



AOPC ANNUAL REPORT 2021

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COURTS



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Message from the court administrator

I am pleased to present this 2021 Annual Report of the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC). While the COVID-19 pandemic continued to present challenges throughout the year, our state's judiciary remained fully operational and accessible thanks to the hard work and commitment of our jurists and court staff.

Staff returned to the office in July 2021 following an order by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court terminating the statewide judicial emergency and declaring that court operations return to pre-pandemic status.

Despite some remaining 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 a wide range of court programs and services offered throughout the state – 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.

This report contains statewide data 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 Courts.](#)

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

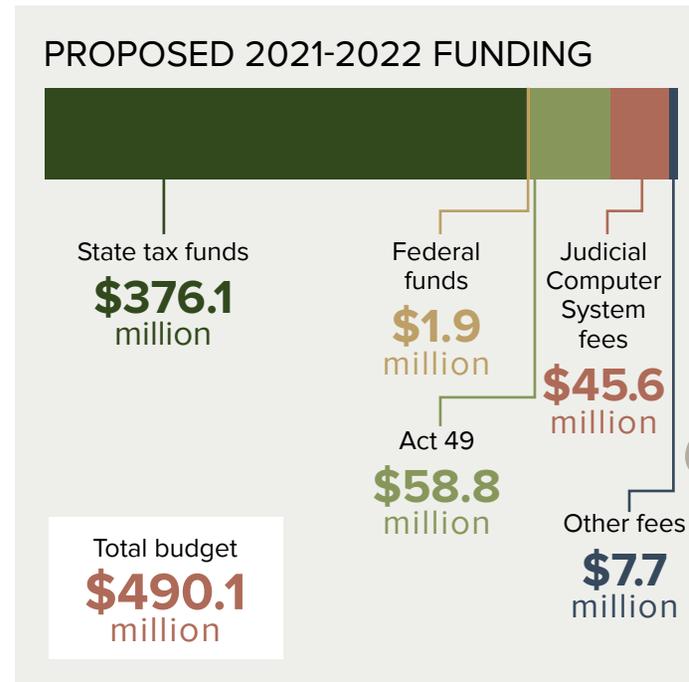
AOPC/Finance provides critical management of budget, accounting and payroll systems for the entire judiciary and serves as the primary resource for the organization on financial matters.

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 \$92 million.

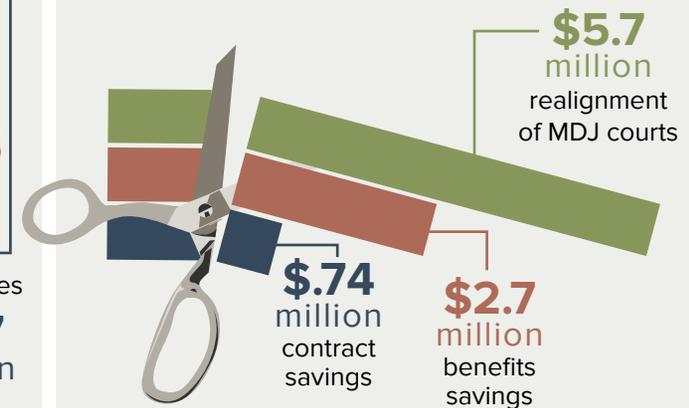
2021-2022 BUDGET REQUEST

FUNDING SOURCES



SAVING TAX DOLLARS

Saving tax dollars through various cost saving measures remains a priority through renegotiating leases and contracts, containing benefit costs and the right sizing of the judiciary including the realignment of Pennsylvania’s magisterial district courts.



Over the past 10 years, the judiciary has saved a combined

\$92 million.

The judiciary receives about

0.5%
of the state budget.

Fee revenue has been used to fund a portion of the judiciary’s annual general fund budget, currently about

14%
of the total.

WHO WE ARE

By the numbers



Pennsylvania's problem-solving courts had a **70% combined successful graduation rate.**



Pennsylvania courts collected over **\$403 million** in fees, fines, costs and restitution.



30% of Pennsylvania's active judges were women.



1,882,897 million new cases were filed in magisterial district courts.



38,765 protection from abuse (PFA) orders were filed.



74% of children who were under court supervision and left the system were reunited with family or relatives.



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



13,785 written allegations, and **12,290 dispositions** representing **10,655 juveniles.***



25,454 jurors were impaneled or sworn.



Facilitated **36,231** requests for interpreters.



More than **10,500 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)

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.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS:

Monitored and adjusted to the ever-changing landscape of protocols regarding COVID-19. Communicated information to judges and staff as necessary.

