

# **ANNUAL REPORT 2024**

THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF LEHIGH COUNTY

# 2024 JUDGES OF THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

PRESIDENT JUDGE J. BRIAN JOHNSON JUDGE ROBERT L. STEINBERG **JUDGE JAMES T. ANTHONY** JUDGE MICHELE A. VARRICCHIO JUDGE DOUGLAS G. REICHLEY JUDGE MELISSA T. PAVLACK **JUDGE ANNA-KRISTIE M. MARKS** JUDGE THOMAS M. CAFFREY **JUDGE THOMAS A. CAPEHART JUDGE ZACHARY J. COHEN** 

SENIOR JUDGE CAROL K. MCGINLEY
SENIOR JUDGE EDWARD D. REIBMAN
SENIOR JUDGE KELLY L. BANACH



# 2024 LEHIGH COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTS

#### **President Judge** J. Brian Johnson **Criminal Division Orphans' Court Civil Division • Family Court Division** J. Brian Johnson, President Judge J. Brian Johnson, President Judge Robert L. Steinberg, Judge Michele A. Varricchio, Judge James T. Anthony, Judge Michele A. Varricchio, Judge Administrative Judge of Civil Court Douglas G. Reichley, Judge Melissa T. Pavlack, Judge Melissa T. Pavlack, Judge Supervisory Judge for Grand Jury Thomas M. Caffrey, Judge Administrative Judge of Family Court Anna-Kristie M. Marks, Judge Thomas A. Capehart, Judge Thomas M. Caffrey, Judge Administrative Judge of Criminal Court Administrative Judge of Orphans' Court Supervisory Judge for Arbitration Administrative Judge of Zachary J. Cohen, Judge Thomas A. Capehart, Judge Juvenile Delinquency Court Supervisory Judge for Mortgage Foreclosure Supervisory Judge for Boards of View Zachary J. Cohen, Judge Administrative Judge of Juvenile Dependency **Court Administrator** Kerry R. Turtzo 14 Magisterial **Family Court Administrator Deputy Court Administrator MDJ Court Administrator** District Judges Richard Focht John J. Sikora Carolynn Perry Office of Adult Probation Family Court Office 14 MDJ Offices Office **Court Administration** Juvenile Law Library Juvenile Hearing Protection From **Probation Office** Custody Officers Abuse Court Domestic Transcription Unit Relations Section Divorce Clerk of Orphans' Interpreting Unit Effective: Court February 2, 2024 CASA Program

#### **President Judge** J. Brian Johnson **Criminal Division Orphans' Court Civil Division • Family Court Division** Robert L. Steinberg, Judge J. Brian Johnson, President Judge J. Brian Johnson, President Judge James T. Anthony, Judge Michele A. Varricchio, Judge Michele A. Varricchio, Judge Administrative Judge of Civil Division and Supervisory Anna-Kristie M. Marks, Judge Douglas G. Reichley, Judge Judge for Arbitration & Mortgage Foreclosure Administrative Judge of Criminal Division & Melissa T. Pavlack, Judge Administrative Judge of Juvenile Delinquency Douglas G. Reichley, Judge Thomas A. Capehart, Judge Supervisory Judge for Boards of View Thomas M. Caffrey, Judge Administrative Judge of Orphans' Court Division Supervisory Judge for Grand Jury Melissa T. Pavlack, Judge Zachary J. Cohen, Judge Administrative Judge of Family Division Thomas A. Capehart, Judge Zachary J. Cohen, Judge Administrative Judge of Juvenile Dependency **Court Administrator** Kerry R. Turtzo 14 Magisterial **Family Court Administrator Deputy Court Administrator MDJ Court Administrator** District Judges Richard Focht John J. Sikora Carolynn Perry Office of Adult Probation Family Court Office 14 MDJ Offices Court Administration Office Juvenile Law Library Juvenile Hearing Protection From **Probation Office** Custody Abuse Officers Court Domestic Transcription Unit Relations Section Divorce Clerk of Orphans' Interpreting Unit Effective: Court June 3, 2024 CASA Program

# COURT OF COMMON PLEAS DIVISIONS

# CRIMINAL/JUVENILE COURT DIVISION

Criminal Court
Juvenile Delinquency Court

CIVIL/FAMILY COURT DIVISION

Civil Court
Family Court
Juvenile Dependency Court

ORPHANS' COURT DIVISION

The Orphans' Court
Marriage License Bureau



# 2024 CRIMINAL/JUVENILE COURT DIVISION

# 2024 CRIMINAL/JUVENILE COURT JUDGES

ROBERT L. STEINBERG, JUDGE

**JAMES T. ANTHONY, JUDGE** 

DOUGLAS G. REICHLEY, JUDGE SUPERVISORY JUDGE FOR GRAND JURY (THROUGH 6/2/2024)

ANNA-KRISTIE M. MARKS, JUDGE

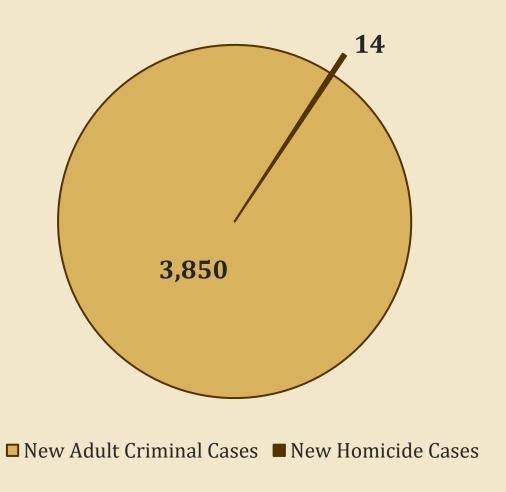
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE OF

CRIMINAL COURT &

ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE OF

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY COURT

THOMAS M. CAFFREY, JUDGE SUPERVISORY JUDGE FOR GRAND JURY (EFFECTIVE 6/3/2024)



# 2024 CRIMINAL/JUVENILE COURT DIVISION

#### **ADULT CRIMINAL COURT**

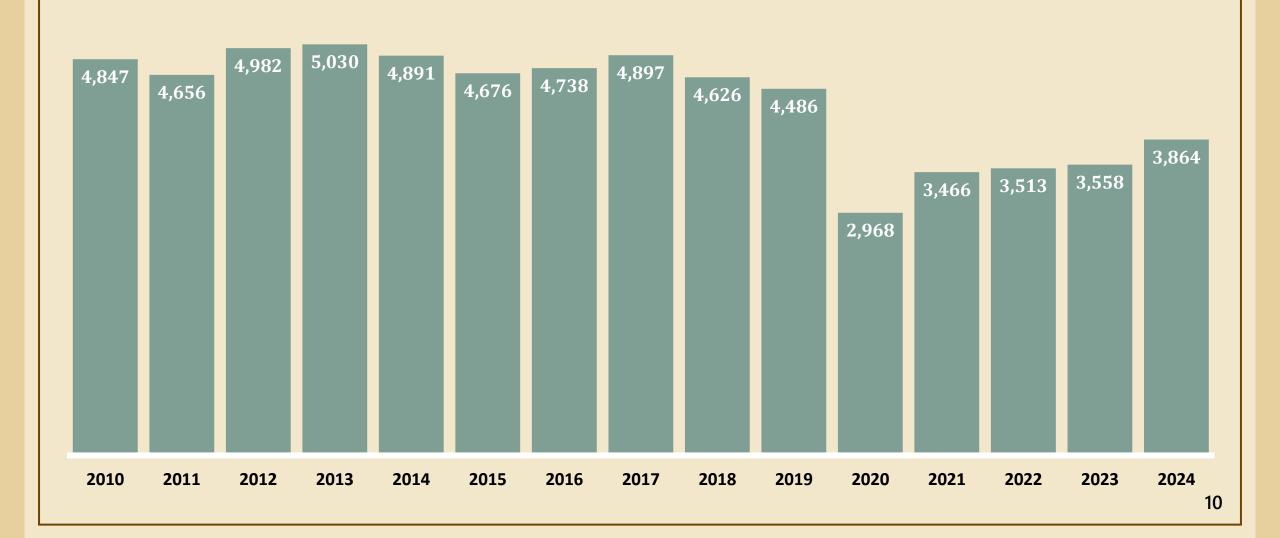
The Judges in the Criminal/Juvenile Court Division utilize an individual calendaring system.

The assigned Judge handles the case from formal arraignment through disposition.

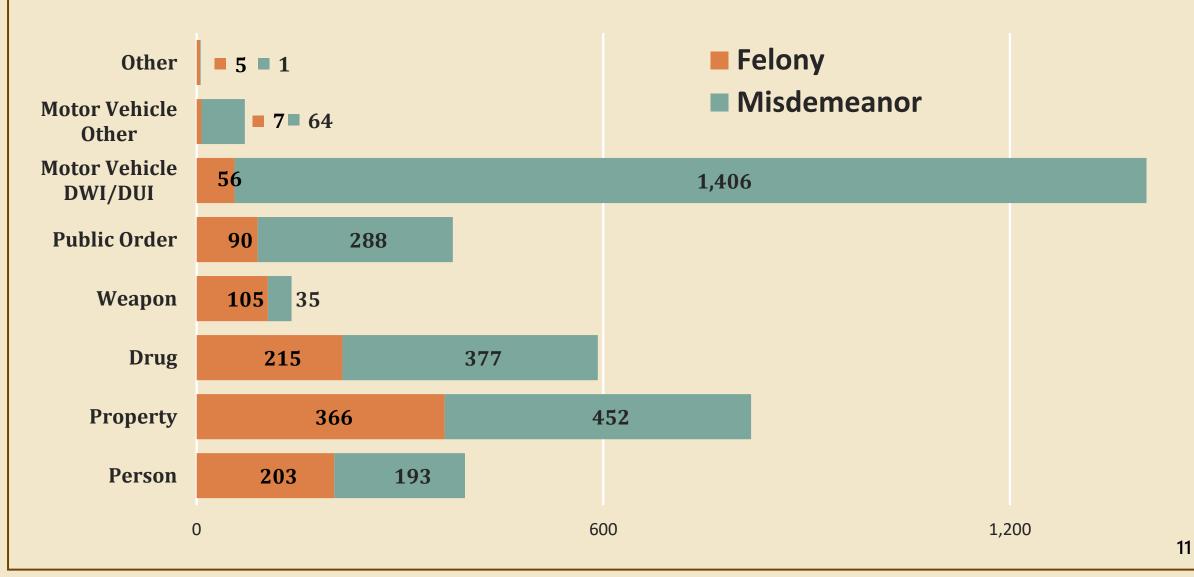
All probation and parole violations and any post-sentence motions are handled by the Judge who sentenced the defendant.

<b>Total Cases Processed</b>	4,344			
2024 CRIMINAL FILINGS & DISPOSITIONS				
New Cases	3,864			
Reopened Cases	615			
ARD	1,416			
Dismissed/Withdrawn	173			
Guilty Plea	2,144			
Jury Trial	26			
Non-Jury Trial	13			
Inactive	572			
Other	0			

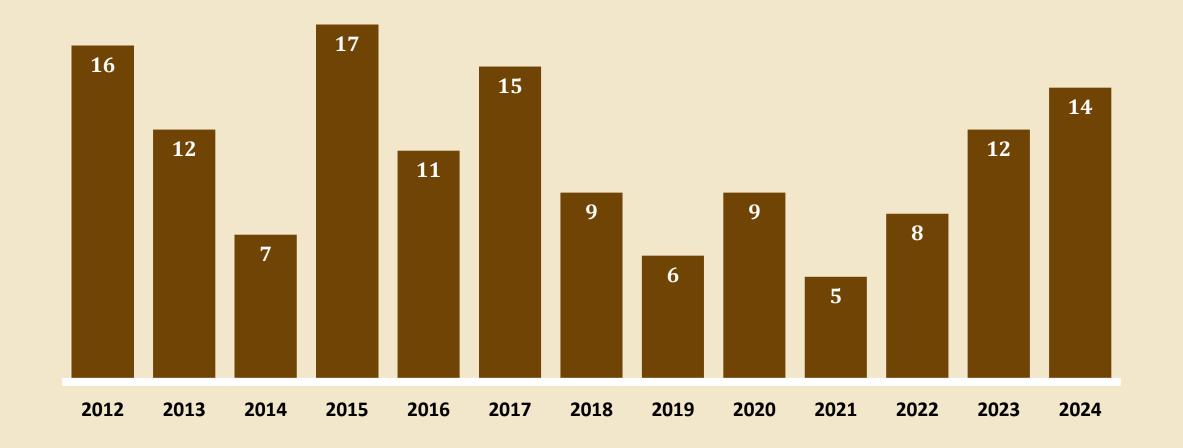
# NEW CRIMINAL CASES FILED 2010 TO 2024







# LEHIGH COUNTY HOMICIDE FILINGS 2012 TO 2024



# 2024 JUVENILE JUSTICE IN LEHIGH COUNTY

#### **JUVENILE COURT**

In 2024, the Juvenile Court fell under both the authority of the Administrative Judge of the Criminal/Juvenile Division and the Administrative Judge of Juvenile Dependency. The Juvenile Court Division is responsible for cases involving juvenile delinquency and juvenile dependency.

