

SENECA COUNTY JUVENILE AND PROBATE COURT



2021
Annual Report

Judge Jay A. Meyer

It is an honor and privilege to serve the citizens of Seneca County.



FROM JUDGE MEYER:

I am proud of the positive impact of Juvenile and Probate Court has on community. It has been an honor and privilege to serve the citizens of Seneca County as Judge of the Juvenile and Probate Court since February 9, 2009.

Our Court is guided by the mission and promise to “serve the citizens of the community with dedication, integrity and professionalism. We will strive to assure the safety, security and best interests of those we serve to the best of our abilities.”

Our goal is the effective stewardship of the resources available. I pledge to continue our dedicated efforts to keep our costs down while providing excellent services to our citizens.

I invite you to review this report and also our website at www.senecajpcourt.com. If you have additional questions, please feel free to reach out via the contact information found on our website.

Respectfully

Judge Jay A. Meyer

The Bench

The Honorable *Judge Jay A. Meyer* was elected by Seneca County Voters to serve as their Juvenile and Probate Judge in 2008 and re-elected in 2014 and 2020. Judge Meyer is a graduate of Tiffin Columbian High School. He received both his BA and Juris Doctor from Ohio Northern University. Judge Meyer supports Seneca County youth, families, and the Court's Mission.

Magistrate

Donald S. Bennett was appointed as Magistrate by Judge Meyer in June of 2009. Magistrate Bennett received his Juris Doctor from the University of Toledo College of Law.

Prior to his appointment, he was in private practice for 20 years, concentrating in the areas of juvenile, domestic, and criminal trial practice.



Magistrate

Tiffany E. Cavanaugh was appointed as Magistrate by Judge Meyer in January of 2016. Magistrate Cavanaugh received her Juris Doctor degree from Ohio Northern University.

Mediator

Ms. Cavanaugh also serves as the Court's Mediator. She was appointed by Judge Meyer as Mediator in May of 2013. Tiffany is a qualified Mediator exceeding Ohio Supreme Court requirements as established under Rule 16.

Teresa Copp – Court Administrator
Sarah Mutchler – Assistant Court Administrator
Cathy Bean– Administrative Clerk

JUVENILE COURT

Beth Brown – Chief Deputy Clerk/Bailiff
Gina Reuter – Assistant Chief Deputy Clerk