Set up COVID-19 vaccine clinic offsite in addition to the vaccine clinics at the Pennsylvania Judicial Center and Ritter Road.

Added district court staff to the online performance evaluation system. Trained state-level district court staff at regional training sessions across the state.

Conducted presentations, trainings, interviews and new employee orientations – in-person and via WebEx. CPR/AED training in person.

Introduced a new **Employee Assistance Program** provider for judiciary staff.

Managed recruitment process including the evaluation of **804 resumes**. Processed **94 new hires, 121 separations** and a total of **364 personnel transactions**.

Coordinated medical benefits for approximately **8,000 covered individuals**.

Adhered to requirements set forth under the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) for an **employer-sponsored health plan** and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

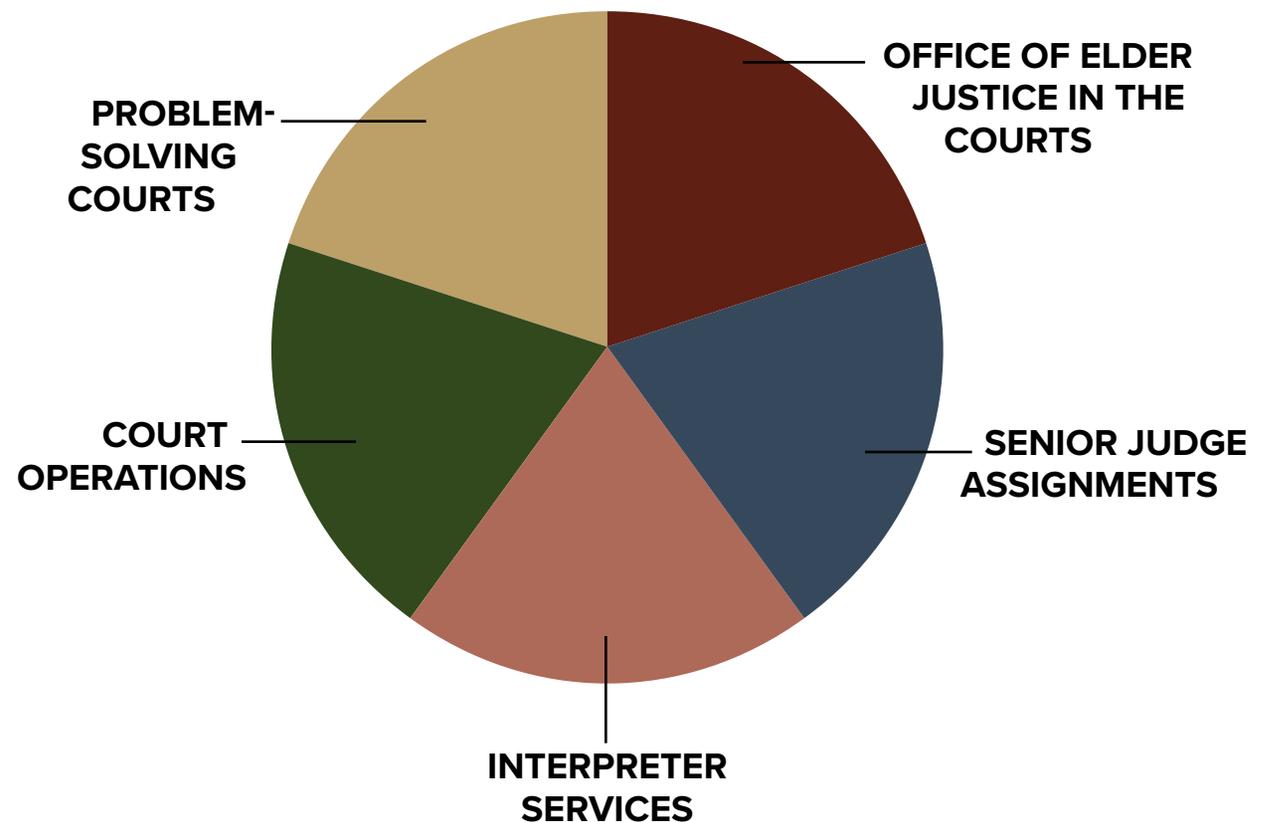
FACILITATING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

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. 2021, more than 130 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.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS:



228 participants achieved an increase in education



431 participants who were unemployed found jobs



Three new problem-solving courts opened.

