

# **COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF LEHIGH COUNTY**

**THE 31<sup>ST</sup> JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA**



**Lehigh County Court of Common Pleas  
455 West Hamilton Street  
Allentown, Pennsylvania 18101-1614**

**Court Administration  
610-782-3014**

**www.lccpa.org**

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Message from the President Judge.....	3
Organizational Chart 2013.....	5
Judges of the Court of Common Pleas .....	7
31st Judicial District Budget 2013 .....	13
The Administrative Offices of the Court.....	16
Court Administration.....	16
Court Transcription Unit.....	17
Jury Administration .....	18
Court Appointed Special Advocate.....	19
Lehigh County Law Library .....	21
Court of Common Pleas .....	23
Civil/Family Court Division .....	23
Criminal/Juvenile Division.....	27
Family Court Division .....	31
Child Custody .....	31
Divorce.....	32
Protection From Abuse.....	33
Interpreting Unit .....	34
Domestic Relations Section .....	36
Orphans' Court Division .....	41
Adult Probation Department.....	43
Juvenile Probation Department .....	50
Magisterial District Courts .....	57



---

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT JUDGE

---

The Thirty-First Judicial District of Pennsylvania is pleased to provide the 2013 Annual Report. 2013 was a continuation of increasing caseloads, increasing mandates from the Supreme Court and the appellate courts, and constrained resources.

While the courts do not and should not operate as a revenue generating agency, the courts were responsible for grants and revenue of \$11,366,716. This is an increase of \$1,097,794 over the prior year, an increase of 10.7%. This, in and of itself, is a remarkable contribution to the expenses associated with providing the mandated services of the courts, especially in a weak economy.

Caseloads continued to increase. Lehigh County saw higher average caseloads than the average of all other third class counties in Pennsylvania, half of which counties have more judges. 5030 criminal cases were filed, the highest number ever. The assistance of a senior judge made it possible for Lehigh County to continue its case disposition rates at satisfactory levels.

With the retirement of the Court Administrator, William Berndt stepped into the position of Court Administrator, and Kerry Turtzo was selected for the Deputy Court Administrator. They have operated as a remarkable team, addressing a vast variety of issues. The most time consuming and visible of their challenges was the participation in the countywide process of Priority Based Budgeting, whereby approaches to budgeting were calculated based on the consideration of various factors.

Significant changes were adopted in the Orphans Court, in response to legislation which expanded the opportunities for persons involved in the adoptive process to conduct searches for birth relatives.

The e-filing pilot program in the Civil Division began its initial rollout to a limited group of attorney participants, in order to test the functionality of the system before a system-wide rollout. Progress was steadily made in 2013. While the pilot program has identified some areas of needed correction, it is expected that 2014 should see us close to full operation of the e-filing program.

The Domestic Relations Section, an underappreciated part of the court system, collected and disbursed \$47,874,438 in child support. Domestic Relations exceeded all federal performance standards by 80% in 2013, a standard that must be kept in order to maximize incentive funding from the federal government. The incentive funding received in 2013 came to a total of \$695,725.

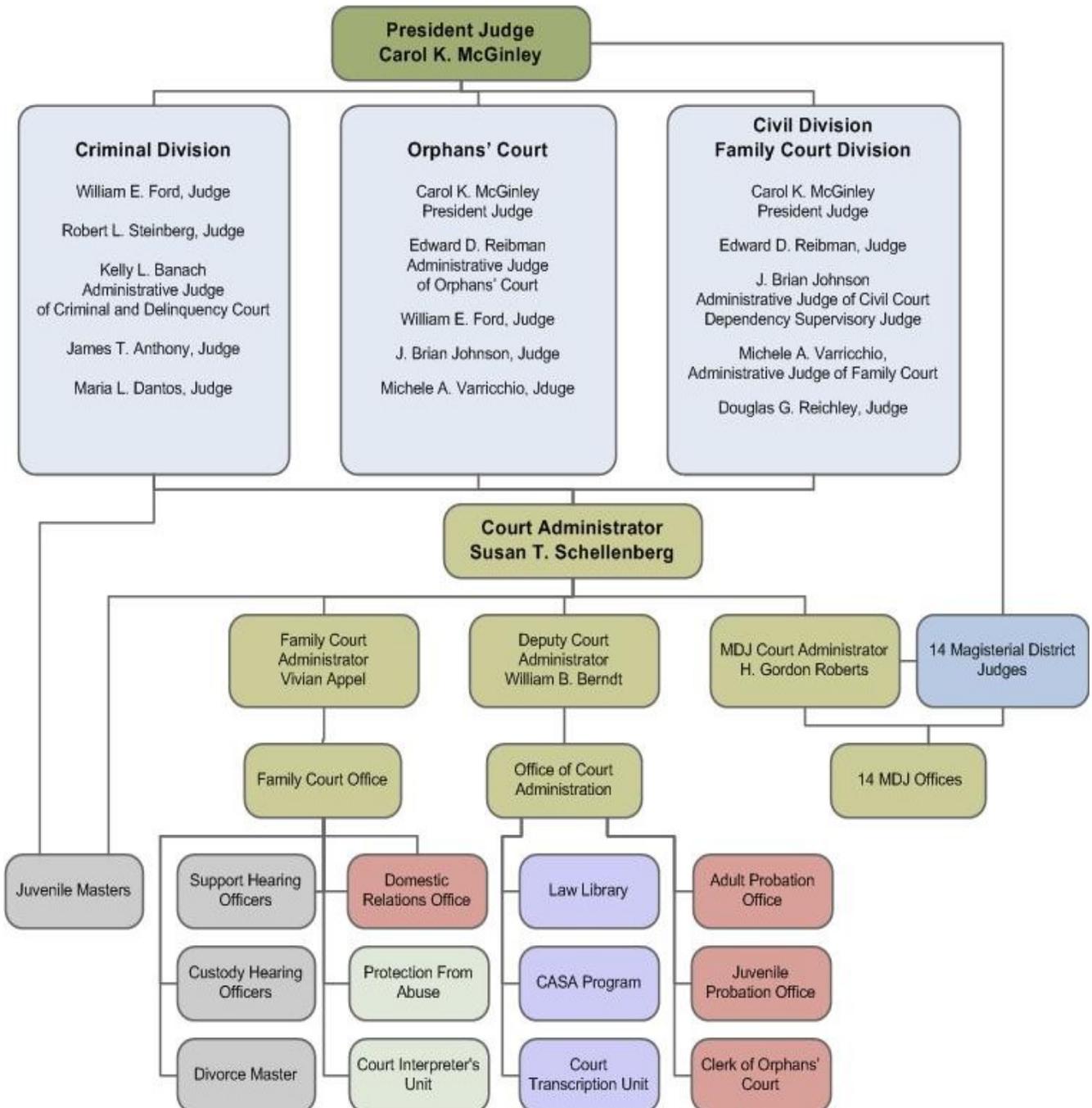
In addition, both our Juvenile and Adult Probation Departments received the maximum incentive funding from the federal government.

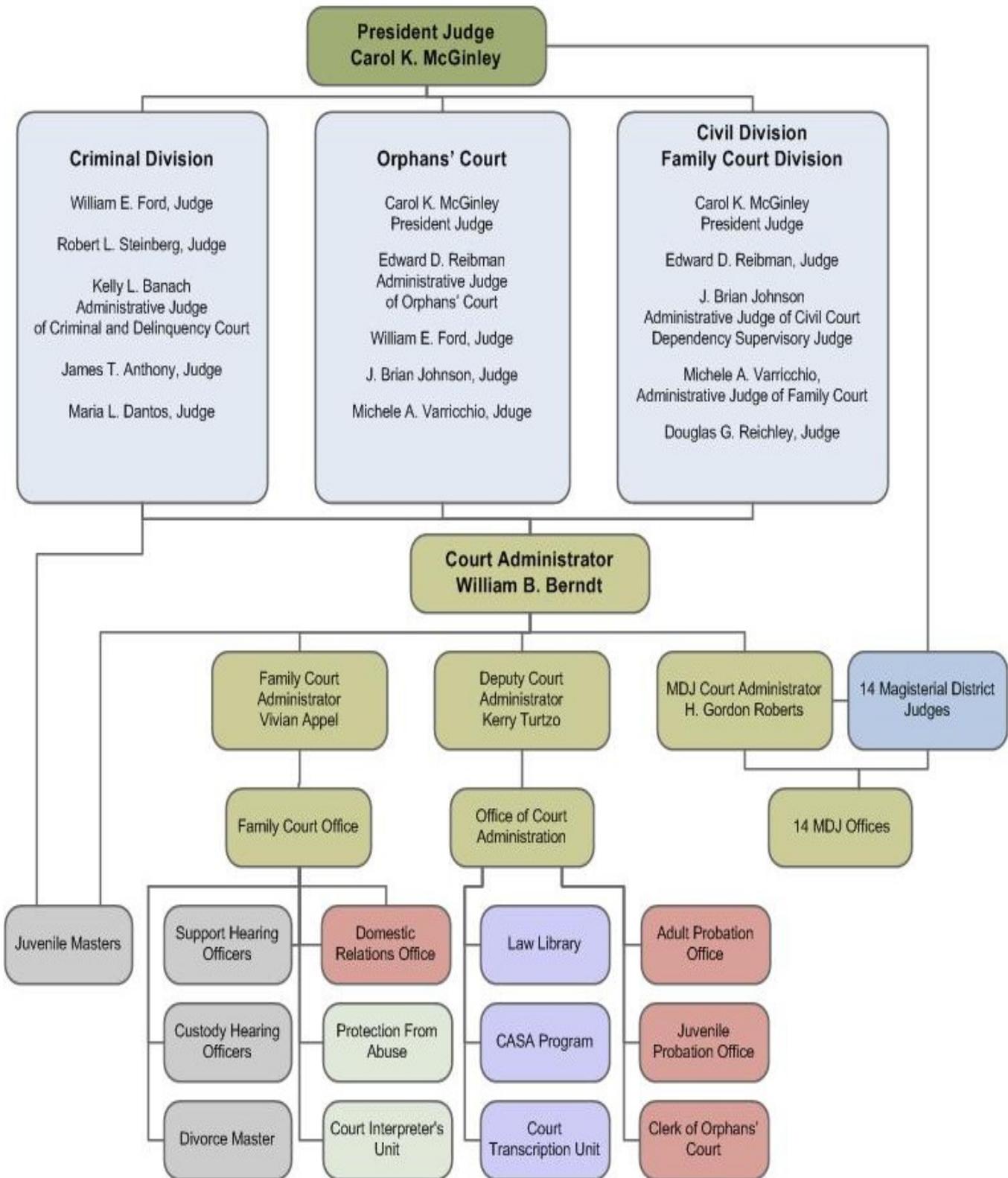
The Magisterial District Justice Districts were approved for realignment in 2013, and steps were taken to balance the weighted caseload equitably among the MDJ districts. The realignment occurred early in 2013, and was effectuated immediately. It has run smoothly without incident.

Carol K. McGinley, President Judge

# 2013 ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTS

The Court of Common Pleas of Lehigh County, the 31st Judicial District of Pennsylvania, under the leadership of President Judge Carol K. McGinley, is staffed by ten judges. There are two charts for 2013 because of Susan T. Schellenberg's retirement.





---

## JUDGES OF THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

---

### **PRESIDENT JUDGE CAROL K. MCGINLEY**

Carol K. McGinley is the President Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, effective January 3, 2011. She has served on the court since January of 1986. Prior to her election, she practiced law for twelve years in the law firm now known as Gross McGinley, LLP. On the court, she has served in all divisions: civil, criminal, family and juvenile. She has also served as Administrative Judge of the criminal and juvenile divisions.

Judge McGinley is a graduate of Georgetown University Law Center. She is the recipient of the James Madison First Amendment Award from the Greater Philadelphia Chapter, Society of Professional Journalists (June 2000) and the Distinguished Leadership Award from the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission (2005, 2006).

She is a past President of the Pennsylvania Conference of Trial Judges, having served on its Educational Committee for many years prior to her becoming an officer of the conference. 1993 to 1996, she was appointed Judge on the newly established Court of Judicial Discipline, which is the court responsible for the enforcement of judicial ethics.

By appointment of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, she sat as Chairman of the Pennsylvania Board of Law Examiners from April 1990 to April 1992. The Board of Law Examiners is responsible for the admission of attorneys to practice law in Pennsylvania.

She was a member of the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission from 1991 to 2006, having been appointed in sequence by Governors Casey, Ridge and Rendell. She served as chairman of the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission from July 2000 to July 2005. From 2001 to 2009, she was appointed to the Supreme Court Juvenile Court Procedural Rules Committee as Vice Chairman. She also served as a member of the Children's Cabinet of Pennsylvania.

Judge McGinley is married and has three grown children.

### JUDGE EDWARD D. REIBMAN

Judge Edward D. Reibman graduated from Lafayette College in 1969 and earned a J.D. from Duke University School of Law in 1972. He served in the U.S. Army Reserves from 1969 to 1975. He was the Law Clerk to the Honorable Bryan Simpson, U.S. Court of Appeals, 11th Circuit (formerly 5th Circuit), 1972 to 1973, and a trial attorney in the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice from 1973 to 1975. He served as a trustee of The Swain School, President of Lehigh Valley Legal Services and Chairman of the Allentown Historical and Architectural Review Board. He currently serves as a member of the Executive Board of the Minsi Trails Council of the Boy Scouts of America. He has served on the Judicial Ethics Committee of the Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges since 1994 and has been its chair since December 2009. He was a member of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's Ad Hoc Committee to Study the Code of Judicial Conduct and chairs the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's Ad Hoc Committee on Residential Mortgage Foreclosures. He was elected Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Lehigh County in November 1991, and retained in November 2001 and 2011. He is a member of the Lehigh County, Northampton County, Pennsylvania and Florida Bar Associations.

### JUDGE WILLIAM E. FORD

Judge William E. Ford graduated with honors from DeSales University in 1972 and earned a J.D. from Dickinson School of Law in 1975. He served in the United States Marine Corps Reserve (JAG) from 1975 to 1979 and as an Assistant District Attorney for Lehigh County from 1979 to 1981 and 1983 to 1991. Judge Ford also was in private civil practice from 1981 to 1991. He was an adjunct member of the faculties of DeSales University and Chestnut Hill College. He was elected Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Lehigh County in November 1991, retained for a second ten-year term in November 2001, and retained for a third ten-year term in November 2011.

