

COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF UNION COUNTY, OHIO

# 2023 Annual Report

PROBATE & JUVENILE DIVISION



Hon. Rick Rodger, Judge

..... 1

Letter from the Bench ..... 3

Hon. Rick Rodger, Judge ..... 4

Court Staff ..... 5

Probate Division ..... 6

    Five Year Case Filing Trend – Probate Division ..... 6

    Jurisdiction of the Probate Court..... 6

    Online Marriage Application.....7

    Weddings at the Courthouse..... 8

    Historical Probate Court Records ..... 8

Juvenile Division ..... 9

    Five Year Case Filing Trend – Juvenile Division ..... 9

    Jurisdiction of the Juvenile Division .....10

    Juvenile Division Probation & Community Control ..... 11

    Truancy .....15

    Mediation .....15

    Treatment Courts .....16

    Central Ohio Youth Center.....17

    CASA Program of Delaware & Union Counties.....18

History of the Probate & Juvenile Courts ..... 20

Union County Probate & Juvenile Judges .....21



# Letter from the Bench

## *To The Citizens of Union County, Ohio:*

I continue to be honored to serve Union County, Ohio as Judge of the Juvenile and Probate Divisions of the Union County Court of Common Pleas. It has been a wonderful experience working with the various agencies within Union County to benefit families and children. We are blessed to have so many caring individuals within various offices and agencies in the County that care deeply for the many individuals and families that come before our Courts each year.


In past years, I updated all of you on our continuing efforts to modernize the Court and prepare for e-filing. In October, 2023, we went live with our e-filing system and it appears that it is working quite well. This is in large part due to the amount of time members of my staff put in to make sure the system was going to run effectively and efficiently as well as the number of hours they put in to train other employees and attorneys using the system. As part of this process, we also implemented the eMarriage system where we can now accept marriage applications on-line through our Probate Division. Likewise, we also began performing marriage ceremonies for individuals in June, 2023. This has been very rewarding as we have the opportunity to interact with and serve individuals on one of their happiest days.

2023 has been a busy year for our Court. My staff have been wonderful for their continued efforts to ensure our case management system is accessible and remains functional. We also could not move forward on many other projects and ideas without their dedicated service to the Court and to Union County, Ohio. I am grateful for the dedication and the work of my staff each and every day. I am very appreciative of their efforts.

I am equally grateful for our partnerships with other service organizations, other County offices and the Union County Commissioners for their continued support.

Thank you to all of the people of Union County, Ohio for permitting me to continue serve you as the Judge of the Juvenile and Probate Divisions.

Humbly,



---

Judge Rick Rodger

## Hon. Rick Rodger, Judge



Judge Rick Rodger grew up on a farm in the State of Montana. After graduating high school, Judge Rodger attended Brigham Young University in Utah where he graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Justice Administration. After college, he attended Capital University Law School and earned his Juris Doctorate in 1988.

Judge Rodger became an associate attorney for a local law firm in 1988 and eventually a partner. He opened his own law office in 2000 but later closed that office in 2014. Judge Rodger joined the Union County Prosecuting Attorney's Office in 1992 and remained with that office through 2000. Between 2001 and 2005, Judge Rodger served as an Assistant Prosecutor for Hardin County, Ohio. In 2005, Judge Rodger again became an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney for Union County and remained in that position until 2021.

On November 3, 2020, Judge Rodger was elected to serve as Probate and Juvenile Judge of the Union County Court of Common Pleas Court. His first term as Judge began February 9, 2021.

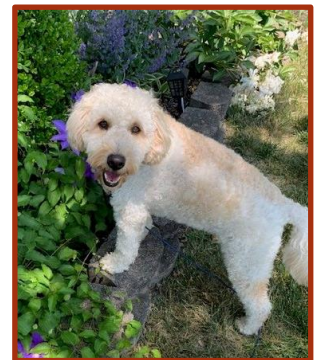
As a member several professional organizations, Judge Rodger serves on committees, including:

- The Ohio Judicial Conference (Juvenile Law and Procedure, Probate Law and Procedure; Court Security Committee and the Court Administration Committees), Ohio Association of Probate Court Judges (Court Administration Committee) and Ohio Association of Juvenile Court Judges (Estate Best Practices Committee).
- The Supreme Court of Ohio's Advisory Committee on Court Security (two-year term beginning in 2023).
- The Ohio Council of County Officials Board (two-year term beginning in 2023).
- Ohio Association of Municipal and County Court Clerks (Records Retention Subcommittee); National Center for State Courts, National College of Probate Judges (Membership Committee, two-year term beginning in 2023).

Judge Rodger also serves on the board of the Miami Valley Juvenile Rehabilitation Center and also attends the board meetings of the Central Ohio Youth Center, and as an advisor the Board of Trustees of the Union County Volunteer Guardian Program.

Judge Rodger moved to Marysville in 1990. He and his wife, Sharon, retired from Nationwide Insurance, have been married for 41 years. Their sons, Adam and Steven, both graduated from Marysville High School and have gone on to pursue further education. Adam obtained his Ph.D. in Russian history. Steven received his Master's degree in healthcare administration. Steven's wife, Alyssa, has received her Master's in education and is employed as a teacher.

Judge Rodger's family expanded in 2022 with the addition of Trooper, a mini-goldendoodle. Trooper frequently visits the courthouse to lend a paw.



