

JUDGE PATRICIA J. SMITH

**20
22**

**PORTAGE COUNTY
COMMON PLEAS
COURT**

**PROBATE/JUVENILE
DIVISION**

ANNUAL REPORT



Message from the Judge

2022 was a year of achievement.

The first full year of my term was spent implementing my vision for the Court. The citizens of Portage County drive the needs of the Court, so I spent time in the community to learn about those needs.

I then began to reorganize the Probate and Juvenile Courts to address the needs of the community. Magistrates are now available in both Courts full time. I formed a Family Services Department to oversee Diversion and the new Case Management Program. The Psychological Services Dept. was expanded to provide more counseling opportunities to those who couldn't get services in the community. I started a CASA program, to advocate for the children of Portage County. The Judicial Services Dept. was created to generate revenue through grant funding and enhance community collaboration.

I look forward to continuing to improve and enhance the services the Court provides to the people of Portage County.



Goal:
**to provide fair,
impartial, efficient,
and consistent
justice to the most
vulnerable citizens of
Portage County**

Meet Our Staff



JUDGE
PATRICIA J.
SMITH



JENNIFER SCHWARTZ
MAGISTRATE / COURT
ADMINISTRATOR



HEATHER GYEKENYESI
MAGISTRATE / COURT
ADMINISTRATOR



AARON HEAVNER
MAGISTRATE



JARED SMILEY
MAGISTRATE



GREG BARTON
MAGISTRATE



LENNY SOBORO
DIRECTOR OF
JUDICIAL SERVICES



JEFF CUNNINGHAM
DIRECTOR OF
PROBATION SERVICES



DARLA SCOTT
DIRECTOR OF
PSYCHOLOGICAL &
SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES



ANN WALDEN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
PORTAGE COUNTY CASA



SCOTT WAYT
DIRECTOR OF
FAMILY SERVICES

COMPLETE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Court Departments

In 2022, Judge Smith reorganized the Courts to better serve the community.



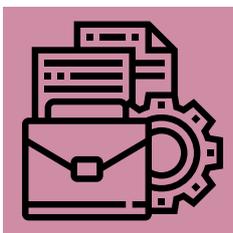
MAGISTRATES

Full Time Magistrates are now available in both the Juvenile and Probate Courts to address the legal needs of the public and staff. Local Rules were updated and policies developed to utilize best practices within the courtroom.



TECHNOLOGY

The skills of existing staff were utilized to target the implementation of expanded Court Access through the use of technology. The Court's expanded features on the website allow 24/7 access to public records, commonly needed forms, instructions and more. Patrons can now pay court fees via credit card online and receive notices via email.



ADMINISTRATIVE BAILIFFS

Bailiff tasks were reorganized to focus on providing services to the people served by the Courts. This includes oversight of interpreter services, courtroom audio recordings, in-court scheduling, evidence management and more.



CLERK'S OFFICE

Clerks in both Courts implemented a new file system designed to move toward a "paperless" system. Scanners were obtained using grant funding. Court costs were updated to comply with the Ohio Revised Code.

Court Departments



CASA

In 2022, 175 cases of abuse and neglect were filed in Portage County. CASAs are specially trained community volunteers appointed by the Juvenile Court to speak in the best interest of children who are brought before the Court for reasons of abuse or neglect.



JUDICIAL SERVICES

Works cooperatively and collaboratively with all court employees, government agencies, and community to generate revenue for Court through timely submission of grant/fund-raising proposals.



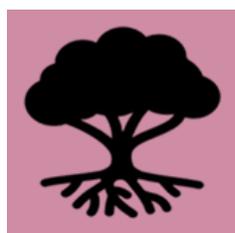
PROBATION SERVICES

Evidence-based practices that utilize cognitive behavioral interventions are used by probation staff to assist youth with understanding how their thoughts and feelings directly impact their actions.



FAMILY SERVICES

In 2022, Judge Smith created the Department of Family Services, which includes Case Management and Diversion Services, to assist in the Court's mission to protect Portage County's most vulnerable children and families.



