LORAIN COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

DOMESTIC RELATIONS & JUVENILE DIVISIONS



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Mission Statement

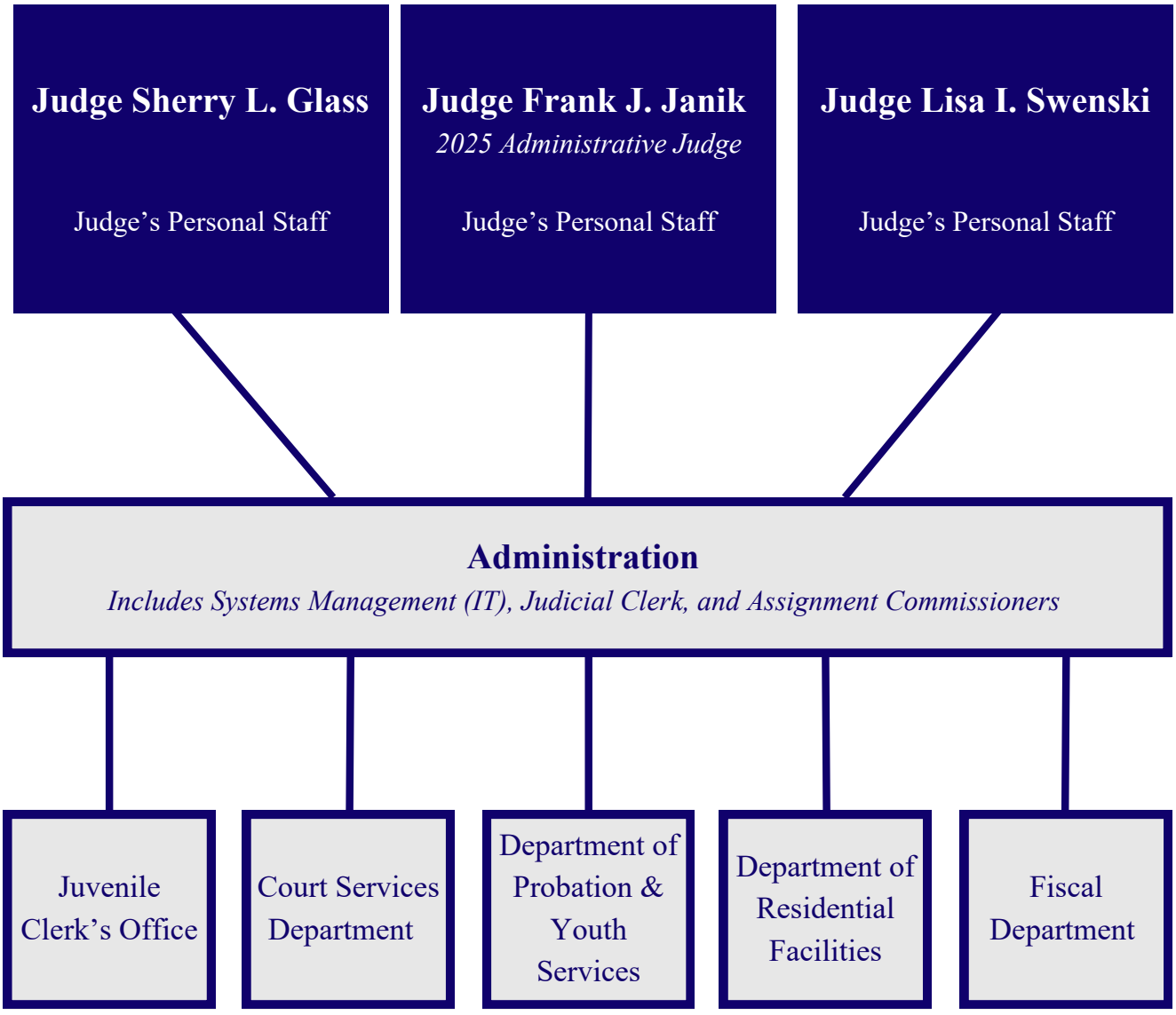
Lorain County Domestic Relations Court will serve the Citizens of Lorain County in a professional, dignified, and timely fashion. The Court will protect the public interest, make cost-effective use of public funds, engage appropriate community resources in providing services, and endeavor to provide for the safety of the public. The Court will strive to ensure that parties receive a just determination in every Court proceeding and enforcement of their constitutional and legal rights. Foremost, the Court will provide for the care, protection, and well-being of the children and families who come before it.

