



**ANNUAL REPORT 2020**  
**29th Judicial Circuit Court**  
Jasper County, Missouri

[www.jaspercountycourts.org](http://www.jaspercountycourts.org)



**Circuit Court of Jasper County, Missouri**  
TWENTY-NINTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Jasper County Courts Building  
601 South Pearl Avenue  
Joplin, Missouri 64801  
417-625-4310

GAYLE L. CRANE  
PRESIDING JUDGE

ERIK T. THEIS  
COURT ADMINISTRATOR

January 15, 2021

On behalf of the Jasper County judiciary, it is our pleasure to present the 2020 Annual Report. It provides insight regarding the important work of the judicial branch of Jasper County. Our judges, court administration, clerks, juvenile personnel, and other staff strive to be excellent stewards of public resources while fulfilling our constitutional duty to administer justice. We are cognizant of the support and collaborative partnerships with county and state government, non-profit organizations, schools, community resource providers, and many others the court interacts on a regular basis. Without these partnerships, our courts are unable to provide exceptional service to the citizens of our community.

The coronavirus pandemic created unprecedented challenges for the judiciary. Numerous public policies were put into place to protect public health, though, these policies created numerous barriers for conducting court business. To overcome these hurdles, and to protect the health and safety of the public we serve, the court quickly adapted its normal business practices by expanding the use of virtual hearings, allowing employees to telecommute, and working side-by-side with county officials to acquire larger venues in the community to comply with social distancing protocols. The Circuit Court of Jasper County traversed through these difficult times due to the innovative thinking of court staff, clerks, and judicial officers.

Despite the challenges of 2020, the Circuit Court continues to provide exemplary service to all Missourians. We remain steadfast in our mission to provide the best public service possible. We are proud to serve the citizens of Jasper County, and we pledge to continue to be good stewards of the resources provided by the citizens of Jasper County and to fulfill our mission of delivering quick, fair, equal justice in the most transparent way. If you have any questions regarding the information contained in this report, please feel free to contact my office.

Very truly yours,

Erik T. Theis, MPA, CCM  
Circuit Court Administrator

# The 29th Judicial Circuit Judicial Officers



*“Four things belong to a judge: to hear courteously, to answer wisely, to consider soberly, and to decide impartially.” - Socrates*

The 29th Judicial Circuit is comprised of six divisions and family court. Divisions 1, 2, 3 are the Circuit Court Divisions (also known as the trial court) which have jurisdiction over civil cases with any cause of action over \$25,000, criminal felony cases bound over from Associate Court, juvenile cases, domestic court, treatment court, and oversees probate court. Divisions 4, 5, and 6 are the Associate Circuit Court Divisions which have general jurisdiction over civil cases with any cause under \$25,000, landlord/tenant matters, small claims, traffic, domestic cases, municipal ordinances, and criminal misdemeanors and felonies. The family court has jurisdiction over domestic cases including divorces, paternity actions, child support matters, child custody cases, juvenile matter, and orders of protection.

## CIRCUIT COURT JUDGES



Judge Gayle L. Crane was elected Circuit Judge in 2006. Judge Crane presides over juvenile hearings, civil and criminal matters, and treatment court. Judge Crane is currently the Presiding Judge of the Circuit. Judge Crane received her undergraduate degree from the University of Kansas and graduated from the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law in 1984.



Judge Dean G. Dankelson was elected Circuit Judge in 2016. Judge Dankelson presides over juvenile hearings, civil and criminal matters, treatment court, and appeals from the municipal courts. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia in 1986 and graduated from the University of North Carolina School of Law in 1989.

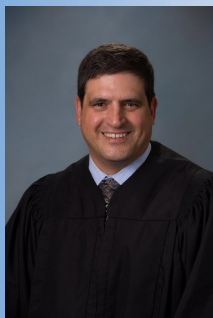


Judge David B. Mouton was elected Circuit Judge in 2006. Judge Mouton presides over civil and criminal matters, treatment court, and probate. From 2016-2018, Judge Mouton was Presiding Judge of the Circuit. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 1982 and graduated from the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law in 1985.

# The 29th Judicial Circuit Judicial Officers



## ASSOCIATE CIRCUIT JUDGES AND COMMISSIONER



Judge John A. Nicholas was elected Associate Circuit Judge in 2014. Judge Nicholas presides over civil and criminal matters, traffic, municipal cases and treatment court. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Oklahoma and his J.D. from the University of Oklahoma, College of Law, in 1996.



Judge Joseph L. Hensley was elected Associate Circuit Judge in 2014. Judge Hensley presides over civil and criminal matters, and juvenile cases. He is currently the Presiding Juvenile Judge. Judge Hensley received his undergraduate degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia in 1995 and his J.D. from the University of Missouri School of Law in 1998.



Judge Jerry L. Holcomb was elected Associate Circuit Judge in 2018. Prior to his election, he was appointed Family Court Commissioner in 2006. Judge Holcomb presides over family court, civil and criminal matters. Judge Holcomb received his undergraduate degree from Pittsburg State University in 1975 and his J.D. from the University of Tulsa College of Law in 1978.



Commissioner Angela A. Vorhees was appointed Family Court Commissioner in 2019. Commissioner Vorhees presides over family court and juvenile matters. She received his undergraduate degree from Southwest Missouri State University and her J.D. from the University of Michigan, School of Law, in 2000.



## DANIEL J. O'TOOLE AWARD

In 2019, the Supreme Court of Missouri honored the Jasper County Circuit Court for its excellence in service and timely justice to the public. The Daniel J. O'Toole Award, named for the late judge's service as the first chair of the time standards monitoring committee, recognizes excellence and efficiency in the service of justice.

As explained by Missouri Supreme Court Judge Laura Stith, "Daniel O'Toole left as his legacy his commitment to an efficient judiciary. This commitment is crucial – timely case processing is fundamental to an effective judicial system – and to justice itself. The staff and judges in these circuits should be commended for their commitment to providing timely justice to the public."