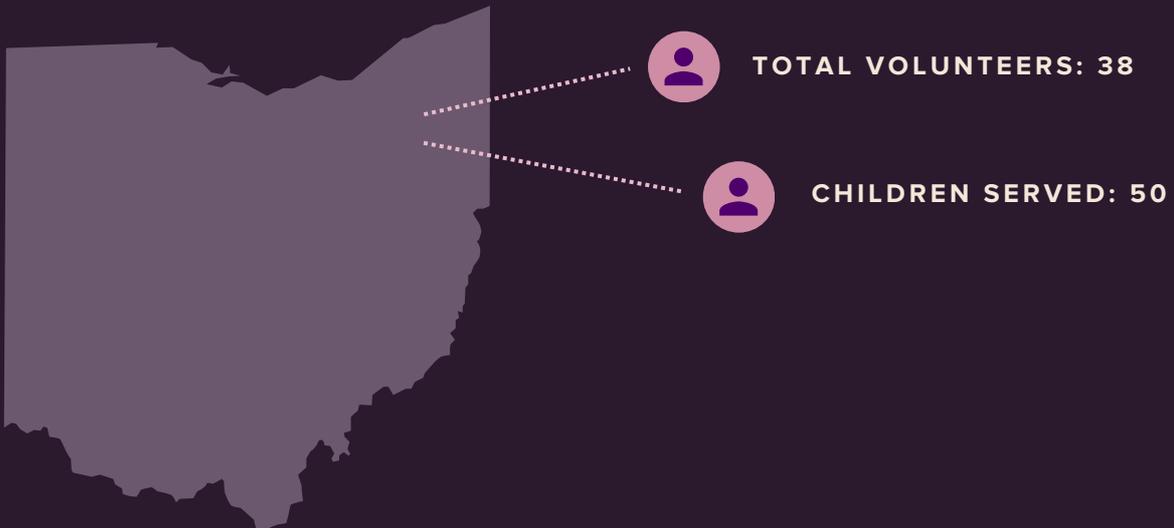
PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Removes barriers to care and treatment for those with mental health and substance use disorders such as lack of available providers, inadequate insurance coverage and extensive wait lists.

CASA

The Impact

When the program first started, the first year goals included having 10-15 volunteers and serving 15-20 children. The numbers below show the incredible success of the program in its first year of operation.



- CASA volunteers have donated approximately 1,800 hours of their time to advocate for children.
- Advocacy efforts include meeting with children every month face-to-face, collecting information about the child and their life, attending court hearings, and preparing reports for the Judge/Magistrate hearing the case.
- CASA volunteers have been essential in making recommendations for the best interest of the children of our community.
- CASA volunteers are required to have 30 hours of preservice training prior to being appointed to a case.
- Once a CASA has completed preservice training, they are required to maintain 12 hours of in-service training annually to maintain their qualification to take cases.
- In addition to the many hours CASA volunteers have donated in direct service to children, they have donated over 1,200 hours of their time maintaining their required trainings.

CASA of Portage County has been funded in full for its first two years of operation by Ohio CASA. In order to maintain the success of the program, a non-profit fundraising arm has been formed by caring community members. Friends of CASA of Portage County is now operational and has been accepting donations for CASA.

All funds raised by this group are used for specific child needs, volunteer appreciation and volunteer training.

Probation Services

Case plans are developed for all youth on probation which outline goals to achieve. Evidence-based practices that utilize cognitive behavioral interventions are used by probation staff to assist youth with understanding how their thoughts and feelings directly impact their actions.

Electronic Monitoring

- Alternative to placing youth into the detention center
- Youth are able to remain in the community to attend school, work, and treatment programs while still being closely monitored
- GPS ankle bracelets are utilized to continuously track youths' location

Restitution

- Restitution is designed to restore the victim and make them whole
- Victims are reimbursed for out-of-pocket losses
- Youth may perform community service to earn money toward restitution

Drug Court

- On 12/30/2022, the Court was awarded initial certification for a Juvenile Drug Court Specialized Docket through the Ohio Supreme Court.