☐ Linda Frank – Deputy Clerk

☐ Jennifer Miller– Deputy Clerk

☐ Melissa Bowers– Deputy Clerk

☐ Chloe Seislove – Deputy Clerk

☐ Jillian Banks – Records Clerk – Part-time

PROBATE COURT

**Dana Eborg – Chief Deputy Clerk/
Investigator**

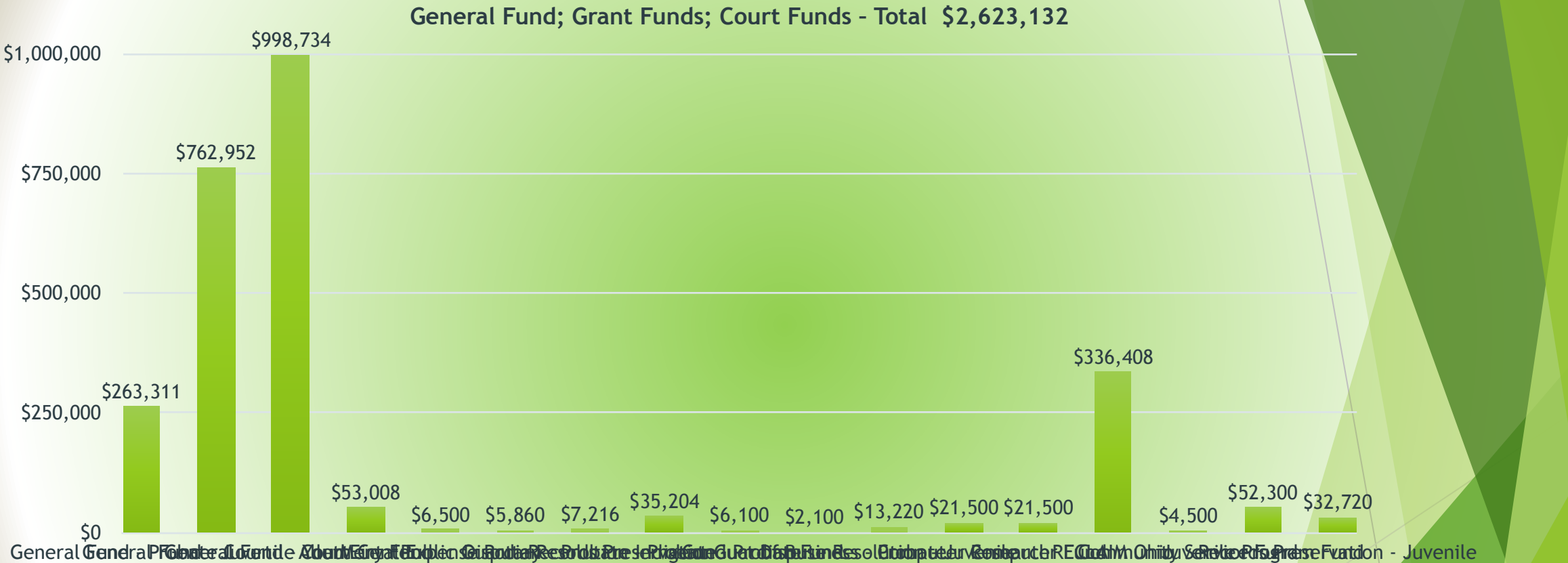
☐ Amy Littlejohn – Deputy Clerk

☐ Traci McMurray– Deputy Clerk/ Investigator

☐ Nicole Johnston – Deputy Clerk/ Investigator

☐ Jay Rishty – Public Guardian

2021 Court Appropriations



PROBATE COURT

Under the first Ohio Constitution of 1802, the Court of Common Pleas had exclusive jurisdiction over all Probate matters. The updated Ohio Constitution of 1851 shifted this power by creating a separate Probate Court in each of Ohio's 88 counties.

Seneca County's Probate Court was established in 1851. William Lang was the first Probate Judge serving from 1851 – 1855. He wrote *History of Seneca County: From the Close of the Revolutionary War to July 1880*.

Probate Court handles wills, administration of estates and trusts, adoptions, marriage licenses, name changes, and appointments of guardians for minors and incompetent adults.
[Ohio Revised Code (R.C.) 2101.24]

Judge Meyer is the Judge for both Seneca County Probate and Juvenile Court.



Probate Court Case Breakdown 2021

	OPEN	CLOSED
Marriage Licenses Issued	276	
Estates	346	317
Minor Guardianships	3	1
Incompetent Guardianships	30	26
Trusts	2	1
Civil	16	15
Adoption	18	16
Mental Illness	13	9
Minor Settlement	4	7
Name Change	32	36
Conservatorship	0	0
Wrongful Death	2	1
Delayed Birth Registration	7	7
TOTAL	473	436

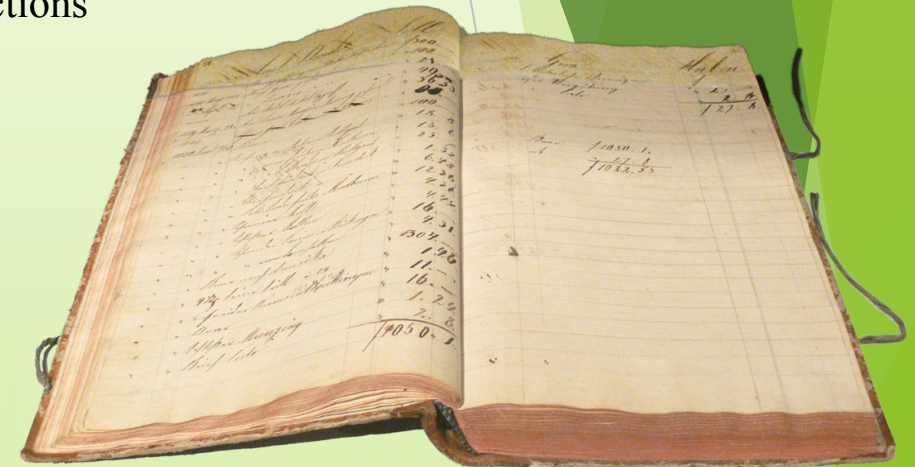
Probate Court Year in Review

Projects implemented/completed during the year:

- ☐ Court records continued to be prepared by Probate Court Staff for microfilming and scanning by Bowling Green State University Center for Archival Collections. This is a continuing effort to preserve and retain Court records
- ☐ Updated court network to add old case proceedings to attach the scanned images from Bowling Green State University Center for Archival Collections
- ☐ Prepared 675 old Docket Books to be scanned by Strategic Solutions
- ☐ Updated court network to add old Docket Books to attach the scanned images from Strategic Solutions
- ☐ Implemented an AOT (Assisted Outpatient Treatment) program to assist individuals with behavioral health services

Goals for 2022:

- ☐ Continue the preservation of Probate records through imaging and/or microfilm
- ☐ Transfer historical court records from the old Youth Center to the new County storage facility
- ☐ Update the Probate Court Case Management System



Seneca County Guardianship Program

The **Seneca County Guardianship Program** provides guardianship and conservatorship assistance to indigent incompetent people that meet specific standards for the program. This life maintaining and life sustaining program would not be possible without generous grant funding provided by the Allen Eiry Fund and the Mental Health and Recovery Services Board of Seneca, Ottawa, Sandusky and Wyandot Counties.

In 2021, the Guardianship Program assisted 35 individuals. Some individuals were housed in a medical facility and only needed assistance with decision making. Some individuals were able to remain in their homes and needed assistance with housekeeping, medical care, and transportation.

The Public Guardian has made family involvement a goal for the program. Many of the wards are unable to have contact with family members due to COVID restrictions. The Guardian set up monthly phone conferences for several families. The Guardian also purchased tablets for a few wards in order to Skype with family members.

Juvenile Court

The Seneca County Juvenile Court handles the filing and processing of the following types of matters:

Juvenile Delinquency and Unruly

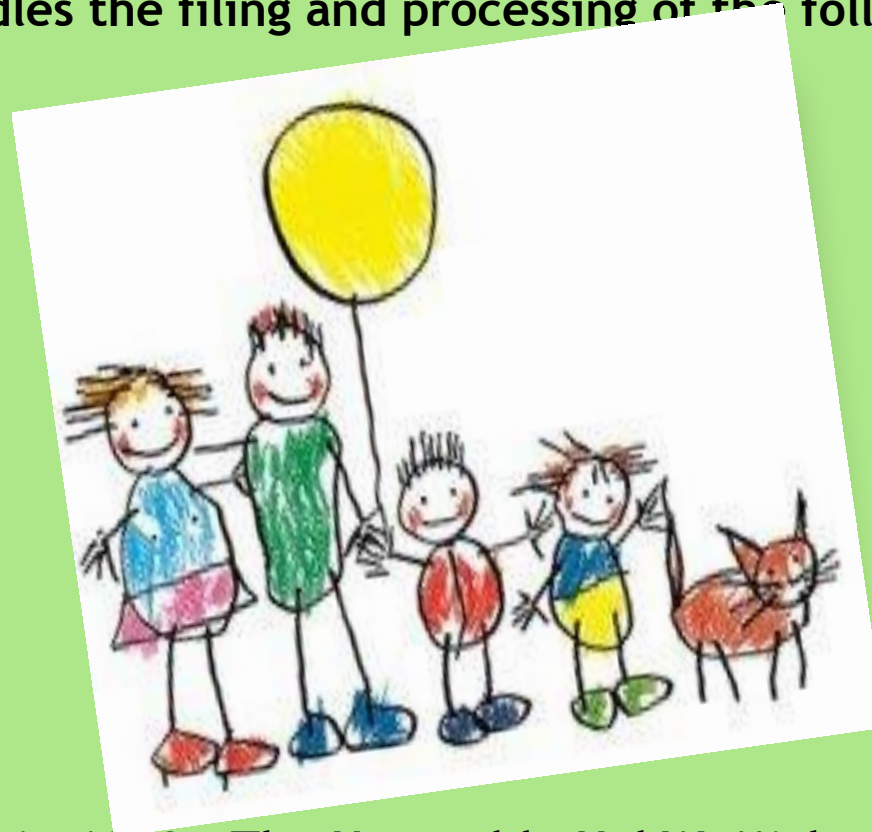
Juvenile Traffic

Abuse, Neglect, and Dependency

Paternity

Custody and Child Support

Some Adult Criminal Cases



The Juvenile Court System was created in 1902. The Honorable Hal W. Michaels served as Probate Judge during this time. When the Juvenile Court System was created, the Probate Judge assumed responsibility over Juvenile Court as well. At age 29, Judge Michaels was the youngest judge elected as Seneca County Probate Judge and served from 1903-1909.

