



**THE THIRTY-FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA
COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF LEHIGH COUNTY
2010 ANNUAL REPORT**



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This mural was painted by Juvenile Probation youth on a temporary plywood wall during the construction in the Courthouse.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT JUDGE AND THE COURT ADMINISTRATOR

For the past several years, the Thirty-First Judicial District of Pennsylvania has produced an annual report that provides an overview of court services and accomplishments. Despite the challenging budgetary environment in which we operate, we continue to focus on improving the delivery of judicial services. We are committed to balancing the need to provide access to justice, and fair and equitable decision-making with the need to keep our community safe.

Innovative programs and initiatives such as Team MISA, which focuses upon offenders with mental health issues and our community corrections center which provides support to those offenders who are ready to reenter the community, have assisted our offender population in obtaining the support they need to be healthy and productive citizens. Our Mortgage Foreclosure Program, which was instituted in 2009, has provided much-needed assistance to those in danger of losing their homes in foreclosure. During 2010, 630 individuals participated in the program.

We were extremely fortunate to have received a prestigious McArthur Foundation Grant that has allowed our Juvenile Probation Department to institute school justice panels for youthful offenders with mental health and drug and alcohol issues. We also obtained grant funding for an evening reporting center which provides an alternative to institutional placement for our juvenile offenders. We continue to take the lead in spearheading collaborative initiatives with regard to gang prevention and intervention through our Youth Crime and Violence Task Force. Our Criminal Justice Advisory Board received from the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania the 2010 Criminal Justice Advisory Board Best Practices Award "for their successful utilization of best practices for operations of their Lehigh County Criminal Justice Advisory Board".

We have undergone a number of transitions, including the retirement of President Judge Platt, who is now serving as a senior judge on the Superior Court. On behalf of the Thirty-First Judicial District, we pledge to engage in continuous improvement, through collaboration, innovation and the implementation of positive change.

We are very pleased to provide you with our 2010 Annual Report and hope that you will take the time to review the highlights of 2010.

Carol K. McGinley
President Judge

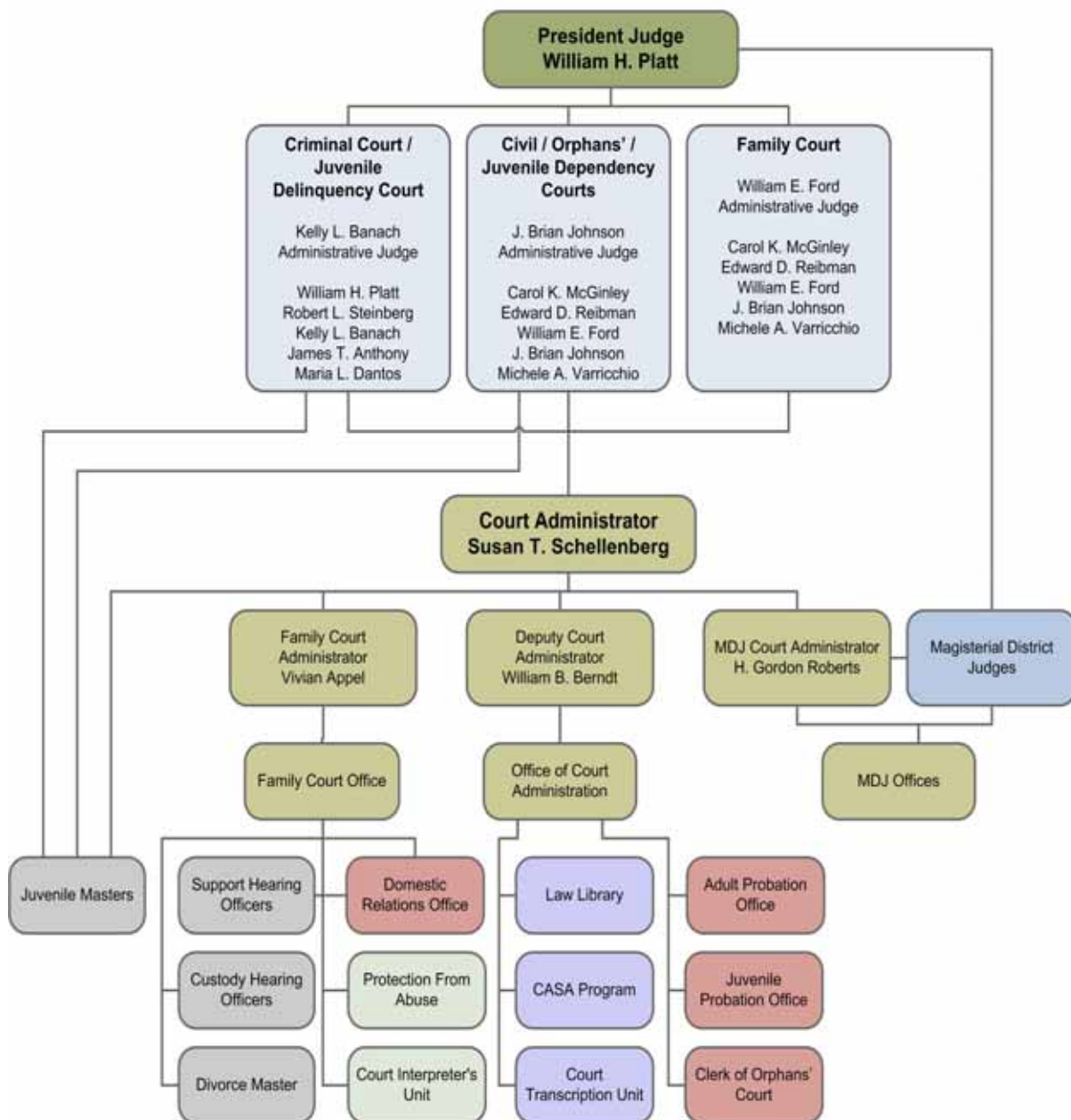
Susan T. Schellenberg
District Court Administrator

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART 2010

The Court of Common Pleas of Lehigh County, the 31st Judicial District, under the leadership of President Judge William H. Platt, is staffed by ten judges.

In 2010, the Court was organized as follows:

2010 Court of Common Pleas



2010 HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Courthouse Expansion and Renovation Project Completed

The major expansion, renovation and relocation projects of court and court-related offices within the courthouse were completed in 2010. Offices and courtrooms remained open and continued to operate despite the challenges which resulted from the construction and relocation.

Two Case Management Systems Implemented

Adult Probation, with the support of Lehigh County's Information Technology Department, installed a new comprehensive case management system. This case management system will allow probation officers to track their clients more efficiently. The new system also provides valuable management tools to assist Adult Probation managers in their efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness in the department.

With the support of Lehigh County Information Technology and the Commonwealth staff responsible for the **Juvenile Case Management System (JCMS)**, **Juvenile Probation** implemented the Juvenile Case Management System. This system, used by most counties in the Commonwealth, was implemented at no cost to the county and allows for the sharing of information with the Juvenile Court Judges Commission (JCJC) and other juvenile-related agencies. Statistics generated with JCMS are consistent, reliable and comparable to other counties. However, JCMS, has grown from simply a statistical reporting system to a true Case Management system.

Lehigh County Criminal Justice Advisory Board—Collaborative Criminal Justice Initiatives

President Judge Platt, who retired at the end of 2010, named Judge Kelly L. Banach, Administrative Judge for the Criminal Division and Juvenile Probation as the chair of our CJAB.

The County Commissioners' Association of Pennsylvania recognized our CJAB's achievements by awarding to our CJAB the **CCAP Best Practices Award for 2010**. Our CJAB is very proud of the fact that our CJAB has been recognized for its collaborative efforts to improve the criminal justice system within Lehigh County.



The Lehigh County Courthouse at 455 West Hamilton Street is seen in an architectural drawing from the construction planning stage.

During 2010, with the support of CJAB, Lehigh County received several significant grants.

- **Continuation of the Reentry Grant** that provides funding for the Community Corrections Center
- Funding for the **Juvenile Evening Reporting Center**
- **Second Chance Act Grant** that will provide additional funding for reentry services, including education and parenting classes

Lehigh County Children's Roundtable— Collaborative Pennsylvania Permanency Initiatives

In 2010, our CRT reorganized to provide for working committees that will identify and prioritize issues related to permanency for children under our care.

- The **Truancy Prevention Committee** collaborated with the Allentown School District in developing and implementing a successful truancy prevention program.
- The **Education Committee** established relationships with school administrators to address issues of mutual concern for children in care
- The **Policy and Procedures Committee** developed policy and procedural changes designed to improve the permanency process.
- The **Service Providers** began to address issues relating to quality assurance.



The Lehigh County Court was instrumental in the creation of the Pennsylvania Children's Roundtable Families 4 Children logo. Law Library staff designed the family, block house and Families 4 Children text in the center. Judge J. Brian Johnson submitted the Lehigh County design which was selected for the statewide initiative's logo. The mission of Pennsylvania's Child Dependency System was then added in a blue circle.



Colorful clown fish swim and play in a salt water tank in the Kids Wait area.

Kids Wait Area Established

A children's waiting room opened in the courthouse in 2010, providing a safe, friendly place for children to wait with a parent or guardian. Named Kids Wait, the room is located on the 4th floor, next to the vending area. The idea of a child friendly waiting area was first discussed in the 1990's. The plan was realized through collaboration among the Court of Common Pleas, Lehigh County Office of Children and Youth Services, Child Advocacy Center of Lehigh County, and the Bar Association of Lehigh County.

