

Belmont County Court of Common Pleas, Juvenile Division 2024 Annual Report

Honorable Albert E. Davies
Court of Common Pleas
Juvenile and Probate Division
Courthouse
101 W. Main Street
St. Clairsville, Ohio 43950

From the Judge

To the Citizens of Belmont County,

In August 2024, I began my seventh year serving as the Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Belmont County, Ohio, Probate/Juvenile Division. Over the years, we have faced many challenges, but I remain unwavering in my commitment to the children and families of Belmont County. This court is dedicated to ensuring the best possible outcomes for our community. With the support of an experienced and skilled staff and a range of evidence-based programs, we provide comprehensive care and services to our most vulnerable individuals. Our focus on justice remains our highest priority and is at the heart of everything we do.



The Belmont County Juvenile Court is proud to share the continued success of its Community Service and Restitution Programs. In 2024, the Restitution Program returned \$4,776.27 to crime victims, a 15% increase from the previous year. Meanwhile, 75 juveniles completed 3,920 hours of community service—a remarkable 375% increase in hours compared to 2023. These efforts supported local entities such as the Belmont County Fairgrounds, food pantries in St. Clairsville and Flushing, the St. Clairsville Recreation Center, the Village of Shadyside, St. Mary's Martins Ferry, and more. These programs embody the court's commitment to accountability and community improvement while helping youth take responsibility for their actions and make meaningful contributions to the community.

Belmont County Juvenile Court applied for and received a \$7,500 grant from the Community Foundation of the Ohio Valley, specifically through the River Valley Health Fund. The grant provided 80 juveniles on probation with backpacks containing hygiene items and haircut gift certificates before the start of school. These backpacks were distributed at a picnic featuring a healthy meal and a motivational speaker. The response from the juveniles was overwhelmingly positive.

I am also proud to share that a presentation regarding our Concentrated Conduct Adjustment Program (C-CAP) was highlighted at the 2024 Ohio InterCourt Conference, a premier juvenile justice event held yearly in Columbus, Ohio. During a 90-minute session, our team showcased the program's goals, operations, and success in supporting youth development and accountability. Through small caseloads, school and home visits, and strong community partnerships, C-CAP continues to positively impact the lives of Belmont County youth. This recognition underscores the dedication and collaboration of our staff, community partners, and the families we serve.

In closing, I humbly and sincerely thank you for the privilege of serving as the Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Belmont County, Ohio, Probate/Juvenile Division. Your continued support and trust inspire me to remain steadfast in my commitment to justice, guided by honesty, integrity, responsibility, faith in God, and genuine care for those we serve.

Very Truly Yours,

Albert E. Davies
Judge of the Court of Common Pleas
Of Belmont County, Ohio,
Probate/Juvenile Division

Juvenile Court Staff

The Honorable Albert E. Davies

Amy Busic
Jennifer Shunk
Jim Langford
Andrea Brueggemeier

Juvenile Judge

Magistrate
Court Administrator
Bailiff
Fiscal Officer

Clerks

Amy Tonkovich (Chief Deputy Clerk)
Michelle Lindsey (Assistant Chief Deputy Clerk)
Gina Walker

Linda Timko
Mary Lyle
Amy Bilyeu

Probation Officers

Kelly Carter (Chief Probation Officer)
Allison Powell
Aaron Walker
Courtney Cook

Truant Officer

Jonell Tolzda

Alternative School/CCAP Program/Community Service

Noah Atkinson (Coordinator/Probation Officer)
Melanie Haswell (Teacher)
John Markus (Probation Officer)

Substance Abuse Programs

Dave Carter (Coordinator/Probation Officer)
Kara Mowery (Probation Officer)

Diversion Program

Mary Lyle (Program Coordinator)

Assigned to Juvenile Court

Rhonda Greenwood (Asst. Prosecuting Attorney)
Ted Tsoras (Asst. Public Defender)
Elizabeth Glick (Mediator)



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Judge Albert E. Davies

The Honorable Albert E. Davies took the Oath of Office as the Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Belmont County, Probate/Juvenile Division, on August 6, 2018. Governor John R. Kasich appointed him. Judge Davies was elected to the bench on November 6, 2018, to complete the remainder of the unexpired term ending February 8, 2021. Judge Davies was then elected to a full term (six years) beginning in February 2021. Serving as a judge for the Belmont County Court, Eastern Division, from January 1, 2015, until August 6, 2018, Judge Davies is honored to serve the judiciary as the Belmont County Juvenile and Probate Judge.

After receiving a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business from Miami University and a Juris Doctorate from the University of Toledo College of Law, Judge Davies began his career as a lawyer and was admitted to practice in the state courts of Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and the Southern District of Ohio, Federal Court. Judge Davies was a partner in the law firm of Myser & Davies for over 25 years, practicing criminal law, family law, school law, municipal law, corporate law, and personal injury. He has represented several school districts in Belmont County and served as the Law Director for the City of St. Clairsville.