Juvenile Court Cases 2021

	FILED	CONCLUDED
Delinquent	338	299
Traffic	221	199
Abuse/Neglect/Dependent	88	94
Unruly	30	28
Adult	92	131
Permanent Custody	18	11
Change of Custody	242	266
Support Modification	324	429
Parentage	17	23
UIFSA	4	5
Other	7	7
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>1138</i>	<i>1492</i>

Juvenile Court Year in Review

Projects implemented/completed during the year:

- Continued the reduction of paper records in juvenile delinquency and unruliness actions by scanning and, if applicable, sealing and expunging
- Extended the ability of parties to use ZOOM virtual conferencing for all case types where necessary, allowing appearances for hearings, arraignments, and detention hearings via video
- Maintained up to date training for clerks by attending sessions offered through the Ohio Supreme Court
- Worked with CSEA to provide mediation services for individuals to assist with issues such as parenting time and visitation schedules at no charge

Goals for 2022:

- ☐ Continue to use ZOOM conferencing for all case types as needed
- ☐ Continue scanning of all records, including sealing and expunging if applicable, to eliminate paper records and reduce the cost of storage space
- ☐ Transfer of historical court records from the old Youth Center to the new County storage facility
- ☐ Update the Juvenile Court case management system

MEDIATION

SENECA COUNTY JUVENILE AND PROBATE COURT OFFER MEDIATION SERVICES.

MEDIATION IS A PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS IN WHICH A NEUTRAL MEDIATOR HELPS FACILITATE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARTIES SO THAT THEY CAN WORK TOWARD A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE RESOLUTION. MEDIATION PUTS THE POWER BACK IN THE HANDS OF THE PARTIES BY EMPOWERING THEM TO COME UP WITH THEIR OWN SOLUTIONS AND OFFERING THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO RESOLVE THEIR ISSUES TOGETHER.

MEDIATION WORKS BECAUSE:

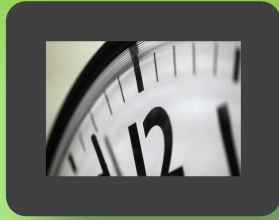
- Both sides have the opportunity to be heard
- The parties are in control of the agreement
- Multiple ways of solving problems are explored
- The final agreement is acceptable to the parties
- Communication is clear and specific

For 2021, the Court Mediator provided services in 14 civil custody mediations, 3 probate mediations, and 19 truancy mediations.

We are proud to report that of the 14 civil mediations referenced above, 10 were a result of the Court's program with the Seneca County Department of Job & Family Services through which we provided mediation services to address non-financial/parenting time issues at no charge for families following their administrative child support hearings.



Tiffany Cavanaugh-Mediator



TIME TO INVEST

After several years of planning, Seneca County Juvenile Court was proud to launch the “Time to Invest” Program (TTI) in the fall of 2019. TTI was a success for the first semester and the youth who participated experienced improved grades and behaviors. The Court was looking forward to the same outcomes for the spring semester of 2020, but unfortunately TTI had to shut down in March due to COVID-19. We hope to restart the program in the fall of 2022.

TTI is an alternative to detention. TTI was developed by Judge Jay Meyer and the staff of the Seneca County Juvenile Court, Court Services, and the Seneca County Youth Center to address the criminogenic needs of our youth by efficiently and impactfully improving their educational, vocational, therapeutic, and socialization deficiencies. TTI utilizes intervention philosophies that align with nationally recognized evidence-based models to provide intensive services for youth not likely available to them at their home schools.

TTI is designed to accommodate up to twelve youth between the ages of 12 and 18 at any given time. The Program operates primarily in a designated and separate location inside the Seneca County Youth Center Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. until 1:40 p.m. during the school year.

Research evidence reveals that academic support, coupled with counseling, workforce development, case management, mentoring, and family interventions are more successful at preventing recidivism and developing a path to success for youth. In Seneca County, we have developed TTI to apply this new line of thinking in our community.

JUVENILE COURT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Seneca County Juvenile Court works closely with area higher education institutions to provide internship opportunities to qualified students.

In 2021, one Tiffin University student clocked in 150 hours as part of the Juvenile Court Internship Program. The intern went to schools and meetings with families while obeying CDC Guidelines. They were also able to observe hearings and Youth Center contacts.



