

# **WILLIAMS COUNTY COMMON PLEAS COURT JUVENILE DIVISION**



## **2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

**Karen K. Gallagher, Judge**



TAMARA S.  
RENOLLET  
Magistrate

WILLIAMS COUNTY COURT OF  
COMMON PLEAS  
PROBATE AND JUVENILE DIVISIONS

CRAIG BILLS  
Administrator

**Karen K. Gallagher**  
Judge

April 16, 2021

Williams County Commissioners  
One Courthouse Square 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Bryan OH 43506  
*Via email to Anne Retcher*

Supreme Court of Ohio  
Case Management Section  
65 S. Front Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Colleagues:

Please find herein the 2020 Annual Report of the Williams County Common Pleas Court, Juvenile and Probate Divisions, in compliance with Ohio Revised Code Section 2151.18. We hope that you will find this report informative as well as demonstrative of the substantial efforts of our entire staff to assist Williams County youth while striving to protect the community.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance provided by the Williams County Prosecutor's Office, the Williams County Department of Job and Family Services, the Williams County Sheriff's Office, all of the local police departments in Williams County, the Northwest Ohio Juvenile Detention Training and Rehabilitation Center, the Juvenile Residential Center of Northwest Ohio, the Department of Youth Services, all of the Williams County school district officials and personnel, and the mental health personnel and social service agencies that have provided services and direction to Williams County youth this past year.

Any questions or comments you have may be directed to the Administrator or Judge Gallagher.

Respectfully Submitted,

Craig Bills

Craig Bills, Administrator

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen K. Gallagher

Karen K. Gallagher, Judge

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# WILLIAMS COUNTY COMMON PLEAS COURT JUVENILE DIVISION



**The Honorable Karen K. Gallagher**  
Juvenile & Probate Judge

**Susan Sheets**, Deputy Clerk  
**Camilla Miller**, Deputy Clerk  
**Jessica Cummins**, Deputy Clerk  
**Michael Polley**, Probation Officer  
**John Karacson**, Probation Officer  
**Deborah Hurni-Willis**, Deputy Clerk  
**Annie Zervos**, Administrative Assistant  
**Ronda Muehlfeld**, Probate Deputy Clerk  
**Bayli Louys-Geiser**, FIC and Program Coordinator  
**Craig Bills**, Juvenile & Probate Court Administrator

(Staff Changes Effective 12/31/2020)

## *A Message from Judge Gallagher*

*What a year 2020 was for everyone! The impact that the COVID – 19 health pandemic had on the Court and its operations, was unprecedented. With the fast action of the Ohio Supreme Court, our Court became equipped with ZOOM videoconferencing and began a new way to conduct the Court's business.*

*Judge Bird ended his years of service and retired at the end of December, 2020. (See the special Tribute in this Report). We are certain he could not have anticipated that this was the way he would end his years of public service. Judge Bird kept the Court in operation, using ZOOM video conferencing and telephone conferencing to hold hearings through the end of the year.*

*The staff did a great job of balancing the recommendations of the Ohio Supreme Court and the need to serve the public. Those who were required to appear in Court, learned how to navigate videoconferencing for their appearances in Court. The safety of the juveniles, their families, community agencies and the Court staff was the priority.*

*The Court continued its specialized docket and other programs, requiring attendance by ZOOM videoconferencing. A major renovation of the Juvenile and Probate Courtroom began in 2020 and concluded at the beginning of 2021. The Court can now ensure that all the CDC's and the health department's requirements can be followed. The Court has returned to essential in-person hearings and also continues to use ZOOM videoconferencing.*

*On December 31, 2020 I was appointed by Governor DeWine as the Judge of the Williams County Common Pleas Court, Juvenile and Probate divisions to serve the unexpired term of Judge Bird. This appointment allowed for continuity of service since I was elected to this position in the November election. Having served as the Magistrate for the Court for the prior four years, there was much planning, thought and excitement leading into the election. The pandemic made us re-evaluate and restructure our plans. Consideration of budget constraints and how to be effective in the operations of the Court, have been a priority. Dealing with issues that were not anticipated, like on-line schooling, lack of socialization for our youth and families in crisis has taken a front row seat in this pandemic. The Court experienced a number of staff changes at the end of the year and we put a plan in place that permitted us to move forward safely and effectively and begin to deal with the challenges that we face daily with our youth and their families. On behalf of the Court and the staff, we are looking forward to our journey into the 2021 year.*