Judge Davies is a member of the Ohio Association of Juvenile Court Judges, the Ohio Association of Probate Court Judges, the Juvenile Law and Procedure Committee with the Ohio Judicial Conference, the National Association of Juvenile Court Judges, the National Association of Probate Court Judges and the Belmont County Bar Association. He previously served as president of the Belmont County Bar Association. Judge Davies is a St. Clairsville Chamber of Commerce member and the St. Clairsville Sunrise Rotary Club member. He has served on the Board of Directors for Belco Works and the Belmont County Special Olympics. Judge Davies is currently the lead Judge for the Oakview Juvenile Rehabilitation Center and is on the Board of Trustees for the Belmont Harrison Juvenile District.

Judge Davies attends the Harbor of Hope church and resides in St. Clairsville with his wife, Lenora Davies. They have two children.



Mission and Purpose of the Juvenile Court

Juvenile Court is a division of the Court of Common Pleas. The Common Pleas has three divisions, each with a specific jurisdiction: Probate, Juvenile, and General.

The Belmont County Juvenile Court is mandated to handle cases of children who are delinquent, unruly, neglected, dependent, or abused. The Court also has the authority to take appropriate action deemed to be in the children's best interests while considering what is necessary for the protection of the community. Juvenile Courts have jurisdiction in juvenile traffic cases as well as adult cases involving paternity, custody, and/or child support, contributing to the delinquency of minors and failure to send children to school.

The mission of the Juvenile Court is stated in Sections 2151 and 2152 of the Ohio Revised Code and the Rules of Juvenile Procedure as promulgated by the Supreme Court of Ohio. The guidelines are as follows:

- To Provide for the care, protection, mental and physical development of the children subject to the Ohio Revised Code.
- To protect the public interest in removing the consequences of criminal behavior and the tarnish of criminality from children committing delinquent acts and to substitute therefore a program of supervision, care, and rehabilitation.
- To achieve the foregoing purposes, whenever possible, in a family environment, separating the child from parents only when necessary for the welfare of the child or in the interests of public safety.
- To provide judicial procedure through which the parties are assured a fair hearing and where constitutional and other legal rights are recognized and enforced.
- To (1) protect the public interest and safety, (2) hold offenders accountable, (3) to restore victims, (4) rehabilitate offenders, (5) provide for the care, protection, and mental and physical development of children. These purposes are to be achieved through a system of graduated sanctions and services.

CASE PROCEDURES

1. COMPLAINT

The complainant must go to the Prosecutor's Office and fill out a statement of facts about the case. A complaint may be filed by the police, probation officer, school officials, parents, victims, or any adult who has knowledge of an offense. The Intake Clerk at the Prosecutor's Office then obtains approval from the Assistant Prosecuting Attorney assigned to the Juvenile Court as to the proper charge to be filed. The complaint is typed by the clerk, signed by the complainant, and sent to the Juvenile Court's Chief Deputy Clerk. The complaint is then filed with the Court and scheduled for a plea hearing. (In some cases of first-time offenders, the complaint may be passed on to the Diversion Program Coordinator for unofficial handling.) The complaint file is then processed, and a deputy clerk issues proper notices to the parties.

2. PLEA HEARING

The initial Court appearance is the plea hearing. During this hearing, an individual is apprised of their right to counsel, and other constitutional and procedural rights, and is made aware of the allegations regarding the charge. If an individual denies the charge, the matter is set for pretrial. If a person admits the charge or the juvenile denies and is subsequently found to be delinquent or unruly, the matter may then be continued for disposition or the Court may immediately follow with the adjudicatory and dispositional hearings.

3. PRETRIAL

A pretrial is held in cases when a denial has been entered. The prosecutor and the defendant, along with any representative the defendant may have, discuss the case informally. During this process, the participants in the case gain information to formulate planning for further proceedings. The case is discussed off the record with all parties involved. If an agreement can be reached the case is presented to the Judge.

4. ADJUDICATORY HEARING

This hearing is to determine whether a child is a juvenile traffic offender, delinquent, unruly, abused, neglected, or dependent child, or otherwise within the jurisdiction of the Court upon a finding or admission of guilt.

5. DISPOSITIONAL HEARING

The dispositional hearing determines what action shall be taken or the sentence given. The Court considers many factors, such as previous records, relationship with family members, employment, counseling reports, school reports, and/or mental and physical development. Considerations are given to victims, the protection of the community, and the rehabilitation of the individual while ensuring accountability for unruly and criminal actions.