During 2024, the Juvenile Court Judges were assisted by Juvenile Court Hearing Officers, Theresa M. Loder, Esquire, Jacquelyn C. Paradis, Esquire, and Lisa Cipoletti, Esquire who adjudicate both delinquency and dependency cases.

Juveniles may be either or both delinquent and dependent.

In 2024, Juvenile Judges and Hearing Officers disposed of 250 delinquency cases and 126 dependency cases. There were 497 new delinquency filings and 159 new dependency filings.

#### **DEPENDENT JUVENILES**

Children who are, or who have been, subject to abuse or neglect may be dependent. Cases are initiated by the Lehigh County Office of Children and Youth Services or the Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department. Cases referred to a judge are handled by the Civil/Family Court Division.

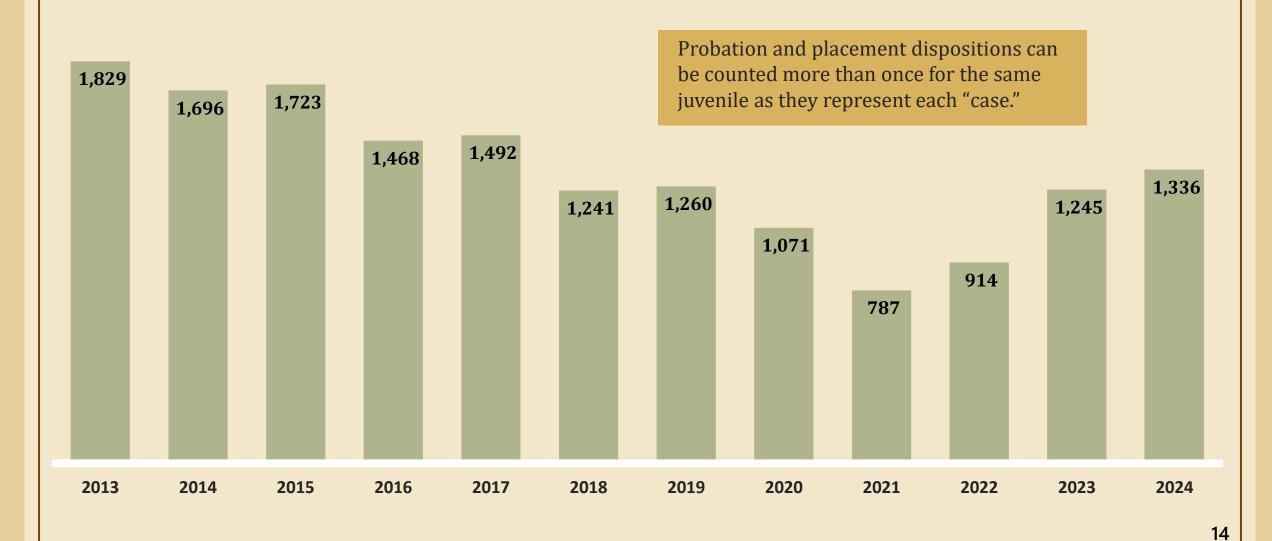
Dependent juveniles may enter foster care, be reunited with family or placed for adoption.

#### **DELINQUENT JUVENILES**

Children under the age of 18 who are in violation of criminal law may be delinquent. Delinquency cases referred to a judge are handled by the Criminal/Juvenile Court Division.

These juveniles may be referred to the Juvenile Probation Department.

# NUMBER OF JUVENILE CASES DISPOSED 2013 TO 2024



# PRIMARY JUVENILE PROBATION DISPOSITIONS



Each referral/written allegation received by Lehigh County Juvenile Probation may include multiple "cases" resulting in multiple dispositions per allegation. Complex issues within cases require collaboration with partners and heightened attention to the dynamics of each case.

Heightened attention is also required for sex offender supervision. The use of drugs and gang activity remain a concern and require an increased level of supervision. The number of youth with a mental health diagnosis continues to increase. These youth require special attention and interventions.

The numbers on the following slide include Lehigh County Juvenile Probation's most frequent dispositions, but are not reflective of all dispositions.

# PRIMARY DISPOSITIONS JUVENILE PROBATION 2019-2024

		Diversion					
	Referrals/Written Allegations (Includes Non-Payment)	Informal Adjustment	Consent Decree	Counsel and Release	Non- Payments	Probation	Placement
2024	683	49	147	21	120	151	54
2023	705	53	148	9	123	139	53
2022	588	25	115	4	82	115	47
2021	321	16	54	2	71	66	39
2020	428	15	97	3	93	109	54
2019	839	28	125	8	200	162	78

# JUVENILE PROBATION PRIMARY DISPOSITIONS

#### DIVERSION PRIOR TO ANY REFERRAL BY JUVENILE PROBATION

	Community Justice Panel (CJP)	School Justice Panel (SJP) Urban	School Justice Panel (SJP) Suburban	Totals
Referred	356	79	69	504
Ineligible/Rejected or Chose Court	76 (21%)	18 (23%)	9 (13%)	103 (20%)
Successful	235 (66%)	42 (53%)	48 (70%)	325 (64%)
Unsuccessful	45 (13%)	19 (24%)	12 (17%)	76 (15%)

Pre-adjudication diversion is defined as providing opportunities for youth who would otherwise face formal processing in the court system so that they can avoid an adjudication of delinquency or conviction for a summary offense, instead directing them into an alternative program, including treatment when appropriate. The Impact Project has worked with Lehigh County in developing and running panels as a diversion since 1999.

# JUVENILE PROBATION: PRE-ADJUDICATION DIVERSION

#### **COMMUNITY JUSTICE PANELS**

■ The Community Justice Panel Program is a youth aid panel diversion program designed to utilize trained community volunteers to effectively handle first-time juvenile offenders charged with summary and misdemeanor offenses.

#### **SCHOOL JUSTICE PANELS**

- A pre-adjudicatory, school-based mental health diversion program. Using clinical assessment and screening tools, SJP clinicians provide the information and have the means to assess underlying mental health issues that the schools often lack the resources to investigate.
- Urban Panels are made up of Allentown and Whitehall.
- Suburban Panels are made up of all other districts in Lehigh County.



# 2024 CIVIL/FAMILY COURT DIVISION

# CIVIL/FAMILY COURT JURISDICTIONS

#### **Civil Actions**

Tort Cases

Real Property

Statutory Appeals

Contract & Debt Cases

Professional Malpractice

Miscellaneous Civil Cases

#### **Orphans' Court**

Termination of Parental

Rights

Adoptions

Guardianships

Fiduciary Accounts

Appeals from Register of Wills

#### **Family Court**

Child Custody

Divorce

Protection From Abuse

Child & Spousal Support

# J. BRIAN JOHNSON, PRESIDENT JUDGE

#### MICHELE A. VARRICCHIO, JUDGE

ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE OF CIVIL COURT

&

SUPERVISORY JUDGE FOR ARBITRATION AND MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE (EFFECTIVE 6/3/2024)

MELISSA T. PAVLACK, JUDGE ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE OF FAMILY COURT

DOUGLAS G. REICHLEY, JUDGE SUPERVISORY JUDGE FOR BOARDS OF VIEW (EFFECTIVE 6/3/2024)

#### THOMAS M. CAFFREY, JUDGE

ARBITRATION SUPERVISORY JUDGE (THROUGH 6/2/2024)

#### THOMAS A. CAPEHART, JUDGE

ORPHANS' COURT ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE & SUPERVISORY JUDGE FOR MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE CONCILIATION & BOARDS OF VIEW (THROUGH 6/2/2024)

ZACHARY J. COHEN, JUDGE
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE OF JUVENILE DEPENDENCY COURT

# 2024 CIVIL/ FAMILY COURT DIVISION JUDGES



# CIVIL COURT OPERATIONS

#### **CIVIL ACTIONS**

Civil actions involve the resolution of private conflicts between people or organizations.

Civil cases include personal injury or personal property claims, matters of equity, products liability, malpractice, or commercial and contract disputes.

License and Registration Suspension Appeals, Mortgage Foreclosures, Assessment Appeals, Quiet Title Actions, Zoning Appeals, Ejectment, and Actions in Replevin are also in the civil category.

Juvenile Dependency cases are also heard by the Civil/Family Court Division.

#### **2024 CIVIL OPERATIONS SECTION**

In 2024, the Civil Operations Section of the Court Administrator's Office, under the direction of Court Operations Officer Paige White, was responsible for scheduling and tracking all civil cases.

The staff of the Civil Operations section schedule and distribute notices for status conferences, arguments, hearings, settlement conferences, and trials. The staff is responsible for tracking the result of each court proceeding.

The Judges of the Civil/Family Court Division work with the Civil Operations staff to proactively manage the civil caseload.

# 2024 CIVIL COURT DIVISION

#### **CIVIL FILINGS BY TYPE**

New Civil Filings Total	4,152
Contract	2,372
Professional Liability	35
Tort	689
Civil Appeals- Administrative Agencies	510
Miscellaneous	108
Real Property	438

#### **2024 CIVIL DISPOSITIONS**

Civil Dispositions Total	3,932
Default Judgments	979
Arbitrations Held	286
Dispositive Motions	29
Settlements	1,283
Stayed	36
Transferred/Withdrawn	77
Dismissed/Discontinued	929
Administrative Purge	47
Other	222
Jury Trial	14
Non-Jury Trial	30



# THE FAMILY COURT OFFICE

# THE FAMILY COURT OFFICE: 2024 CHILD CUSTODY

#### PROVIDING FAMILY-RELATED COURT SERVICES

The vast majority of parties in custody cases are not represented by attorneys. When a self-represented custody litigant comes to the Family Court Office, an intake employee asks questions to begin the assessment of whether the Lehigh County Court has jurisdiction to decide the custody issue.

The necessary forms to start a custody lawsuit are available online and filings are completed by e-filing. General instructions on completing the forms and filing and serving the pleadings are also available on the Court's website at lccpa.org.

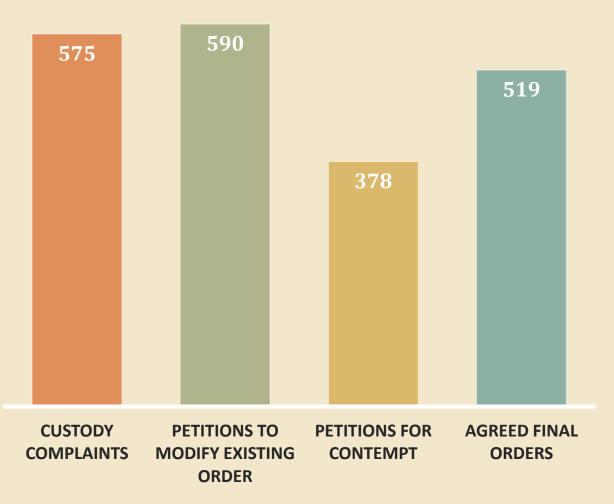
After the filing of one or more pleadings, custody cases proceed to a conciliation conference where efforts are made to have the parties reach an agreement. A Custody Hearing Officer (CHO) conducts the conference and identifies the issues, helping the parties settle the case according to the best interests of the child. If a settlement is reached, the CHO prepares a Court Order that summarizes the custodial agreement. If the parties are unable to agree, the case proceeds to a trial on the merits before a Judge (most cases) or a CHO (only in cases involving partial physical custody).