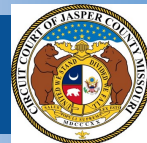
In 1997, time standards were created to serve as guidelines for processing cases before the Court. The standards govern the court's decision-making processes and case management practices with the goal of delivering justice in an efficient, fair, and consistent manner. This is the first time the Jasper County Circuit Court has received this recognition since the award's inception in 1998.

## CIRCUIT JUDGES RECOGNIZED FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

In 2020, Missouri Chief Justice George W. Draper III recognized Circuit Judges Gayle L. Crane, Dean G. Dankelson, and David B. Mouton for participating in the judicial transfer program in the last fiscal year during a ceremony honoring exemplary service to the people of Missouri. The ceremony was held as a part of the annual meeting of the Judicial Conferencing of Missouri, the organization of all state judges, in conjunction with the annual meeting of The Missouri Bar. Due to COVID-19 concerns and health precautions, this year's meeting was held virtually.

The judicial transfer program maximizes efficient use of Missouri's available judicial resources by allowing the presiding judge of a judicial circuit to ask the Supreme Court of Missouri to assign a judge from anywhere in the state to hear cases in the circuit. A transfer often is requested when local judges have recused from a case.

"The Court is pleased with the willingness of our judges to share their talents outside their home circuits," Draper said. "I spent more than 15 years working in Missouri's trial courts, first as a prosecutor and then as a judge, and I know first-hand how important it is for the people of our state to have their cases resolved efficiently, fairly and without undue delay. We appreciate all the much-needed assistance of our qualified, capable and experienced judges who travel outside their home counties to hear cases throughout the state, which helps our judiciary serve the public well."



Erik T. Theis, MPA, CCM  
Court Administrator

In August 1969, soon after he became Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, Warren E. Burger observed, “The courts of this country need management, which busy overworked judges, with drastically increased caseloads, cannot give. We need a corps of trained administrators or managers to manage and direct the machinery so that judges can concentrate on their primary duty of judging. Such managers do not now exist, except for a handful who are almost entirely confined to state court systems. We must literally create a corps of court administrators or managers and do it at once.” As a result of Chief Justice Burger’s efforts and those of other leaders in the field, court administrators have become an important part of the federal, state, and local levels. All judges, particularly the Presiding Judge, are responsible for the overall administration of the court. In effect, the judges are the board of directors; the Presiding Judge is the chairman of the board and the court administrator is the executive officer responsible executing policies.

The Office of Court Administration provides a variety of support services to assist the judiciary in the daily operations of the court. Some of these services include human resource management, courtroom technology, assigning court reporters, jury management, and interpreter services. The Office also manages a number of programs and services which assist the judiciary in resolving problems impacting the court and the community.

The Court Administrator is an executive position and appointing authority for all court personnel except deputy circuit clerks and court reporters. The primary purpose of this office is to assist the judiciary in providing for the effective and efficient operation of the courts. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to, budget and personnel management; representing the court at the local, state and national levels; and overseeing operations of the juvenile court division, treatment court division, and court services. The Court Administrator is also responsible for strategic planning, developing policies, implementing court programs, managing grants and contracts, public and media relations, and is the primary liaison between the judiciary and numerous public and private organizations.



Melissa Holcomb  
Circuit Clerk

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Jasper County Circuit Clerk's Office is committed to providing exceptional service to Jasper County residents and the Missouri Bar by promoting excellence in Judicial Administration.

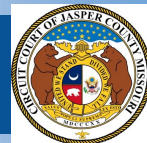
### **Commitment to Excellence**

The circuit clerk's office handles a myriad of administrative duties to ensure the court's proper functioning. The Clerk is responsible for maintaining complete and accurate records of the court. In addition, the clerk's office also collects and distributes all fines and costs, issues summons, subpoenas, executions, garnishments, sequestrations, judgments, orders and commitments. The clerk's office also provides valuable administrative support for the court administrator's office and treatment court programs in the county. Under the direction of Circuit Clerk Melissa Holcomb, in 2020, the clerk's office handled approximately 16,128 new cases filed with the court, and processed 8538 summons, 6000 warrants, 2589 garnishments, 1305 protection orders, and 188 search warrants.

### **Commitment to Transparency and Access to the Court**

Case.net provides citizen's on-line access to case information regarding most cases filed with the court. Citizens can also receive case notifications by email or text message about their case as well as make financial transactions on-line virtually anywhere. These services are not only convenient, but save taxpayers time and money. To access cases in Missouri and for any additional information go to [www.courts.mo.gov](http://www.courts.mo.gov).

# Court Wide Initiatives



**Show-Me Courts:** The foundation of Show-Me Courts is continuous improvement and incremental delivery. The vision is to develop solutions on an ongoing basis, and then incrementally roll out features, adhering to the decision-making principle of “progress not perfection; progress not disruption.” The goal is to deliver an evolving, efficient, flexible, reliable, responsive, intuitive court processing system. The Circuit Clerk’s Office is piloting this initiative and providing training on the Show-Me Courts platform in other counties across the state.

**Internship Program:** The Circuit Court of Jasper County is committed to providing meaningful internships for college students interested in careers within the judiciary or the criminal justice system. Our internship program enables students to acquire lifelong skills which assists them in their career path.. Our internship program is designed to provide an opportunity for students to connect theory with practice and serves as a training opportunity for prospective attorneys, social workers, and other criminal justice professionals. Prospective interns have an opportunity to work in one of the busiest and progressive court systems in Missouri. In most instances we are able to place students in an area of their interest so they can gain practical experience to build a solid foundation for the future.

**Infrastructure Projects:** To enhance the operations of the court, several infrastructure projects were initiated county-wide. The Carthage Courthouse underwent an interior renovation, security upgrades, and added an additional hearing room on the second floor to allow more court hearings to be held at our historic courthouse.