DISPOSITIONS

Disposition in Belmont County Juvenile Court can be any one or more of the following depending on case type in addition to any other orders the Judge chooses to impose:

- Detention
- Fines/Court Costs
- Curfew
- Restitution
- Community Service
- Probation
- Driver's License Suspension
- Dismissal
- Custody with Children Services
- CCAP (Concentrated Conduct Adjustment Program)
- House Arrest/GPS Monitoring
- Referrals to outside agency services
- Family/Individual Counseling
- Family Dependency Treatment Court
- Referrals to Court programs
- Residential Treatment
- Parenting Classes
- Commitment to the Department of Youth Services
- Drug Screening
- CrossFit Program
- Ready Assess Driving Program

COURT PROGRAMS

The Belmont County Juvenile Court utilizes an array of treatment services and programming to provide rehabilitation and alternatives to incarceration. Through assessments, one-on-one work with youth, and collaboration with other county agencies and facilities, each youth's case is reviewed when recommending sentencing and case planning options.

Continuing to provide programming in step with current national trends and research, the Court believes our ever-changing world must be considered. With the use of technology, social media, and acknowledgment of changes in family dynamics, the Court diligently considers the impacts of society on the youth we serve to ensure all aspects of an individual's lifestyle are being examined in providing the best possible case evaluation and processing to deter further Court involvement.

Court employees attend various trainings throughout the year to learn up-to-date treatment methods, available resources, changes to state statutes, and trends in Juvenile Justice. Training and awareness of research in the Juvenile Justice system, both within Ohio and nationally, are an integral part of the operation of the Belmont County Juvenile Court as staff continuously look for ways to improve and expand the services we offer and consider types of programming, length of treatment, and behavioral modification techniques.

Funding for programs is obtained from varying sources including contracts and grants with the Ohio Department of Youth Services, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, and the Federal Government. The Court works closely with the Belmont County Commission in addition to other local funding sources including the Mental Health and Recovery Board.

PROBATION

The Probation Department is guided by Chief Probation Officer Kelly Carter, a graduate of West Liberty University with a degree in Criminal Justice. The Court has one bailiff and eight probation officers, including two substance abuse probation officers.

Each probation officer has a caseload in which they actively monitor juveniles through face-to-face contact with unannounced home and school visits. During these regular visits, the probation officer can create relationships with the youth and their families to encourage positive behaviors. Probation terms and case plans provide specific orders and goals for the juvenile to comply with, such as curfews, drug screens, stay-away orders, academic goals, objectives to improve behaviors, and relationship goals with family members.

The probation department has trained staff in evidence-based curricula, including Carey Guides and Motivational Interviewing. Probation officers do random drug testing and have arrest powers. The probation officer reports to the Juvenile Court the ongoing activities of the youth and progress on case



plans. They not only file violations of court orders, file motions to impose, and request warrants be issued but also make referrals to agencies throughout the county and other Court programs. In addition, the Probation Department meets regularly with juveniles under Court orders and provides guidance and support to youth on their caseloads. Probation officers speak publicly and maintain regular contact with local schools and police departments.

All probation officers have been trained through the Ohio Department of Youth Services web-based assessment tool, *OYAS* (Ohio Youth Assessment System). Youth on probation have a case plan and assessment updated minimally every six months to assess the risk level and to ensure the best possible service is being provided by the Court to meet the needs of the juvenile. Probation officers have been trained through OPOTA probation officer firearm training and qualify annually for firearm certification.

Drug and Alcohol Programs



Drug and alcohol programs are overseen by Dave Carter, a graduate of West Liberty University with a degree in Criminal Justice. The Court maintains various levels of drug and alcohol-specific programming to best accommodate the needs of juveniles and families regarding substance abuse treatment.

All youth under the Court's supervision may be drug tested. The Court utilizes both urine screens and saliva swabs to make use of the most up-to-date testing materials available. The Court additionally partners with various law enforcement agencies, community programs, and treatment partners to provide drug and alcohol services.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE INTERVENTION DOCKET (SAID)

Established in 2009, the Substance Abuse Intervention Docket (SAID), operated by the Drug Court Program staff, is, on average, a ninety-day diversion program designated to provide education and early interventions for treatment as needed for addictions. With early, effective intervention measures to reduce drug and alcohol use, including vaping, general discipline problems, criminal activity, absenteeism, and truancy, the SAID program is key to preventing further involvement by youth in the legal system.



Only juveniles with a first offense related to drug and or alcohol consumption, including tobacco usage, that are considered a misdemeanor or tobacco offense by the standards of the Ohio Revised Code are eligible to participate in the Belmont County Juvenile Court Substance Abuse Intervention Docket. To participate in the program, the youth must admit the charges stated in the complaint are substantially true, and the minor and their parent(s) must be willing to cooperate and abide by the terms and conditions of an Agreed Order.

