

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE LACKAWANNA BAR ASSOCIATION
BY THE PRESIDENT JUDGE OF THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
THE HONORABLE MICHAEL J. BARRASSE

COURT OF COMMON PLEAS 2019 REPORT

7525 civil cases filed, including 33 professional liability/medical malpractice cases.

2955 criminal cases filed.

1919 family cases filed, which includes 541 divorces and 461 custody cases.

191 summary appeals.

196 miscellaneous filings: PFA contempt, expungements.

917 PFAs.

In our Adult Probation Department there were:

1330 Sentencings.

1113 PSIs Ordered.

603 Gagnon II Hearings.

2518 Cases on Active Supervision (301 are ARDs).

301 Defendants on Pre-Trial Services Supervision.

307 Defendants on the COLOR Drug Testing System.

Treatment Court Totals:

DUI Court 123.

Drug Court 174.

Domestic Violence Court 75.

IP/RIP Court 105.

Veterans Court 34.

Mental Health Court 44.

Total number on supervision in our Treatments Courts is 555.

IN ORPHANS' COURT, there have been:

16 Accounts to Court

65 New Adoptions

95 New Guardianships, Appointments of Guardians

92 Relinquishments/Terminations

1641 New Estates

Domestic Relations 2019 Summary Report

Lackawanna County Domestic Relations currently has 5,634 open complaints for child support of which 4,255 are actively charging cases with monthly collections of 1.6 million dollars. (\$1,683,708.77)

1,525 new complaints for child and spousal support were filed during 2019 representing a 4% increase over the previous year.

2,877 conferences were held, 6% more than the previous year.

1,773 modifications were processed during 2019, representing a 2% increase over the previous year.

905 contempt of court proceedings were held, a decrease of approximately 1% over the previous year.

Lackawanna County Domestic Relations consistently exceeds the state average in three of the five Federal Performance Indicators which are: (1) Establishment of Support Orders, (2) Percentage of Paternity Establishment and (3) Establishment and Enforcement of Medical Support.

The remaining two Federal Performance Indicators (1) Current Collection of Support Ratio of 83.30%, is slightly less than the State average of 83.92% and (2) Collection of Arrears Ratio of 54.80% as of November 2019 is 1% lower than the State average of 55.81%.

The Domestic Relations Diversion Program currently has eighteen participants, eight of whom are working and making consistent child support payments.

- 2019 started with the relocation of Family Court, Juvenile Probation and Domestic Relations to the Government Center at The Globe. This new home provides attorneys, litigants, witnesses and families a spacious, safe and appropriate facility. Currently there are four common pleas judges and staff located on the first floor along with a law library and court administration.
- The closure by the County of the long time Juvenile Detention Center necessitated the Juvenile Probation Department, in conjunction with the Sheriff's Office, to develop new standards and protocols for the detention and transport of juvenile offenders. In cooperation with, and through approval by, the Juvenile Court Judges Commission these new protocols have served both the juvenile offenders and the community very well.
- The Yondr cell phone program was expanded to the main Courthouse this past year. These secure pouches are now required for all members of the public who are entering both the Courthouse and The Globe to attend a court hearing or trial. This safety project is overseen by the Sheriff's Office and ensures that the integrity of court proceeding is maintained.
- The implementation of the UCM (Unified Case Management) project was launched in 2019. This system allows for the sharing of information between Adult Probation, the District Attorney's Office and the Prison for individuals under the supervision of the court. We thank the County IT department and all the stakeholders for their diligent work on this project.

- The Juvenile Probation Department added a Deputy Chief to its management team. This important and necessary addition allows Juvenile Probation to further develop, implement and process programs and procedures that serve the juveniles, their families and our community in a best-practice manner each day.
- Our Adult Probation Department also saw the addition of a second Deputy Chief position to its ranks. This new management position allows for the division of duties between policy and day to day operations which helps streamline the workflow for the officers and support staff in this department.
- With the help of the Bar Association's Equal Access to Justice Committee, our Family Court planned for the re-launch of the mediation program for custody cases. This program, scheduled to begin in the first quarter of 2020, will provide free mediation services to litigants prior to their custody hearing with a Family Court Master.
- During 2019, the Courthouse Security Committee, chaired by Senior Judge Robert Mazzone, toured the 10 Magisterial District Judge offices throughout the county and performed a security assessment of each facility. The recommendations have provided valuable insight as how to better secure these busy and active court venues.

- One of the outcomes of the visits to the MDJ offices is the development of a new office for MDJ Kipp Adcock and his staff. The new location is next to the existing office space on Main Street in Moscow. When complete, it will provide a very safe, appropriate, assessable and functional venue for the staff and citizens served in that district. The anticipated relocation is for April 2020.
- The long-awaited construction on the new Criminal Justice Center located at 1360 Wyoming Avenue, directly behind the prison, is underway. Ground was broken just before Christmas with an anticipated completion of late fall 2020. The facility will be the home of Central Court, the Booking Center, and Pre-Trial Services, with space for various criminal justice support agencies and departments.
- With the cooperation of the Clerk of Judicial Records Office, the Court continues to work with the AOPC to introduce PACFile, which is the process of electronic filing for criminal cases. Trainings and go-live dates are scheduled for May 2020 and will provide practitioners, pro-se litigants and agencies with criminal case dockets the ability to e-file.
- During August of 2019 the main Courthouse hosted numerous works of art through the Prison Art Project. This display highlighted various forms of artistic expression by inmates at the county prison.

- In October of 2019 the Courthouse hosted, for the first time, The University of Scranton Mock Trial competition. This weekend event brought college students from throughout northeast states to Scranton for competition and comradery.
- We are pleased to announce that once again the Pennsylvania Superior Court will be sitting in Scranton at the Lackawanna County Courthouse. The two-day session is planned for April 28th & 29th of 2020. A three-judge panel will hear arguments.
- Throughout 2019 the Court remained committed to reversing the scourge of addiction and opioid deaths in Lackawanna County. The Treatment Court Advocacy Center developed and opened The Recovery Bank on Wyoming Avenue across from The Globe. This center provides day services and opportunities to those in recovery by and through people in the recovery community.