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GENESEE COUNTY SPECIALTY COURTS

Specialty Courts are problem solving courts that divert parties into special programs designed to address underlying issues.

Over the past 15 years, several specialty courts have been implemented in the Genesee County Circuit and Probate Courts.

They represent a shift away from the adversarial concept of justice towards the view that therapeutic justice can be used to address the underlying problems.

In this article, an overview is provided of the probate/family division specialty courts. In the next newsletter we will examine the specialty courts associated with the civil/criminal division.

A listing by judge and a brief description of each specialty court follows.

Judge Barkey

Juvenile Mental Health Court is focused on identifying youth with mental health problems. The program started in 2009. The participants range in age from 12 to 17 years old. Youth attend weekly court sessions along with their parents and case managers. School performance and medication compliance are

monitored. Successful graduates often return to share their continued progress. Currently there are 12 participants in this specialty court. (Court Staff: **Jill Bade, juvenile probation officer; Gail Redmond, clerical support**)

Judge Behm

Parent Representation Project is a SCAO sponsored pilot program designed to improve legal representation for parents, when the child welfare system has filed a child protective petition. A social worker is assigned to work exclusively with the attorneys for the parents and engage families in the child welfare process. The goal is to increase parent participation and to accelerate reunification. Currently there are 16 participants. (Staff: **Tiffany Stachiw, SCAO**)



dents and the families to develop and monitor a plan to improve attendance. Community resources may also be identified to help students and families overcome barriers that prevent attendance. In 2015, there have been 132 referrals to Spectrum. (Court Staff: **Suette Brown, clerical support**)

Family Dependency Drug Court became operational in 2001. This court consists of child abuse and neglect cases where parental substance abuse is a primary factor. Substance abuse treatment and case management services form the intervention core with the Department of Health and Human Services providing family monitoring and support. Family reunification is the goal. Currently there are 13 participating families. (Court Staff: **Quintin Williams, drug court supervisor; Melanie Szelogowski, coordinator; Suette Brown, Mary Moors clerical support**)

ADAPT Program (Acquiring DNA and Paternity Timely) The ADAPT Program is an initiative to develop an expedited process to establish paternity, a child support case and services for eligible families. Eligible participants are identified through Friend of the Court informational sessions and outreach at the Hurley Hospital Prenatal Clinic.

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THE CHIEF SPEAKS



As a judge or a member of the court staff, it is a privilege to work in the court system. With that privilege comes the responsibility to insure that the court is fair, impartial and respectful.

The Michigan Supreme Court promulgated a Model Code of Conduct for Michigan Trial Court Employees. This code was established in 2010. I want to underscore the importance of its content and encourage a review of the complete document.

Canon One

Impropriety or the Appearance of Impropriety

Court employees are highly visible and should conduct themselves in a way that instills public trust and confidence. Improper behavior or the appearance of improper behavior may compromise the integrity of the court.

Canon Two

Abuse of Position

The use of the real or apparent power of a position as a court employee to personally benefit the employee or someone else is prohibited. Court employees should not use their position to secure privileges, gifts, special favors or exemptions.

Canon Three

Impartiality

The official actions of an employee should not be affected or appear to be affected by relationships, position or influence of any party or person involved in the court system.

Canon Four

Proper Use of Public Resources

Court employees shall use court resources, property and funds solely for court business and in accordance with prescribed procedures. Court employees are stewards of public resources.

Canon Five

Duty to Disclose

A court employee should expect coworkers to abide by the canons set out in this code. A court employee shall report violations of this code.

Canon Six

Confidentiality and Discretion

Although most court records are public, some are nonpublic and cannot be released. Confidential information should never be disclosed to any unauthorized person for any purpose.

Sensitive information acquired by court employees in the course of performing their official duties should never be revealed until it is made a matter of public record.

Canon Seven

Discrimination

Essential to the administration of justice is allowing equal access and treatment for all. Court employees are called upon to assist the public and coworkers with courteous service, irrespective of their race, religion, gender or national origin.

Canon Eight

Political Activity

A court employee is free to participate in the democratic process by working for a political cause, party or candidate. Participation in political activity should not transcend into the workplace by the displaying of political material, soliciting signatures for political candidacy or soliciting or receiving funds for political purposes.

Canon Nine

Duty to Serve

Court employees must reflect a high level of professionalism. Court employees are not to inappropriately destroy, alter, falsify, mutilate, backdate, or fail to make required entries on any court records.

Canon Ten

Competency

Court employees are encouraged to take advantage of educational opportunities to maintain their understanding of laws, court rules, administrative orders, case law, technology and other approved practices.

-cjrby

Hyperlink to complete document is below.