- Bucks County Mental Health Court
- Columbia/Montour Recovery Court (Mental Health Court)
- Luzerne Co. Juvenile Wellness Court (Mental Health Court)

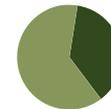


Two problem-solving courts received accreditation.

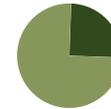


Two problem-solving courts had their accreditations renewed.

Successful graduation rates by court:



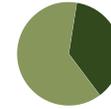
63% Drug Court



75% DUI Court



81% Veterans Court



64% Mental Health Court



1,623 participants were admitted.

1,368 participants graduated successfully.

FACILITATING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Problem-Solving Courts

2021 TRAININGS AND INITIATIVES

Lunch & Learn Series - Lunch & Learn webinars were presented by national experts on topics including medical marijuana, team conflict, trauma, incentives/sanctions and treatment.

Annual Coordinators' Symposium - A virtual symposium was held with topics including effective communication, incentives, sanctions and therapeutic responses during COVID, grant opportunities and updates from AOPC Research and Statistics.

Motivational Interviewing (MI) Training for PSC Judges - 13 treatment court judges were trained in the use of motivational interviewing - an evidenced-based practice that research has shown can help treatment court participants increase their motivation and readiness for change.

Brief MI Techniques for the PSC Judge: Therapeutic Methods for Compressed Time Frames - This course was presented to treatment court judges and outlined 10 MI techniques that judges can use in a condensed time frame during a court session to help change a participant's perspective regarding problems and for solution-building.

National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP) RISE21 Conference - The AOPC awarded 46 scholarships to treatment court team members to attend the national conference in National Harbor, MD.

Veterans Court Event at Widener University - The AOPC co-sponsored a series of virtual panel presentations with Widener University Commonwealth Law School on access to justice for veterans in the commonwealth.

Pennsylvania Association of Treatment Court Professionals (PATCP) Conference - The AOPC awarded 85 scholarships to attend the conference in State College, PA.

PA DUI Association Annual Meeting - The AOPC awarded five scholarships to DUI Court team members to attend the annual meeting in Lancaster, PA.

Incentives and Sanctions Virtual Workshops - The AOPC contracted with three national speakers to train 12 Mental Health Court teams on the appropriate use of incentives and sanctions within a mental health court.

Confidentiality, Ethical and Constitutional Requirements for Treatment Court Judges - Offered to treatment court judges, the goal of the training was to enhance a judge's knowledge, competency, and proficiency in identifying ethical issues that are likely to arise in the treatment court process.

- **Veterans' Court Virtual Summit** - This summit provided training on topics identified in the needs assessment of this project, including substance use disorder, military/veteran culture, mental health disorders and the roles and responsibilities of VTC team members.

- **Veterans' court poster campaign** - Signs were printed and mailed to all 512 of the state's magisterial district court judges to spread awareness about the eligibility requirements for veterans' courts.

- **Pennsylvania's Veterans' Courts Mobile App** - Funds were used to begin developing an app that will provide information specific to Pennsylvania's Veterans' Treatment Courts as well as feature guides to assist veterans with topics such as battling depression, drug awareness, military and veteran culture, post-traumatic stress syndrome, and suicide prevention. This app is currently in development and should be available in late 2022.

Regional Treatment Court (Forest and Jefferson counties) - The RTC is a pilot project to make treatment court available to qualified citizens of the commonwealth, including those in the most expansive, rural communities.

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.

2021 ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

As of Dec. 2021, there were **18,380 active guardianship cases in GTS**, and **\$1.7 billion in total assets** under court supervision for guardianships. There were **19,261 family/lay guardians** and **382 professional guardians** serving in the commonwealth.

Trained 165 family/lay guardians on the fundamentals of guardianship, their duties and responsibilities, best practices and helpful resources/tools.

Presented, with interagency collaboration, two virtual "town hall" sessions, ***Understanding and Identifying Elder Abuse*** and ***Preventing and Responding to Financial Exploitation***. Attendees participated by WebEx, YouTube and Facebook.

Provided **Elder Abuse Bench Cards** to all common pleas judges about the physical and financial signs of elder abuse, primary risk factors for elder abuse and remediation and case management tools a court can use when elder abuse issues arise.

Created and distributed, together with the Advisory Council on Elder Justice in the Courts, the ***Resource Guide for Health Care Providers***, a tool to help frontline health care staff reduce occurrences of elder abuse and financial exploitation.

Responded to **50 public requests** for assistance with guardianship and other elder justice issues.