### JUDGE ROBERT L. STEINBERG

Judge Robert L. Steinberg graduated from American University in 1973 and earned a J.D. from Western New England School of Law in 1976. Judge Steinberg served Lehigh County as an Assistant Public Defender from 1976 to 1978. He served in the District Attorney's Office as an Assistant from 1978 to 1983, as Deputy District Attorney from 1985 to 1988, and as First Assistant District Attorney from 1988 to 1991. He served as District Attorney for Lehigh County from 1991 to 1998. He is the recipient of a number of awards, including the Colonel John J. Schafer Award for excellence in law enforcement. He also has been a lecturer, a member of the faculty and an author of criminal law related articles for the Pennsylvania Bar Institute and other organizations. He was elected Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Lehigh County in November 1997, and retained for a ten-year term in 2007.

### JUDGE J. BRIAN JOHNSON

Judge J. Brian Johnson graduated from Villanova University in 1977 and earned a J.D. from Temple University School of Law in 1981. He served Lehigh County as an Assistant Public Defender from 1981 to 1983, as Criminal Arraignment Master from 1984 to 1986, as Assistant County Solicitor from 1987 to 1989, and as Criminal Costs and Fines Master from 1990 to 1991. He taught Business Law at DeSales University 1986 to 1987. He was an associate with Lanshe, Lanshe and Lanshe from 1983 to 1986. He was in private practice as a sole practitioner and as a partner in the firms of Johnson & Ashcraft, and Johnson, Ashcraft & Giordano from 1986 to 1996. Immediately prior to his election, he was Special Counsel to the Philadelphia-based national law firm of Duane Morris LLP from 1996 to 2003.

Judge Johnson has been a member of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's Juvenile Court Procedural Rules Committee since 2009 and currently serves as Vice-Chair of that committee. He has chaired the Lehigh County Children's Roundtable since 2006 and has served on the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's Leadership and State Roundtables since 2007. He chaired the Guiding Principles and CPCMS Users Group Committees of the Pennsylvania Children's Roundtable Initiative. He has been a member of the Pennsylvania Bar Association since 1984, a member of the Bar Association of Lehigh County since 1982, a member of its Board of Directors 1999 to 2000 and a member of the Donald E. Wieand Inn of Court 2000 to 2001 and a Team Leader 2002 to 2003. He was elected Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Lehigh County in November 2003. He has served as the Administrative Judge of the Civil Division since 2007 and served as the Administrative Judge of the Orphans' Court Division from 2007 to 2010.

### JUDGE KELLY L. BANACH

Judge Kelly L. Banach received her undergraduate degree in Government from Cornell University in 1979 and her law degree from Villanova University School of Law in 1982. She served as Assistant Public Defender in Bucks County, Pennsylvania from February 1983 to November 1985. After a brief association with the Allentown Law Firm of Wiener and Wiener, Judge Banach started at the Office of the Lehigh County District Attorney in May 1987. She ultimately became Senior Chief Deputy District Attorney, Supervisor of the Special Offenses Unit, which handled Sex Crimes, Child Abuse, and Domestic Violence cases, and Director of Training and Public Education, developing the Protecting Kids from Cyber Crimes Program. Judge Banach served as an instructor for the Allentown Police Academy and the Pennsylvania District Attorney's Institute. She is a former board member of the Child Advocacy Center of Lehigh County, and was co-chair of the Lehigh County Death Review Team. She was elected to the Lehigh County Court of Common Pleas in November of 2003, was retained to the bench in 2013 and presently serves as the Administrative Judge of the Criminal and Juvenile Divisions as well as Co-Chair of the Lehigh County Criminal Justice Advisory Board.

### JUDGE JAMES T. ANTHONY

Judge James T. Anthony graduated from Saint Joseph's University in 1980 and earned a J.D. from Creighton University School of Law in 1983. Commissioned a second lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps Reserve in 1981, he retired at the rank of colonel in 2009. During his military career he served in both active duty and reserve capacities, was deployed to Okinawa and Iraq, and participated in a number of exercises at home and abroad. He served as a full time assistant district attorney in York County in 1987, and as a part time assistant district attorney in Lehigh County from 1989 to 1999. After employment as staff counsel for two insurance companies, Judge Anthony went into the private practice of law where he remained for nineteen years. Judge Anthony is a member of the Lehigh County and Pennsylvania Bar Associations, the American Legion, and the Marine Corps League. He was elected Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Lehigh County in November 2007.

### JUDGE MARIA L. DANTOS

Judge Maria L. Dantos received her undergraduate degree from Rutgers University in 1982 and her law degree from Syracuse University College of Law in 1985. Judge Dantos served Lehigh County as a Public Defender from 1986 to 1989. She began her service in the District Attorney's Office as an Assistant in 1989. She served as Deputy District Attorney, Chief Deputy District Attorney, and in 2001 was appointed First Assistant District Attorney. She was the supervising attorney for the Lehigh County Investigating Grand Jury and the Homicide Task Force. She has been an instructor for the Allentown Police Academy, the Pennsylvania District Attorney's Association, and the Pennsylvania Bar Institute. She is the recipient of the Colonel John J. Schafer Award for excellence in law enforcement. She was appointed by the Governor to fill a vacancy on the bench in June of 2007 and was elected Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Lehigh County in November 2007 and serves in the Criminal Division.

### JUDGE MICHELE A. VARRICCHIO

Judge Michele A. Varricchio, a graduate of William Allen High School, Class of 1977, earned a B.A. at St. John's College, Santa Fe, New Mexico, and a J.D. from Antioch School of Law in Washington, D.C. She served as a judicial law clerk to the Honorable James N. Diefenderfer from 1985-1987. She was Solicitor for the Lehigh County Domestic Relations Section from 1988-1992. From 1987 through 1992 she was in partnership with Frederick P. Rooney, Esq. She was appointed by Governor Casey in 1992, was elected in 1993, and served for fifteen years as a Magisterial District Judge in Lehigh County. Judge Varricchio was a member of the Special Court Judges Association from 1992-2007. In the past she has served as the President and Treasurer of the Allentown YWCA. She has been a member of the Allentown Rotary Club since 2003. She served on the boards for 4H, Bikeworks, and the Human Services Advisory Board, and the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival at DeSales University. She is a member of the Lehigh Valley Arts Council and the National Association of Women Judges and has served as a Board member of the Bar Association of Lehigh County since 2011. Judge Varricchio attended the National Judicial College, General Jurisdiction, Reno, Nevada, October 2009. She was elected Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Lehigh County in November 2007 and assigned to the Civil Division. She currently serves as the Administrative Judge of the Family Division.

### JUDGE DOUGLAS G. REICHLEY

Judge Douglas G. Reichley graduated from Lafayette College in 1983 with honors in Government and Law, and received his J.D. from the Dickinson School of Law in 1986. Judge Reichley served in the Lehigh County District Attorney's Office from 1989-2000, rising to the position of Deputy District Attorney for violent crime prosecutions. He also served in the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office from 2000-2001 in the Special Investigations Unit. Before his election to the bench, Judge Reichley served in the Pennsylvania State House from 2003-2011. During his five terms in office, he was appointed to the House Appropriations Committee as the Vice-Chairman, and also served on the Consumer Affairs, Health and Human Services, Judiciary, Professional Licensure, Transportation, and Urban Affairs committees. In 2007 he was appointed to the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing by the Speaker of the House. He served as Vice Chairman in 2011. Judge Reichley was the recipient of several recognitions for his legislative service, including being named the State Public Official of the Year by PA Bio in 2010 and the Outstanding Legislator of the Year in 2010 by the Pennsylvania Association of School Retirees and in 2012 by the American Heart Association.

Judge Reichley served as a criminal judge in 2012 and now sits as a civil judge. Judge Reichley served on the Parole Recommitment Range Work Group in 2013. This group drafted parole recommitment ranges for consideration by the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing.

### SENIOR JUDGES

The Court was further staffed by Senior Judge Lawrence J. Brenner and other Senior Judges as assigned from time to time by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. Senior Judges may work a limited number of days each year in order to assist the Court. The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania determines the number of days each Senior Judge may preside during a given month.



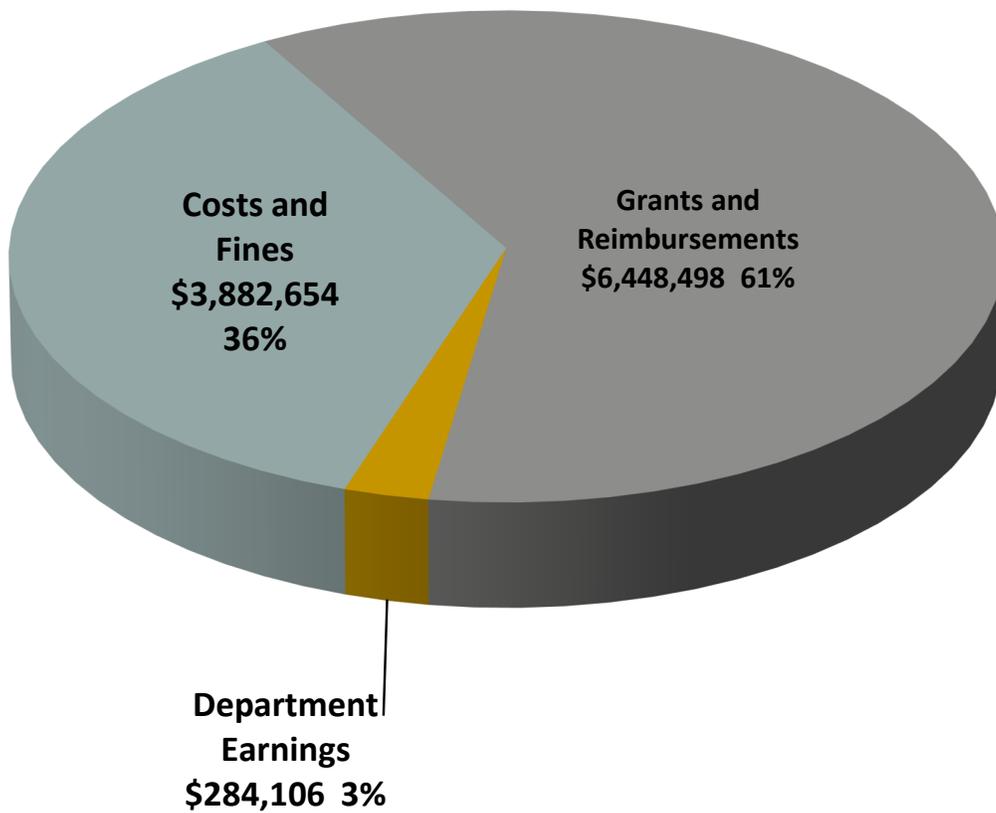
---

# 31<sup>ST</sup> JUDICIAL DISTRICT BUDGET

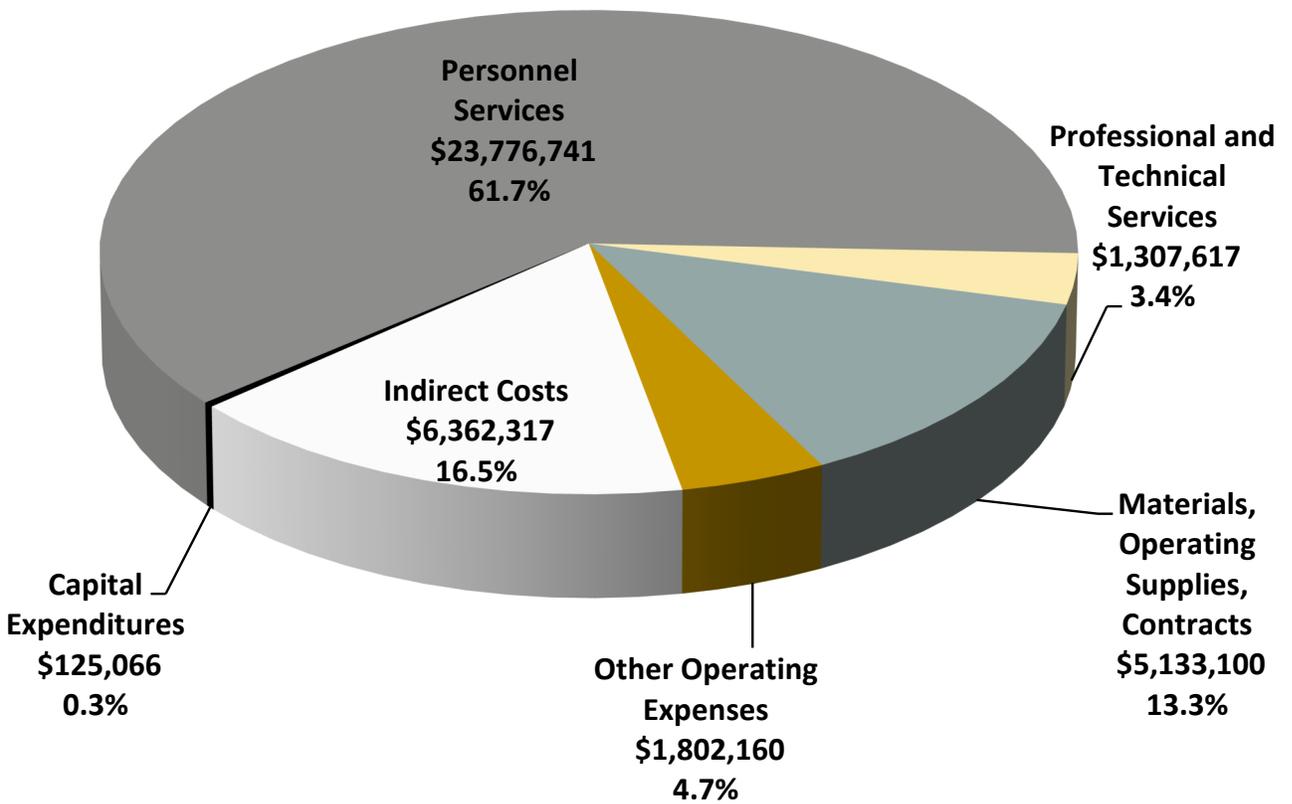
---

## COURT REVENUE AND EXPENSES

### 2013 Budgeted Revenue



## 2013 Budgeted Expenses



## GRANT FUNDING

The Court places emphasis in pursuing federal and state grants in order to offset the costs of current or new programs. This grant funding is more available in the areas of Adult and Juvenile Probation, with concentration on creation of new programs and initiatives.