### 2024 CHILD CUSTODY

In 2024, 575 custody complaints were disposed of through the Family Court system. In addition, 590 Petitions to Modify an Existing Order and 378 Petitions for Contempt were resolved. Petitions to Modify and Petitions for Contempt are often filed at the same time.

Agreed final orders resulting from custody conferences before the CHO numbered 519 in 2024. Other custody cases were discontinued, transferred, withdrawn, dismissed by the court, resolved by stipulations of the parties, or went to trial before a Judge or CHO.

#### **CUSTODY DISPOSITIONS 2024**



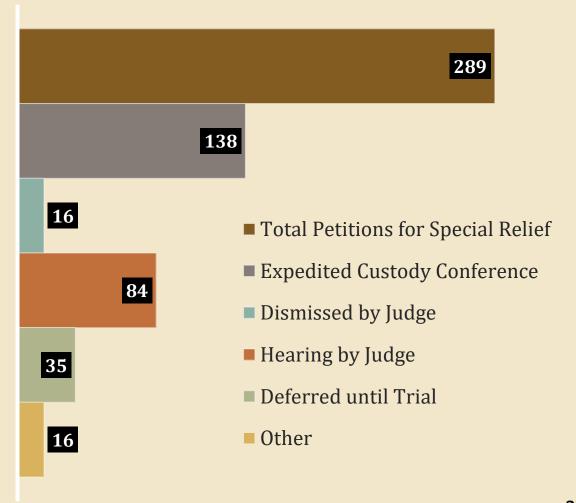
# 2024 CHILD CUSTODY

#### **CUSTODY SPECIAL RELIEF**

The Domestic Relations Code and the Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure permit the filing of a Petition for Special Relief in instances where a litigant believes an emergency exists in a custody case. In 2024, the Family Court Office received 289 Petitions for Special Relief.

In 2024, of the 289 filings, 138 were ordered to proceed to an expedited custody conference before a Custody Hearing Officer, while 16 were summarily dismissed by a Judge. The Judges held 84 hearings on Petitions for Special Relief. Thirty-five Petitions were deferred until the trial. Sixteen cases were otherwise addressed and resolved.

# 2024 PETITIONS FOR CUSTODY SPECIAL RELIEF



# THE FAMILY COURT OFFICE: 2024 DIVORCE









Contested divorce cases are often resolved by the Hearing Officer in Divorce, an attorney appointed by the Court. Following the filing of a motion by a divorce litigant to appoint the Hearing Officer to a case, the Hearing Officer conducts one or more settlement conferences with the litigants and attempts to resolve the issues. If those efforts are unsuccessful, the Hearing Officer conducts hearings and prepares reports and recommended Orders subject to judicial review. Approximately 90-95% of cases before a Hearing Officer are settled before a hearing.

<sup>\*</sup>As an uncontested divorce case may become a contested divorce during the pendency of the action over more than one year, these numbers do not sum to the total divorce cases filed in any given year.

# THE FAMILY COURT OFFICE: 2024 PROTECTION FROM ABUSE



1,635 New Protection From Abuse Petitions were Filed in 2024. 535 Final PFA Orders were Entered in 2024. 282 were Granted and 253 were Stipulated.

In 2024, approximately 33% of new Protection From Abuse Petitions resulted in Final Orders of Protection.



355 PFA
Petitions were
Withdrawn by
Plaintiffs

-373

Plaintiff Did Not Appear at the Final PFA Hearing in 373 cases -286

286 Temporary PFA Orders were Dismissed at the Final Hearing

# PROTECTION FROM ABUSE FILINGS 2016 to 2024

Pennsylvania law requires every court to assist domestic violence victims who seek Protection From Abuse Orders. Individuals may seek a protection order on their own behalf and/or on behalf of their minor children.

Lehigh County Family Court staff provide private intake assistance during specific hours. Litigants appear before a Common Pleas Court Judge during a morning or afternoon session. Special security measures are taken in all cases, especially in cases where cross-petitions have been filed.

Emergency PFA relief is available during nonbusiness hours through the Magisterial District Judges.

See the Family Court Office webpage on lccpa.org for PFA hours and more information.



# THE FAMILY COURT OFFICE: 2024 PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE & INTIMIDATION



The Protection From Sexual Violence and Intimidation Act became effective in Pennsylvania in July 2015. The Act protects victims of sexual violence and intimidation who may not be covered by the Protection From Abuse Act. A victim may seek a Sexual Violence Protection Order against a perpetrator where there is no family or personal relationship between them. A minor may obtain a Protection From Intimidation Order against an offender who is 18 or older for certain types of conduct. Assistance available from the Lehigh County Family Court Office is the same as that described in the Protection From Abuse information on the prior page.



# THE ORPHANS' COURT DIVISION

# THE ORPHANS' COURT DIVISION

#### WHAT IS ORPHANS' COURT?

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.

# ORPHANS' COURT JURISDICTION

THE ORPHANS' COURT DIVISION	Oversees Trusts, Powers of Attorney, and certain aspects of non-profit organizations	Reviews & approves settlement of litigation/claims involving minors, incapacitated persons, and/or decedents' estates	Audits all formal fiduciary accounts
THE ORPHANS'	Appeals from Register of Wills, including will contests or contested letters of administration	All parental rights termination cases	Petitions for adult guardianships (incapacities)
COURT HEARS	Disputes regarding administration/distribution in decedents' estates	Adoptions & minors' guardianship cases	Judicial by-pass hearings required by the Abortion Control Act
THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT	Issues marriage licenses upon "in person" application	Maintains marriage license records and issues certified copies of those records	Responds to requests for access to both identifying and non-identifying information from adoption files

# ORPHANS' COURT UNIQUE CHALLENGES

#### REQUIREMENTS POSING UNIQUE CHALLENGES TO ORPHANS' COURT

Statutory requirement to appoint counsel to represent each indigent parent who contests the termination of his/her parental rights (many cases involve more than one paternal parent) and counsel to represent the minor child.

Effective June 11, 2024, requirement to appoint legal counsel to represent alleged and previously adjudicated incapacitated persons in every matter involving incapacitated persons.

Statutory prohibition on imposition of filing fee for Judicial Bypass Hearings.

# THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF THE ORPHANS' COURT

The Office of the Clerk of the Orphans' Court Division is a judicial office distinct from the Register of Wills (which is a division of the Clerk of Judicial Records). All scheduling for Orphans' Court cases is done by the Office of the Clerk of the Orphans' Court.

The Clerk of the Orphans' Court is an appointed position held by Wendy A. W. Parr. Juan Rivera, Esquire, serves as Orphans' Court Counsel.

A full-time law clerk, four full-time assistant clerks and an assistant clerk/analyst, (who reviews all formally filed fiduciary accounts), comprise the staff of the Clerk of the Orphans' Court.

The Orphans' Court Administrative Judge in 2024 was Thomas A. Capehart, Judge. Five other Judges are assigned to the Orphans' Court Division.

## 2024 ORPHANS' COURT STATISTICS

102

Persons Adjudicated as Incapacitated and Appointed Guardians for their Persons and/or Estates

43 **Adoptions Granted**  73

Minors' Settlements Involving Lump Sum Payouts, Creation of Trusts, and Structured **Settlements Approved** 

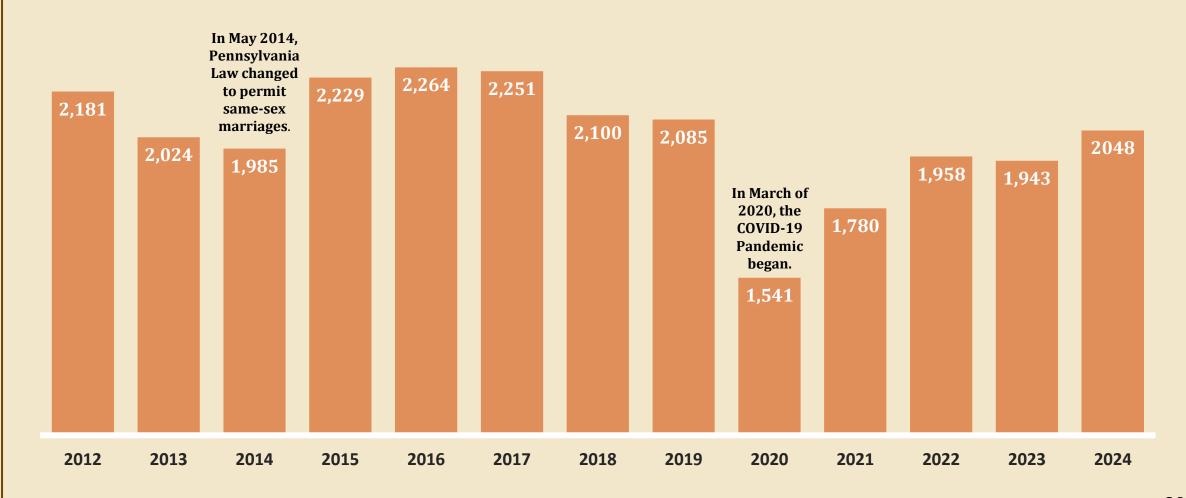
19

**Fiduciary Accountings** Audited, Confirmed, and Adjudicated

Minor Guardian Cases

Judicial Bypass Hearing Pursuant to the Abortion Control Act

## MARRIAGE LICENSES ISSUED 2012 TO 2024





# **COURT ADMINISTRATION**

## LEHIGH COUNTY COURT ADMINISTRATION

#### PROVIDING COURT MANAGEMENT

Complex modern courts require the delegation of administrative functions to the Court Administrator.

The office of the Court Administrator manages the non-judicial functions of the Court under the guidance of the President Judge, providing Judges with more time for adjudication.

In 2024, District Court Administrator Kerry R. Turtzo and Deputy District Court Administrator John J. Sikora continued to serve in the positions to which they were appointed in 2016.

In Lehigh County, Jury Management, the Court Interpreting Unit, the Court Transcription Unit, Library Information Services and the CASA program are considered components of Court Administration.