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.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS:

The AOPC held its **2021 Language Access Coordinator Summit** in a virtual format in December. The Summit focused on outreach initiatives, how to train judges and staff and interpreter best practices.

Pursuant to a grant that AOPC received from the State Justice Institute in 2020, **over 35 statewide court forms were translated into a number of different languages**, including Spanish, Nepali, Arabic, Chinese, Vietnamese and Russian. The translated forms can be found here: <https://www.pacourts.us/forms>.

The AOPC proposed changes to the languages access regulations and new Rules of Judicial Administration (260-263) which integrate provisions from the [Language Access Plan for the Unified Judicial System \(UJS-LAP\)](#) and incorporate the interpreter fee schedule into the regulations. Proposed revisions were also made to Rules of Judicial Administration (250-252) which involve compliance with the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**. The Supreme Court approved the proposed rules and regulations in Nov. 2021 with an effective date of Jan. 1, 2022.

A new [ASL video](#) of the UJS language services brochure was created by AOPC Communications and professional interpreters.

A project was also launched to **provide a library of resources for the ADA coordinators** in the judicial districts and the appellate courts.

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 2021 and despite the obstacles to in-person events brought about by the pandemic, the Interpreter Certification Program managed to forge ahead with its main mission of augmenting the roster of qualified interpreters.

The ICP allows the UJS to fulfill its goal of making the courts accessible to limited English speakers and promotes confidence in the courts by guaranteeing the rights of all citizens irrespective of the language they speak.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS:



In 2021, almost **\$3.13 million** was spent on **36,231 interpreter requests**.



As of Dec. 2021, the roster consisted of **239 interpreters** representing **39 languages**.

THE TOP 10 LANGUAGES REQUESTED IN 2021:



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.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS:

Addressed 800 security incidents reported for Common Pleas and Magisterial District Courts. Of those incidents,

- **686** resulted in involvement with law enforcement.
- **34** incidents resulted in criminal charges.

Emergency Preparedness and Resiliency

- An Emergency Action Plan Template was developed for all judicial district courts.
- Multiple training sessions were provided for judicial officials and court administration.

Security Project Administration

- Facilitated court security improvements for common pleas and magisterial district courts.
- Almost 1 million dollars was spent on court security enhancements in 2021.

Facility Security Assessments

- Security Assessments were completed for all county courthouses and multiple magisterial district court offices throughout the commonwealth.

Security Program Training and Education

- Delivered training to **592 MDJs**.
- Supported Domestic Relations Association of Pennsylvania with security-related training.
- Multiple security programs were provided to hundreds of judicial officials and staff throughout the commonwealth.

Outreach and Collaboration

- Partnered with the Pennsylvania Sheriffs Association in a harm reduction initiative.
- Received the Neufeld Award for innovation from MAACM: Pennsylvania's Approach to Developing a Security Management Enterprise.

PROVIDING FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE

Protecting children

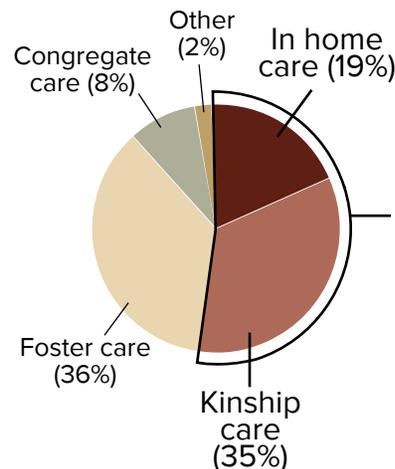
The judiciary's federally-funded [Office of Children and Families in the Courts \(OCFC\)](#), a program initiated by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, continues to have dramatic impacts on the lives of children while contributing savings to the state.

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.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS:

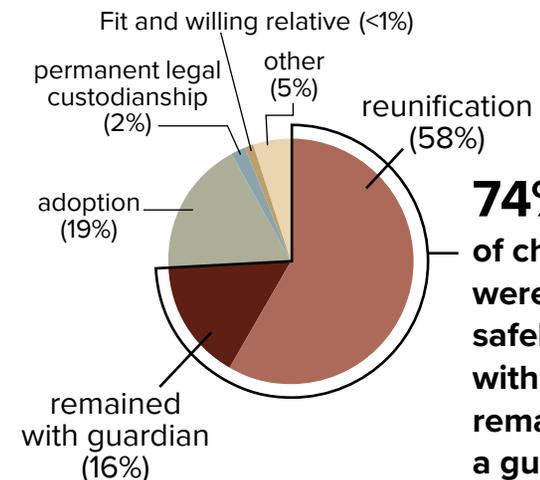
- Created the **Autism and Dependency Courts Taskforce**, led by Supreme Court Justice Kevin M. Dougherty.
- **Completed Family Engagement Initiative (FEI) implementation in Philadelphia County** and began implementation in three additional counties (Bradford, Lycoming, & Washington).
- Delivered three **Judicial Academies on Reasonable Efforts** in partnership with the Capacity Building Center for Courts (two for judges and one for hearing officers).
- Completed **Kinship Care Analysis** project in three judicial districts.
- Supported "**The Urgency of Awareness – Implicit Bias Analysis**" in three counties.
- **Developed an online course for attorneys** practicing in dependency proceedings.
- Hosted the **Virtual Family Group Decision Making Conference** with over **600 participants**.