Office of Court Services

Kendra Shearer-Director

Kody Brewer	Probation Officer
Amy Chalfin	Probation Officer
Linda Cohen*	Probation Officer
Jason French	Compliance Officer
Abbi Norville	Diversion Officer
Jim Jarrett*	Director of Community Outreach
*Paid by General Fund	

The Court Services Department helps to connect youth and families with interventions and services available in our community as soon as they make contact with the Court, and it continues to do so throughout the youth's involvement with the Court. Court Services houses and coordinates the:

- Probation Program
- Diversion Program
- Community Outreach

Evidence-based practices and interventions, such as Motivational Interviewing techniques, the Carey Guide curriculum, and the Ohio Youth Assessment System, allowed Court Officers to measure risk, provide intervention, set goals and objectives, and measure outcomes. Our community has a right to be safe and secure.

The Court believes in and operates in accordance with the principle of the least restrictive setting required to protect the community. This principle, supported by outcome measures and a large volume of research, suggests that the more restrictive settings do more harm than good to low and moderate risk youth. Accordingly, Judge Meyer and our Court Services team work together with community partners to help create individualized plans and services for each youth and family so as to create the appropriate balance of accountability and assistance.

Court Services

The Department of Court Services is largely funded by RECLAIM Ohio.

WHAT IS RECLAIM OHIO?

RECLAIM stands for

Reasoned and Equitable Community and Local Alternatives to the Incarceration of Minors.
It A funding initiative which encourages Juvenile Courts to explore community-based options to meet the needs of juvenile offenders and youth at risk of offending.



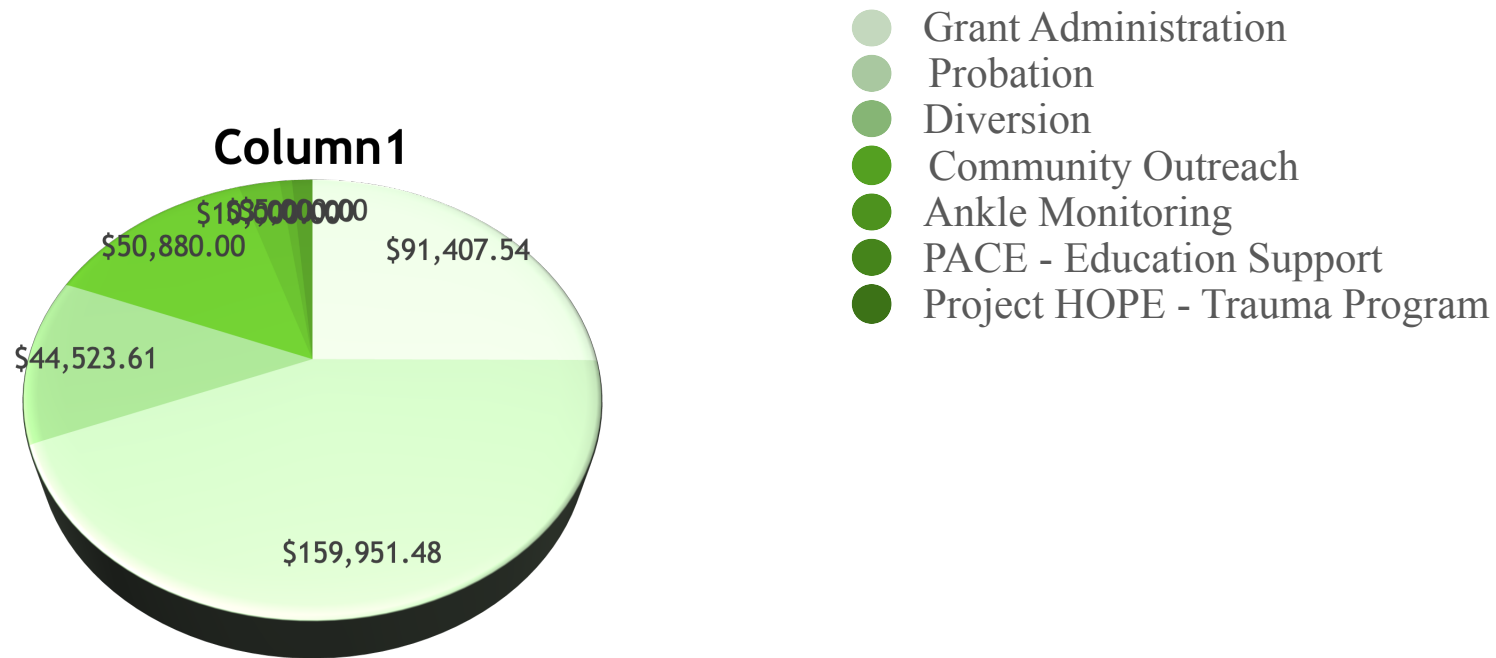
RECLAIM Grant funds pay for the following programs:

- Grant Administration
- Probation
- Educational Services -PACE
- Project HOPE
- Community Outreach
- Ankle Monitoring
- Diversion

HOW WE USED OUR RECLAIM GRANT FUNDS IN 2021

Grant Administration *7 staff received 346 hours of training in FY21	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director of Court Services salary and benefits and 60% of the Administrative Clerk salary and benefits• Continued training for Motivational Interviewing provided by Case Western Reserve University• Additional training for Court Officers
Probation *served 152 adjudicated youth in FY21	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 Probation Officer salaries and benefits -Probation Officers provide supervision and case management to adjudicated youth intending to reduce subsequent delinquent behavior.• Drug Screen test and supplies
Diversion *served 70 youth in FY21	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 Diversion Officer salary and benefits• Programing supplies
Community Outreach * served 115 youth in FY21	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allows for youth to work off Court ordered community service hours and restitution• Ford Transit Van
Ankle Monitoring *served 34 youth in FY21	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allowed ankle monitors to closely track youth who required intensive supervision as an alternative to detention
PACE * served 9 youth in FY21	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Targeted youth who are struggling in school by providing contracted tutoring services through Heidelberg University students
Project HOPE *served 10 youth in FY21	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth participated in a 10-session equine-assisted trauma group

RECLAIM Ohio Total FY 2021 Budget - \$369,762.63



Community Outreach

- ▶ Community Outreach is about giving and contributing. Seneca County Juvenile Court offers this program as a way to help Court ordered youth give back to the community through completion of community service hours. This program also offers youth an opportunity to pay Court ordered restitution to victims through their participation in a work program. The work program allows the youth owing victim restitution a chance to earn an hourly credit of \$8.70 (state minimum wage) to be paid to their victim(s). Youth can earn up to a maximum of \$1,500.00.
- ▶ Since Judge Meyer took office, **more than 70,000 hours of community service have been completed by youth and more than \$116,000 has been paid to victims.**



Roadside Cleaning



Sidewalk Snow Removal



Playground Clean-up

DIVERSION PROGRAM – ORC 2151.18(B)

Seneca County Juvenile Court's Diversion Program was developed to assist the Juvenile Court Judge and Magistrates by diverting first time low-risk unruly/delinquent offenders from formal adjudication, with the goals of holding the youth accountable for their actions and minimizing penetration into the Juvenile Justice System. Research finds that increased/formal contact with the Court for low-risk youthful offenders does more harm than good.

In FY21: A total of 70 youths were served. 61 successfully completed, 9 unsuccessfully completed, and 21 were carried over into FY22. Of the 70 youth served: 19 were truancy cases. Of the 19 truancy cases, 8 successfully completed, 1 was unsuccessful and adjudicated, and 10 were carried over into FY22.

In Diversion, the youth/family enter into a voluntary agreement to address the offense. Following successful completion of the agreement, there is no record of the charge. In addition, successful Diversion saves the cost of Court appointed counsel. Court appointed counsel is conservatively estimated at \$250.00 per case. With 61 successfully completed cases in 2021, this was a cost savings of \$15,250.00. Each youth/family brings food donations with them at the time of signing the Diversion agreement. The food donations have a value of at least \$5.00 per youth/family. For 2021, there were 70 donations, for a total of \$350.00 of food provided to our community.

