

2020

Annual Report



Guernsey County

*Probate/Juvenile Court &
Juvenile Probation*

Executive Summary

The Probate and Juvenile Court are divisions of the Common Pleas Court of Guernsey County.

The Juvenile Court's mission is to provide for the education, rehabilitation, care, protection, and mental and physical development of children subject to the jurisdiction of the Court; Further, its mission is to protect the welfare of the community and the public interest by treating children as persons in need of supervision, care and rehabilitation.

The Probate Court is responsible for over two hundred separate duties. Those duties range from issuing marriage licenses to overseeing testamentary trusts valued in the millions of dollars. The Court provides the oversight of Guardianships for minors and incompetent adults. As such, the Court is the Superior Guardian to these individuals.

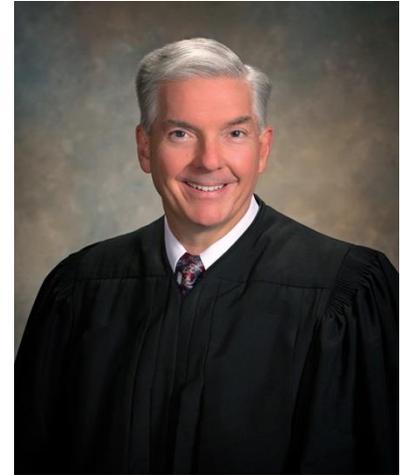
Both the Probate and Juvenile Courts are responsible for the welfare of the most vulnerable members of our community. The Court not only decides cases based on sound legal principles, but also must determine the best course in achieving justice for individuals, and society as a whole.

The year 2019 saw the continued commitment of the Probate/Juvenile Court to provide timely justice for all litigants before the Court. The Court has continued its efforts to reduce the number of delinquent estate filings and ensure that all cases are heard within the timeframe set by the Supreme Court of Ohio. Since taking office in 2015, the Court has reduced its delinquent estate/guardianship filings by over 93-percent.

In Juvenile Court, with 1,438 filings in calendar year 2019, only 2 cases were pending at the end of the year over the recommended timelines of the Supreme Court of Ohio. In order to make sure that justice is provided in a timely manner, the Court requires all litigants to stay on top of their cases.

During 2019, the Court said goodbye to several employees. Heather Robertson resigned to take a new position, and was replaced by Kim Charlton to fill the role of Multi-System Youth Coordinator. Casey McVicker also resigned to take a new position, and was replaced by Ashley Tyo as the new School Engagement Coordinator. Intern Alexis Burris finished her schooling and has taken a position with Guernsey County Children Services. Finally, we said goodbye to CASA Volunteer Cassie Ragsdale, who is moving on to other opportunities.

As in years gone by, the work of the Probate/Juvenile Court remains quite challenging. As noted in the statistical part of this report, our case filings have stayed relatively constant over the last three years. Abuse, neglect and dependency cases have continued to increase over the last four years, with a majority of those cases involving families with chemical dependencies.



The work being performed by our Probation Staff, Multi-System Youth Coordinator, School Engagement Coordinator, and Truancy Prevention Officer are important components in holding juveniles accountable for their actions, while attempting to uncover the reasons for their delinquent or unruly behavior. The Court continues to believe that education and positive contact with probation staff will, in the long run, change the behavior of the juveniles.

2019 saw the continuation of the Sexting Education Awareness Diversion (S.E.A.D) Program in our middle schools and high schools throughout the county. This program was devised to raise the awareness of students to the negative consequences of sexting. Also a special thanks to the administrators of the local school districts for permitting the Court to teach this program in the schools. My hope for 2020 is to develop a program for drug awareness and prevention in the schools as well.

The Probate Court continued with its Family Guardianship Program again in 2019. This program continues to be a success in educating Guardians and their responsibility to their wards.

The Probate Court is again continuing its efforts to modernize its office and provide better access to public records. However, with greater access, the risk of losing confidentiality is a primary concern. Many cases in the Probate Court are private and not open for public review. The Court continues to monitor ways to provide better public access, and still maintain that confidentiality. As in previous years, any upgrades will need to be paid for from grants, as the County General Fund cannot support the cost associated with going online with estate documents.