ORGANIZATION OF THE COURT

The Lorain County Domestic Relations Court is comprised of two divisions: the Domestic Relations Division and the Juvenile Division. The Court is led by three Judges, each supported by dedicated personal staff. The Judges are responsible for the overall direction, operation, and management of the Court.

In 2025, the Court employed an average of 162 staff, including judicial staff and administrative staff, in addition to employees throughout the Court's five departments.

The following organizational chart illustrates the structure of the Lorain County Domestic Relations Court. It reflects the leadership of the Judges and the administrative framework that supports the Court's daily operations.



JUDICIAL OVERVIEW



Judge
Sherry L. Glass



Judge
Frank J. Janik



Judge
Lisa I. Swenski

Judge Frank J. Janik, Judge Sherry L. Glass, and Judge Lisa I. Swenski serve as the Lorain County Domestic Relations and Juvenile Court Judges. They preside over a wide range of family and juvenile cases, including divorce, custody, child support, domestic violence, abuse, neglect, and delinquency. Their role is to ensure that hearings are fair, cases move efficiently, and families receive timely, well-reasoned decisions.

Each Judge is supported by personal staff, which may include an Administrative Secretary, Court Reporter, Bailiff, Staff Attorney, and Magistrates.

Magistrates are appointed judicial officers who conduct hearings and issue decisions, helping the Court manage its caseload. Each Judge has Magistrates assigned to their dockets to handle specific types of cases.

The Court also employs subject-matter Magistrates who serve all three Judges. These include an Intake Magistrate who is available 24/7 for juvenile detention admissions and related hearings; two IV-D Magistrates who handle paternity and child support matters; and a Domestic Violence Magistrate, who was added in 2025 due to the growing number of domestic violence-related filings.

Together, the Judges and Magistrates ensure that Lorain County families and children receive fair, timely, and well-supported access to justice.

Domestic Relations Court Case Types	Juvenile Court Case Types
Marriage Dissolution	Juvenile Delinquency, Traffic, and Unruly
Divorce	Juvenile Civil Protection Orders
Annulment	Judicial Bypass
Legal Separation	Consent to Marry
Domestic Violence Civil Protection Order	Permanent Surrender for Adoption
Custody	Child Abuse, Neglect, Dependency
Visitation	Custody
Child Support	Visitation
	Child Support

ADMINISTRATION

Emily Kirsch, Court Administrator

Dominic Gentile, Deputy Court Administrator / Legal Director

Kristen Richardson, Deputy Court Administrator / Fiscal Director

Administration oversees all Court operations, except for the Judges and their personal staff. In 2025, the Administrative Team included a Court Administrator and two Deputy Court Administrators.

Core responsibilities include personnel management / human resource functions, fiscal and budget oversight, facilities management, information systems, and caseflow and program development across Court departments. In 2025, the Administrative Team onboarded 33 new hires and 13 internal staff who were promoted or transferred to new positions. A total of 10 staff retired in 2025.

The Court Administrator oversees all the departments within the Court, as well as the Court Magistrates, and oversees caseflow management and related systems. Administration provides legal oversight to ensure compliance with the law and manages all fiscal operations. Both Deputy Court Administrators serve in the Administrator's absence when needed.

Additional departments, including Systems Management (IT), the Judicial Clerk, and other administrative roles, are also part of Administration.

SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT

The Systems Department (IT) provides network and desktop support to all Court employees at 5 separate locations across Elyria, Ohio. IT is responsible for the Court's computer hardware, software, intranet, website, and other related systems. In 2025, two projects included launching automated payroll and updates to the case management systems:

TimeClock Plus (TCP)

In 2025, the Court implemented TCP to modernize timekeeping for payroll purposes. The system was gradually rolled out over six pay periods. TCP improved efficiency by automating leave tracking, increasing employee access to information, enhancing supervisor oversight, and reducing administrative workload.