Kinship care placements over the past five years



54% of children remained safely in their home or were placed in kinship care in 2021.

Reasons court supervision ended in 2021



74% of children were either safely reunified with family or remained with a guardian.

PROVIDING FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE

STOP Grant

Administered through the Office of 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.

2021 PROJECTS AND TRAININGS FUNDED BY STOP:

- Offered judges and court staff **judicial training scholarships** to attend national training and conferences, both in-person and virtually.
- Updated Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence Protocols.
- Print and Distribute **Elder Abuse Bench Cards** for Judges.
- Continued work with PCADV and PCAR to update existing judicial resources.
- Hosted a 2-part virtual-training series for MDJ court administration titled **Culturally Responsive Practices in the Courts and Bias and Domestic Violence Cases**.
- Developed social media outreach campaigns focused on human trafficking and domestic and sexual violence to educate audiences, create awareness and share court resources/how the court can help.



- Worked with the Center for Court Innovation to complete the **statewide assessment of protection orders** and drafted a report highlighting themes and recommendations for the Commonwealth.
 - The statewide evaluation revealed key areas requiring a concerted, multidisciplinary response, including access to justice, domestic violence education, judicial/court engagement in coordinated community response efforts, and procedural justice or people-centered practices.
 - The survey received 694 survey responses representing 67 counties.
 - Continued work with the Protection Order Assessment Group to prioritize recommendations from the statewide report.



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.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS:



2.15 million new cases were docketed.



\$163.8 million in fines, fees, costs collected online through PAePay®.



104.6 million docket sheets were viewed on our website.



401,819 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.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS:

Cybersecurity - The Judicial Computer System (JCS) requested three cybersecurity engagements with Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), formerly part of the Department of Homeland Security. These items were planned in addition to other routine and recurring cybersecurity efforts conducted by JCS. They included a Cyber Infrastructure Review, Validated Architecture Design Review and a Network Risk and Vulnerability Assessment.

Language Access - IT staff built a new **Language Access Data Collection (LADC) system**, where county language access coordinators can track and manage the fulfillment and payment of language-related service requests. The new application is mobile friendly allowing for management in the courtroom or other remote locations. Dashboards are included to help evaluate the performance and utilization of interpreters.

UJS Web Portal Modernization - JCS completed the infrastructure set-up and released six of the less complex functional areas in 2021, including Case Search, Docket Sheets, Online Help, Statewide Warrants, Dispositional Lookup, Financial Records and Judicial Assignments. The DA Link application was released in late 2021 after extensive testing and user outreach.

Attorney Registration - 74,780 registrations were completed online on the UJS web portal,

representing a **99.6% completion rate**. System enhancements were also made to accommodate an overhaul to the batch processing screens for large firms and the new interface paradigms being implemented.

ERMS – Electronic Documents - A lot of effort was spent overhauling the entire ERMS Hyland OnBase system. The Hyland OnBase solution provides all the electronic document capability to our systems and services. Hyland OnBase processes over 1.2 million new electronic documents each month across our enterprise. These **technology upgrades** provide us with an **enhanced cybersecurity posture** and will facilitate future upgrades and migrations of the ERMS system to be performed quickly and at reduced risk.

Case Records Public Access Policy - The latest Case Records Public Access Policy of the Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania went into effect on Jan. 1, 2022 requiring filers to safeguard confidential information using a **Confidential Information Form**, affecting procedures in seven judicial districts and the appellate courts. To accommodate this change, a new confidentiality value of ‘Confidential Document Form’ was added to use when a document is confidential in its entirety. The statewide case management systems and PACFile were modified to capture the filer’s certification of compliance with the policy.