As in years past, I am attempting to stay up to date on all matters affecting the Probate and Juvenile Courts by maintaining my appointments to the Probate Law and Procedures Committee, Juvenile Law and Procedures Committee, and Board of Directors of the Ohio Association of Juvenile Court Judges. I also remain active on the Ohio Supreme Court Commission on the Rules of Superintendence, Legislative Committee for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and The Ohio Judicial Conference Judicial Advisory Group.

While all of this committee work takes time from my job as Judge, I believe it is important work so that I might properly administer and provide justice for the persons appearing before both Courts. In addition, it helps the citizens of the county in that I remain up to date on the many changes taking place in our justice system on a daily basis.

Judge David B. Bennett
Guernsey County Probate/Juvenile Court

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Employees

Magistrate

Peter Cultice

Juvenile Court Division

Tim Welch, Court Director
Amy Weaver, Deputy Clerk
Debbie Bennington, Deputy Clerk
Mary Caldwell, Deputy Clerk
Rebecca Townsend, Deputy Clerk
Veronica Mourer, Deputy Clerk/Court Reporter
Tom Galbreath, Bailiff



Juvenile Probation Division

Travis Stevens, Chief Probation Officer
Kayla Higgins, Probation Officer
Josh Snyder, Probation Officer
Noah Burris, Probation Officer
Tiffany Lowry, Probation Clerk
Heather Robinson, Multi-System Youth Coordinator (Resigned, August 2019)
Kim Charlton, Multi-System Youth Coordinator (November 2019 - Present)
Casey McVicker, School Engagement Coordinator (Resigned, August 2019)
Ashley Tyo, School Engagement Coordinator (August 2019 - Present)
John Davis, Elementary School Truancy Prevention Officer
Kathy Kelly Hibler, Grants Administrator
Brenda Mourer, Grants Administrator

Probate Court Division

Patricia Nichols, Court Administrator
Deana Craft, Deputy Clerk
Brenda Allen, Deputy Clerk
Allanna Decker, Intern
Alexis Burris, Intern (Resigned, May 2019)

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)

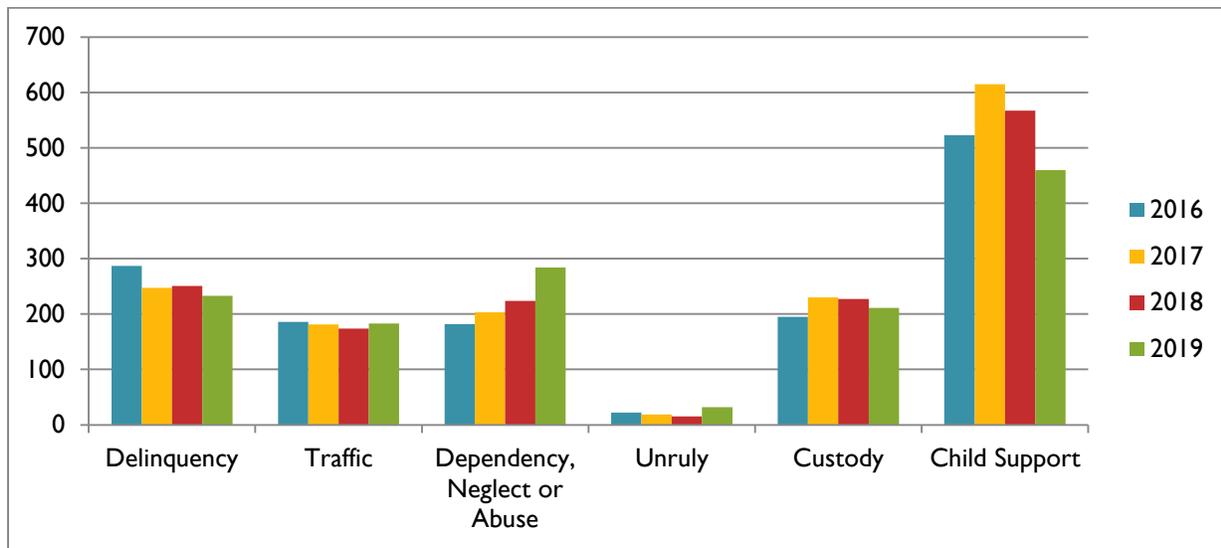
Kayla Higgins, CASA Director
Jaynie Vasko, Volunteer Coordinator
B.J. Yates, Volunteer
Cheryl Gadd, Volunteer
Julia Dowling, Volunteer
Lynne Maynard, Volunteer
Cassie Ragsdale, Volunteer (Resigned, May 2019)

Juvenile Court

The Juvenile Court is a division of the Common Pleas Court of Guernsey County, and it is located on the second floor of the Courthouse.

