. Tiffany is a qualified Mediator exceeding Ohio Supreme Court requirements as established under Rule 16.

Teresa Copp – Court Administrator
Cathy Bean– Administrative Clerk

JUVENILE COURT

Beth Brown – Chief Deputy Clerk/Bailiff

☐ Linda Frank – Deputy Clerk

☐ Jenny Harris – Deputy Clerk

☐ Melissa Bowers– Deputy Clerk

☐ Chloe Seislove – Deputy Clerk

☐ Jillian Banks – Records Clerk – Part-time

PROBATE COURT

**Dana Eborg – Chief Deputy Clerk/
Investigator**

☐ Amy Littlejohn – Deputy Clerk

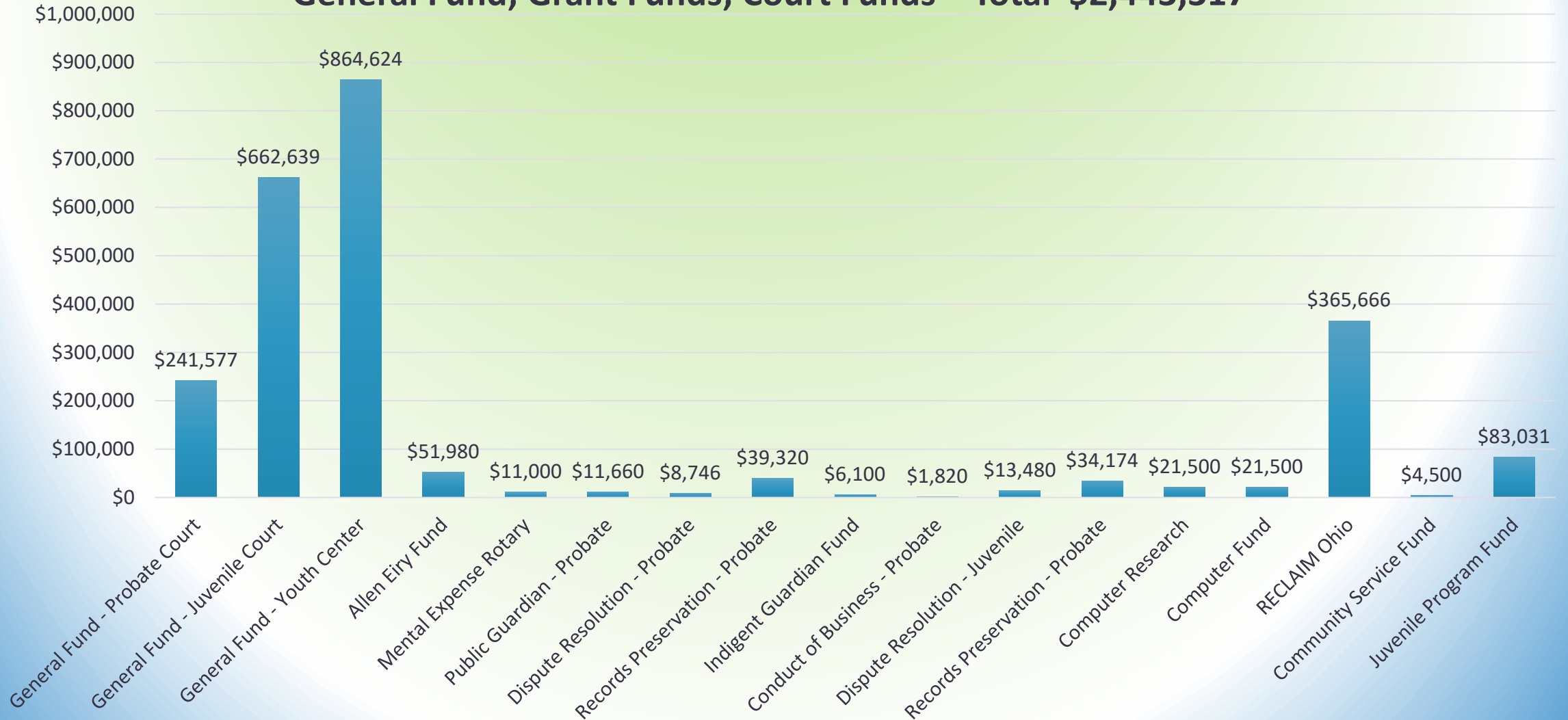
☐ Samantha Gruss – Deputy Clerk/ Investigator