# Court Staff

## Magistrates

Sharon Robinson-Walls, Chief Magistrate  
 Louis P. Endres, III, Magistrate  
 Victoria Stone-Moledor, Magistrate/Staff Attorney  
 Adam R. Rinehart, Magistrate/Court Administrator

## Administrative Staff

Sue Chongson, Financial Officer  
 Julie Harvey, Administrative Assistant

## CASA Program of Delaware and Union Counties

Tammy Matias, Executive Director  
 Melanie Kempton, Assistant CASA Coordinator  
 Meagen Belcher, Program Assistant  
 Cheyenne Debren, Program Assistant

## Community Control and Probation Department

Jennifer N. Griffith, Chief Probation Officer/Court Administrator  
 Chris Hrytzik, Probation Officer  
 Lindsey Keller, Probation Officer  
 Abby Sullivan, Probation Officer  
 Dan Wallace, Probation Officer

## Family and Juvenile Treatment Courts

Joshua Levingston, Coordinator  
 Nicole Ray, Case Manager/Probation Officer

## Deputy Clerks of Court – Juvenile Division

Leigh Ann Moots, Chief Deputy Clerk  
 Jackie Dillahunt, Deputy Clerk  
 Christy Jackson, Deputy Clerk  
 Pamela O'Brien, Deputy Clerk  
 Jerika Risner, Deputy Clerk  
 Christine Schalip, Deputy Clerk  
 Pam Vance, Deputy Clerk

## Deputy Clerks of Court – Probate Division

Jody Anderson, Deputy Clerk  
 Alicia Murphy, Deputy Clerk  
 Sarah Johnson, Deputy Clerk

## Services Provided Pursuant to Contract

Daniel L. Davis, Ph.D., Board Certified Forensic Psychologist  
 Nicole R. McDonald, Esq., Mediator  
 Dr. Christopher D. Cottrell, Mediator  
 Shannon Rust, Esq., Stephanie Coe, Esq., and Chelsea Maggio, Esq., CASA Staff Attorneys  
 Jon Kleiber and Kim Zacharias, Probate Court Investigators  
 Adoption Circle, Probate Court Adoption Assessor



# Probate Division

The Probate Division of the Court of Common Pleas assists citizens in navigating many aspects of their lives.

## Five Year Case Filing Trend – Probate Division

Case Type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Adoptions	31	16	15	18	10
Changes of Name	47	32	30	48	40
Civil Actions	5	1	6	6	7
Conservatorships	0	0	0	2	0
Delayed Registrations & Corrections of Birth Record	7	5	1	0	4
Estates	178	179	199	233	203
Guardianships (Adult)	14	18	17	34	34
Guardianships (Minor)	7	7	3	19	8
Minor's Settlement of Claim	4	3	3	6	10
Testamentary Trusts	3	1	4	1	4
Wrongful Death	0	0	0	0	0
Other, Miscellaneous	2	5	7	14	10
Total New Cases Filed	296	262	276	381	331
Total Cases Closed	239	285	209	295	445
Cases Pending at Close of Year	426	402	481	550	456
Marriage License Applications	317	323	364	311	358

## Jurisdiction of the Probate Court

**Adoptions.** Most adoptions are of a minor child, though the law permits adoption of adults in specific circumstances. The Probate Court also considers petitions from adopting parents who wish to be pre-approved for adoption. If the adopting parents are not working with an adoption agency who provides a home study, the Court will appoint the Court's contracted adoption assessor to complete the home study.

**Changes of Name.** A petition can be filed by an adult to change their own name, or by a parent or custodian to change the name of a minor.

**Civil Actions.** Adversarial lawsuits filed in the Probate Court include the following actions: to contest the validity or construction of a will (which, upon demand, may be tried by a jury); citations for the concealment of assets or to produce an original will; to continue or withdraw life-sustaining medical treatment; presumption of death of a missing person; and petitions to order treatment for persons suffering from the effects of alcohol or other drug abuse.

*Civil Commitments.* The Probate Court exercises exclusive jurisdiction to order civil commitment, involuntary hospitalization of mentally ill persons or involuntary outpatient treatment for those who can reasonably benefit from recommended treatment. These actions are filed when the allegedly mentally ill person refuses to or cannot voluntarily consent and comply with necessary treatment.

*Delayed Registrations and Corrections of Birth Records.* Although uncommon today, the parents or guardians of a child whose birth is not otherwise registered immediately with the Ohio Department of Health's (ODH) Bureau of Vital Statistics can petition the Probate Court to order the registration and creation of a birth certificate.

*Decedent's Estates.* The Court oversees the estates of persons who die owning property that must be distributed either according to their validly executed will or, if the owner died without a will, in accord with the laws of descent and distribution. The Probate Court appoints one or more fiduciaries to conduct the administration of the estate.

*Guardianship of Adults.* If an adult person is "so mentally impaired, as a result of a mental or physical illness or disability, as a result of intellectual disability, or as a result of chronic substance abuse, that the person is incapable of taking proper care of the person's self or property [...]," the Probate Court will consider an application to appoint a guardian for that person. See R.C. 2111.11(D)(1). A guardian has many important and mandatory duties, including completing education requirements provided by the Supreme Court of Ohio (both upon appointment and annually each year thereafter), and timely filing accurate, annual accountings regarding the ward's assets. Guardians are strictly accountable to the Court in its role as the superior guardian of all wards.