Its purpose is to provide care, protection, and mental and physical development for the children in the Court’s jurisdiction; to protect the welfare of the community, and to protect the public interest by treating children as persons in need of supervision, care, and rehabilitation.

Among the duties of the Juvenile Court include: Delinquent/Unruly Children (Truancy); Dependent, Abused, Neglected Children (Guernsey County Children Services); Traffic Offenders; Custody, Visitation, Child Support, Paternity involving unmarried, and in some cases, married persons, who are living separate and apart; and Juvenile Civil Protection Orders.



Case Totals

The Supreme Court of Ohio Reports

- **2019** - The total number of cases in all categories pending beginning of period, new cases filed, cases transferred in, reactivated or redesignated was **1,438**.
- Highlighted areas include: Delinquency = 233; Traffic = 183; Dependency, Neglect or Abuse = 284; Unruly = 32; Custody = 211; and Child Support = 460.

Case Totals Continued *The Supreme Court of Ohio Reports*

- **2018** - The total number of cases in all categories pending beginning of period, new cases filed, cases transferred in, reactivated or redesignated was **1,491**.
- Highlighted areas include: Delinquency = 251; Traffic = 174; Dependency, Neglect or Abuse = 224; Unruly = 15; Custody = 227; and Child Support = 567.

- **2017** - The total number of cases in all categories pending beginning of period, new cases filed, cases transferred in, reactivated or redesignated was **1,548**.
- Highlighted areas include: Delinquency = 247; Traffic = 181; Dependency, Neglect or Abuse = 203; Unruly = 19; Custody = 230; and Child Support = 615.

- **2016** - The total number of cases in all categories pending beginning of period, new cases filed, cases transferred in, reactivated or redesignated was **1,472**.
- Highlighted areas include: Delinquency = 287; Traffic = 186; Dependency, Neglect or Abuse = 182; Unruly = 22; Custody = 195; and Child Support = 523.



Local CASA Program (Court Appointed Special Advocates)



The Court Appointed Special Advocates Program is affiliated with, and under the direction of, the Guernsey County Court of Common Pleas, Juvenile Division.

Its Mission is to speak for the best interests of the abused, neglected, and dependent children in the courtroom.

The Agency promotes and supports quality volunteer advocacy for children to provide each child with a safe, permanent, nurturing home.

The Volunteers serve as a fact finder for the Court by completely researching the background of child abuse, neglect and dependent cases.

They speak for the child in the courtroom, focusing exclusively on the child's best interests. A CASA Volunteer provides carefully researched information to help the Judge make decisions.

The Volunteers continue to monitor the child during the life of the case, helping to ensure that he or she will be raised in the best possible environment.

In 2019, the total number of children that were served by volunteers was 190. The total number of new children assigned to CASA/GAL volunteers or staff was 73, with the average length of time that the volunteer was assigned to a child at 9.4 months. The total number of children served whose cases were closed was 58, including 29 where reunification was achieved.

Among the requirements to become a CASA Volunteer include:

- Must pass a criminal background investigation.
- Must be 21 years of age or older.
- Complete a face to face interview with the CASA Program Director.
- Pass all requirements.
- Complete 40-hours of training.

Established through the Guernsey County Juvenile Court in 1991, the local CASA Program had a Director, a Volunteer Coordinator, and 5 Volunteers during the 2019 calendar year.

Juvenile Probation

The Juvenile Probation Department is located on the ground floor of the Courthouse, and is responsible for performing many duties beyond the supervision of the juveniles on probation.

The Staff is involved in facilitating and participating in many programs to encourage the growth and support to the youth they encounter.

Everyday duties include: attending court hearings; completing risk assessments, providing referrals; making school, home, and community visits; attending trainings; informal hearings; and advocating for the juveniles they are involved with, as appropriate, to help ensure their success and well-being.