JUVENILE COURT - COURT HABILITATION PROGRAMS

4-H CARTEENS Program—

A teen facilitated traffic safety program for first time juvenile traffic offenders

Partnership with OSU Extension



3rd Millennium Classrooms

Offers on-line courses with evidence- based strategies for behavior change intervention



PROJECT H.O.P.E.
EQUINE ASSISTED THERAPY
Horses Opening People's E
yes
THERAPUTIC RIDING

CAREY GUIDES

Tools for Probation Officer to use to support Behavior Change and Recidivism Reduction

Reality Works

Interactive technology used to educate youth on topics such as fetal alcohol syndrome, prenatal drug exposure, shaken baby syndrome, and pregnancy prevention



**PACE Program -
academic tutoring
offered in partnership with
Heidelberg University**

SENECA COUNTY YOUTH CENTER

The Seneca County Youth Center is a division of the Seneca County Juvenile Court. The Seneca County Youth Center is a 24 bed detention facility. The facility's construction began in April of 2012 and was completed in February of 2013. This facility is the State of Ohio's newest facility and replaces a facility that was constructed in the 1950's. This facility was made possible by a grant from the State of Ohio, forethought of the County Commissioners, and the work of three Juvenile Court Judges.



Youth Center response to COVID-19

The Youth Center implemented:

- ▶ Continued use of the 72-hour Medical Isolation period for all new intakes until seen and cleared by Nurse, and confirmed by the Director
- ▶ Continued use of video aids as needed for communication
- ▶ Continued use of protective face coverings for everyone and eventually only required for non-vaccinated guests
- ▶ Continued use of social distancing markers and practices

YOUTH CENTER STAFF...

Sarah Canalos– Director
Greg Sehlhorst – Director of Operations

Other Positions Include:

1 Detention Coordinator

1 Program Coordinator

2 full time Activities Supervisors

3 full time Head Supervisors

4 full time Shift Leaders

9 full time Juvenile Corrections Officers

Numerous part time Juvenile Correction Officers (based upon need)



EDUCATION at the Youth Center...

- ▶ North Central Ohio Educational Service Center (NCOESC) provides all educational services for the youth at the Youth Center.
- ▶ All of the youth are required to attend school while detained. This includes a minimum of 5.5 hours per weekday during the school year and a minimum of 2.5 hours per weekday during the summer.
- ▶ Residents receive individual work assignments from their respective schools. Basic skills in English, Math, Science, and Social Studies are available through electronic education programs.

Counseling at the Youth Center

Residents have the opportunity to participate in mental health counseling during their time at the Seneca County Youth Center.

Funding for the SCYC Behavioral Health Program is paid in part by local Seneca County levy funds from Mental Health and Recovery Services Board of Seneca, Ottawa, Sandusky, and Wyandot Counties.

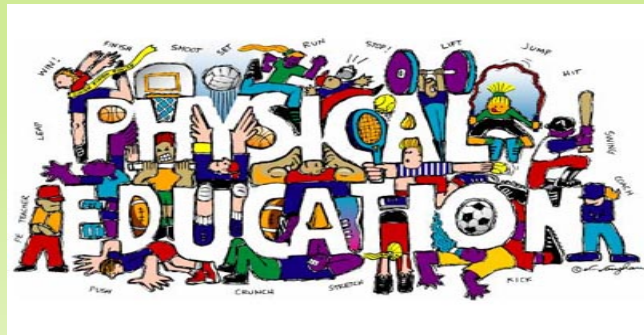
Behavioral Health Services provided by Firelands Counseling and Recovery Services of Seneca County and Wellness Counseling Solutions, LLC dba Wyandot Counseling Associates.