*Guardianship of Children.* A guardianship of the minor's person could be granted if the child's parents are deceased, unable or unwilling to provide care and guidance for the ward, or if the minor's best interest will be promoted through a guardianship. A guardianship of the minor's estate could be granted when the child has obtained property valued at more than \$25,000 and Probate Division oversight of the financial administration of those assets is required. A guardianship of both the minor's person and the minor's estate may be granted if circumstances require.

*Settlement of Claims for Personal Injuries (Incompetent Adults and Minors).* Probate Division approval is required for any settlement of claims for personal injuries to an incompetent adult under guardianship or a minor child. Parents and guardians may file suit on behalf of the ward or child and may negotiate proposed settlements, however only the Probate Division can approve the actual settlement, grant authority to execute releases and to receive proceeds for the estates of the incompetent adult or the minor child.

## Online Marriage Application

The eMarriage online portal opened to the public in August of 2023. Applicants for a marriage license are able to provide the Court with the required demographic information and schedule an appointment to complete the process in person. Once they are in the Probate Division Clerk's Office, they submit their supplemental documentation to a Deputy Clerk for review, and, if approved, take their Oath. The eMarriage portal increases the efficiency for prospective newlyweds and the Court by streamlining the application process on both sides of the counter.

## Weddings at the Courthouse

In June of 2023, Judge Rodger began to conduct wedding ceremonies at the Union County Courthouse pursuant to R.C. 2101.27, which allows the Probate Court Judge to solemnize marriages within the county. Wedding appointments are scheduled through the Probate Division Clerk's Office according to the availability of both the Probate Judge and a courtroom. Guests and photographers are a welcome addition to the ceremony.

### WEDDING CEREMONIES

<b>2023</b>	32
-------------	----

## Historical Probate Court Records

Union County Probate Court historical and closed records are available for review at the [Union County Records Center and Archives](#) (128 South Main Street, Marysville). Records may be viewed with the assistance of an archivist. Many historical records have been microfilmed and digitally indexed.

A computer terminal is available for public use at both the Union County Records Center and the Union County Recorder's Office (233 West Sixth Street). The computerized, searchable index references all Probate matters from 1820 through May 2019.



The following records are also available: Birth and Death Records from 1867 to 1909; Marriage Records from 1820 to present (digitally, May 28, 1996 and after); and Delayed Registration and Correction of Birth records from 1941 to the present. Mental illness and intellectual disability cases are confidential. Adoption records are confidential; however, limited access may be granted according to the controlling provisions of the Ohio Revised Code.

Beginning June 1, 2019, the Probate Court's public dockets and records filed after that date can be accessed through the Court's online [Public Records Search Portal](#).

Open matters are held in the Probate Clerk's Office and may be viewed with the assistance of a deputy clerk. Customers are advised to call ahead to the Probate Court at (937) 645-3029 Ext. 3416 to inquire about the location and availability of a particular file. Copies are available for a fee.



# Juvenile Division

The Union County Juvenile Court is focused on children and promoting their best interests. The court seeks to rehabilitate and hold children accountable for criminal activity, address circumstances in a family's life to protect children from abuse, neglect and dependency, and determine and enforce orders of custody, visitation and financial support.

## Five Year Case Filing Trend – Juvenile Division

Case Type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Delinquency	148	110	135	149	141
<i>Youths Adjudicated of a Felony*</i>	18	8	18	19	20
<i>Youths Committed to ODYS JCF**</i>	1	0	1	0	1
<i>Youths Placed in a CCF***</i>	3	2	2	2	0
Unruly	45	29	43	36	42
Juvenile Traffic	235	255	289	221	206
<i>Juvenile Traffic Violations Bureau****</i>	<i>n/a</i>	31	80	43	41
Abuse/Neglect/Dependency	76	63	35	49	55
Permanent Custody	0	0	5	2	17
Custody/Visitation	77	71	60	58	125
Parentage	1	0	0	0	3
Child Support Enforcement/ Modification	423	340	283	341	277
UIFSA	0	5	0	0	12
Adult Criminal	5	7	28	26	17
Other	22	20	21	2	1
<b>Total New Cases Filed</b>	<b>1033</b>	<b>899</b>	<b>899</b>	<b>884</b>	<b>896</b>
<b>Total Cases Terminated</b>	<b>1017</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>1018</b>	<b>864</b>	<b>1038</b>

\*As reported to Ohio Department of Youth Services for the Fiscal Year (July 1 to June 30)

\*\*Committed to serve a term in an Ohio Department of Youth Services Juvenile Correctional Facility

\*\*\*Ordered to serve a term in an Ohio Department of Youth Services Subsidized Community Corrections Facility

\*\*\*\* Number of qualifying Juvenile Traffic offenders eligible to waive a court appearance and admit traffic violations

## Jurisdiction of the Juvenile Division

The jurisdiction of the Juvenile Division includes:

*Unruly Children* – children who are truant or will not submit to the reasonable control of their parents, guardians, custodians, or teachers, by reason of being wayward or habitually disobedient.