## OFFICE OF THE COURT ADMINISTRATOR

#### **NON-JUDICIAL FUNCTIONS**

Personnel Management Fiscal Management Jury Management Interpreting Services

**Records Control** 

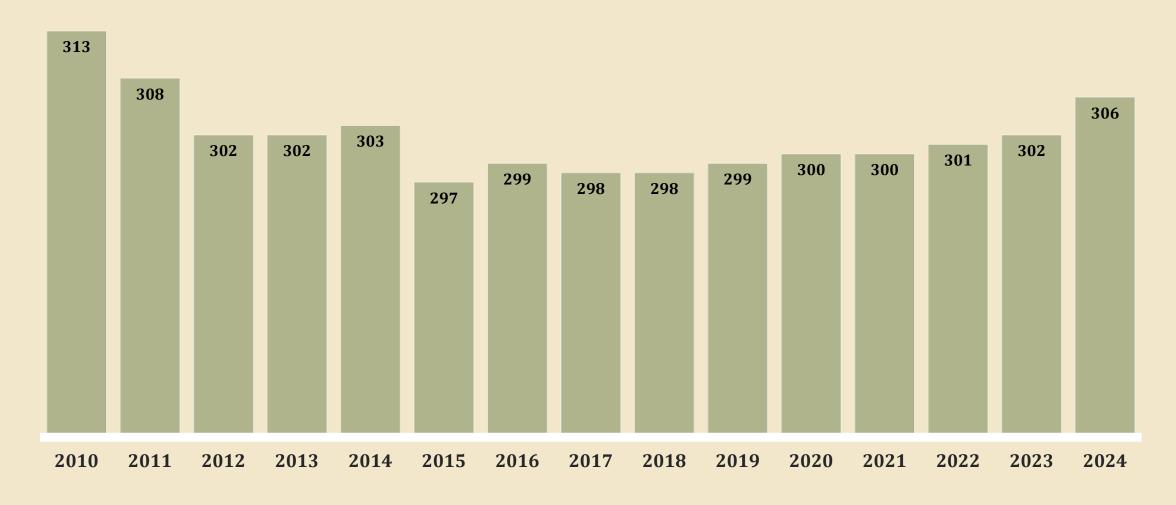
Calendar and Scheduling Management

Information Systems Public Information

Legal Resource Procurement Equipment and Technology Management

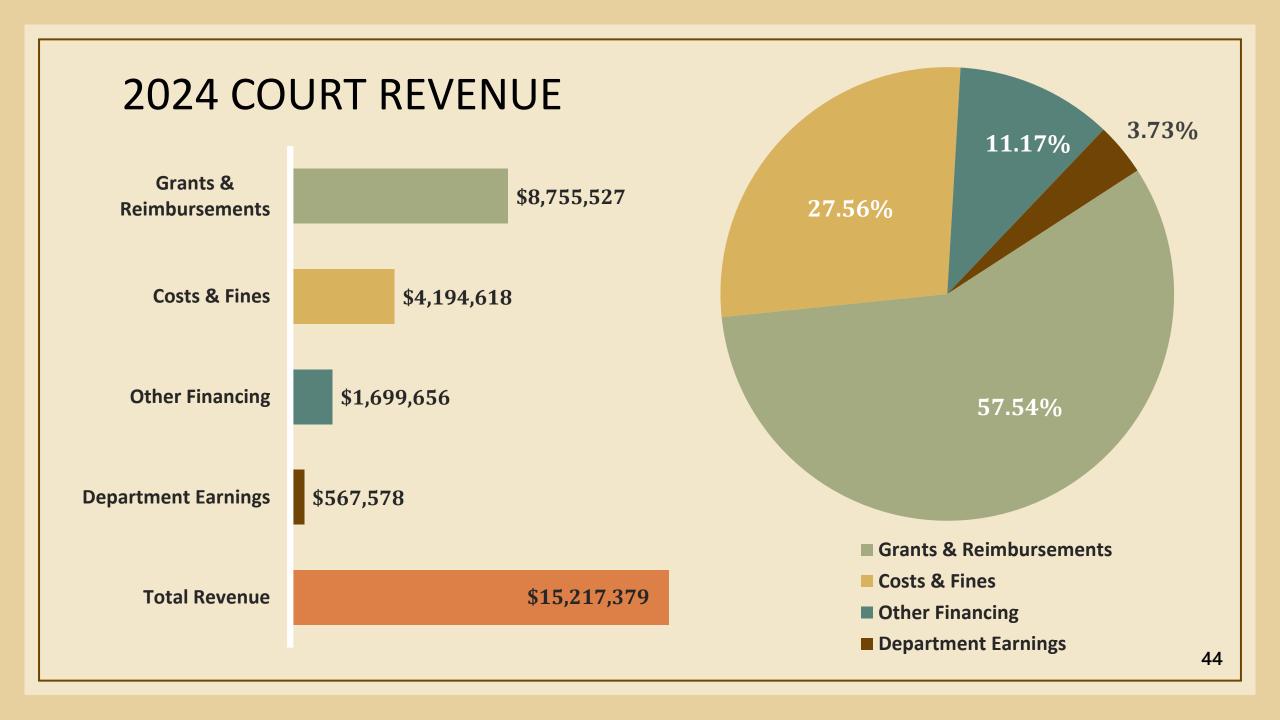
Facilities Management

## FULL-TIME JUDICIAL PERSONNEL 2010 to 2024

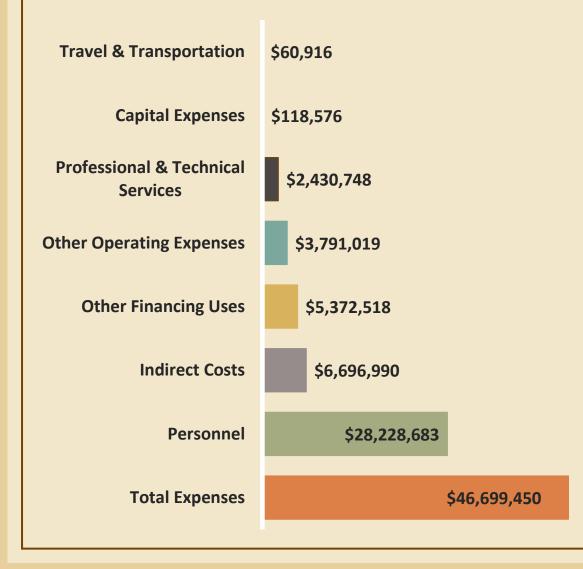


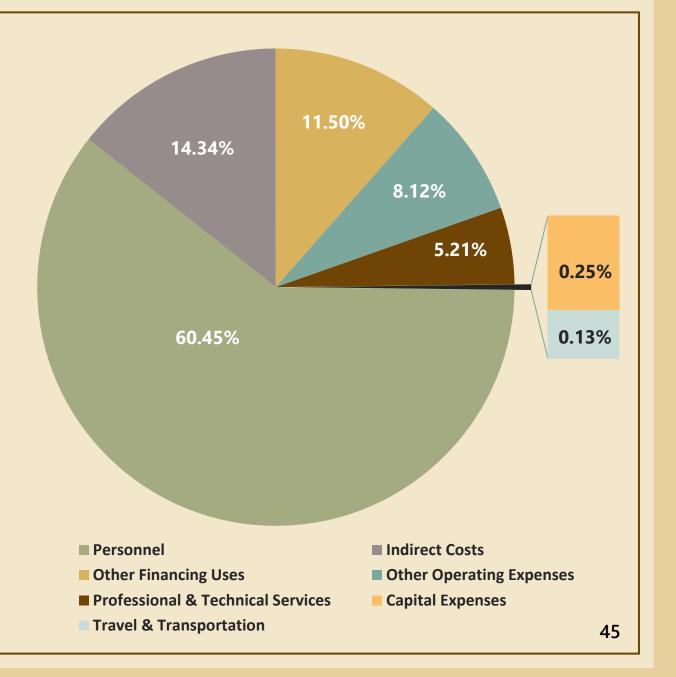
## FULL-TIME JUDICIAL PERSONNEL BY DEPARTMENT 2015 to 2024

YEAR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
COURT ADMINISTRATION	76	76	75	75	75	75	75	76	76	77
ADULT PROBATION	52	54	54	54	54	55	55	55	55	55
JUVENILE PROBATION	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48
ORPHANS' COURT	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
DOMESTIC RELATIONS	62	62	62	62	62	62	62	62	62	61
DISTRICT JUDGES	51	51	51	51	52	52	52	52	53	57
LAW LIBRARY	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
TOTAL	297	299	298	298	299	300	300	301	302	306



## 2024 COURT EXPENSES





## **GRANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **ADULT PROBATION**

Adult Probation receives state funding based on the rate of compliance with state-wide standards for probation operations. Currently, the Lehigh County Adult Probation Department receives the maximum in state funding.

#### **JUVENILE PROBATION**

The Juvenile Probation
Department works closely with
the Lehigh County Office of
Children and Youth to produce a
"needs-based" budget maximizing
state assistance to the Court.

#### YOUTH PLACEMENT

The Court is reimbursed in the form of services at state youth institutions and funding for some delinquent youth placement expenditures.

The Court of Common Pleas pursues federal and state grants to offset the costs of court programs.

## 2024 CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOARD GRANT ACTIVITIES

## **ADULT PROBATION GRANT ACTIVITIES**

PROJECT TITLE	GRANT	GRANT \$	DEPARTMENT	STATUS
Adult Probation/Drug/Alcohol Restrictive Intermediate Punishment	PCCD	\$660,000	SCA/ Adult Probation	Awarded
Continuing County Adult Probation and Parole Grant	PCCD	\$528,239	Adult Probation	Awarded

## 2024 CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOARD GRANT ACTIVITIES

## **JUVENILE PROBATION GRANT ACTIVITIES**

PROJECT TITLE	GRANT	GRANT \$	Status
Grant-In-Aid/Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy Implementation Plan	JCJC	\$467,389	Awarded
Juvenile Court Judges' Commission Training Grant	JCJC	\$17,496	Awarded
Youth Juvenile Advisory Board Grant	PCCD	\$94,173	Awarded
Violence Prevention Grant with OCYS	PCCD	\$488,053	Awarded
Pennsylvania Academic Career Technical Training (PACTT)	PCCD	\$5,000	Awarded

## **COURT ADMINISTRATION: JURY MANAGEMENT**

#### PROVIDING SELECTION AND CONTROL OF JURORS

Lehigh County has adopted the "one day, one trial" method of juror selection to increase the efficiency of the jury system while making a minimal imposition on the lives of residents. Citizens selected for jury duty will serve one day, or, if selected for a jury, will serve the duration of the trial. This method ensures juries are available to Judges and only keeps those jurors who are necessary for trials.

The selection and control of juries requires cooperation between jury management staff and courtroom staff. The web-based jury management system allows potential jurors to complete qualification questionnaires online. Correspondence to jurors about their status and reminders may be via text message and email, reducing reliance on the U.S. Postal system.

Prospective jurors who fail to appear for jury service are scheduled for hearings before the President Judge, who will make a determination if the juror is to be held in contempt of court pursuant to 42 Pa. C. S. § 4584. If found in contempt, the sanctions include a fine not to exceed \$500 or imprisoned for no more than 10 days or both. Although all hearings are scheduled on one date each year, the President Judge will hear each juror's case individually.

In 2024, there were 45 prospective jurors who were scheduled for hearings due to failure to appear for jury service.

## **2024 JURY MANAGEMENT**



4,071
Jurors
Reporting
for Duty

Jurors Sent to Voir Dire for Selection

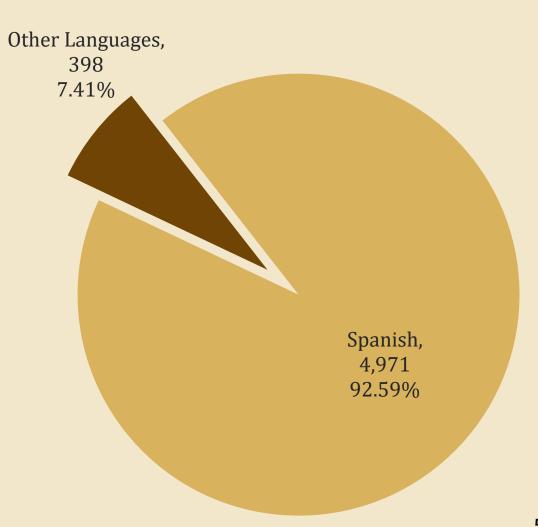
Jurors Empaneled or Sworn In

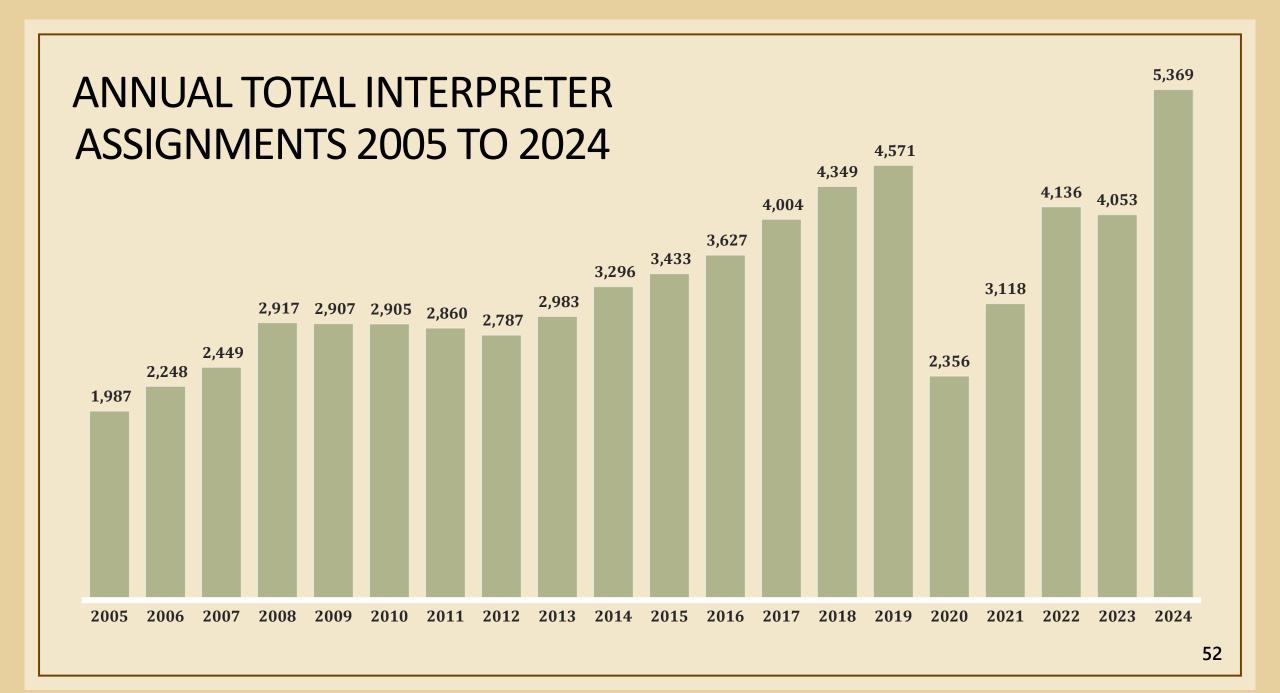
## COURT ADMINISTRATION: 2024 INTERPRETING UNIT