Adult Probation receives state funding based on the amount of compliance with state-wide standards for probation operations. Currently the Lehigh County Adult Probation Department receives the maximum in state funding for compliance at over the 90% level.

The Juvenile Probation Department works closely with the Lehigh County Office of Children and Youth to produce a “needs-based” budget that attempts to maximize state assistance to the Court, in the form of services at state youth institutions and a funding stream to reimburse the court for some delinquent youth placement expenditures.

<b>2013 CRIMINAL JUSTICE ADVISORY BOARD GRANT ACTIVITIES</b>				
<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Grant</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>TCAP</b>	PCCD	<b>\$617,425.00</b>	Adult Probation	Awarded
<b>Intermediate Punishment Program Enhancement</b>	PCCD	<b>\$23,780.00</b>	SCA/Adult Probation	Awarded
<b>Grant-In-Aid Continuing Program for the Improvement of Adult Probation Services</b>	PBPP	<b>\$637,205.00</b>	Adult Probation	Awarded
<b>Grant-In-Aid/JJSES Implementation Plan</b>	JCJC	<b>\$462,389.00</b>	Juvenile Probation	Awarded
<b>Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (Mental Health PO)</b>	PCCD	<b>\$10,000.00</b>	Juvenile Probation	Awarded
<b>Drug Testing Funding</b>	JCJC	<b>\$5,000.00</b>	Juvenile Probation	Awarded
<b>Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy</b>	PCCD	<b>\$29,304.00</b>	Juvenile Probation	Awarded
<b>Disproportionate Minority Contact</b>	PCCD	<b>\$21,808.00</b>	Juvenile Probation	Awarded
<b>Training Grant</b>	JCJC	<b>\$23,900.00</b>	Juvenile Probation	Awarded

---

# THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES OF THE COURT

---

---

## COURT ADMINISTRATION

---

The responsibility of the Court Administrator is to manage the non-judicial functions of the Court under the guidance of the President Judge. Judges are ultimately responsible for effective court management. However, the complexity of the modern court requires the delegation of administrative functions and responsibilities to the Court Administrator. The Court Administrator serves as an appointee of the entire Court but is subject to the supervision and direction of the President Judge. The Court Administrator must practice extensive managerial and administrative skills to serve effectively as the managerial arm of the Court. The Court Administrator serves the dual function of increasing judges' time for adjudication by accomplishing the administrative functions of the Court, and by bringing professional managerial expertise to the administrative problems of the judiciary.

Duties of the Court Administrator include personnel and fiscal management, calendar or scheduling management, information systems and space and equipment management, records control, public information, and jury management.

In March of 2013, District Court Administrator, Susan T. Schellenberg retired from her position. Incoming District Court Administrator, William B. Berndt, and Deputy Court Administrator, Kerry R. Turtzo, were responsible for supervision of all court-related departments of the Judiciary, to include Adult Probation, Juvenile Probation, Domestic Relations, District Judge personnel, the Law Library, the Court Transcription Unit, and Court staff personnel.

### **COURT TECHNOLOGY**

The Court has been actively increasing the use of technology wherever possible. Adult and Juvenile Probation have case management systems which allow probation officers and their supervisors to manage and access cases electronically.

In e-filing, the court expanded the types of cases that pilot program members can file to all cases on the Supreme Court Civil Filing Cover Sheet, a significant expansion of the program. In addition, more pilot program members were approved in order to test the system's ability to handle the different types of cases. The expectation is to have the e-filing system available to all attorneys and pro se individuals sometime in 2014. By December 2013, there were 100 successful filings, and the rate is expected to increase greatly early in 2014.

The court has increased the use of videoconferencing for some court hearings, where the defendant attends the hearing by videoconference from a state correctional institute. The saving in transport costs, Sheriff overtime, and lodging in the Lehigh County Jail is substantial, and the use of this equipment by the judges is becoming more routine.

All of the videoconferencing units in the fourteen Magisterial District Justice offices were replaced in 2013 in order to continue preliminary arraignments by video to the Central Booking Office located adjacent to the Lehigh County Jail. The video units then in use were obsolete and the court took advantage of a grant from the AOPC to replace all the units.

### **COURT TRANSCRIPTION UNIT**

A unit of the Office of Court Administration, the Court Transcription Unit, under the supervision of Supervisory Court Reporter Dolores M. Young, has the primary task of recording proceedings before judges or other fact finders appointed by the Court. This task also includes the transcription of those notes taken during proceedings when a transcript is requested. The fifteen employees in this unit use both stenography and audio recording to perform the assigned task. Members of the unit are assigned to specific judges for a period of one year. Those who are not assigned to a judge, serve in a pool. Pool members fill in for assigned reporters and monitors when needed and also provide support to senior and visiting judges. Since the adoption of this system, transcription backlogs have been substantially reduced and office morale and effectiveness have been improved.

<b>JUDICIAL EMPLOYEES BY DEPARTMENT</b>							
	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>Court Administration</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Adult Probation</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Juvenile Probation</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Special Probation</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Orphans Court</b>	<b>6</b>						
<b>Domestic Relations</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>District Judges</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Law Library</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>302</b>

## JURY ADMINISTRATION

The Office of the Court Administrator is responsible for the effective management of the jury system. The jury system operation is supervised by Court Operations Officer, Gayle Fisher, who coordinates the process of random juror selection and determines the number of jury panels needed each day.

The reception and orientation of jurors, followed by selection and control of individual juries, is a process that requires continuing cooperation between the jury management staff and the courtroom staff. The emphasis is on making juries available to those judges who may require them and to keep available only those jurors necessary for the accomplishment of this task.

To this end, Lehigh County has adopted the “one day, one trial” method of selection to increase the efficiency of the jury system while making a minimal imposition on the lives of our residents. Citizens selected for jury duty will serve one day, or, if selected for a jury, will serve the duration of that trial.

<b>2013 LEHIGH COUNTY JURY UTILIZATION REPORT</b>	
<b>Jurors Reporting</b>	<b>4,877</b>
<b>Jurors Sent to Voir Dire</b>	<b>3,282</b>
<b>Jurors Selected</b>	<b>920</b>
<b>Juror Selection Rate</b>	<b>28%</b>

---

## COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA)

---

"Don't worry that  
children never listen to  
you; worry that they are  
always watching you."

~ Robert Fulghum



### WHAT IS CASA?

The Lehigh  
County  
Court-  
Appointed  
Special Advocate  
(CASA) Program provides  
consistent, credible and trained  
volunteers who advocate for Lehigh  
County's abused and neglected children in juvenile  
dependency court in accordance with the Pennsylvania  
Juvenile Act (Title 42 PA C. S. § 6301 et. seq.). These CASA  
volunteers serve as the "eyes and ears" of the Court and are appointed to  
the most complicated dependency cases.

## CASA VOLUNTEERS

CASA volunteers are everyday citizens who are interested in the children of their community. They are 21 years of age or older and are selected through a rigorous application process, which includes three background checks. CASA volunteers must complete 40 hours of pre-service training and make a minimum of an eighteen-month commitment to the CASA program. These incredible CASA volunteers are supported by two staff members in the CASA office. These staff members are responsible for recruiting, training and supervising CASA volunteers. In 2013, the staff handled more than 100 inquiries about volunteering, screened 32 volunteer applicants and held one 40-hour trainings for 4 new volunteers.

CASA volunteers are generally appointed to only one case at a time. Having only one case allows a CASA volunteer to focus more time and attention on a case than a paid service provider with a large caseload. CASA volunteers meet with the children they work with approximately three hours each month. In addition they speak with everyone involved in the child's life, including parents, teachers, doctors, therapists and other service providers. In 2013, Lehigh County CASA had 55 active CASA volunteers who advocated for 98 abused and neglected children, making Lehigh County CASA the third largest CASA Program in the state. CASA volunteers are also able to provide additional advocacy for children's educational needs when they are appointed by the court as the education decision-makers. In 2013, four volunteers were appointed as education decision-makers for 10 children.

## PERMANENT HOMES

A CASA volunteer's main objective is to assist the Court in making sound decisions that will provide safe, secure and permanent homes for these at-risk children. CASA volunteers aid the court by submitting written reports making recommendations in the best interest of the child. A CASA representative attends every hearing for their children and is often called on for their input by the Judge or Master. With the help of CASA volunteers in Lehigh County, 19 children found permanent homes in 2013; 13 were adopted, 4 were reunited with their biological family and 2 aged out of the foster care system with a transition plan to help them plan for a successful future.



---

## LEHIGH COUNTY LAW LIBRARY

---

### **THE JUDGE DONALD E. WIEAND LAW LIBRARY**

The Lehigh County Law Library was dedicated to the late Pennsylvania Superior Court and Lehigh County Court of Common Pleas Judge Donald E. Wieand in February of 1997. The Judge Donald E. Wieand Law Library is a county-funded public law library offering full library services to the public, the bar, county employees, and the court. In the absence of local law schools, the law library of the Thirty-First Judicial District stands alone in providing legal material in the county. Founded in 1869, the law library has been located in the Lehigh County Courthouse since 1963.

### **LIBRARY INFORMATION SERVICES**

The management of the Law Library is overseen by Lorelei A. Broskey, M.L.S., Director of Library Information Services, under the direction of the District Court Administrator. As well as manning the public law library, the Library Information Services staff functions as the centralized purchasing and distribution office for all print and online legal resources procured for the Judges' chambers and for judicial and county offices. Book requisitioning, invoice processing, and book cataloging for county and judicial offices are performed in the law library.

In 2013, the Library Information Services staff processed invoices and delivered print and online legal resources costing \$447,381.19 to the public law library, the judiciary, and county offices. The District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, and all other county and court offices are provided Westlaw through accounts in the law library budget.

In conjunction with the computer technical support coordinator for the court, Rachel Wotring, Library Information Services staff are instrumental in providing document production and computer end user support for many of the offices within the courthouse as well as serving as a point of contact for the Court's Website at [www.lccpa.org](http://www.lccpa.org). Document preparation for other offices and the court in general—such as this Annual Report—is facilitated by the Document Prep Division of Library Information Services. When needed, consultation with the computer support employee is accomplished through file sharing and collaboration.

### **LEHIGH COUNTY'S ONLY PUBLIC LAW LIBRARY**

As the only public law library in Lehigh County, the main collection consists of traditional print, electronic and microform formats. This comprehensive library of Pennsylvania, national, and federal sources, selected statutes and regulations, practice materials, treatises, and periodicals is supplemented by interlibrary loan with other institutions. The library offers online legal research through Westlaw, Shepard's Citations Online and Lexis. Through loan and online services, the law library may supply practically any resource, legal or otherwise, to patrons in a

very short time. Six computers in the law library are available for employees and patrons to access and use court rules and dockets, the Uniform Judicial System of Pennsylvania's website, public records of Lehigh County offices, the Lehigh County Court and Lehigh County websites, Microsoft Word, Elibrary, and many other resources. Reference assistance

continues to become more "virtual" with many questions asked and documents delivered by email to both employees and public law library patrons. Library staff members are on duty whenever the library is open.

Although Westlaw access for both the public workstations and the court employees is the method by which most primary law is now delivered, the law library remains a lending library. Since 2003, the book catalog records and patron library card records have been managed with LibraryWorld, a Windows based catalog and circulation system. Catalog records are MARC format—the cataloging standard for libraries worldwide—and searching is available by keyword, title, author and more. The online public access catalog (OPAC) is available to the public on the computer workstations. An Internet version of the LibraryWorld OPAC is set to be available in early 2014 when a conversion to a Cloud based version of the catalog is scheduled to take place. The OPAC will be available to everyone, members and non-members, from a link on the Law Library webpage.

### **SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANT ASSISTANCE**

The Law Library serves as the primary point of access to the courts for many self-represented litigants and ESL speakers. The Self Help Section of the Court's Website, Spanish language translations of library pathfinders and Legal Referral brochures are among efforts to serve the steadily increasing number of court users who are indigent, unrepresented, ESL speakers, or who simply lack basic information on how to access the courts.

In 2012, Spanish speaking part time staff members were added to the law library staff. Bilingual staff have proven a great aid in the assistance of Spanish speaking library users.

<b>PUBLIC LAW LIBRARY ACTIVITY TOTALS FOR 2013</b>	
<b>Card Holding Members</b>	<b>357</b>
<b>Individual Items Circulated</b>	<b>1352</b>
<b>Renewals of Items Circulated</b>	<b>1578</b>
<b>Photocopies Made by Public</b>	<b>2095</b>
<b>Paid Pages Printed from Computers</b>	<b>11126</b>
<b>In House Pages Printed</b>	<b>872</b>
<b>Total Pages Printed from Computers</b>	<b>11998</b>



---

## THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS CIVIL/FAMILY DIVISION

---

Currently, there are five judges assigned to the Civil/Family Division who are responsible for handling a caseload comprised of various types of civil actions as well as divorce, custody, protection from abuse, and child and spousal support cases. Furthermore, the judges in this division handle juvenile dependency cases and Orphans' Court cases regarding termination of parental rights, adoptions, and guardianships.

## **CIVIL ACTIONS**

Civil actions are those cases which, for the most part, involve the resolution of private conflicts between people or institutions. These cases may include personal injury or personal property claims, matters of equity, products liability, malpractice, or commercial and contract disputes.

At the time a complaint is filed, a judge is assigned to the case using a computerized process that selects the next judge in the rotation. In addition, the Court utilizes an individual calendaring system, which means that the same judge handles all aspects of the case from its inception through completion.

In 2010, the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts changed the type of data that was to be collected and reported to the AOPC. As a result, the Court is now responsible for collecting data on all civil case filings, including civil actions classified as Civil Other. Within the Civil Other Category are License and Registration Suspension Appeals, Mortgage Foreclosures, Assessment Appeals, Quiet Title Actions, Zoning Appeals, Ejectment and Actions in Replevin. Consequently, in 2013, the Court recorded 2,224 new civil cases filed and 2,278 Civil Other actions filed.

The Civil Operations section of the Court Administrator's Office, under the direction of Court Operations Officer Toni Dries and Court Operations Director Linda Fritz, is responsible for scheduling and tracking all civil cases. On average, there are approximately 1,700 civil cases pending in the Court's open inventory. With the pending cases, the staff of the Civil Operations section schedule and distribute notices for status conferences, arguments, hearings, settlement conferences, and trials. In addition, the staff is responsible for tracking the result of each court proceeding. Finally, the Judges of the Civil/Family Division work with the Civil Operations staff to proactively manage the civil caseload and resolve cases in a timely manner.

