



AOPC ANNUAL REPORT 2020

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COURTS



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Message from the court administrator

I am pleased to present this 2020 Annual Report of the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC). While 2020 proved to be an unprecedented year of change, the hard work and dedication of our jurists and court staff ensured our judiciary remained operational and accessible.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, consistent with its constitutional authority and Rule of Judicial Administration 1952, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court declared a statewide judicial emergency and authorized the courts to issue local declarations of judicial emergency to safeguard the health and safety of court users, court personnel, and the public. The Court specifically expanded use of advanced communication technology, subject to constitutional restrictions, to enable the courts to conduct court proceedings amid statewide courthouse closures.

While the Supreme Court ended its statewide declaration in June 2020, the lower courts retained the authority to continue their emergency declarations in response to operational needs and the rapidly changing health and safety guidance from federal and state government.

Despite the challenging logistical issues caused by the pandemic, our work to support and improve the administration of justice, in partnership with other state agencies and branches of government, continued.

The AOPC continues to support the growing number of court programs and services offered throughout the Commonwealth – whether through the expansion of our county treatment court programs, the work of our offices specifically dedicated to protecting the most vulnerable populations, or the development of nationally-awarded court technology to improve access and respond to legislative enactments, such as the Clean Slate Law.

This report contains statewide statistics and program highlights of the judiciary's efforts to promote the fair and efficient administration of justice.



Sincerely,

GEOFF MOULTON
Court Administrator of Pennsylvania

How the court system works

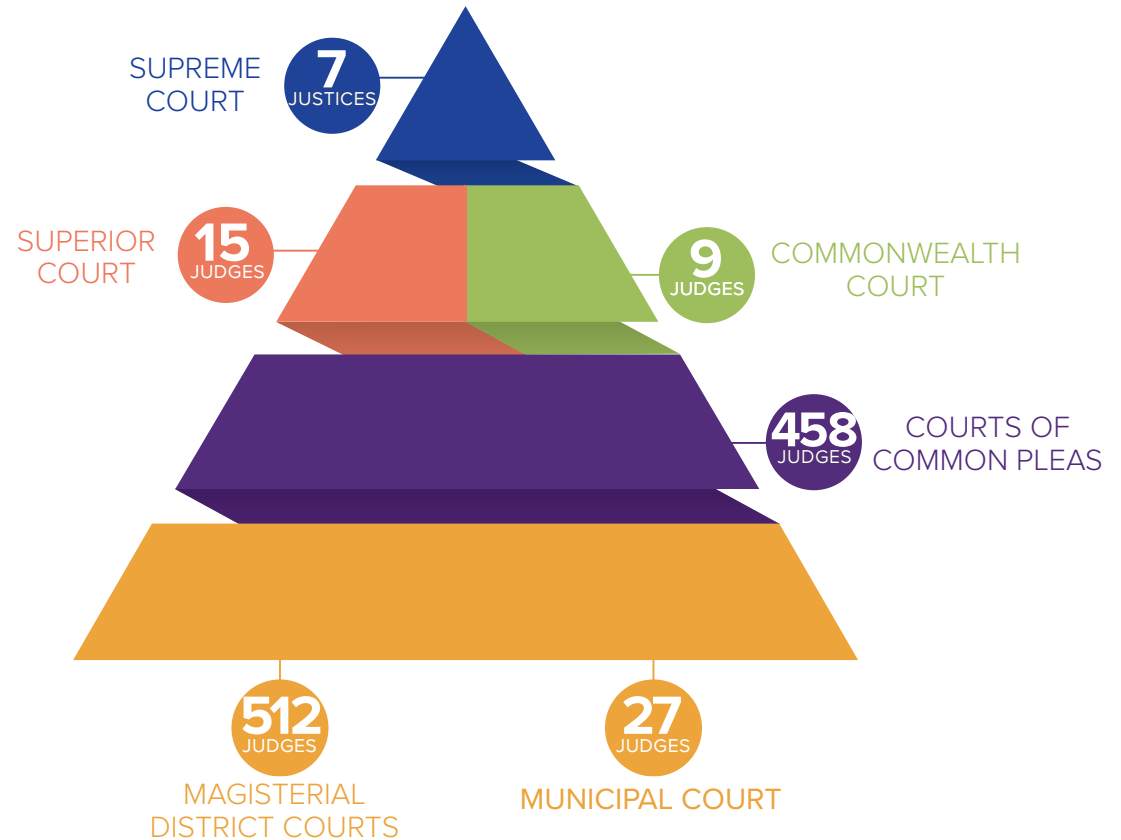
FACILITATING ACCESS TO JUSTICE IS THE HIGHEST PRIORITY OF PENNSYLVANIA'S COURTS.

We approach every day with this focus – to keep courts open, safe, accessible, fair, effective, responsive and accountable.

Pennsylvania continues to lead the nation in our use of technology to make the courts accessible and efficient. Our court data is used widely in government to help make informed policy decisions and to foster public safety.

Our programs provide opportunities for dramatic differences in peoples' lives and are proving to be cost-savers as well.

The Pennsylvania court system is structured like a pyramid, with the Supreme Court at the top. All courts fall under the umbrella of the judiciary headed by the Supreme



Court. In the interest of full transparency and accountability, Pennsylvania's judiciary provides comprehensive public access to court records online and upon request. [Learn more about Pennsylvania's Unified Judicial System.](#)

WHO WE ARE

Defining the AOPC

The Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) is the administrative arm of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

Led by the Chief Justice of Pennsylvania, the Supreme Court supervises and administers Pennsylvania's judicial branch of government. The Supreme Court appoints the court administrator of Pennsylvania.

THE AOPC IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:



Representing the court system to the public and at all government levels, providing each with reliable information.



Developing and maintaining information technology resources, such as case, financial and administrative management systems.



Facilitating safe and accessible courts for all.



Providing legal services to system personnel.



Recommending **court system improvements** and program innovations.



Conducting **continuing education programs** for judges and staff.



Managing administrative functions including finance and human resources.



Educating the public about the courts' roles and functions, ensuring all court information is as transparent and publicly accessible as possible.



Assisting president judges and district court administrators in **management** of local courts.