Over the last several years, the Jasper County Courts Building has developed structural and safety issues due to the increasing number of litigants coming into the building. As a part of phase two of the county’s justice initiative, a new state-of-the-art Courts Building is being constructed south of the current facility. The facility will include four jury capable courtrooms, two hearing rooms, and plenty of room to accommodate the needs of the community for many years to come. Not only will the facility have a judicial function, it is designed to have a civic presence in downtown Joplin; offering public parking and space for community activities.

**Civic Education:** Missouri judges have conducted over 130 civic education presentations throughout the state through the “Have Gavel, Will Travel” initiative aimed at boosting the public’s understanding of the judicial system. Some of the presentations include the Fourth Amendment and cell phones, fairness and role of the Courts, and protecting liberty and justice for all. In addition, several school groups toured the courthouses and the Juvenile Center where they learned about court processes, observed judicial hearings, and learned about a variety of evidence-based programs. Numerous presentations were delivered on court services, treatment court, and juvenile court proceedings.

**Jasper County Treatment Program:** The court received an award from the United States Department of Justice in the amount of \$877,000 to implement a court-lead community corrections initiative which will provide supervision, treatment, and other services to non-violent individuals with substance use disorder who enter the criminal justice system. The goal of this program is to provide supervision and treatment as an alternative to incarceration for those entering the criminal justice system due to substance abuse and other behavior health disorders.

**Website Improvements:** The Circuit Clerk and Court Administrator redesigned and developed a more intuitive and user-friendly website so citizens can quickly and easily access information about the court. Citizens can obtain necessary court forms, learn about jury service, make payments online, and discover all court services available to the public.



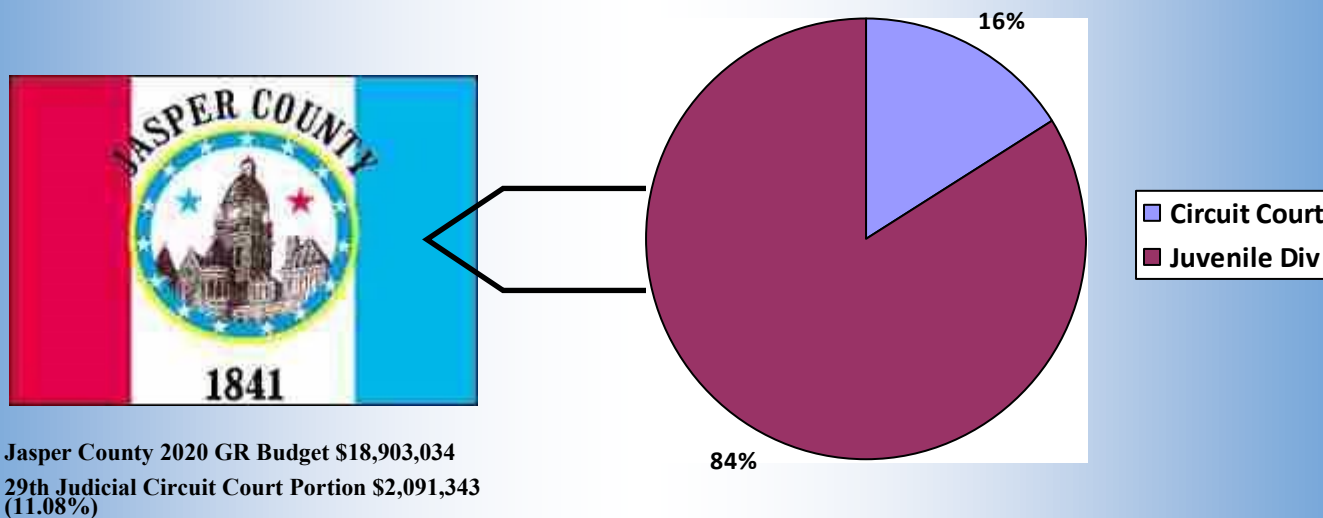
# Financial Overview



As an independent branch of government, the courts generate limited revenue. Other than case filing fees established by the state legislature, the public is not directly charged for many court services. Instead, the courts rely on legislative appropriation to pay for judicial salaries and county general revenue appropriation to cover salaries of certain court employees and daily operational expenses. Other court operational expenses are paid in part through grants and other executive branch appropriations.

In FY 2020, the County general revenue expenditure budget was \$18,903,034; the Circuit Court portion was \$342,380 (1.81%) and the Juvenile Division was allotted \$1,748,963 (9.27%).

FIGURE 1: JASPER COUNTY GENERAL REVENUE FUND ALLOCATION—JUDICIAL PORTION



## SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS TRANSFER

For FY 2020, the 29th Judicial Circuit Court and Juvenile Division received or generated revenue which off-set the total budgeted expenditures for the fiscal year. Jasper County received \$407,836 which consisted of state reimbursements; collected fees; state and federal grants; Juvenile Detention fee collection; and DESE reimbursement.