☐ Nicole Fretz – Deputy Clerk/ Investigator

☐ Jay Rishty – Public Guardian

2020 Court Appropriations

General Fund; Grant Funds; Court Funds – Total \$2,443,317



PROBATE COURT

Under the first Ohio Constitution of 1802, the Court of Common Pleas had exclusive jurisdiction over all Probate matters. The updated Ohio Constitution of 1851 shifted this power by creating a separate Probate Court in each of Ohio's 88 counties.

Seneca County's Probate Court was established in 1851. William Lang was the first Probate Judge serving from 1851 – 1855. He wrote *History of Seneca County: From the Close of the Revolutionary War to July 1880*.

Probate Court handles wills, administration of estates and trusts, adoptions, marriage licenses, name changes, and appointments of guardians for minors and incompetent adults.
[Ohio Revised Code (R.C.) 2101.24]

Judge Meyer is the Judge for both Seneca County Probate and Juvenile Court.



Probate Court Case Breakdown - 2020

	OPEN	CLOSED
MARRIAGE LICENSES ISSUED	285	
Estates	284	218
Minor Guardianships	3	3
Incompetent Guardianships	29	21
Trusts	0	2
Civil	18	17
Adoption	15	13
Mental Illness	10	10
Minor Settlement	4	1
Name Change	21	22
Conservatorship	0	0
Wrongful Death	0	0
Delayed Birth Registration	6	6
TOTAL	390	313

Probate Court Year in Review

On March 9, 2020, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine declared a state of emergency in response to the growing COVID-19 public health crisis. During this time, the Probate Court remained in operation to maintain essential court functions with limited personnel. To help minimize the effects of the ongoing coronavirus emergency, the Court issued General Orders allowing electronic filings, extending due dates for all cases, and permitting telephonically and video proceedings. Personnel rotated working remotely from home. Personnel working remotely from home were able to participate in courses through Ohio Court Edu., offered by the Ohio Supreme Court and through CORSA. Those working remotely from home also prepared Court records to be microfilmed and scanned by Bowling Green State University Center for Archival Collections.

Projects implemented/completed during the year:

- ❑ Court records prepared by Probate Court Staff to be to be microfilmed and scanned by Bowling Green State University Center for Archival Collections. This is a continuing effort to preserve and retain Court records.
- ❑ Updated court case management to add old case filings scanned by Bowling Green State University Center for Archival Collections.
- ❑ Updated Probate Court Local Rules for 2021.

Goals for 2021:

- ❑ Continue the preservation of Probate records through imaging and/or microfilm.
- ❑ Resume review of the Guardianship Handbook, sharing it in print and on the Court's Website.
- ❑ Update Probate Court Local Rules that will take effect in 2022.



Seneca County Guardianship Program

The **Seneca County Guardianship Program** provides guardianship and conservatorship assistance to indigent incompetent elderly. This life maintaining and life sustaining program would not be possible without the generous grant funding provided by the Allen Eiry Fund. For more information about Allen Eiry, please visit our website.

The Seneca County Guardianship Program was greatly impacted by COVID-19. The Public Guardian went from working in the office and being able to freely visit individuals in the program to working remotely from home. Daily visits with the Public Guardian and/or family and friends of these individuals abruptly stopped. Suddenly, the Guardian could no longer take wards on outings or visits with family. Scheduled doctor appointments and procedures were no longer a simple process. These wards had to be tested for COVID-19 first, which delayed health care services.