JUDGES OF THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

PRESIDENT JUDGE WILLIAM H. PLATT

Judge William H. Platt is a graduate of Emmaus High School, Dickinson College (A.B., Honors in Economics, 1961), and the Law School of the University of Pennsylvania (J.D., 1964). He served in the U.S. Army Military Police Corps from 1964 to 1966. From 1976 to 1991, he was the District Attorney of Lehigh County, and before that, the Lehigh County Chief Public Defender. From 1994 to 1996, he was the Allentown City Solicitor. Judge Platt has published numerous legal articles, including a practice handbook on Pennsylvania Eyewitness Identification. He was Chairman of the Criminal Procedural Rules Committee of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania from 1986 to 1992, and a member of the Committee beginning in 1982.

Judge Platt is a past president and lifetime honorary board member of the Pennsylvania Bar Institute, a past president of the Pennsylvania District Attorneys' Association, a member of the National District Attorneys' Association, the National Association of Criminal Defense Attorneys, the Education Committee of the Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges, and the Lehigh County, the Pennsylvania, and the American Bar Associations. He has been a member of the Executive Board of the Minsi Trails Council, B.S.A., since 1990, and, from 1991 to 1995, served as their legal counsel.



The view from the Judge's Bench in Courtroom 1B, Old Lehigh County Courthouse.

Immediately prior to his election to the Court of Common Pleas, he was the partner in charge of the Allentown office of a Pittsburgh-based national law firm, a member of that firm's litigation department and the Coordinator of its White Collar Crime Practice Group. Before becoming District Attorney, he was in private practice with the late Howard Yarus, Esquire, from 1967 through 1976, in a firm which ultimately became Yarus & Platt.

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. While 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. From 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.



The Jury's view of Court Room 2A, in the Lehigh County Courthouse.

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 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 and as 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 and is a member of the Advisory Board of the Lehigh Valley campus of the Pennsylvania State University and the RJ Fellows Program at Muhlenberg College. 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 elected Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Lehigh County in November 1991, and retained in November 2001.



The restored historic Judge's Bench and Witness Stand in Court Room 1A in the Old Lehigh County Courthouse.

JUDGE WILLIAM E. FORD

Judge William E. Ford graduated with honors from De Sales 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 De Sales University and Chestnut Hill College. He was elected Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Lehigh County in November 1991 and retained for a second ten-year term in November 2001.

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. 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 chairs the Guiding Principles Committee of the Pennsylvania Children's Roundtable Initiative and is a member of the Initiative's Benchbook Committee and Children's Summit Committee. 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 is Administrative Judge of the Civil Division, Orphans' Court Division, and Juvenile Dependency cases.

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 and presently serves as the Administrative Judge of the Criminal and Juvenile Divisions.

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, including service in Okinawa in 1984-1985, and service in Iraq in 2004-2005 and 2006-2007. 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. 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. She is a member of the Lehigh Valley Arts Council and serves on the board of the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival at DeSales University. 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.

SENIOR JUDGES

The Court was further staffed by Senior Judges Lawrence J. Brenner and Alan M. Black, and such 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.

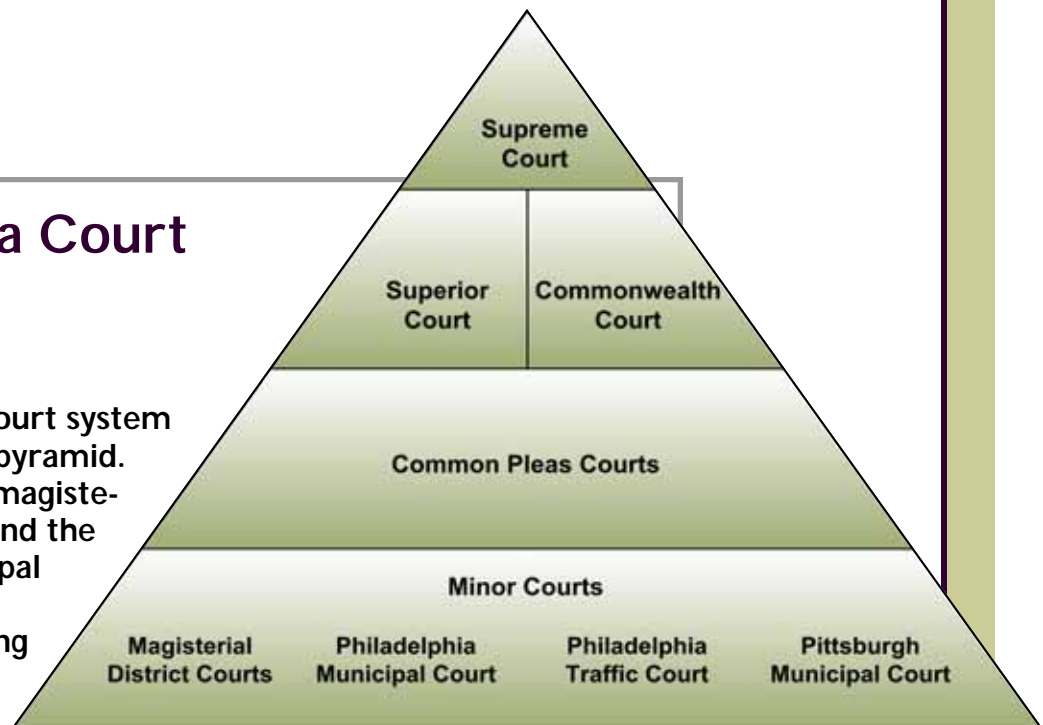


Pennsylvania Court Hierarchy

The Pennsylvania court system is structured like a pyramid. At its base are the magisterial district judges and the Philadelphia Municipal and Traffic courts where cases involving small claims, minor crimes and traffic offenses are heard.

One step up on the pyramid are the Common Pleas courts, in 60 judicial districts around the state where trials are held in civil and criminal cases and disputes involving family and estate matters are litigated. As the 31st Judicial District of Pennsylvania, Lehigh County is one of the 60 Common Pleas courts, and also has 14 Magisterial District Judges.

Another step up are the intermediate appellate courts, the Superior Court, a general court of appeals with 15 judges, and the Commonwealth Court, a special court with nine judges which hears government-related matters. At the top of the pyramid is the highest court, the Supreme Court with seven justices. The Supreme Court has the power to review any case from the lower courts. It also has administrative authority over the entire Pennsylvania court system.



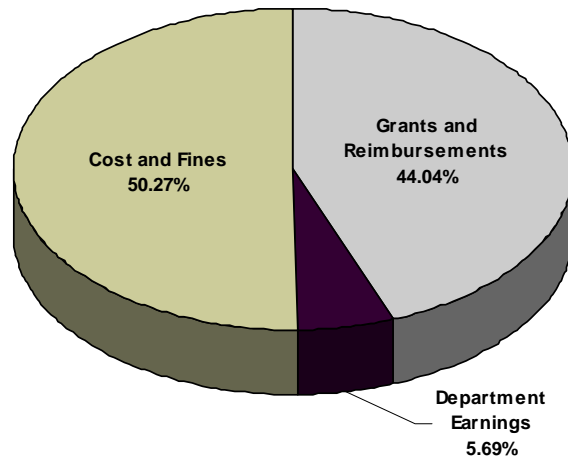
31ST JUDICIAL DISTRICT 2010 BUDGET

Court Revenue and Expenses

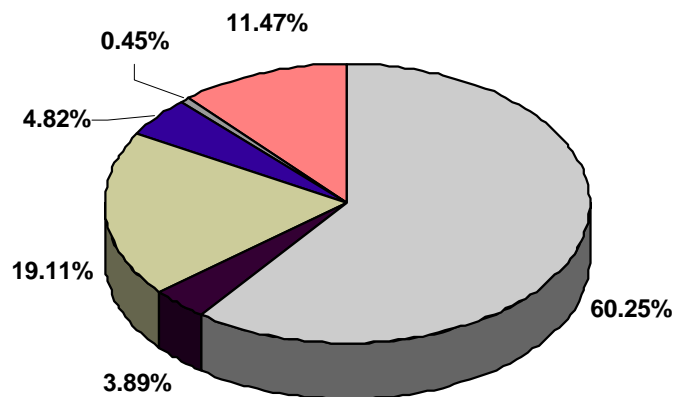
Although it is not the function or mission of the Court of Common Pleas to generate revenue, the Court in 2010, nevertheless, produced significant revenue.

The adopted 2010 budget for the Court of Common Pleas consisted of total revenues of \$7,625,247 and total expenses of \$29,435,414.

2010 Budgeted Revenue



2010 Budgeted Expenses



<input type="checkbox"/> Personnel Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional and Technical Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Materials, Operating Supplies, Contracts	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Operating Expenses
<input type="checkbox"/> Capital Expenditures	<input type="checkbox"/> Indirect Costs

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.

2010 Criminal Justice Advisory Board Grant Activities				
Project Title	Grant	Amount	Department	Status
Systems of Care	SAMHSA	\$200,000.00	Juvenile Probation	Awarded
Technical Assistance	PCCD	\$1,400.00	Juvenile Probation	Pending
Lehigh Valley Evening Reporting Center	ARRA/Criminal Justice Improvement Programs	\$300,000.00	Juvenile Probation	Awarded
Community Corrections Employment Enhancement	ARRA/Byrne Justice Assistance Grant Program	\$155,583.00	Adult Probation	Awarded
Community Corrections Center Reentry Continuation	Byrne Justice Assistance Grant Program	\$133,322.00	Adult Probation	Awarded

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.

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.