If the minor and family choose to participate in the Substance Abuse Intervention Docket and abide by the terms and conditions of the Agreed Order, then the respective case will not be filed in the Belmont County Juvenile Court, nor will it result in a juvenile record. Although involvement in SAID is approximately ninety (90) days, time in the program may be extended if necessary and depends on a child's progress and compliance with the specific directives.

If during the time of court supervision, the juvenile or parent(s) fail to abide by the terms and conditions, the juvenile is charged with additional offenses or fails or refuses drug and alcohol testing, nicotine testing, or shows no or minimal effort to succeed in the program, or voluntarily withdraws, and then the case will be filed in the Belmont County Juvenile Court. The program collected a total of \$2,025.00 in program fees. The juvenile will pay \$75.00 to participate in the diversion program.

FAMILY DEPENDENCY TREATMENT COURT

The Family Dependency Treatment Court began in January 2005 through the cooperative efforts of the Juvenile Court and the Department of Job and Family Services. The Court is proud to have been one of the first Specialized Dockets in Ohio to be certified by the Supreme Court of Ohio. The program is



designed to address cases involving adjudications of abuse, neglect, and/or dependency, with the primary issue being alcohol and/or drug problems. The Family Dependency Treatment Court team consists of not only Court staff but also representatives from the Belmont County Department of Job & Family Services-Children Services and local drug and alcohol and mental health treatment provider, Brite Futures, through the Village Network.

The Family Dependency Treatment Court attempts to break the cycle of substance abuse in families by treating drug and alcohol-addicted parents who face the loss or restriction of their parental rights. The primary goal of this program is to foster family reunification through intensive treatment, including frequent contact with case managers, close supervision by probation staff, drug screening, and bi-weekly Court hearings, along with the constant relay of information among the treatment team. These requirements greatly contribute to the expeditious reunification and permanency placing of the involved children.

C-CAP (CONCENTRATED CONDUCT ADJUSTMENT PROGRAM)

In its twenty-eighth year of operation, C-CAP (Concentrated Conduct Adjustment Program) is under the direction of Noah Atkinson, a graduate of Muskingum University with a degree in Business and West Liberty University with an Education Certification. Under Mr. Atkinson's guidance, the C-CAP program continues to provide dedicated service to youth under the supervision of the Court.



Through the years, C-CAP has been successful in making a difference in the lives of youth by providing an alternative to incarceration with an educational and social skills-building approach to working with youth. Juveniles referred to this program participate in group sessions, community service projects, educational work, and independent living skills. Transportation is often provided for youth throughout the county to attend.

The C-CAP program entails the following:

Summer C-CAP Program

Juveniles have charges filed against them and appear in Court. The Judge sentences the juvenile to the C-CAP Program, or the probation department makes a referral. The youth participate in a 10-week program, four days per week. Two of the four days are dedicated to community service throughout the county, and transportation is provided by the probation staff. The remaining programming entails a holistic approach of mental/social, physical, and emotional programming designed to equip the youth with the necessary tools to be successful.

Wednesday C-CAP Program

The program during the school year operates two Wednesdays per month. Youth are picked up from their home school by probation staff and transported to a community site where they will participate in life-skill-building activities and perform community service at the designated site. Youth are referred to the program through the Court/Probation. The amount of time youth will spend in the Wednesday C-CAP Program is determined by the Court/Probation.

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/VIRTUAL LEARNING PROGRAM



The Alternative School is composed of two programs offering differing classroom experiences serving students from fifth through twelfth grades. All school districts in Belmont County provide financial support and participate in the Alternative School programming.

The Alternative School Classroom is for short-term placement of youth suspended from their home school districts, designed to further augment the school discipline plans and to replace out-of-school suspensions. The Virtual Learning Program (VLP) is for youth who are credit deficient, at risk of dropping out, or need a non-traditional school environment to succeed.

The VLP, created in 2011 as an addition to the Alternative School curriculum, assists youth on homeschooling curriculums having difficulty completing online assignments in their home environments. Schools can refer students for credit recovery and those struggling in the traditional academic environment. 48 youth participated in the VLP program in 2024, of which 14 graduated from high school upon earning the required credit hours. The court or school personnel may refer youth to attend the Alternative School to gain assistance in completing online school assignments. By motivating, encouraging, and assisting these youth, they can regain valuable time lost in their education. The VLP also provides credit recovery services that coincide with the Summer C-CAP Program for students enrolled in Belmont County schools.

The goals of the Alternative School are to provide a structured setting for out-of-school suspensions, help support the school districts in combating non-compliance in the schools, help students obtain a better understanding of their school issues and academic needs, offer an alternative to the traditional school setting, and to decrease the drop-out rate by allowing students to maintain their current classroom level. The Alternative school totaled 439 students in 2024, with vaping accounting for 50% of placements in the Alternative School.