If an individual had to relocate to another facility or from their home, they had to be quarantined for 14 days, which meant they were isolated in their rooms with no interaction. The wards endured frequent and sometimes daily COVID-19 testing. Their lives were disrupted and many of these individuals lacked the mental capacity to understand what was happening and why these restrictions were put in place. Eventually, with the help of the facilities and their technology, wards were able to have virtual visits with the Public Guardian, family and friends.

While working remotely from home and maintaining communication with the individuals in the program and the facilities, the Public Guardian also was able to participate in courses through Ohio Court Edu, offered by the Ohio Supreme Court and through CORSA.

In 2020, the Guardianship Program was able to assist 34 individuals.

Juvenile Court

The Seneca County Juvenile Court handles the filing and processing of the following types of matters:

Juvenile Delinquency and Unruly

Juvenile Traffic

Abuse, Neglect, and Dependency

Paternity

Custody and Child Support

Some Adult Criminal Cases



The Juvenile Court System was created in 1902. The Honorable Hal W. Michaels served as Probate Judge during this time. When the Juvenile Court System was created, the Probate Judge assumed responsibility over Juvenile Court as well. At age 29, Judge Michaels was the youngest judge elected as Seneca County Probate Judge and served from 1903-1909.

Juvenile Court Cases - 2020

	FILED	CONCLUDED
Delinquent	242	207
Traffic	150	174
Abuse/Neglect/Dependent	86	98
Unruly	24	36
Adult	47	30
Permanent Custody	6	1
Change of Custody	155	149
Support Modification	193	225
Parentage	12	11
UIFSA	0	0
Other	1	1
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>916</i>	<i>932</i>

Juvenile Court Year in Review

Projects implemented/completed during the year:

- On March 9, 2020, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine declared a state of emergency in response to the growing COVID-19 public health crisis. During this time, Juvenile Court remained in operation to maintain essential court functions with limited personnel. Personnel rotated working remotely from home. The Juvenile Clerks completed over 250 online trainings pertaining to the Court, childhood development, ethics, substance abuse and computer applications.
- Continued the reduction of paper records in juvenile delinquency and unruliness actions by scanning and, if applicable, sealing and expunging.
- Implemented ZOOM virtual conferencing, which allowed parties to appear for hearings, arraignments, and detention hearings via video, reducing the number of individuals in the Justice Center to limit the spread of the virus.
- Clerk manuals for cross-training purposes were brought up to date.

Goals for 2021:

- ☐ Continue to use ZOOM conferencing for all case types.
- ☐ Continue scanning of all records, including sealing and expunging if applicable, to eliminate paper records and reduce the cost of storage space.
- ☐ Update the Juvenile Court case management system.



MEDIATION

SENECA COUNTY JUVENILE AND PROBATE COURT OFFER MEDIATION SERVICES.

MEDIATION IS A PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS IN WHICH A NEUTRAL PROFESSIONAL (MEDIATOR) FACILITATES COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARTIES REGARDING IDENTIFIED ISSUES. THE MEDIATOR HELPS PARTIES DEVELOP A PLAN THAT IS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THEIR CHILDREN WITHOUT MAKING DECISIONS FOR THE PARTIES.

MEDIATION WORKS BECAUSE:

- Both sides have the opportunity to be heard.
- The parties are in control of the agreement.
- Multiple ways of solving problems are explored.
- The final agreement is acceptable to the parties.
- Communication is clear and specific.

For 2020, the Court Mediator provided services in 28 truancy cases and 6 civil cases.

Due to COVID-19 and the effects it had on school closings, there were fewer truancy cases referred to mediation.



Tiffany Cavanaugh-Mediator



TIME TO INVEST

After several years of planning, Seneca County Juvenile Court was proud to launch the “Time to Invest” Program (TTI) in the fall of 2019. TTI was a success for the first semester and the youth who participated experienced improved grades and behaviors. The Court was looking forward to the same outcomes for the spring semester of 2020, but unfortunately TTI had to shut down in March due to COVID-19. We hope to re-start the program in the fall of 2021.