<http://courts.mi.gov/education/mji/Resources/Documents/ModelCodeConductAllStaff.pdf>

ADMINISTRATOR CORNER

June 15, 2015 was World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. In honor of that day the local Elder Abuse Alliance (EAA) held a wine and cheese reception at the Flint Farmer's Market. Judge Barkey, Sheriff Pickell, Tracy Dowless (supervisor from DHHS Adult Protective Services), and Mark Rice II (President of Loving Hands and the EAA) were all speakers at the event designed to increase awareness of Elder Abuse and the EAA.

The concept of a collaborative group formed to raise awareness and reduce elder abuse is not new in Genesee County. In 1998 a small group of organizers formed the Elder Abuse Task Force and Elder Death

Review Team. This group took the lead in asking the citizens of Genesee County to pass the senior millage several years ago. As a result, thousands of seniors in Genesee County receive the benefits of senior millage funding, and criminals who perpetrate elder abuse are prosecuted and held accountable for their actions. The EAA formed in July of 2014. The Mission Statement of the EAA reads: "The Elder Abuse Alliance is a collaborative organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for at risk older adults by protecting their rights, dignity and promoting their independence and safety." The alliance is made up of representatives

from law enforcement, governmental agencies, the legal and medical communities, service providers and citizens.

There is a 15 member board and 34 members who meet every month. The Alliance provides support and advocacy for the Department of Health and Human Services and the Genesee County Sheriff's Elder Abuse and Exploitation Prevention



program through outreach and community education. The EAA is an excellent source of referrals for those interested in this problem. For more information go to -jb

www.elderabusealliance.org

HOW JULY 4TH BECAME A NATIONAL HOLIDAY

The Continental Congress decided to declare independence from Great Britain on July 2, 1776. The final wording of the document was not agreed upon until July 4, 1776. It was signed on August 2, 1776 and delivered to Great Britain in November 1776.

July 4, 1776, however, was the date included in the various copies that had to be prepared for formal delivery and noti-



fication. It has become the official date for celebration and historical reference. Celebrations did not immediately start to be a part of the American culture. After the War of 1812, printed cop-

ies of the Declaration of Independence began to circulate. The fact that Thomas Jefferson and John Adams died on July 4, 1826 is also cited as a reason that the date may have taken on greater importance as a symbol of national celebration to honor their service.

Congress first declared the 4th of

July as a national holiday in 1870, nearly 100 years after its passage.

SPECIALTY COURTS (CONT'D.)

Specialty courts represent a shift away from an adversarial approach to one of therapeutic jurisprudence.



The goal is to expedite the paternity establishment process and to increase child support collection. There are currently 46 cases in the program. (Court Staff: Tony McDowell, FOC staff attorney, Danielle Wenzel, FOC case worker)

Judge Gadola

Juvenile Drug Court began in 2001 and consists of a three phase intervention program for juvenile offenders. Using an assessment/risk tool, juveniles are screened for eligibility, their commitment to the program and past delinquent history. There are currently 12 participants. (Court Staff: Jamie Bieler, juvenile probation officer; Lisa Flora, clerical support)

Judge Newblatt

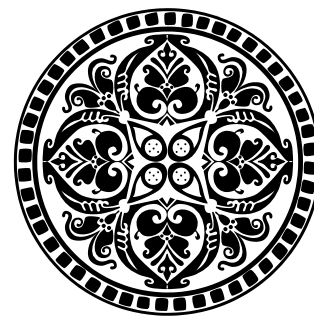
Infant Toddler Treatment Court aka Baby Court aims to make changes for abused and

neglected children in foster care from newborns to age four by focusing on parenting skills. The children and their parents are evaluated and treated by an Infant Mental Health Specialist. A treatment plan is then developed to meet the individual needs of each family member.

An additional component of Baby Court is the Nurturing Parent Curriculum. The focus of this court is to reach permanency faster, strengthen the parent-child relationship and reduce the chance of being placed in foster care again. There are currently 8 participants in Baby Court. (Court Staff: Gail Redmond, clerical support)

Girls Court is a gender specific court that targets the commercial sexual exploitation of adolescent females. It is the newest

specialty court and became operational in January 2015. Monthly review sessions are held that focus on trauma treatment, supervision and mentoring opportunities. There is a capacity of 12 females in this court. (Court Staff: Natasha Walker, juvenile program specialist, Gail Redmond, clerical support) -jep



• On June 5, 2015 the Genesee County Courthouse staff and public participated in a Tornado Drill. A courthouse safety team member was located on each floor for assistance. In approximately 10 minutes, all occupants were in a sheltered location and the drill was over.

Many thanks to Lt. Matt Rule, Sgt. Rudy Lopez, Rob Gifford, Dave Combs, Jim Bauer, Janet Patsy, Tom Temple and the many other courthouse staff who provided assistance.

Special thanks to the law clerks who play such an

important role to insure the well-being of courtroom occupants.

• Dave Combs, Court IT Technician, recently completed his certification in *On Base* workflow development. Dave joins Rob Gifford, Court Technology Coordinator, in achieving this level. Support for the court of the future looks solid.