How the court system is funded

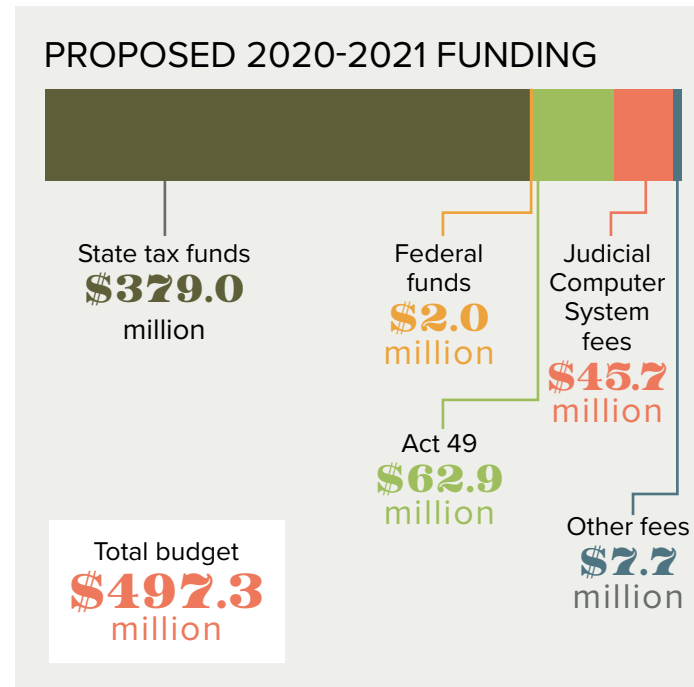
AOPC/Finance provides critical management of budget, accounting and payroll systems for the entire judiciary and serves as the primary resource for the organization on financial matters.

The Pennsylvania Constitution calls for justice to be administered without “sale, denial or delay.” That mandate shapes the core mission of the courts – delivering fair, timely and accessible justice for all. Adequate funding with an ongoing commitment to efficiency and the wise and transparent use of public funds allows the mission to be met.

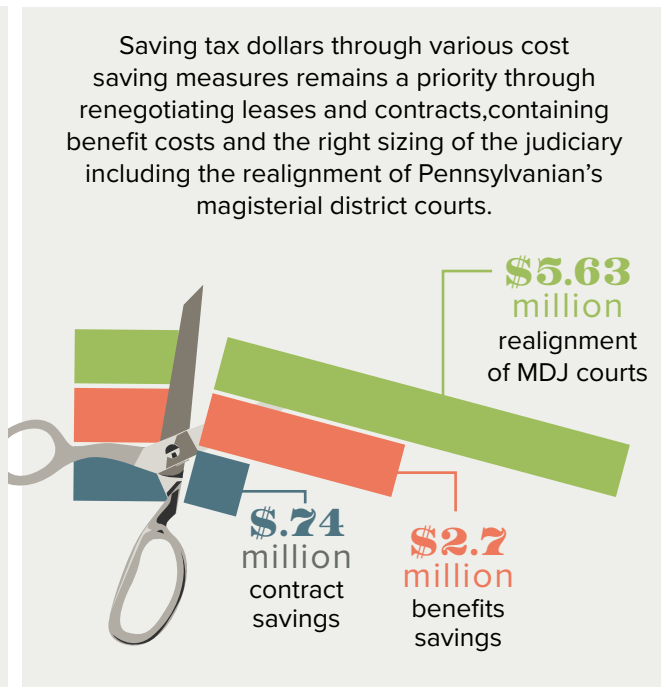
The judiciary strives to use tax dollars wisely and efficiently. Over the past 10 years, reducing its personnel complement, renegotiating leases and contracts, containing benefit costs and limiting merit and cost-of-living increases has saved more than \$87.5 million.

2020-2021 BUDGET REQUEST

FUNDING SOURCES



SAVING TAX DOLLARS



Over the past 10 years, the judiciary has saved a combined **\$87.5 million.**

The judiciary receives about **0.5%** of the state budget.

Since 2009, fee revenue has been used to fund a portion of the judiciary’s annual general fund budget, currently about **13%** of the total.

WHO WE ARE

By the numbers



Pennsylvania's problem-solving courts had a **69% combined successful graduation rate.**



Pennsylvania courts collected over **\$156 million** in fees, fines, costs and restitution.



31% of Pennsylvania's active judges were women.



1,580,188 million new cases were filed in magisterial district courts.



34,678 protection from abuse (PFA) orders were filed.



75% of children who were under court supervision and left the system were reunited with family or relatives.



100 million docket sheets were viewed for free on our website.



14,460* total dispositions representing **12,756 juveniles** were processed through juvenile courts.



92,101 people reported for jury duty.



Facilitated **32,398** requests for interpreters.



More than **10,000 followers** on Twitter @PACourts.



Trial and appellate judges completed more than **34,000 hours** of continuing education.

For more numbers see the [AOPC's interactive data dashboards.](#)

*Provided by Juvenile Court Judges Commission (JCJC)

Office of the court administrator

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court appoints the state court administrator who is responsible for overseeing all statewide court operations and related personnel of the judiciary.

Under the direction of the Court, the court administrator leads the AOPC.

The court administrator, assisted by the deputy court administrator, plans for statewide judicial needs while supervising the operation of statewide court programs and strategic initiatives.

The office handles a broad range of budgetary, intergovernmental, technological, educational and legal responsibilities relating to the courts.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS:

Established a Jury Trial Working Group: In May 2020, the Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges and the AOPC collaborated in **developing guidance and suggested best practices for trial courts to consider in resuming jury trials during the COVID-19 pandemic**. Chaired by Lackawanna County Judge Terrence Nealon, the group reviewed the work of similar bodies across the country and carefully considered public health advisories and protocols.

The group's report, issued in June 2020, focused on four areas:

1. Preparing courthouses for the return of staff, jurors and other members of the public in the wake of COVID-19;
2. Summoning prospective jurors, notifying them of new protocols to promote safety and obtaining relevant COVID-19 information that may affect their ability to serve as jurors;
3. Selecting juries, both in-person and virtually, through advanced communication technology;
4. Conducting jury trials.

Magisterial District Court Security Task Group: Established in 2019, the Magisterial District Court Security Task Group completed its work in August 2020 to **review the security posture of Pennsylvania's 512 Magisterial District Courts**.

The report set forth **eight recommendations** focused on improving safety and security for the public, court users, staff and judges.

WHO WE ARE

Human Resources

Providing support to approximately 2,000 active judges and staff, the [Human Resources Department](#) counsels and guides individuals throughout the employment lifecycle. From recruitment and onboarding to the development of policies, procedures and services, HR assists with strategies to retain our workforce by securing benefits and identifying development programs. HR serves as a regular point of contact for many judges and staff helping long-term employees prepare for retirement and listening to general concerns and navigating employees through the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to coordinating and maintaining employee benefit programs and counseling employees and retirees on the provisions and use of benefits, AOPC/HR staff develop training curriculum, administer judiciary wide policies, and ensure compliance with federal and state employment laws. The department is also responsible for administering the compensation program and monitoring the employee leave accounting program, and the performance evaluation system.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS:



Served as the **COVID-19 coordinator and managed all things COVID-related** – including guidelines, protocols, policies (leave, telework etc.) and communications.



