



SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Performance Report



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Perhaps the greatest development in 2023 was the move into the annex at the Pinellas County Justice Center in Clearwater. The ribbon-cutting for the four-story, 80,000-square-foot structure, which cost \$35 million to build and which became home to our Unified Family Court division, took place in April. The Sixth Judicial Circuit also experienced a continuation of changes involving judges and staff, and chief among them (no pun intended) was the election of Shawn Crane as the new Chief Judge in February. He replaced Anthony Rondolino, and is seen in the picture above presiding at the annual Veterans Court at the One Community Now Stand Down event in Shady Hills, Pasco County. As you know, the year before, in 2022, I replaced Gay Inskeep as trial courts administrator, and Lyndsey Siara took over my position as court counsel. But there were even more substantial administrative staff changes in 2023. Michele Emmerman was named the new Chief Deputy Trial Courts Administrator, Inass Riyad started as the new Director of Administrative Services, and Nick Bridenback was named the circuit's new Director of Administrative Services – Specialty Courts. Katherin Chapman became the new Director of Alternative Dispute Resolution, and Alicia McLane became the new Juvenile Diversion Program Coordinator. Finally, with the hiring of Jesus Gonzalez Laboy as the head of Human Resources (his official title is Chief of Personnel Services) the circuit witnessed the beginning of an entirely new HR department. For the particulars on the work done by our judges and staff over the course of the year, please read below. Finally, I just want to say how proud I am of all that you accomplished in 2023.

Jennifer Parker
Trial Courts Administrator

PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

PROBLEM-SOLVING COURTS

2023

ADULT DRUG COURT OVERVIEW

The Sixth Judicial Circuit Adult Drug Court is an 12- to 18-month, court-supervised, comprehensive treatment adult drug court for eligible non-violent felony offenders. The Pinellas County Adult Drug Court was initiated in 2001, and Pasco County's in 2007. Both courts consist of a community partnership forged among the Sixth Judicial Circuit, the State Attorney's office, the Public Defender's Office, both sheriffs' offices, the Florida Dept. of Corrections, local law enforcement, community substance abuse providers, and the Pinellas County and Pasco County boards of county commissioners. Adult Drug Court is a voluntary program that involves regular court appearances before a drug court judge. It exists to provide drug court participants the opportunity to become productive, drug-free members of the community.



Judge Kimberly Todd
Pinellas Drug Court

ADULT DRUG COURT OVERVIEW (cont'd)



Judge Kemba Lewis
Pasco Drug Court

In the sixth circuit, adult drug courts serve a blended combination of pre-plea (pretrial intervention), post-plea, post-adjudication, and probation violators. The treatment-based approach begins with an eligible defendant receiving a substance abuse assessment administered by a licensed treatment provider. Following the substance abuse evaluation and based on the result, the licensed and certified assessor will make a treatment recommendation to the court. Defendants opting out of the drug court are transferred to another felony division for prosecution. Defendants who voluntarily enter drug court are ordered to complete an appropriate outpatient or residential treatment level as determined by the court.

Frequent judicial review hearings enable the court to closely monitor a participant's progress in treatment and the results of frequent random drug testing. Participants report directly to the drug court judge at these hearings. Based on success or setbacks, the drug court judge either rewards compliance or sanctions non-compliance.

ADULT DRUG COURT OVERVIEW (cont'd)

For defendants entering adult drug court through pre-trial intervention-diversion (first-time, nonviolent, 3rd degree felons), successful completion and graduation from the program will result in a dismissal of the charge. For defendants entering the drug court as a condition of probation (post-plea drug court), successful completion will result in a withhold of adjudication, and/or a reduced length of probation.

Pinellas County contributes \$655,000 toward Adult Drug Court Treatment. Pasco County contributes \$482,000 toward Adult Drug Court treatment and transitional housing. Additionally, state funding is available in the amount \$69,936 for residential treatment in Pinellas, \$13,149 for targeted treatment for clients at risk of failing drug court in Pinellas, and \$8,400 for recovery residence services in Pasco.

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT OVERVIEW

The Veterans Treatment Court, or VTC, was established in Pinellas and Pasco counties with state funding in 2013. A smaller VTC in Pinellas has been operating since 2011. The aim of this special court is to help veterans deal with their current criminal charges and stop them from getting into further trouble. It also is designed to help with substance abuse or mental health issues that may have caused or contributed to their legal problems. Only veterans charged with misdemeanors and certain felonies, such as drug-related charges, burglary, grand theft, and battery, may qualify and must submit an application through the State Attorney's Office. Among the criteria considered by the State Attorney's Office are the victim's point of view, the veteran's criminal history and the veteran's service record. The VTC partners with the Veterans Administration, treatment providers and employment specialists to help the veterans succeed. The Veterans Treatment courts in Pasco and Pinellas Counties are allocated \$150,000 each from the Florida Legislature, to be put toward its operational costs.

POST ADJUDICATION PRISON DIVERSION DRUG COURT OVERVIEW

Late in 2009, Pinellas received grant funding through the state of Florida to launch a new post-adjudicatory expansion Adult Drug Court pilot. The Legislature directed \$19 million in federal funds from the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant to expansion drug courts in nine counties for case management, treatment services and drug testing, data management, and project administration. This drug court, assigned to Pinellas Criminal Division “Z,” is for defendants who are facing prison but whose sentencing scores do not exceed 60 points. Once the grant funding ended, the State of Florida continued to fund the project. The current allocation is set at \$599,928 per year.

DEPENDENCY DRUG COURT OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Sixth Judicial Circuit's dependency drug courts (DDCs) is to provide substance-abusing parents with support, treatment, and access to services that will protect children; reunite families (as applicable); and expedite permanency. The target population of DDCs are adults (parents) who have had a dependency adjudication where a primary cause for the neglect or abuse is parental substance abuse and who have a history of substance abuse disorders with or without co-occurring mental health problems, and histories of trauma. Each county serves about 35 families per year. The Pasco DDC was initiated with SAMHSA grant funding in 2016, and the Pinellas DDC was implemented in 2017 with funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).



**Judge Patrice Moore
Presides over Dependency
Drug Court and Early
Childhood Court in Pinellas
County**

EARLY CHILDHOOD COURT OVERVIEW

Both Pasco and Pinellas County dependency drug courts operate a speciality track called Early Childhood Court to better serve parents in DDC who have children five years old or younger. The Early Childhood Court track uses the Zero to Three (ZTT) Safe Babies Court model as well as modifications made to Florida's ECC mode to help infant and toddler victims of maltreatment by addressing their parents' trauma to enable their parents to more effectively parent. The focus is on parent-child bonding. Prior to being a track within DDC, the ECC was a standalone court started in Pasco in the fall of 2013 and Pinellas in May 2015.

The ZTT Early Childhood Court model was designed to keep children safe while attempting to address the underlying causes for the parenting failure. The ZTT model involves a family court judge partnering with a child development specialist to create a multi-disciplinary team of child welfare and health professionals, child advocates and community leaders to provide services to abused and neglected infants and toddlers. The ZTT model's core components are 1) judicial leadership, 2) continuum of behavioral health services, 3) a collaborative court team, 4) a community coordinator, 5) cross-agency training, 6) developmental supports for child well-being, 7) placement and concurrent planning, 8) monthly family team meetings to review open cases, 9) parent-child contact, 10) evaluation, and 11) funding and sustainability. Florida has added to this model the additional components of trauma lens, a central role of an infant mental health specialist and child-parent psychotherapy, parent education, and co-parenting.

EARLY CHILDHOOD COURT OVERVIEW (cont'd)

The Pinellas County Juvenile Welfare Board contributes \$106,467 to fund Early Childhood Court track enhancements to the Pinellas Dependency Drug Court.

PINELLAS MENTAL HEALTH COURT

The Pinellas Mental Health Court (MHC) is a specialty court that works to improve the response to individuals with serious mental illnesses who have come into contact with the criminal justice system. MHC participation is voluntary. Rather than be punished for incidents that occur as a result of mental illness, participants are instead engaged in appropriate, effective mental health and supportive services to improve and sustain their quality of life. This model has proven to be effective in achieving these goals.



**Judge Philip Federico
Presides Over Mental
Health Court**

PINELLAS MENTAL HEALTH COURT (cont'd)

The target population of the MHC are adults charged with a third degree, non-violent felony or misdemeanor who has a qualifying mental health diagnosis or history of mental illness. Eligible participants may also have a substance use disorder, but the primary condition must be mental-health related. All prospective clients are screened for clinical eligibility by the Public Defender's Office and for legal eligibility by the State Attorney's Office. All participants must be willing to receive mental health treatment and must voluntarily agree to the terms of MHC participation. Project partners include Pinellas County Government, the State Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, Directions for Living (mental health service provider), and the University of South Florida's Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute.

The MHC aims to treat about 40 defendants per year.

MISSION STATEMENTS

The mission of the Sixth Judicial Circuit's criminal adult drug court program is to provide eligible participants immediate, comprehensive and appropriate substance abuse treatment, aftercare and compliance monitoring in an effort to eliminate substance abuse and recidivism, thereby reducing crime, increasing community safety, and lowering the costs of the criminal justice system.

The mission of the Sixth Judicial Circuit's dependency treatment court programs is to achieve permanent, stable homes for children by creating healthy, drug-free families through treatment, family supports and services, and enhanced judicial supervision.

GOALS

CRIMINAL ADULT TREATMENT COURT

- (1) TO REDUCE CRIMINAL RECIDIVISM
- (2) TO PROVIDE COST-EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION
- (3) TO PROVIDE TIMELY ACCESS TO SUPPORTIVE TREATMENT INTERVENTION
- (4) TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR TARGETED OFFENDERS AND THEIR FAMILIES
- (5) TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF ADDICTION AFFECTING DRUG COURT PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES
- (6) TO PROMOTE PUBLIC HEALTH FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS AND CO-OCCURRING MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE WHO ARE IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM.