Judicial Employees By Department						
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Court Administration	85	85	87	86	85	84
Adult Probation	49	49	49	51	51	51
Juvenile Probation	40	40	40	40	40	38
Special Probation	11	11	11	11	11	11
Orphans Court	6	6	6	6	6	6
Domestic Relations	58	62	62	64	64	62
District Judges	53	53	53	53	53	53
Law Library	3	3	3	3	3	3
Total	305	309	311	314	313	308

The District Court Administrator, Susan T. Schellenberg, and the Deputy Court Administrator, William B. Berndt, are 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, a total 308 full-time and part-time employees.

Court Technology

In 2000, a long term project was initiated to investigate improvements in the computer operating system used by the court, and this continued throughout 2005. The National Center for State Courts was chosen as the project manager for this endeavor and guided the court through the process needed to update the operating system and database. This project is a multi-year effort and will impact the capital budget for the next few years. The Business Process Review was completed in 2003 and the project was awarded to Tyler Technologies, Inc. In addition, Tyler is assisting with the implementation of Automon, a case management software for Adult Probation, and electronic filing for the civil courts. The State of Pennsylvania is implementing a Juvenile Case Management System (JCMS) which was projected to go on line in Lehigh County during 2010.

Court Transcription Unit

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 thirteen 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.

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 judges' staff personnel. 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 in 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.

**In an average year,
the Court of Common
Pleas serves 48,000 jury
summons
and calls over
7,000 jurors for service.**

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)

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 PA Juvenile Act (Title 42 Act PA C.S. Sec. 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 18 month commitment to the CASA program. In 2010, 42 of 45 active CASA volunteers exceeded the 18 month commitment, making them the most consistent person in the life of the child. For one child in Lehigh County, her CASA volunteer was the only person who remained constant while she was moved to nine different foster homes.

CASA volunteers are generally appointed to only one case at a time. Having only one 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 3 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 2010, Lehigh County CASA had 45 active CASA volunteers who advocated for 114 abused and neglected children. One of our CASA volunteers attended 62 of the

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69 visitations between his CASA children and their mother, far exceeding the number any other service provider attended. As a result, in December of 2010 this CASA was the only person who was able to report to the Judge about each visitation.

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, **33 children found permanent homes in 2010; 20 were adopted and 13 were reunited with their biological family.**

This past year, a CASA child stood up at her adoption hearing and asked the Judge if she could thank her CASA volunteer because her CASA volunteer was the only person in the room that day who had known her for the entire five years that she was in the child welfare system. She went on to say that her CASA volunteer had attended every one of her choir concerts since the beginning of the case and sometimes she was the only person who attended for that child.



Educational Enhancement



CASA volunteers often go above and beyond what is required of them by the Juvenile Act. **The year 2010 marked the first year that a CASA volunteer was appointed as a child's educational surrogate.** An educational surrogate fills the role of a parent for the student with a disability whenever decisions are being made about the student's educational placement and program.

While this is not one of a CASA volunteers duties, Connie*, a retired second grade teacher, was willing to take on the additional responsibilities such as attending all school meetings and negotiating with school professionals to ensure that the child's educational needs were being met.

This past year was also the first year that a CASA volunteer, Paul*, was able to use his trained therapy dog to help the child he works with succeed in school. Towards the end of 2010, it became evident to Paul that his CASA child, Brad*, was not living up to his potential in school. Paul made arrangements with the county and the foster home to bring his therapy dog along on visits as a reward for Brad doing well in school. Brad learned to brush the dog, give him commands and

***Names have been changed to protect the identity of the children.**



Moses, likely the first canine CASA, struts his stuff at a dog show.

teach him new commands. After seeing how well Brad was responding to this reward system, Paul made arrangements to have Brad brought to a local dog show to show the dog. Brad's grades went from D's and F's to A's as a result of Paul's work.

CASA Office Staff and CASA Volunteer Training

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 2010, the staff handled 101 inquiries about volunteering, screened 38 volunteer applicants and held one 40-hour

training session for 7 new volunteers. All CASA volunteers are required to complete 12 hours of pertinent In-Service training each year to enhance their knowledge and advocacy for children. The CASA staff arranges opportunities for volunteers to be trained by coordinating guest speakers, book club meetings and teaching National CASA curriculum. In 2010, the CASA volunteers had the opportunity to participate in 24 In-Service trainings.

Additionally, Lehigh County CASA was selected to receive a **National CASA Capacity Building Grant**,



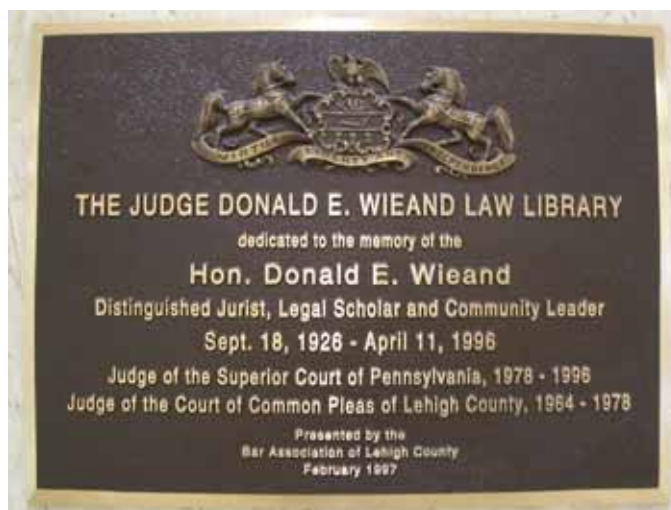
which was used to allow 17 volunteers to attend a Child Development class at Lehigh Carbon Community College. CASA staff members also support their volunteers through bi-weekly communication via, email, telephone or in person. They are also available to attend meetings and home visits with the volunteers. Staff reviews each court report with their CASA volunteers. A staff member attends every court hearing along with the CASA volunteers.

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 research material in the local region. Founded in 1869, the law library has been located in the Lehigh County Courthouse since 1963.



Library Information Services

The management of the Lehigh County Law Library is overseen by law librarian 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 books and online services procured for the Judges' chambers and for judicial and county offices. Book requisitioning, invoice processing, and book cataloging for more than 50 county and judicial offices are performed in the law library.

In 2010, the Library Information Services staff processed invoices and delivered products providing \$411,232.25 worth of print and online legal resources to the public law library, the judiciary, and county offices. The District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, the Clerk of Judicial Records and all other county offices are

provided Westlaw through Law Library funded and administered Westlaw accounts. Library Information Services also provides computer technical support for many of the offices within the courthouse as well as serving as the primary coordination contacts for design and content of the Court's Website at www.lccpa.org. JNET registrations and recordkeeping for the municipal police departments and county offices is also a function of library staff. The Library's technical support staff consists of one full time employee dedicated to computer support for the other offices in the courthouse.

2010 Brings Updated and ADA Compliant Law Library Facilities

In late 2009, the Law Library's public space was remodeled and reconfigured as part of the overall courthouse construction project. For five months, the majority of the Law Library's



Nine hundred boxes of law books, library shelves and furniture spent the construction stored in the courthouse hallways.

collection remained packed in some 900 boxes while the staff operated in a temporary location. Although the Law Library was returned to the former location in early 2010 without any increase in square footage, changing the layout of the book stacks allowed for all aisle widths to be ADA compliant and for a more open and spacious floor plan. The library also received new lighting and an expanded circulation desk. The overall result of the construction is a brighter, more spacious and contemporary facility ready to serve the legal information needs of the community for the coming decades. In March of 2010, the Law Library hosted an open house for court and county employees and library patrons to mark the completion of the unpacking of the 900 boxes of law books.

Lehigh County's Only Law Library

As the only law library in Lehigh County open to the public, this important collection consists of more than 30,000 volumes in traditional print, microform, CD-ROM and online formats. This comprehensive library of Pennsylvania, national, and federal casebooks, selected statutes and regulations, practice materials, treatises, and periodicals are supplemented by interlibrary loan with other institutions. The library offers online legal research through Westlaw, Shepard's Citations Online and Lexis. Through these services the law library may supply virtually any legal resource to patrons. The six computers in the law library are also available for employees and patrons to access and use court rules and dockets, the AOPC website, public records of Lehigh County offices, the Lehigh County Court and Lehigh County websites, Word, Elibrary, and many other resources.

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 25,000 book catalog records and 400 patron library card records have been managed with LibraryWorld, a Windows based card catalog and circulation system. Catalog records are MARC format—the cataloging standard for libraries worldwide—and searching is now available by keyword, title, author and more. The online card catalog is available to the public on the computer workstations. Reference assistance continues to become more “virtual” with many questions answered and documents delivered by email, fax or telephone. Library staff members are on duty whenever the library is open.



The Lehigh County Law Library reopened in early 2010. New lighting and white floors help to shed light on patron work tables and book stacks.

Self Help and Access to Justice Initiatives

Library Activity Totals for 2010	
Card Holding Members	358
Items Checked Out	1663
Items Renewed	1001
Pro Se Divorce Packets Sold	224
Library Services	30
In House Copies Printed	7376
Pages Printed Total	10164

The Law Library serves as the primary point of access to the courts for many unrepresented litigants and those with limited English language skills. The Self Help Section of the Court's Website, Spanish language translations of library pathfinders and Legal Referral brochures are among many efforts to serve the growing number of law library patrons who are indigent, unrepresented, ELS speakers, or

simply lack information on how to access the courts.

In 2010, the Self Help initiatives of the Law Library, including the Self Help section of the Court's Website, launched in 2009, became known world wide. Page visitors to the Website of the Court of Common Pleas came from more than 90 countries around the world. Also a marked increase in the filings of divorces using the forms available on the Self Help section of the website was seen by the Clerk of Judicial Records. Future plans include continued expansion of the legal Self Help section of the court website and additional pro se resources in the law library.

THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

CIVIL COURT DIVISION

The judges assigned to the Civil Division/Motion Court Division, under the Administrative Judges of the Division, are responsible for the administration of civil and family law within the Court.

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, civil actions are assigned to the judges in the division on an impartial rotational basis. The cases are assigned on the individual calendar system, which means that the same judge schedules and handles all aspects of the case from its inception to its completion.

In June of 2010, the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts changed how data was to be reported to the AOPC. The court is now responsible for collecting data on all civil case filings from the time of filing. As of the end of 2010, there were 2118 newly filed civil cases and 1508 newly filed civil/other cases.

The Civil Operations section of the Court Administrator's office, under the supervision of Court Operations Director Kerry Turtzo, is responsible for scheduling, conferencing, and controlling all civil cases until trial begins. There are over 2000 cases pending in civil court, all requiring extensive and demanding preparation by the Civil Operations staff. After numerous pre-trial motions, arguments, and conferences, the case is termed "trial ready". **Trial ready civil** actions pending for court increased in 2010, as did the dispositions.

High disposition rates are indicative of very active participation by assigned judges through pre-trial settlement conferences, resulting in case resolution prior to trial date.

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 opposing party, if not satisfied with the panel ruling, may appeal the decision to the Court of Common Pleas, where a new trial will be held. The Arbitration Program has proven to be a very effective method of alternative dispute resolution.

Annual Civil Filings and Dispositions for 2010

Pending Cases	2336
Docketed Cases	2118
Arbitration Appeals	33
Transferred In	11
Returned to Active	18
Total Available	4516
Default Judgments	760
Arbitration	218
Disposed of by motions	18
Settlements	536
Inactive	69
Transferred Withdrawn	176
Administrative Purge	73
Other	201
Jury Trial	17
Non-Jury Trial	21
Total Disposed	2089

Mediation Case Filings and Dispositions in 2010

New Cases	502
Prior Agreement	14
No Show	43
Continued	53
Rescheduled Partial	0
Ongoing	31
Agreement Reached	209
No Agreement	125
Cancelled Domestic Violence	4
Cancelled No Service	3
Cancelled by Mediator	15
Cases Processed	497

Mortgage Foreclosure Program

In response to a faltering economy and high unemployment, 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 the housing counselor and to bring their financial materials to the conciliation conference. Along with the individuals who are in danger of losing their homes, representatives from the banks and the conciliation counselor attend the conferences. The goals are to open communication between the lender and the borrower and to come up with a plan that will allow the borrower to remain in the home. During 2010, 630 individuals participated in the Mortgage Foreclosure program.

**During 2010,
630 individuals
participated in the
Mortgage
Foreclosure
program.**

CRIMINAL/JUVENILE DIVISION

The judges assigned to the Criminal/Juvenile Division, under the Administrative Judge of the Division, are responsible for the administration of criminal and juvenile law within the court.

Adult Criminal Court

In 2010, there were 4847 adult criminal cases filed in Lehigh County. The court disposed of 5354 adult cases in 2010.

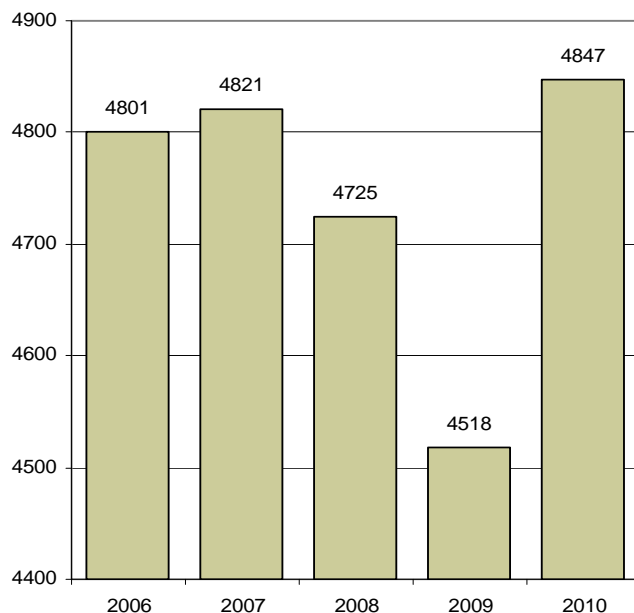
Most years since 1994 have seen increases in the number of adult criminal case filings. The year 2009 saw a slight decrease in both new cases and dispositions, but the number of new cases rose in 2010 to above that of 2008.

Five judges were assigned to the Criminal/Juvenile Division in 2010, responsible for criminal cases, summary case appeals, and juvenile delinquency cases. Homicide cases are divided among the five active judges, and certain matters, including probation and parole violations and Post Conviction Relief Act matters, are referred to the judge who initially heard the case, even when that judge is currently serving in another division.

In 2010, the Court, court-related departments and the Department of Corrections began 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 collaborate 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.

New Criminal Filings
2006-2010



2010 Criminal Court and Juvenile Filings and Dispositions

Criminal Dispositions for 2010		Juvenile Delinquency Filings and Dispositions	
Beginning Pending	1460	Beginning Pending	176
New Cases	4847	New Cases	1170
Reopened Cases	616	Cases Available	1346
Total Filed	5463	Judge	280
Total Available	6923	Non-Judicial Officer	483
Total Disposed	5354	Other	382
Ending Pending	1569	Cases Processed	1145
Dismissed	13	Ending Pending	233
Withdrawn Nolle Prossed	89	Clearance Rate	0.98
Speedy Trial	0	Backlog Index	0.15
Rule 600	0	Juvenile Dependency Filings and Dispositions for 2010	
Rule 586	67	Beginning Pending	12
ARD	1582	New Cases	154
Guilty Pleas	2851	Cases Available	166
Nolo Pleas	117	Judge	10
Non-Jury Trials-Guilty	13	Non-Judicial Officer	106
Non-Jury Trials-Not Guilty	3	Other	42
Jury Trials Guilty	38	Cases Processed	158
Jury Trials Not Guilty	10	Ending Pending	8
Inactive	0	Clearance Rate	1.03
Bench Warrant	562	Backlog Index	0.08
Incompetent	0		
Case Transferred	3		
Remand MDJ	2		
Transfer Juvenile Court	4		
Other	0		
Clearance Rate	0.98		
Backlog Index	0.27		

Juvenile Court

Juvenile Court, in 2010, fell both under the authority of the Administrative Judge of the Criminal/Juvenile Division and the Administrative Judge of the Civil Division/Motion/ Family Division.

Juvenile Delinquency and Juvenile Dependency

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

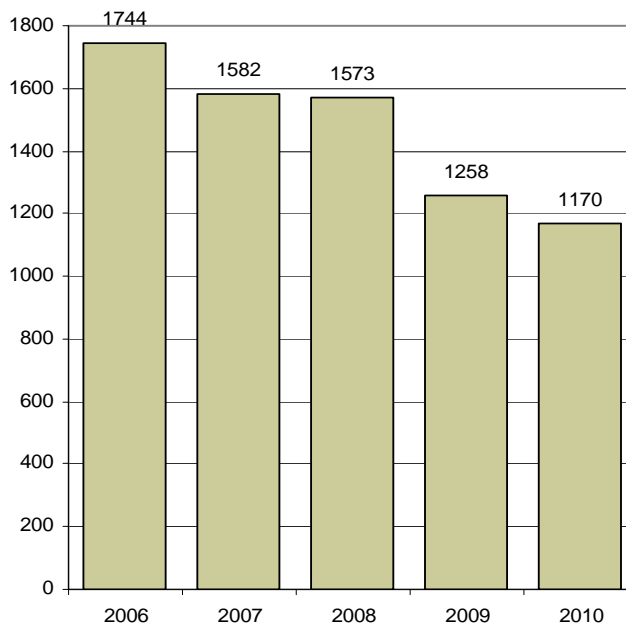
Delinquent juveniles are those under the age of 18 who are in violation of criminal law. Delinquency cases referred to a judge are handled by the Criminal/Juvenile Division. These juveniles may be referred to the Juvenile Probation Department.

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 Division/Motion/Family Division. Dependent juveniles may enter the foster care system, be reunited with family or placed for adoption.

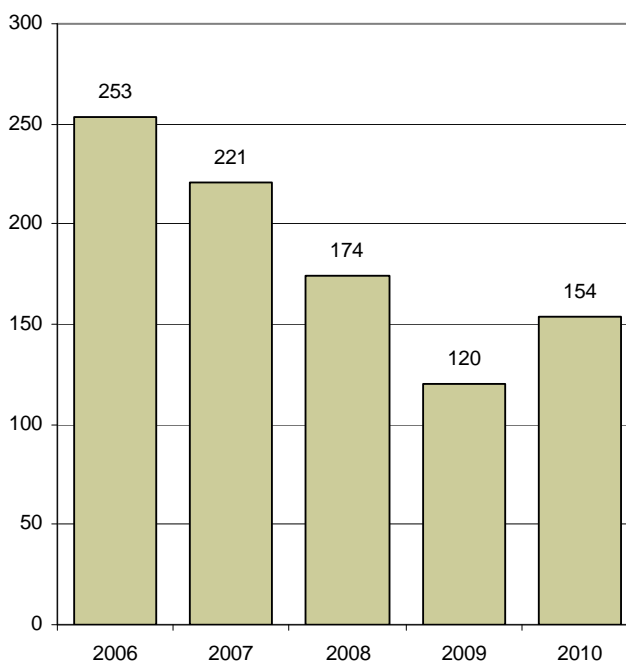
Juvenile Masters

The Juvenile Court judges are assisted by one full-time and two part-time Juvenile Masters who adjudicate both delinquency and dependency cases. Theresa M. Loder, Esquire, serves full-time and Stephen A. Lanshe, Esquire and Jacquelyn Paradis, Esquire serve part-time.