Conducted **presentations, trainings and new employee orientations** – some of which were reformatted into a video electronic format.



Coordinated medical benefits for approximately 8000 covered individuals.



Developed new work-from-home processes – including virtual new employee orientation and new leave policies to accommodate the requirements of the Families' First Coronavirus Response Act.



Advised judges and employees how to handle COVID sickness and exposure and partnered with AOPC Administrative Services to ensure facilities were appropriately managed.



Managed recruitment process including the evaluation of **1420 resumes**. Processed **161 new hires, 89 separations** (79 retirements and 10 other separations) and a total of **447** Personnel Transaction Order forms.



Launched a **new online performance evaluation system** for AOPC evaluations, developed by AOPC/IT.



Set up **flu shot clinics** at the Pennsylvania Judicial Center and Ritter Road locations with roughly **116 participants** attending.



Managed the entry of **67 newly-elected judges**.

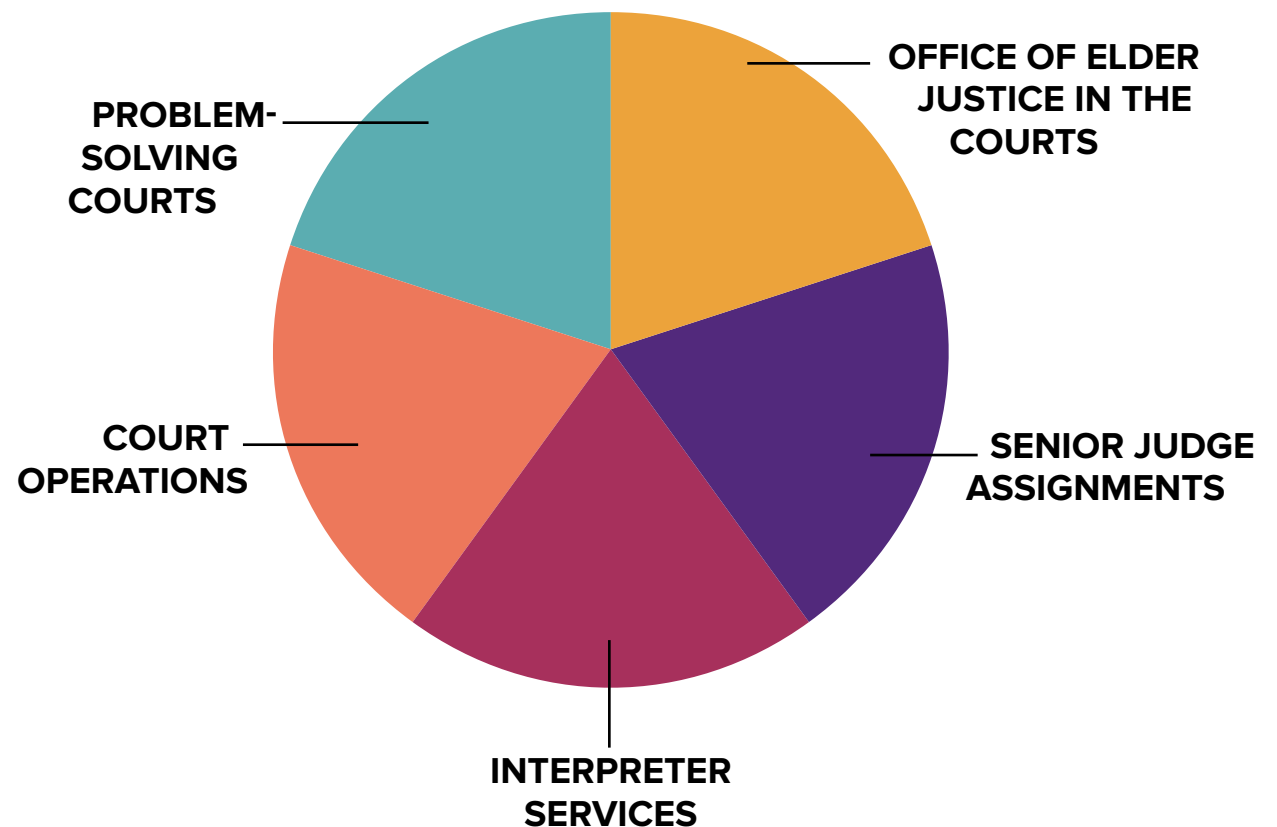
FACILITATING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Judicial operations

AOPC/[Judicial District Operations and Programs](#) department works closely with court administration at both the state and local level to support the efficient operation of magisterial district and trial courts and to promote equitable access to justice.

While funding for all AOPC operations comes mainly from appropriated state funds and also from fee funding, it receives a small amount of federal funds – including a STOP Grant (see page 16).

COMPONENTS OF JUDICIAL DISTRICT OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT:



FACILITATING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Problem-Solving Courts

More than 20 years ago, Pennsylvania established [problem-solving courts](#), in an effort to address a growing need in the community for those struggling with addiction. Since that time, the need for additional services and support to address major social policy issues has grown, and the role of the courts along with it.

As of Dec. 2020, more than 127 problem-solving courts were operational across the state, serving those with DUI offenses, veterans, those living with a mental illness and more. These specialized courts focus on behaviors and conditions that many times are linked to crime and social problems and have a major impact on the court system.

Rather than serve jail time, defendants may complete community service and are given access to counseling, treatment opportunities for addiction, educational assistance and healthcare support.

Completing the program and graduating opens doors to the future for these defendants, with many seeing their charges dismissed, sentences reduced or criminal records expunged.

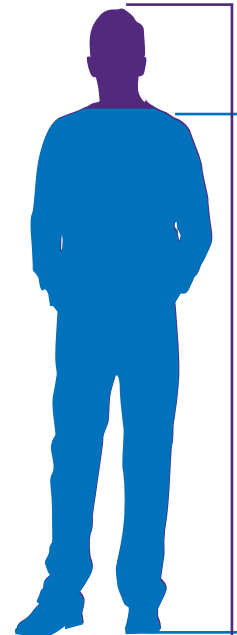
2020 HIGHLIGHTS:



228 participants achieved an increase in education



427 participants who were unemployed found jobs



1,616 participants were admitted.

1,338 participants graduated successfully.