# Caseload Trends



TABLE 2: TOTAL CASE FILINGS BY FISCAL YEAR

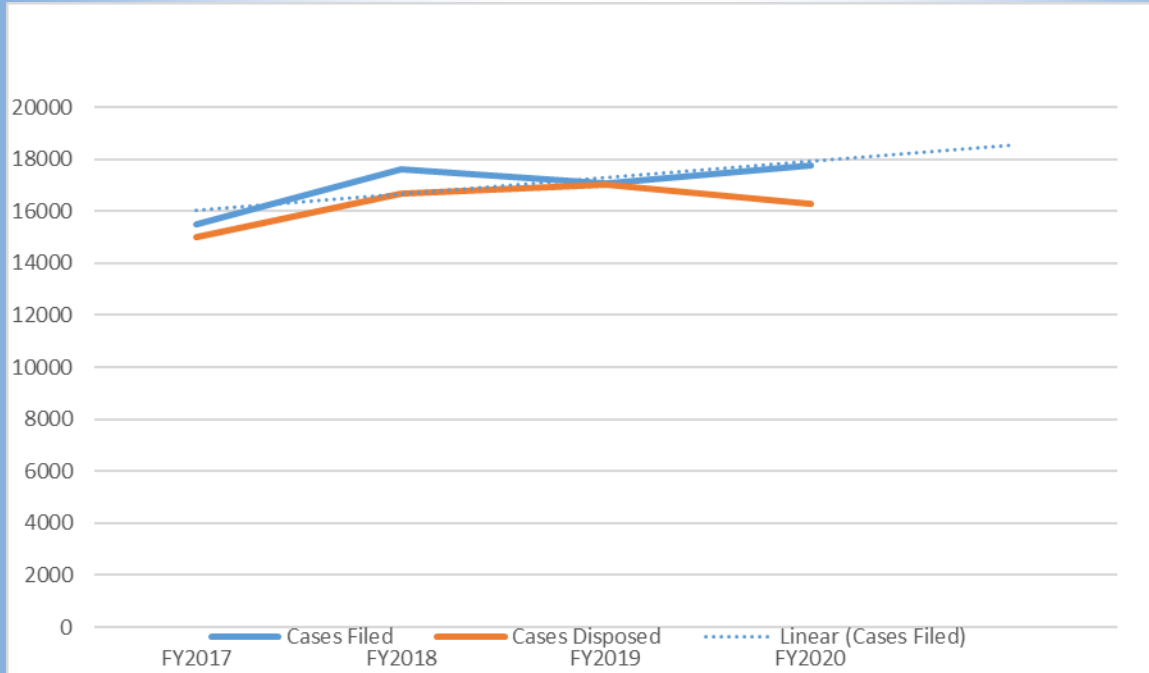
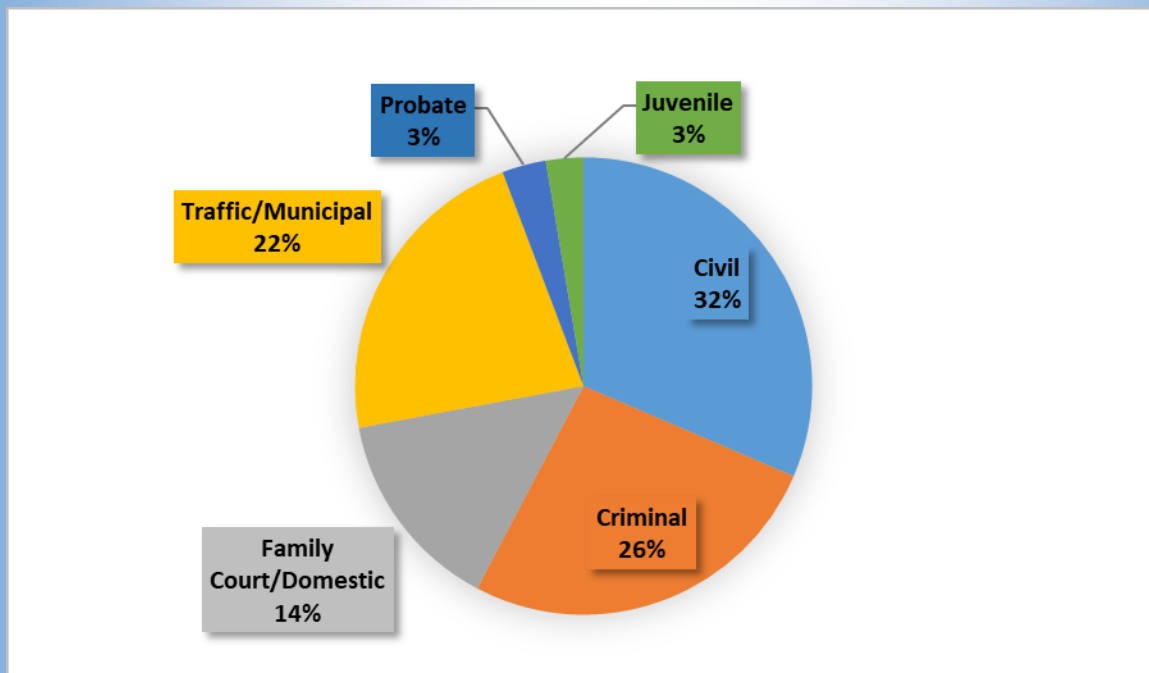


TABLE 3: FY 2020—PERCENT OF CASES FILED BY TYPE



# Caseload Trends



TABLE 4: CIRCUIT COURT FILINGS BY DIVISION

CIRCUIT DIVISION	2019	2020	%Change
Criminal (Felony)	831	623	-25%
Civil	382	429	+11%
<b>Total Circuit Division Filings</b>	<b>1213</b>	<b>1052</b>	<b>-13%</b>

ASSOCIATE CIRCUIT DIVISION	2019	2020	%Change
Criminal (Felony)	2008	1915	-5%
Criminal (Misd)	1856	1698	-9%
Traffic/Municipal	3227	4672	+45%
Civil	4648	4642	-.004%
<b>Total Assoc. Circuit Division Filings</b>	<b>11,739</b>	<b>12,927</b>	<b>+10%</b>

PROBATE	2019	2020	%Change
Decedent Estates	106	117	+10%
Guardian/Conservator	245	176	-28%
Abbreviated Matters	769	724	-06%
<b>Total Probate Filings</b>	<b>1110</b>	<b>1017</b>	<b>-08%</b>

FAMILY/JUVENILE	2019	2020	%Change
Domestic Relations	1248	1077	-13%
Protection Orders	1252	1240	-01%
<b>Total Family/Domestic Filings</b>	<b>2500</b>	<b>2317</b>	<b>-07%</b>
Delinquency	91	51	-43%
Status	42	38	-10%
Child Abuse/Neglect	243	216	-11%
Adoption	118	123	+4%
<b>Total Juvenile Filings</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>-13%</b>