Case Management Systems

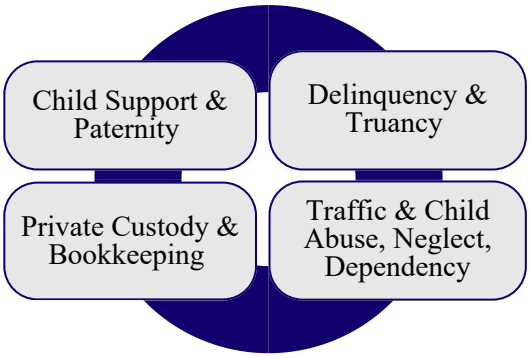
The Court continued its efforts to upgrade and modernize its case management systems. The Domestic Relations Division transitioned to a new system that includes e-filing, improving overall efficiency. The Juvenile Division also expanded its e-filing capabilities, increasing the number of case types and filings that can now be submitted electronically.

JUVENILE CLERK'S OFFICE

Erika Sugarman, Chief Deputy Clerk

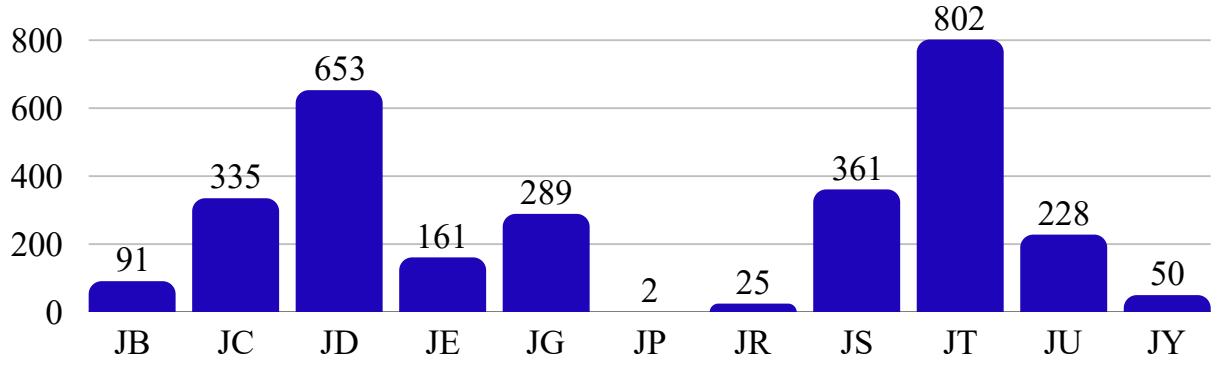
In Lorain County, the Administrative Judge serves as the Ex-Officio Clerk of the Juvenile Court, with the Clerk's Office located in Room 110 of the Justice Center. The office handles all matters under Juvenile Court jurisdiction, including delinquency, traffic, paternity, child support, custody for unmarried parents, protection orders, abuse/neglect cases, judicial bypasses, and powers of attorney. Clerks support court staff and the public by providing legal information and customer service.

Each clerk has a specialized area of expertise, and each team covers a specified area of work:



2025 JUVENILE COURT FILINGS

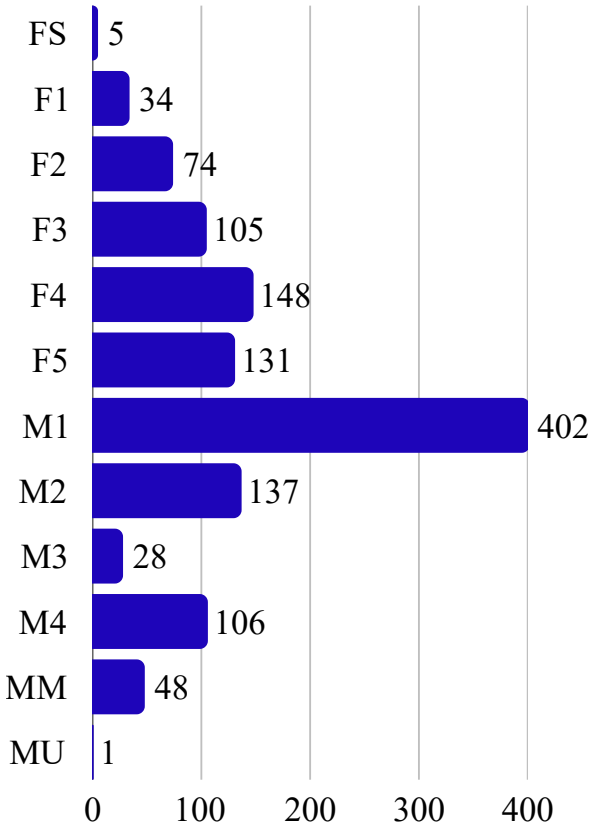
JB	Paternity Establishment	91
JC	Abuse, Neglect, Dependency	335
JD	Delinquency	653
JE	Contributing to Delinquency of a Minor	161
JG	Private Custody / Visitation (Unwed Parents)	289
JP	Permanent Custody	2
JR	Grandparent Power of Attorney	25
JS	Child Support Establishment	361
JT	Juvenile Traffic	802
JU	Juvenile Unruly / Truancy	228
JY	Juvenile Civil Protection Order	50