*Delinquent Children* – children who violate any federal, state or local law or ordinance that would be an offense if committed by an adult; violate a lawful order of the court; and attempt or complete acts forbidden to those less than 18 years of age. Children who are adjudicated of felony-level offenses may be committed to serve a term in an Ohio Department of Youth Services Juvenile Correctional Facility (JCF) or, alternatively, a Community Corrections Facility (CCF) to receive targeted treatment.

*Abused Children* – children whose adult caregivers have abused the child or placed the child in danger of abuse (including sexual, physical, or mental abuse). Includes infants who test positive at birth for illicit drugs.

*Neglected Children* – children whose adult caregiver has abandoned the child, refuses to provide proper or necessary subsistence, education, medical or surgical care or treatment, or other care necessary for the child's physical or mental health, morals, or well-being, or whose faults result in a lack of parental adequate care.

*Dependent Children* – children who are dependent upon the state for their care because of homelessness, lack of parental adequate care, or circumstances of the child's condition or environment that warrant the state to assume the child's guardianship.

*Juvenile Traffic Offenders* – children who violate federal, state or local traffic laws, other than parking violations. In June 2020, the Court instituted a Juvenile Traffic Violations Bureau to allow children (depending on the nature of the alleged violation and lack of any prior traffic violations) to waive and through the Bureau.

*Custody* – determination of parental rights and responsibilities to children of unwed parents.

*Child Support* – matters regarding the establishment, modification or enforcement of Court or Child Support Agency administrative orders for the financial support of children.

*Adult (Criminal)* – matters in which adults are charged with misdemeanor violations of nonsupport or contributing to nonsupport of dependents; parental educational neglect; interference with custody; and contributing to the unruliness or delinquency of a child.

*Other* – Includes orders of protection against a juvenile; petitions of minor child (17) to marry; grandparent powers of attorney; and caretaker authorization affidavits.

## Juvenile Division Probation & Community Control

The officers of the Juvenile Probation and Community Control Department are dedicated to improving the lives of youth under the jurisdiction of the Court due to delinquent or unruly behavior.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Youth On Community Control/Probation*</b>					
Continuing (from previous year)	64	32	28	56	94
New Youth	47	24	86	78	60
Total Youth Supervised	111	56	114	134	154
Successful Completions	68	25	50	50	55
Unsuccessful Completions	9	1	6	5	5
Neutral Completions	2	2	1	0	0
Neutral Completions- Transferred	0	0	1	0	2
Total Youth Completions	79	28	58	55	62
<b>Specialized Interventions</b>					
Specialized Assessments** ***	14	13	8	10	13

\* Data reported for 2023 calendar year and does not include youth served via pre-adjudication/disposition efforts..

\*\* Data reported to Ohio Department of Youth Services for State Fiscal Year (July 1 to June 30).

\*\*\* Specialized Assessments: i.e., psychological; competency; and specialized offenses assessments

Through the Probation Department, the Court utilizes a proactive approach to support family enrichment and to strengthen parent and child relationships to promote unity and family stability. Probation officers support a youth's academic growth by facilitating communication and interaction between schools and families. Youth are also required to engage in tasks such as community service and writing meaningful apology letters that hold them accountable for their past actions. Probation officers assist in the development of family-managed responsibility through structured rewards and consequences to promote healthy decision-making in the future.

Annually, the Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) provides the Union County Juvenile Court with supplemental funding to develop and provide an array of local, community-based treatment, intervention, diversion and prevention programs to address and serve the individual needs of each juvenile offender or youth at risk of offending. The direct funding is intended to further Ohio's goal to divert or steer youth away from a path that could lead to placement in Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) institutions.

The Union County Juvenile Court has prioritized the use of DYS funding to build a highly trained staff of probation officers who can provide individualized interventions to youth of all risk levels. Union County's Juvenile Probation Officers approach all youth with a strength based, family-centered mindset, bolstered by ongoing training in multiple disciplines, including

motivational interviewing and the targeted use of evidence-based interventions. The primary goal is to guide youth to lasting behavioral change.

Probation officers primarily work with youth in their own home and involve the youth's parents or guardians in most interactions, with few exceptions. A youth's term of probation varies depending on the youth's compliance with court orders, identified risk level and the severity of their offense. A youth's case is successfully terminated after probation case plan goals and court orders are completed.

Probation officers begin immediately to work with the youth and family to identify their strengths and needs. All probation officers are appropriately trained to perform various screenings and assessments. Based upon years of juvenile justice system evidence, today it is a well-settled fact that lower risk youth are best served by the community-based interventions, while outcomes for higher risk youth are better if they engage in more intensive programs.

### **Ohio Youth Assessment System (OYAS) Assessments**

All youth adjudicated of an unruly or delinquency offense receive an Ohio Youth Assessment System (OYAS) assessment, which determines the youth's likelihood of recidivating in seven (7) targeted criminogenic need areas. The OYAS risk-need level assessment is critical to form the department's response to the youth's individualized needs, and follow-up screenings are periodically conducted to measure progress and further guide the use of appropriate interventions. Youth eligible to participate in the Court's Diversion Accountability Program are screened with the Ohio Youth Assessment System-Diversion (OYAS-DIV) tool.

The probation officers also screen the youth for exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACES) and trauma in furtherance of the Court's long-standing commitment to provide trauma informed services and responses.