- Karen K. Gallagher

## A Tribute to Judge Steven R. Bird

Steven R. Bird was elected Judge of the Common Pleas Court of Williams County Probate and Juvenile Divisions, in November 1996. He took office in 1997 and served until December 31, 2020, when he retired. During Judge Bird's 23 years of service he took an active role in establishing local dispositional alternatives such as Intensive Probation; L.A.N.C.E. (Local Alternative Correctional Environment), and encouraged the development and utilization of Diversion alternatives such as Character First and Victim-Offender Reconciliation Program (V.O.R.P.).

Judge Bird also directed the implementation of the Williams County Family Intervention Court, a specialized docket approved by the Supreme Court of Ohio, and implemented the Reclaiming Futures model for the Court. He also served as an advisor to the Executive Committee and as Administrative Judge for the Northwest Ohio Juvenile Detention, Rehabilitation, and Training Center located in Stryker, Ohio.

Judge Bird was active in the Ohio Association of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and served on the Executive Committee of that organization. Judge Bird was a member of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the Ohio Probate Judges Association, as well as the American, Ohio and Williams County Bar Associations.

Judge Bird received several awards recognizing his work over the years, including Northwest State Community College Foundation *Making the Difference Award* for his work serving children and families in the community. The Williams County Job and Family Services, Child's Services Unit recognized Judge Bird with the *Cherish the Child Award* in recognition of his continued effort and support in keeping children safe.

Judge Bird is married to Lori Bird and they have three children: Lindsey, Michael and Emily. Judge Bird and his wife looked forward to traveling and spending time with his children and grandchildren, in his retirement.

We thank Judge Bird for his years of service and making a difference in the lives of children and families in our community.



## **WILLIAMS COUNTY JUVENILE DIVISION**

### **SUMMARY OF CASES FILED IN 2020**

Williams County Juvenile Court has the responsibility to hear and determine all cases and issues concerning children in Williams County. In 2020, there were 448 complaints and/or new cases formally filed. This total includes: 105 delinquent child complaints; 20 unruly child complaints; 99 juvenile traffic complaints; 62 child abuse, neglect, and dependency cases; 1 permanent custody case; 2 adult contributing cases; 32 adult failure to send cases; and 127 cases involving the allocation of parental rights/custody/visitation, support, paternity, and other actions.

**DELINQUENCY CASES:** Any child under the age of 18 who violates any state or federal law or any local ordinance or regulation, which would be a crime if committed by an adult, or who violates any lawful Court order is a delinquent child. In 2020, the Williams County Juvenile Court had 105 delinquency complaints filed. Of the 105 complaints filed, 9 were felony charges and 96 were misdemeanors and probation violations.

**UNRULY CASES:** Any child who violates a law applicable only to a child; which includes a child who is habitually truant from school and who previously has not been adjudicated an unruly child for being a habitual truant; a child who is not under the reasonable control of the child's parents, teachers, guardian, or custodian by reason of being wayward or habitually disobedient; or a child who engages in other conduct defined in Ohio Revised Code Section 2151.022 is an unruly child. In 2020, the Williams County Juvenile Court had 20 unruly complaints filed.

**JUVENILE TRAFFIC CASES:** A child who violates any traffic law, traffic ordinance or traffic regulation of the state or local political subdivision is a juvenile traffic offender. The Williams County Juvenile Court has exclusive jurisdiction over all juvenile traffic cases. In 2020, there were 99 juvenile traffic cases filed in the Williams County Juvenile Court.

**ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND DEPENDENCY:** Cases of abuse, neglect, and dependency are filed by the Williams County Department of Job and Family Services. The Williams County Juvenile Court appoints a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), or an attorney, as the Guardian Ad Litem for the child(ren) in these cases. In 2020, there were 62 abuse, neglect, and dependency cases filed in the Williams County Juvenile Court.

**PERMANENT CUSTODY:** The Williams County Juvenile Court has jurisdiction to determine motions for permanent custody that requires the permanent termination of parental rights and placement of a child in the permanent custody of the Williams County Department of Job and Family Services for adoptive placement of the child. 1 motion for permanent custody was filed in the Court in 2020.