ASSEMBLING AND ANALYZING COURT DATA

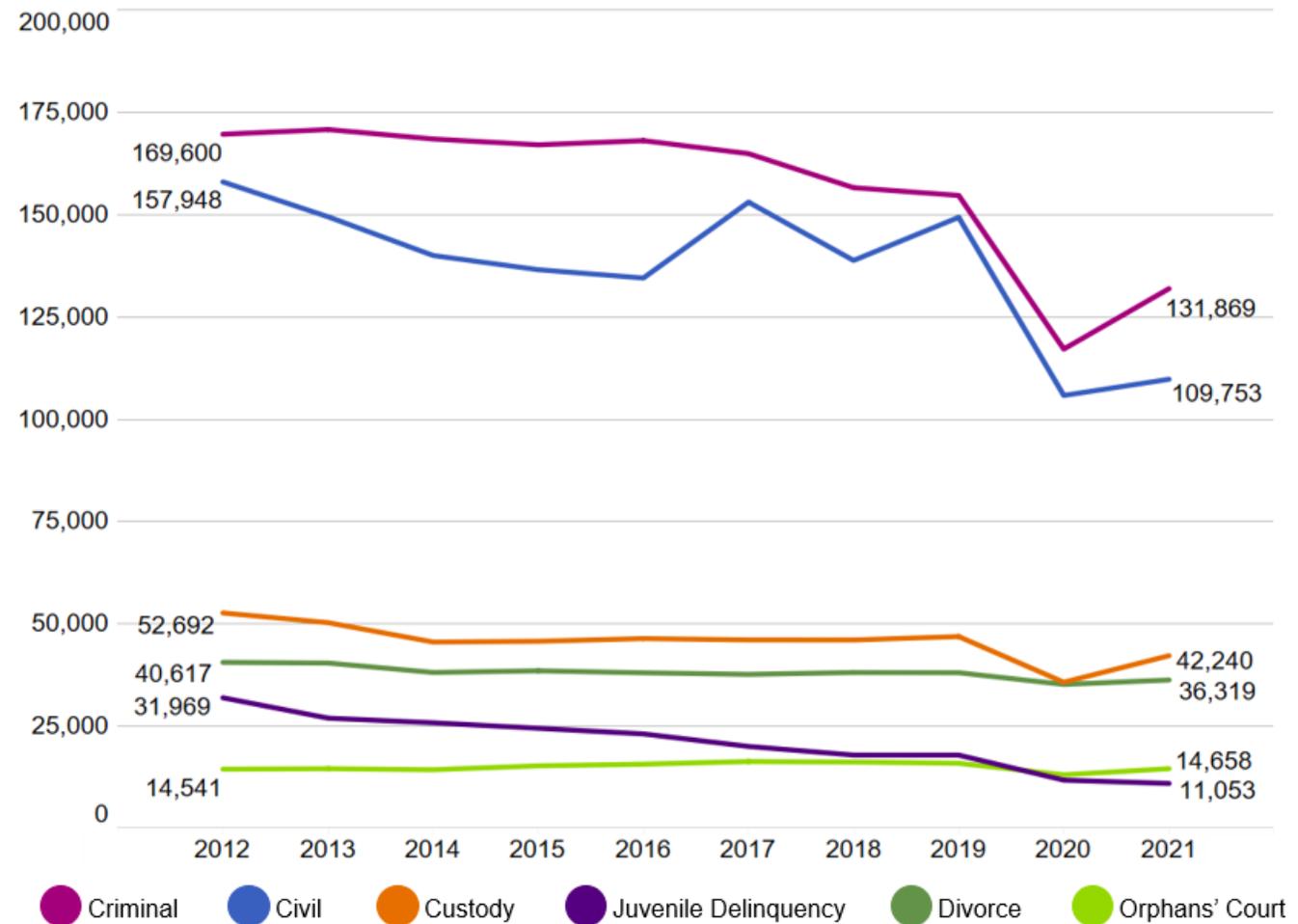
Research and Statistics

[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 2012-2021:



View the full collection of [2021 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 2021 HIGHLIGHTS:

The **eight committees** are made up of **100 members** that met **26 times**.



41 proposed recommendations were published for public comment.

44 recommendations were submitted to the Court for consideration.



26 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.

2021 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.



- **2,186 applications** were processed in 2021.
- 2021 Pennsylvania Bar exam **pass rates**:
 - February **51%**
 - October **70%**

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



- More than **\$20 million** was awarded in total grants.
 - **More than \$1.5 million** was awarded to Law School Clinical and Internship Programs.
- **1,301 attorneys** received assistance with compliance issues or questions.
- Nearly **\$1.8 million** was awarded under the **Bank of America Grant Program** - which provides foreclosure prevention and community redevelopment legal assistance.
- Processed an average of nearly **14,000 IOLTA accounts** monthly.