2025 DELINQUENCY COURT FILINGS

Top Felony Charges		Top Misdemeanor Charges
Felonious Assault (37)	1	Assault (146)
Aggravated Riot (35)	2	Domestic Violence (111)
Receiving Stolen Property (32)	3	Obstructing Official Business (68)
Rape (20)	4	Disorderly Conduct (64)
Assault (19) Breaking & Entering (19) Vandalism (19)	5	Criminal Damaging or Endangering (50)

Number of Charges by Offense Level in 2025

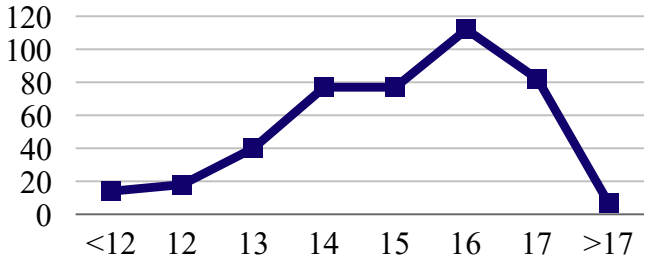


**FS: Felony Special represents egregious offenses such as murder, attempted murder, and aggravated murder*

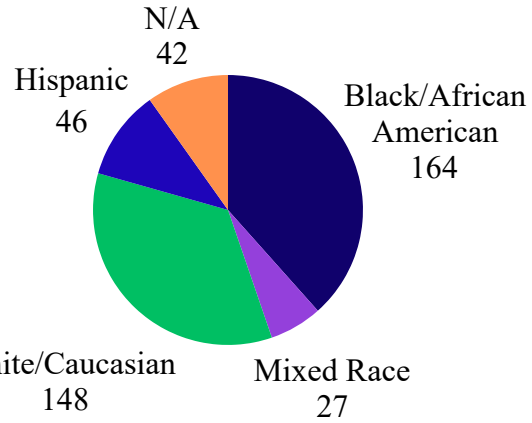
Youth Demographics

A juvenile may have multiple Complaints filed in a year. In 2025, **427** youth had at least one Complaint filed, resulting in a total of 648 Complaints. The following is the demographic information for the 427 youth:

AGE



RACE



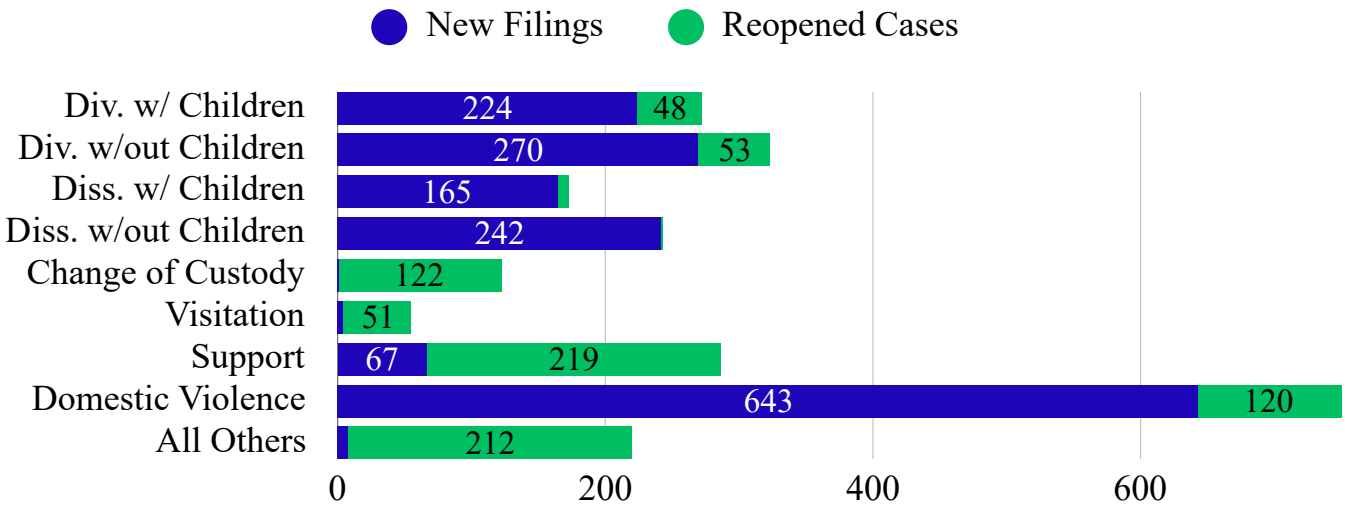
2025 DOMESTIC RELATIONS COURT CASE FILINGS

All Domestic Relations cases are filed with the Clerk of Court's Office, run by Lorain County Clerk of Court Tom Orlando. Domestic Relations clerks handle cases for individuals ending their marriage through divorce, dissolution, annulment, or legal separation. They also process cases involving visitation, custody, child support, and spousal support. The Court also handles adult Domestic Violence Civil Protection Order requests.

At the end of 2025, the Clerk's Office implemented a new case management system, CourtView 3, which includes e-filing services. This system allows attorneys, the public, and the Court to submit documents electronically, resulting in faster processing times, improved access to case information, and greater overall efficiency and convenience.

New Filings	Type of Filing	Reopened Cases
224	Divorce w/ Children	48
270	Divorce w/out Children	53
165	Dissolution w/ Children	8
242	Dissolution w/out Children	1
1	Change of Custody	122
4	Visitation	51
67	Support	219
643	Domestic Violence	120
8	All Others	212
1624	**Total**	834

A **New Filing** is the first time a case or issue is brought before the Domestic Relations Court. If a party later asks for additional orders after the initial ruling, it is recorded as a **Reopened Case.**



DEPARTMENT OF COURT SERVICES

Jessica Alvis, Director of Court Services

The **Court Services Department** provides several support services for families involved in custody and visitation matters. These include home inspections, investigations, mediation, and supervised visitation, and the Seminar for Separating Parents. Services may be ordered by the Court or requested when parties cannot reach an agreement.



An Investigation requires the Court Services Specialist to interview parties to the case, gather background information, and submit a detailed report with recommendations to the Court.



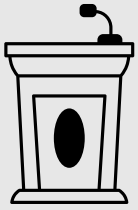
A Home Inspection involves a Court Services Specialist examining a party's home and property for safety or environmental hazards and submitting a written report to the Court.



Mediation is a confidential process in which a neutral mediator helps parties communicate and reach mutually acceptable agreements.