School Guidelines:

1. Students suspended from school will be required to attend the C-CAP Alternative School for the period of their suspension as referred from their home school district.
2. If a student is suspended three (3) times, the Alternative School will request the home school district file charges on the student to be handled by the Belmont County Juvenile Court.
3. The home school district will send the student's class assignments. The student will complete their assignments with the assistance of the teacher. The **student** is then responsible for returning all assignments to their home school teachers. Students who refuse or incorrectly complete assignments will not receive academic credit from their home school.
4. Various counseling agencies and guest speakers are brought into the classrooms for educational presentations.
5. Schools may refer a student to complete online coursework in the summer for credit recovery.

DIVERSION PROGRAM

In its twenty-fourth year of operation, the Diversion Program is directed by Diversion Program Coordinator Mary Lyle, a graduate of West Liberty University with a degree in Criminal Justice. The Diversion program is an alternative method to efficiently yet effectively divert youth with a first offense from formal involvement in the juvenile justice system.

The Belmont County Juvenile Court receives referrals to the Diversion Program through a Complaint from the Belmont County Prosecuting Attorney. Only youth who have committed a first offense (unrelated to a traffic violation and/or illegal substance usage) and are alleged to have committed a misdemeanor offense by the standards of the Ohio Revised Code are eligible to participate in the Diversion Program, at the discretion of the Court.

After the Complaint is reviewed, the youth and parent(s) are notified in writing by the Diversion Program Coordinator of the date and time of the scheduled conference. To participate in the program, the youth must admit the charges stated in the complaint are substantially true; a program fee of \$75.00 is to be paid; and the youth and parent(s) must be willing to cooperate and abide by the terms of an Agreed Order. Through the Agreed Order, the Diversion Coordinator establishes appropriate consequences such as curfews, informal license suspensions, counseling, no-contact orders with co-defendants and victims, writing assignments and/or reports, verification of school attendance, community service, electronically monitored house arrest, and drug screening.

If the youth and parent(s) cooperate and abide by the program guidelines, the Complaint will not be filed in the Belmont County Juvenile Court for formal action by the Judge, nor will the case result in a permanent juvenile record. The typical timeframe of involvement in the Diversion Program is ninety (90) days; however, this varies depending on the youth's compliance and progress.

Upon successful completion of the program, all Diversion files/records are sealed immediately, resulting in no permanent record for the juvenile within the juvenile justice system. If the youth denies or disputes the charges, the scheduled conference is canceled, and the Complaint will then be filed for the youth to appear in Court before the Judge to respond to the charges.

Since its inception, the Diversion Program has proven beneficial in deterring youth from committing new offenses within the juvenile justice system. In 2024, 93 youths were referred to the program by the Belmont County Prosecuting Attorney. Of those youth, 79 agreed to participate in the Diversion Program of which 4 youth were dismissed due to failing to cooperate with the program guidelines, and the Prosecutor dismissed 3 cases. As a result, 14 cases choosing not to participate were filed formally in Belmont County Juvenile Court for the youth to appear before the Judge in addition to the 4 cases dismissed from the program.

In 2024, the Diversion Program collected \$6,465.00 in program fees.

RESTITUTION AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

The Restitution and Community Service Program is a two-part program that serves not only victims of crime but also holds youth accountable for their negative actions. The Restitution portion of the program allows youth to compensate victims for their financial loss. The Court may order the juvenile to reimburse the victim to the original state of their out-of-pocket loss. In the case of co-defendant (s), the



restitution is divided by the number of juveniles involved. Each juvenile is required to make monthly payments to the Court and the victims will receive reimbursement checks as payments are received. If a co-defendant is incarcerated, has absconded from the area, or otherwise is not capable of paying their portion of restitution, the other juvenile(s) involved in the case is required to fulfill the prorated share of the restitution, allowing the victim to be reimbursed to their full loss amount.

The victim's losses are verified by the Belmont County Juvenile Prosecutor. The Court orders restitution based on the recommendations and findings of the Prosecutor's office. If a juvenile fails to make their restitution payments promptly, a "review hearing" may be set. Once the juvenile has satisfied the requirements of the Court, a completion form is sent to the juvenile and the victim will receive compensation for their loss.

The second part of the program, the Community Service Program, allows youth to perform court-ordered community service hours. Most of these cases involve minor infractions such as curfew violations, underage consumption, and probation violations. There are numerous acceptable community service sites available such as parks and recreation centers, schools, libraries, churches, and local animal shelters. The program coordinator works with the site staff to monitor the child and track the hours completed.

Youth may be involved with both the Restitution and Community Service portions of this program. In 2024, 75 youths were involved with the program, accounting for approximately 3,920 hours of court-ordered community service completed. A total of \$4,776.27 was collected in restitution for victims.