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

- During the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the Board of the Fund made disposition of **163 claims** where **76 claims** reviewed resulted in the approval of awards, which **awards totaled \$1,632,244**.

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.”

- Through a **new online filing system**, pleadings can be submitted electronically to the Board.
- The new **Case Research Collection** allows website users to search public case information and documents from 2016 through the present.
- The addition of a “**Pro Bono**” **webpage** makes easily accessible a variety of opportunities for Pennsylvania attorneys to perform pro bono work through the Board, IOLTA, CLE, and other statewide organizations.
- **87.5% of attorneys** completed registration by the July 1 deadline.
 - **284 attorneys** were placed on administrative suspension in 2021 (**24% fewer attorneys** placed on administrative suspension than in 2020).



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.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS:



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

- **526 judges** each attended 32 hours of judicial education.
- Some **2021 MJEB session topics** included:
 - Autism in the Courtroom
 - Media Relations
 - Discovering and Disclosing Child Abuse
 - Effectively Linking Courts and Behavioral Health
 - Ethics
 - Leadership Blindspots



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 and appellate judges completed a combined total of nearly **10,547 hours** of continuing education.

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

- **99.8% of lawyers** met the requirements of the CLE rules.
- **163 lawyers** were administratively suspended for failure to comply with CLE.
- **59,292 attorneys** participated in continuing legal education.
- **702,295 CLE credits** were taken.
- **CLE for Pro Bono Initiative:** 2021 was the third year of a three-year pilot project that allowed lawyers the option to earn one CLE credit for every five hours of service completed through an Accredited Pro Bono CLE Provider.

The pilot project resulted in the following participation rates.

- **20** participating Accredited Providers of Pro Bono CLE
- **1,296 lawyers** received credit for pro bono work
- **2,937 CLE credit hours** earned through pro bono service
- These credits represent **14,685 hours** of volunteer service

Rules were officially adopted in 2022 that allow lawyers the option of earning CLE credit in this manner moving forward.

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

During 2021, the Judicial Education Department navigated on-going public health concerns that made most in-person education difficult, if not impossible.

The Department transferred nearly all its educational offerings to remote modalities.

Based on that experience, the Department institutionalized remote education into its overall program strategy.

For the Department, developing remote offerings allowed them to expand the universe of potential faculty with the ability to enlist presenters from across the country without incurring the cost or inconvenience of travel.

For their purpose, remote education allows judges to hear cases for most of the day and, beginning at 3:00 pm, continue their education while sitting in their chambers.

The Department realized significant savings through remote offerings and by leveraging resources that are publicly available online.

TRIAL AND APPELLATE COURT JUDGE EDUCATION

CJE Compliance:

The Department tracked **589** trial and appellate court judges' continuing education efforts during 2021.

- **100% of judges complied** with the Supreme Court's mandate.
- On average, each judge recorded **17.9 CJE credit hours**, nearly **150%** of the requirement.
- In total, trial and appellate court judges recorded **10,547 hours** of continuing judicial education.
- **7,264.5 (69%)** of these hours were earned through courses offered by the Judicial Education Department or the PCSTJ Education Committee with Department support.
- **7,748.5 (75%)** of these hours were earned through courses delivered remotely.

32 hours, including 8.5 hours of judicial ethics, covered topics selected by the PCSTJ Education Committee and were developed and delivered with Department support.

- **23 hours** were delivered remotely and nine were delivered in person.
- In total, judges recorded **3,481.5 CJE credit hours** through these courses.
- On average, **83 judges** participated in each remote offering.

The Judicial Education Department facilitated the development and delivery of **21 courses** on behalf of the PCSTJ Education Committee, a few of which included:

1. Constitutional Interpretation
2. Serial Killers
3. Surrogate Decision Making
4. Judicial Immunity
5. Sealing the Record
6. The Robe Isn't a Shield
7. Digital Evidence
8. Adoption Law Issues

The Judicial Education Department offered the following courses:

1. SCOTUS Update
2. The Great Dissent
3. Understanding Cryptocurrency and Blockchain
4. Recent Developments in Judicial Ethics
5. Emerging Issues in Elder Law
6. Establishing a Trauma Informed Court Room
7. Medical Marijuana: Implications for Pennsylvania Courts
8. Social Media Infiltration
9. Developments in Land Use Law
10. Expert Testimony
11. Privilege
12. Insurance Issues with COVID
13. Deep Fakes

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Educating jurists

Educational Offerings:

During 2021, the Judicial Education Department developed and delivered **88 hours** of continuing judicial education for trial and appellate court judges.