TTI is an alternative to detention. TTI was developed by Judge Jay Meyer and the staff of the Seneca County Juvenile Court, Court Services, and the Seneca County Youth Center to address the criminogenic needs of our youth by efficiently and impactfully improving their educational, vocational, therapeutic, and socialization deficiencies. TTI utilizes intervention philosophies that align with nationally recognized evidence-based models to provide intensive services for youth not likely available to them at their home schools.

TTI is designed to accommodate up to twelve youth between the ages of 12 and 18 at any given time. The Program operates primarily in a designated and separate location inside the Seneca County Youth Center Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. until 1:40 p.m. during the school year.

Research evidence reveals that academic support, coupled with counseling, workforce development, case management, mentoring, and family interventions are more successful at preventing recidivism and developing a path to success for youth. In Seneca County, we have developed TTI to apply this new line of thinking in our community.

JUVENILE COURT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Seneca County Juvenile Court works closely with area higher education institutions to provide internship opportunities to qualified students.

In 2020, one Tiffin University student clocked in 150 hours as part of the Juvenile Court Internship Program. Due to the COVID restrictions, this internship was structured to follow guidelines that limited the field contacts they made with probation officers. The student intern reported a great experience with the Program, despite COVID restrictions.



Office of Court Services

Kendra Shearer-Director

Kody Brewer	Probation Officer
Amy Chalfin	Probation Officer
Linda Cohen*	Probation Officer
Vacant	Probation Officer
Jason French	Compliance Officer
Abbi Norville	Diversion Officer
Jim Jarrett*	Director of Community Outreach
*Paid by General Fund	

The Court Services Department helps to connect youth and families with interventions and services available in our community as soon as they make contact with the Court, and it continues to do so throughout the youth's involvement with the Court. Court Services houses and coordinates the:

- Probation Program
- Diversion Program
- Community Outreach

In 2020, the Court's Probation approach was altered due to COVID restrictions. Probation Officers, serving 175 adjudicated youth, balanced community protection, accountability, and the development of skills necessary to improve family functions through video conferencing calls and socially distanced field contacts. The Juvenile Court continued to focus on prevention, supervision, and control, while simultaneously adhering to COVID restrictions. Evidence-based practices and interventions, such as Motivational Interviewing techniques, the Carey Guide curriculum, and the Ohio Youth Assessment System, allowed Court Officers to measure risk, provide intervention, set goals and objectives, and measure outcomes. Our community has a right to be safe and secure.

The Court believes in and operates in accordance with the principle of the least restrictive setting required to protect the community. This principle, supported by outcome measures and a large volume of research, suggests that the more restrictive settings do more harm than good to low and moderate risk youth. Accordingly, Judge Meyer and our Court Services team work together with community partners to help create individualized plans and services for each youth and family so as to create the appropriate balance of accountability and assistance.

Court Services

The Department of Court Services is largely funded by RECLAIM Ohio.

WHAT IS RECLAIM OHIO?

RECLAIM stands for

Reasoned and Equitable Community and Local Alternatives to the Incarceration of Minors.

A funding initiative which encourages Juvenile Courts to explore community-based options to meet the needs of juvenile offenders and youth at risk of offending.