Additional Important Facts:

- There are currently 3 Probation Officers and 1 Supervisor.
- There is a female (Kayla Higgins) that deals with gender specific issues. She also handles the sexually aggressive youth.
- The Probation Officers meet with the youth a minimum of once a week, but usually 2 to 3 times per week, generally at school.
- There is an additional person (John Davis) who handles truancy and prevention/education issues in the elementary schools in the county.
- There is also one person (Ashley Tyo) who handles truancy issues in the Rolling Hills and East Guernsey Local School Districts (Middle School & High School).
- Finally, there is a single person (Kim Charlton) who provides educational outreach for juveniles and families in an effort to change the behaviors of the child, and assist the families in developing healthy relationships. She also teaches the Parent Project and Thinking for a Change Programs.

On average, there are 130 juveniles on probation at any given time.

Drug Screens Administered to Youth

2019 - **506** Total screens administered - **239** Positive
208 Marijuana; 1 PCP; 2 Cocaine; 2 Opiates; 17 Methamphetamines.

2018 - **514** Total screens administered - **317** Positive
304 THC; 1 Extended Opiate Combined w/ THC; 10 Benzodiazepines Combined w/ THC; 2 Cocaine; 3 Ethanol Combined w/ THC; 22 Amphetamines
10 (prescribed medication).

2017 - **544** Total screens administered - **307** Positive
285 Marijuana; 7 Extended Opiates; 3 Benzodiazepines; 3 Cocaine
2 Alcohol; 19 Amphetamines (prescribed medication).

Current Programs Operating Under Juvenile Court & Juvenile Probation

Thinking For A Change – This is an evidence-based program from the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections. It is an integrated cognitive behavioral change program, which focuses on social skills, cognitive self-change, and problem solving. The main goal is to teach individuals how to stop, think, and make better choices, which will lead to avoiding conflict and poor decision making. It is currently being used with local high school and middle school students; however several area counseling agencies also use to with adults. This program is provided through the Guernsey County Juvenile Probation Department.

Parent Project – The Parent Project is an evidence-based parenting program consisting of two different curriculums: Changing Destructive Teen Behavior, and Loving Solutions. Changing Destructive Teen Behavior is curriculum for parents of youth ages 12 to 21 who are out of control behaviorally, sexually active, violent, involved in gangs, or involved with drugs and/or alcohol. It provides parents with the tools and support to maintain consistency, structure, appropriate discipline techniques, and incorporate tough love. It also provides parents with information on how to connect with community services, such as mental health providers, law enforcement, and the court systems.

Loving Solutions – This curriculum is for parents of youth, ages 5 – 11. It is a more traditional parenting course, which teaches parents consistency, structure, and basic milestones for young children, such as how children of this age think, grow, and learn. It specifically covers appropriate discipline for this age group, and how it should be set-up, incorporated, and utilized in the home. It also provides parents with information on how to work with community supports, such as schools and mental health providers. These programs are provided through the Guernsey County Family and Children First Council.

Sexting Education Awareness Diversion (S.E.A.D.) – Places special emphasis on preventing sexting by minors, and to address the potential negative impact it can have on their legal, social, emotional, educational, and career goals. It is a 3 to 5-day program that is presented to middle school and high school classrooms within the county. The program is designed to approach the complex issues around sexting from an educational standpoint. In addition to sexting, the local program also discusses the topics of bullying, cyberbullying and harassment.

Current Programs Continued

Drug Screens – Any juvenile placed on probation is subject to random drug and alcohol testing at any time as part of their probation terms. A juvenile on probation for a drug or alcohol offense is screened much more frequently. Probation uses instant 8-panel screens, as well as 10-panel screens that are sent to the lab for confirmation and levels.

Detention – The Guernsey County Juvenile Court contracts with the Sargus Juvenile Detention Center in St. Clairsville, Ohio, and the Muskingum County Juvenile Detention Center in Zanesville, Ohio. The Court has 3 contracted beds at Sargus, and 2 contracted beds with 1 floater bed at Muskingum JDC. Juveniles can be sentenced to detention for up to 90-days.

Electronic Monitoring – Guernsey County Juvenile Probation uses Themis Tracking Services for EMHA. The units used will monitor the juveniles through a GPS system. The juveniles that are placed on EMHA have certain zones set-up, which determines where they can be. Probation Officers are able to monitor those youth who are placed on EMHA through their work computers, and also through an APP on their cell phones.

Oakview Juvenile Residential Center – Oakview is a facility that the Guernsey County Juvenile Court uses for males that have been adjudicated on a felony charge. They are placed there for a minimum of 6-months, or until they complete the program. While they are there, the juveniles will have a mental health assessment, drug and alcohol assessment, and attend individual, group and family counseling appointments. They also have in-house schooling, as well as community service work and assigned duties inside the facility. This is usually the last option for the Court before having to send a juvenile to the Ohio Department of Youth Services.