# Caseload Trends



TABLE 5: CIRCUIT COURT CIVIL FILINGS BY CASE TYPE

Nature of Action	2019	2020	% Change
Personal Injury – Vehicular	80	68	-15%
Person Injury – Other	29	39	+34%
Personal Injury – Malpractice	15	14	-7%
Breach of Contract	24	27	+13%
Employment Discrimination	8	8	0%
Quiet Title	28	27	-4%
Wrongful Death	14	20	+43%
Replevin	9	5	-44%
Suit on Account	21	39	+86%
Motn, Rules 29.15 or 23.035	17	8	-53%
Declaratory Judgement	5	10	+100%
Property Damage	4	3	-25%
Reg Foreign Jgmt	16	22	38%
CAFA Forfeit	7	8	+14%
Expungement Criminal Rec	15	32	+113%
Small Claims Trial De Novo	13	10	-23%
Other Misc Actions	16	30	+88%
Other Tort	20	8	-60%
Contract – Other	7	7	0
Other Filings	34	43	+26 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>+12%</b>

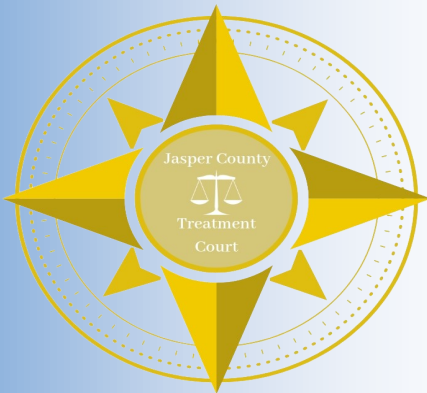
# Caseload Trends



TABLE 6: ASSOCIATE CIRCUIT COURT CIVIL FILINGS BY CASE TYPE

Nature of Action	2019	2020	% Change
Personal Injury – Vehicular	23	12	-48%
Personal Injury – Other	6	6	0
Suit on Account	1904	2211	+16%
Rent and Possession	636	554	-13%
Breach of Contract	1127	1001	-11%
Delinquent Taxes	1	0	-100%
Landlord Complaint	16	6	-63%
Small Claims over \$100	150	117	-22%
Replevin	5	3	-40%
Unlawful Detainer	29	86	+197%
Reg of Foreign Judgment	10	19	+90%
Promissory Note	138	94	+32%
Property Damage	37	31	-16%
Refusal Breath	53	60	+13%
DL Revoc Rvw	59	79	+34%
Limit Dr Priv	22	26	+18%
AC SATOP Revw	75	51	-32%
Other Tort	52	25	-52%
Misc Associate Civil - Other	28	40	+43%
Contract - Other	136	162	+19%
Other Actions	140	62	-56%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4648</b>	<b>4642</b>	<b>-.004%</b>

# Treatment Court



Jared Prater  
Treatment Court  
Administrator

The Jasper County Treatment Court began in 2005 with the county’s first drug court program. Over the years, the treatment court has expanded to include a co-occurring disorders court (2010); DWI Court (2013); and Veterans Court (2016). The drug court model used by the treatment court has been highly effective due in part to its adherence to the ten key components of a successful treatment court. Over the last five years, the number of participants entering into the programs have increased over 200 percent. This increase is due to the strong support from the Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, Sheriff’s Office, State Public Defender’s Office, local Bar Association, non-profit organizations, Probation and Parole, and the community as a whole. Current funding for the program is provided through State appropriations, the Bureau of Justice Administration, and participant fees. Many volunteers also donate their time and resources to provide support and help the participants navigate the program.

Treatment Court is a strict behavioral program designed to offer substance abuse treatment, combined with supervision and judicial oversight to provide non-violent addicts the tools they need to change their lives. While participant eligibility and requirements differ with each Court, to graduate all participants must demonstrate abstinence from drugs and alcohol, satisfy treatment and supervision conditions, complete program requirements, and pay applicable fees and restitution. Participants attend treatment, undergo frequent random drug and alcohol testing, meet with their probation officer or caseworker, and appear before the Judge during regular court sessions. The Treatment Court team meets in a non-adversarial staffing prior to each court appearance to review the progress of each participant. The Judge addresses each participant's level of success in open court and determines the appropriate course of action in each case. Assessments and treatment plans are individualized to address the clinical needs of each person. In addition to substance abuse treatment, services may include trauma and mental health treatment, educational and vocation counseling, housing assistance, medical health referrals, and life skills building.

The Treatment Court’s Peer Support program is an integral part to the success of the program. Peer Support Specialists (PSS) are recovering addicts who successfully completed intensive training to support other individuals in recovery. A participant who is struggling can communicate their concerns to the PSS in lieu of sharing with a probation officer or staff. Honesty is an important aspect of the program. The PSS, who has lived the similar experiences as the participant, can often advise and help breakdown ambivalence to change.

Our community understands that substance use disorder is a community problem which affects families, children, and the local economy. Jasper County has rallied around the Jasper County Treatment Court and has provided resources ranging from treatment and family counseling to housing and employment opportunities. This holistic approach makes the treatment court successful in combating crime and substance use disorder plaguing the criminal justice system in our county. For more information regarding the Jasper County Treatment Court, please contact Treatment Court Administrator Jared Prater.