### **The Carey Guides for Youth**

To reinforce behavioral change, Juvenile Probation Officers are trained and utilize the long-term case management strategies set forth in The Carey Guides, an intervention program for moderate to high-risk youth. Probation officers guide the youth to understand the personal and environmental factors underlying their offending behavior and teach the youth skills to achieve lasting behavioral changes.

### **Brief Intervention Tools for Youth**

The Probation Officers are also trained to use Brief Intervention Tools (BITS) to address key skill deficits for moderate to high-risk youth in short, structured interventions. Youth learn a variety of skills including, but not limited to: prosocial decision making, overcoming automatic responses and thinking traps, problem solving, and examining unhealthy relationships.

### **Cognitive-Behavioral Interventions Group for Youth**

Many moderate to high-risk youths can participate in Cognitive-Behavioral Interventions - Core Youth (CBI-CY), created by the University of Cincinnati and initially offered by the probation department in 2019. CBI participants meet twice per week for twenty-three weeks in a group setting that provides a thorough intervention to broadly target all criminogenic needs in moderate to high-risk youth.

Probation officers are trained to lead the group with a cognitive-behavioral approach to manage risk factors in a way that is developmentally appropriate for youth. CBI places heavy emphasis on skill building activities to assist with cognitive, social, emotional, and coping skill development. The probation department also developed and provides a shortened, modified

version of CBI-CY, carefully targeted to deliver benefits of the curriculum for low-risk youth who are not appropriate to participate in the standard program.

### ***The Parent Project® Group for Parents***

The Parent Project® is a 40-hour clinical group and parenting course for the families of delinquent and unruly children under the jurisdiction of this Court. Families with identified parenting needs are taught by specially trained staff members who received initial training in 2013, funded by an ODYS grant. Families Matter, a non-profit organization that supports the mission of the Union County Juvenile Court to strengthen and improve the lives of children under the jurisdiction of the Court, also provides critical funding for the program.

The Parent Project® is designed to empower parents to increase the effectiveness of their parental monitoring and supervision skills, as well as provide families with appropriate intervention strategies to maintain youth within their homes. Parents learn to calmly address problematic behavior, implement specific sanctions for unwanted behaviors, reward desired behavior and other skills to assist in decreasing negative behaviors that contributed to their child's delinquent or unruly behaviors.

The classes are held one evening per week for 12 weeks. Curriculum materials and meals are provided by Families Matter. Initially, many parents are skeptical that the program will benefit them, but most conclude the program with a deep appreciation for the positive impact their new, learned parenting skills have benefitted their child.

### ***OhioGuidestone FFT-Informed Services for Youth and Families***

FFT is an evidence-based, strength-based, tri-phasic family therapy model designed to help youth and their families who struggle with acting out behaviors and relational issues and provides skills to reduce recidivism. The outcomes of the program result in a decrease of acting-out behaviors and an increase in relational functioning for the family and the larger community involved with the family. The target population for FFT are both males and females, minority and non-minority youth, ages 13-18, who have been OYAS-assessed as moderate to high risk to reoffend or assessed as low risk but presenting with high psychosocial needs including significant family dysfunction that contributes to the youth's delinquency.

The phases of FFT include Engagement and Motivation, Behavior Change and Generalization. The engagement goals phase includes reducing negativity and blame, developing protective factors, exploring barriers to change, implementing behavior change strategies and determining which behavior change interventions match the relational functions of the problem behaviors. The final phase involves generalizing the changes the family made to other areas of the relational system, developing and following focused relapse prevention strategies, and extending the changes by incorporating relevant community resources and family.

FFT informed services are individualized to the needs of the youth and their family. Sessions are typically one to two times each week and each session is 1-1.5 hours in duration. The model is a short-term, with sessions occurring over the course of three to six months, but services can continue if medically necessary.

OhioGuidestone's approach to clinical intervention is informed by neurobiology and applied sciences that drive clinical treatment based on symptoms and associated brain areas that delineate appropriate intervention and treatment modalities. Symptomology around brain processes involved in anxiety, depression, and anger/aggression are most common among clients, and correlated with all or most diagnoses. OhioGuidestone therapists focus on measuring and evaluating changes in these symptom domains. Treatment progress is also

measured by reviewing the treatment plan goals, as necessary. Successful completion is defined by a reduction in negative behaviors (including drug use), an increase in both parental skill development and youth mental stability, and youth medication compliance (if applicable).

### **Diversion Accountability Program**

Juvenile delinquency or unruly behavior cases originate with the filing of a complaint by the Union County Prosecuting Attorney. Complaints are reviewed and selected if they appear appropriate for diversion based upon criteria established by the Court. Typically, youth who have no prior official or unofficial record (first-time offenders) and who are alleged to have committed status (unruly, truancy, or curfew violations) or misdemeanor-level, non-violent offenses are eligible for diversion.

The Probation Department conducts an eligibility screening of the youth and parent/guardian. If the youth is determined eligible, the youth and family must acknowledge the youth committed the offense and a Diversion Program fee must be paid. Depending on individualized programming needs, additional fees may apply. All terms, plus a deadline to complete them, will be included in the youth's Diversion Contract.

The Diversion Contract includes tasks and requirements designed to remediate the offense, to provide a learning opportunity for the youth and to serve as a consequence or deterrent for further illegal behavior. Terms could include: appropriate skills-building instruction; letters of apology to any victims; restitution; community service hours; a written essay on a subject related to the offense or to the youth's future goals; mental health screenings and full participation in recommended services; drug screening; and other terms that the officer believes are appropriate. Parenting skills instruction may be required for the parent/guardian.