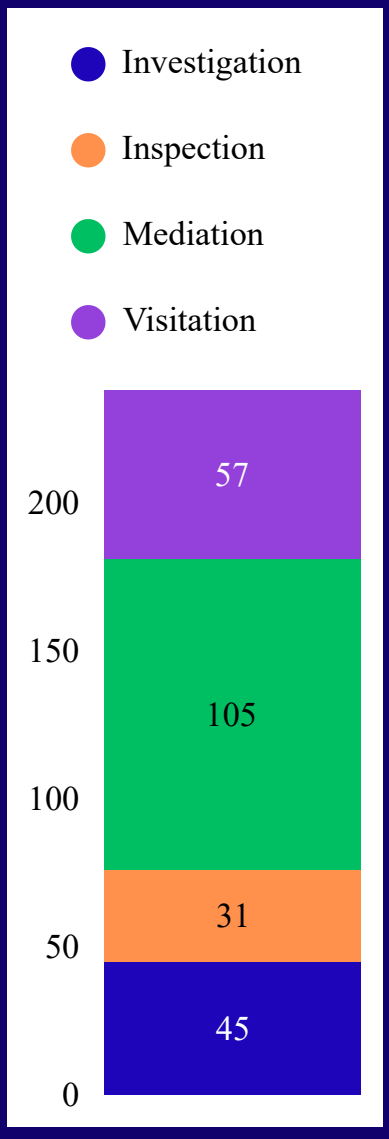


Supervised Visitation involves a Court Services Specialist overseeing parent-child visits, monitoring interactions, supporting safe exchanges, and reporting observations to the Court.



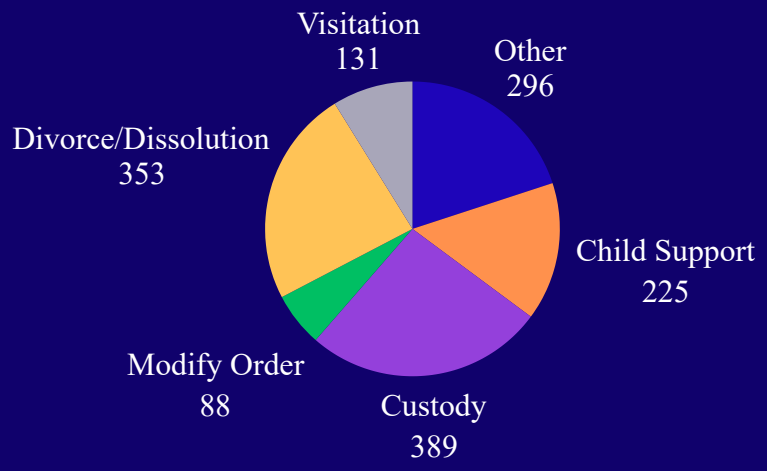
The Seminar for Separating Parents is a required program that provides legal information from Judge Frank J. Janik and support from a Social Worker to parents or parties seeking custody or visitation during separation. In 2025, **259 litigants** completed the Seminar for Separating Parents.

The figures below show the number of cases referred for each service. Visitation cases often include multiple visits, so 57 cases resulted in more than 200 scheduled visits. Investigations typically involve both parties, meaning the 45 cases resulted in nearly twice as many individual investigations.



In-Person Help Center

In its second full year, the Help Center continued to assist self-represented individuals by providing information to help them navigate court processes for divorce, dissolution, legal separation, protection orders, custody, visitation, and child support, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. In 2025, the Help Center assisted approximately **1,482 individuals**, with the following case types:



Virtual Self-Help Center (VSHC)

The Court launched its online Virtual Self-Help Center in July 2025 in partnership with Ohio Legal Help. The VSHC helps litigants understand and navigate the court system in cases such as divorce, custody, and child support. The VSHC is available 24/7 and allows users to draft, edit, save, and complete court forms on their mobile phones, tablets, or computers. It also provides local information, guidance on filing documents, and what to expect at court.

Domestic Support

The Domestic Support Department provides judicial and clerical services for the Lorain County CSEA for child support cases such as establishment, modification, and enforcement. Federal IV-D contracts fund much of the unit's operations, including portions of salaries and fringe benefits for 17 staff members. In 2025, Domestic Support conducted **7,913 hearings.** Contempt of Court actions—cases seeking to enforce orders and secure owed payments—were the largest share, totaling **5,002 hearings**.

Voices for Children

Voices for Children (VFC) is part of the national CASA-GAL Program, with volunteers advocating for neglected and dependent children in court. VFC recruits, trains, and supports volunteers with grant funds (VOCA & SVAA) and general fund dollars. Volunteers complete a background check, interview, and 30 hours of training before taking a case, then complete 12 hours of annual continuing education. For each case, volunteers investigate a child's circumstances and provide recommendations to the Court. The Voices for Children Board, a 501(C)(3) organization, supports the Court's program with fundraising and outreach.