GOALS

CRIMINAL ADULT TREATMENT COURT (cont'd)

- (7) TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY SAFETY BY ADDRESSING SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LOCAL CRIMINAL ACTIVITY.

GOALS

DEPENDENCY DRUG COURT

- (1) TO MAINTAIN/ENHANCE FAMILY BONDS
- (2) TO TREAT ADDICTIONS TO ENABLE LONG-TERM,
STABLE RECOVERY
- (3) TO SAVE MONEY FOR THE COMMUNITY AND FAMILIES
- (4) TO PROMOTE SAFETY – FOR CHILD AND FOR COMMUNITY
- (5) TO PREVENT NEGATIVE REPEAT PATTERNS

GOALS

DEPENDENCY DRUG COURT (cont'd)

- (6) TO DECREASE NUMBER OF FOSTER CHILDREN IN CARE
- (7) TO PROVIDE FAMILIES WITH AN ENHANCED CAPACITY TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR CHILDREN'S NEEDS
- (8) TO CREATE STABLE, SAFE FAMILIES
- (9) TO PROVIDE INTENSIVE, SUPPORTIVE TREATMENT INTERVENTION FOR CHILDREN TO MEET THEIR EDUCATIONAL, PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS
- (10) TO MAKE FAMILIES AWARE OF RESOURCES, CONTACTS AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

DEVELOPMENTS

Ongoing Grant-Funded Projects:

Pinellas County entered its third year of a three-year Bureau of Justice Assistance Mental Health Collaboration grant in the amount of \$549,826 over three years to plan for and implement a new Mental Health Court for Pinellas. The project proposes to serve 80 clients, 40 per year after second year launch. The Court partners with Pinellas County, Directions for Living, the State Attorney's Office and the Public Defender's Office on this project.

The Pinellas Unified Family Court entered its third year of a three-year \$996,944 Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Support (OJJDP) grant to continue operating and expand its Dependency Drug Court. The Court provides treatment, peer recovery coaching and family-support services to parents who have open dependency cases. The Court partners with Pinellas County and WestCare on this project. The first year of this project will supplement services provided in a no-cost extension of a previous OJJDP grant.

DEVELOPMENTS (cont'd)

The Pasco Adult Drug Court completed its third year of a three-year Bureau of Justice Assistance Adult Drug Court Discretionary grant of \$498,755 to provide a gender-responsive and trauma-informed treatment track for women who are negatively affected by neurotrauma-related symptoms. The court partners with WestCare Gulfcoast-Florida, Clinical Neuropsychologist Dr. James Lewis, and Pasco County.

The Pasco County Adult Drug Court entered its fourth year of a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Expansion grant for \$2,000,000 over five years. This grant, called Thrive after a similar Pinellas program, provides an outpatient protocol for Pasco ADC. The court partners with WestCare Gulfcoast-Florida and Pasco County.

The Pinellas Adult Drug Court completed its third year of a three-year Bureau of Justice Assistance Adult Drug Court Discretionary grant of \$495,955 to provide services to adult clients who have identified past sexual trauma and began an expansion of those services through a new four-year BJA grant totaling \$778,932. The court partners with the Center for Rational Living and Pinellas County Government.

DEVELOPMENTS (cont'd)

The Pinellas County Adult Drug Court entered its fifth year of a five-year Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Expansion grant for \$2,000,000. This grant provides an outpatient protocol for Pinellas ADC through a program called THRIVE to help provide additional outpatient treatment dollars.

The Pinellas Veterans Treatment Court extended its \$500,000 Bureau of Justice Assistance Adult Drug Court Discretionary grant project (called VALOR) for a fourth year to March 30, 2024. This grant funds treatment for veterans in Pinellas Veterans Treatment Court. The court partners with WestCare Gulfcoast-Florida, and Pinellas County Government.

The Pasco Dependency Drug Court entered its fifth year of a five-year \$2,125,000 SAMHSA Dependency Drug Court grant continue operating and expand its Dependency Drug Court. The Court provides treatment, peer recovery coaching and family-support services to parents who have open dependency cases. The Court partners with Pasco County and WestCare on this project.

DEVELOPMENTS (cont'd)

The Pinellas County Dependency Drug Court and Early Childhood Court completed the No Cost Extension of its \$1,000,000 Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Opioid Affected Youth Initiative grant for a fourth year to September 30, 2023. This cooperative agreement provides funding for treatment resources for children in Dependency Drug Court and Early Childhood Court who have been affected by the opioid epidemic. The court partners with Family Support Services Suncoast, WestCare Gulfcoast-Florida, Adoption Related Services, the University of South Florida Family Study Center, and Pinellas County Government for this project.

ACHIEVEMENTS
CRIMINAL DRUG COURTS

(1) NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS ACCEPTED; TOTAL SERVED

PASCO ADC – 236 new; 550 served

PINELLAS – 423 new; 776 served

PASCO VTC – 35 new; 60 served

PINELLAS VTC – 65 new; 118 served

PINELLAS PRISON DIVERSION – 34 new; 53 served

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

CRIMINAL DRUG COURTS (cont'd)

(2) ACTIVE CASELOAD AS OF END OF DECEMBER

PASCO ADC – 332

PINELLAS ADC – 420

PASCO VTC – 28

PINELLAS VTC – 48

PINELLAS PRISON DIVERSION – 35

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

CRIMINAL ADULT DRUG COURTS (cont'd)

(3) RECIDIVISM RATES AS MEASURED AT 12 MONTHS AND 24 MONTHS
FROM GRADUATION (Please note that VTC is a subset of ADC percentages)

PASCO ADC – 12 MONTHS: 6.06 %; 24 MONTHS: 5.77 %

PINELLAS ADC – 12 MONTHS: 10.9 %; 24 MONTHS: 18.9 %

PASCO VTC – 12 MONTHS: 0 %; 24 MONTHS: 7.14 %

PINELLAS VTC – 12 MONTHS: 9.09 %; 24 MONTHS: 17.95 %

PINELLAS PRISON DIVERSION – 12 MONTHS: 12.5 %;
24 MONTHS: 33.33 %

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

CRIMINAL DRUG COURTS (cont'd)

(4) RE-ARREST RATES FOR ACTIVE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

PASCO ADC – <1 %

PINELLAS ADC – 17.3 %

PASCO VTC – 1.3 %

PINELLAS VTC – 7.6%

PINELLAS PRISON DIVERSION – 0%

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

CRIMINAL DRUG COURTS (cont'd)

(5) RETENTION RATE MEASURED BY THE TOTAL NUMBER OF CURRENT ENROLLEES PLUS THE TOTAL NUMBER OF GRADUATES IN THE LAST THREE YEARS DIVIDED BY THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS EVER ENROLLED IN THE LAST THREE YEARS

PASCO ADC – 56 %

PINELLAS ADC – 62 %

PASCO VTC – 79 %

PINELLAS VTC – 73 %

PINELLAS PRISON DIVERSION – 58 %

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

CRIMINAL DRUG COURTS (cont'd)

(6) NUMBER OF GRADUATES

I. NUMBER OF GRADUATES

**II. % OF GRADUATES WHO RETAINED OR OBTAINED
EMPLOYMENT (DOES NOT REFLECT THOSE GRADUATES
WHO ARE RETIRED, DISABLED OR FULL-TIME STUDENTS)**

**III. NUMBER OF GRADUATES WHO EARNED A GED WHILE
IN DRUG COURT**

**PASCO ADC – 108 GRADUATES – 49.54 % OF ALL EXITS;
44 % EMPLOYED AND 14% DISABLED/RETIRED/STUDENT, AND
42% NOT REPORTED; 3 EARNED GED**

**PINELLAS ADC – 186 GRADUATES – 52.25 % OF ALL EXITS; 76 %
EMPLOYED; 8.6% DISABLED/RETIRED/STUDENT, AND 12 %
NOT REPORTED; 4 EARNED GED AND ONE AN AA**

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

CRIMINAL DRUG COURTS (cont'd)

(6) NUMBER OF GRADUATES (cont'd)

PASCO VTC – 22 GRADUATES – 68.75 % OF ALL EXITS;
18 % EMPLOYED AND 32 % DISABLED/RETIRED/STUDENT;
54 % NOT REPORTED; ONE EARNED AA

PINELLAS VTC – 33 GRADUATES – 68.75 % OF ALL EXITS;
36 % EMPLOYED AND 30 % DISABLED/RETIRED/STUDENT,
AND 33 % NOT REPORTED; ONE EARNED AA

PINELLAS PRISON DIVERSION PILOT – 8 GRADUATES – 44.44 % OF
ALL EXITS; 87.5% RETAINED OR OBTAINED EMPLOYMENT;
0 EARNED A GED

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

CRIMINAL DRUG COURTS (cont'd)

(7) NUMBER OF DRUG-FREE BABIES BORN TO PARTICIPANTS

PASCO ADC – 3

PINELLAS ADC – 5

PINELLAS PRISON DIVERSION – 0

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

DEPENDENCY DRUG COURTS

(1) NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS ACCEPTED; TOTAL SERVED

PASCO – 11 NEW; 26 SERVED

PINELLAS – 20 NEW; 68 SERVED

(2) ACTIVE CASELOAD AS OF END OF DECEMBER

PASCO – 14; PINELLAS – 30

(3) RETENTION RATES: TOTAL NUMBER OF CURRENT ENROLLEES
PLUS THE TOTAL NUMBER OF GRADUATES IN THE LAST
THREE YEARS DIVIDED BY THE TOTAL NUMBER OF
PARTICIPANTS EVER ENROLLED IN THE LAST THREE YEARS

PASCO – 58 %; PINELLAS – 74 %

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

DEPENDENCY DRUG COURTS (cont'd)

(4) NUMBER OF PARENTS WHO COMPLETED

PASCO – 7 (26%)

PINELLAS – 29 (76.6 %) WITH 9 MORE (23.6 %) WHO DID NOT
GRADUATE BUT HAD VISITS POSSIBLE

(5) NUMBER OF DRUG-FREE BABIES BORN

PASCO – 2; PINELLAS – 8

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

DEPENDENCY DRUG COURTS (cont'd)

(6) NUMBER OF REUNIFICATIONS

PASCO – 15 CHILDREN ACHIEVED REUNIFICATION WITH THEIR PARENTS IN 2023; 18 TOTAL CHILDREN SERVED IN 2023 HAD REACHED REUNIFICATION WHILE IN DDC.