- **56** of these hours were developed and delivered by the Department, including **8 hours** of judicial ethics.
- Judges who participated in these courses qualified for Judicial Education Department CJE credits for purposes of compliance.
- **50** of these hours were delivered remotely and 6 were delivered in person.
- In total, judges recorded **3,783 credit hours** of continuing judicial education through Department courses.
- On average, **85 judges** participated in each remote offering.

MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT JUDGE EDUCATION

In 2021, a total of **526** MDJs completed **32 hours** of continuing judicial education mandated by statute, administered by the Minor Judiciary Education Board, and developed and delivered by the Judicial Education Department.

- **209** MDJs attended continuing judicial education courses in-person.
- **316** MDJs participated remotely.

32 distinct hours of continuing judicial education were developed and delivered in both the Sept. 2020 - May 2021 MDJ academic year and the Sept. 2021 - May 2022 academic years.

During Spring 2021, all **279** MDJs participated remotely, following the 2020-2021 curriculum.

Collectively, they recorded **8,928** hours of remote education.

During Fall 2021, only **37** MDJs participated in continuing education remotely. All others participated in person. These **37** judges recorded **1,184 hours** of remote education.

The Department facilitated **2 certification** courses during 2021.

161 individuals participated in certification courses offered by the Department during 2021.

108 individuals participated in certification courses remotely. **53 individuals** participated in-person.

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 chief justice, court administrator, and the Legislative Committee of the Conference of State Trial Judges.

Input and participation by members of the Legislative Committee is crucial to providing the perspective of jurists who have acquired knowledge and expertise on a myriad of issue areas in the course of their judicial duties, and several members of the committee are former legislators.

Staff provides 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.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS:

- Worked on legislative language and participated in the [Judicial Computer System Financial Audit Committee](#) within PCCD, which issued a report recognizing that the JCS provides a critical service to the Commonwealth, counties, attorneys, participants in the legal system, and citizens, and that the AOPC should continue to operate the JCS.
- Secured adoption of language within the budget Fiscal Code legislation – [Act 93 of 2021](#) – to reauthorize the “Act 49” surcharges. Revenue from the surcharges [provides \\$64 million for the Judiciary's general operations budget](#).
- Achieved enactment of a one-year suspension of the annual \$15 million diversion from the judicial computer fund, which allowed the Judicial Computer System (JCS) to continue uninterrupted operation of the Common Pleas Case Management System.
- [Continued engagement with policymakers on probation reform](#) in concert with members of the Legislative Committee, 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.
- Worked with the Advisory Council on Elder Justice in the Courts and legislative partners on the Aging committees to [enact amendments to the Crimes Code](#) to define the offense of financial abuse of an older adult or care-dependent person and expand the definition of abuse of care-dependent person to address certain conduct involving the posting of images and/or videos.
- [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.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Twitter** - The [@PACourts Twitter page](#) had more than **10,500 followers** and generated nearly **6.1 million tweet impressions**.
- **Facebook** - Gained nearly **400 followers** of [PA Courts Facebook page](#).
- 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 **14,375 page views** and **183,411 impressions**.
- Collaborated with Justice Kevin Dougherty, on behalf of the Pa. Supreme Court to conduct **“Autism and the Courts” regional listening tours across the state** to better understand and address challenges faced by Pennsylvanians with autism who are involved with the criminal justice system.
- Worked with Human Resources to conduct an in-depth employee survey for AOPC staff.
- Created a **digital educational toolkit** to teach children about the Pennsylvania Judiciary. <https://www.pacourts.us/civics-ed>



[Role of the Courts](#)



[How the Courts Work](#)



[Our Pa. Court System](#)



[How a Case Progresses](#)

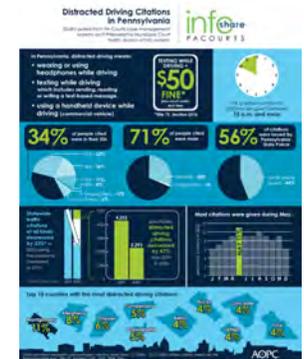


[Flat Judge Project](#)



[Explore Appellate Courtrooms](#)

Infoshare - Developed monthly infographics on different court data topics.





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ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COURTS