If the youth successfully completes diversion, the Court will order the matter sealed. If the terms of the Diversion Contract are not fulfilled, the original complaint will be filed, and the matter will proceed formally.

### **Diversion – Alternatives to Adjudication (R.C. 2151.27)**

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Youth Referred for Assessment	57	43	3	21	10
<i>Delinquency Matters</i>	36	30	3	15	4
<i>Unruly Matters</i>	21	13	0	5	2
<i>Tobacco Matters</i>	0	0	0	4	4
Youth Ineligible	9	7	2	3	1
Case Dismissed	<i>na</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>na</i>	1
Total Youth Eligible for Diversion	48	36	1	18	8
Successful Completions*	43	31	4	10	6
Unsuccessful Completions*	5	5	1	1	2
Continuing**	4	4	0	7	0

\*Includes Youth who began Diversion during prior year.

\*\* Youth continuing on Diversion to next year.

## Truancy

The Union County Juvenile Court began aggressively targeting truancy in 1998 with the implementation of its Mediation Program. Mediation successfully aids many schools and families in correcting truancy and behavioral issues that would otherwise have been filed in the Court. Even after changes to Ohio truancy law in 2017, the Court's mediator remains available to the school districts to mediate with families after their Absence Intervention Teams recognize that a Written Intervention Plan is likely to fail.

Mediation takes place before the matter is submitted to the Court for filing as a complaint. Like all Unruly and Delinquency matters, truancy complaints are considered for diversion if diversion is in the best interests of the child. Complaints filed after mediation failed typically represent the most serious of all truancy matters from each Union County school district, as well as youth who attend digital or online schools.

### Truancy Complaints & Dispositions (R.C. 2151.27(G))

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Truancy Complaints Filed*	4	2	8	12	13
Average School Hours Missed ( <i>alleged</i> )		243	213	183	192
Entered Diversion	0	0	0	0	0
Dismissed	2	2	1	1	0
Transferred for Adjudication	1	0	1	0	0
Hold Open					1
Adjudicated	1	0	6	11	12
Disposition - Probation	0	0	5	11	12
Disposition - Transferred	1	0	1	0	0

\*Includes complaints alleging Habitual Truancy per R.C. 2151.022(B), Chronic Truancy per R.C. 2152.02(F)(5) and Delinquency for Violation of an Order of the Court regarding child's prior adjudication as an unruly child for habitual truancy per R.C. 2152.02(E)(2).

## Mediation

The Juvenile Division's Mediation Program has served the families and local school districts of Union County since 1998. The Court estimates that hundreds of children and their families have been diverted from Juvenile Court because of the Court's Mediation program.

### Mediations Conducted

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Unruly - School Truancy	37	31	38	17	20
Unruly - Disobedience	1	0	0	1	3
Custody - Private	10	3	10	4	11
Probate - Civil	0	1	0	0	0
<b>Total Mediations</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>34</b>

The mediator is available to serve all schools in Union County in responding to truancy and school behavior issues. Mediation also assists parents whose cases are before the Court as the result of paternity, legal custody, decision-making, and visitation issues. Meeting with the mediator provides a structure for parents to discuss their concerns and disagreements and arrive at an agreement regarding their child's care. Some parents require the assistance of a mediator when an Abuse, Neglect or Dependency matter has come before the Court. The mediator will also assist with crafting agreements for custody and visitation. All agreements in such matters are subject to the approval of the Court.

## Treatment Courts

The Family Treatment Court (FTC) was established in November 2007 and manages adult participants whose children have open abuse, neglect, or dependency cases before the Court. The FTC functions as a collaboration of multiple systems: the court, child welfare, substance use disorder and mental health treatment providers, and community partners. No single system has the authority, capacity, resources, or skills to respond to the array of challenges faced by families affected by substance use disorders. Collaboration is required if families are to succeed. Treatment, case management and peer support for participants is provided primarily by Freedom Recovery, Lower Lights Health, Lighthouse Behavioral Health Solutions, Maryhaven, Inc. and Wings Support and Recovery.

The Juvenile Treatment Court (JTC) was established in 2010 for high-risk, high-need youth whose drug and alcohol abuse issues continue without abatement on regular probation. A youth's family is expected to participate in parent education and to assist the Court in monitoring and holding the youth accountable. Treatment is provided primarily by therapists from OhioGuidestone and Maryhaven, Inc. Case management, supervision of the youth and family support is provided by the treatment court coordinator and case manager.

In addition to attending the annual NADCP training with the treatment team, Judge Rodger attended an additional NADCP conference specifically for Judicial Officers of Specialized Dockets in November of 2023. The training presented new, more focused information and was a great benefit.

Both of our Specialized Dockets were successfully recertified for three (3) years, effective December 16, 2023 through December 31, 2026.

### Family Treatment Court

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Parents Referred	29	21	16	15	30
Parents Admitted	11	5	4	6	8
Children of Parents Admitted	25	15	6	4	12
Graduated	3	5	3	2	3
Terminated – Unsuccessful	0	3	2	5	1
Terminated - Neutral	2	0	0	1	1



The program goals and objectives of both treatment courts are to establish mental health and addiction treatment services; to create a framework for the participant to live their life in recovery from addiction or free from substance abuse; and to provide education and supports for effective and safe parenting. For parents, the FTC seeks to safely reunify the child with the participant within the time permitted by law; and to prevent future removal due to abuse, neglect and dependency of that child or their siblings. For substance-abusing youth, the JTC seeks compliance with the terms of probation, to refrain from abusing substances and to prevent recidivism.