# PROVIDING FOREIGN AND SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION

The Court provides interpreters in all court proceedings. The Interpreting Coordinator schedules a pool of 9 per diem contractors, as well as many other interpreters by court order, to carry out court interpreting assignments.

In 2024, there were 5,369 interpreter assignments, 4,971 of which were for Spanish. Telephone interpretation is used when needed. Translations of written documents are also provided by the Interpreting Unit.





## LEHIGH COUNTY LAW LIBRARY

Founded in 1869, the
Lehigh County Law
Library provides the court
and community with
Pennsylvania and United
States legal sources.
Lorelei A. Broskey, M.L.S.,
Director, has overseen the
three related missions of
the Library Information
Services department since
1989.

#### LAW LIBRARY SERVICES

Operating the only public law library in Lehigh County by providing Self-Help and other legal resources to the Lehigh Valley community.

#### **DOCUMENT PRODUCTION**

Providing website support, scanning, color printing, brochure development and related document services to court offices.

# LEGAL RESOURCE PROCUREMENT

Providing Judges, court, and county employees with essential print and electronic legal sources necessary for work performance.

## 2024 LAW LIBRARY SERVICES

# 92,300 WESTLAW SEARCHES WITH A RETAIL VALUE OF \$8.85 MILLION

Retail value of the 92,300 Westlaw research transactions performed by Court/County Employees and Law Library Patrons during 9,500+ hours of research. 1,217 Lexis transactions valued at \$51,146 were performed.

# \$458,040.05 IN LEGAL RESOURCES PROCURED AND PROCESSED

Cost of all legal and other resources received and processed by the Lehigh County Law Library for the Court, County offices, and the Law Library. 718 invoices, the majority containing multiple items, were submitted for payment.

# 6,933 PUBLIC LAW LIBRARY PATRON SEARCHES

The total of 5,716 Westlaw Public Access Program and 1,217 Lexis Advance Public Access Program searches meant 6,933 online legal research searches were performed by or for patrons in the public Lehigh County Law Library during 2024.

# TRADITIONAL LIBRARY SERVICES

2,281 pages of legal research were printed or photocopied by patrons in the public Law Library. Lehigh County Law Library staff handled 965 print book circulation transactions and recorded 272 inhouse use transactions.

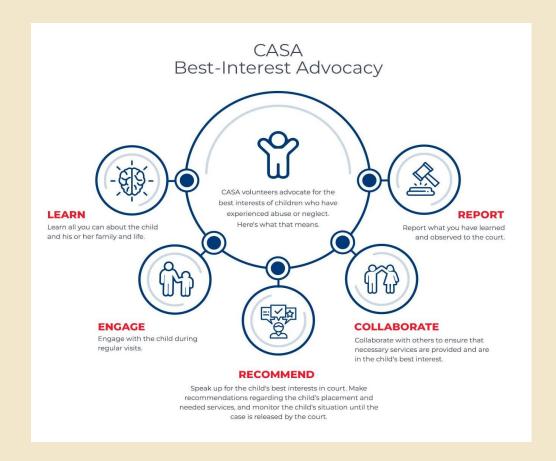
# VIRTUAL REFERENCE SERVICE

Virtual reference service continued in 2024 with 200+ total documents requested in 150+ virtual service contacts received by Law Library staff by phone and email.

## CASA: COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE

# CASA VOLUNTEERS: PROVIDING "EYES AND EARS" FOR THE COURT

A CASA volunteer's objective is to assist the Court in making decisions that will provide safe, secure and permanent homes for at-risk children. A CASA representative attends every hearing for their children. CASA volunteers aid the court by submitting written reports making recommendations in the best interest of the child.



## 2024 LEHIGH COUNTY CASA VOLUNTEERS

32
ACTIVE CASA VOLUNTEERS

37
ABUSED & NEGLECTED CHILDREN
SERVED

5
CASA VOLUNTEERS SERVED AS
EDUCATIONAL DECISION MAKERS
FOR THEIR ASSIGNED CHILDREN





# **ADULT PROBATION**

## LEHIGH COUNTY ADULT PROBATION

#### PROVIDING COMMUNITY PROTECTION THROUGH SUPERVISION

### **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.

## ADULT PROBATION: PHILOSOPHY AND PRIMARY GOALS

- The primary goal of the Lehigh County Adult Probation Department is to provide protection to the community. The Department, led by Chief Adult Probation Officer Pamela Sheffer in 2024, works to achieve this goal through appropriate and relevant treatment and supervision of individuals by trained probation officers.
- The Department recognizes that no individual can change if they are not intrinsically motivated to do so. It is the Department's responsibility to evoke this need for change within the individual, while providing the opportunities, treatment, and experiences that can positively influence their re-entry into society. Ultimately, the goal of the Department is to reduce the likelihood that an individual will reoffend.

## ADULT PROBATION: PHILOSOPHY AND PRIMARY GOALS

- Since 2020, the Department has utilized evidence-based practices into its standard of supervision. Use of evidence-based practices is a key factor in the establishment of safer communities, the reduction of recidivism, the enhancement of collaboration between agencies, and the reduction of costs. Using a validated risk assessment, officers target moderate to high-risk individuals, determine their criminogenic needs, and use programs to deliver cognitive-based treatment.
- The Department is audited annually by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency and continues to be in compliance with standards promulgated by the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections.

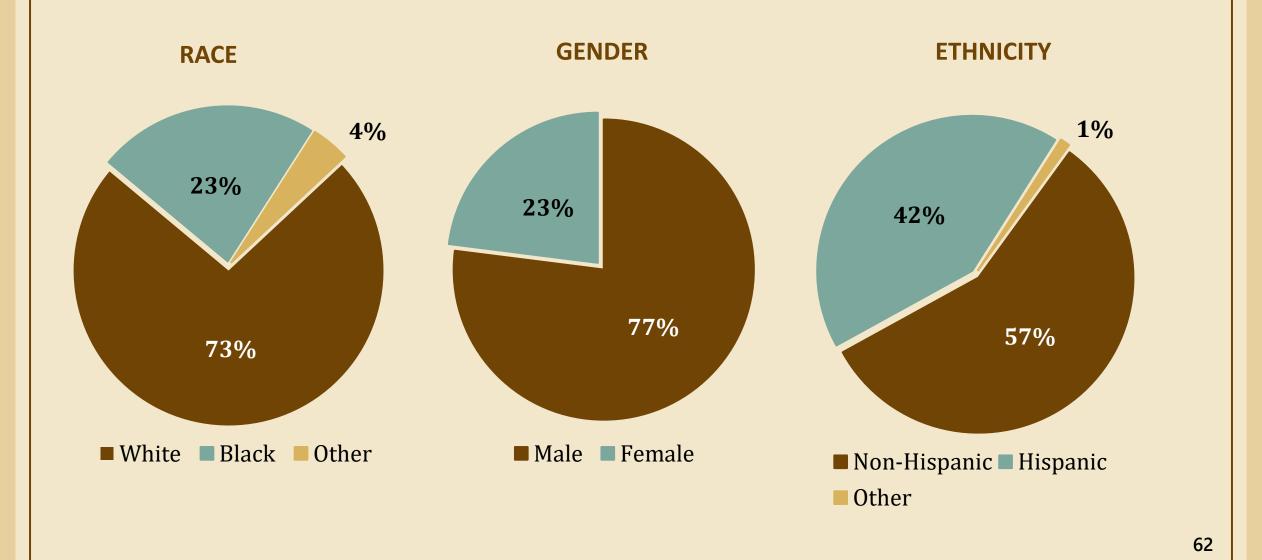
## 2024 ADULT PROBATION STAFF COMPOSITION

# 3,973 INDIVIDUALS ON ACTIVE SUPERVISION AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2024

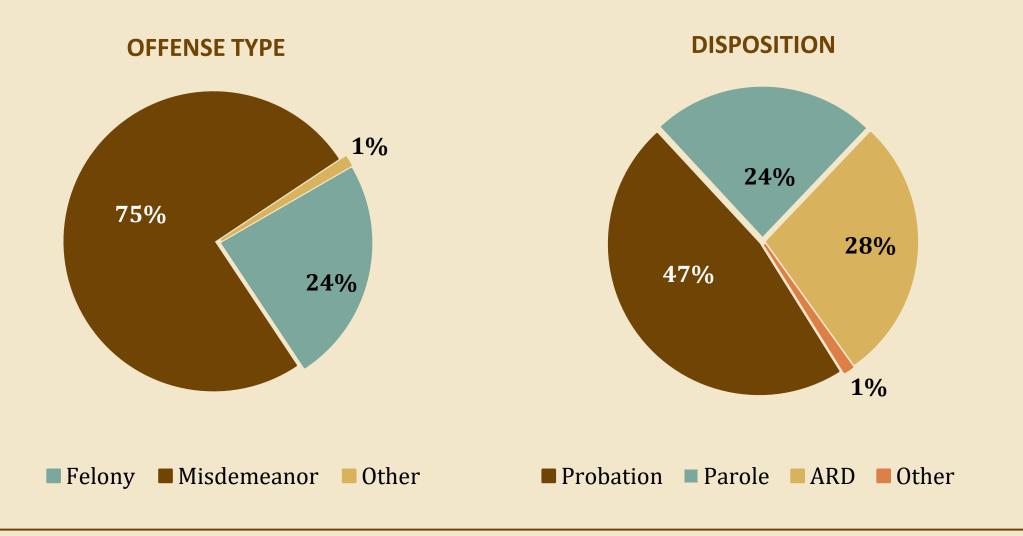
The 3,973 Individuals on Active Supervision are supervised by:

- 42 Full-Time Probation Officers
- 7 Part-Time Probation Officers
- 14 Full-Time Probation Aides/Clerical Staff
- 1 Part-Time Probation Aide

## 2024 LEHIGH COUNTY ADULT PROBATION CLIENT PROFILE



## 2024 LEHIGH COUNTY ADULT PROBATION CLIENT PROFILE



## **SPORE UNIT SPECIALTY SUPPORT COURTS DRUG** STAFF COURT/TCAP **ADMINISTRATION** REPEAT D.U.I./ ELECTRONIC INTENSIVE UNIT **MONITORING GENERAL** INVESTIGATIVE **SUPERVISION** UNIT UNIT