Court Foster & Residential Placement – The Juvenile Court will work with Guernsey County Children Services, and other agencies and resources to find solutions for youth. The Court uses several residential placements, depending on the needs of the child. The most common used by the Court is All Well Behavioral Health Services Residential, Cornell Abraxas (substance abuse), The Village Network, and Gender Specific (females). The Court will utilize a residential placement if there are several concerns with a child's behavioral or mental health issues that cannot be addressed appropriately by the family.

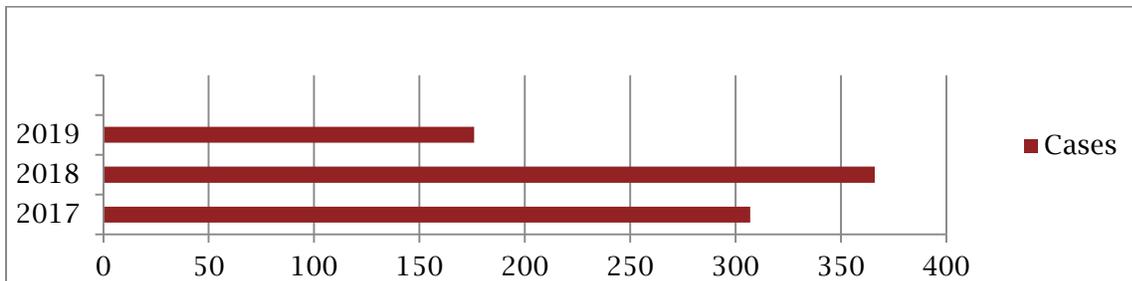
Department of Youth Services – DYS is the juvenile corrections system for the state of Ohio. DYS is statutorily mandated to confine felony offenders, ages 10 to 21, who have been adjudicated and committed by the Juvenile Court. During their stay, youth are engaged in programming that is designed to address their criminological and behavioral needs. Each of the facilities also operates a year-round school that offers general curriculum, as well as vocation opportunities.

Alternatives to Adjudication

Grade K – 6 Prevention – The Prevention Officer receives referrals from schools within the county on students and/or families that have been red flagged for attendance or behaviors within the school. The Prevention Officer makes contact with the family and child. They address the problems and concerns in a meeting with the school to establish conditions in order to correct the issues. All parties will then sign an informal contract that states the recommendations in order to alleviate the filing of charges with the Juvenile Court.

2019 – Worked with **176** different cases.

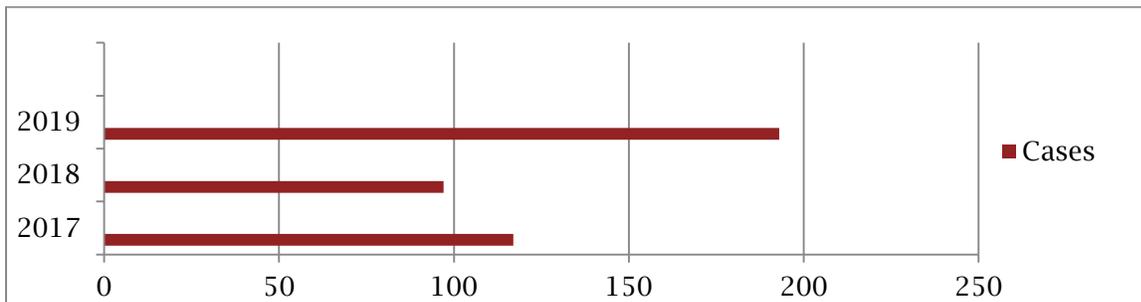
2018 – Worked with **366** different cases. **2017** – Worked with **307** different cases.



Grade 7 – 12 Truancy – The Truancy/Engagement Coordinator receives referrals from schools on students who have been red flagged by the school for their attendance. The Truancy/Engagement Coordinator will meet one-on-one with the child to try and determine the reason for the absences from school. The Coordinator will also conduct meetings with the child and parent(s), where informal contracts will be signed which outline the issues and the recommendations to correct the problems that are presented.

2019 – Worked with **193** different cases.

2018 – Worked with **97** different cases. **2017** – Worked with **117** different cases.