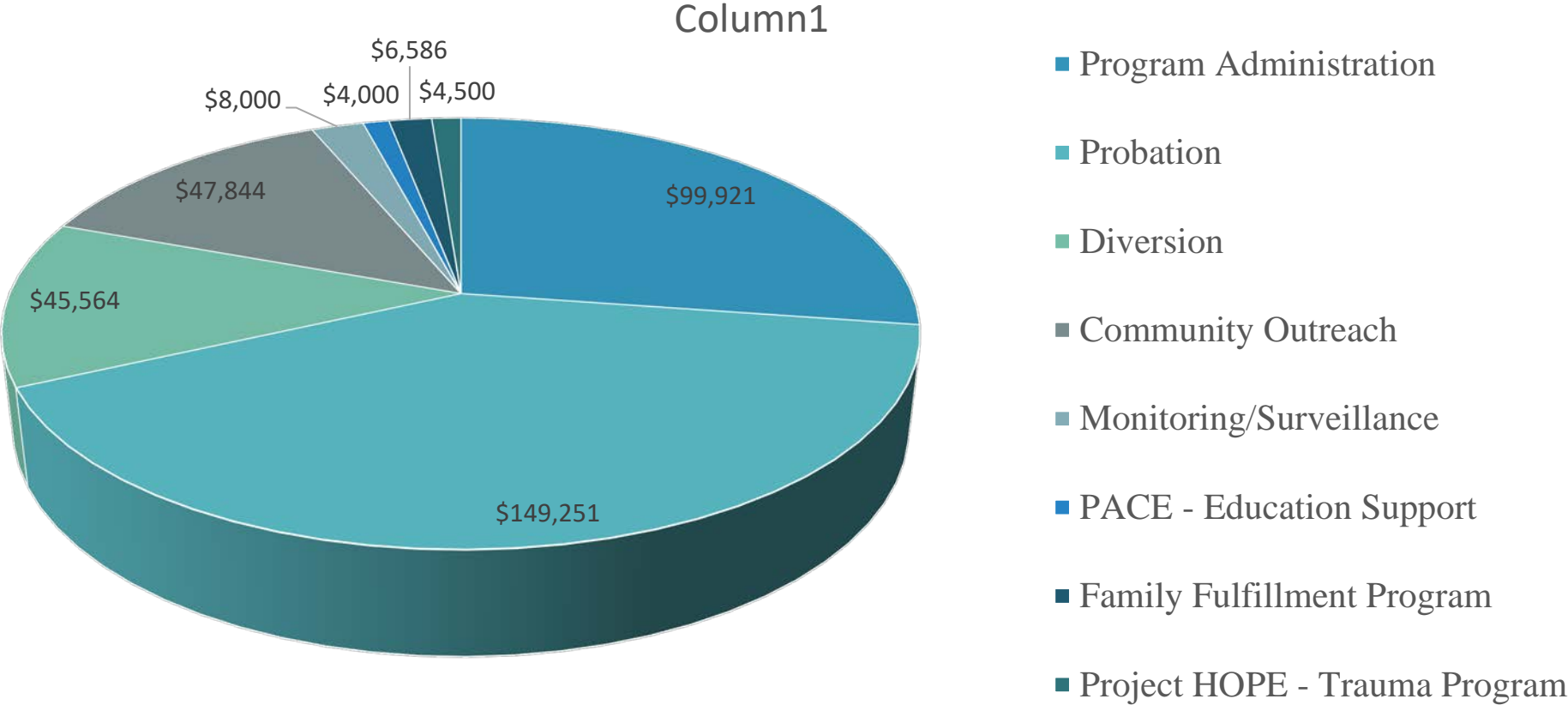


RECLAIM Grant funds pay for the following programs:

- Grant Administration
- Probation
- Educational Services -PACE
- Project HOPE
- Community Outreach
- Monitoring/Surveillance
- Diversion
- Family Fulfillment Program

How We Used Our Reclaim Grant Funds in 2020	
Grant Administration *7 staff received 467 hours of training in FY20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Court Services salary and benefits and 60% of the Administrative Clerk salary and benefits • Continued training for Motivational Interviewing provided by Case Western Reserve University • Additional training for Court Officers
Probation *served 175 adjudicated youth in FY20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Probation Officer salaries and benefits -Probation Officers provide supervision and case management to adjudicated youth intending to reduce subsequent delinquent behavior. • 3 replacement computers for Probation officers • Drug Screen test and supplies
Diversion *served 87 youth in FY20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Diversion Officer salary and benefits • Programing supplies (Reality Works Simulators) – 1 replacement computer
Community Outreach * served 91 youth in FY20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows for youth to work off Court ordered community service hours and restitution – 1 replacement computer
Ankle Monitoring and Surveillance *served 64 youth in FY20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowed ankle monitors to closely track youth who required intensive supervision as an alternative to detention
PACE * served 20 youth in FY20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted youth who are struggling in school by providing contracted tutoring services through Heidelberg University students
Project HOPE *served 11 youth in FY20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth participated in a 10-session equine-assisted trauma group
Family Fulfillment Program –Strengthening Families *served two youth in FY20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds were used to pay for the contracted services with a local counseling agency