# LEHIGH COUNTY ADULT PROBATION

**DEPARTMENTAL UNITS 2024** 

## 2024 LEHIGH COUNTY ADULT PROBATION

1,348

Court Reporting
Network Evaluations
Completed

828

Pre-parole Investigations Completed 1,169

Individuals Completing
Alcohol Safe Driving
School

270

Pre-sentence Investigations Completed

## 2024 ADULT PROBATION PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

Drug Treatment Court Competency/ Accountability Programs

Community Work
Service Project

SPORE

Intensive Supervision In-House Drug Testing Program

Outmate

Prevention
Through AntiViolence Education
(PAVE)

Electronic Monitoring

Treatment
Continuum
Alternative Project
(TCAP)

Alcohol Highway Safety Project Effective Corrections
Programs
B.I.T.S/Carey Guides

Program Offering
Women
Empowerment and
Reentry (POWER)

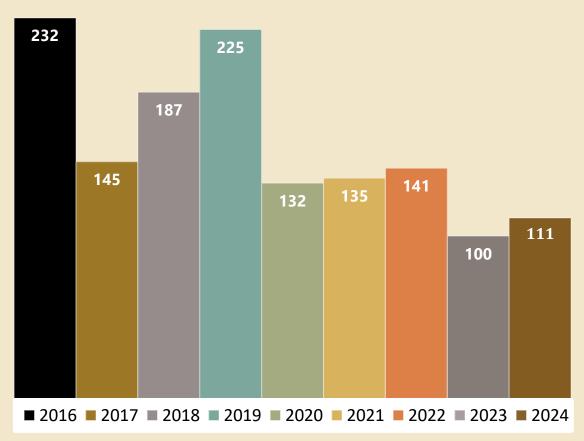
## ADULT PROBATION ELECTRONIC MONITORING 2015 to 2024



## **LEHIGH COUNTY ADULT PROBATION SPORE 2024**

- Special Program Offering Rehabilitation and Education (SPORE) provides services for mentally ill individuals.
- Adult Probation Officers and Mental Health Caseworkers jointly supervise individuals on intensive and maximum supervision levels.
- A psychiatrist and psychologist are available for evaluations.
- During 2024, SPORE received 111 formal referrals and 18 evaluations were completed.

#### **SPORE FORMAL REFERRALS**





# **JUVENILE PROBATION**

## LEHIGH COUNTY JUVENILE PROBATION

#### PROVIDING A BALANCED APPROACH TO JUVENILE JUSTICE

#### MISSION STATEMENT

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

## LEHIGH COUNTY JUVENILE PROBATION

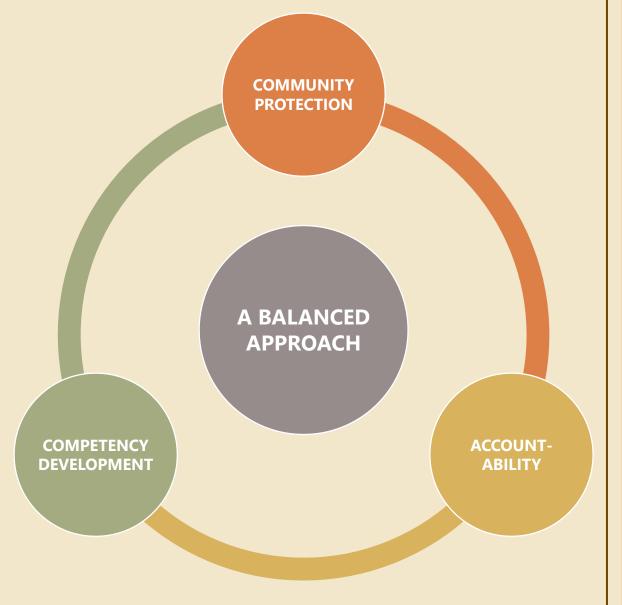
The Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department is a division of the Court of Common Pleas reporting to the Administrative Judge responsible for juvenile probation activities.

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

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.

## JUVENILE PROBATION

- **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.
- 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.
- Competency Development: The department assesses each youth to determine how they can best become productive and responsible citizens. This is the part of our mission "that seeks to tap the strengths of young people, their immense capacity for change and growth, in order to achieve transformations."



#### INTAKE UNIT (EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT) COMMUNITY BASED SUPERVISION SPORE (MENTAL HEALTH AND ID) **ADMINISTRATION** PLACEMENT/AFTERCARE UNIT MANAGEMENT **COMMUNITY SERVICES UNIT** VICTIM SERVICES UNIT PROGRAM COORDINATOR NON-PAYMENT OF COSTS AND FINES UNIT **QUALITY ASSURANCE UNIT** TRANSPORTATION UNIT FISCAL UNIT

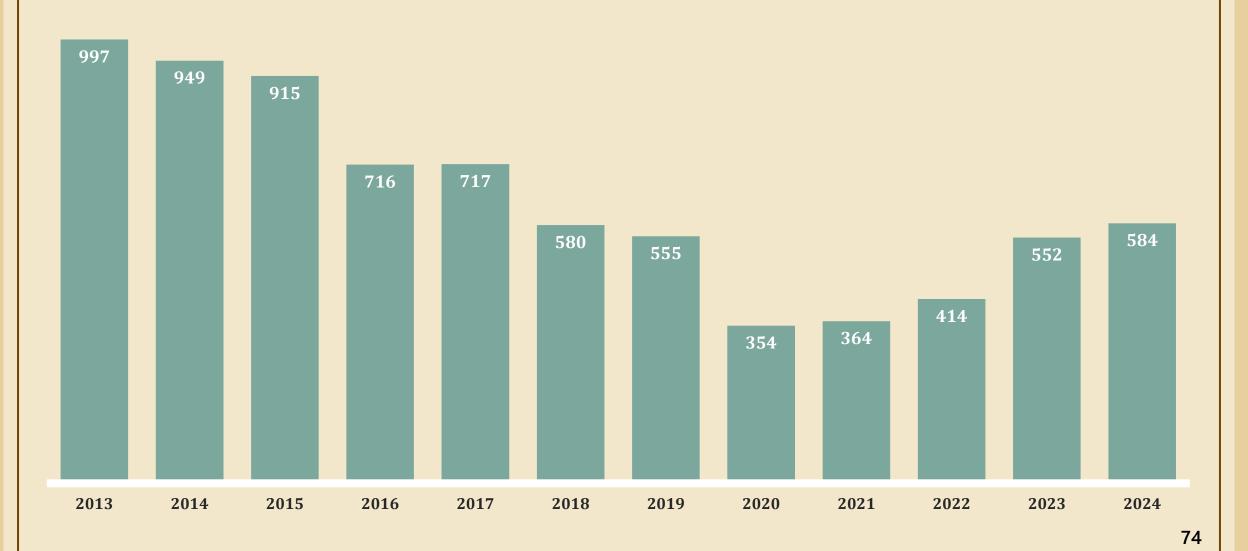
SUPPORT STAFF

MANAGEMENT UNIT

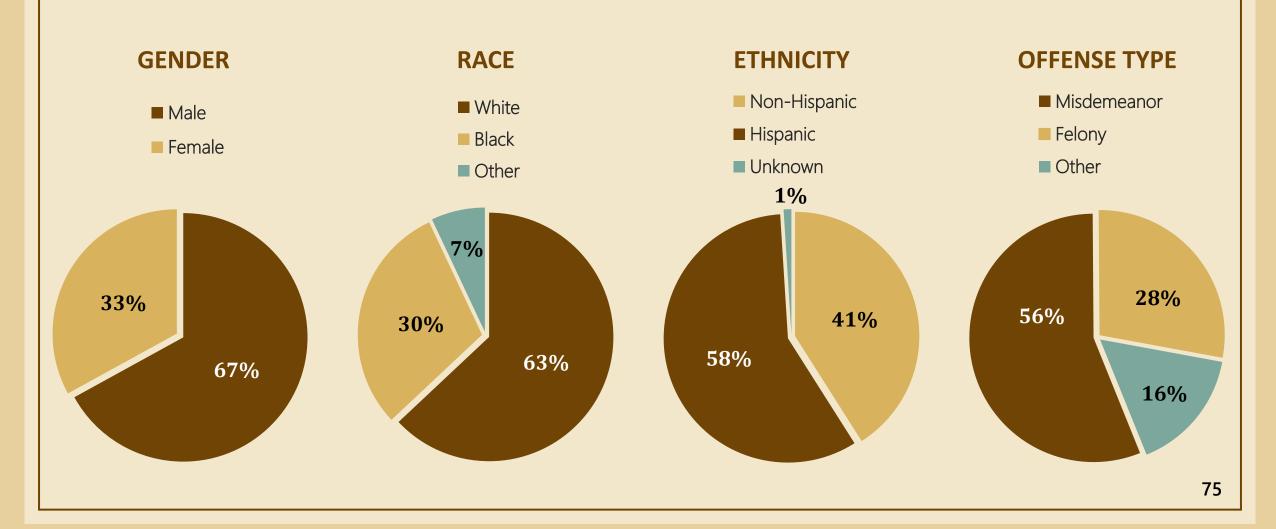
## LEHIGH COUNTY JUVENILE PROBATION

**DEPARTMENTAL DIVISIONS** 





## 2024 LEHIGH COUNTY JUVENILE PROBATION CLIENT PROFILE



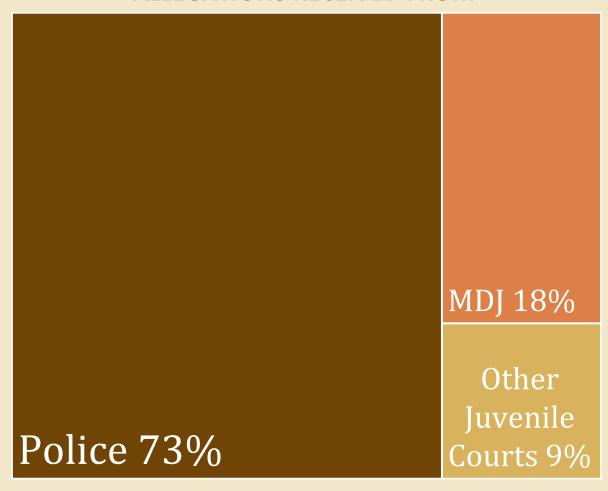
#### 2024 LEHIGH COUNTY JUVENILE PROBATION

#### **ALLEGATIONS RECEIVED FROM:**

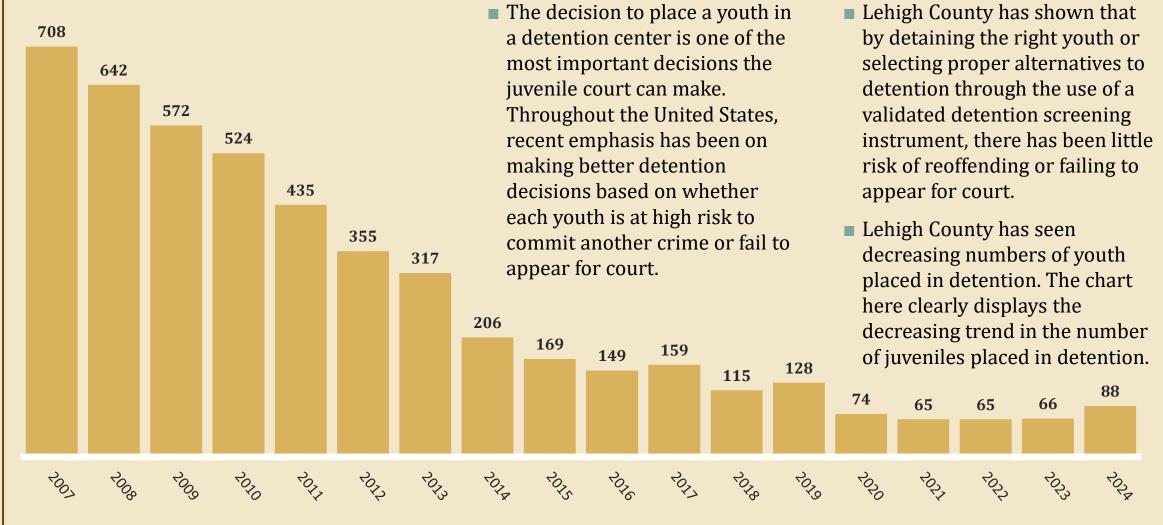
#### SOURCES OF REFERRALS TO JUVENILE PROBATION

When a police department makes an arrest of a juvenile and the District Attorney's office approves the charges, the Juvenile Probation department receives a referral delineating the allegations faced by the juvenile.