FACILITATING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

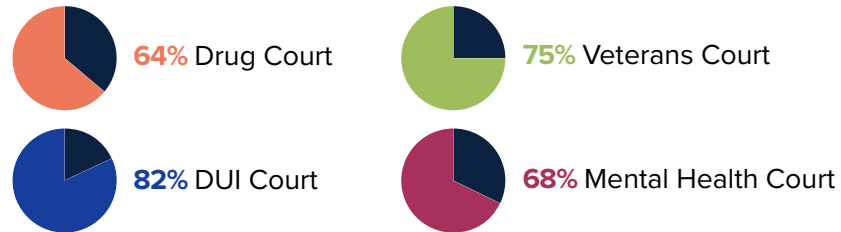
Problem-Solving Courts

2020 HIGHLIGHTS:

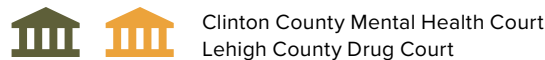
Scholarships and Training

- Awarded 142 scholarships for staff to attend the **National Association of Drug Court Professionals** Virtual Conference and the **Pennsylvania Association of Treatment Court Professionals** Virtual Conference.
- Began holding **monthly Lunch and Learn webinars**. The first webinar was presented by Dr. Kevin Baldwin on *Coping with a Participant's Death: When the Unthinkable Becomes Inevitable*.
- Awarded **33 discretionary grants** totaling approximately \$300,000.

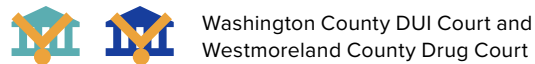
Successful graduation rates by court:



Two new problem-solving courts opened.



Two problem-solving courts received accreditation.



10 problem-solving courts had their accreditations renewed.



- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Blair County Diversionary Drug Court | Luzerne County Treatment Court |
| Blair County IP Drug Court | Lycoming County Drug Court |
| Blair County Re-Entry Drug Court | Snyder/Union Counties Drug Court |
| Bradford County Drug Court | Warren County Drug Court |
| Montgomery County Drug Court | Wyoming/Sullivan Counties Treatment Court |

Accreditation is a thorough examination of the 10 key components and best practice standards, which were established by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, and renewal is based on a review of the court's progress and continued adherence to the components and standards.

Supporting Pennsylvania's elders

AOPC's [Office of Elder Justice in the Courts \(OEJC\)](#) assists the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania and the Advisory Council on Elder Justice in the Courts in implementing the recommendations made by the Elder Law Task Force.

Committed to protecting Pennsylvania's rapidly growing population of elders from all forms of abuse and exploitation, the OEJC educates judges, court staff, attorneys, guardians and the public about the warning signs of elder abuse and how to respond.

In collaboration with other elder justice entities and branches of government, the OEJC works to enhance elder Pennsylvanians' ability to fully participate in legal proceedings and promote best practices around elder abuse, neglect, guardianship and access to justice.

2020 ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:



Provided COVID-19 pandemic resources to judges hearing Orphans' Court cases and to guardians to help them carry out their duties.



Worked with the Advisory Council on Elder Justice in the Courts to **create and publish the Pennsylvania Guardianship Bench Book**. The Bench Book was provided to 178 Orphans' Court judges.



Supported local courts on matters involving the statewide Guardianship Tracking System (GTS). As of December 2020, there were **18,585 active guardianship cases** in GTS, and **about \$1.5 billion** in total assets under court supervision for guardianships. There **were 18,242 family/lay guardians** and **410 professional guardians** serving in the Commonwealth. The GTS was showcased as an innovative model at the nationally attended Massachusetts Colloquium on Guardianship Monitoring and Oversight.



Designed an educational program for judges on best practices for reviewing guardianship reports and obtained judicial education credits for the program.

FACILITATING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Language access

[Language services](#) for individuals who are limited English proficient or deaf or hard of hearing are essential to ensure that all court users are able to fully participate in judicial proceedings and court services, programs and activities in which their rights or interests are at stake.

One of the top priorities of the AOPC is to ensure that the Pennsylvania courts are accessible to everyone and the AOPC Language Access Team works hard to make this possible.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS:



The **Monitoring & Evaluation Team (MET)** charged with implementing the Language Access Plan was re-organized and began the **prioritization of court forms for translation into the top languages** for posting on the UJS website.



At the end of 2020, the AOPC was awarded a **\$40,000 grant from the State Justice Institute for use in translating court forms**, starting with landlord-tenant and expungement forms.



Presented on “Beyond Pennsylvania Dutch: Language Access in the Keystone State” at the **National Association for Court Management Annual Conference** – which was held virtually.



The AOPC held its 2020 **Language Access Coordinator Summit** in a virtual format where representatives from 36 judicial districts attended at least one session. The Summit addressed four topics in a series of webinars over a four-week period:

1. Remote Interpreting Platforms
2. Language Access Data Collection
3. Working with Interpreters
4. Translation and Services Beyond the Courtroom.

Recruiting and certifying court interpreters

The [Interpreter Certification Program \(ICP\)](#) holds four orientation workshops, and administers four written exams and five oral exams each year.

Throughout 2020 and despite the obstacles to in-person events brought about by the pandemic, the ICP managed to forge ahead with its main mission of augmenting the roster of qualified interpreters, adding 18 new interpreters to the roster.

The program moved its orientation online and carried on all but three of its scheduled testing events for the year, following strict CDC guidelines.

The ICP conducted trainings for the Court of Common Pleas and Magisterial District Judge new judge schools and the Language Access Coordinators (LAC) Annual Summit. In addition, the program conducted four successful outreach events to recruit potential new interpreter candidates.

The ICP allows the judiciary to fulfill its goal of making the courts accessible to limited English proficient individuals and promotes confidence in the courts by guaranteeing the rights of all irrespective of their first language.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS:



In 2020, almost **\$3.7 million** was spent on **32,618 interpreter requests**.



As of December 2020, the roster consisted of **237 interpreters** (185 certified and 52 otherwise qualified) representing **37 languages**.

THE TOP 10 LANGUAGES REQUESTED IN 2020:



KEEPING COURTS SAFE AND SECURE

Judicial District Security

AOPC's [Office of Judicial District Security](#) evaluates and assists in responding to emerging threats, in addition to implementing innovative protective measures and security protocols.

Staff review security policies and procedures, develop training and educational materials to enhance situational awareness and incident avoidance, and provide online and in-person seminars.

The office also evaluates security needs and requests for security enhancements in its administration of ongoing grant programs to provide courts with essential security equipment.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS:



Addressed **635 security incidents** reported for Common Pleas and Magisterial District Courts. Of those,



558 resulted in involvement with law enforcement.



67 incidents resulted in criminal charges.



Provided all magisterial district judges with **annual security-related training**.



Supported **Pennsylvania Association of Court Management** and **Domestic Relations Association of Pennsylvania** with security-related training.



Developed **10 new security-related training programs**.

PROVIDING FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE

Protecting children

The judiciary's federally-funded [Office of Children and Families in the Courts \(OCFC\)](#), a program initiated by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, continues to have dramatic impacts on the lives of children while contributing savings to the state.