CARTEENS

In 1999, the Court began the Carteens program in cooperation with The Ohio State University Extension Office. “Car” stands for “caution and responsibility,” while “teens” stands for teenagers who help prepare and present the program. Carteens is a diversion program in which the Belmont County Juvenile Court refers first-time traffic offenders for moving violations such as speeding (if under 21 miles per hour over the limit), stop sign violations, and failure to control without injury. The Court determines which cases are to be diverted to the Carteens Program.



By attending this three-hour program with a parent, custodian, or guardian, the juvenile may be able to avoid having their traffic offense reported to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles. Classes are held approximately twice monthly at The Ohio State University Extension office. A \$75.00 fee is required to be paid at the time of attendance. The Ohio State University Extension office retains all monies collected to operate the program. Successful attendance and cooperation with the program, if referred through diversion, will result in the dismissal of the juvenile traffic case. For traffic offenses not eligible for diversion the Judge can refer the youth to Carteens as part of the sentencing for educational purposes.

The Ohio State Highway Patrol and local law enforcement are supportive of this program and often provide speakers. Films, pictures, and night vision goggles are part of the program to educate teens on the risks of driving irresponsibly. The Carteens' goal is to reduce the number of repeat traffic offenders by increasing awareness of traffic safety issues. This program is self-funded with 106 juveniles referred in 2024.

GUARDIAN AD LITEM PROGRAM

The Belmont County Juvenile Court Guardian Ad Litem (G.A.L.) advocates for young people who are involved in the juvenile justice system. G.A.L. are court-appointed volunteers who do not act as an attorney, but serve as an advisor to the Court regarding the child's best interests. The Chief Deputy Clerk is appointed to maintain and oversee this program ensuring appropriate training is received by all volunteers. G.A.L.'s hold discussions with the child and other interested parties relevant to the case and prepare a written report for the Court. The responsibility of the G.A.L. continues until the completion of the case. A G.A.L. may be appointed for any youth involved with the Juvenile Court who are delinquent, dependent, neglected, or abused children. Training programs are required annually for court-appointed G.A.L.

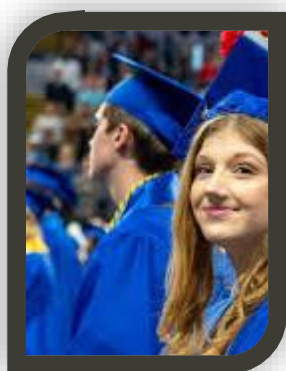
INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Local college students are assigned to the various Court programs as interns through an agreement between the Court, the educational institution, and the student. The students experience the everyday operations of the Court and programs through a “hands-on approach” gaining valuable experience and insight into the juvenile justice system. Through this program, the student can observe firsthand the operation of the Court, Probation Department, and programs. The Court employees look forward to assisting the college students as they embark on new careers.

PARENT PROJECT

The Parent Project was implemented in 2019 to provide support to parents of youth involved with the juvenile system. A nationally recognized program, Parent Project can assist parents in dealing with the destructive, negative behaviors of teens. Certified instructors, CCAP Director Noah Atkinson, and Chief Probation Officer Kelly Carter, oversee the program. Parent Project classes are held virtually via Zoom. The curriculum consists of 10 weeks of courses for parents to achieve successful completion. Classes are held one day per week typically from 6:00-8:00 pm. Parents are expected to attend all classes. As the focus is to offer support to parents in learning new skills in parenting through discussions and class work, children are not permitted to attend. Parent Project offers guidance in the everyday interactions between children and parents to improve the relationships within the family. Classes are offered twice per year. In 2024, during the spring session, 16 parents participated with an additional 13 parents participating in the fall session.

TRUANCY PROGRAM



The Truancy Program, created in 2009, works closely in partnership with school districts throughout Belmont County. Truant officer, Jonell Tolzda, a graduate of Kent State University, works diligently with school officials to improve the attendance of youth to utilize diversion techniques to avoid court involvement.

The Truancy Program is designed to prevent and eliminate truancy or unexcused absences among the students of Belmont County. The Truant Officer works directly with schools for early intervention with students who have attendance problems. The truant officer also works with families to help resolve any obstacles that can lead to truancy. The truant officer holds Parent Intervention Meetings (PIM) as a diversion to truancy charges being filed. Students and parents must both attend this one-time meeting.

Students and parents failing to participate or cooperate with the truant officers and/or continue not following the school’s attendance policies will face sanctions and sentencing through the Belmont County Juvenile Court as described in the Ohio Revised Code regarding truancy. In 2024, 173 new youth were referred to truancy diversion programming, 13 complaints were filed against parents for failure to send, and 39 truant charges were filed against juveniles who had failed to comply with attempts to work with truancy diversion programming. In total, 14 youths were adjudicated of the truant filings.