**FAILURE TO SEND:** No parent, guardian, or other person having care of a child of compulsory school age shall violate any provision of the Ohio Revised Code regarding School Attendance. The Juvenile Court may require a person convicted of violating this division to give bond in a sum of not more than five hundred dollars, conditioned that the person will cause the child under the person's charge to attend school upon instruction as provided by the law, and remain as a pupil in the school or class during the term prescribed by law. Williams County Juvenile Court had 32 failure to send charges filed in 2020.

**ALLOCATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS/CUSTODY/VISITATION/PARENTAGE CASES:** The Williams County Juvenile Court has jurisdiction to hear the allocation of parental rights/custody/visitation cases involving children who are born to unmarried parents and not under another Ohio Court's jurisdiction. In 2020, there were 96 allocation of parental rights/custody/visitation/parentage cases filed in the Court.

**SUPPORT CASES:** The Williams County Juvenile Court has jurisdiction to hear and determine an application for an order of child support of any child, if the child is not a ward of another Court of this state. In 2020, there were 31 support cases filed in the Williams County Juvenile Court.

**CONTRIBUTING TO UNRULINESS OR DELINQUENCY OF A CHILD:** No person, including a parent, guardian, or other custodian of a child, shall violate any provision of the Ohio Revised Code regarding contributing to the unruliness or delinquency of a child. In 2020, the Williams County Juvenile Court had two contributing cases filed.

## 2020 PROGRAMS & SERVICES FOR WILLIAMS COUNTY

### YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

The Williams County Juvenile Court and Williams County Juvenile Probation Department administers programs and facilities providing for the custody, care, and rehabilitation of youth within its jurisdiction. The services to youth offenders and their families emphasize a commitment to meeting the needs of adjudicated delinquent and unruly children and juvenile traffic offenders within the community.

**JUVENILE PROBATION DEPARTMENT:** The Williams County Juvenile Probation Department is the primary service provider for the Juvenile Court. The department strives to hold juvenile offenders accountable for delinquent and unruly activity, while providing referrals to resources that reduce criminal behavior, and increase the ability of youth to live productively and responsibly in the community. It is the duty of the department to carry out the orders of the Court and serve to protect the interest of the community. Probation Officers are responsible for utilizing all suitable methods to aid juveniles on probation in order to bring about improvement to their conduct. The department recognizes the importance the role the family plays in each youth's response to supervision and therefore requires parents and/or guardians to participate in a youth's treatment plan, as well as other programs to which the youth and family are referred.

The Williams County Juvenile Probation Department is staffed by an Administrator, two Probation Officers, a Program Coordinator/Probation Officer, and two Probation Clerks. The Administrator manages the department and acts as a liaison between the Court and various community and law enforcement agencies. Williams County Juvenile Probation Officers each manage a caseload of juvenile offenders and are responsible for ensuring compliance with Court orders, assessing client needs, initiating referrals to appropriate agencies, and maintaining related documentation.

Every youth who is placed on probation is required to follow the conditions of probation. These conditions establish the parameters of acceptable behavior for the probationer. Probation Officers enforce the conditions of probation, and if necessary, can file complaints with the Court for probation violations. Each probationer is seen by his/her Probation Officer at least once per month either at the probation department, at school, or at home.

**DRUG TESTING:** Urinalysis testing is consistently used by the Williams County Juvenile Court to test youths for drug use. All juveniles placed on probation are subject to random drug and alcohol testing as a condition of their probation. Testing helps to keep youth substance-free and guides the Court on appropriate recommendations for treatment. The Probation Department used a twelve panel instant cup during 2020 testing for amphetamine, cocaine, oxycodone, marijuana, phencyclidine (PCP), methylenedioxymethamphetamine (ecstasy), opiate, benzodiazepine, barbiturate, methadone, methamphetamine, and buprenorphine.