PINELLAS – 27 CHILDREN ACHIEVED REUNIFICATION WITH THEIR PARENTS IN 2023; 44 TOTAL CHILDREN SERVED IN 2023 HAD REACHED REUNIFICATION WHILE IN DDC.

(7) AVERAGE LENGTH OF TIME IN DDC FOR ALL GRADUATES

PASCO – 524 DAYS

PINELLAS – 500 DAYS

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

DEPENDENCY DRUG COURTS (cont'd)

(8) AVERAGE LENGTH OF TIME IN DDC FOR ALL EXITS

PASCO – 457 DAYS; PINELLAS – 435 DAYS

**(9) NEW DEPENDENCY ACTIONS – PERCENTAGE OF GRADUATES WITH
NEW VERIFIED ABUSE REPORTS**

PASCO – 1 (2.6 %) WITHIN THREE MONTHS; 4 (16.7 %) WITHIN
ONE YEAR.

PINELLAS – 0 (0%) WITHIN THREE MONTHS; 0 (0 %) WITHIN
ONE YEAR.

(10) AVERAGE LENGTH OF FINAL SOBRIETY FOR GRADUATES

PASCO – 237 DAYS; PINELLAS – 399 DAYS

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

PINELLAS MENTAL HEALTH COURT

(1) NEW PARTICIPANTS ACCEPTED – 13; TOTAL SERVED – 17

(2) ACTIVE CASELOAD AS OF THE END OF DECEMBER – 13

(3) RECIDIVISM RATES AS MEASURED AT 12 MONTHS AND 24 MONTHS
FROM GRADUATION

12 MONTHS – 0 %; 24 MONTHS – 0 %

(4) RE-ARREST RATES FOR ACTIVE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS – 0 %

(5) RETENTION RATES MEASURED BY THE TOTAL NUMBER OF CURRENT
ENROLLEES PLUS THE TOTAL NUMBER OF GRADUATES IN THE
LAST THREE YEARS DIVIDED BY THE TOTAL NUMBER OF
PARTICIPANTS EVER ENROLLED IN THE LAST THREE YEARS – 76 %

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

MENTAL HEALTH COURT (cont'd)

(6) NUMBER OF GRADUATES – TWO – 50 % OF ALL EXITS;
50 % EMPLOYED

(7) AVERAGE LENGTH OF TIME IN MHC FOR ALL GRADUATES – 218 DAYS

(8) AVERAGE LENGTH OF TIME IN MHC FOR ALL EXITS – 232 DAYS

PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

BEHAVIORAL EVALUATIONS 2023

OVERVIEW

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES ARE PROVIDED FOR JUVENILES BY THE BEHAVIORAL EVALUATION PROGRAM AND FOR ADULTS BY THE COURT PSYCHOLOGIST

JUVENILE BEHAVIORAL EVALUATION PROGRAM

The Juvenile Behavioral Evaluation program supports the Unified Family Court in its decision-making process by providing the court with psychological evaluations of youthful offenders and truants and their families. Information is obtained from youth and parent interviews, school and mental health records, contacts with collateral sources, including the Department of Juvenile Justice, treatment agencies, the Guardian ad Litem, and the Department of Children and Families. Reports include information regarding the social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive functioning of the youth; overall functioning of the family; violence risk; the youth's competence to proceed, if needed; and recommended sanctions based on treatment needs.

OVERVIEW (cont'd)

Information is provided by report and through court testimony. The program seeks to identify unaddressed mental health, substance abuse, and family problems and works actively to link youth and their families to appropriate community resources. The staff is active in mobilizing alternatives to incarceration, assisting with placements of very difficult youth, advocating for the needs of a particular youth among involved agencies, and in working with court committees to encourage and develop alternatives to incarceration. The staff works with Truancy Court and other truancy-related programs.



Keila Roman

Behavioural Evaluations Program Director

OVERVIEW (cont'd)

The behavioral evaluation program serves delinquent, truant and/or dependent youth ages 7-18 and their families, appearing before the Unified Family Court. All youth have been charged in Pinellas County and are referred by court order. Services are provided at the County Justice Center, with some youth being seen in the Juvenile Detention Center in Clearwater. A Community Resource Advocate (CRA) works with families to connect them to resources in the community, provides referrals to community agencies and follow-up assistance after the referrals, fast tracks services at local mental health agencies, and participates in community meetings regarding services for youth.

COURT PSYCHOLOGIST – ADULT CRIMINAL

The court psychologist provides competency to proceed to trial evaluations and expert witness testimony for defendants appearing in criminal court. The court psychologist also provides mental status and placement evaluations of adults in criminal court, making recommendations regarding necessary treatment needs. Many evaluations are provided on an immediate basis, thereby enhancing the efficiency and productivity of the court.

MISSION STATEMENTS

The Juvenile Behavioral Evaluation Program supports the Unified Family Court in its decision-making process by providing information regarding the social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive abilities of the child; the overall functioning of the family; information regarding the child's competency to understand court proceedings; and recommended sanctions based on treatment needs. The program also enhances the well being of the individual, family and community by linking clients with community agencies for treatment as needed.

The court psychologist supports the criminal court in its decision-making process by providing competency-to-proceed-to-trial evaluations, mental status and treatment placement evaluations, and expert witness testimony for defendants appearing in criminal court.

GOALS

- (1) TO PROVIDE THE COURT WITH INFORMATION THROUGH A REPORT AND/OR TESTIMONY THAT WILL HELP THE COURT UNDERSTAND THE UNIQUE PROBLEMS OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY AND INCLUDES IDENTIFICATION OF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING: MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS, MENTAL RETARDATION, ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL ISSUES, SUBSTANCE ABUSE, VIOLENCE HISTORY AND BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS
- (2) TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COURT REGARDING DISPOSITION AND NEEDED TREATMENT INTERVENTIONS
- (3) TO PROVIDE THE COURT WITH EVALUATIONS OF THE CHILD OR ADULT DEFENDANT'S COMPETENCY TO UNDERSTAND COURT PROCEEDINGS AND ASSIST IN THEIR DEFENSE
- (4) TO PROVIDE TESTIMONY TO THE COURT WHEN NEEDED

GOALS (cont'd)

- (5) TO PROVIDE CONSULTATION TO FAMILIES REGARDING TEST RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, TO LINK FAMILIES TO APPROPRIATE RESOURCES, TO ASSIST WITH PLACEMENT OR ADVOCACY AS NEEDED, OR TO PROVIDE CRISIS INTERVENTION.
- (6) TO PROVIDE TRAINING, CONSULTATION AND COLLABORATION TO COURT PERSONNEL, INCLUDING JUDGES, ATTORNEYS, JUVENILE JUSTICE PERSONNEL, ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF, AND COMMUNITY PROVIDERS AND AGENCIES WORKING WITH YOUTH.

DEVELOPMENTS

The Behavioral Evaluation Program continued providing most evaluations in person with accommodations made for remote evaluations when needed due to transportation issues or other challenges. Family interviews are also completed both in office and by phone to accommodate their schedules as much as possible. Staff continues to participate in truancy court, girls court and boys court.

The unit has continued to see a high number of homeless families, difficulties accessing services and the impacts on school performance. The program continues to assist families with navigating complex system processes such as applications for residential treatment placement and applications with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities. The program has identified a group of higher needs youth and provides monthly extra check-in support with those families; helping them navigate barriers to access treatment.

One staff psychologist position became open as of September 28, 2023 and remained open for the rest of 2023. The director position became open as of November 1, 2023 and remained open for the rest of 2023.

ACHIEVEMENTS

JUVENILE BEHAVIORAL EVALUATION PROGRAM*

NUMBER OF JUVENILE EVALUATIONS – 448

NUMBER OF TRUANCY EVALUATIONS – 5

NUMBER OF JUVENILE COMPETENCY EVALUATIONS – 113

NUMBER OF FAMILY INTERVIEWS – 283

NUMBER OF FAMILIES ASSISTED THROUGH COMMUNITY
RESOURCE ADVOCATE – 148

(*BASED ON COUNTY FISCAL YEAR 10/1/2022-9/30/2023)

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

ADULT CRIMINAL COURT PSYCHOLOGIST*

NUMBER OF ADULT COMPETENCY EVALUATIONS
COMPLETED – 761

NUMBER OF WRITTEN REPORTS PROVIDED TO COURT – 113

NUMBER OF BAKER ACT SCREENINGS PERFORMED – 2

NUMBER OF CASES FOR WHICH EXPERT TESTIMONY
WAS PROVIDED – 412

(*CALENDAR YEAR 2023 DATA)

PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

CASE MANAGEMENT 2023

OVERVIEW

The Supreme Court Committee on Trial Court Performance and Accountability Case defined case management as “the systematic administration and allocation of resources, including judicial attention and leadership, time, court staff, court technology, and the resources of parties and communities, directed to enhancement of the quality, timeliness, and efficiency of the judicial system. Case management develops and maintains reasonable and achievable policies and practices, identifies, collects and organizes critical case information, responds appropriately to characteristics of cases and parties, organizes movement of cases, ensures that necessary activities and events occur, marshals and prioritizes court and community resources, promotes reasonable and consistent expectations, provides critical information to judicial leaders and court managers, and promotes accountability and ongoing improvement.”