CROSSFIT PROGRAM

The “CrossFit for Change” Program began in 2022 under the probation department, with Probation Officer Courtney Cook overseeing and organizing operations. Designed to help probationers improve their mental and physical well-being, the program involves probation officers working alongside the youth participants. Probation officers mentor teens through group participation, offering support and encouragement.

The program was created in Mercer County, Ohio, and has spread to other courts nationwide. CrossFit has developed a training curriculum for their staff to work with delinquent/unruly youth and Juvenile Court Probation Officers to offer programming for youth to gain self-esteem, become physically fit, and learn healthy lifestyle options.



The program had an 8% recidivism rate, with a total participation of 37 youth in 2024. Twenty-three youths completed, and 15 were removed from probation upon completing the CrossFit program. Youths are transported to and from the program by probation officers after school twice weekly to participate. Healthy snacks are provided along with any necessary clothing, including shoes and gym bags. Referrals are also made to local mental health providers so that each youth can participate in counseling. Youth learn to overcome obstacles and set goals through encouragement by both peers and adults around them. The program receives funding from the Belmont County Mental Health and Recovery Board.

MOCK TRIAL PROGRAM

The Belmont County Juvenile Court travels throughout the county presenting “mock” proceedings in cooperation with all public and private schools. The mock hearings are a dramatization of actual court cases previously heard by the Court. Juvenile probationers agree to participate in the mock trials and provide valuable insight from their experiences in an open discussion forum following the mock presentation. The juveniles can tell their “stories” and connect with their peers.



The program involves multiple Court staff, including Judge Davies and several probation officers, the Juvenile Prosecutor, Drug Court staff, Diversion staff, and C-CAP staff. Case discussions are held and rulings presented the same as would be in the courtroom setting. Educating children as to the workings of the judiciary, the role the Juvenile Court plays in the lives of Belmont County’s youth, promoting abstinence from drug and alcohol usage, and working closely with schools is important to the operation and function of the Court.

The Mock Trial Program offers an opportunity for middle school-aged youth to learn about the judicial branch and procedures. The program also provides an opportunity for the Court to educate youth as to the consequences they may face for poor decisions made in the future from vaping to inappropriate use

of cell phones. It is the Court's goal that educators and parents build upon this experience to communicate with our youth about the important role of the judiciary.

SARGUS DETENTION CENTER (BELMONT HARRISON JUVENILE DISTRICT)

The Sargus Juvenile Center, located at 68131 Hammond Road in St. Clairsville, is one of several detention facilities in Ohio and provides detention space to both Belmont and Harrison Counties. The center is operated by a seven-member board, three members from Harrison County and four from Belmont County. Sargus Detention Center was established in 1973 and was named after Judge Edmund A. Sargus, a former Juvenile Court Judge for Belmont County. The detention facility is under the operation of Director DJ Watson.

The Sargus Juvenile Center has a maximum bed capacity of 30. During 2024, total admissions for Belmont County were 216, of which 91 were female and 125 were male. The total number of bed days utilized was 6,049 of which were Belmont County or 63% of the total population. Belmont County's average daily population was 10.1 youth per day of the 16.9 total daily youth average. The Sargus Juvenile Center is an invaluable tool for the Court. Not only does Sargus provide protections for the county's citizens, but it also allows youth to receive immediate consequences for their actions and provides a safe, stable, structured environment.



Through a dedicated internet connection, Video Court hearings are transmitted, allowing for a live feed between the Juvenile Courtroom and the detention center. This feature provides significant time and cost savings to the county. No detainees are transported from the detention center to the Court for detention hearings, thus avoiding transportation costs. Transportation security issues have been eliminated and cases are processed quickly as parents report directly to the detention center for participation in the video hearings with their children.

OAKVIEW JUVENILE RESIDENTIAL CENTER

The Oakview Juvenile Residential Center, located at 67701 Oakview Road in St. Clairsville, is one of the Ohio Department of Youth Services' (DYS) community corrections facilities (CCF). The program began in 1994 as a ten-bed group home and was expanded in 2005 to a 24-bed facility. The facility is under the direction of John Rowan.

The program serves adjudicated male juvenile felony offenders from Ohio's 88 counties. Offenders may be placed at Oakview instead of committed to the Ohio Department of Youth Services (Ohio's Juvenile Penitentiary System) to complete a comprehensive behavioral modification program.



The Oakview program has been a positive alternative for Belmont County youth by enabling youth to remain in their local community and maintain regular contact with family members. The program is overseen by a six-member board of Juvenile Judges from Guernsey, Jefferson, Harrison, Monroe, Noble, and Belmont, with Judge Albert E. Davies presiding as the lead Judge.