OCFC works with judicial leaders and child advocates to place neglected and abused children in permanent homes rather than in temporary foster care. This improves a child's opportunity to succeed and significantly reduces the cost of institutional care – a savings of hundreds of millions of dollars in the past decade.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS:



Supported automation needs in 20 judicial districts to allow for the continuity of dependency matters.



Completed Family Engagement Initiative (FEI) implementation in three counties (and were halfway complete in the implementation in Philadelphia County).



Created five online training modules for FEI counties.



Delivered a virtual education session for judges new to dependency matters, with 20 judges from 17 judicial districts attending.



Hosted AOPC's largest virtual training – "The Urgency of Awareness." Over 830 participants from 15 FEI counties attended the WebEx session focused on implicit bias.

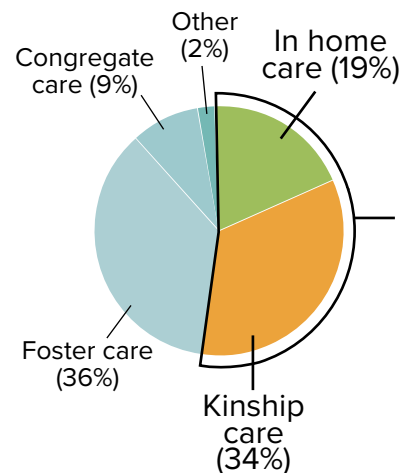


Created a Kinship Care Task Force, led by Justice Max Baer and focused on increasing the safe use of kinship care.



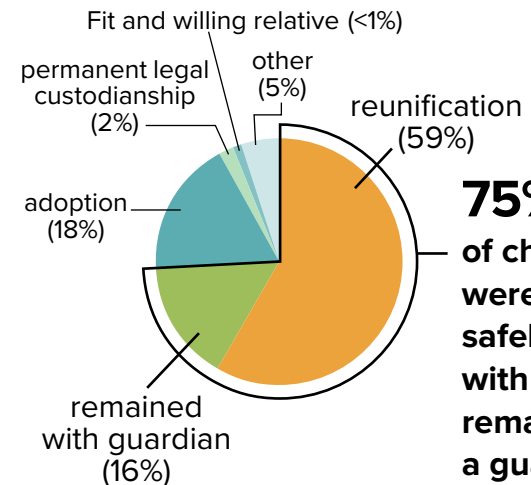
Created three new tools/resources for courts and counties to help reduce their use of congregate care facilities.

Kinship care placements over the past five years



53% of children remained safely in their home or were placed in kinship care in 2020.

Reasons court supervision ended in 2020



75% of children were either safely reunified with family or remained with a guardian.

PROVIDING FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE STOP Grant

Administered through the U.S. Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), the Services, Training, Officers, Prosecutors (STOP) Formula Grant Program awards federal grant money annually to states and territories to help enhance their communities' efforts to combat violence against women.

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency distributes the grant – five percent of which goes to the judiciary.

The AOPC uses that funding to provide support and enhance court services available to victims of domestic and sexual violence, and offers local and national training opportunities tailored to Pennsylvania's jurists and court staff highlighting new research and best practices.

2020 PROJECTS AND TRAININGS FUNDED BY STOP:

In 2020, 672 judges and court staff were trained using STOP Grant funds.

Developed by the Villanova University Law Institute to Address Commercial Sexual Exploitation, the training on **Commercial Sexual Exploitation: The Legal Perspective and Using Best Practices for a Trauma-Informed Judicial Practice** was delivered to jurists as part of the mandatory Minor Judiciary Education Board continuing education program.

Front-line magisterial district and trial court staff received training through four webinars titled **Trauma-Informed Court Practices and Trafficking 101**.

Funded a **human-trafficking training** at the **Pennsylvania Court Reporters Association Conference** held virtually in September 2020, examining human trafficking in Pennsylvania and providing an overview of the state's human trafficking laws.

Provided **judicial training scholarships** for judges and court staff to attend national training and conferences, both in-person and virtually.

Printed, laminated and mailed **Human Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation bench cards** to all common pleas and magisterial district judges.

Developed two social media outreach campaigns to educate the public on the court's role in obtaining a protection order.

Worked with the Center for Court Innovation to **review protection order processes statewide** and inventory existing practices, make recommendations and share best practices for implementation.

Began work to **update existing judicial resources** (including benchcards and brochures) and create an online repository to store and share resources with judicial officers.

Assisted in creating **Pennsylvania's STOP Formula Grant Implementation Plan** for upcoming years (2021-2024) as required by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women.

Leading in court innovations

[AOPC/Information Technology](#)

develops, maintains and updates statewide case management systems for all levels of Pennsylvania's courts. The systems are linked, allowing case data and information to be shared as cases move through the court system saving time and money.

Court technology helps make court information significantly more accessible, improves collection of fines, fees, costs and restitution, and creates administrative efficiencies for courts and other government agencies.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS:



1.9 million new cases were docketed.



\$156.3 million in fines, fees, costs collected online through PAePay®.



100 million docket sheets were viewed on our website.



350,367 documents were e-filed statewide.



38,000 law enforcement and public safety officials used our case management systems to perform daily duties.

System design and development

Funded by fees and fines rather than taxpayer dollars, AOPC/IT provides general IT support for the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and AOPC, and performs all aspects of the software development lifecycle in designing systems – from writing the code and testing its functions, to implementing the technology, and providing all necessary training and help desk support.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS:



Provided essential remote operational support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff facilitated online meetings, webinars and training sessions, as well as appellate oral argument sessions and remote hearings.



Added a “Notice of Language Rights” form in the statewide case management systems, as well as a **new Language Access Data Collection (LADC) application**, where county language access coordinators can track and manage the fulfillment and payment of language-related service requests.



Developed and implemented a new process to satisfy updates to the Clean Slate Law (Act 83 of 2020). As of December 2020, **AOPC/IT had sealed 48.8 million offenses on 36 million cases.**



Added a new E-Communications feature to the Common Pleas Case Management System (CPCMS) – allowing all judicial districts the ability to send email reminders to participants in upcoming criminal cases.



Transitioned to a new Wide-Area Network (WAN) contract, which required the **installment configuration and implementation of new circuits.** Upgraded ethernet service was also installed across many court sites to **provide a more reliable and robust network at a reduced cost.**



Implemented changes to the case management systems required by various **legislative mandates** – including Act 115 of 2019, Act 38 of 2020, Act 63 of 2020, Act 83 of 2020, Act 93 of 2020, Act 99 of 2020 and Act 111 of 2020.



Received two awards from the National Association for Court Management – the **Court Process Innovation Award** for the Language Access Data Collection System and the **Cross-Boundary Partnerships Award** for the Clean Slate initiative.