TABLE 6: TREATMENT COURT HIGHLIGHTS - 2020

**DRUG COURT/CO-OCCURRING DISORDERS COURT:**

- 32 admissions
- 59% had unstable housing at admission
- 75% were unemployed at time of admission
- 654 hours of community service completed
- 86% graduation rate
- 100% had stable housing at graduation
- 100% were employed at graduation

**DWI COURT:**

- 6 admissions
- 66% were unemployed at time of admission
- 100% had stable housing at graduation
- 92% graduation rate
- 100% were employed at graduation
- 3265 hours of community service completed

**VETERANS COURT**

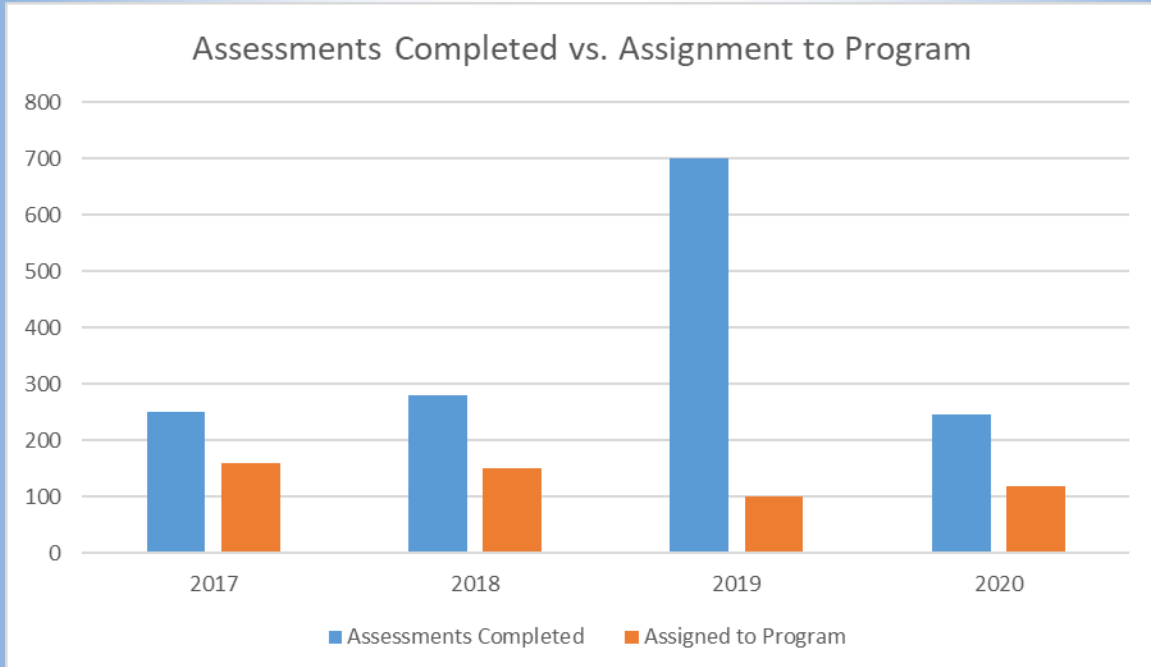
- 5 admissions
- 50% had unstable housing at admission
- 66% were unemployed at time of admission
- 161 hours of community service completed
- 71% graduation rate
- 100% stable at graduation
- 100% were employed at graduation



## PRE-TRIAL SERVICES

In May 2017, Jasper County launched its first ever pre-trial release program. The program is designed to provide the judge with an evidenced-based assessment of inmates which evaluates their flight risk, family and other support systems, and danger to the community. If released to the program, the pre-trial officer ensures the defendant follows the conditions of bond and appears in court. In addition, the program utilizes a variety of supervision strategies such as electronic monitoring, in-person reporting, treatment referrals, and home visits as an alternative to pre-trial incarceration. The program is a proactive approach in response pretrial reform movements occurring in the United States. In fact, in July, 2019, the Supreme Court of Missouri changed the rules of criminal procedure, requiring judges to take into consideration several factors related to the defendant when making a bail decision. Due to proactive thinking, Jasper County already has a program in place which assists the court in complying with these mandates.

TABLE 7 : PRE-TRIAL RELEASE PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



Regarding the cases assigned to pretrial services, 93% of individuals appeared for their court hearings, and 99% did not commit a new offense while released to the program.





## COURT SERVICES AIMED AT FIGHTING MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS

In the late 1950s, states began closing their asylums in large numbers with the promise that they would be replaced with a robust network of behavioral health care centers where people could receive the services they needed, while continuing to live in the community—a movement known as deinstitutionalization. However, the collateral consequences of these policies are that these individuals, when left untreated in the community, often commit crimes and become involved in the criminal justice system. The criminal justice system, although evolving rapidly, is ill-equipped to handle this vulnerable population. As a result, persons suffering from



mental health disorders wind up in our local jails and correctional systems. Currently, only the most progressive of communities have taken actions to address these issues. On December 12, 2017, the Jasper County Commission adopted the Stepping-Up Initiative, a resolution to utilize comprehensive resources available to reduce the number of persons experiencing co-occurring and mental health disorders in the county jail by safely releasing these individuals while also providing services to prevent recidivism. The judiciary, court administration, sheriff's department, law enforcement, and the county executive branch partner with behavioral health systems and community-based resource providers to combat this issue in Jasper County. The Stepping-Up Initiative and other criminal justice reforms garner bipartisan political support. The Missouri Governor and the Legislature are expanding treatment courts statewide, and pretrial release programs are gaining momentum. Local communities understand and support the necessity of providing treatment and care of inmates. Jasper County voters recently approved an extension of a sales tax, in part, to expand the county jail to appropriately classify inmates, provide space for behavioral health treatment, and add additional cells specifically designed for inmates experiencing mental health issues.

Since the adoption of the Stepping-Up Initiative, court services has worked collaboratively with the Jasper County Sheriff's Department and the Jasper County Critical Intervention Team to identify individuals who frequently come into contact with the criminal justice system due to unresolved mental health issues. Once identified at the county jail, assessments are conducted on high-risk individuals to determine the level of medical care needed to stabilize them while incarcerated. Prior to release, a court services officer develops a release plan focusing on continued treatment, health care, and stable housing. Referrals are often made to our Treatment Court Programs and to local behavior health systems for continuum of care. Linking this high risk population to services when released from jail facilities drastically reduces rearrests and continual involvement in the criminal justice system, while reducing the reliance on inpatient hospital stays. This initiative uses resources more efficiently, thereby, reducing the cost to taxpaying citizens.