**LIFE WITHOUT DRUGS:** The Life Without Drugs program is a 90-day program provided to juvenile detainees at The Northwest Ohio Juvenile Detention, Training, and Rehabilitation Center who are experiencing alcohol or drug related problems. This program is provided by Recovery Services of Northwest Ohio and is facilitated by Donna Robinson, BSW, LCDC III, who is the on-site Substance Abuse Counselor. The Life Without Drugs program educates youth on the disease concept, 12 step support groups, as well as relapse prevention, family origin issues, anger management, coping/decision making skills, and leisure/recreational activities. The on-site counselor conducts in-depth assessments, substance abuse education, group therapy, and individual counseling with the youths placed in the program. Williams County had a total of one juvenile referred and successfully completed The Life Without Drugs program in 2020.

**ELECTRONIC MONITORING:** The Court contracts with the Corrections Center of Northwest Ohio (CCNO) for electronic monitoring services. Electronic Monitored House Arrest is used as an alternative to placing juveniles in a secure detention facility. The equipment used is designed to track an offender's movement in the community providing juveniles the opportunity to experience a structured setting within their home. There were 16 youth placed on Electronic Monitored House Arrest in 2020.

**ON-CALL:** The Probation Department has a Probation Officer on-call at all times. This allows for a Probation Officer to be available to law enforcement officials when juvenile related matters occur in the county. Probation officers have the authority to detain a juvenile or determine an alternative placement pending a hearing before the Court on the next business day.

**FAMILY INTERVENTION COURT:** The Juvenile Court operates two specialized dockets with its Family Intervention Court (FIC). FIC is a Court process that takes cases out of the traditional docket and places them in a specialized docket. The purpose is to bring more intense services to cases with mental health issues, substance abuse issues, or family systems issues. Cases may be referred to the Court from delinquency cases or abuse, neglect, dependency cases. Each case is reviewed by a treatment team consisting of organizations and service providers in Williams County. FIC may accept a maximum of 10 cases per docket. To successfully complete the process, participants must pass through four phases. It is a voluntary program and all members of the household must consent to being involved in the process. The Delinquency Treatment Court served 10 youth/families while the Dependency Treatment Court served one family.

**DIVERSION:** Referrals to the Diversion program for Williams County youth come from a number of entities including the Prosecuting Attorney's office, law enforcement, school administration/staff, Williams County Job and Family Services, Community Agencies, and parents/guardians of juveniles. Diversion uses programming, supervision, and support as ways to redirect youth. The program reduces recidivism rates, reduces Court costs, and provides necessary services and resources to youth and their families. In 2020, 39 juveniles completed the program successfully, 2 juveniles continued into 2021, and no juveniles were referred back to the prosecutor's office for formal prosecution.

The Williams County Juvenile Court's Diversion Program is a practical application of Ohio Juvenile Rule of Procedure 9 (A), which states that "in all appropriate cases formal Court action should be avoided and other community resources utilized to ameliorate situations brought to the attention of the Court." Ohio Juvenile Rule of Procedure 9 (B) further provides that "information that a child is within the Court's jurisdiction may be informally screened prior to the filing of a complaint to determine whether the filing of a complaint is in the best interest of the child and the public." The philosophy behind the rule is that the formal Court action should be a last resort in addressing juvenile problems. Diversion keeps lower risk youth from the formal system, which allows the Court to direct limited staff and resources to higher risk, chronic, and serious juvenile offenders.

**CARTEENS:** In 2020, 32 juveniles were referred to the CARTEENS program. CARTEENS is a traffic safety program that educates teen drivers in an attempt to reduce the number of repeat juvenile traffic offenders, decrease the number of teen traffic offenders, and increase teen awareness of traffic/vehicle safety. The "Car" in CARTEENS stands for "Cautions and Responsibility", and the "Teens" refers to the teenagers who help prepare and present the program. In the CARTEENS programs, teen leaders teach traffic education safety programs to first-time teen traffic offenders, while also building offenders' self-esteem and interpersonal skills. Program topics include excessive speed, driving under the influence, seat belt safety use, consequences of unsafe decisions, dealing with peer pressure, understanding traffic laws, and recognizing and reacting to traffic signs and signals. This program presented to Williams County youth through a collaborative effort of the Northwest Ohio OSU Extension 4-H Office, the Williams County Juvenile Court, and the Ohio State Highway Patrol. The Court allows many first time juvenile traffic offenders the opportunity to have their traffic violation dismissed by completing the CARTEENS program. Juvenile traffic offenders that are ordered into the program must successfully complete the program and pay all Court costs prior to their traffic violation being dismissed.