RECLAIM Ohio Total FY 2020 Budget - \$365,666



Community Outreach

- Community Outreach is about giving and contributing. Seneca County Juvenile Court offers this program as a way to help Court ordered youth give back to the community through completion of community service hours. This program also offers youth an opportunity to pay Court ordered restitution to victims through their participation in a work program. The work program allows the youth owing victim restitution a chance to earn an hourly credit of \$8.70 (state minimum wage) to be paid to their victim(s). Youth can earn up to a maximum of \$1,500.00.
- When COVID-19 hit in March of 2020, health and safety measures were implemented. The Director of Community Outreach began working with one youth at a time. Masks were required and the distance required between the youth and the Director was at least 6 feet. Parents were required to sign a release prior to their child's participation. Before COVID, the Director would work with approximately 6 youth at a time, resulting in a greater number of community service/restitution hours completed.
- Since Judge Meyer took office, **more than 64,000 hours of community service have been completed by youth and more than \$100,000 has been paid to victims.**



Roadside Trash Pick-up



Cleaning at School



**47 Tires Removed
from Roadside**



**One Youth - Roadside
Trash Pick-up 1 day**

DIVERSION PROGRAM – ORC 2151.18(B)

Seneca County Juvenile Court's Diversion Program was developed to assist the Juvenile Court Judge and Magistrates by diverting first time low-risk unruly/delinquent offenders from formal adjudication, with the goals of holding the youth accountable for their actions and minimizing penetration into the Juvenile Justice System. Research finds that increased/formal contact with the Court for low-risk youthful offenders does more harm than good.

In 2020, like many Court programs, Diversion was transformed due to COVID restrictions. The Diversion Officer had to rely on video conferencing and telephone calls to check in with youth.

In FY20: A total of 87 youths were served. 52 successfully completed, 7 unsuccessfully completed, and 28 were carried over into FY21. Of the 87 youth served: 9 were truancy cases. Of the 9 truancy cases, 5 successfully completed, 1 was unsuccessful and adjudicated, and 3 were carried over into FY21.

In Diversion, the youth/family enter into a voluntary agreement to address the offense. Following successful completion of the agreement, there is no record of the charge. In addition, successful Diversion saves the cost of Court appointed counsel. Court appointed counsel is conservatively estimated at \$250.00 per case. With 52 successfully completed cases in 2020, this was a cost savings of \$13,000.00. Each youth/family brings food donations with them at the time of signing the Diversion agreement. The food donations have a value of at least \$5.00 per youth/family. For 2020, there were 87 donations, for a total of \$435.00 of food provided to our community.

JUVENILE COURT – COURT HABILITATION PROGRAMS

4-H CARTEENS Program–

A teen facilitated traffic safety program for first time juvenile traffic offenders

Partnership with OSU Extension



Reality Works

Interactive technology used to educate youth on topics such as fetal alcohol syndrome, prenatal drug exposure, shaken baby syndrome, and pregnancy prevention

3rd Millennium Classrooms

Offers on-line courses with evidence- based strategies for behavior change intervention



PROJECT H.O.P.E.
EQUINE ASSISTED THERAPY
Horses Opening People's
Eyes
THERAPUTIC RIDING

CAREY GUIDES

Tools for Probation Officer to use to support Behavior Change and Recidivism Reduction



**PACE Program –
academic tutoring**

offered in partnership with Heidelberg University

SENECA COUNTY YOUTH CENTER

The Seneca County Youth Center is a division of the Seneca County Juvenile Court. The Seneca County Youth Center is a 24 bed detention facility. The facility's construction began in April of 2012 and was completed in February of 2013. This facility is the State of Ohio's newest facility and replaces a facility that was constructed in the 1950's. This facility was made possible by a grant from the State of Ohio, forethought of the County Commissioners, and the work of three Juvenile Court Judges.