The graph at right demonstrates the percent of total referrals received from originating sources which are the Police, Magisterial District Judges and other Juvenile Courts.



#### **JUVENILE PROBATION DETENTION TRENDS 2007 TO 2024**



Juveniles who completed a community service obligation in full	98.4%
Juveniles in school or employed at case closing	98%
Juveniles who paid their restitution in full	93%
Juveniles who successfully completed supervision without a new offense resulting in a Consent Decree, Adjudication of Delinquency, ARD, Nolo Contendere, or finding of guilt in a criminal proceeding	93%
Juveniles with no judicial finding of technical violations of probation while under supervision	90%
Juveniles committed to placement (28 days or longer)	12%
Completion rate of juveniles ordered to Victim Awareness Curriculum	99%

# OUTCOMES ON 312 JUVENILES INVOLVED WITH LEHIGH COUNTY PROBATION SERVICES

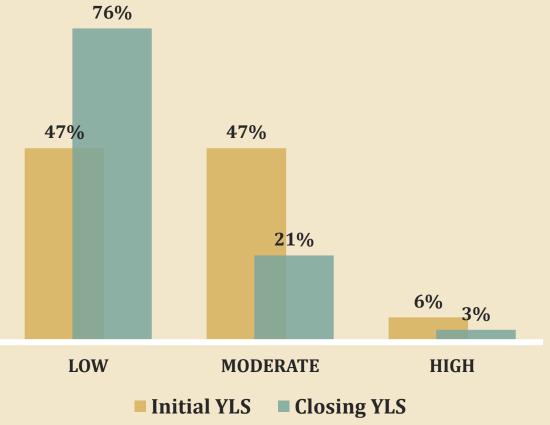
- Probation officers are required to report outcome measures whenever they release a juvenile from probation supervision.
- These outcomes measure activities while under supervision.

#### 2024 JUVENILE PROBATION RISK/NEEDS ASSESSMENT

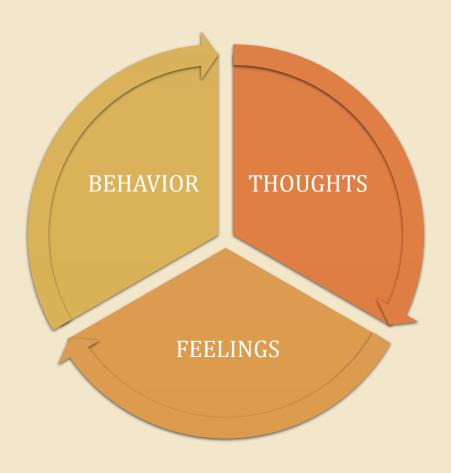
#### **Initial YLS Assessments vs. Closing YLS Assessments**

The Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory 2.0 (YLS/CMI 2.0<sup>TM</sup>) is a gender and culturally informed, strengths-based risk/needs assessment tool that reliably and accurately classifies and predicts **re-offending** within juvenile populations. The juvenile probation department has administered the YLS since 2009.

The chart at left compares the initial YLS assessments to the assessments done at time of case closing. This information illustrates the change in risk level from the onset of supervision to the time supervision ends. In 2024, the percentage of youth who scored low at the time of case closing increased to 76%.



#### **COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS**



- Research is clear that the most effective interventions in reducing risk to reoffend are cognitive-behavioral interventions.
- Cognitive-behavioral interventions assist to identify and restructure negative thinking patterns, and help build, practice, and utilize previously lacked skills that are linked to reoffending behavior.
- Lehigh County Juvenile Probation utilizes a wide range of both cognitive-behavioral and educational interventions to tailor an individual plan for each juvenile under supervision.
- These programs and initiatives are listed on the next page.

### JUVENILE PROBATION PROGRAMS & JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVES

YLS/CMI &
Other Screening
& Assessments

Young Offenders Program Community Work Service Program

Case Planning

Motivational Interviewing

Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument

**CHOICES** 

Family Engagement Young Artist Program Thinking for a Change

Graduated Responses Skill Building & Cognitive Based Interventions

Drug Awareness & Prevention Program (DAPP) Forward Thinking Journaling

Child Trauma Screening

Girls Circle

Aggression Replacement Training Retail Theft & Underage Drinking Programs

Effective
Practices in
Community
Supervision
(EPICS)

Victim Awareness Curriculum



## THE DOMESTIC RELATIONS SECTION

#### THE DOMESTIC RELATIONS SECTION

#### PROVIDING CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

The Domestic Relations Section (DRS) is the provider of child support services for the Lehigh County Court of Common Pleas under the federal Title IV-D child support program.

Under the leadership of Director Raymond Stabinsky, the DRS is responsible for providing services to dependent children and spouses through the establishment of paternity, location of absent parents, establishment of support orders, and enforcement of support orders.

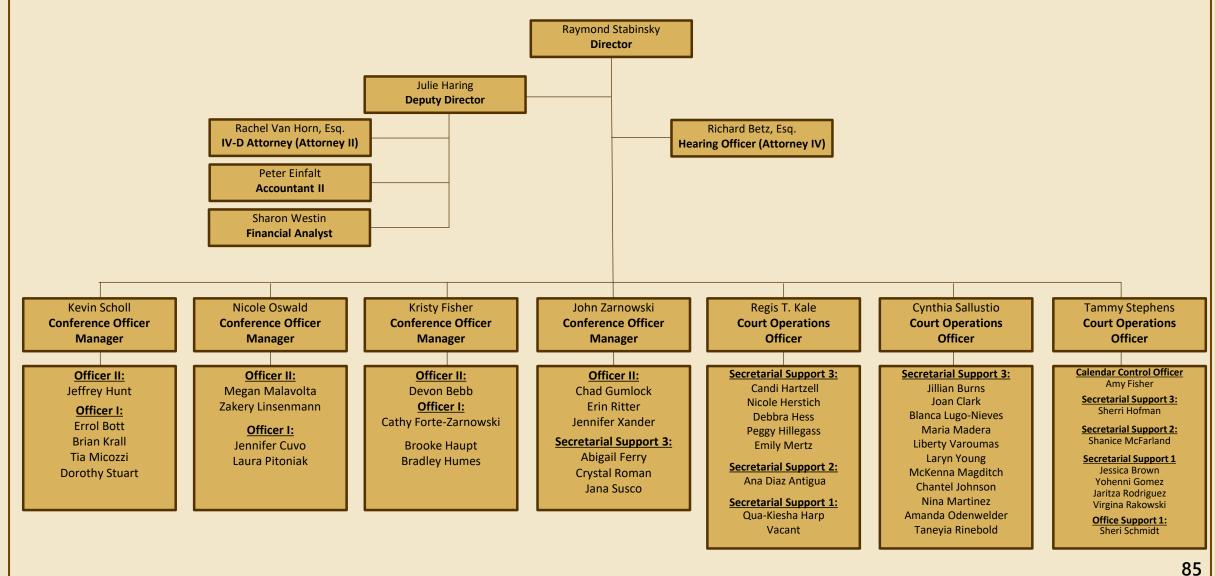
#### DOMESTIC RELATIONS SECTION SERVICES

**Establishing Paternity** 

**Locating Absent Parents** 

Establishing Support Orders **Enforcing Support Orders** 

#### DOMESTIC RELATIONS SECTION ORGANIZATION



#### ESTABLISHING CHILD & SPOUSAL SUPPORT ORDERS

#### **CONFERENCE OFFICER**



#### **HEARING OFFICER**



#### JUDGE OF THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

Conducts conferences on support complaints and petitions for modification

Conducts hearings not settled by agreement by the conference officer

Conducts hearings on cases appealed from the hearing officer's order

In Lehigh County, establishment of a support order progresses under a 3-tier system. A conference officer conducts conferences on support complaints and petitions for modification on existing support orders. If an agreement cannot be reached between the parties at the conference, a temporary or "interim" support order is entered, and the case proceeds to a hearing before a hearing officer. The case will be scheduled for a hearing before a Judge of the Lehigh County Court of Common Pleas if one of the parties does not agree and files "exceptions" to the support order entered by the hearing officer.

#### 2024 CASE MANAGEMENT TEAM ACTIVITIES



Conference officers and secretarial support staff are assigned to case management teams that are responsible for all case management activities of a support case from the establishment of a support order through the enforcement of a support order. In 2024, the Domestic Relations Section conducted 2,424 establishment conferences, 612 establishment hearings, and 1,656 contempt conferences/hearings.

#### 2024 DOMESTIC RELATIONS SECTION FILINGS

DISPOSITIONS		
New Cases	2,723	
Cases Transferred In	76	
TANF to Non-TANF	69	
Judge	51	
Hearing Officer	441	
Conference Officer	2,380	
Cases Transferred Out	60	
Non-TANF to TANF	87	
Cases Processed	3,019	

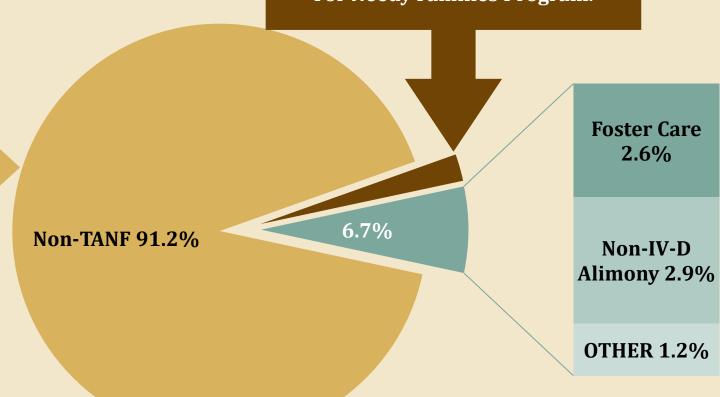
#### 2024 TANF SUPPORT CASE FILINGS & **DISPOSITIONS** New Cases 247 Cases Transferred In 19 Non-TANF to TANF 87 Judge **Hearing Officer** 116 Conference Officer 237 Cases Transferred Out 24 TANF to Non-TANF 69 **Cases Processed** 486

#### 2024 SUPPORT CASES BY CASE TYPE



#### NON-TANF 91.2% Cases where

Cases where families do not receive benefits under the Temporary Assistance For Needy Families Program.