Probate Court

The Probate Court is located on the second floor of the Courthouse, and has over 200 separate duties that it is charged with by the Ohio Revised Code.

Each of Ohio's 88 counties has a Probate Division of its Court of Common Pleas, and their duties range from the issuing of marriage licenses to overseeing testamentary trusts valued at millions of dollars.

The duties of the Probate Court include the following:

- Marriage Licenses
- Administering Estates
- Guardianships
- Conservatorships
- Mental Illness
- Adoption
- Correction of Birth Certificates
- Change in Name
- Testamentary & Inter Vivos Trusts
- Appoint to Boards & Commissions

Case Types	Totals for 2019		Totals for 2018		Totals for 2017	
	Number of Cases Opened	Cases Pending at the End of the Year	Number of Cases Opened	Cases Pending at the End of the Year	Number of Cases Opened	Cases Pending at the End of the Year
Adoptions	17	8	25	11	14	7
Birth Correction/Registration	6	0	2	0	2	0
Probate Civil	9	13	15	11	16	12
Conservatorship	0	0	0	0	0	0
Estates	198	162	184	152	189	159
Guardianship of a Minor	4	13	4	11	4	11
Guardianship of an Incompetent	23	275	36	292	33	282
Guardianship Emergency	7	0	0	0	0	0
Marriage License	221	0	250	0	235	0
Minors Settlement	9	22	2	14	6	14
Name Change	35	0	19	0	22	0
Trust	0	15	0	15	1	17

Local Guardianship Program

The Probate Court is the superior guardian of those placed in guardianships and is responsible for monitoring guardians to make sure that they fulfill their duties.

Guardianship is one of the more restrictive protective services available under Ohio law and is only necessary when individuals are unable to care for their basic needs, finances, or medical issues and when a less-restrictive alternative is not feasible.

People placed in guardianship are especially vulnerable, and there is a great need for willing volunteers, family members, and attorneys to act on their behalf. In many cases, every decision affecting those individuals is in another person's hands. That is why it is so important for guardians to carry out their duties responsibly.

A Guardian holds a unique role with respect to the ward and the Guardian has an obligation to obtain an understanding of the fundamentals of that relationship. Formalized training is one means to gain that competency.

In 2016, the Probate Court adopted Local Rule 66, which requires family guardians to attend a shortened local version of the Supreme Court of Ohio's Guardian Fundamentals Training Program.

This program was developed in conjunction with the Guernsey County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Mental Health and Recovery Services Board, and the Area Agency on Aging Region 9.

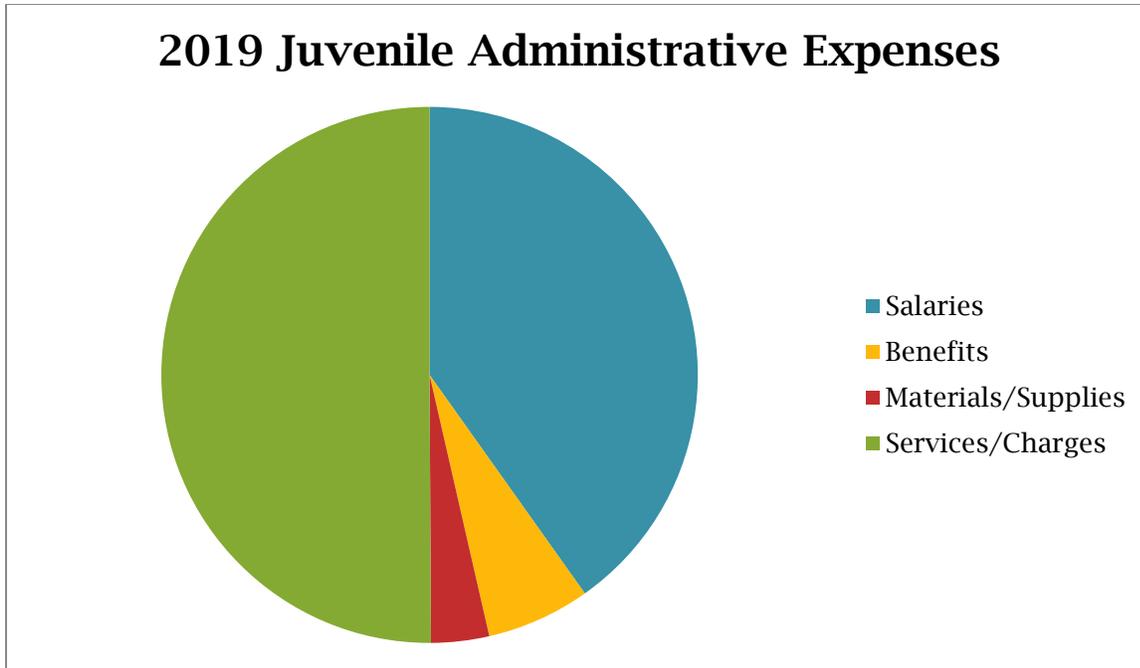
The training sessions are offered 4 times per year at various times, and all family guardians must attend this program once during the year.