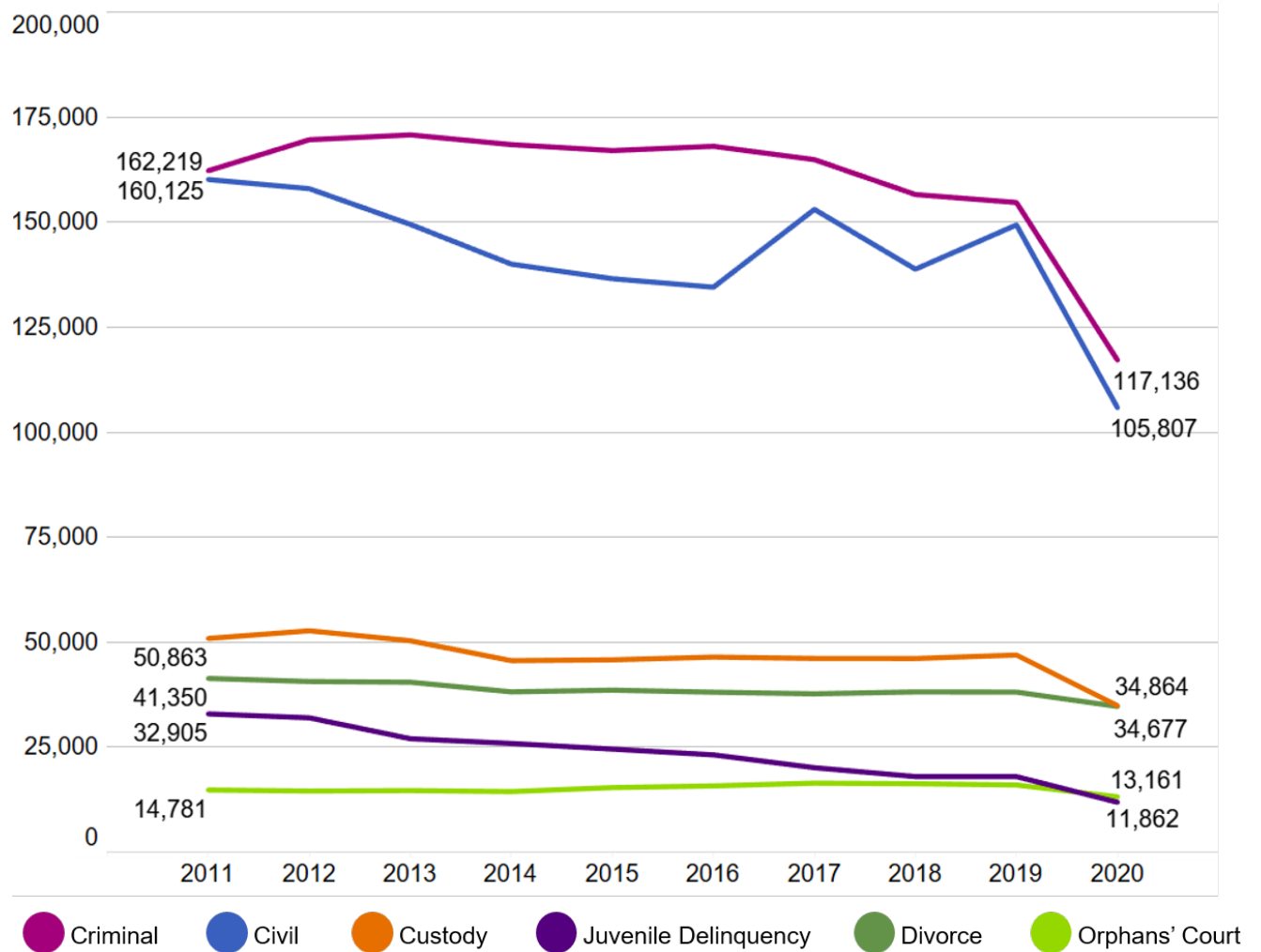
ASSEMBLING AND ANALYZING COURT DATA

Research and Statistics

[AOPC/Research and Statistics](#) collects and analyzes statewide court data, developing annual caseload statistics to help determine trends that inform policy and practice improvements.

In addition to providing data and analysis to the courts on topics related to case management, and court programs and operations, AOPC/Research and Statistics facilitates the public's access to this information by publishing data online via web-based reports and interactive data dashboards.

STATEWIDE FILINGS FROM 2010-2020:



View the full collection of [2020 court data](#) from all levels of the court system.

Drafting and recommending rules

More than 180 appointed volunteers — most of whom are lawyers and judges — make up the various boards, committees and advisory groups that aid the Pennsylvania Supreme Court on a wide range of court matters.

More specifically, the rules committees assist the Court in establishing statewide rules governing procedures in cases. These committees study and draft rules before making recommendations to the Court.

Rule change proposals are published for public comment before being submitted to or adopted by the Supreme Court.

RULES COMMITTEES 2020 HIGHLIGHTS:



The **eight committees** are made up of **100 members** that met **30 times**.



22 proposed recommendations were published for public comment.



21 recommendations were submitted to the Court for consideration.



22 recommendations were adopted by the Court.

Rules Committees

- Appellate Court
- Criminal
- Civil
- Domestic Relations
- Orphans' Court
- Evidence
- Juvenile Court
- Minor Court

Read more about the [roles and functions of the different rules committees](#).

Regulating the practice of law

The following Supreme Court Boards are responsible for regulating lawyers and the practice of law throughout the Commonwealth. Most of the boards are funded by fee revenue* – most of which comes from the **\$225 attorney registration fee** collected by the Disciplinary Board annually.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS:



The **Board of Law Examiners** is empowered to assess the competency, character and fitness of candidates seeking admission to the bar. It administers the bar exam to prospective lawyers twice every year and issues a certificate recommending admission to those that meet the requirements.

- **2,409 applications** were processed in 2020.
- 2020 Pennsylvania Bar exam **pass rates**:
 - February **52%**
 - October **76%**



The **Interest on Lawyers Trust Account (IOLTA) Board** provides critical funding for civil legal aid to the poor and disadvantaged of Pennsylvania.

- More than **\$28.8 million** was awarded in total grants.
 - **More than \$1.6 million** was awarded to Law School Clinical and Internship Programs.
- **349 attorneys** helped to achieve or maintain compliance with Pennsylvania's IOLTA requirements.
- Nearly **\$3.4 million** was awarded under the **Bank of America Grant Program** – which provides foreclosure prevention and community redevelopment legal assistance.
- Processed an average of **14,175 IOLTA accounts** monthly.



The **Pennsylvania Lawyers Fund for Client Security Board** ensures clients will be reimbursed when lawyers misappropriate funds.