**PARENT PROJECT:** The Parent Project is a nationally recognized program that was created specifically for parents with difficult or defiant adolescents. Parents learn and practice specific prevention and intervention strategies for destructive behaviors – truancy, alcohol, and drug use, criminal behavior, running away, violence, and suicide. Williams County Common Pleas Court contracted with Amanda Beck, SWA, CCDC II, to facilitate Parent Project courses in 2020. The Parent Project meetings are conducted one night a week for twelve weeks. Parents in the program are required to purchase the course material. Williams County had no participants in Parent Project in 2020.

**VOLUNTEER ATTORNEY PRO BONO PROGRAM:** In 2019 upon our application, the Ohio Supreme Court approved the Williams County Common Pleas Court as a Pro Bono service provider which permitted local attorneys to volunteer to represent indigent parties in the presentation of their cases in the areas of paternity and family law. This program was re-certified in 2020. Due to the increasing number of self-represented litigants appearing in Court in the family law area, the Court looked at creative solutions that would have a positive result for all involved. The Court makes a determination if a party is indigent or of such limited resources that they are unable to retain counsel. If the party meets the requirements, the Court assigns a volunteer attorney to represent the party in the case that is before the Court. In turn, the volunteer attorney keeps track of their time in the representation of the party and is able to receive CLE (continuing legal education) credits for providing this service. This program has been a benefit to the Court, the parties and the attorneys.

**MAGISTRATE FORUMS:** In 2020 the Court's Magistrate continued to provide educational forums for the local attorneys to assist with continuing education and Court procedures. The programs focused on local issues and procedures to assist the attorneys in representing their clients.

## **CONFINEMENT, REHABILITATION, AND PLACEMENT FOR WILLIAMS COUNTY YOUTH IN 2020**

**NORTHWEST OHIO JUVENILE DETENTION, TRAINING, AND REHABILITATION CENTER:** The Northwest Ohio Juvenile Detention, Training, and Rehabilitation Center (JDC), which is located in Williams County, Ohio, became operational in February of 2000 as a regional Juvenile Detention Center. The Detention Center provides secure detention to juveniles within the jurisdictions of Defiance, Henry, Fulton, and Williams Counties. The Center consists of approximately 17,000 square feet and has 32 individual detention cells, a control room, multi-purpose room, two classrooms, intake area, nurse clinic, gymnasium, library, administrative offices, and a secure outdoor recreation area. The Northwest Ohio Juvenile Detention Center is governed by a Board of Trustees where each member has a vote. The Juvenile Court Judges in the four counties are Ex Officio members of the Board. In 2020, Williams County detained 27 youth at the Northwest Ohio Juvenile Detention and Rehabilitation Center for a total length of stay of 563 days.

**JUVENILE RESIDENTIAL CENTER OF NORTHWEST OHIO:** The Juvenile Residential Center of Northwest Ohio (JRC) operates a 42 bed facility located in Wood County, Bowling Green, Ohio that houses male felony offenders. The mission of the Juvenile Residential Center of Northwest Ohio is to assist youth and their families in making positive changes that contribute to an improved functioning in the home environment while protecting the community. In collaboration with Courts, families, and other outside service providers, the facility seeks to individualize each youth's treatment and enhance their pro-social development. JRC is governed by the following counties: Defiance, Fulton, Hancock, Henry, Ottawa, Paulding, Putnam, Van Wert, Williams, and Wood. In 2020, Williams County Juvenile Court placed one juvenile with felony adjudications into the Juvenile Residential Center of Northwest Ohio.

**OHIO DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES:** The Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) is the juvenile correction system for the State of Ohio. DYS is statutorily mandated to confine felony offenders, ages 10-21, who have been adjudicated and committed by one of Ohio's 88 county juvenile Courts. The mission of the Ohio Department of Youth Services is to improve Ohio's future by habilitating youth and empowering family and communities. DYS also provides parole services to youth upon release from a DYS facility to assist in the transition from the institution back into the community. Williams County committed no juveniles with a felony adjudication to the Department of Youth Services in 2020.