COMPONENTS

FAMILY



Gillian Isibue

Case Manager, Community Violence Division

Case managers assist judges by facilitating the flow of cases through the family law system, particularly dissolution of marriage cases, family law cases involving pro se litigants, and domestic violence. Work involves reviewing and monitoring cases, providing procedural and informational assistance to litigants, making referrals to legal assistance programs for persons seeking legal advice, noticing parties of missing items prior to hearings, checking service, setting case management conferences and other hearings, attending hearings as required, and preparing draft orders.

COMPONENTS (cont'd)

UNIFIED FAMILY COURT

A team of case managers assists the court to help ensure a single judge hears all family law matters involving one family when at least one of the cases is a dependency or delinquency case. Related family matters include child support, domestic relations, domestic violence, delinquency and dependency. Key elements of the sixth circuit's procedures include an integrated information system for providing necessary case tracking and calendaring, the case management team which serves as a central intake unit, facilitated inter-agency communication to avoid duplication of services, and swift identification and handling of cases where persons may be at risk of family violence. Staff also assist judges by facilitating the flow of cases through the juvenile system, particularly regarding juvenile release requests, adoptions stemming from termination of parental rights, and dependency actions.

COMPONENTS (cont'd)

UNIFIED FAMILY COURT (cont'd)

Work involves reviewing and monitoring cases, contacting parties regarding missing items prior to hearings, checking service, setting hearings, preparing draft orders, coordinating with other agencies, and reviewing pending caseloads for dispositional problems. An alternative sanctions coordinator assists in case flow management of delinquency and related cases, serves as liaison between the judiciary and delinquency-related agencies, and recommends alternative sanctions to incarceration as requested by the judiciary.



Doug Elliott

Case Manager, Unified Family Court

COMPONENTS (cont'd)

CRIMINAL ADMINISTRATION

The case management duties assigned to the criminal administration staff include processing divisional reassignments, informing each judge of mandates from the Second District Court of Appeal, coding the mainframe to reflect available calendar dates, and maintaining a list of capital case assignments among the felony divisions. Additionally, staff processes all appointments and reporting of doctors in cases where the mental capacity of the defendant is in question. Other criminal-related projects assigned to Criminal Administration are reported under Court Administration.



**Court Operations Manager Steve Walsh, with LS Blatter,
Court Program Specialist II**

MISSION STATEMENT

Case managers in the Sixth Judicial Circuit will screen and manage cases to promote timely disposition and maximize the efficient use of court resources to help deliver a high-quality litigation process. Case managers will ensure equal access to the courts by providing procedural and other information to the litigants and the public.

GOALS

- (1) TO ASSIST THE SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT TO MAKE MORE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT USE OF JUDGE AND GENERAL MAGISTRATE TIME
- (2) TO HELP ENSURE EQUITABLE TREATMENT OF ALL LITIGANTS
- (3) TO FOSTER THE TIMELY DISPOSITION OF CASES
- (4) TO PROVIDE PROCEDURAL AND OTHER INFORMATION TO LITIGANTS, THE PUBLIC, AND ATTORNEYS
- (5) TO ENABLE HIGHER DEGREES OF PREDICTABILITY AND CERTAINTY IN SCHEDULING
- (6) TO MAKE EFFECTIVE USE OF LIMITED RESOURCES, MINIMIZING COSTS TO LITIGANTS, THE COURT AND THE PUBLIC

GOALS (cont'd)

- (7) TO DIRECT LITIGANTS/PARTIES TO APPROPRIATE COURT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AND MONITOR PROGRESS AS APPROPRIATE.
- (8) TO IMPROVE THE DELIVERY OF COURT AND COURT-RELATED SERVICES THROUGH GOOD INTERAGENCY COMMUNICATIONS.
- (9) TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO ALL FAMILY LAW JUDGES WITH PERIODIC REVIEW OF QUARTERLY TIME STANDARDS REPORTS.

DEVELOPMENTS

Unified Family Court – Child Protection Investigation started to transition from the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office to the Department of Children and Families in July 2023 and the transition was complete in August 2023. Shelter hearings were starting to decrease at the beginning of 2023 due to the lead agency, Family Support Services, implementing robust intensive diversion services. There was a drastic decrease in shelter hearings when the Department of Children and Families took over Child Protection Investigation.

ACHIEVEMENTS

FAMILY

(1) NUMBER OF DOMESTIC RELATIONS CASES REVIEWED FOR HEARING READINESS

IN PASCO, 1,646

IN PINELLAS, 2,304 CASES WERE REVIEWED FOR HEARING BEFORE A GENERAL MAGISTRATE, AND, OF THESE, 1,006 WERE SET FOR HEARING, AND 1,298 WERE DEEMED NOT READY TO PROCEED.

(2) NUMBER OF TELEPHONE CALLS FIELDDED REGARDING PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

IN PASCO, 102 (CALL VOLUME DROPPED DUE TO PAPER-DRIVEN PROCESS THAT PROACTIVELY PROVIDES INFORMATION TO PARTIES BY MAIL.)

IN PINELLAS, 10,657

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

FAMILY (cont'd)

(3) NUMBER OF CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCES CALENDARED AND HEARD, AND NUMBER PROCEEDING TO FINAL HEARING AT CONFERENCE.

IN PASCO, 1,646 CASES WERE CALENDARED, RESULTING IN 985 FINAL JUDGEMENTS ENTERED. ADDITIONALLY, 242 CASES WERE DISMISSED FOR A TOTAL CLEARANCE OF 1,227 CASES; 433 CASES WERE SENT TO THE CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT FOR REMOVAL OF PENDING STATUS; 15 CASES WERE SENT TO THE FAMILY LAW JUDGES FOR FURTHER PROCEDURAL DIRECTIVE. CASE MANAGERS PREPARED 3,501 DRAFT ORDERS TO INCLUDE: TEMPORARY STANDING ORDERS, ORDERS TO ATTEND PARENT STABILIZATION COURSE, ORDERS ON CHILD SUPPORT AND ORDERS TO APPEAR FOR A CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE.

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)**FAMILY (cont'd)**

PASCO (cont'd) IN 2023, FAMILY LAW STAFF ADDRESSED A BACKLOG OF CASES LANGUISHING WITHOUT SERVICE OR ACTIVITY FOR 10 MONTHS. CASE MANAGERS PREPARED 305 NOTICES OF INTENT TO DISMISS, 577 NOTICES OF LACK OF PROSECUTION, AND 350 ORDERS TO DISMISS FOR LACK OF PROSECUTION. THIS RESULTED IN THE REMOVAL OF 1,232 LANGUISHING CASES FROM PENDING STATUS

PINELLAS - 761 CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCES WERE CALENDARED. FINAL JUDGMENT WAS ENTERED IN 522 CASES, NO CASES WERE RESOLVED PRIOR TO HEARING, AND 10 CASES WERE DISMISSED FOR A TOTAL CLEARANCE OF 532 CASES.

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

FAMILY (cont'd)

(4) DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RETURN HEARING STATISTICS FOR PINELLAS ONLY.

(1) DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES – 2,131

(a) FINAL JUDGMENT OF INJUNCTION GRANTED – 540

(b) REFERRALS TO GENERAL MAGISTRATE – 55

(c) FIRST COMPLIANCE HEARINGS SET – 69

**(d) BATTERER'S INTERVENTION PROGRAM (BIP)
ORDERED – 31**

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

FAMILY (cont'd)

(4) DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RETURN HEARING STATISTICS FOR PINELLAS ONLY (cont'd).

(2) TOTAL DATING VIOLENCE INJUNCTIONS (PINELLAS ONLY) – 222

(a) FINAL JUDGMENT OF INJUNCTION GRANTED – 62

(b) REFERRALS TO GENERAL MAGISTRATE – 0

(c) FIRST COMPLIANCE HEARINGS SET – 3

(d) BIP ORDERED – 3

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

FAMILY (cont'd)

(4) DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RETURN HEARING STATISTICS FOR PINELLAS ONLY (cont'd).

(3) TOTAL SEXUAL VIOLENCE INJUNCTIONS (PINELLAS ONLY) – 67

(a) FINAL JUDGMENTS OF INJUNCTION GRANTED – 13

(b) REFERRALS TO GENERAL MAGISTRATE – 0

(c) FIRST COMPLIANCE HEARINGS SET – 0

(d) BIP ORDERED – 0

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

FAMILY (cont'd)

(4) DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RETURN HEARING STATISTICS FOR PINELLAS ONLY (cont'd).

(4) TOTAL REPEAT VIOLENCE INJUNCTIONS (PINELLAS ONLY) – 208

(a) FINAL JUDGMENT OF INJUNCTION GRANTED – 47

(b) REFERRALS TO GENERAL MAGISTRATE – 0

(c) FIRST COMPLIANCE HEARINGS SET – 1

(d) BIP ORDERED – 0

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

FAMILY (cont'd)

(4) DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RETURN HEARING STATISTICS FOR PINELLAS ONLY (cont'd).

5) TOTAL STALKING INJUNCTIONS (PINELLAS ONLY) – 818

(a) FINAL JUDGMENT OF INJUNCTION GRANTED – 141

(b) REFERRALS TO GENERAL MAGISTRATE – 0

(c) FIRST COMPLIANCE HEARINGS SET – 15

(d) BIP ORDERED – 0

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

FAMILY (cont'd)

PASCO – WHILE THERE ARE NO CASE MANAGERS SPECIFICALLY ASSIGNED TO CIVIL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN PASCO COUNTY, STAFF REVIEWED 1,523 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES AND ASSISTED IN SETTING 49 ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE HEARINGS FOR NON-COMPLIANCE AND STAFF ATTENDED NO HEARINGS ON CASES IDENTIFIED FOR POSSIBLE ASSIGNMENT TO THE UNIFIED FAMILY COURT. IN 2023, FAMILY LAW CASE MANAGERS REVIEWED DV RETURN HEARING DOCKETS TO IDENTIFY RELATED CASES WITH EXISTING ORDERS FOR NO CONTACT, CHILD SUPPORT, TIME-SHARING, ETC. STAFF PROVIDED THE SECTION JUDGES WITH 1,065 RELATED CASES WORKSHEETS.