In addition to the initial basic course titled "Responsibilities and Duties of Guardians," several other courses are held with topics of interest to guardians, which were created from suggestions and questionnaires that were completed at previous trainings. In 2019, those topics included: Medicaid Eligibility and Information; Stress Management for Caregivers; Stable Account/Payee Information and Estate Planning; and Dementia/Alzheimer's Disease Information.

This program assists the guardians in complying with the law, as well as helping them learn about the different resources that may be available to them for the benefit of their ward.

Fiscal Report

Funding for the Guernsey County Probate/Juvenile Court and Juvenile Probation is received from a variety of sources, with the majority coming from the County's General Fund, and some programs being supplemented with several grants.



2019

Salaries	\$300,367.60
Benefits	\$ 46,733.11
Materials/Supplies	\$ 26,122.52
Services/Charges	<u>\$384,795.42</u>
Total Appropriation	\$758,018.65

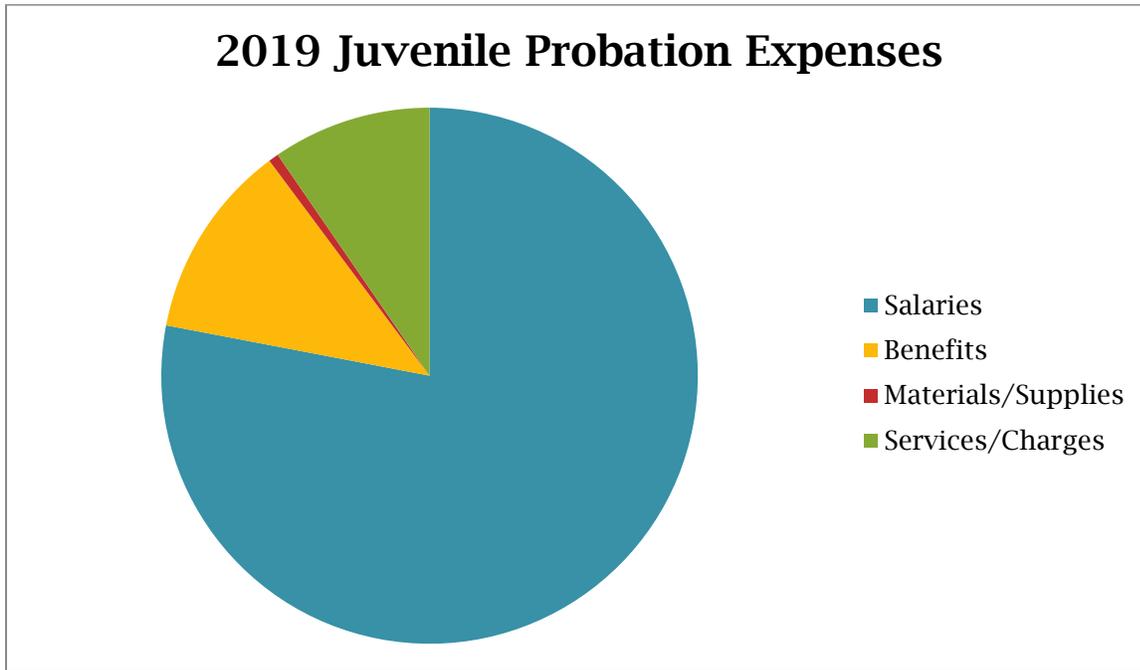
2018

Salaries	\$294,478.08
Benefits	\$ 45,496.95
Materials/Supplies	\$ 22,348.53
Services/Charges	<u>\$343,431.49</u>
Total Appropriation	\$705,755.05