Youth Center response to COVID-19

In conjunction with the Policy changes that became standard across the country in many organizations and business such as temperature readings, enhanced cleaning measures, social distancing markers, and protective face coverings, correctional facilities faced their own unique set of challenges.

In addition to the measures the Juvenile Court took, the Youth Center also implemented:

- Medical Isolation period of all new intakes until seen and cleared by Nurse, and confirmed by the Director, for a minimum of a 72-hour period unless determined otherwise by both Nurse and Director
- Restrictions on population
- Restrictions were put in place regarding who entered the building
 - Alternative ways to communicate included telephone calls and video aids
 - Facility operations adjusted and visitation, outside/volunteer programming, and other needed connections were made through other means.

YOUTH CENTER STAFF...

Sarah Canalos– Director
Greg Sehlhorst – Director of Operations

Other Positions Include:

1 Detention Coordinator

2 full time Activities Supervisors

2 full time Head Supervisors

4 full time Shift Leaders

9 full time Juvenile Corrections Officers

Numerous part time Juvenile Correction Officers (based upon need)



EDUCATION at the Youth Center...

- North Central Ohio Educational Service Center (NCOESC) provides all educational services for the youth at the Youth Center.
- All of the youth are required to attend school while detained. This includes a minimum of 5.5 hours per weekday during the school year and a minimum of 2.5 hours per weekday during the summer.
- Residents receive individual work assignments from their respective schools. Basic skills in English, Math, Science, and Social Studies are available through electronic education programs.

Counseling at the Youth Center

Residents have the opportunity to participate in mental health counseling during their time at the Seneca County Youth Center.

Funding for the SCYC Behavioral Health Program is paid in part by local Seneca County levy funds from Mental Health and Recovery Services Board of Seneca, Sandusky, and Wyandot Counties.

2020

Youth who received behavioral health services	Primarily MH Service Hours	Primarily AOD Service Hours	Successfully Discharged	Unsuccessfully Discharged
163	187	187	180	0

• *Along with school, youth in detention are kept active from breakfast until bedtime. The Youth Center offers an array of programs and each youth attends approximately 20 hours of programming per week. Some of programs offered include:*