- During fiscal year 2020 the board's review of **207 claims** resulted in **77 awards** totaling **\$1,516,336**.



The **Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court** regulates attorney conduct in support of its mission to “protect the public, maintain the integrity of the profession and safeguard the reputation of the courts.”

- Over **100 hours of public proceedings** were livestreamed to more than **4,000 viewers** as the Board worked to improve public access to disciplinary proceedings during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **374 attorneys** were transferred to administrative suspension. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of **attorneys administratively suspended in 2020 is the lowest in recent history**.
- **Succession planning survey results** showed that roughly 46 percent of Pa. attorneys do not have a successor, nearly 12 percent have a law firm as their successor and 3 percent have an individual as their successor – while nearly 40 percent of attorneys preferred not to answer.

Read more about the [specific functions of each board](#), and learn about the Court's different [advisory groups and independent entities](#).

* With the exception of the Minor Judiciary Education Board.

ASSISTING THE SUPREME COURT

Continuing education

Under order of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, all judges and lawyers in the state are required to complete continuing education requirements each year. Volunteers are appointed by the Court to make up the various boards that are responsible for overseeing these efforts.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS:



The **Minor Judiciary Education Board (MJEB)** administers certification and education programs for magisterial district judges and arraignment court magistrates.

- **601 judges** each attended 32 hours of judicial education.
- Some **2020 MJEB session topics** included:
 - Human Trafficking
 - IT Security
 - How being Trauma-Informed Improves Judicial Decision Making



The **Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Board** regulates lawyer compliance with CLE requirements and accredits ongoing education programs for lawyers.

- **99.7% of lawyers** met the requirements of the CLE rules.
- **165 lawyers** were administratively suspended for failure to comply with CLE.
- **61,505 attorneys** participated in continuing legal education.
- **689,809 CLE credits** were taken.
- **Pandemic Response:** The onset of COVID-19 called for the CLE Board to coordinate with the Pa. Supreme Court on a variety of policy updates to help facilitate lawyer compliance with CLE requirements. These accommodations included compliance deadline extensions, exceptions to distance learning credit restrictions and processes to expedite accreditation for approved distance learning providers.
- **Pro Bono Pilot Program:** 2020 was the second year of a three-year pilot program that allows attorneys to receive one CLE credit for every five hours of pro bono service completed through Accredited Pro Bono CLE Providers.



The **Pennsylvania Continuing Judicial Education Board of Judges** oversees the continuing education program for trial and appellate judges in ethics, as well as procedural and substantive law.

- Trial court judges completed a combined total of **30,000 hours** of continuing education.

Read more about the [specific functions of each board](#), and learn about the Court's different [advisory groups and independent entities](#).

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Educating jurists

Due to widespread public health concerns, AOPC/[Judicial Education](#) migrated all judicial education activities to the remote environment beginning in March 2020.

Continuing education for Magisterial District Judges (MDJs), which typically takes place in the Pennsylvania Judicial Center, was delivered through asynchronous, online-learning modules throughout the year.

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court promulgated Rules for Continuing Judicial Education (CJE) in early 2020, replacing the 2016 Supreme Court Order implementing a mandatory continuing judicial education program.

In response to public health related restrictions, the Pennsylvania Continuing Judicial Education Board of Judges extended the 2020 CJE compliance deadline to Dec. 31, 2021, and removed the limitation on distance learning credits for the 2020 and 2021 compliance periods.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS:

MDJ Education Highlights



- 601 MDJs completed 32 hours of continuing education, for a **total of 19,232 hours**.
- **A four-week MDJ certification training was streamed live** to prospective MDJs using an online learning management system. Candidates completed the MDJ Certification Exam in-person at regional testing sites across Pennsylvania.

Some courses offered include:

- o Collections & Consumer Law
- o Judicial Ethics
- o Vicarious Trauma
- o Pennsylvania Motor Vehicle Code Update

Common Pleas and Appellate Courts Education Highlights



- Despite having limited in-person education, **615 trial and appellate judges recorded 10,371.5 hours of continuing judicial education** – an average of 16.86 hours per judge.

- o Judges earned **5,641.5** of these hours through distance education (compared to 91.5 hours in 2019).

- **The Judicial Education Department offered 10, 4-hour programs** – many developed through partnerships with law schools across the Commonwealth.

Some courses offered include:

- o The Neurobiology of Judicial Decision Making
- o Medically-Assisted Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder
- o Lexicon of Text Emoji

- Courses developed by AOPC/Judicial Education and Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges (PCSTJ) Education Committee collectively account for nearly **75 percent of all CJE credit hours recorded**.
- Judges earned **3,928.5 hours** through programs developed by AOPC/Judicial Education – nearly 40 percent of all CJE credits recorded.
- Judges recorded **3,863.5 hours** earned at courses facilitated by AOPC/Judicial Education on behalf of the PCSTJ Education Committee – about 37 percent of all credits recorded.

Working with state government partners

AOPC's [Office of Legislative Affairs](#)

represents the AOPC before the state's executive and legislative branches of government.

Legislative Affairs staff is responsible for coordinating all interaction with the legislature, subject to the guidance of the court administrator and the Chief Justice of Pennsylvania.

They provide legislative support to the judiciary including all courts, boards, advisory groups and the AOPC.

As an important result of the judiciary's commitment to working with their government partners, proposed legislation receives crucial input from AOPC's legislative staff regarding the effects it may have on relevant courts, as well as on Pennsylvania's judicial system as a whole.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS:



Worked to apprise the legislature of the judiciary's response to Covid-19, communicating statewide and district judicial emergencies and providing guidance on a number of related bills, including:

- **Act 18 of 2020** – Allows applicants for marriage licenses unable to appear in person to forward an affidavit verifying all of the information required to secure a license.
- **Act 15 of 2020** – Provides for remote notarization.



Secured adoption of language within the budget Fiscal Code legislation – **Act 30 of 2020** – to reauthorize the “Act 49” surcharges. Revenue from the surcharges **provides nearly \$60 million for the Judiciary's general operations budget.**



Worked with legislative members and staff on **crafting legislation permitting a county court that has established a veterans treatment court (VTC) to allow defendants from other counties to participate** or join with other counties to establish a multicounty VTC. Additionally, a court may establish a veterans track – including treatment resources and veteran mentors – within an already established (non-VTC) treatment court.



Continued engagement with policymakers on probation reform in concert with members of the Legislation Committee of the Conference of State Trial Judges, which generally supports reforms, while cautioning that changes must be balanced against public safety concerns and preservation of judicial discretion to ensure defendants struggling with mental health issues and addiction are supervised in the appropriate manner. Additionally, **provided guidance on HR 634, creating a Task Force on Technical Probation Violations**, focusing on probation violation probable cause hearings.