**ANNUAL CIVIL/OTHER FILINGS AND  
DISPOSITIONS FOR 2013**

	Civil	Other
<b>Pending Cases</b>	<b>1834</b>	<b>1354</b>
<b>Docketed Cases</b>	<b>2224</b>	<b>2279</b>
<b>Arbitration Appeals</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Transferred In</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Returned to Active</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Default Judgments</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>1097</b>
<b>Arbitration</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Disposed of by motions</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Settlements</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>693</b>
<b>Inactive</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Transferred Withdrawn</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>452</b>
<b>Administrative Purge</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>307</b>
<b>Jury Trial</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Non-Jury Trial</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Total Disposed</b>	<b>2393</b>	<b>2809</b>

## **CIVIL COURT SPECIAL PROGRAMS**

### **MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE PROGRAM**

In response to a faltering economy and an increase in mortgage foreclosure filings, the Court instituted, under the direction of the Honorable Edward D. Reibman, a Mortgage Foreclosure Program. This program is designed to assist individuals who are in danger of losing their homes through foreclosure. Mortgage foreclosure cases are scheduled for a conciliation conference before court-appointed Master Karl Friend. Individuals who wish to participate in the program are instructed to contact a housing counselor at the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley (CACLV) and to bring their financial materials to the conciliation conference. Along with the individuals who are in danger of losing their home, the housing counselor and a representative from the bank attend the conference. The goals of the program are to foster communication between the lender and the borrower and ultimately develop an agreement that avoids foreclosure.

In 2013, there were 1490 new mortgage foreclosure cases filed. Of those 1490 cases, 1,459 were diverted into the Mortgage Foreclosure Program. As a result of conciliation conferences held, 240 cases settled with the mortgage company. Finally, of the cases that were filed in 2013, 270 were pending at the end of the year.

### **CIVIL ARBITRATION PROGRAM**

The Arbitration Program is utilized to adjudicate those civil cases which involve an amount with a monetary total of \$50,000 or less. A panel of arbitrators, consisting of three attorneys, is appointed by the Court to conduct a hearing and rule on each arbitration case. Either party, if not satisfied with the panel's ruling, may appeal the decision to the Court of Common Pleas. Once again, in 2013, the Arbitration Program proved to be a very effective method of alternative dispute resolution.

---

## THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

### CRIMINAL/JUVENILE DIVISION

---

Currently, there are five judges assigned to the Criminal/Juvenile Division who are responsible for handling a caseload comprised of adult criminal cases as well as juvenile delinquency matters. Furthermore, the judges in this division handle appeals of summary cases, forfeiture matters, contempt of Domestic Relations' court orders, and contempt of cost and fine orders.

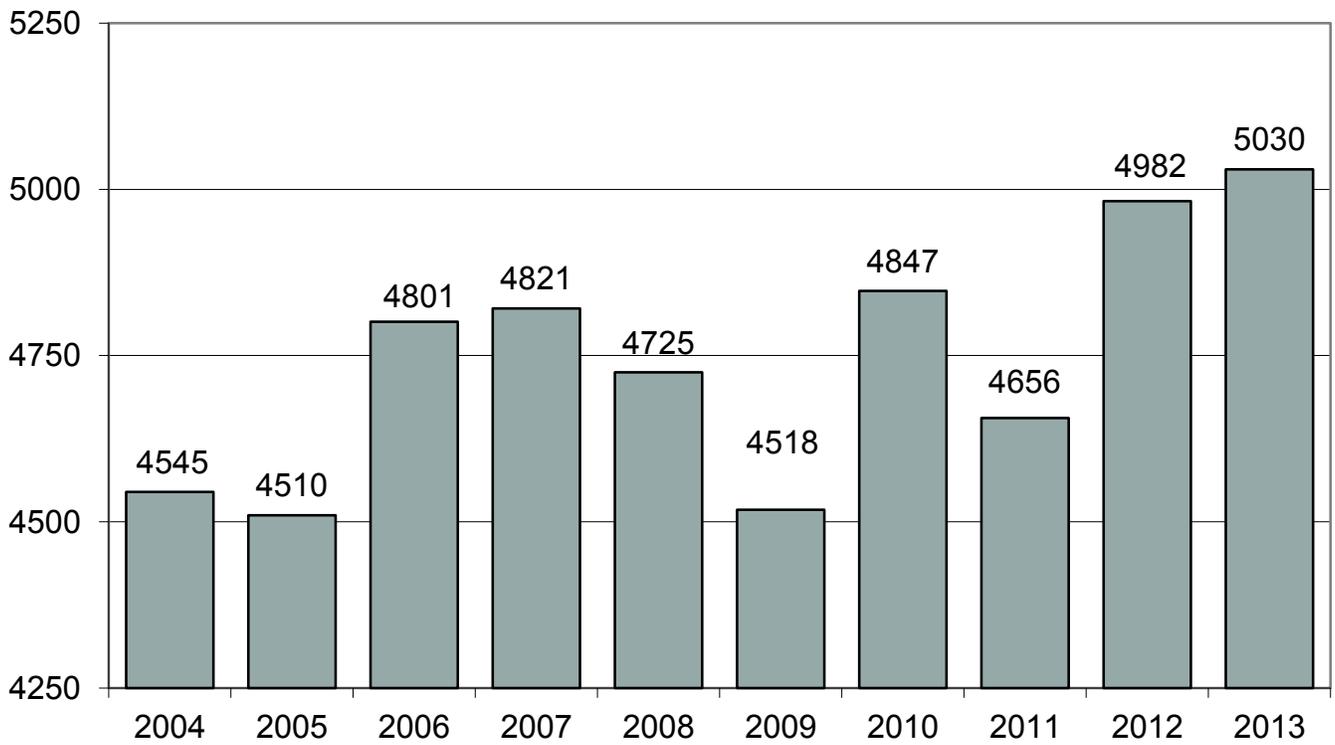
#### **ADULT CRIMINAL COURT**

In 2013, the Court received 5030 new adult criminal cases – the highest number of criminal cases ever filed. Furthermore, 12 of the new adult cases were homicide filings. The homicide cases were divided and assigned to the five judges. The Court utilizes an individual calendaring system in the Criminal/Juvenile Division as well. Therefore, the assigned judge handles the cases from formal arraignment through disposition. In addition, all probation and parole violations as well as post sentence motions are handled by the judge who sentenced the defendant. Finally, in 2013, the five judges of the Criminal/Juvenile Division disposed of 5,694 adult criminal cases.

In 2013, the Court, court-related

<b>CRIMINAL FILINGS AND DISPOSITIONS FOR 2013</b>	
<b>New Cases</b>	<b>5030</b>
<b>Reopened Cases</b>	<b>745</b>
<b>ARD</b>	<b>1730</b>
<b>Dismissed</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Rule 586</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Withdrawn Nolle Prossed</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Speedy Trial</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Guilty Plea</b>	<b>3028</b>
<b>Nolo Plea</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Nonjury Trial-Guilty</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Nonjury Trial Not Guilty</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Jury Trial Guilty</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Jury Trial Not Guilty</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Bench Warrant</b>	<b>594</b>
<b>Incompetent</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Case Transferred</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Remand MDJ</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Transfer Juvenile Court</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total Dispositions</b>	<b>5694</b>

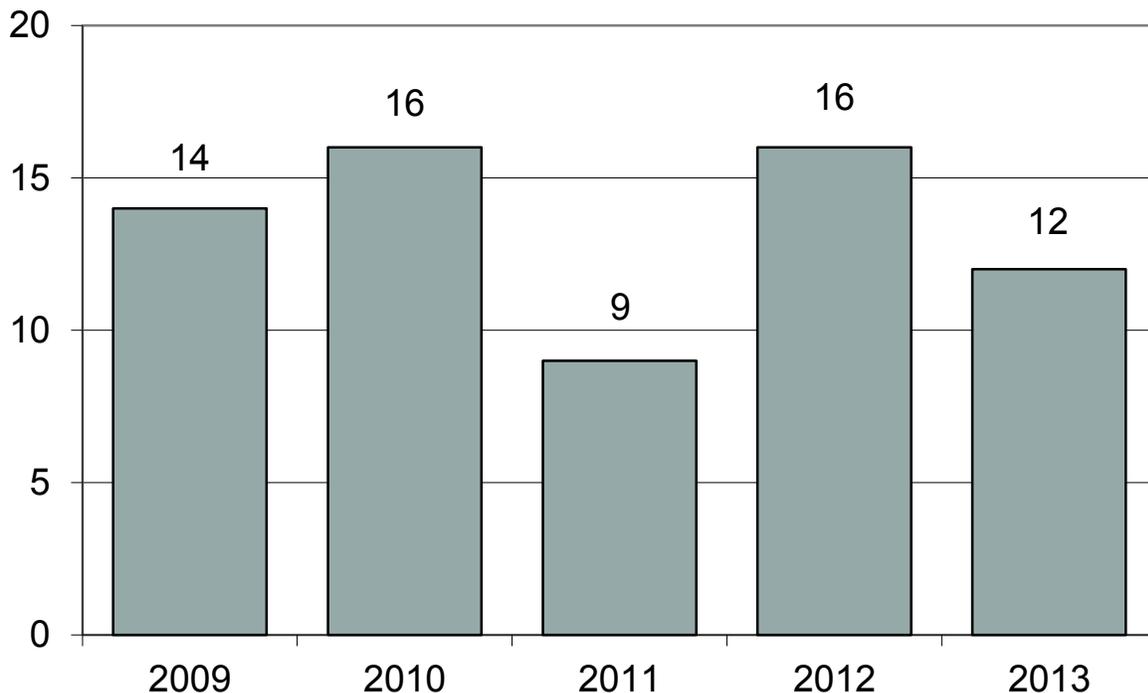
### New Criminal Cases Ten Year Trend 2004-2013



departments and the Department of Corrections continued to see positive results from the implementation of the community corrections program developed by the Criminal Justice Advisory Board's Reentry Committee. The number of technical probation violations was reduced significantly, which freed up prison bed space and reduced the number of probation violations that required scheduling before the Court.

Approximately 14% of male inmates and 39% of female inmates have a self-reported history of psychiatric issues and require psychotropic medications. Through the efforts of our CJAB's Mental Illness/Substance Abuse Committee, procedures have been implemented to identify these individuals early in the process so that they can receive appropriate treatment. Team MISA, a collaborative team comprised of representatives from the Department of Corrections, Pre-trial Services, MH/MR, Drug and Alcohol, Adult Probation, the District Attorney and the Public Defender develop treatment plans for those defendants who have serious mental health issues. Their efforts have resulted in significantly shorter prison stays for this challenging population.

### **Annual Homicide Filings 2009-2013**



## JUVENILE COURT

Juvenile Court, in 2013, fell under both the authority of the Administrative Judge of the Criminal/Juvenile Division and the Administrative Judge of the Civil Division.

### JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AND JUVENILE DEPENDENCY

The Juvenile Court Division as a whole is responsible for cases involving juvenile delinquency and juvenile dependency.

**Delinquent juveniles** are those under the age of 18 who are in violation of criminal law. Delinquency cases referred to a judge are handled by the Criminal/Juvenile Division. These juveniles may be referred to the Juvenile Probation Department.

**Dependent juveniles** are children who are, or who have been, subject to abuse or neglect. Action before the court is initiated by the Lehigh County Office of Children and Youth Services or the Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department. Dependency cases referred to a judge are handled by the Civil/Family Division. Dependent juveniles may enter the foster care system, be reunited with family or placed for adoption.

<b>JUVENILE DELINQUENCY CASE FILINGS AND DISPOSITIONS FOR 2013</b>	
<b>New Cases</b>	<b>862</b>
<b>Judge</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>Non-Judicial Officer</b>	<b>489</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>Cases Processed</b>	<b>828</b>

### JUVENILE MASTERS

The Juvenile Court judges are assisted by two full-time Juvenile Masters who adjudicate both delinquency and dependency cases. Theresa M. Loder, Esquire and Jacquelyn C. Paradis, Esquire serve as full time Juvenile Masters.

---

## THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

### FAMILY COURT DIVISION

---

Legal actions ending family relationships, child custody, divorce, and protection from abuse (domestic violence), are managed by the Family Court Division. Child and spousal support are managed by the Domestic Relations Division, which, while part of the Family Court Division, has separate operations and a separate location.

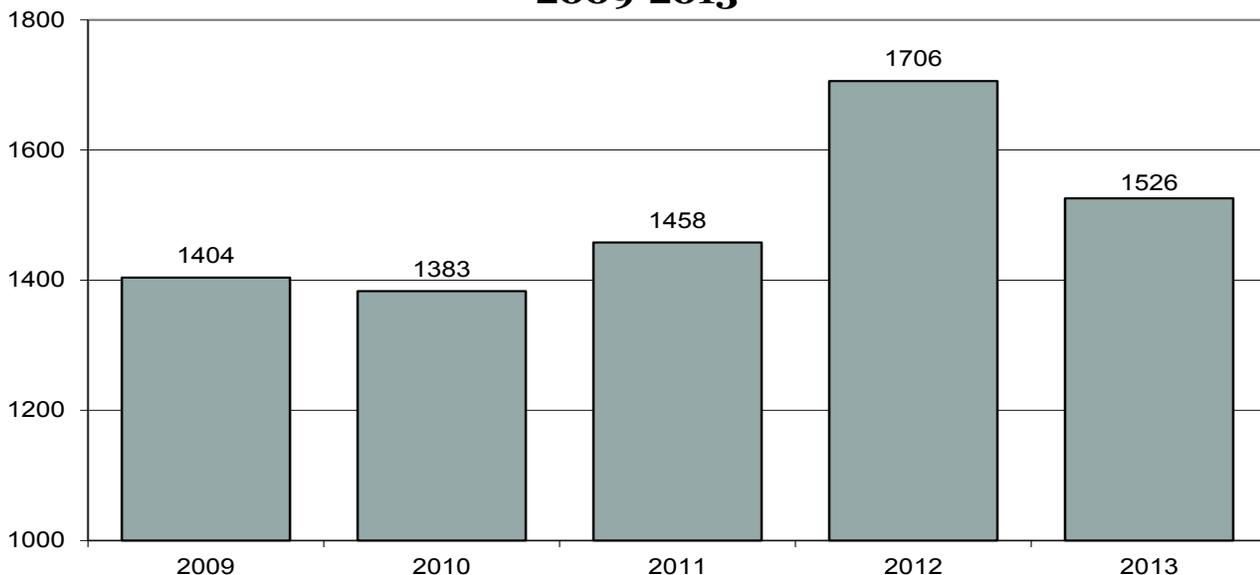
The Family Court Office staff provides intake services for individuals seeking protection from abuse orders, as well as forms and filing instructions for people without an attorney who want to start a custody case. Divorce clients are referred to the Court's Self-Help website. Because of the nature of the cases, the office is equipped with private intake areas, conference rooms, hearing rooms, and sheriff's security.