2017

Salaries	\$269,684.93
Benefits	\$ 45,897.09
Materials/Supplies	\$ 56,139.38
Services/Charges	<u>\$299,626.19</u>
Total Appropriation	\$671,347.59

Fiscal Report Continued



2019

Salaries	\$243,087.12
Benefits	\$ 36,775.92
Materials/Supplies	\$ 1,886.16
Services/Charges	\$ 29,859.78
Total Appropriation	\$311,608.98

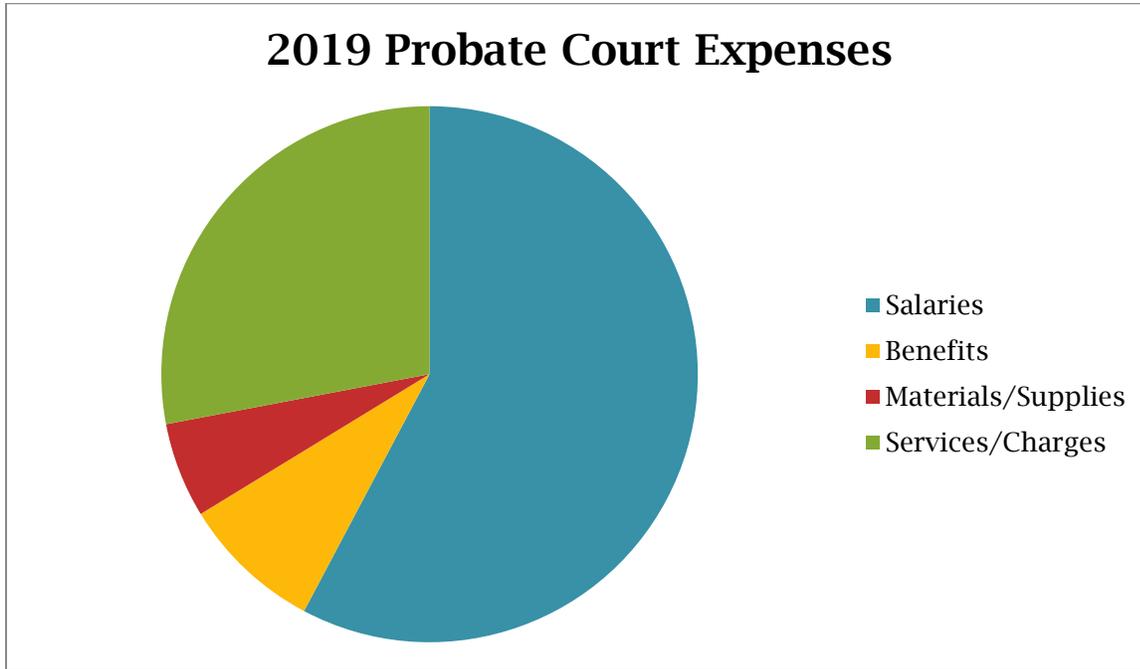
2018

Salaries	\$230,195.94
Benefits	\$ 35,565.37
Materials/Supplies	\$ 2,066.88
Services/Charges	\$ 21,326.55
Total Appropriation	\$289,154.74

2017

Salaries	\$213,464.39
Benefits	\$ 36,680.41
Materials/Supplies	\$ 2,487.25
Services/Charges	\$ 31,352.88
Total Appropriation	\$283,984.93

Fiscal Report Continued



2019

Salaries	\$131,834.28
Benefits	\$ 19,451.47
Materials/Supplies	\$ 13,103.71
Services/Charges	<u>\$ 63,899.79</u>
Total Appropriation	\$228,289.25

2018

Salaries	\$124,792.37
Benefits	\$ 18,461.60
Materials/Supplies	\$ 12,741.08
Services/Charges	<u>\$ 48,862.65</u>
Total Appropriation	\$204,857.70

2017

Salaries	\$119,369.78
Benefits	\$ 19,763.56
Materials/Supplies	\$ 16,365.39
Services/Charges	<u>\$ 49,831.21</u>
Total Appropriation	\$205,329.94

Contact Information



**Guernsey County Courthouse
801 East Wheeling Avenue
Cambridge, Ohio 43725**

**Juvenile Court – (740) 432-9266
Probate Court – (740) 432-9262
Juvenile Probation – (740) 432-9229
CASA Program – (740) 439-5697**

www.guernseycounty.org

**Monday – Friday
8:30 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. & 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M.**