*Drug & Alcohol Education/Awareness

*Life Skills

*Job Application & Resume Education

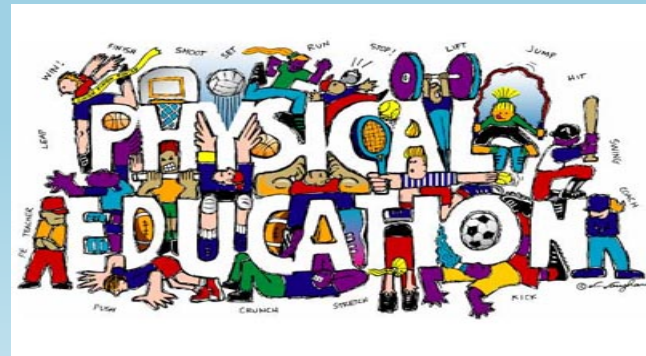
*First Aid/CPR

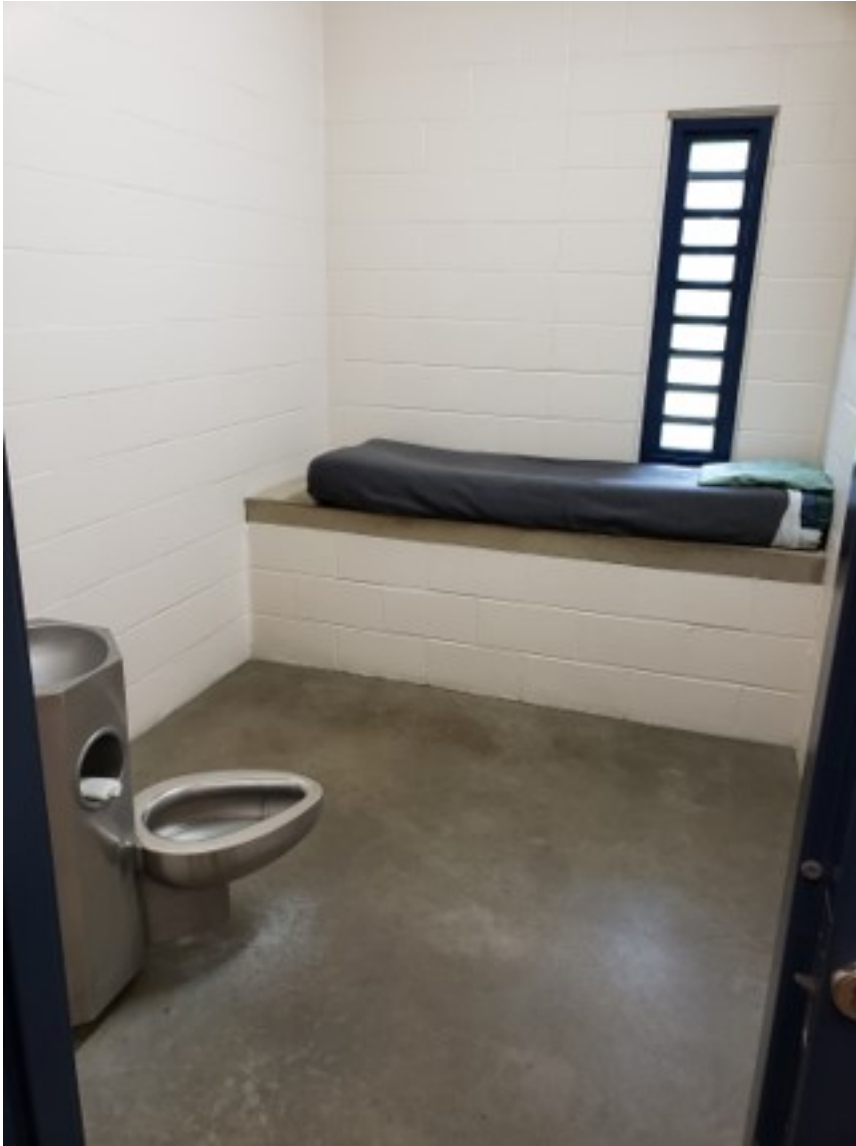
*Arts & Crafts

*Guest Speakers

*Physical Education

*Activities to Work on Self-Esteem, Anger Management, Trauma, and Peer Pressure





FELONY OFFENSES	33
Misdemeanor Offenses	154
Other (status, tobacco, alcohol)	0
Seneca County Intakes	114
Other County Intakes	73
Seneca County Sentencing	86
Other County Sentencing	53

Partnerships and Relationships

The Seneca County Juvenile and Probate Court would like to thank the many wonderful partners who work closely with us for the benefit of the Seneca County residents.

- COMMUNITY ACTION FOR REDUCING SUBSTANCE ABUSE (CARSA)
- FIRELANDS COUNSELING AND RECOVERY SERVICES
- SENECA MENTORING YOUTH LINKS (SMYL)
- TIFFIN PARK AND RECREATION
- SENECA COUNTY PARK DISTRICT
- MENTAL HEALTH AND RECOVERY SERVICES BOARD OF SENECA, SANDUSKY AND WYANDOT COUNTIES
- SENECA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES
- ALL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICTS
- AREA COUNSELORS AND COUNSELING SERVICES
- HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY
- TIFFIN UNIVERSITY
- SENECA COUNTY FAMILY AND CHILDREN FIRST COUNSEL
- TIFFIN-SENECA PUBLIC LIBRARY
- FIRST CALL FOR HELP
- OHIO STATE EXTENSION SERVICE
- UNITED WAY
- OTTAWA, SANDUSKY, SENECA COUNTY JOINT SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
- TIFFIN COMMUNITY YMCA
- COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES (CASA)
- ST. FRANCIS EARTH LITERACY CENTER
- CAMP GLEN
- CAMP FIRE BOYS AND GIRLS
- FOSTORIA COMMUNITY YMCA
- PATCHWORKS HOUSE