**Juvenile Delinquency Filings
2006-2010**



**Juvenile Dependency Filings
2006-2010**



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.

In 2010, staff and services were consolidated when the Family Court Office opened on the third floor of the newly renovated courthouse. A cross-trained staff provides intake services for individuals seeking protection from abuse orders, as well as forms and filing instructions for people without attorneys who want to start a custody case. The new space provides an ample waiting room, hearing and conference rooms, private intake areas, and sheriff's security.

Kids Wait

Books, crayons, a sofa and bean bag chairs are not found in most courthouses, but they are found in Kids Wait, a waiting room for children and their parents.

Located on the 4th floor next to the canteen, Kids

Wait is a coopera-

tive pro-

ject of

Lehigh

County

Court of

Common

Pleas, Le-

high County

Office of Chil-

dren and Youth

Services, the Child

Advocacy Center of Lehigh

County and the Bar Association of Lehigh

County.

Children come to court to testify in child cus-

tody, juvenile dependency, criminal and do-

mestic violence hearings. In the past, they

waited in hallways on chairs or benches, sit-



ting quietly. Kids Wait provides a safe and friendly, and comfortable environment for children to wait with a parent or guardian. Kids Wait is not a day care or drop-off center.

Child Custody and Visitation

All custody cases start with a mediation or conciliation conference where efforts are made to create agreements between the parties. In 2010, to reduce costs to both the court and the litigants, and reduce the number of court appearances, the custody mediation program became voluntary. 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 2010, the majority of child custody cases in Lehigh County involved people who appear without attorneys (pro se). Court staff cannot provide legal advice, but the staff can provide filing information. Family Court has created "Frequently Asked Questions." with standardized accurate information which is available both on the Family Court website, and in person.

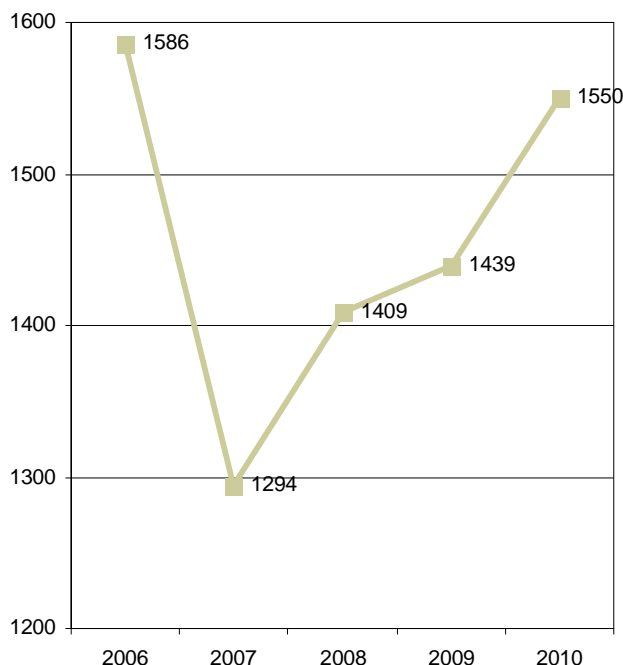
When a pro se litigant comes to the Family Court office, an intake worker asks questions to determine if Lehigh County court has jurisdiction to decide a case. In general, the county in which the child has resided for six months is the court where a case starts. In some circumstances, the court can accept 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 2010 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 determine partial custody cases. Cases involving legal custody, primary physical custody, or contempt of a court order are scheduled before a judge.

**Custody Cases Processed
2006-2010**



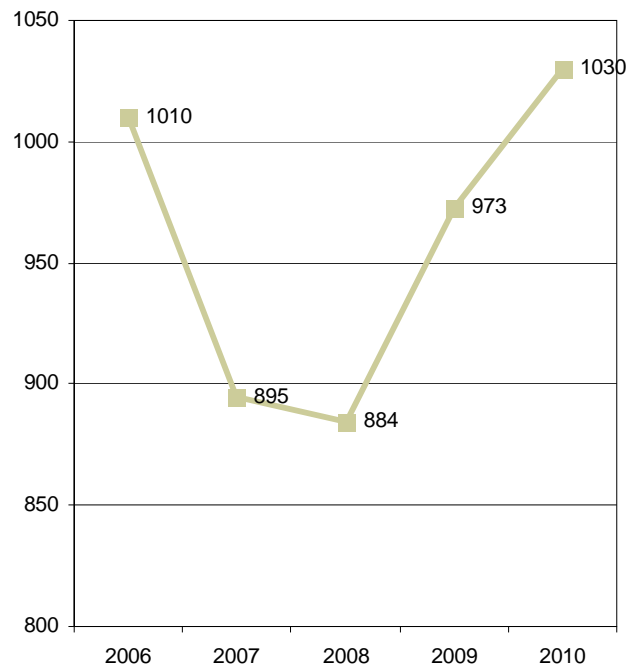
Divorce

The Family Court website provides detailed forms and instructions for the filing of simple, uncontested divorces. In 2010, more than 130 cases were initiated from the 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 2010, the divorce master was assigned 166 cases. Most cases require multiple settlement conferences. Fewer than five percent of the cases require hearings.

**New Divorce Filings
2006-2010**

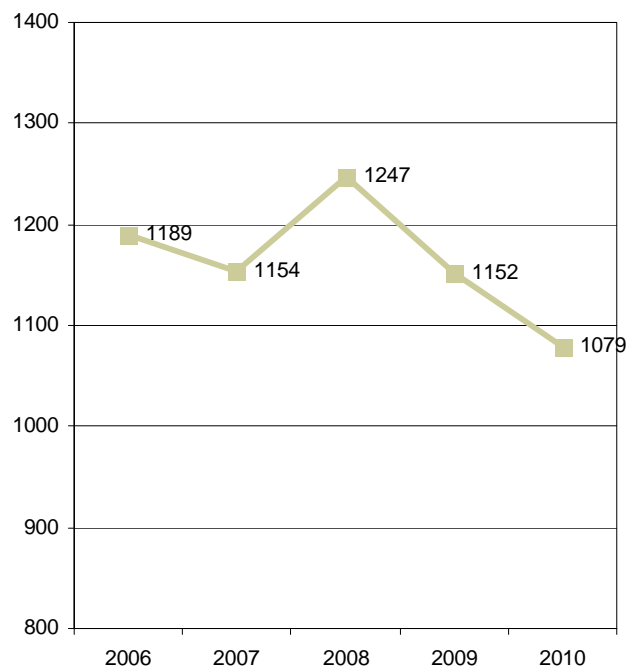


Protection From Abuse

Pennsylvania law requires every court to assist victims of domestic violence seeking protection from abuse order. 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.

**Protection from Abuse Cases Processed
2006-2010**



Family Court Division Filings 2010

Child Custody Case Filings & Dispositions	
Beginning Pending	202
New Cases	1383
Cases Available	1585
Judge	117
Non-Judicial Officer	929
Other	504
Cases Processed	1550
Ending Pending	35
Clearance Rate	1.12
Backlog Index	0.13

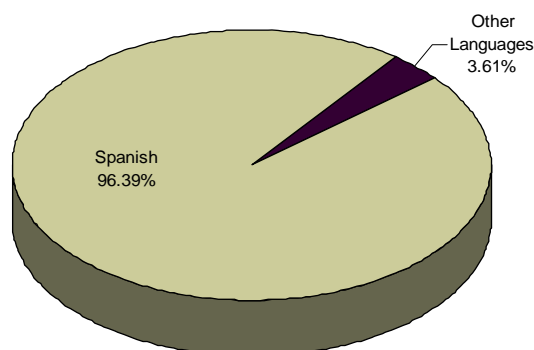
Divorce Case Filings & Dispositions	
Beginning Pending	1704
New Cases	1030
Cases Available	2734
Contested Judge	0
Contested Master	117
Uncontested	707
Other	201
Cases Processed	1025
Ending Pending	1709
Clearance Rate	0.37
Backlog Index	1.00

PFA Case Filings & Dispositions	
Beginning Pending	15
New Cases	1099
Cases Available	1114
Temporary Order Denied	63
Temporary Order Dismissed	0
Final Order Denied	180
Final Order Granted	390
Failure of Plaintiff to Appear	179
Final Order Stipulation	107
Petition Withdrawn	160
Transferred/Other Jurisdiction	0
Deceased Party	0
Other	0
Cases Processed	1079
Ending Pending	35

Interpreting Unit

The Court provides interpreters in criminal and family court proceedings. The full-time lead 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 2010, but the number of available interpreters did not. The court increasingly relies on telephone interpreting services.

2010 Interpreting Assignments
(Spanish in comparison with other languages used)



Assignments per Language per Month

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total
Arabic	3	3	5	1	3	4	1	1	3	3	1	3	31
Burmese			1										1
Cantonese								1					1
Chinese								1					1
Italian								2					2
Karen										1			1
Macedonian	1								1		1		3
Mandarin	1	1		1									3
Polish	1												1
Portuguese	1						1	1					3
Punjabi			1									1	2
Russian	1	1	2		1								5
Sign Language	3	4	2	2	1	5	1	1		6	2	2	29
Spanish	256	225	288	248	232	241	218	226	243	225	221	177	2800
Tagalog				1									1
Tibetan										1	1		2
Turkish	1												1
Vietnamese	1	1	1		4	5	5	1					18
Total	269	235	300	253	241	255	226	234	247	236	226	183	2905*

* The total number of assignments reflected herein does not include assignment for which telephonic interpreting services were utilized.