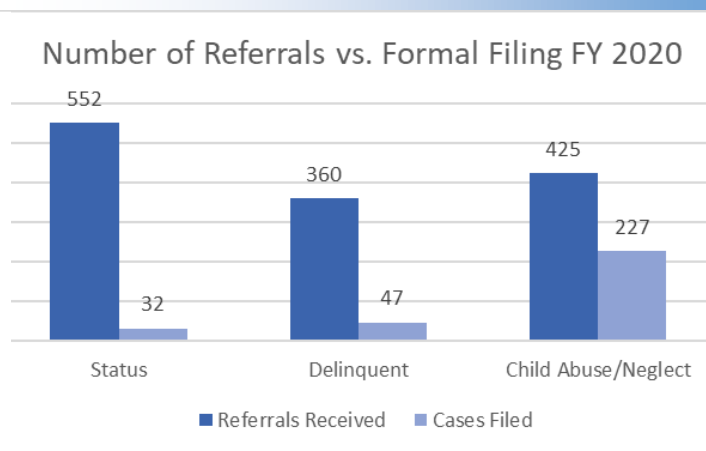
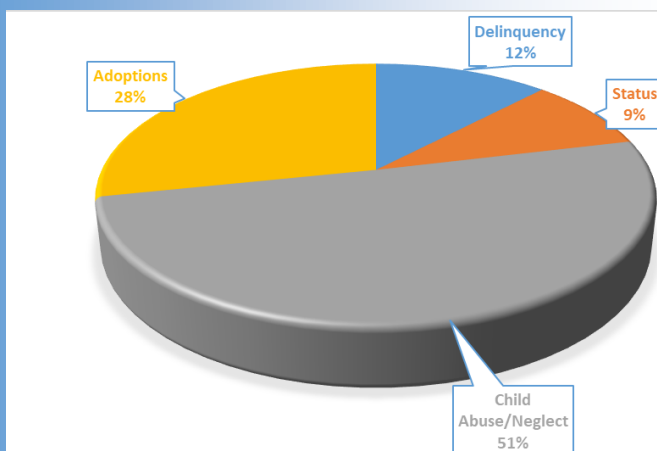
## CASELOAD

Over the last five years, the Juvenile Division has fundamentally changed the approach to juvenile justice. The focus has changed from punishment to proactive, treatment-based programs designed to address the root issues causing a youth to become involved in the juvenile justice system. As a result, when 1337 new referrals were received by the Juvenile Division in 2020, a concerted effort was made to divert youth from the formal court process while ensuring appropriate programming was available for delinquent youth, family, and caregivers. Juvenile Division officers and staff have extensive training on assessing risk, criminogenic needs, and trauma of youth referred. These trained staff use assessments to place youth in appropriate treatment programs, counseling, educational programs, life skills training, and pro-social interest classes. Though the overall number of delinquency cases remained steady, the complexity of many cases increased; requiring tailored evidence-based services and in some cases referrals to the Department of Youth Services for residential care. As noted below, delinquency cases constitute 12% of Juvenile Court cases. In addition to delinquency cases, Juvenile Officers handle status offenders and provide case management on all child abuse and neglect cases in Jasper County.



TABLE 8: JUVENILE COURT CASE FILING—2020

TABLE 9 : # REFERRALS vs. FILING—2020



When youth are referred to the Juvenile Division or placed on probation by the Juvenile Court, there are a continuum of programs which are designed to assist youth and families. Programs include in-house and community based treatment, family counseling, anger management, community service, intensive supervision, gender-specific programs, alternative school, after school programming, culinary program, prosocial activities, and more.



Steven D. Norman, MS  
Chief Juvenile Officer



## JUVENILE OFFICE

Our new Juvenile Center opened its doors in 2019, helping the division continue its transition from traditional juvenile justice methods into more proactive, preventative and collaborative approaches. In addition to providing in-house services, the division assigned a Juvenile Officer to each of the major school districts including Joplin, Carthage, Carl Junction, and Webb City. Each of these school districts now has a Juvenile Officer on campus, allowing the officer to work closely with school officials and school resource officers to quickly intervene and deal with issues at the school. As a result of this innovative approach, not only is the division seeing a dramatic drop in the number of formal referrals, we are also experiencing positive outcomes built through collaborative relationships with the schools, law enforcement, students, and families.

The division has a variety of in-house programs designed to address the specific needs of families and youth who come under our jurisdiction. These programs range from evidence-based programming to pro-social activities. In 2020, 153 youth received in-house services at the Juvenile Center; a 74% reduction from 2019. This reduction is attributed to COVID-19 shutdowns, social distancing restrictions, and other safety protocols related to the pandemic.

In addition to these programs, the Juvenile Center operates an alternative school for the Jasper County School Districts. Students who are suspended are referred to the school. For school year 2020, 40 high-risk students were referred to the school for a total of 2118 days. The alternative school's mission is to hold the youth accountable for their behavior while continuing their education; therefore, reducing the chances of the student getting behind academically and dropping out school.



## ACHIEVEMENT COURT

The Juvenile Achievement Court is a comprehensive treatment program for juveniles who are struggling academically due to truancy, substance use, mental health, or behavioral issues. Traditionally, students who were faced with a long term suspension due to drug violations or other inappropriate behavior are suspended for 10-180 days. The collateral consequences of long-term suspension are delays in education, continued misbehavior, and delinquency. Furthermore, suspending a student does not address the root issues the student maybe experiencing. As an alternative, youth can be placed in the achievement court program, which includes bi-monthly court appearances, a variety of treatment modalities based upon the need of the youth, drug testing, individual/group counseling, medication assisted therapy, and substance use education. If educational needs



are an issue, youth are also referred to the Jasper County Juvenile Center’s alternative school during the day. In addition, juveniles and their families are linked with community resources to help meet the needs of the entire family.