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

UNIFIED FAMILY COURT

(1) NUMBER OF SHELTER HEARINGS ATTENDED AT WHICH SERVICE
REFERRALS WERE PROVIDED

PASCO – 98

PINELLAS – 268

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

UNIFIED FAMILY COURT

(2) NUMBER OF FAMILIES LINKED TO COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES

PASCO – 98 REFERRALS

PINELLAS – 604 FAMILIES PROVIDED RESOURCES*

* Florida Statute Chapter 985.037(3) Punishment of contempt of court; alternative sanctions – *Upon determining that a child has committed direct contempt of court or indirect contempt of a valid court order, the court may immediately request the alternative sanctions coordinator to recommend the most appropriate available **alternative sanction** and shall order the child to perform up to 50 hours of community-service manual labor or similar alternative sanction.*

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

UNIFIED FAMILY COURT (cont'd)

(3) NUMBER OF CASES RESEARCHED FOR POSSIBLE CROSSOVER

PASCO – 6,317 CASES

PINELLAS – 12,894 CASES

(4) NUMBER OF MASTER CASES CREATED

PASCO – 96 FAMILIES WITH 142 CASES REASSIGNED

PINELLAS – 40 FAMILIES

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

UNIFIED FAMILY COURT (cont'd)

(5) NUMBER OF JUVENILE ALTERNATIVE SANCTIONS RECOMMEN-
DATIONS MADE

PASCO – N/A

PINELLAS – 5 ALTERNATIVE SANCTION RECOMMEN-
DATIONS AND 272 JUDICIAL REFERRALS WITH 297 ISSUES.

(6) NUMBER OF JUVENILE RELEASE REQUESTS REVIEWED

PASCO – N/A

PINELLAS – 51

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

UNIFIED FAMILY COURT (cont'd)

(7) NUMBER OF PETITIONS FOR TEMPORARY CUSTODY HEARINGS
HELD

PASCO – N/A

PINELLAS – 101

(8) NUMBER OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HEARINGS HELD

PASCO – N/A

PINELLAS – 52

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

UNIFIED FAMILY COURT (cont'd)

(7) NUMBER OF OTHER FD HEARINGS HELD

PASCO – N/A

PINELLAS – 187

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

CRIMINAL CALENDARING

(1) NUMBER OF FELONY DIVISION REASSIGNMENTS MADE

PASCO – 390

PINELLAS – 601

(2) NUMBER OF MISDEMEANOR DIVISION REASSIGNMENTS MADE

PASCO – 56

PINELLAS – 1,155

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

CRIMINAL CALENDARING (cont'd)

(3) NUMBER OF SANITY/COMPETENCY DOCTORS APPOINTED

PASCO – 479 ORDERS APPOINTING 502 DOCTORS

PINELLAS – 147

(4) NUMBER OF DOCTOR REPORTS SEALED AND FILED

PASCO – N/A

PINELLAS – 417

PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

GENERAL MAGISTRATES AND HEARING OFFICERS 2023

OVERVIEW

The Sixth Judicial Circuit utilizes general magistrates and hearing officers in multiple court divisions, including family, child support enforcement, dependency, probate/guardianship, and civil traffic, to assist the courts in efficiently and effectively administering justice. These quasi-judicial officers provide invaluable assistance in speeding up the timeliness of case processing.

CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT HEARING OFFICERS

Child support enforcement hearing officers are attorneys appointed by the chief judge to conduct proceedings where the department of revenue is a party in a child support action. The child support hearing officers hear establishment of support, enforcement of child support matters and other post-judgment matters. The hearing officers have the authority to issue process, administer oaths, require the production of documents and conduct hearings for the purpose of taking evidence. The hearing officer takes testimony and establishes a record. The hearing officer evaluates the evidence and promptly makes a recommended order to the court setting forth findings of fact. Upon receipt of a recommended order, the court generally enters the order promptly.



Child Support Hearing Officer Joseph Flannery

GUARDIANSHIP MAGISTRATES

Guardianship magistrates assist the probate judges (who also preside over guardianship cases) by conducting incapacity hearings, restoration hearings, and reviewing the mandatory annual reports submitted by guardians. The court also employs general magistrates to hear all petitions for involuntary placement under Florida's mental health act, commonly known as the Baker Act. Hearings are conducted weekly at six receiving facilities in Pinellas County and four in Pasco. Magistrates in both counties hear involuntary placement hearings under Chapter 397 (drug or alcohol abuse). Staff to the probate magistrates includes a non-attorney guardianship monitor in each county. Monitors investigate the well-being of the ward and the responsible distribution of the ward's assets upon order of the court.



Guardianship Magistrate Bama Tearney

FAMILY GENERAL MAGISTRATES

Family general magistrates conduct any proceeding referred to them by a family law judge. The general magistrate is empowered to administer oaths and conduct hearings, which may include the taking of evidence. The majority of the referrals involve pro se (self-represented) litigants who are seeking dissolution of marriage. The general magistrates also hear issues relating to modification and enforcement, parenting time, equitable distribution, alimony, child support, and paternity. Since many of these hearings involve pro se litigants, a greater expenditure of time is required to explain court procedure. After conducting a full hearing, the general magistrate makes findings of fact, conclusions of law, and recommendations for relief for the review of the judge. If there are no objections to the general magistrate's report, the court enters an order adopting the recommended relief.



Alex Mabery, General Magistrate in the Family Division

DEPENDENCY GENERAL MAGISTRATES

Dependency general magistrates provide direct assistance to the Unified Family Court judges by hearing judicial reviews, permanency reviews, status checks, and various motions throughout the life of the dependency proceedings. The purpose of judicial reviews is two-fold: to review the placement and status of a child or children, and to monitor the progress of the case plan of the parent or parents who are working on meeting the requirements that are imposed by the Department of Children & Families and approved by the court, so they can be successfully reunified with their child or children, or to decide whether a change of permanency goal is needed. Permanency review hearings are to address the status of the permanency goals as established by the case plan and court order.

DEPENDENCY GENERAL MAGISTRATES (cont'd)

Changes of custody matters and judicial review hearings for 17-year-old teens are also held (to ensure DCF is providing independent living trainings). Dependency general magistrates also conduct post termination of parental rights permanency reviews to ensure adoptions are progressing in a timely manner. The dependency general magistrates make findings of fact, conclusions of law and provide recommendations to the court, which are entered by the court as an order, if there are no exceptions filed by any party.



General Magistrate Jennifer Paullin At A Dependency Hearing

CONTRACT CIVIL TRAFFIC INFRACTION HEARING OFFICERS

Contract civil traffic infraction hearing officers hear and consider all civil traffic infraction proceedings including parking ticket hearings. They preside over calendars scheduled in the evening at traffic court locations throughout Pasco and Pinellas counties. These contract hearing officers do not hear cases involving any accidents resulting in injury or death and they do not hear any criminal traffic offenses.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Sixth Judicial Circuit's general magistrates and hearing officers is:

- To make findings and recommend rulings by conducting judicial reviews, evidentiary hearings, temporary hearings, pre-trial matters, post-judgment enforcement and status conferences, guardianship inventories, accountings and plans as directed by the court and
- To provide parties with an expedited forum for the resolution of legal matters while preserving their constitutional right to due process

GOALS

- (1) TO PROVIDE EFFICIENT, EXPEDITIOUS RESOLUTION OF CASES
WITHOUT SACRIFICING DUE PROCESS
- (2) TO PROVIDE MORE TIMELY COURT ACCESS TO LITIGANTS
- (3) TO ASSIST THE JUDGES IN DISPOSING OF EVER-INCREASING COURT
CASELOADS
- (4) TO ASSIST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF DIVISIONAL POLICY AND
PROCEDURE
- (5) TO PROVIDE SAFEGUARDS TO CITIZENS, WHO THROUGH ILLNESS
AND INCAPACITY ARE UNDER THE COURT'S SUPERVISION
(GUARDIANSHIP/PROBATE)

DEVELOPMENTS

The Dependency General Magistrates have been able to conduct more hearings on contested matters and hearings on cases needing more oversight due to the decrease in the scheduled judicial reviews.