DOMESTIC RELATIONS SECTION

The Lehigh County Domestic Relations Section, located at 14 North 6th Street, Allentown, started the year under the supervision of Director Rosemary C. McFee. Mrs. McFee retired in July 2010 after 33 years of service to the Lehigh County Courts. With 25 years of child support experience, Julia Parker Greenwood was hired to fill the director position and began management of the office on September 8, 2010. There are currently 13,073 active support cases in Lehigh County, with 5,884 new cases filed in 2010.

Establishing and Enforcing Child and Spousal Support Orders

The Domestic Relations Section consists of 21 conference officers, 10 managers, and 40 full and part time support staff. The office is responsible for the establishment and enforcement of orders of child and spousal support for the court. This includes establishing paternity for children born out of wedlock, locating absent parents for support purposes and securing financial support for minor children of separated parents.

There are
13,073 active support cases
in Lehigh County.

In 2010,
\$47,955,742 was
collected and distributed.

Once an application for support is filed, a hearing is held with a conference officer to gather information for the preparation of an agreed support order or a proposed support order if no agreement can be reached. Support

orders proposed by conference officers can be appealed to the court for a hearing before a master and then before a judge.

Conference Officers are also responsible for ensuring compliance with the 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.

2010 Case Management Caseload System Changes

In 2010, the DRS office reorganized into a case management caseload system. Previously officers were assigned as either conference officers or enforcement officers, and performed duties within their assigned unit only. Officers are now assigned to case management teams and no longer have specialized duties. The conference officers are now 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 2010, Domestic Relations staff conducted 4,745 establishment conferences and 581 establishment hearings. In addition, 2,916 judicial contempt hearings were conducted.

PACSES and SCDU

The Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement System (PACSES) is a state-wide computer and check disbursement system which was implemented in 1998, and 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 2009, the total amount collected and then disbursed to the plaintiffs was \$45,054,479. In 2010, that figure was \$47,955,742, an increase of more than 6% over the previous year.

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 outlines 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 in performing as required, 66% of DRS operating expenses are reimbursed by the federal government.

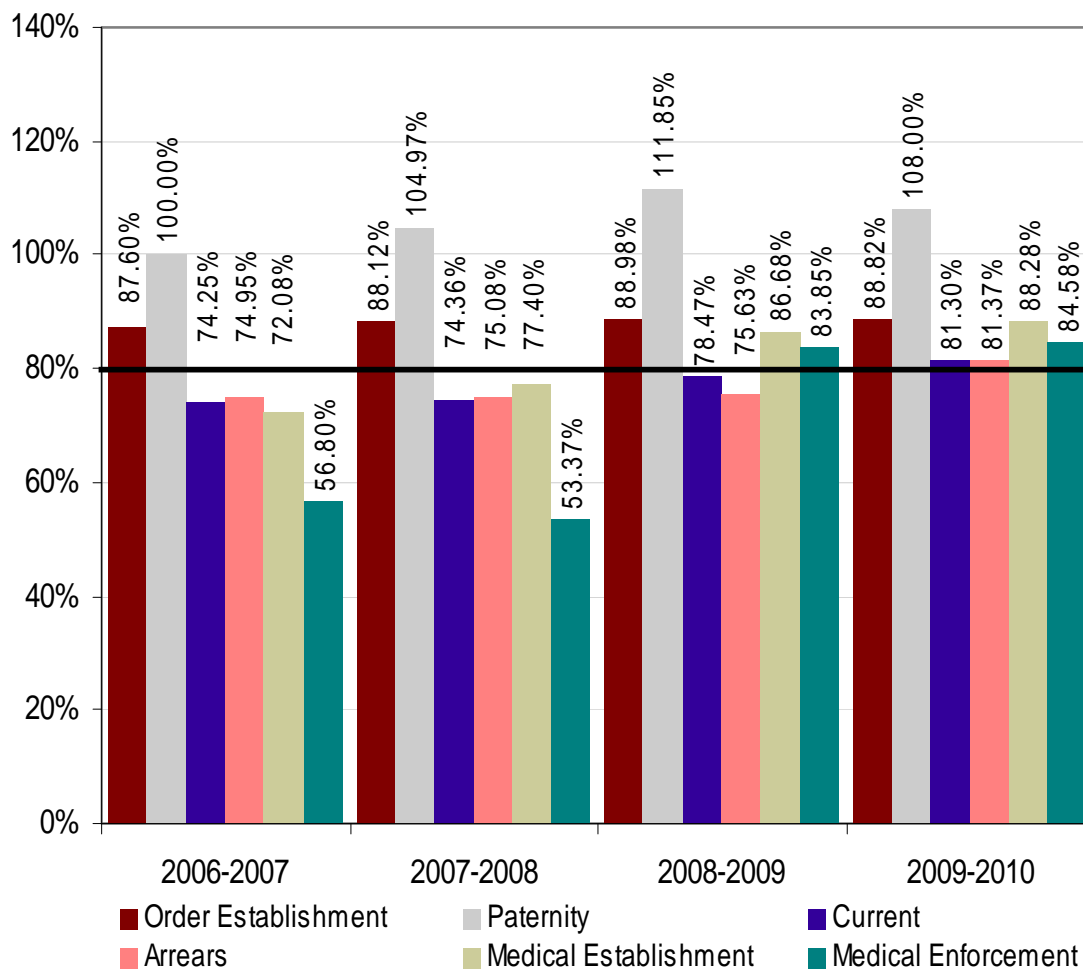
In addition, as a VI-D agency, the DRS is required to meet federal performance standards. To maximize incentive funds for Pennsylvania and Lehigh County, the benchmark of 80% must be met in the following categories:

- Cases with active support orders
- Cases with paternity established
- Cases with full monthly collection of current support
- Case with a payment on arrears (back support) during the federal fiscal year
- Case with medical support established—not tied to funding in 2010
- Cases with medical support enforced—not tied to funding in 2010

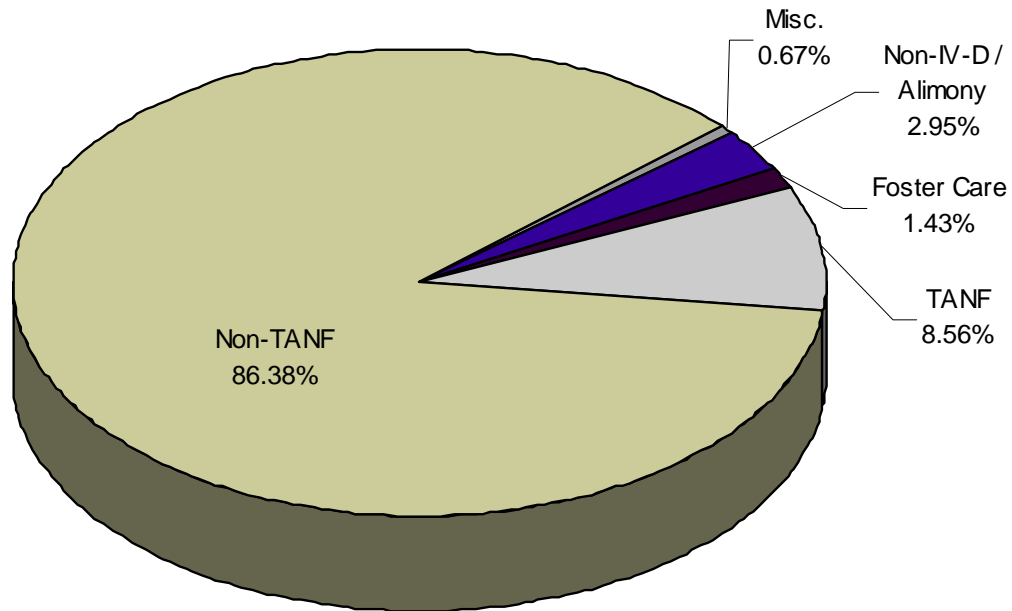
2010 Domestic Relations Federal Performance Standards

Federal Fiscal Year 2010, which ended on September 30, 2010, was the first year that Lehigh County Domestic Relations exceeded 80% in all the federal performance standards.

DRS Federal Performance Indicators



Support Cases By Case Type



2010 Support Case Filings & Dispositions

New *Non-TANF Cases	5468
Cases Transferred In	84
*TANF to Non-TANF	325
Judge	78
Hearing Officer	340
Conference Officer	4865
Cases Transferred Out	79
Non-TANF to TANF	505
Cases Processed	5867

2010 TANF Support Case Filings & Dispositions

New TANF Cases	416
Cases Transferred In	15
Non-TANF to TANF	505
Judge	3
Hearing Officer	24
Conference Officer	593
Cases Transferred Out	20
TANF to Non-TANF	325
Cases Processed	965

*TANF cases involve children in families receiving aid under the federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program. Non-TANF cases are those cases with no such assistance.

ORPHANS' 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.

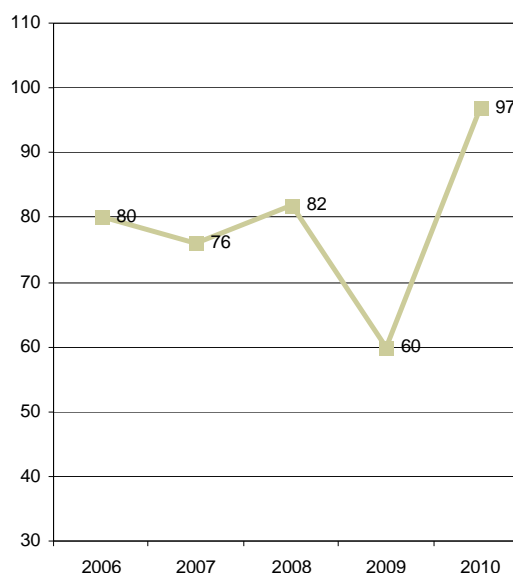
The Office of the Clerk of the Orphans' Court Division

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.