#### **CHILD CUSTODY**

All custody cases start with a mediation or conciliation conference where efforts are made to create agreements between the parties. If a party requests mediation, a court mediator assists the parties in identifying and resolving the issues. All other cases are scheduled with a custody hearing officer for a settlement (conciliation) conference.

In 2013, more than 80 percent of child custody cases in Lehigh County involved people who appear without attorneys (self-represented). Court staff cannot provide legal advice, but the staff

**Custody Filings  
2009-2013**



can provide filing information. Family Court has created “Frequently Asked Questions” with standardized accurate information which is available on the Family Court website and in person.

When a self-represented litigant comes to the Family Court office, an intake worker asks questions to determine if Lehigh County court has jurisdiction to decide a case. In general, the county in which the child has resided for six months is the court where a case starts. In some circumstances, the court can accept emergency jurisdiction. The intake worker provides the forms necessary to start a custody action, and gives instructions on completing the forms, and filing and serving the pleadings on the other parent. If the case involves a modification or contempt, the litigant must provide a copy of the existing court order.

While most cases are disputes between a mother and a father, some involve grandparents seeking custody or partial custody. In the past, custody cases typically involved divorcing parents. Consistent with national trends, more cases are now between “never marrieds.”

The conciliation conference may be the first opportunity since separating that the parties have met to discuss their child or children. It is an informal proceeding with a custody hearing officer in which the parties, and if represented, their attorneys, have the opportunity to present their case, and make their requests for legal and physical custody. The hearing officer helps the parties focus on the child’s needs, and attempts to settle the case. More than half the custody cases filed in 2013 were resolved by the hearing officers with agreed orders. An additional 20 percent of the cases were resolved with agreements through mediation or record hearings by a hearing officer.

When the parties fail to agree, the case is scheduled for hearing or trial. The Hearing Officer has the authority to receive testimony and make recommendations in partial custody cases. Cases involving legal custody, primary physical custody, or contempt of a court order are scheduled before a judge.

## **DIVORCE**

The Family Court website provides detailed forms and instructions for the filing of simple, uncontested divorces. In 2013, 182 cases were initiated from the self-help website. Cases where parties require division of marital assets are heard by the Divorce Master. The Master holds settlement conferences and conducts hearings in contested cases on economic issues relating to the dissolution of the marriage. In 2013, the divorce master was assigned 151 cases. Most cases require multiple settlement conferences. Fewer than five percent of the cases require hearings.

<b>DIVORCE CASE FILINGS &amp; DISPOSITIONS OR 2013</b>	
<b>New Cases</b>	<b>915</b>
<b>Contested Judge</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Contested Master</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>Uncontested</b>	<b>700</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>190</b>
<b>Cases Processed</b>	<b>1015</b>

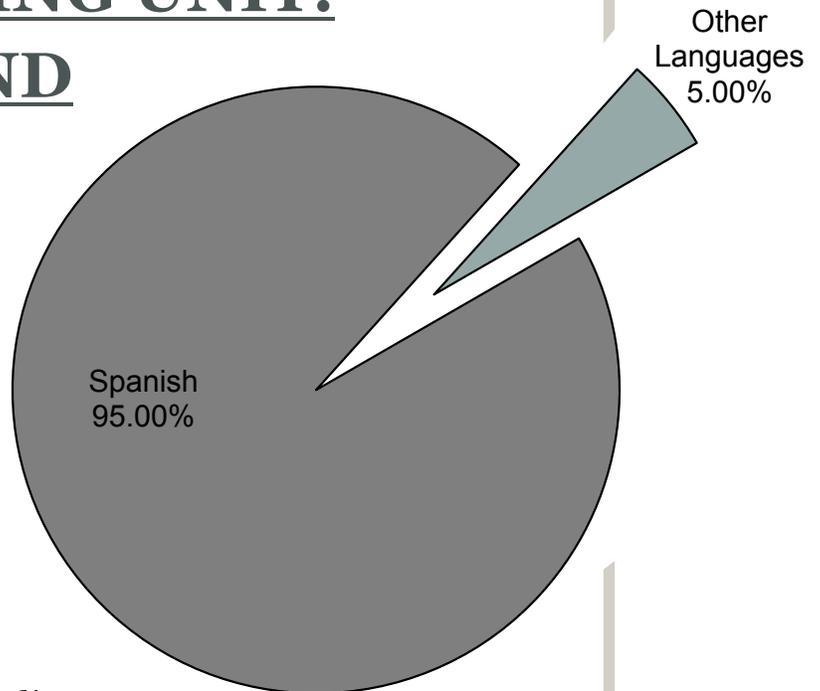
## PROTECTION FROM ABUSE

Pennsylvania law requires every court to assist victims of domestic violence seeking protection from abuse orders. In Lehigh County, the staff provides private intake assistance and twice daily escorts applicants to court. Special security measures are taken in all cases, but especially in cases where cross-petitions have been filed.

Individuals may seek a protection order on their own behalf or on behalf of their minor child. Court assistance hours are from 8 a.m. until 12:15 daily, and litigants appear before a judge at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. At other times, PFA relief is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through the Magisterial District Judges.

<b>PFA CASE FILINGS &amp; DISPOSITIONS FOR 2013</b>	
<b>Beginning Pending</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>New Cases</b>	<b>1112</b>
<b>Cases Available</b>	<b>1213</b>
<b>Temporary Order Denied</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Temporary Order Dismissed</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>Final Order Denied</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Final Order Granted</b>	<b>344</b>
<b>Failure of Plaintiff to Appear</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>Final Order Stipulation</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Petition Withdrawn</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>Transferred/Other</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Deceased Party</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Cases Processed</b>	<b>1139</b>
<b>Ending Pending</b>	<b>74</b>

## INTERPRETING UNIT: FOREIGN AND SIGN LANGUAGE



The Court provides interpreters in criminal and family court proceedings. A staff interpreter is assisted by a pool of 25 per diem contractors, all of whom meet the professional standards set by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.

The numbers of individuals needing interpreting services increased in 2013, but the number of available interpreters did not. The challenge of allocating limited resources to increased demands was met by having Juvenile and Adult Probation Offices and District Courts use the telephone interpreting services.

### 2013 ASSIGNMENTS PER LANGUAGE PER MONTH

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total
Amharic		1											1
Arabic	6	8	3	21	4	4	5	3	2	2	3	3	64
Burmese							2		1	1		3	7
Chinese Fuzhou				1	1								2
Chinese Mandarin	1	1	1	2	1		4	4	3	2	0	1	20
Greek						3							3
Gujarati					2								2
Korean		1						2					3
Polish										1			1
Sign Language	2	1	2	2	2	1	4	4	3	2		1	20
Spanish	225	203	208	200	240	206	228	248	273	309	252	239	2831
Swahili	1						1		1				3
Thai											1		1
Turkish	1							1					2
Vietnamese	5	3				4	4			1	1	2	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>2983</b>

---

## DOMESTIC RELATIONS SECTION

---

**There are 12,426 active support cases in Lehigh County.  
In 2013, \$47,874,438 was collected and distributed by the  
Domestic Relations Section.**

The Lehigh County Domestic Relations Section, located at 14 North 6th Street, Allentown, is the Title IV-D agency responsible for the establishment and enforcement of child and spousal support for the Lehigh County Courts. The office is responsible for establishing paternity for children born out of wedlock; locating absent parents for support purposes; and securing financial support for minor children of separated parents.

Under the leadership of Director Julia Parker Greenwood, the Domestic Relations Section, which consists of 21 conference officers, 10 managers, and 43 full and part-time support staff, handles all aspects of a support case, with the goal of establishing enforceable orders of support to benefit the children for whom support is owed.

<b>2013 TANF SUPPORT CASE FILINGS &amp; DISPOSITIONS</b>	
<b>New Cases</b>	<b>511</b>
<b>Cases Transferred In</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Non-TANF to TANF</b>	<b>333</b>
<b>Judge</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Hearing Officer</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Conference Officer</b>	<b>574</b>
<b>Cases Transferred Out</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>TANF to Non-TANF</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>Cases Processed</b>	<b>880</b>

<b>2013 NON-TANF SUPPORT CASE FILINGS &amp; DISPOSITIONS</b>	
<b>New Cases</b>	<b>5286</b>
<b>Cases Transferred In</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>TANF to Non-TANF</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>Judge</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Hearing Officer</b>	<b>515</b>
<b>Conference Officer</b>	<b>4648</b>
<b>Cases Transferred Out</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Non-TANF to TANF</b>	<b>333</b>
<b>Cases Processed</b>	<b>5647</b>

## **ESTABLISHING CHILD AND SPOUSAL SUPPORT ORDERS**

Establishment of support in Lehigh County progresses under a 3-tier system. All initial complaints for support and petitions for modification are conducted by a Conference Officer, who gathers information and attempts to reach an agreed support order between the parties. If no agreement can be reached at the conference level, a temporary or "interim" order is issued, and the case proceeds to a full hearing before a Hearing Officer. The support order entered by the Hearing Officer can be appealed before a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Lehigh County.

## **JUDICIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ENFORCEMENT OF SUPPORT ORDERS**

Conference Officers are also responsible for ensuring compliance with support orders by holding contempt conferences to get payments back on track and by referring cases for a contempt hearing before a judge for failure to meet the support obligations when necessary.

In addition, many enforcement tools are available for use by the Domestic Relations Office to ensure compliance with the support orders; including IRS intercepts, driver's license suspensions, lottery intercepts, professional license suspensions, real estate liens and credit bureau reporting.

Those non-custodial parents who have lost their jobs, or are in need of a job in order to pay their support orders, may be referred to the Work Search Program within the Domestic Relations Office for assistance in finding employment and for monitoring of job seeking efforts by the work search officer.

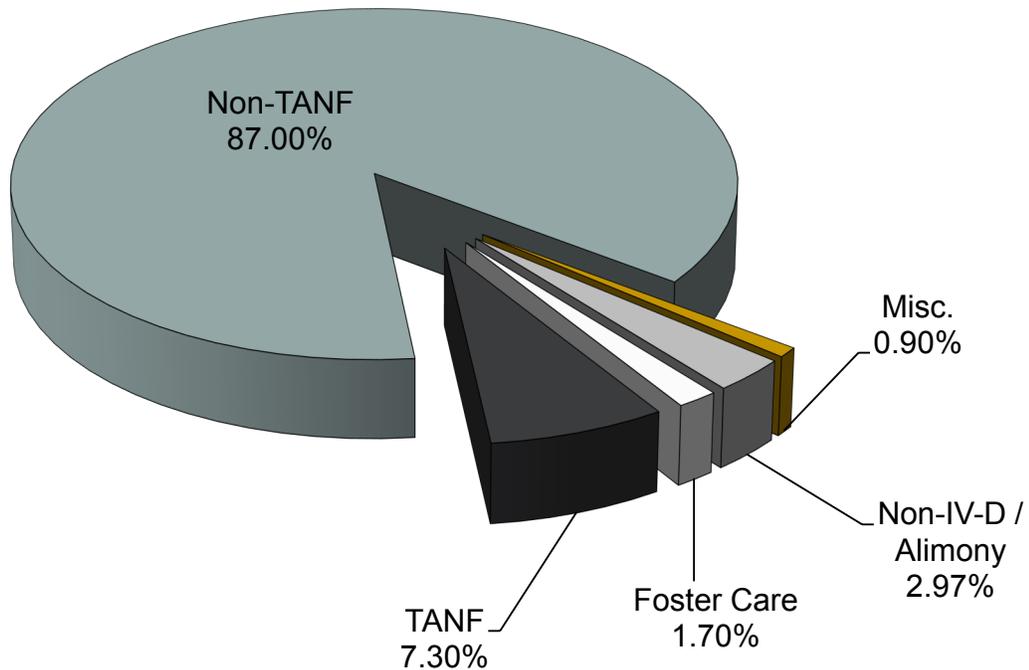
## **CASE MANAGEMENT CASELOADS**

Domestic Relations Officers and Clerical Staff are assigned to case management teams that are responsible for all aspects of a support case from establishment through enforcement with the goal of establishing enforceable orders of support to benefit the children for whom support is owed. In 2013, Domestic Relations staff conducted 5,098 establishment conferences and 765 establishment hearings. In addition, 3,580 contempt hearings were conducted.

## **PACSES AND SCDU**

The Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement System (PACSES) is a state-wide computer and check disbursement system is used as the database for child support case information, support calculations and enforcement actions. Payments are made to and disbursed from the state level office, the Support Collection and Disbursement Unit (SCDU).

Domestic Relations is responsible for the collection of support funds from the defendant in the action and disbursement of those funds to the plaintiff. In 2013, that figure was \$47,874,438.