ACHIEVEMENTS

CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

(1) NUMBER OF HEARINGS SCHEDULED AND HELD BY TYPE, NUMBER OF RECOMMENDED ORDERS SIGNED

ESTABLISHMENT CASES

**PASCO: 313 HEARINGS SCHEDULED, 278 HELD AND
256 RECOMMENDED ORDERS SIGNED**

**PINELLAS: 934 HEARINGS SCHEDULED, 841 HELD AND
AND 813 RECOMMENDED ORDERS SIGNED**

MODIFICATION CASES

**PASCO: 105 HEARINGS SCHEDULED, 97 HELD AND 94
RECOMMENDED ORDERS SIGNED**

**PINELLAS: 551 HEARINGS SCHEDULED, 497 HELD,
AND 494 RECOMMENDED ORDERS SIGNED**

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT (cont'd)

(1) NUMBER OF HEARINGS SCHEDULED AND HELD BY TYPE, NUMBER OF RECOMMENDED ORDERS SIGNED (cont'd)

ENFORCEMENT CASES

**PASCO: 859 HEARINGS SCHEDULED, 801 HELD
AND 708 RECOMMENDED ORDERS SIGNED**

**PINELLAS: 3,192 HEARINGS SCHEDULED, 2,965 HELD
AND 2,878 RECOMMENDED ORDERS SIGNED**

**OTHER CASES (LIENS, RESPONDENTS' MOTIONS,
ETC.): PASCO: 257 HEARINGS SCHEDULED, 253 HELD
AND 251 RECOMMENDED ORDERS SIGNED; PINELLAS:
1,489 HEARINGS SCHEDULED, 1,425 HELD AND 1,394
RECOMMENDED ORDERS SIGNED**

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

GUARDIANSHIP AND PROBATE (INCLUDES GUARDIANSHIP MONITORING)

(1) NUMBER OF HEARINGS CONDUCTED (ALL PINELLAS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

- (a) INCAPACITY/GUARDIAN ADVOCATES/EMERGENCY TEMPORARY
GUARDIANSHIPS – 376**
- (b) RESTORATIONS – 14 HEARINGS, 2 ORDERS WITHOUT A HEARING**
- (c) MARCHMAN ACT (ASSESSMENT & TREATMENT SERVICES
HEARINGS) – PASCO: 117; PINELLAS: 63**
- (d) MARCHMAN PICKUP ORDERS/DENIALS – 92**
- (e) BAKER ACT HEARINGS – PASCO: 3,378; PINELLAS: 4,621 PETITIONS
FILED; 208 HEARINGS AND 1429 ORDERS WITHOUT HEARINGS
(IN 2023 FACILITIES BEGAN FILING NOTICES OF WITHDRAWALS
FOR PATIENTS DISCHARGED OR VOLUNTARY)**

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

**GUARDIANSHIP AND PROBATE
(INCLUDES GUARDIANSHIP MONITORING) (cont'd)**

**(1) NUMBER OF HEARINGS CONDUCTED (ALL PINELLAS
UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED) (cont'd)**

(f) WRITS – 62 ORDERS WITHOUT A HEARING

(g) FIREARMS – 577

(h) PROTECTIVE SERVICES PETITIONS (CHAPTER 415) – 2

**(i) ANNUAL RESIDENTIAL SERVICES REVIEWS
(CHAPTER 393) – 12**

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

**GUARDIANSHIP AND PROBATE
(INCLUDES GUARDIANSHIP MONITORING) (cont'd)**

**(1) NUMBER OF HEARINGS CONDUCTED (ALL PINELLAS
UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED) (cont'd)**

**(j) ORDER TO PRODUCE – 129 HEARINGS AND 704 ORDERS
WITHOUT A HEARING**

(k) ATTORNEY & GUARDIAN FEE ORDER – 1,076

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)**GUARDIANSHIP AND PROBATE
(INCLUDES GUARDIANSHIP MONITORING) (cont'd)****(2) NUMBER OF GUARDIANSHIP INVENTORIES, ACCOUNTING AND
PLANS REVIEWED, NUMBER OF RESULTING HEARINGS**

THE PASCO COURT MONITOR REVIEWED 1,440 INVENTORIES, ACCOUNTINGS AND PLANS IN 2023. WHILE THE COURT MONITOR WILL RECOMMEND AND PREPARE APPROPRIATE NOTICE OF HEARING DOCUMENTS FOR THE COURT'S CONVENIENCE, THE JUDGES SET THEIR OWN HEARINGS SO THE NUMBER OF HEARINGS IS NOT RECORDED. SINCE COVID-19, EVERY EFFORT WAS MADE TO RESOLVE ISSUES WITHOUT SETTING HEARINGS UNLESS REQUIRED BY STATUTES.

PINELLAS HAD A TOTAL OF 4,650 AUDITS IN 2023 RESULTING IN ORDERS APPROVING OR DISAPPROVING, CHECKLISTS OR DISCHARGE. A TOTAL OF 704 ORDERS TO PRODUCE WITHOUT A HEARING WERE REVIEWED WITH 129 HEARINGS, AS INDICATED AT (1J) ABOVE.

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

GUARDIANSHIP AND PROBATE (INCLUDES GUARDIANSHIP MONITORING) (cont'd)

(3) NUMBER OF GUARDIANSHIP MONITOR INVESTIGATIONS COMPLETED AND NUMBER OF RESULTING HEARINGS HELD

PASCO - THERE WERE 85 ORDERS OR SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UTILIZING THE COURT MONITOR, RESULTING IN ONE KNOWN HEARING AND NO CHANGES OF GUARDIANS. EVERY EFFORT WAS MADE TO RESOLVE ISSUES WITHOU RESORTING TO HEARINGS, I.E., TELEPHONIC INTERVIEWS WITH PERSONS TO PROVIDE INSIGHT, PREPARATION OF FORENSIC ACCOUNTINGS AND REVIEWS TO REDUCE EXPOSURE TO WARDS AND GUARDIANS. THESE AUDITS WERE PERFORMED WITHOUT THE NEED OF AN ORDER APPOINTING MONITOR DUE TO VOLUNTARY COOPERATION AND ARE INCLUDED IN THE REVIEWS NOTED ABOVE. THERE WERE MULTIPLE ORDERS TO SHOW CAUSE AND ORDERS TO PRODUCE ISSUED TO RESOLVE SERIOUS DELINQUENCIES IN FILINGS WITH REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS SENT TO THE JUDGE.

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

**GUARDIANSHIP AND PROBATE
(INCLUDES GUARDIANSHIP MONITORING) (cont'd)**

**(3) NUMBER OF GUARDIANSHIP MONITOR INVESTIGATIONS
COMPLETED AND NUMBER OF RESULTING HEARINGS HELD
(cont'd)**

**PINELLAS: THERE WERE TWO ORDERS APPOINTING THE INSPECTOR
GENERAL, 26 ORDERS APPOINTING THE MONITOR, 30 INFORMAL
INVESTIGATIONS AND 323 BACKGROUND INVESTIGATIONS OF
PROPOSED GUARDIANS.**

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

**GUARDIANSHIP AND PROBATE
(INCLUDES GUARDIANSHIP MONITORING) (cont'd)**

**(4) NUMBER OF ATTORNEY AND GUARDIAN FEE PETITIONS
REVIEWED**

PASCO – THE PASCO COURT MONITOR REVIEWED 240 ATTORNEY FEE PETITIONS AND 80 GUARDIAN FEE PETITIONS RESULTING IN A REDUCTION OF FEES (SAVINGS TO THE WARDS) OF \$7,556.80 IN 2023. THE FEES WERE REDUCED DUE TO PROBLEMATIC, NON-COMPLIANT OR MATHEMATICALLY INSUFFICIENT BILLINGS BY ATTORNEYS AND GUARDIANS.

AS FOR PINELLAS, SEE NUMBER (1) ABOVE

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

GUARDIANSHIP AND PROBATE (INCLUDES GUARDIANSHIP MONITORING) (cont'd)

(5) NUMBER OF CREDIT AND CRIMINAL BACKGROUND INVESTIGATIONS REVIEWED

PASCO – THE PASCO COURT MONITOR REVIEWED 267
CRIMINAL BACKGROUND INVESTIGATIONS, DCF AND FDLE
REPORTS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COURT IN 2023.

PINELLAS – THE PINELLAS COURT MONITOR REVIEWED 269
BACKGROUND INVESTIGATIONS.

|

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

GENERAL MAGISTRATES – FAMILY AND DEPENDENCY

(1) NUMBER OF FAMILY HEARINGS CONDUCTED

PINELLAS – 814

PASCO – 2,328

(2) NUMBER OF DEPENDENCY JUDICIAL REVIEWS CONDUCTED

PINELLAS – 2,689

PASCO – N/A

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

CONTRACT CIVIL TRAFFIC INFRACTION HEARING OFFICERS (FISCAL YEAR 2023)

(1) NUMBER OF HEARINGS CONDUCTED

IN PINELLAS, CONTRACT CIVIL TRAFFIC INFRACTION HEARING OFFICERS CONDUCTED 262 TRAFFIC HEARING SESSIONS FOR A TOTAL OF 786 HOURS. MULTIPLE CASES WERE HEARD EACH SESSION.

IN PASCO, CONTRACT CIVIL TRAFFIC INFRACTION HEARING OFFICERS CONDUCTED 1,264 TRAFFIC HEARING SESSIONS FOR A TOTAL OF 72 HOURS. MULTIPLE CASES WERE HEARD EACH SESSION.

PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

JUVENILE DIVERSION SERVICES

2023

OVERVIEW

Youth who are new to the criminal justice system, and/or who have committed non-violent offenses, are provided a second chance through the circuit's juvenile arbitration program. Juveniles who are referred to this program and who successfully complete it either have adjudication of the offense withheld or they may earn a complete dismissal of their charges. Many also participate on a non-arrest diversionary basis (JAAP) whereby completion of the program avoids an arrest record. Acceptance into the program is contingent upon consent from the victims in the case.

The program's aims are to divert eligible juvenile offenders from formal court proceedings in order to reduce caseload and allow the court to concentrate its efforts on the most serious juvenile offenders. Another major goal of the program is to closely monitor juvenile progress and follow-through to prevent future offenses.

COMPONENTS

JUVENILE ARREST AVOIDANCE PROGRAM – DIRECT DIVERSION

The goal of the Juvenile Arrest Avoidance Program is to break the cycle of juvenile justice involvement and avoid an arrest record for youth who commit first time-misdemeanor offenses. The mission is to promote public health, expand juvenile justice diversion efforts, improve interagency communications in the interest of juveniles, gather reliable data for use in juvenile justice system planning, decrease juvenile detention use, and lower the incidence of Pinellas juveniles entering the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems.