### Juvenile Treatment Court

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Juveniles Referred	12	10	12	10	23
Juveniles Admitted	3	3	7	8	5
Graduated	0	1	1	1	10
Terminated – Unsuccessful	0	0	3	2	2
Terminated - Neutral	0	2	1	1	0

To successfully complete or “graduate” from treatment court, a participant must demonstrate sobriety (accumulate clean drug screens and make sober life choices); complete substance abuse treatment (at assessed levels of care); address mental health issues (current and long-term). Parent participants in FTC must also obtain stable living/housing for themselves and their children; obtain a stable income; and accomplish all the Case Plan objectives as drafted by Children’s Protective Services and approved by the Court. For youth participants in the JTC, the juveniles must complete all terms of their probation successfully, including the completion of any specialized juvenile justice intervention program.

## Central Ohio Youth Center

Located at 18100 State Rt. 4, just north of Marysville, the Central Ohio Youth Center primarily serves detained youth from five counties: Union, Champaign, Logan, Madison and Delaware.

COYC also operates the Community Residential Center (CRC), is a 90-day program for adjudicated juvenile offenders. Within seven days of admission as a resident, the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI) residential interview is completed with each resident youth, as well as a comprehensive psycho-social interview. The information obtained from the interview is utilized to develop an Individual Treatment Plan (ITP) for each resident. The ITP lists objectives to be completed to achieve each goal.

Residents are assigned a therapist upon admission. The therapist develops a case management plan and provides individual and family therapy. The frequency and duration of individual and family therapy sessions are determined on a case-by-case basis, but each CRC resident receives individual therapy at least once per week. Youth are required to satisfy their current school requirements while they reside in COYC. For those who have dropped out of school, the staff will provide instruction to assist the resident in obtaining his or her GED.

COYC has been recognized by the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress for providing the organizational leadership and support necessary for the implementation of Trauma and Grief Component Therapy for Adolescents (TGCTA).

**Detention Use**

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Youth	200	63	152	126	173
Total Days	1267	396.5	817	980	1558.5
Percentage of Use*	24.20%	13.70%	15.71%	14.56%	19.28%
Community Residential Center	4	1	1	1	2

\* Percentage of use among four counties (2018-2020) or five counties (2021-2022).

\*\*Community Residential Center (CRC) secure residential program for adjudicated juvenile offenders.

## CASA Program of Delaware & Union Counties

*Submitted by Tammy Matias, CASA Executive Director, Delaware & Union Counties*

In 2023, The CASA Program of Delaware and Union Counties continued to experience growth and expansion. The program added 15 new CASA/GAL volunteers who were trained and sworn in. These new volunteers immediately began advocating for abused and neglected children in both counties.

### VOLUNTEER STATISTICS

Volunteer CASA Advocates (Delaware & Union)	65
Volunteer Total Case Hours	7,013
Miles Driven by Volunteers for Casework	65,076

### CASE STATISTICS

Number of Children Served	214
Gender of Children Served	
Female	101
Male	113
Child Age Range of Children Served	
0-5 years	90
6-11 years	57
12-15 years	43
16-17 years	17
18+	7

In 2023, 80 children's cases were closed with a CASA/GAL Volunteer involved. Of those 80 children, following are some important outcomes:

OUTCOMES	
Reunification achieved	25
Adopted	8
Legal Custody (relative)	27
Child turned 18/21	3
Other (case transferred, removed from docket, etc, legal custody to non-relative, remained in home)	17

CASA/GAL Volunteers continue to be a strong voice in the courtroom for abused and neglected children. While the National CASA volunteer retention rate is 18 months, the CASA Program of Delaware and Union Counties had a retention rate of 30.3 months in 2023. The CASA/GAL Volunteers in Delaware and Union Counties are very dedicated and committed to ensuring that every child has a voice in the courtroom and achieves a safe and permanent home at case closure.

# History of the Probate & Juvenile Courts

*Courtesy of Stephen W. Badenhop, Union County Record Center & Archives Coordinator*

## Probate Court

Probate courts, with authority in probate, testamentary and guardianship cases, existed in the Northwest Territory prior to Ohio's statehood. In 1802, Ohio's first constitution abolished separate probate courts and vested that jurisdiction with the common pleas courts. Separate probate courts reappeared in 1851 when Ohio drafted a new constitution, giving probate courts jurisdiction to grant marriage licenses and control land sales by appointed executors, administrators, and guardians.

In 1820, the Ohio General Assembly created Union County by uniting portions of Delaware, Franklin, Madison and Logan counties, as well as a portion of territory controlled by indigenous peoples pursuant to the 1795 Treaty of Green Ville (colloquially, the "Greenville Treaty.") The Union County Probate Court was established in 1852. Prior to 1852, probate matters in Union County were heard and decided by a judge of the Union County Common Pleas Court. As a result of a 1912 constitutional amendment, voters could decide by referendum to combine the probate court with the court of common pleas, which voters declined to approve in Union County.