### **2013 Support Cases By Case Type**

**TANF Cases involve children in families receiving aid under the federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program.**

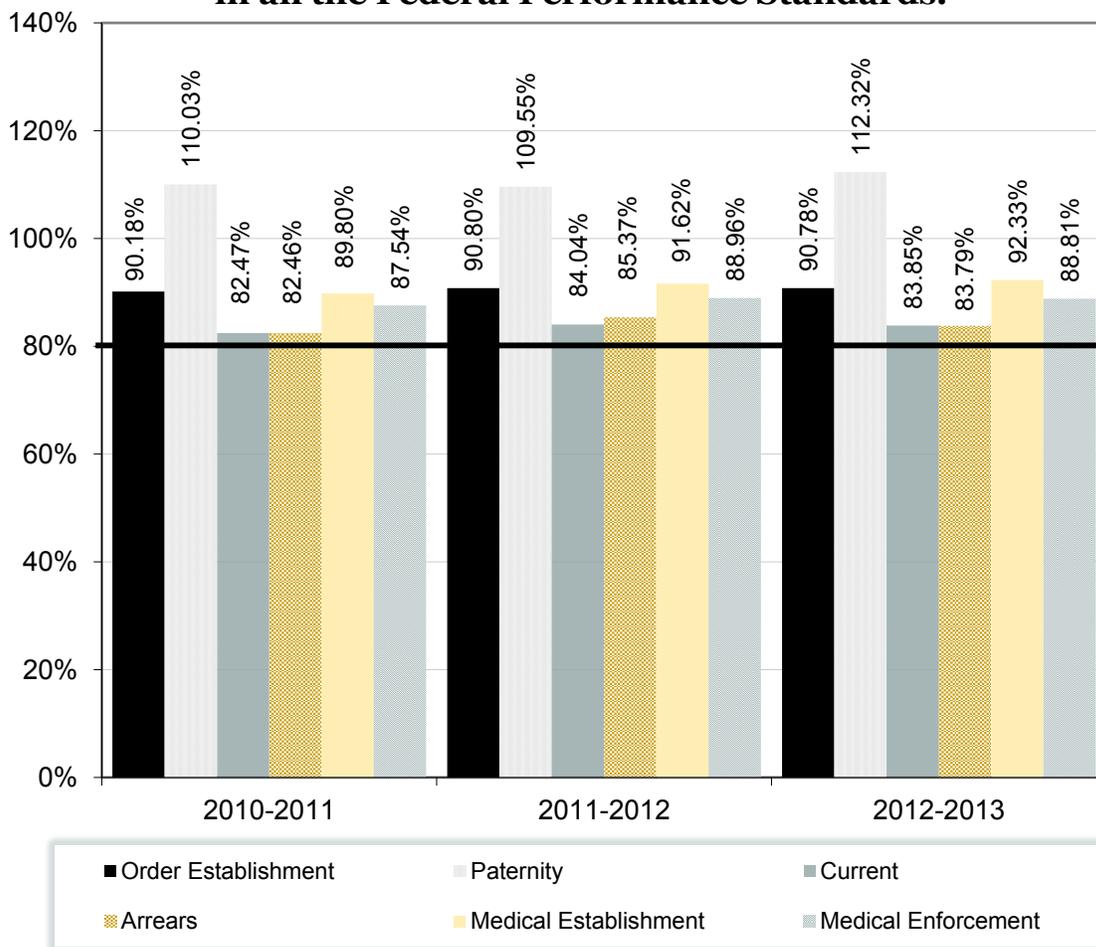
**Non-TANF cases are those with no such federal assistance.**

#### **NEW IN 2013: WEB BASED APPLICATION**

Beginning in 2013, those seeking child support services through the Domestic Relations Office are able to start the application process via the child support website at [www.childsupport.state.pa.us](http://www.childsupport.state.pa.us). Once the application is submitted electronically, the person seeking support must appear in the DRS within sixty (60) days to complete the process and file a complaint for support.

## 2012-2013 Domestic Relations Section Federal Performance Indicators

**For Federal Fiscal year 2013, which ended on  
September 30, 2013, Lehigh County exceeded 80%  
in all the Federal Performance Standards.**



## FEDERAL FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

The Lehigh County Domestic Relations Section, through a Cooperative Agreement between Lehigh County and the Pennsylvania Bureau of Child Support Enforcement, is required to provide child support services as outlined in Title IV-D of the Social Security Act in order to receive federal funding. These child support services must be performed in accordance with Federal Code of Regulations and Pennsylvania Rule of Civil Procedure. As long as the DRS is performing as required, 66% of DRS operating expenses are reimbursed by the federal government.

In addition, as a IV-D agency, the DRS is required to meet federal performance standards. To maximize incentive funds for Pennsylvania and Lehigh County, the benchmark of 80% must be met in the following categories:

- Cases with active support orders
- Cases with paternity established
- Cases with full monthly collection of current support
- Cases with a payment on arrears (back support) during the federal fiscal year
- Cases with medical support established—not tied to funding in 2013
- Cases with medical support enforced—not tied to funding in 2013

## ORPHAN'S COURT DIVISION

The name Orphans' Court is an anachronism derived from an era in which those persons who traditionally had no legal "voice" (minor children, widows, orphans, decedents) required an objective entity—the Orphans' Court—to "speak" for them and assure that their rights and interests were protected. Unlike the other divisions of the Court of Common Pleas, many of the matters that come before the Orphans' Court are non-adversarial.

### THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF THE ORPHANS' COURT DIVISION

The Office of the Clerk of the Orphans' Court Division is a judicial office distinct from the Register of Wills, (which in Lehigh County is a division within the Office of the Clerk of Judicial Records). In addition, the scheduling of all Orphans' Court cases is done by the Office of the Clerk of the Orphans' Court and not by the Court Administrator's Office. The Orphans' Court Division of the Court of Common Pleas is under the direction of the Director of Orphans' Court Operations, Janet T. Woffindin, Esquire, and the Clerk of the Orphans' Court, Wendy A. W. Parr. There are three full-time assistant clerks and a full-time auditor who reviews all formally filed fiduciary accounts. There are currently five judges, including an Administrative Judge, assigned to the various matters within the jurisdiction of the Orphans' Court Division.

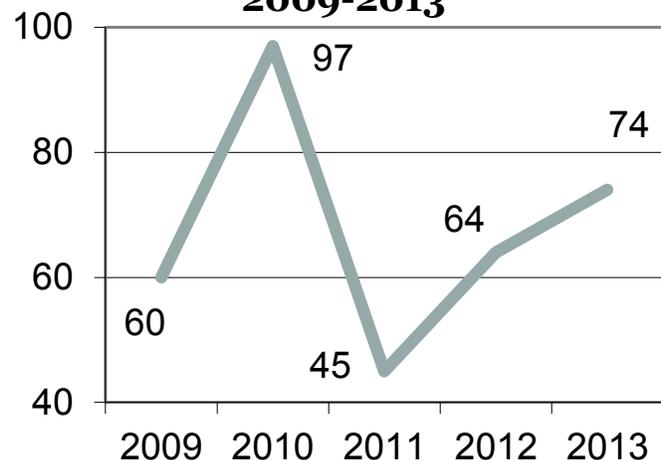
### REQUIREMENTS UNIQUE TO ORPHANS' COURT

- Statutory requirement to appoint counsel to represent each indigent parent who contests the termination of his/her parental rights, (not uncommon for there to be more than one father involved in most cases), and counsel to represent the minor child.
- Necessity to appoint guardians ad litem and/or counsel in guardianship proceedings to protect the interests of AIP (alleged incapacitated person).
- Statutory prohibition on imposition of filing fee for Judicial Bypass Hearings.

### ORPHANS' COURT JURISDICTION

After the grant of letters and payment of inheritance taxes (accomplished through the Register of Wills), all matters and/or disputes regarding wills and other aspects of the administration of decedents' estates are heard in the Orphans' Court Division. The Orphans' Court is also charged with the responsibility of overseeing the administration of both private and charitable inter vivos and testamentary trusts, powers of attorney and matters

**Adoptions Filed  
2009-2013**



## ORPHANS' COURT HIGHLIGHTS: 2013

- Issued 2,024 marriage licenses.
- Audited, confirmed and adjudicated 48 fiduciary accountings.
- Freed 57 children for adoption following the termination of the parental rights of their biological parents.
- Granted 69 adoptions.
- Appointed guardians of the person for 36 minors.
- Adjudicated 116 persons incapacitated and appointed guardians for their persons and/or estates.
- Held 7 judicial bypass hearings pursuant to the Abortion Control Act.
- Approved 58 minors' settlements involving lump sum payouts, creation of trusts, and structured settlements and in excess of a dozen death case settlements.
- Resolved petitions regarding contested wills, joint asset ownership problems, inheritance tax disputes, use of powers of attorney, either via hearing or court-assisted settlement.
- Responded to a steady number of requests by adoptees for information about their biological parents, and conducted adoption searches. These requests are expected to increase over time as 2011 amendments to the Adoption Act expanded the classes of person who can initiate an adoption search.

involving not-for-profit organizations. The Orphans' Court hears all parental termination cases, adoptions and minors' guardianship cases, as well as judicial by-pass hearings required by the Abortion Control Act, and responds to all requests for access to both identifying and non-identifying information from adoption files.

In Lehigh County, settlement of lawsuits or claims involving minors, incapacitated persons and/or decedents' estates must be approved by the Orphans' Court Division to assure proper allocation of proceeds and preservation of monetary awards during minority. The Orphans' Court hears petitions for adjudication of incapacity and appointment of both guardians of the person and estate regarding those adults who cannot safely manage their own affairs. Finally, the Clerk of the Orphans' Court is responsible for issuing marriage licenses upon "in person" application by couples, maintaining marriage license records, and issuing certified copies thereof.

---

# ADULT PROBATION DEPARTMENT

---

## Mission Statement

**To aid in reducing the incidents of crime in the community through field-based supervision, treatment and rehabilitation of the offender, thus protecting the public from recurring criminal and antisocial behavior.**

## PRIMARY FUNCTIONS

- Supervision of adult offenders (age 18 and above) who are court ordered to probation, parole, ARD, and Intermediate Punishment.
- Completion of presentence investigations as an aid in sentencing.
- Completion and verification of preparole plans and investigations, in preparation for an offender's release from incarceration.
- Victim Services – victim impact statements, release notifications, enforcement of restitution orders.

## COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS POLICY – RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Although community protection through traditional community based casework and surveillance remains a high priority, offenders are also required to acquire specific skills through educational and job readiness programs. This approach also makes them accountable for the satisfaction of financial liabilities such as victim restitution, fines and program fees.

## SUPERVISION AND CASELOAD TRENDS

As of December 31, 2013, there were 6,085 offenders on active supervision with the Department, an decrease of 0.6% over the previous year.

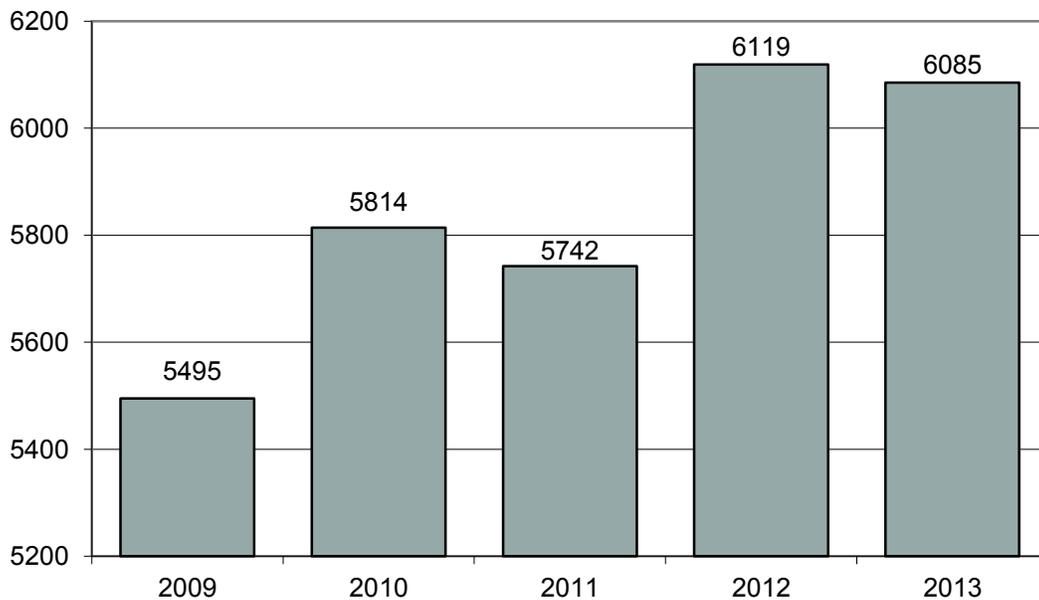
## PRE-SENTENCE INVESTIGATION TRENDS

The Pre-Sentence Investigation Unit is responsible for interviewing offenders, verifying and evaluating information, contacting victims and police officers, preparation of sentencing guidelines, and making recommendations to the Court relative to an offender's sentence. In 2013, 512 pre-sentence investigations were completed, down 14.2 % over 2012.

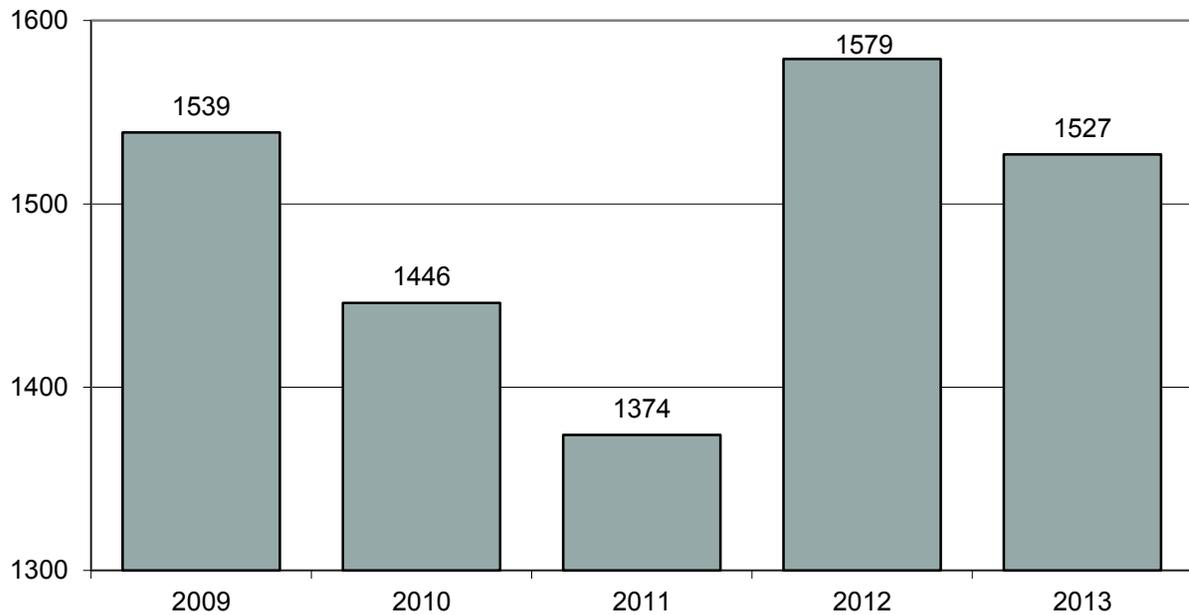
### 2013 ADULT PROBATION: CLIENT PROFILE