Provided subject matter and programmatic guidance to the legislative and executive branches as they expanded the expungement and “Clean Slate” law in Act 83 of 2020, adding acquittals and pardons, respectively. Under the act, certain criminal history information regarding pardons are automatically sealed using AOPC/IT's technological infrastructure.



Facilitated data requests that assisted the legislature in its crafting of legislation amending the Crimes Code, Transportation Code, Crime Victims Act and other statutes.

Public education and outreach

AOPC's [Office of Communications](#) manages media inquiries, social media accounts, website content, public information and educational opportunities to engage with the judicial branch.

By focusing on communication and outreach, the Office of Communications ensures that the public has access to information about the key court programs, services and support available to them.

From educational videos to monthly infographics and an increased focus on the use of social media channels, case information, data and general information about the courts is more readily available and accessible to the public.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS:



The [@PACourts Twitter page](#) had more than **10,000 followers** and generated nearly **6.9 million tweet impressions**.

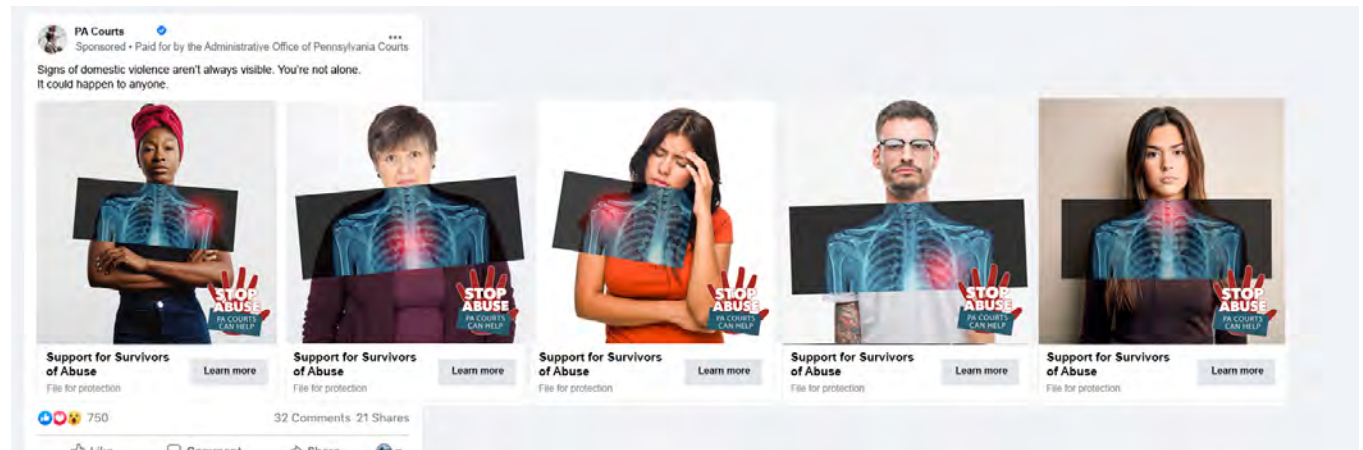


Gained nearly **1,000 followers** of [PA Courts Facebook page](#).



STOP abuse campaign – Ran a **social media campaign** on Facebook, YouTube and Google to educate victims of abuse that protection orders are available as an option, especially for those experiencing heightened domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The campaign generated **27,718 page views** and **2,384,900 impressions**.



INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Public education and outreach

2020 HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED):



The Communications Office team responded to international, national, state and local media on issues including **election 2020**, the **COVID-19 global pandemic** and **statewide high profile trials**.



Developed monthly **infographics** on different court data topics.



OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

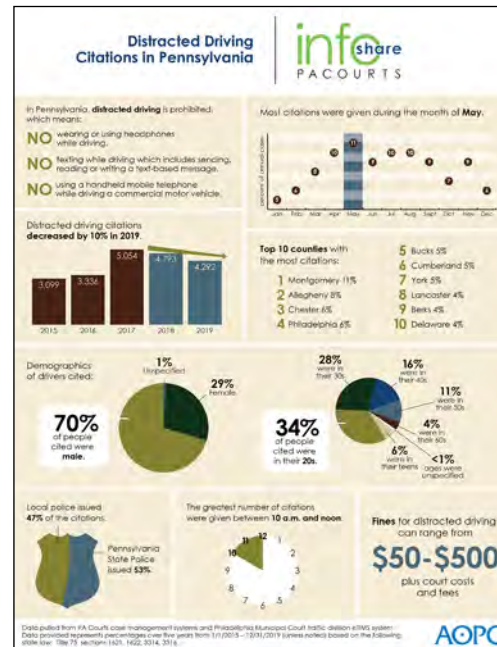
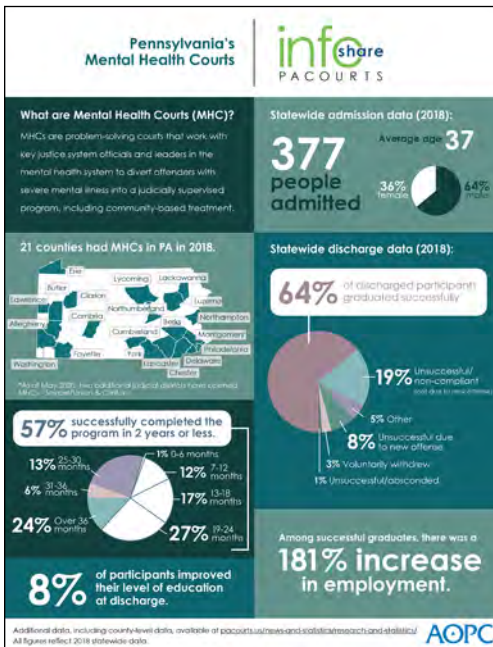
AUTISM & THE COURTS

LISTEN · LEARN · EDUCATE.
A CONVERSATION ABOUT AUTISM AND THE COURTS

ROUNDTABLE EVENTS

- FEB 23, 2021
LEHIGH VALLEY
- MARCH 23, 2021
SUSQUEHANNA VALLEY / CENTRAL PA
- APRIL 27, 2021
NORTHEAST PA
- JUNE 17, 2021
NORTHWEST PA AND GREATER PITTSBURGH

Collaborated with Justice Kevin Dougherty, on behalf of the Pa. Supreme Court, and the Pa. Department of Human Services' Autism, Services, Education, Resources and Training Collaborative (ASERT) to help **develop and launch a statewide "Autism and the Courts" initiative** to better understand and address challenges faced by Pennsylvanians with autism who are involved with the criminal justice system.





AOPC ANNUAL REPORT 2020

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COURTS