*Union County's first courthouse was a tavern located in the Village of Milford Center, where county business was conducted from 1820 to 1821. The building was moved to the Union County Fairgrounds in the late 1800s but removed in 1940, due to decay.*

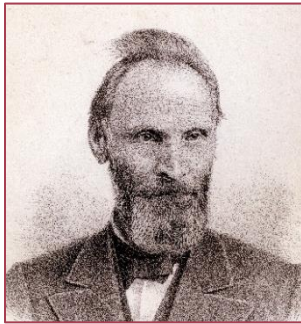
## Juvenile Court

The origins of the juvenile court system trace back to the reform spirit of the Progressive Era. Prior to the establishment of the juvenile court system, juvenile offenders were tried like adults and imprisoned with them. On April 25, 1904, the Ohio General Assembly passed an act to "regulate the treatment and control of dependent, neglected and delinquent children" through the establishment of a juvenile court. The law focused on the reformation and rehabilitation of minors, rather than punishment and applied only to children less than 16 years old. The law provided for juvenile probation officers and prohibited sending children under the age of twelve to jail, while allowing those children twelve to sixteen years of age to be sentenced to jail, industrial schools, other state institutions or into the homes of responsible individuals, and decreed those children sentenced to jail could not be confined with adult prisoners. Jurisdiction was originally given to the court of common pleas or the probate court.

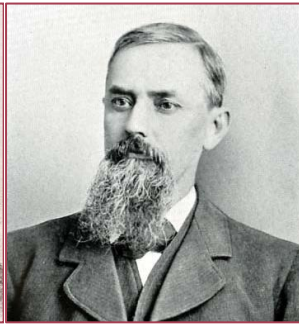
In 1906, the juvenile court act was extensively amended. The revised law extended the court's jurisdiction to punish any person or parent responsible for the delinquency or dependency of any child, while also raising the age of a minor to seventeen years.

By the approval of voters, a juvenile court can be placed under the jurisdiction of an independent juvenile court, or as a division of either the common pleas, probate or domestic relations courts. In Union County, the juvenile court has been under the jurisdiction of the probate court judge since it was established in 1906. Each was a separate court until the juvenile court was combined with the probate court pursuant to an act passed on April 29, 1937, which reorganized and recodified the existing juvenile laws. With the passage of the Modern Courts Amendment to the Ohio Constitution in May 1968, Ohio's Probate Courts became divisions of the Courts of Common Pleas.

# Union County Probate & Juvenile Judges



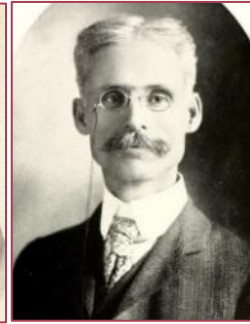
*John B. Coats*



*Leonidas Piper*



*John M. Broderick*



*Edward W.  
Porter*



*Carrie  
Hornbeck*

**Hon. Thomas Brown**  
(1852-1855 and 1859-1861)\*

**Hon. James M. Turner**  
(1855-1859)

**Hon. James R. Smith**  
(1861-1870)

**Hon. John B. Coats**  
(1870-1888)

**Hon. Leonidas Piper**  
(1888-1894)

**Hon. James S. McCampbell**  
(1894-1900)

**Hon. John M. Brodrick**  
(1900-1906)

**Hon. Dudley E. Thornton**  
(1906 – 1913)

**Hon. Edward W. Porter**  
(1913 – 1921)

**Hon. William H. Husted**  
(1921 – 1932)

**Hon. Carrie Wood Hornbeck**  
(1932 – 1933)\*\*

**Hon. L. W. Hazen**  
(1933 – 1941)

**Hon. John W. Dailey, Sr.**  
(1941 – 1955)

**Hon. Luther L. Liggett, Sr.**  
(1955 – 1960)

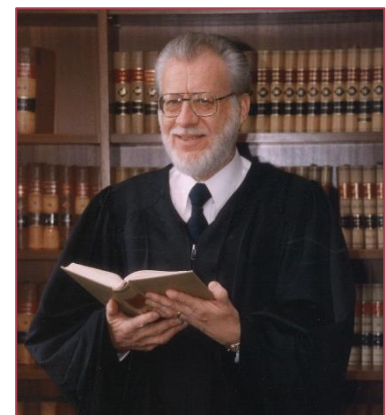
**Hon. Robert F. Allen**  
(1960 – 1979)

**Hon. Gary F. McKinley**  
(1979 – 2003)\*\*\*

**Hon. Charlotte Coleman Eufinger**  
(2003 – 2021)

**Hon. Rick Rodger**  
(2021 – )

- \* Judge Turner unexpectedly passed away December 26, 1859. Judge Brown was appointed to fill the office and served until the election of Judge James R. Smith in 1861. Judge Brown served for two years before he was admitted to the bar in 1854.
- \*\* Ms. Hornbeck, Chief Deputy Clerk of the Probate Court from 1916 to 1946, was nominated by the Union County Commissioners and appointed by Governor George White to serve the unexpired term of Judge Husted, who unexpectedly passed away August 31, 1932. She served as judge until L.W. Hazen was elected and sworn in February 9, 1933.
- \*\*\* Judge McKinley was the longest-serving judge in the history of the Court; he was elected to four terms and served 24 years.



**Gary F. McKinley**