- **Sex**
  - Male 74.8%
  - Female 25.2%
- **Race**
  - White 57.5%
  - Black 16.9%
  - Latino 23.0%
  - Other 2.6%
- **Offense Type**
  - Felony 22.4%
  - Misdemeanor 75.5%
  - Other 2.1%
- **Disposition**
  - Probation 44.3%
  - Parole 30.9%
  - ARD 22.1%
  - I.P. 2.7%

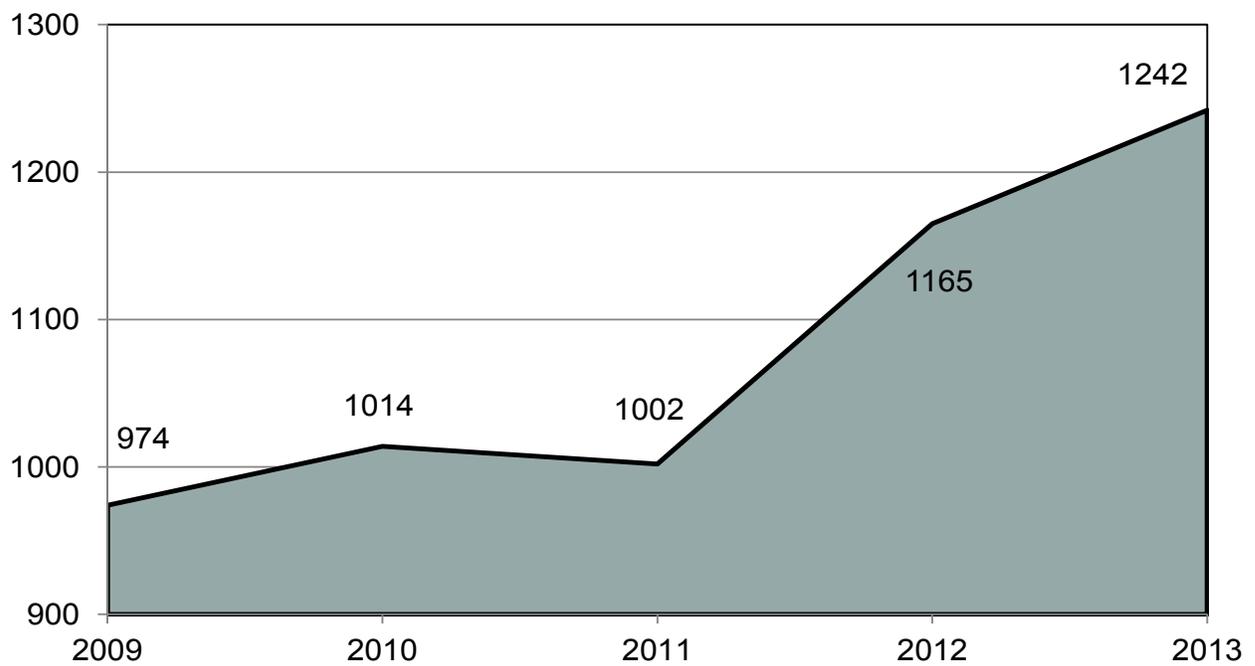
**Number of Offenders on Active Supervision  
2009-2013**



### Number of Pre-Parole Investigations 2009-2013



### Offenders Completing Alcohol Highway Safe-Driving School 2009-2013



## **PRE-PAROLE TRENDS**

The Court of Common Pleas is the paroling authority for all cases sentenced to a maximum term of imprisonment of less than two years. The Department is responsible for investigating parole plans and for recommendations to the paroling authority.

Pre-parole services include post-sentencing interviews with inmates, compliance with Acts 134 and 155 relative to victims, the calculation and utilization of the *Earned Time Program*, and verification of information submitted by inmates for parole plans. DNA registration and Megan's Law compliance are also ensured by this unit. In 2013, 1527 parole plans were investigated, a negligible decrease from 2012.

## **STANDARDS AND ACCREDITATION**

The Lehigh County Adult Probation Department continues to be in compliance with all standards relative to Commission on Accreditation for Corrections guidelines for probation and parole agencies. Standards audits and reports conducted by the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole reflect positively on the department's staff, goals and accomplishments.

## **ADULT PROBATION DEPARTMENT PROGRAMS**

**The Alcohol Highway Safety Project** is court-operated and administered by the department to deal with Driving Under the Influence offenders. The four components are: evaluation and screening via the Court Reporting Network Evaluation; operation of the Alcohol Highway Safe-Driving School; community information and education; and assistance to law enforcement, government and court-related agencies to improve techniques to identify and apprehend problem alcohol and drug abusers who drive in Lehigh County. The department continued in its efforts to alert the public to the dangers of drinking and driving through presentations at local community organizations, agencies and schools. This included lectures, displays and distribution of information. The department also coordinated efforts with area student organizations providing information to their fellow students. In 2013, 1242 offenders attended AHSDS, an increase of 6.6% over 2012.

**The Interlock Ignition Program** involves the installation of a device on the vehicle, where detection of alcohol prohibits the vehicle from starting. Interlock is a main component of the DUI Repeat Offender Project, in which the department provides early and increased levels of treatment, education, supervision and surveillance of repeat Driving Under the Influence offenders. Included are classroom instruction, outpatient counseling, electronic monitoring and substance abuse testing.

**The Community Corrections Center** was established as an alternative to incarceration for technical violators of probation/parole/Intermediate Punishment. PCCD funding assisted in this project becoming operational in 2009. Administered by the Departments of Corrections, Adult Probation and Human Services, an array of services are provided to offenders on-site at the Men's Community Corrections Center to prepare for their re-entry into the community. Programming includes: Substance Abuse Assessment, Intervention and Treatment; Employment and Vocational Training; Mental Health Group Services; Education/GED Preparation and Testing; and various life skills programs. In addition, valuable court time is saved by the administrative movement of offenders directly from the Adult Probation Department to the Community Corrections Center, as are bed days charged to the Department of Corrections. In 2013, 223 alleged technical violators were referred to the project.

**The Community Work Service Project** allows offenders to provide volunteer services to agencies and organizations as a condition of probation, Intermediate Punishment, parole, ARD, or in lieu of fines. In 2013, a total of 882 offenders performed community service and 19,667 hours were volunteered.

The Department sustained **Competency/Accountability Programs** with the continuation of its interagency agreement in 2013 with the Center for Humanistic Change to provide off-site instruction to offenders, based on needs areas assessed upon their assignment to supervision. The main component of the Department's Intermediate Punishment Restorative Sanctions, the following services were made available to offenders: Financial Management; Health Education; Job Readiness Training; Life Skills; Retail Theft Rehabilitation; and Substance Abuse Education.

The Department has operated an **Intensive Drug Supervision Unit** since 1989. Supervision of clients who have severe substance-abuse problems on an intensive basis increases surveillance, thus adding to the safety and protection of the community. Clients benefit from the unit's services through identification and counseling/treatment. During 2013, 549 new clients were accepted into the unit, an increase of 37.6% over 2012.

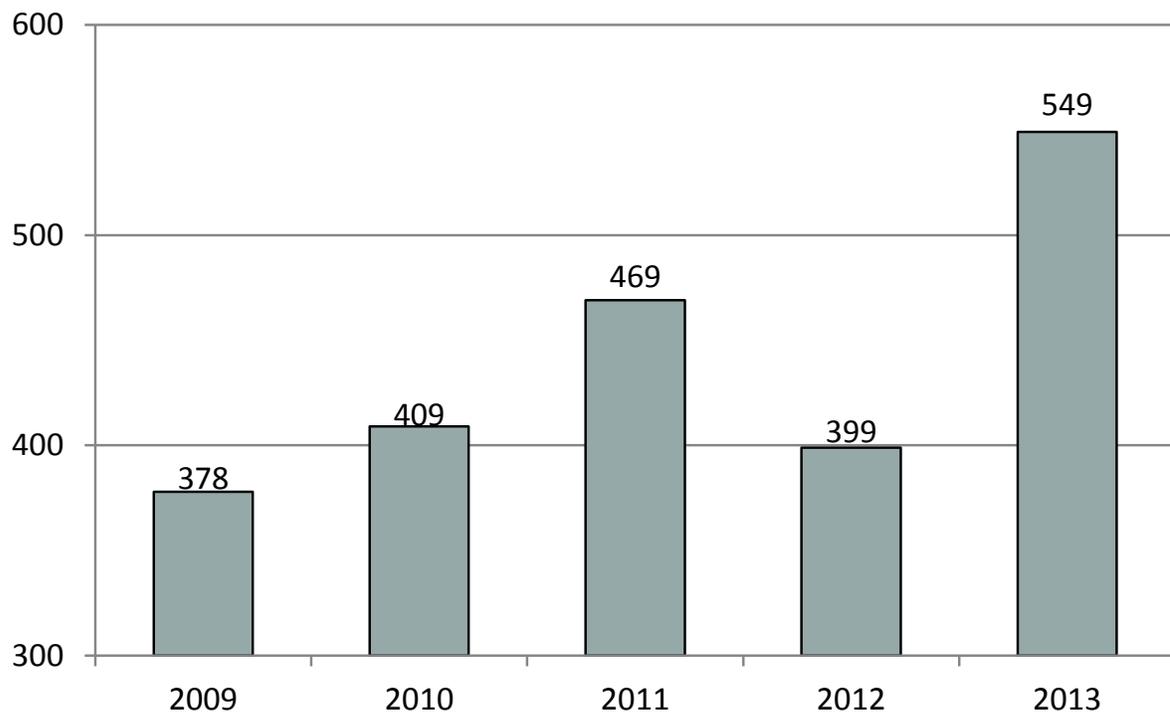
The Department initiated an **In-House Drug Testing Program** in 1988 to detect possible illegal drug use by clients. The Department uses an on-site testing system, which is advantageous because clients know they can be tested by probation officers with immediate results in their presence.

**The Special Program for Offenders in Rehabilitation and Education** is more commonly known as S.P.O.R.E. This program continues to provide services for mentally ill offenders. Probation officers and mental health workers jointly supervise clients. A psychiatrist and

psychologist are available for evaluations. During 2013, the program received 283 formal referrals, an increase of 15.0% from 2012. Violations were pursued in 81 cases, up 11.0% over the prior year.

**The Treatment Continuum Alternative Project** is a grant-funded project which utilizes the resources of the Adult Probation Department and Treatment Trends, Inc. to administer a 34 month continuum of care to level 3 and 4 substance-abusing offenders. The continuum is comprised of four to six months of residential treatment at Keenan House, followed by two to four months in a local halfway home environment. Upon release, the offender receives intensive outpatient and outpatient treatment, and is electronically monitored by the Adult Probation Department. This is then followed by two months under intensive probation supervision. It is at this point that a decision is made relative to the remaining court-ordered 12 months of supervision and its intensity. This project continued for its sixteenth full year in 2013 during which 29 offenders successfully completed the 34 month continuum.

### Intensive Drug Supervision Participants 2009-2013

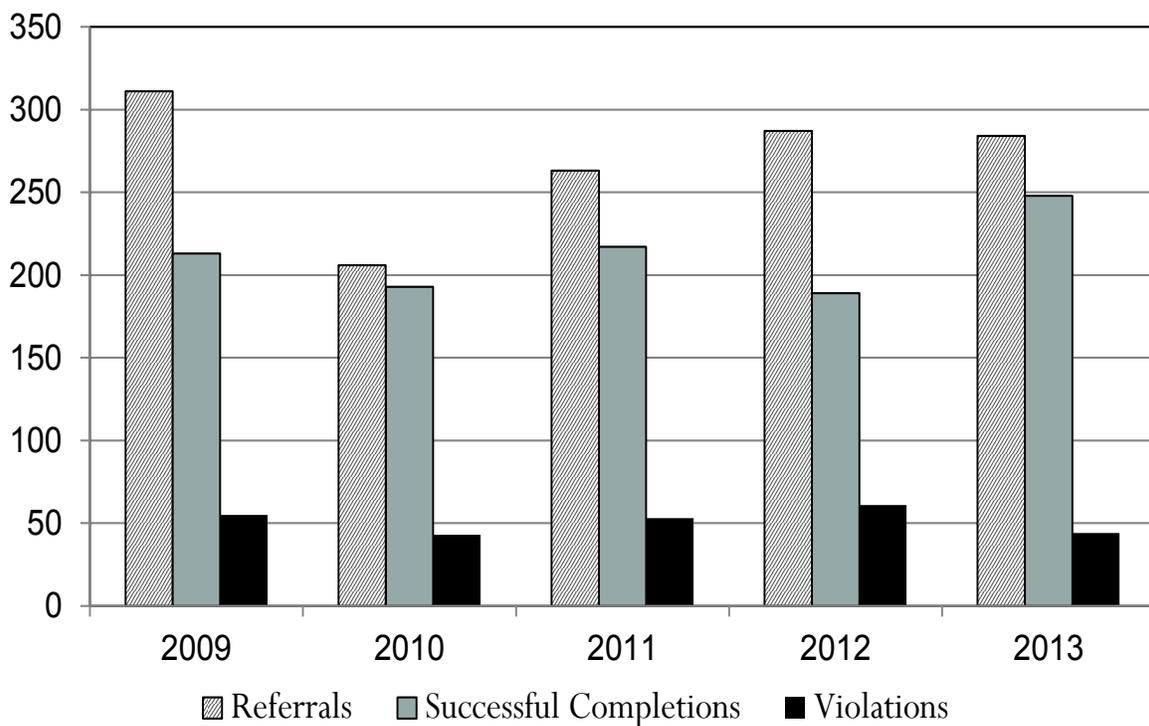


## ELECTRONIC MONITORING

The Adult Probation Department provides **Electronic Monitoring** supervision for offenders as an alternative to incarceration. Offenders may be ordered to the program as an intermediate punishment, as a condition of early release or furlough from prison, as an intermediate graduated sanction for violation of community supervision requirements, or on bail supervision.

Offenders are monitored by an active satellite system of surveillance called global positioning, which replaced the RF ankle bracelet system in 2005. The probation officer carries a pager, providing twenty-four hour coverage, including weekends. The pager notifies the officer of any violations (leave alerts). Field visits and surveillance are integral components of the program, as are random field testing and video-breath analysis.