Grants

The following programming is made available through grants received from RECLAIM Ohio and other sources:

- Anger Management
- Car teens
- Choices
- Cognitive Behavioral Interventions for Substance Abuse (CBI-SA)
- Community Based Truancy Intervention Program (CB-TIP)
- Families Forward
- Girl's Circle
- King Kennedy Mentoring Program
- New Directions Residential
- Pro-Social Activities
- Townhall II Active Parenting Program
- Victim Reimbursement Program

Community Service

- Youth are court ordered to complete community service hours at local non-profit agencies or collect non-perishable items for local food banks
- Allows youth to give back to the community while being rehabilitated and educated from the services performed

Family Services

In 2022, Judge Smith created the Department of Family Services, which includes Case Management and Diversion Services, to assist in the Court's mission to protect Portage County's most vulnerable children and families.

Case Management

The Case Manager works with families to assist with compliance with court orders, schedule parenting time and monitor communication; and with other professionals to ensure families are receiving necessary services and to assist in facilitating team meetings. Other duties include updating the Court on families' progress, drug testing, and supervised visits.

Diversion Services

Diversion is available to low-risk youth as an alternative to formal case processing. Most youth complete diversion in 30 - 90 days. Referrals are accepted as follows:

- Prior to formal Court filing for offenses ranging from status offenses to minor misdemeanors, including truanancies;
- Formally processed cases referred by Judge Smith or a Magistrate;
- Informally from a parent or community member (referred to as At-Risk Youth).

In 2022, Diversion Services worked with 258 youth as an alternative to adjudication. Eight juveniles failed to successfully complete diversion and were adjudicated.



Youth referred to Diversion must admit to the offense and be deemed a low risk to reoffend in order to be accepted. Diverting cases from further Court involvement allows youth to acknowledge responsibility for their actions while still subjecting them to appropriate consequences, based on the offense, an interview, and screening, as outlined below.

Once youth are accepted into Diversion, a comprehensive interview is conducted by the Diversion Specialist. This interview includes screening for mental health and substance abuse issues, as well as trauma exposure. These results are used to help determine the expectations outlined in the Diversion Contract.

The Diversion Contract includes individualized goals designed to prevent further involvement in the juvenile justice system. It may include mental health and substance abuse referrals, completion of an apology letter and/or a topical essay, restitution to the victim, community service, or referrals to other programs within the Court or through community partners.

Case Statistics

Probate Court

2022	Estates	Incompetent Guardianships	Minor Guardianships	Conservatorships	Civil Actions	Adoptions	Mental Illness	Minor Settlements	Wrongful Death	Change of Name	Marriage License
New Cases Filed	754	44	14	0	224	77	2	12	8	123	N/A
Cases Terminated	671	42	10	0	16	66	0	14	13	132	805

Juvenile Court

2022	Delinquency	Traffic	Dependency, Neglect or Abuse	Unruly	Adult Cases	Permanent Custody	Private Custody	Support	Parentage	U.I.F.S.A	All Others
New Cases Filed	278	348	175	50	25	18	77	12	8	0	50
Cases Transferred in, Reactivated, or Redesignated	69	221	0	3	3	0	86	66	1	0	0
Total	347	569	175	53	28	18	163	78	9	0	50

Current & Coming Soon

2022 was a big year for the Portage County Probate/Juvenile Court with a reorganization, new hires and exciting events on the horizon.

01

Guardianship Services Board

Judge Smith secured collaboration and funding to start a Guardianship Services Board - coming in 2023.

02

Collaboration with Community Partners

Renewed commitment to collaborate to serve mental health and substance use disorder clients and protective services.

03

Expansion of Court Investigator Dept.

The Probate Court will be hiring a new Court Investigator in order to improve oversight and reduce wait times.

04

Diversion Moving to Riddle Building

Following best practices, Diversion will be moving out of the courthouse and into the historic Riddle Building.