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

Orphans' Court Adoptions Filed
2006-2010



Orphans Court Filings 2010

Filings & Dispositions for Orphans' Court Accounts

Beginning Pending	15
New Cases	54
Cases Available	69
Contested Judge	15
Contested Master	0
Uncontested Dispositions	19
Other	9
Cases Processed	43
Ending Pending	26
Clearance Ratio	0.80
Backlog Index	0.35

Filings & Dispositions for Orphans' Court Guardianships

Beginning Pending	44
New Cases	116
Cases Available	160
Contested Judge	20
Contested Master	0
Uncontested Dispositions	72
Other	28
Cases Processed	120
Ending Pending	40
Clearance Ratio	1.03
Backlog Index	0.37

Filings & Dispositions for Orphans' Court Adoptions

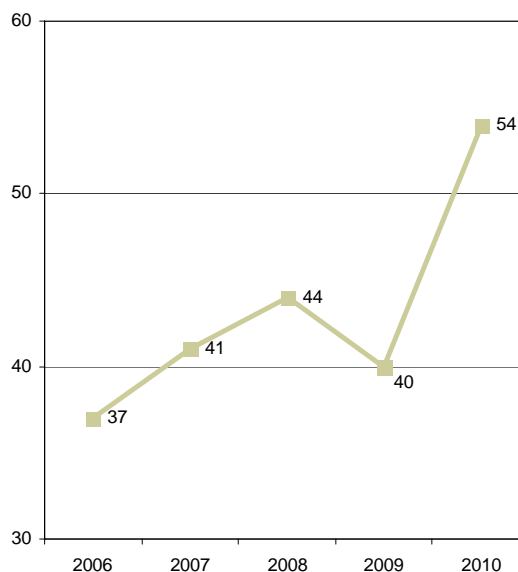
Beginning Pending	10
New Cases	97
Cases Available	107
Contested Judge	4
Contested Judge-Denied	0
Contested Master	0
Uncontested Dispositions	94
Other	3
Cases Processed	101
Ending Pending	6
Clearance Ratio	1.04
Backlog Index	0.10

Filings & Dispositions for Orphans' Court Terminations

Beginning Pending	33
New Cases	49
Cases Available	82
Contested Judge	24
Contested Master	1
Uncontested Dispositions	21
Other	11
Cases Processed	57
Ending Pending	25
Clearance Ratio	1.16
Backlog Index	0.58

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 can not 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.

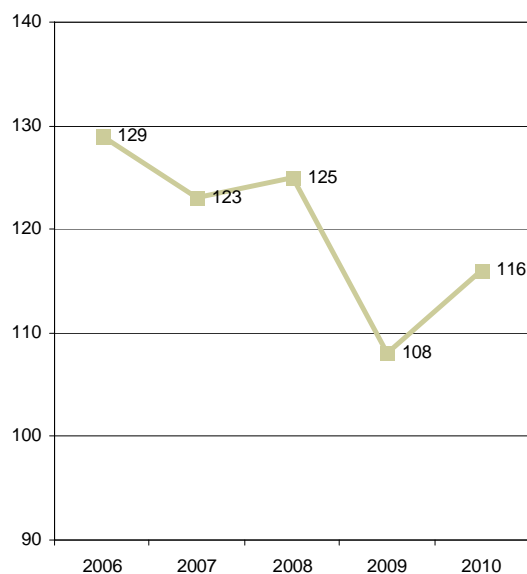
**Orphans' Court Accounts Filings
2006-2010**



Challenges 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 petitions for review hearing in incapacity cases.
- Statutory prohibition on imposition of filing fee for Judicial Bypass Hearings.

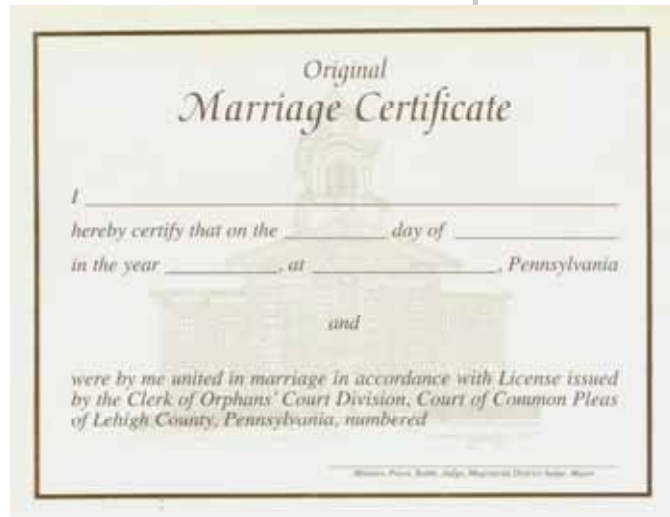
**Orphans' Court Guardianship Filings
2006-2010**



2010 Orphans' Court Division Highlights

In 2010, the Orphans Court:

- Issued 2,077 marriage licenses.
- Audited, confirmed and adjudicated 43 fiduciary accountings.
- Freed 57 children for adoption following the termination of the parental rights of their biological parents.
- Granted 101 adoptions.
- Appointed guardians of the person for 31 minors.
- Adjudicated 120 persons incapacitated and appointed guardians for their persons and/or estates.
- Held 22 judicial bypass hearings pursuant to the Abortion Control Act.
- Approved 79 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 with the April 25, 2011 effective date of amendments to the Adoption Act that expand the classes of person who can initiate an adoption search.



ADULT PROBATION DEPARTMENT

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.

Adult Probation 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.

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.

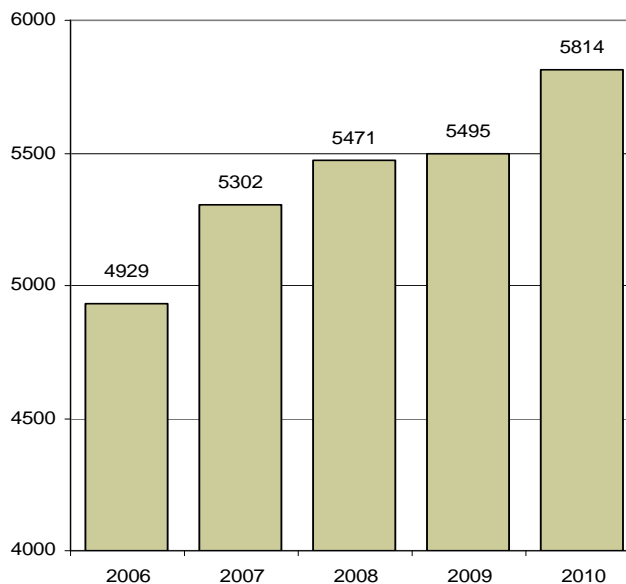
Supervision and Caseload Trends

As of December 31, 2010, there were 5,814 offenders on active supervision with the Department, an increase of 5.8% 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,

**Supervision Trends (# offenders)
2006-2010**



and making recommendations to the Court relative to an offender's sentence. In 2010, 678 pre-sentence investigations were completed, up 5.4% over 2009.

Pre-Parole Trends

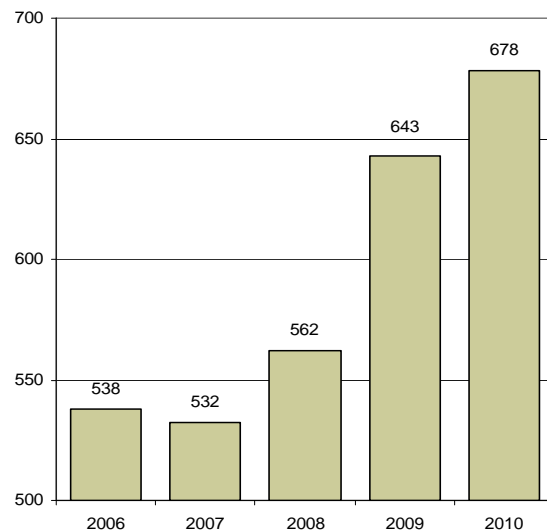
The Court of Common Pleas is the paroling authority for all cases sentenced to a maximum term of imprisonment of less than two years. The Department is responsible for investigating parole plans and for recommendations to the paroling authority.

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 2010, 1,446 parole plans were investigated, a decrease of 6.0% over 2009.

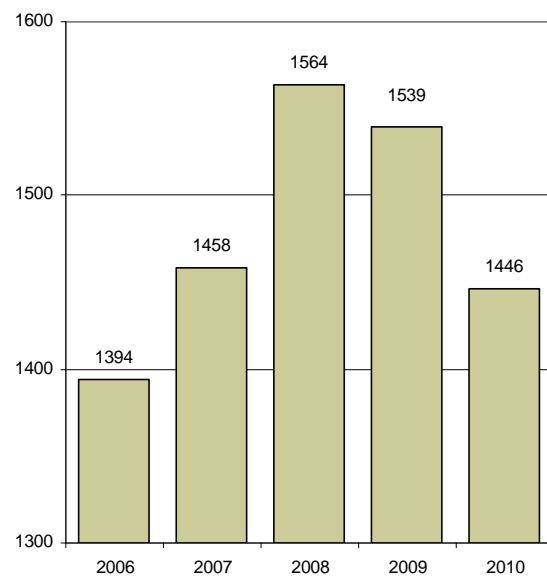
Standards and Accreditation

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.