A group of seven (7) key stakeholders in the criminal and juvenile justice arena in Pinellas County have come together in 2015 and entered into a new Memorandum of Understanding, which outlines each participating agencies' commitment and collaborative role in the JAAP/JAAP2/JAAP3-Direct Diversion programs. These collaborative partners include the State Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, Clerk's Office, Administrative Office of the Courts, Department of Juvenile Justice, Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, and Operation Par, Inc. Since that date there have been a few changes that need to be addressed. All 7 stakeholders are still present in 2023, however, Operation PAR is no longer located at the Pinellas County Juvenile Assessment Center, so the assessments that were conducted there have ceased.

COMPONENTS (cont'd)

JUVENILE ARBITRATION

Juvenile Arbitration is for first-time offenders. Upon referral to the program, a hearing is held and sanctions are assigned, which the juvenile must complete. Sanctions may include restitution, a letter of apology, an essay assignment, school attendance and behavior improvements, counseling assessment, community service, and/or educational classes. The program offers more than twenty (22) different classes and experiences, such as: Conflict Resolution, Drug Awareness, D.O.S.E., Alcohol & Tobacco Awareness, To Catch A Thief, a maximum-security jail tour, Judicial Education, Truancy-Related Law, Medical Examiner's class, Crime Scene Intervention, ACE, USF College Tour, Career Orientation, Removing Intoxicated Drivers, Controlling Abuse of Prescriptions, and the Ambassador program. Follow-up hearings are held at the end of six (6) to eight (8) weeks to determine if all requirements were successfully met.

COMPONENTS (cont'd)

JUVENILE ARBITRATION (cont'd)

A more rigorous component, the S.T.O.P. (Services and Treatment for Offender Prevention) Program, is similar in design but is geared for repeat misdemeanor offenders and third degree felony offenders (excluding offenses involving personal violence, use of a weapon or Grand Theft Auto). Additional sanctions include fifty (50) community service hours and mandatory weekly phone contact. The program lasts about one hundred and twenty (120) days and involves weekly call-ins and an additional mid-point hearing to assess juveniles' progress within the program.

Juvenile Drug Court is for juveniles who have been charged with misdemeanor or felony drug charges or who are assigned diversion but have exhibited substance abuse issues. Participants will be required to submit to drug assessment and random urinalysis. A hearing master conducts the initial hearing, and appropriate sanctions are applied. Hearings are held monthly or more often as needed to monitor the progress of participants. Juvenile Drug Court is offered in Pinellas County.

COMPONENTS (cont'd)

JUVENILE ARBITRATION (cont'd)

In Teen Court, the roles of clerk, bailiff, prosecuting and defense attorneys and jury are held by high school student volunteers. A Stetson University College of Law student or an assistant state attorney serves as the Teen Court judge. Upon conclusion of a trial, the teen defendant is sentenced to appropriate sanctions as described above. If using a grand jury format, the Teen Court jury will directly ask questions to the teen offender. Again, the jury deliberates and issues a Teen Court jury verdict.

Truancy Teen Court is a Teen Court program that provides early intervention through the Teen Court process for students that have established a pattern of non-attendance and unexcused absences (5-15 days). Truancy Teen Court operates in the same way as the standard Teen Court and hearings are held using the grand jury format. Truancy Teen Court is available in Pinellas County. Truancy Teen Court has been enhanced to include a Truancy Teen Court II program.

COMPONENTS (cont'd)

JUVENILE ARBITRATION (cont'd)

The A.I.M. program (At-Risk Intervention and Motivation) is a voluntary prevention program that provides education and community referrals for siblings of Juvenile Arbitration defendants, truants, siblings of DJJ-involved youth, or other at-risk youth in an effort to prevent participants from ever entering into the juvenile justice system. At first a summer program pilot, AIM has now been incorporated as a full year-long program. Juvenile Arbitration continues to give presentations to youth at community programs throughout the summer.

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide intervention, prevention, and diversion services to at-risk youth and juvenile offenders and to relieve overburdened juvenile courts by providing non-judicial dispositions of lesser juvenile offenses.



Alicia McLane, the Juvenile Diversion Program Coordinator, with her staff

GOALS

- (1) TO PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL ELIGIBLE FIRST-TIME MISDEMEANANT JUVENILES TO AVOID A JUVENILE RECORD.
- (2) TO PROVIDE AN EFFICIENT AND COST-EFFECTIVE DIVERSIONARY ALTERNATIVE TO FORMAL JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS THROUGH THE TEEN COURT PROGRAM.
- (3) TO HOLD JUVENILE OFFENDERS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS.
- (4) TO PROVIDE JUVENILE OFFENDERS WITH EDUCATIONAL CLASSES, COUNSELING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES, ENABLING THEM TO MAKE POSITIVE CHOICES.
- (5) TO CIRCUMVENT THE PROGRESSION OF INCREASED CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR AND TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM.
- (6) TO DECREASE JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER USE.

DEVELOPMENTS

Since its inception, the Sixth Judicial Circuit Juvenile Diversion Program has been at the forefront in developing and implementing unique and innovative direct diversion programs. It was thirteen years ago, in 2009, that a large collaborative effort in Pinellas County came together to address ways to break the cycle of juvenile justice involvement of the community's youth. It was in that year that the Juvenile Arrest Avoidance Project, now referred to as Juvenile Arrest Avoidance Program, or JAAP, began. With successful completion rates consistent over twelve years averaging 84% to 94%, recidivism rates consistently averaging between 2% to 7% and the continued strong collaborative, JAAP has a proven track record and consistent outcomes that have significantly addressed breaking the recidivist cycle early on – at the first misdemeanor offense. Since the inception of the Juvenile Arrest Avoidance Program in April 2009, over 8,600 juveniles have been diverted with civil citations.

DEVELOPMENTS (cont'd)

By 2023, in Pinellas County, the Juvenile Arbitration Program had returned to in-person hearings, classes, and follow-up hearings according to Court protocols and CDC guidelines. With the creation of innovative online programs in both 2020 and 2021, Juvenile Arbitration was able to offer opportunities to participate in diversion to families outside of Pinellas County. These online or “virtual” options allowed for increased program efficiency, safety, and improved outcomes.

In 2023, the Juvenile Arbitration Program, in collaboration with the Pinellas County School Board Prevention Office, continued its R.I.S.E. (Reassignment Intervention Services and Education) program. R.I.S.E. is an alternative to reassignment and reduction in out-of-school suspension for specific youth referred for drug-related infractions to school administration who do not qualify for FACE-IT. The R.I.S.E. program officially started in September/October of 2022 with the help of the Juvenile Drug Court component of the Juvenile Arbitration Program. The R.I.S.E program length can vary from 1-4 months based on the collaborative determination of the PCSB Prevention Office, treatment provider, and Juvenile Arbitration Program. Parental participation is mandatory. The number of RISE referrals has steadily increased – in 2022 11 cases and in 2023 37 cases were referred.

DEVELOPMENTS (cont'd)

The Juvenile Arbitration education classes were updated in 2022 with recent data, statistics, materials, and videos to be used online. Two classes received a complete revision – R.I.D. became Alcohol Awareness and Tobacco Dangers became Up in Smoke. The new Alcohol Awareness class has a speaker from M.A.D.D.(Mothers Against Drunk Driving), who talks to the assigned juveniles about the dangers of driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. For the Up in Smoke class, a speaker from Drug-Free America comes out to talk about the dangers of vaping and the THC variants that are widely popular now in grocery and convenience stores.

The Juvenile Arbitration staff ended 2023 with a few other ideas for 3 new classes to offer down the road. One of these new class ideas would replace the Medical Examiner's/Crime Scene Investigation class, and the other two would address an increase in the number of weapon-related offenses and resisting or fleeing and eluding charges we have been receiving lately. The replacement for Medical Examiners and resist/fleeing idea classes are in the research/design stage. The class that discusses the dangers of weapons is set to start in 2024 for the first class. Juvenile Arbitration is still in the process of re-opening other classes that were temporarily closed due to COVID-19. These classes (Youth Challenge, PAR, W.I.N, and the college tours) were in the works of re-opening towards the end of 2023, and staff will continue to work towards having all the classes return to the calendar. The tour of the Maximum Security jail was reopened and the first tour since COVID was offered in September 2023.

DEVELOPMENTS (cont'd)

In Pasco County, Juvenile Arbitration participants are offered a variety of counseling services depending on the needs of the juvenile. In 2023, various counseling agencies worked with the Juvenile Arbitration Program to provide services. Participants who reside in Pasco County are offered substance abuse prevention services, as well as counseling dealing with anger or violence, at no cost to them.

Also in 2023, the Pasco Juvenile Arbitration Program offered a total of 10 different educational classes, some of them involving hearing officers and Teen Court juries, which the juveniles participated in while going through the program. The classes focused on a wide range of subject matter and were selected to fit the needs of each particular juvenile.

The Juvenile Arbitration Program also continued to address truancy with participants of the Juvenile Diversion Program. The objective is to ensure that all juveniles are attending school daily. The program monitored the youths' attendance and required some students to make contact with their School Resource Officer weekly. If a youth is determined to have excessive unexcused absences, he or she was given an opportunity to achieve the acceptable attendance required to satisfy program conditions and earn a successful discharge from Juvenile Arbitration or Teen Court.