BELMONT COUNTY SCHOOLS STAYING CLEAN PROGRAM

The Juvenile Court is a proud supporter of the Belmont County Schools Staying Clean (BCSSC) program, a non-profit program promoting drug-free lifestyles for middle and high school students. The Juvenile Court works in cooperation as a partner to support the program with Chief Murphy of the Martins Ferry Police Department. Positive relationships have been established with businesses and community members to offer the program in schools throughout Belmont County, including presentations by nationally recognized guest speakers to students in Belmont County. A significant credit for the funding success of this program is due to the support of the Classy Chassis Car Club. They work annually to raise funds by organizing the Belmont County Schools Staying Clean Car Show.

BCSSC completes random drug testing for middle and high school youth who join the program. The goals are to promote abstinence, provide education on substance abuse, and promote healthy lifestyles. Through support of student activities in the community and school setting, with scheduled events for members such as picnics and extra school activities such as taco bars and pizza parties, the program has proven to be highly effective, with over 1,500 Belmont County school students participating. Tax-deductible donations may be sent to **BCSSC, P.O. Box 516, St. Clairsville, Ohio 43950.**

STATISTICS



**Children are not a distraction from more important work.
They are the most important work.**

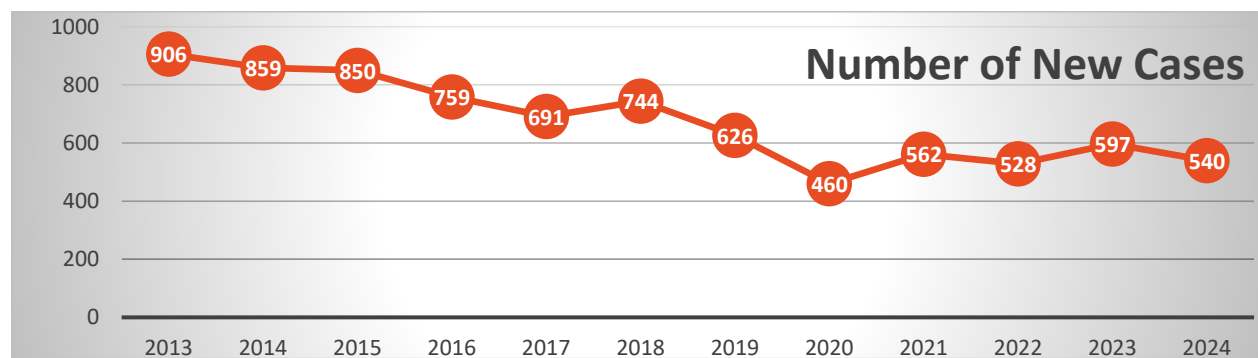
Dr. John Trainer

Children must be taught how to think, not what to think.

Margaret Mead

The Juvenile Court New Case filings...

- * Overall case filings decreased 9.5% over 2023
- * Dependency, Neglect, and Abuse filing have increased by 20% over the last year.
- * Delinquency filings have decreased by 30.5% over ten years ago.



New Cases Heard by Case Type


Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Delinquent	369	298	279	279	235	236	193	127	171	178	222	207
Dependency, Neglect, Abuse	51	45	59	54	31	66	66	25	63	75	65	78
Parentage	6	5	9	15	9	1	9	7	7	22	7	1
Support	159	136	189	139	129	108	38	34	33	38	44	27
Custody, Visitation	122	162	128	100	123	100	89	95	103	75	73	68
Traffic	122	148	120	124	108	141	143	113	109	80	116	104
Unruly	25	174	29	18	27	69	72	50	55	40	41	33
Adult Cases	38	46	27	21	23	19	13	4	15	14	15	14
Contributing	8	4	7	2	4	4	2	3	6	6	14	8
URESA	4	1	3	7	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
Total New Cases	906	859	850	759	691	744	626	460	562	528	597	540

New Admissions into Programs

*Note: Numbers do not reflect the actual number of youths in programs but only **new** referrals.*

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Restitution & Community Service	55	58	53	43	73	106	45	58	37	43	92
Alternative School/VLP	266	267	285	275	241	309	239	376	412	439	436
CCAP	12	14	17	9	19	21	6	14	18	20	24
Carteens	150	124	111	67	135	115	115	106	82	112	106
Family Dependency Treatment Court	7	8	10	5	8	7	4	8	8	3	3
Diversion Program	90	99	96	70	73	50	45	75	75	79	76
Probation	73	84	76	79	95	95	73	71	76	88	99
Truancy Diversion Program	503	475	486	312	208	199	220	141	142	135	173
SAID (Substance Abuse Intervention Docket)	24	16	5	11	11	9	6	7	12	34*	19
CrossFit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	34	37

*Vaping (tobacco) complaints were added to the SAID program in 2023.



For more information about the Belmont County Juvenile
Court go to www.BelmontCountyOhioCourts.com or call
(740)699-2141