**Pre-Sentence Investigation Trends
2006-2010**



**Pre-Parole Trends
2006-2010**



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.



The Adult Probation Department continues to assist law enforcement in identifying and apprehending problem alcohol and drug abusers in Lehigh County.

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.

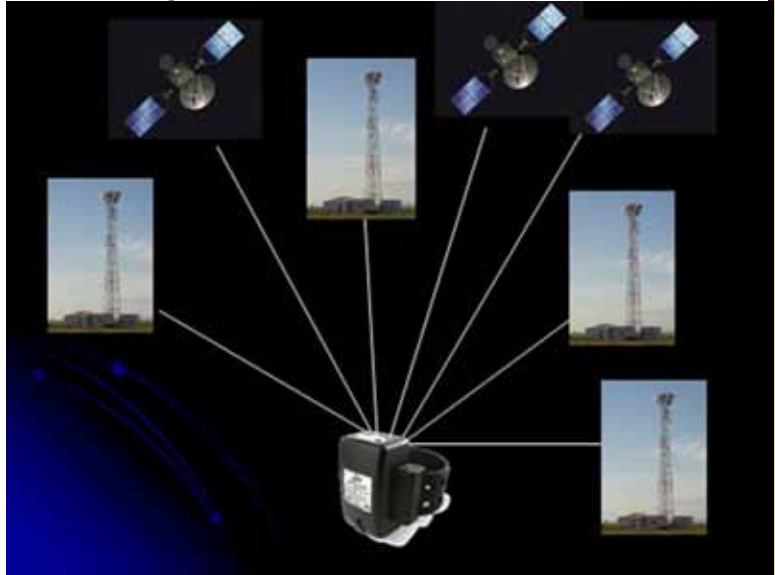
The Community Corrections Center was established as an alternative to incarceration for technical violators of probation/parole/Intermediate Punishment. PCCD funding assisted in this project becoming operational in 2009. Administered by the Departments of Corrections, Adult Probation and Human Services, an array of services are provided to offenders on-site at the Men's Community Corrections Center to prepare for their re-entry back 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.

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.

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.



Twenty-four hour, seven days a week, Electronic Monitoring of offenders is achieved through the use of satellite and cellular telephone links to the offender's ankle bracelet system seen below.



The Department sustained **Competency/Accountability Programs** with the continuation of its interagency agreement in 2010 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.

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

Adult Probation Client Profile

Sex		Offense Type	
■ Male	75.6%	■ Felony	22.5%
■ Female	24.4%	■ Misdemeanor	74.0%
		■ Other	3.4%
Race		Disposition	
■ White	60.3%	■ Probation	30.2%
■ Black	16.3%	■ Parole	41.9%
■ Hispanic	21.8%	■ ARD	24.6%
■ Other	1.7%	■ I.P.	3.3%

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.

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.

JUVENILE PROBATION DEPARTMENT

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.



Many juveniles perform their community service at the Allentown Recycling Center which produces all of the proceeds for the department’s restitution program.

Mission Statement:

To foster prevention and reduction of juvenile crime; respond to the needs of the victim; promote community safety, restoration and development; and empower youth and their families through the interaction of the court.

3. **Competency Development:** The Department assesses each youth to determine how they can best become productive and responsible citizens. This is that 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.”

Evidence Based Practices

The Juvenile Probation Department has undertaken some exciting initiatives in recent years in an effort to implement 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.**

In the past two years, probation officers have been trained in the following areas: the use of a validated risk/need assessment, the development of meaningful and effective case plans, a detention risk instrument, motivational interviewing, family group conferencing, and evidence based probation as it pertains to caseload supervision. The training and use of the risk/need assessment (YLS/CMI) is a critical first step in the development of case plans that specifically address those areas of a youth's life that are likely to lead to continued delinquent behavior. The use of a risk/need assessment will determine the level of risk the youth poses to the community and intervention strategies to most effectively impact change in the individual. Enhancing probation officers skills in these critical areas will be the main focus of staff development in the foreseeable future.

2010 Juvenile Probation Offenders by Gender*

Male Offenders	75%
Female Offenders	25%

*The percentage of male and female offenders rarely deviates by a percentage point.

2010 Juvenile Probation Highlights

In addition to the extensive training the staff has undergone, there were also two other significant developments. An **Evening Reporting Center (ERC)** operated by the Children's Home of Reading was initiated in September. The ERC was initiated as an alternative to secure detention. The program is modeled after a similar one in Berks County, and it shows great promise to reduce secure detention numbers while providing intensive programming. All juveniles in the program are monitored by electronic monitoring via GPS so as to reduce their risk to the community.

Before



After



Juveniles performing Community Service help St. Paul's Church conquer the weeds.

In March 2010, a new computer system was introduced in the Juvenile Probation Department. The new system is the **Pennsylvania Juvenile Case Management System (JCMS)** and it replaced the county operated system that had been in use since 1995. The new system is shared by sixty-five Pennsylvania counties. Probation officers and support staff have all been trained on its use. It is the department's goal to maximize the use of this system to assist management in its decision making and to record essential probation related activities. This will further assist the department in gathering accurate statistics as we strive toward making data driven decisions.

Collaborative Projects and Justice Panels

The Juvenile Probation Department continued to work in collaboration with other County agencies and the community to develop prevention and diversion programs. **Community Justice Panels**, facilitated by The Impact Project, Inc. of Emmaus, accepted 203 cases last year. Seventy-four (74) of these originated with our department and the remainder were referred directly by police departments and magisterial district judges for misdemeanor and summary offenses.



A young man participating in the Baum School of Art Program.

School Justice Panels continue in the Allentown School District middle schools, as a pre-adjudication diversion initiative. Youth involved in summary and low grade misdemeanors, when appropriate, are provided the opportunity to be diverted to a panel where they are held accountable through various contractual obligations including restitution to the victim. If identified as necessary, other treatment interventions are provided to the youth. These panels attempt to prevent young middle school students from entering the delinquency system by giving them treatment opportunities at an earlier age.

The Impact Project, Inc. also coordinates the **Mentor Program** in cooperation with Moravian, Muhlenberg, Cedar Crest and Lehigh County Community Colleges. Referred youth are matched with college students for tutoring and mentoring. The Juvenile Probation Department has had representation on **Truancy Panels** at Mosser Elementary School on the city's east side. This was a project spearheaded by the County's Office of Children and Youth Services, but it also included other county departments and the Allentown School District and Mosser Village.

In the past few years, the Juvenile Probation Department and the **Office of Children and Youth** have made a concerted effort to work cooperatively on shared cases. We continue to identify these common cases, and probation officers and caseworkers are required to meet to discuss shared case responsibilities, attend each others hearings and jointly discuss supervision strategies. This has been instrumental in eliminating the duplication of services and presenting families with a more seamless treatment plan. The County of Lehigh has recently been selected to participate in the **Pennsylvania Systems of Care** initiative which will help guide our interactions and handling of multi-system youth with mental health involvement. This effort will continue to enhance our partnership and collaborative relationship with other county departments.

Juvenile Probation Department Programs

In addition to the above 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.



Artwork produced by Juvenile Probation clients participating in the Baum School of Art Program.

Juvenile Probation Primary Dispositions

Juvenile Probation Primary Dispositions					
Year	Referrals	Informal Adjustment	Consent Decree	Probation	Placement
2010	1570	219	191	385	238
2009	1700	240	158	455	271

Records for the Department indicate that referrals decreased by about 8% from 2009 to 2010. In that same period, dispositions for placement decreased by 12%. Although there were fewer referrals, there was a significant spike in several categories of serious offenses. The Juvenile Probation Department received 59 allegations for serious sexual offenses in 2010 compared to 9 in 2009. There was also an increase in robberies. The department received 108 allegations of robbery last year compared to 68 in the prior year. Otherwise, Lehigh County has been consistent with the rest of the state and country in experiencing a decrease in referrals.

Outcomes on 517 Juvenile Probation Cases Completed in 2010

Juveniles who completed a community service obligation in full ¹	95%
Juveniles in school or employed at case closing	84%
Juveniles who paid their restitution in full ²	60%
Juveniles who re-offended while under supervision	19%
Juveniles with a technical violation of probation requiring further court action	19%
Juveniles committed to placement (28 days or longer)	22%

Juvenile Probation Outcome Measures

Probation officers are required to report outcome measures whenever they release a juvenile from probation supervision. These outcomes only measure activities while under supervision and do not measure variables such as juveniles who re-offend after their case is closed. Juvenile Probation constantly monitors and evaluates these outcomes to determinate the effectiveness of programming and services.

MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT COURTS

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.

2010 Lehigh County District Courts Case Filings	
Summary Traffic Cases	51,300
Summary Non-Traffic Cases	15,448
Civil Cases	10,200
Criminal Cases	6,874

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.



While District Court 31-2-01 is located in the Old Lehigh County Courthouse, above, the other MDJ offices are located throughout Lehigh County.

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 judges are elected within magisterial districts, which comprise the geographic boundaries of their jurisdictions.

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 Justice Administrator, H. Gordon Roberts.

2010 Magisterial District Judges	
District Court	Magisterial District Judges
31-1-01	Patricia M. Engler
31-1-02	Maryesther S. Merlo, Esquire
31-1-03	Ronald S. Manescu
31-1-04	David G. Leh
31-1-05	Carl L. Balliet
31-1-06	Wayne Maura
31-1-07	Robert C. Halal
31-1-08	Anthony G. Rapp
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	Charles H. Crawford
31-3-03	David B. Harding

NOTES