### Electronic Monitoring Outcomes 2009-2013



---

## JUVENILE PROBATION DEPARTMENT

---

### Mission Statement

**We are dedicated to working with juvenile offenders, their families, victims and the community by utilizing evidence based practices and balanced and restorative justice principles, in order to build competencies, reduce risk to reoffend, restore victims, protect the community and assist in promoting long term behavior change.**

The Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department is a division of the Court of Common Pleas, reporting to the Administrative Judge responsible for juvenile probation activities.

The department, under the supervision of Chief Juvenile Probation Officer Elizabeth Fritz, is responsible to the court and the community for delivering necessary and appropriate services to those juveniles referred to the department.

### JURISDICTION

The jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court and the Juvenile Probation Department extends to both “delinquent” and “dependent” children as defined in the Pennsylvania Juvenile Act, Section 6302. In light of the mandate of this Act, it is essential for the department to have operational principles to guide its decision making and delivery of services. Accordingly, operational procedures have been formulated to coincide with “**The Balanced Approach**” principles:

- 1. Community Protection:** Residents have a right to live in a safe and secure community. Probation Officer’s decisions must take into account the risk that each child poses and the degree of structure required to protect the community.
- 2. Accountability:** Every juvenile offender is to be held accountable for his or her actions and behavior. When a juvenile commits an offense against a person or property, the juvenile incurs an obligation to the victim of that offense. Victims are to be compensated by the offender as a rehabilitative measure.
- 3. Competency Development:** The department assesses each youth to determine how they can best become productive and responsible citizens. This is the part of our mission “that seeks to tap the strengths of young people, their immense capacity for change and growth, in order to achieve transformations.”

## 2013 JUVENILE PROBATION: CLIENT PROFILE ON REFERRALS

### • Sex

- Male 72.0%
- Female 28.0%

### • Race

- White 62%
- Black 32%
- Multi Racial 3%
- Asian 1%

### • Offense Type

- Felony 18%
- Misdemeanor 56%
- Other 26%

### • Ethnicity

- Hispanic 45%
- Non-Hispanic 53%
- Unknown 2%

## JUVENILE PROBATION PRIMARY DISPOSITIONS

Records for the department indicate that referrals have been relatively flat or slightly declined the past few years. The complexity of the issues facing a juvenile or their case has increased significantly, requiring more collaboration with other system partners and heightened attention to the dynamics of the case. In 2013, there was a slight decrease in the number of violation of probation petitions filed. Although there still may be violations committed by the juveniles under supervision, alternate sanctions are attempted prior to taking into court. With an increased focus on alternatives, we hope to hold youth accountable, yet reduce court appearances. Heightened attention is still required for our sex offenders, both in supervision, but also in required tracking. With additional statutory requirements related to sex offenders, more attention is required at every stage of the case processing. The use of drugs among our youth remains a concern and we work closely with other partners to address this issue. Gang activity remains a concern for our probation officers and requires an increase level of supervision. Probation officers are monitoring this activity on a regular basis and intercepting by providing local police with information whenever possible. As has been the case for many years, the number of youth with a mental health diagnosis has continued to increase. These youth require special attention and interventions.

The Juvenile Probation Department continues to adjust to any changes in the Rules of Juvenile Court Procedure. New rules often result in major process and procedural changes within the department, many which are unfunded.

<b>JUVENILE PROBATION PRIMARY DISPOSITIONS</b>					
<b>Year</b>	<b>Referrals</b>	<b>Informal Adjustment</b>	<b>Consent Decree</b>	<b>Probation</b>	<b>Placement</b>
<b>2013</b>	<b>1175</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>221</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>1239</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>214</b>
<b>2011</b>	<b>1475</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>209</b>
<b>2010</b>	<b>1570</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>238</b>
<b>2009</b>	<b>1700</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>271</b>

## EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE EFFORT CONTINUES

The Juvenile Probation Department is still actively engaged in the Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy. Lehigh County Juvenile Probation continues to be a progressive leader in juvenile justice and the department has continued to train probation officers in the most effective interventions that research has shown to reduce recidivism and guide toward long-term behavior change. The department has continued the implementation of evidence based practices.

**Evidence based practices are those documented, research based and proven methods of treatment and supervision that have been demonstrated to reduce juvenile reoffending.** The department continues to use a valid and reliable risk/need assessment, the Youth Level of Service Inventory (YLS/CM) and have trained additional staff as “master trainers.” The use of a risk/need assessment determines the level of risk the youth poses to the community and intervention strategies to most effectively impact change.

Probation officers continued intensive training on Motivational Interviewing (MI) and the progress seen by the staff is remarkable. MI, when successfully implemented, creates an environment to encourage behavioral change among offenders. Solely focusing on compliance of conditions of probation typically does not create long-term changes in behavior. Training has allowed probation officers to explore proven methods in communication strategies with juveniles.

In 2013, the Juvenile Probation Department began facilitating cognitive behavioral interventions/ groups, as well as, the evidence-based program “Thinking for a Change.” Cognitive interventions are designed to restructure problematic thinking patterns and attitudes. These interventions also focus on developing prosocial skills in managing anger and taking personal responsibility. Probation Officers were trained in strategies related to skill building of youth. Research is clear that these interventions have the most impact on delinquent behavior and recidivism in youth, thereby increasing community protection. In 2013, the Juvenile Probation Department began utilizing the new standardized case plan which is yet another method of employing best practices for successful probation supervision. We continue to refine the use of this tool.

In addition, in 2013, the Juvenile Probation Department continued as a pilot county in the implementation of Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP) which is based on the groundbreaking work of Dr. Mark Lipsey. This research is clear about the characteristics of effective delinquency interventions and will be the foundation to improving delinquency programs and services. Evaluation of our community-based programs began in 2013 and in 2014 work with residential programs will begin. We have found this to be a significant learning tool for both probation and the providers.

As part of the Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy, the Juvenile Probation Department has continued to develop reports to assist in gathering data. This will provide opportunities to assess effectiveness of these strategies, to identify gaps where services are needed, to monitor success of programming and to make data driven decisions. It is important to note that the Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy is heavy on training needs. In 2013, the department

## JUVENILE PROBATION OUTCOME MEASURES

Probation officers are required to report outcome measures whenever they release a juvenile from probation supervision. These outcomes measure activities while under supervision and do not measure variables such as juveniles who reoffend after their case is closed.

<b>OUTCOMES ON 548 JUVENILE PROBATION CASES CLOSED IN 2013</b>	
<b>Juveniles who completed a community service obligation in full</b>	<b>88.3%</b>
<b>Juveniles in school or employed at case closing</b>	<b>91.4%</b>
<b>Juveniles who paid their restitution in full</b>	<b>92.8%</b>
<b>Juveniles who re-offended while under supervision</b>	<b>24.8%</b>
<b>Juveniles with a technical violation of probation requiring further court action</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>Juveniles committed to placement (28 days or longer)</b>	<b>21.9%</b>
<b>Juveniles who completed Victim Awareness classes</b>	<b>96.8%</b>
<b>Juveniles who completed a Competency Development activity while under supervision</b>	<b>96.7%</b>

received grant funding through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency or the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission, to cover all of the training expenses related to these activities. In addition, the Juvenile Probation Department's Grant-In-Aid was increased due to such successful implementation surrounding these initiatives.

### **JUVENILE PROBATION HIGHLIGHTS 2013**

The Juvenile Probation Department continued their involvement in many other identified activities which are being implemented throughout the state, including in the areas of detention reform, racial and ethnic disparity, and reducing unnecessary placements for youth that do not pose a risk to the community. The department continued to increase their options for holding youth accountable by developing additional alternatives and graduated responses. The Juvenile Probation Department is committed to transparency in their activities and as a result has engaged many other stakeholders, community members, youth and families in the discussions on system improvement.

In 2013, probation officers continued to engage in collaborative working relationships with other county and community system partners. Interactions with police departments, child welfare representatives, school officials and others occur on a regular basis. The Juvenile Probation Department and the Office of Children and Youth continued to work closely together to enhance services for shared cases. These efforts have been instrumental in eliminating duplication of services and presenting a seamless treatment plan.

The County of Lehigh, previously chosen as a Systems of Care site, continued to work on implementation of processes to guide the interactions of multisystem youth with mental health involvement and continued to assist in more effective and expedited services. The Juvenile Probation Department continues to lead collaborative partnerships by coordinating the Lehigh County Youth Collaborative and its various subcommittees, and also, by participating in the Children's Roundtable and Criminal Justice Advisory Board.

Diversion opportunities continued in 2013. The Juvenile Probation Department continued to use the Evening Reporting Center (ERC), Community Justice Panels (CJP) and School Justice Panels (SJP). The Juvenile Probation Department continued to refer youth to the Mentoring Program, which matches youth to college students for tutoring and mentoring. Moravian, Muhlenberg, Cedar Crest and Lehigh Carbon Community College assist with this program.

The Juvenile Probation Department remained committed to enhancing the community service efforts within the department. The Community Service Work Programs in Lehigh County are recognized statewide for its innovativeness and youth accountability. Youth under supervision are required to complete a certain number of community service hours as an accountability measure, and for those youth unemployed; the hours can be applied toward restitution to the victim.

## JUVENILE PROBATION DEPARTMENT PROGRAMS

In addition to the noted cooperative efforts, the department operates a number of its own programs. These include the following: Retail Theft, Underage Drinking, Young Offenders, Community Alternative Work Service (CAWS) and Victim Awareness.

- The **Retail Theft and Underage Drinking programs** accept referrals from magisterial district judges and participants attend in lieu of fines.
- The **Young Offender program** is for youth between the ages 10 to 13. It includes classroom instruction that concentrates on the core principles of the Balanced Approach and Restorative Justice model.
- The **CAWS programs** are primarily responsible for providing community service opportunity to hold youth accountable for the delinquent offenses. It also provides an opportunity for the youth to repay their victims through revenue generated by the Allentown Recycling Center.
- The **Victim Awareness program** is a state curriculum that all of the probation officers have been trained to instruct. The curriculum teaches the youth the impact their crimes have had on their victims and the community with the hopes of increasing their empathy and understanding of the consequences of their actions.

These programs are in addition to the cognitive based groups facilitated by Probation Officers. Those groups include topics such as: Anger, Cognitive Life Skills, Drug & Alcohol, High Risk Offenders, Gangs, and many others.

---

## MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT COURTS

---

### JURISDICTION

There are fourteen District Courts in the Thirty-First Judicial District that comprises Lehigh County. These are courts of limited jurisdiction and are not courts of record, but often are the courts with which the average citizen has the most contact. These courts hold trials on summary cases such as traffic violations, bad check cases, school truancy, underage drinking, and similar types of cases.

District Courts can enter dispositions graded up to a misdemeanor of the second degree for cases of Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol. In the area of civil law, District Courts can hold trials on civil disputes with a maximum monetary limit of \$12,000 and also disputes between landlords and tenants. These landlord cases can result in evictions of tenants from rental properties.

In the more serious criminal cases, higher level misdemeanors and felonies, District Courts conduct the initial hearings, including preliminary arraignments and preliminary hearings. All preliminary arraignments are conducted using video technology. The defendant is held in the secure environment of the Central Booking Center and the Magisterial District Judge presides over the hearing from their courtrooms.

At the preliminary arraignment, the criminal charges are read to the defendant, the bail amount is set, and the Magisterial District Judge schedules the preliminary hearing date. At the preliminary hearing, the court conducts a hearing to determine if there is sufficient evidence for the case to proceed to trial. If so, the case is forwarded to the Court of Common Pleas, which is the court of general jurisdiction. If the evidence presented at the preliminary hearing does not support the criminal charges, the charges will be dismissed. The date of arraignment in the Court of Common Pleas is established at the conclusion of the preliminary hearing.

### MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT JUDGES

The judges of the District Courts are referred to as Magisterial District Judges, and are elected officials serving six-year terms. A change in the title of these elected officials from District Justice to Magisterial District Judge occurred in 2005. The magisterial district

<b>2013 LEHIGH COUNTY MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT COURTS CASE FILINGS</b>	
<b>Summary Traffic Cases</b>	<b>55,594</b>
<b>Summary Non-Traffic Cases</b>	<b>12,372</b>
<b>Civil Cases</b>	<b>9,439</b>
<b>Criminal Cases</b>	<b>7,911</b>

## 2013 MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT JUDGES

District Court	Magisterial District Judge
31-1-01	Patricia M. Engler
31-1-02	Senior MDJs
31-1-03	Ronald S. Manescu
31-1-04	David M. Howells
31-1-05	Michael D. D'Amore
31-1-06	Wayne Maura
31-1-07	Robert C. Halal
31-1-08	Michael J. Pochron
31-2-01	Karen C. Devine
31-2-02	Jacob E. Hammond
31-2-03	Donna R. Butler
31-3-01	Rod R. Beck
31-3-02	Michael J. Faulkner
31-3-03	David B. Harding

judges are elected within magisterial districts, which comprise the geographic boundaries of their jurisdictions. In 2012 a reestablishment of the magisterial districts occurred and was approved by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to be effective in June, 2013. This review of the magisterial districts is a mandatory process that must occur no less than every ten (10) years. The intent of the review is to balance the caseloads and workloads of the individual offices and, if adjustments are necessary, then the boundaries of the magisterial districts can be realigned.

### NIGHT COURT AND CENTRAL COURT

Lehigh County contains fourteen magisterial districts. In addition, the Lehigh County District Court System includes a Central Court and a Night Court. Central Court

operates to schedule and preside over the preliminary hearings of all incarcerated defendants. The magisterial district judges of the fourteen individual districts are assigned to preside in Central Court utilizing a rotating daily schedule.

Night Court operates to handle the preliminary arraignments of all defendants who are arrested within the county after the normal operating hours of the courthouse. The assignment of a Magisterial District Judge is also completed based upon a rotating schedule of the fourteen District Judges of the individual districts. In addition, Night Court operates to facilitate the payment of bail for incarcerated defendants, preside over matters related to warrants served by Constables and issue Protection from Abuse (PFA) orders in matters of domestic violence.

The supervision of each District Court is the responsibility of the elected Magisterial District Judge, a state employee. The employees within the specific office, however, are County judicial employees and the personnel and administrative functions fall under the responsibility of the District Judge Administrator, H. Gordon Roberts.

**Lehigh County Court of Common Pleas  
455 West Hamilton Street  
Allentown, Pennsylvania 18101-1614**

**Court Administration  
610-782-3014**

**[www.lccpa.org](http://www.lccpa.org)**