ACHIEVEMENTS

JUVENILE DIVERSION

(1) TOTAL YOUTHS PARTICIPATING – PINELLAS, 440; PASCO, 582

(2) SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION RATES – PINELLAS, 65 PERCENT;
PASCO, 79.2 PERCENT

(3) RECIDIVISM RATES – PINELLAS, 6 PERCENT; PASCO, 6 PERCENT

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

JUVENILE DIVERSION
(PINELLAS AND PASCO COUNTIES)

(1) TOTAL JUVENILE DIVERSION PARTICIPANTS

PINELLAS – 1,009

PASCO – 582

(2) SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION RATES

PINELLAS – 81%

PASCO – 79.2%

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

**JUVENILE DIVERSION
(PINELLAS AND PASCO COUNTIES)
(cont'd)**

(3) REFERRAL BREAKDOWN BY PROGRAM

JUVENILE ARBITRATION

PINELLAS (TEEN COURT) – 24

PASCO – 264

STOP

PINELLAS – 54

PASCO – 74

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

**JUVENILE DIVERSION
(PINELLAS AND PASCO COUNTIES)
(cont'd)**

(3) REFERRAL BREAKDOWN BY PROGRAM (cont'd)

JUVENILE DIVERSION DRUG COURT

PINELLAS – 85

PASCO – 104

TEEN COURT

PINELLAS – 225

PASCO – 140

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

JUVENILE DIVERSION
(PINELLAS AND PASCO COUNTIES)
(cont'd)

(3) REFERRAL BREAKDOWN BY PROGRAM (cont'd)

TRUANCY TEEN COURT

PINELLAS – 167

PASCO – N/A

AIM

PINELLAS – 454

PASCO – N/A

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

JUVENILE DIVERSION
(PINELLAS AND PASCO COUNTIES)
(cont'd)

(4) RECIDIVISM RATES – JUVENILE ARBITRATION

PINELLAS – 7%

PASCO – 6%

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

NUMBER OF JUVENILES REFERRED BY JUVENILE ARBITRATION
TO OUTSIDE COUNSELING SERVICES, FOLLOWED BY
THE PERCENTAGE COMPLETING THESE SERVICES

PINELLAS COUNTY

REFERRED TO OUTSIDE COUNSELING – 237

PERCENTAGE COMPLETING – 61%

PASCO COUNTY

REFERRED TO OUTSIDE COUNSELING – 229

PERCENTAGE COMPLETING – 71.7%

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

NUMBER OF COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS SERVED BY JUVENILE
DIVERSION PARTICIPANTS

PINELLAS – APPROXIMATELY 35,000

PASCO – APPROXIMATELY 11,957

NUMBER OF STUDENT VOLUNTEERS PARTICIPATING IN TEEN COURT

PINELLAS – 200

PASCO – 151

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

TEEN TRUANCY PROGRAM: PERCENTAGE OF TRUANCY REDUCTION
FOR THOSE WHO SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED (PINELLAS ONLY) – 100%

NUMBER OF AIM PARTICIPANTS (PINELLAS ONLY) – 454

PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

PINELLAS COUNTY LAW LIBRARY

2023

OVERVIEW

The Pinellas County law libraries have been providing access to legal information necessary for the effective functioning of the justice system since 1950. Today, the remaining law library is administered by court administration for the Sixth Judicial Circuit. The chief judge consults with the law library board of trustees with respect to law library services, budget and planning. The law library provides access to legal research resources for the residents of Pinellas County at its location in the Fred G Minnis Sr. Law Library in the old historic courthouse in Clearwater. Library patrons include attorneys, judges, paralegals, court reporters, students, law clerks, court and county staff, the business community, and the general public. Statistics demonstrate that the general public is a major user and receives the most service from law library staff. The law library strives to provide equal access to the courts through a strong collection of legal materials in print and electronic format to better serve all of the citizens of Pinellas County.

OVERVIEW (cont'd)

The law library collection development policy follows the county law library standards approved by the American Association of Law Libraries. Holding the line on the law library collection expenditures during a period when costs are escalating up to 40 percent annually presents challenges.



Law Library Director Michelle Howard

MISSION STATEMENT

The Pinellas County Law Library provides access to timely, reliable and accurate legal information in a format that can be understood and used by the greatest number of citizens.

GOALS

- (1) PROMOTE TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM BY PROVIDING AN ACCESS POINT FOR EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER THE LAW
- (2) PROVIDE ACCESS TO THOSE SOURCES OF LEGAL INFORMATION THAT CAN ASSIST ANY INTERESTED CITIZEN OF PINELLAS COUNTY TO DETERMINE THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
- (3) SELECT AND MAINTAIN THE COLLECTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COUNTY LAW LIBRARY STANDARDS OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF LAW LIBRARIES

ACHIEVEMENTS

- (1) THE LAW LIBRARY SERVED AN AVERAGE OF 24 WALK-IN PATRONS AND 7 PHONE INQUIRIES PER WEEK.
- (2) THE GENERAL PUBLIC REPRESENTED 72% OF PATRONS SERVED.
- (3) FOUR PERCENT OF SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS WERE REFERRED TO OTHER SERVICES SUCH AS THE CLERK'S SELF- HELP CENTER AND THE LAWYER REFERRAL SERVICE.
- (4) THE LAW LIBRARY MAINTAINED ITS BUDGET IN A CLIMATE OF DECREASING REVENUE AND INCREASING COSTS, USING 96% OF ITS BUDGET.
- (5) THE LAW LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES CONTINUES TO ACTIVELY SEEK ADDITIONAL FUNDING SOURCES.

PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

2023

OVERVIEW

To help make mediation more accessible to all parties, the Sixth Judicial Circuit implemented a mediation model that provides paid family, dependency and county civil mediation services to certain parties. Family mediation involves many marriage dissolution issues, such as property division, shared or sole parental responsibility, child support, custody and visitation issues. Parties may choose a mediator privately and at an agreed-upon fee. Parties whose combined annual gross income is under \$100,000.00 may request court-provided mediation, and if deemed eligible, pay a \$60.00 or \$120.00 fee per party. Mediators are assigned from a state court system list of certified mediators for the circuit on a rotation basis. The contract mediator is paid by the state of Florida.

OVERVIEW (cont'd)

Dependency mediation involves cases in which there is an allegation of abuse, abandonment and/or neglect of a child by one or both parents. The goal of this type of mediation is to work out case plans that would help reunite families sooner. No fee is charged for dependency mediation.

Small claims cases, involving amounts between \$1 and \$8,000, may also be mediated. These issues include such matters as monies due, landlord-tenant disputes, breach of contract, consumer claims, etc. Small claims mediation is used mostly in the pre-trial phase of the case and is provided at no cost to the participants.

County civil cases, where the amount in dispute is \$8,000 to \$50,000, are also referred for mediation. These cases can involve issues such as negligence, monies due, real estate, breach of contract, etc. If a judge determines that the parties do not have the ability to pay for a private mediator, a court-provided mediator can be utilized for a fee of \$60 per party as long as the amount in dispute of the case is \$15,000 or less.

Model mediation noted below consists of those mediations in family, dependency or county that utilize court-contracted mediators at a state-subsidized, flat rate.

The mediation staff also help schedule non-model mediations with private mediators pursuant to policy covered by administrative order. These mediations are also tracked until disposition.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Sixth Judicial Circuit's mediation program is to provide the court with an alternative mechanism for the resolution of legal disputes leading to the early disposition of cases, and resulting in savings in time and costs to the litigants and to the court.



Katherin Chapman, the director of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Program, with Mediation and Arbitration Coordinator Ermadesa Avdia looking over her shoulder.

GOALS

- (1) TO EFFECTIVELY PROCESS ALL CASES REFERRED TO THE MEDIATION PROGRAM BY JUDGES IN A TIMELY MANNER AND ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH ALL FLORIDA STATUTES AND RULES, LOCAL RULES AND ADMINISTRATIVE ORDERS PERTAINING TO MEDIATION
- (2) TO ENSURE ACCESS TO COURT-PROVIDED MEDIATION FOR ELIGIBLE PERSONS REQUESTING IT
- (3) TO PROVIDE PROCEDURAL INFORMATION, INVOICES, AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR COURT-CONTRACTED MEDIATORS IN FAMILY, DEPENDENCY AND SMALL CLAIMS
- (4) TO MAINTAIN STATISTICS NECESSARY TO ENSURE OPERATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY
- (5) TO ASSIST PROSPECTIVE MEDIATORS IN ACHIEVING CERTIFICATION BY OFFERING MENTORING OPPORTUNITIES TO OBSERVE AND CO-MEDIATE CASES UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF FLORIDA SUPREME COURT CERTIFIED MEDIATORS

DEVELOPMENTS

Pasco County small claims pretrial sessions have returned to in-person, while Pinellas sessions continue by Zoom due to improved appearance rates of unrepresented parties as well as savings in time and travel. Settlement rates remain unaffected by using the video platform. The Circuit welcomed a new ADR Director upon the former's retirement after more than 30 years in the ADR Program. The ADR page of the Sixth Circuit's website was wholly redone, providing better ease of use and readability to members of the public. And the Sixth Circuit's Approved Arbitrator List was fully updated in order to supply the most accurate and up-to-date information to pro se parties and attorneys.

ACHIEVEMENTS

(1) NUMBER OF COURT ORDERED CASES – 5,887
(INCLUDES NON-MODEL MEDIATIONS AND ARBITRATIONS)

(2) NUMBER OF MEDIATION SESSIONS HELD – 3,743
(MODEL MEDIATIONS ONLY)

(3) SETTLEMENT RATES (FULL OR PARTIAL SETTLEMENT)

(A) COUNTY CIVIL – 47%

(B) FAMILY – 44%

(C) DEPENDENCY – 30%

(D) CIRCUIT CIVIL – 45%

(E) ARBITRATION – 77% (includes cases settled before and right after award)

(F) SMALL CLAIMS – 88%

ACHIEVEMENTS (cont'd)

(4) PERCENTAGE OF MEDIATION CASES ELIGIBLE FOR
COURT PROVIDED MEDIATION – 69%

(5) AMOUNT OF MODEL MEDIATION USER FEES, \$1 CIRCUIT FILING
FEE, AND \$15 COUNTY FILING FEE SUPPORTING MEDIATION
SERVICES COLLECTED (FISCAL YEAR 2022)

PASCO – \$55,421

PINELLAS – \$244,216