• Thanks for the quick response from Genesee County Building and Grounds Department to secure the Beach Street entrance, after it was damaged over the weekend of

June 13-14. Within a matter of hours, the entrance was re-opened to the public.

• The first *IT Tech Talk* was held in May. The topic was *OneNote* and it was a standing room only crowd! The second session was held on June 25 on "*Excel*" and once again, all the seats were filled.

Watch for e-mail notification for the July session. *IT Tech Talk* is a 30 minute training session on available technology.

Thanks to the court technology team of Rob Gifford and Dave Combs.

COURT CLERKS

Have you ever wondered about the duties of a court clerk and why they are so important for court operations? Read the comments of Cindy Grossbauer, Legal Division Supervisor, Genesee County Clerk-Register, and you will have a better appreciation of a “day in the life” of a court clerk.

A court clerk has a tremendous amount of responsibility. There is one court clerk assigned to each judge. They are required to work as a team with judicial offices and others, such as Friend of the Court, Prosecutor, Adult Probation and Sheriff.

The work of a court clerk does not end by giving the judge a court file. Court clerks are responsible for checking in parties or attorneys and making sure that the file is available to the judge when the case is called. They update the register of actions and print out re-

quired judgments and forms for the judge to sign. Accuracy and timeliness are necessary skills for a court clerk. Interruptions are part of the job. Whether it is checking in parties or attorneys, obtaining information for the judge or calling sheriff detention for assistance, it is all part of the daily challenges of a court clerk.

After the courtroom work is done, a court clerk returns to the office to finish properly processing paperwork, put files away, listen to phone messages left from the public and attorneys, respond to emails, process new filings and begin the repeat process for files that will be needed next week.



Court clerks are also responsible for reports related to non-service, no-progress and release of bonds. Working cooperatively to service the court when co-workers are on vacation or otherwise absent is important and done graciously by the staff.

So if I haven't said it lately, I appreciate all that the court clerks do and thank them for their hard work (we all do.) -cg



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Left to Right: Natasha, Jessica, Mary Anne, Lori

Jessica Clemens – Collections Specialist

Jessica Clemens is our newest *Collections Specialist* assigned to the Circuit Court, Financial Division. Jessica has a BBA from U of M-Flint. Prior to her Circuit Court employment, she worked at a law firm for three years. Jessica is an avid reader, and loves to spend time with her 1 year old son.

Mary Anne Falk – Deputy Register

Mary Anne accepted the position of *Deputy Register* and is currently assigned to the Adoptions Unit. Mary Anne transferred from GCCARD where she worked for 6 ½ years. Mary Anne has one son, Charlie, and a future daughter-in-law, Catie. She enjoys time with her family and 3 ½ year old black lab, Sadie.

Lori Long – Deputy Register

Lori Long joined the Circuit Court, Family Division, as a *Deputy Register* in April 2015. Lori's prior experience

includes working for a local family law attorney as a legal assistant for 7 years. In her spare time she likes to be involved with the community. Lori is a former volunteer for the Genesee County Animal Control and she's currently involved with rescuing and helping to re-home lost/homeless pets of Genesee County.

Natasha Warren – Juvenile Program Specialist AKA: Girls Court Coordinator

Natasha Warren is excited to take on the new role of *Girls Court Coordinator*. She has a BA in Criminal Justice from U of M-Flint, and is currently pursuing her MPA degree at Central Michigan University. Natasha has a strong desire to serve her community. Her prior work and volunteer experience includes management and banking, DHHS, MI-YVPC and the Y.E.S. program. Natasha is married with 4 beautiful children.

Sam Fleet – Judicial Advisory Assistant Judge Gadola

Sam graduated from Powers Catholic High School and earned his bachelor's degree at Michigan State University. Now that he has

graduated from Cooley Law School, Sam looks forward to having time to fly fish in northern Michigan.

Kathryn Frontier – Judicial Advisory Assistant Judge Theile

Kathryn is a recent graduate of Cooley Law School and is an alumna of the University of Michigan. She is an adventurous cook and baker; she enjoys trying new vegetarian recipes and perfecting her cupcakes.

Brooke Tucker – Judicial Advisory Assistant Judge Fullerton

Brooke grew up in Fenton, graduated from Powers Catholic High School and recently graduated from DePaul University College of Law. Brooke is excited to quit her hobby of taking bar exams (she is licensed in California and Michigan already) and start playing volleyball again this summer. -dm/lj



Left to Right: Sam, Kathryn, Brooke



Hearsay is now available on the Circuit Court website www.7thCircuitCourt.com/hearsay-newsletter

We want to hear from you! Send us an email letting us know what you would like to see in the newsletter and feedback on the current edition. You can also submit ideas and information about activity in your department. hearsay@7thcircuitcourt.com