Research shows programs focusing on treatment, competency development, and education reduce recidivism and future involvement in the juvenile justice system; not to mention these opportunities are valuable alternatives to detention. The Achievement Court team works collaboratively to help meet the

needs of the juveniles and their families, offers close supervision throughout the week while keeping the juvenile out of the formal court system, and provides ongoing opportunities for juveniles to remain on track academically. The combination of supervision and intensive services positively impacts the lives of the participants by addressing the needs of the family, and consequently, keeping the juvenile engaged in school, earning a high school diploma, promoting abstinence, eliminating future delinquent or status issues related to substance use, and improving the overall health of the individual. During the calendar year 2020, 158 youth were placed into achievement or drug court. Only 4 youth reoffended while in the program.

## GAP MENTOR PROGRAM

More than ever, America’s youth face a variety of challenges, so programs must become more creative in countering the steady stream of negative influences children face. Our GAP Program (Guiding, Advising, Preparing) uses adult volunteers who commit to supporting, guiding, and being a positive role model to a young person. By being a positive adult role model, the mentor helps the youth develop resilience and positive adaption with the over-all goal of helping them reach positive academic, career, and personal goals.

Mentors receive training prior to being assigned a mentee. Once matched, the mentor takes the lead in supporting a young person through an ongoing, one-on-one relationship. The relationship is built by planning and participating in activities, building mutual respect, developing goals, and working collaboratively to accomplish them.

## JUVENILE DETENTION ALTERNATIVE INITIATIVE

Our Jasper County Juvenile Center is recognized as a Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) site. The JDAI is in support of the Annie E. Casey’s Foundation’s vision that all youth involved in the juvenile justice system have opportunities to develop into healthy, productive adults. The initiative is one most effective, influential, and widespread justice system reforms in the nation.

The objectives are:

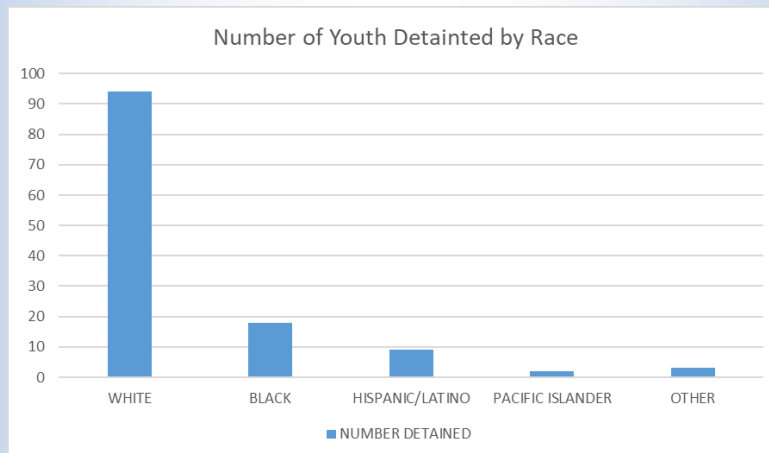
- Eliminate the inappropriate or unnecessary use of secure detention;
- Minimize re-arrest and failure-to-appear rates pending adjudication;
- Ensure appropriate conditions of confinement in secure facilities;
- Redirect public finances to sustain successful reforms; and
- Reduce racial and ethnic disparities



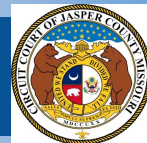
## JUVENILE DETENTION

In 2020, there were 108 admissions to secure detention in the Jasper County Detention Center, for a total of 1678 days of care. In addition to beds occupied by Jasper County youth, beds are also rented to other jurisdictions with no secure placement options. The Jasper County Juvenile Detention Center has contracts with several counties in Southwest Missouri and we hold youth for the Division of Youth Services. 68% of admissions to the detention center were for jurisdictions outside of Jasper County. Rented bed space from other jurisdictions accounted for \$76,165 in revenue for Jasper County in 2020.

TABLE 10: DETENTION DEMOGRAPHICS—2020



# Court Contact Information



Jasper County Courts Building  
601 South Pearl Avenue  
Joplin, Missouri 64801



Jasper County Courthouse  
302 South Main Street  
Carthage, Missouri 64836



Jasper County Juvenile Center  
530 South Pearl Avenue  
Joplin, Missouri 64801

## CIRCUIT CLERK (JOPLIN)

Phone: 417-625-4310

Email: [JasperCountyCivil@courts.mo.gov](mailto:JasperCountyCivil@courts.mo.gov)

[JasperCountyCriminal@courts.mo.gov](mailto:JasperCountyCriminal@courts.mo.gov)

## CIRCUIT CLERK (CARTHAGE)

Phone: 417-358-0441

Email: [JasperCountyCivil@courts.mo.gov](mailto:JasperCountyCivil@courts.mo.gov)

[JasperCountyCriminal@courts.mo.gov](mailto:JasperCountyCriminal@courts.mo.gov)

## PROBATE OFFICE

Phone: 417-358-0403

Email: [JasperCountyProbate@courts.mo.gov](mailto:JasperCountyProbate@courts.mo.gov)

## ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Phone: 417-624-4328

Email: [JasperCountyAccounting@courts.mo.gov](mailto:JasperCountyAccounting@courts.mo.gov)

## FAMILY COURT

Phone: 417-237-1079

Email: [JasperCountyFamilyCourt@courts.mo.gov](mailto:JasperCountyFamilyCourt@courts.mo.gov)

## COURT ADMINISTRATION

Phone: 417-625-4310

## JUVENILE DIVISION

Juvenile Office 417-625-4300

Detention Center 417-623-6676