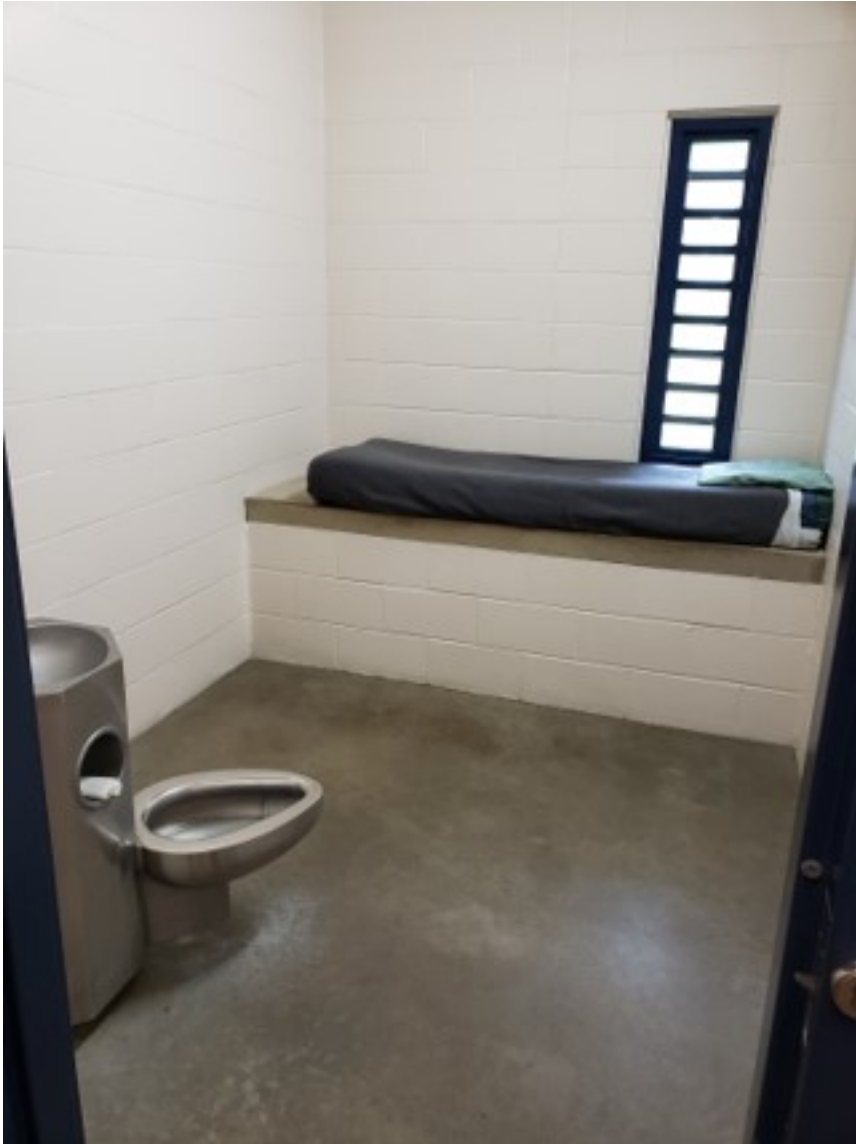
2021

Youth who received behavioral health services	Primarily MH Service Hours	Primarily AOD Service Hours	Successful Discharge	Unsuccessful Discharge
125	156	156	134	0

Along with school, youth in detention are kept active from breakfast until bedtime. The Youth Center offers an array of programs and each youth attends approximately 20 hours of programming per week. Some of programs offered include:

- *Drug & Alcohol Education/Awareness
- *Life Skills
- *Job Application & Resume Education
- *First Aid/CPR
- *Arts & Crafts
- *Guest Speakers
- *Physical Education
- *Activities to Work on Self-Esteem, Anger Management, Trauma, and Peer Pressure





FELONY OFFENSES	29
Misdemeanor Offenses	220
Other (status, tobacco, alcohol)	0
Seneca County Intakes	162
Other County Intakes	87
Seneca County Sentencing	133
Other County Sentencing	64

Partnerships and Relationships

The Seneca County Juvenile and Probate Court would like to thank the many wonderful partners who work closely with us for the benefit of the Seneca County residents.

- COMMUNITY ACTION FOR REDUCING SUBSTANCE ABUSE (CARSA)
- FIRELANDS COUNSELING AND RECOVERY SERVICES
- SENECA MENTORING YOUTH LINKS (SMYL)
- TIFFIN PARK AND RECREATION
- SENECA COUNTY PARK DISTRICT
- MENTAL HEALTH AND RECOVERY SERVICES BOARD OF SENECA, SANDUSKY AND WYANDOT COUNTIES
- SENECA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES
- ALL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICTS
- AREA COUNSELORS AND COUNSELING SERVICES
- HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY
- TIFFIN-SENECA PUBLIC LIBRARY
- FIRST CALL FOR HELP
- OHIO STATE EXTENSION SERVICE
- UNITED WAY
- OTTAWA, SANDUSKY, SENECA COUNTY JOINT SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
- TIFFIN COMMUNITY YMCA
- COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES (CASA)
- ST. FRANCIS EARTH LITERACY CENTER
- CAMP GLEN
- CAMP FIRE BOYS AND GIRLS
- FOSTORIA COMMUNITY YMCA
- PATCHWORKS HOUSE
- TIFFIN UNIVERSITY
- SENECA COUNTY FAMILY AND CHILDREN FIRST COUNSEL