#### DOMESTIC RELATIONS SECTION SUMMARY 2024

## **\$47** MILLION IN SUPPORT PAYMENTS COLLECTED

8,370 ACTIVE SUPPORT CASES

**4,692** CONFERENCES & HEARINGS CONDUCTED

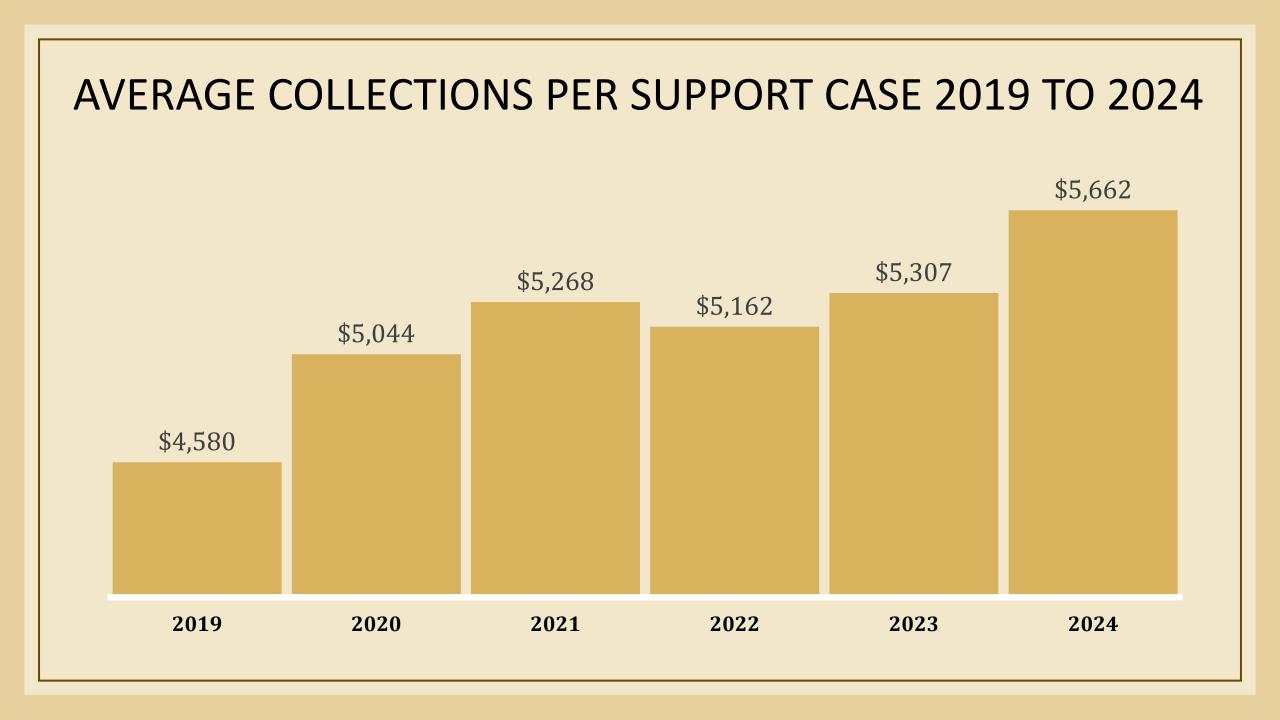
**58** STAFF MEMBERS

The Lehigh County
Domestic Relations
Section conducted 4,692
conferences and hearings
for the establishment and
enforcement of support
orders and collected \$47
million in support
payments in 2024.

#### PACSES AND PA-SCDU

The Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement System (PACSES) is a state-wide computer system used to enter, process and track all support case information and case management activities. All support payments that are collected from the defendant by the DRS are sent to the Pennsylvania State Collection and Disbursement Unit (PA-SCDU) and then forwarded to the plaintiff as a support payment.

#### LEHIGH COUNTY DRS COLLECTED \$47,394,329 IN SUPPORT PAYMENTS IN 2024



## FEDERAL FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

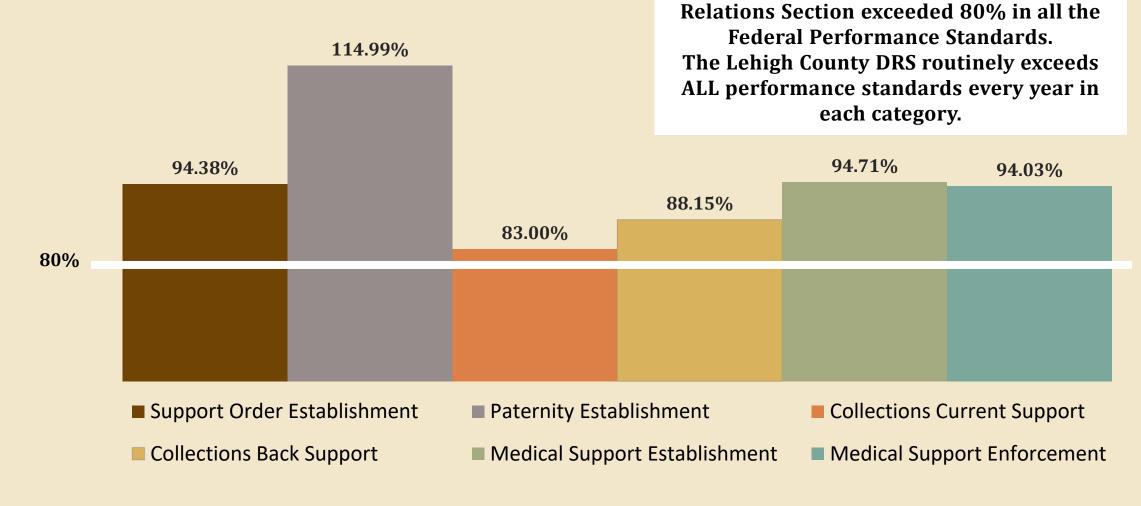
Through a Cooperative Agreement between the County of Lehigh and the Pennsylvania Bureau of Child Support Enforcement, the Domestic Relations Section is required to provide child support services as outlined in Title IV-D of the Social Security Act.

In order for the Domestic Relations Section to receive federal funding of 66% for all operating expenses, the child support services must be performed in accordance with the Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure and the United States Code of Federal Regulations.

In order to maximize federal incentive funding for Pennsylvania and Lehigh County, the Domestic Relations Section is required to meet federal performance standards of at least 80% in the following categories:

- CASES WITH SUPPORT ORDERS ESTABLISHED
- **CASES WITH PATERNITY ESTABLISHED**
- CASES WITH FULL MONTHLY COLLECTION OF CURRENT SUPPORT
- CASES WITH A PAYMENT ON BACK SUPPORT IN THE FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR
- CASES WITH MEDICAL SUPPORT ESTABLISHED (NOT TIED TO FUNDING)
- CASES WITH MEDICAL SUPPORT ENFORCED (NOT TIED TO FUNDING)

## FEDERAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2023 TO 2024



For the 2024 Federal Fiscal Year, which

ended on September 30, 2024, the Domestic

## JUDICIAL & ADMINISTRATIVE ENFORCEMENT OF SUPPORT ORDERS

- FEDERAL AND STATE TAX REFUND INTERCEPT
- LOTTERY WINNINGS INTERCEPT
- FREEZE/SEIZE OF FINANCIAL ASSETS
- REAL PROPERTY LIENS
- CREDIT BUREAU REPORTING
- PASSPORT DENIAL

- DRIVER'S LICENSE SUSPENSION
- RECREATIONAL LICENSE SUSPENSION
- PROFESSIONAL/OCCUPATIONAL LICENSE SUSPENSION
- **BENCH WARRANTS/BODY ATTACHMENTS**
- WORK SEARCH PROGRAM
- ■INCARCERATION WITH PURGE CONDITIONS/ WORK RELEASE

Conference Officers are responsible for conducting contempt conferences with delinquent defendants in an effort to gain compliance with the support order. If the defendant is habitually noncompliant with the support order, the defendant may be scheduled for a contempt hearing before a Judge for consideration of incarceration or other appropriate sanctions.

In addition, the judicial and administrative enforcement actions above may be initiated.



### MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT COURTS

#### LEHIGH COUNTY MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT COURTS

#### PROVIDING THE FIRST LEVEL OF PENNSYLVANIA'S JUDICIARY

Magisterial District Courts handle traffic cases, minor criminal and summary cases, landlord/tenant cases, and civil cases involving amounts up to \$12,000.

In 2024, the Lehigh County Magisterial District Court consisted of 14 District Court offices, Night Court and Central Court. District Court 31-1-09 opened in January 2024 to serve Allentown Wards 6 and 10.

The personnel and administrative functions for the Magisterial District Courts are the responsibility of Magisterial District Judge Administrator Carolynn Perry.

#### 2024 LEHIGH COUNTY MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT JUDGES

<b>■31-1-01</b>	Linda D. Vega	<b>31-1-08</b>	Kyle B. Miller
<b>■31-1-02</b>	Rashid O. Santiago	<b>31-1-09</b>	Mark A. McCants
<b>■31-1-03</b>	Ronald S. Manescu	<b>31-2-01</b>	Karen C. Devine
<b>■31-1-04</b>	David M. Howells, Jr.	<b>31-2-02</b>	Jacob E. Hammond
<b>■31-1-05</b>	Michael D. D'Amore	<b>31-3-01</b>	<b>Thomas Creighton</b>
<b>■31-1-06</b>	Amy Zanelli	<b>31-3-02</b>	Michael J. Faulkner
<b>■31-1-07</b>	Todd P. Heffelfinger	<b>31-3-03</b>	Daniel C. Trexler

The supervision of each District Court is the responsibility of the elected Magisterial District Judge, a state employee. Other Magisterial District Court office employees are Lehigh County judicial employees.

#### 2024 LEHIGH COUNTY MDJ COURT FILINGS



Traffic Cases

5,310

Non-Traffic Cases



Criminal Cases

4,840

**Civil Cases** 



#### SPECIAL MDJ COURTS

#### **CENTRAL COURT**



- Preliminary Hearings for all Incarcerated Defendants
- Located within the Lehigh County Courthouse
- MDJs preside on a rotating schedule
- DUI Court two days per month

#### **NIGHT COURT**



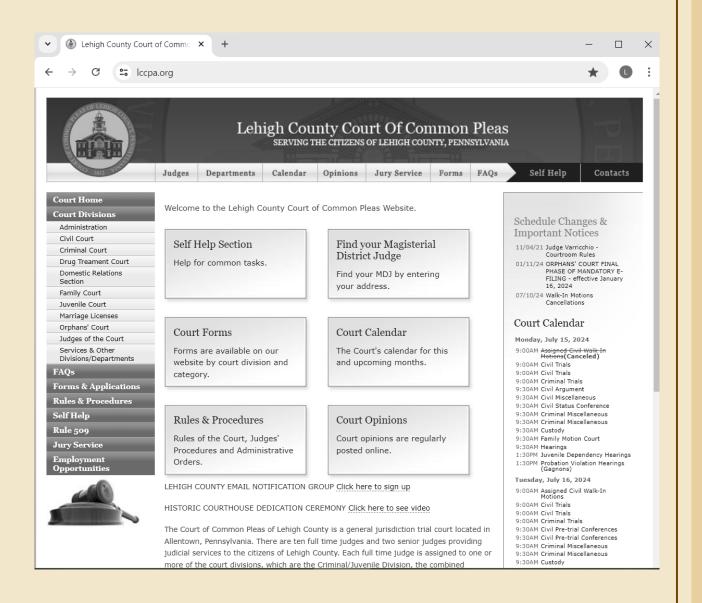
- Preliminary Arraignments for Arrests made after Courthouse hours
- Bail Payments
- Emergency PFA Orders
- Constable Warrant Matters

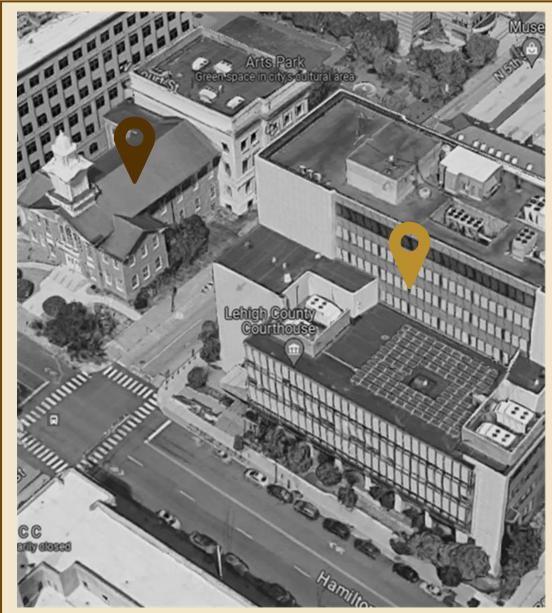
#### MORE INFORMATION

- In-depth information about the Lehigh County Court of Common Pleas is available at the Court's website at www.lccpa.org.
- This and prior annual reports and recent Criminal Justice Advisory Board Data Committee Reports are available in PDF at:

https://www.lccpa.org/courtadmin/annualreports.nex

Information about careers with the Court is available at: <a href="https://www.lccpa.org/employment">https://www.lccpa.org/employment</a>





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#### **LOCATION & CONTACT**



#### **COURT ADMINISTRATION**

Court of Common Pleas of Lehigh County 455 W. Hamilton Street Allentown, PA 18101 Telephone: 610-782-3014



www.lccpa.org

#### THE HISTORIC LEHIGH COUNTY COURTHOUSE

501 W. Hamilton Street Allentown, PA 18101