VFC in 2025

125
Active Volunteers

169
Cases Assigned to Volunteers

333
Children Served on Assigned Cases

DEPARTMENT OF PROBATION & YOUTH SERVICES

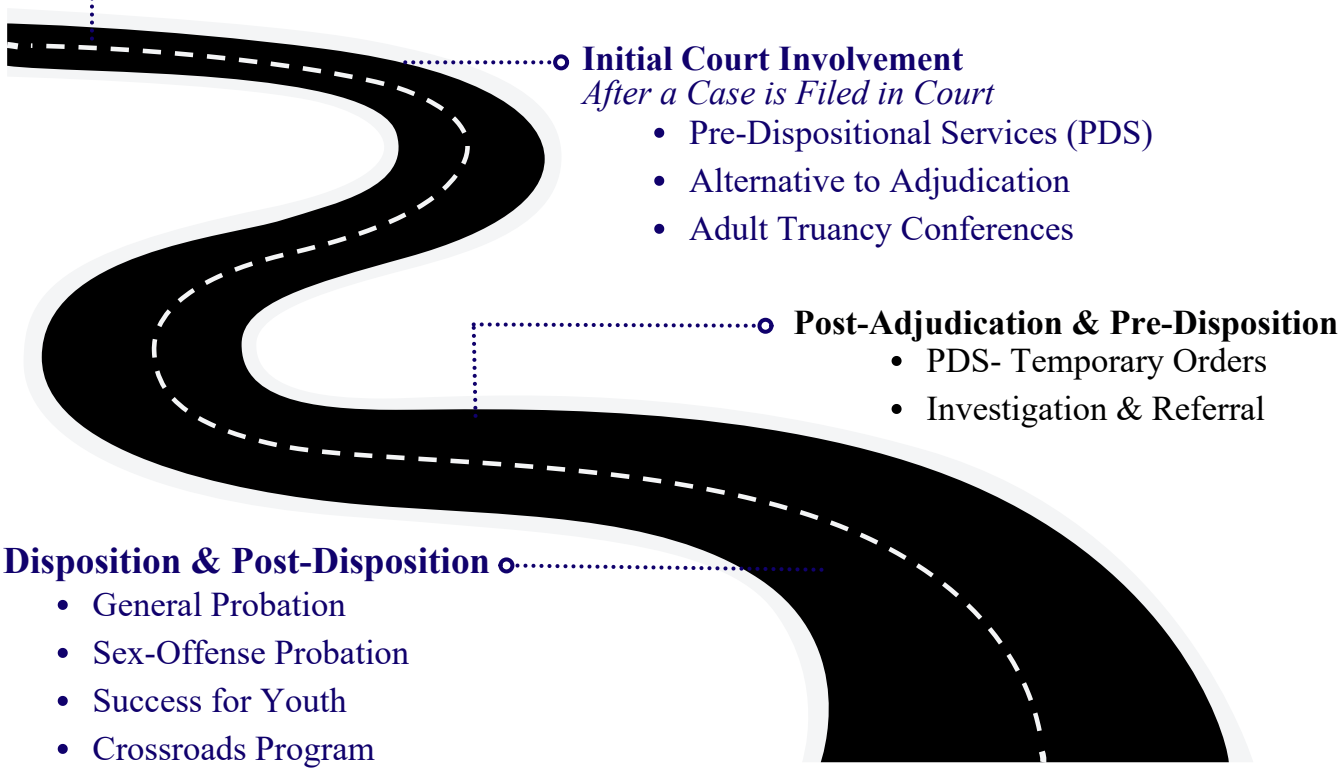
Sarah Tremont, Chief Probation Officer

The Department of Probation and Youth Services supports youth and families referred by the Court, working to reduce recidivism and enhance public safety. Youth may be referred for status offenses, misdemeanors, or felonies. Staff use evidence-based practices—including Motivational Interviewing and Effective Practices in Community Supervision (EPICS)—to promote behavioral change, accountability, and compliance with court orders.

The Court partners with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Ohio Department of Youth Services to align services with best practices. As a JDAI and Ohio Probation Transformation site, staff receive ongoing specialized training. Collaboration is essential to the department's approach; through the Reimagining Juvenile Justice (RJJ) curriculum, the Court strengthens cross-system partnerships to support long-term youth success.

2025 Probation Programs & Services

Prevention to Post-Disposition



PREVENTION & DIVERSION

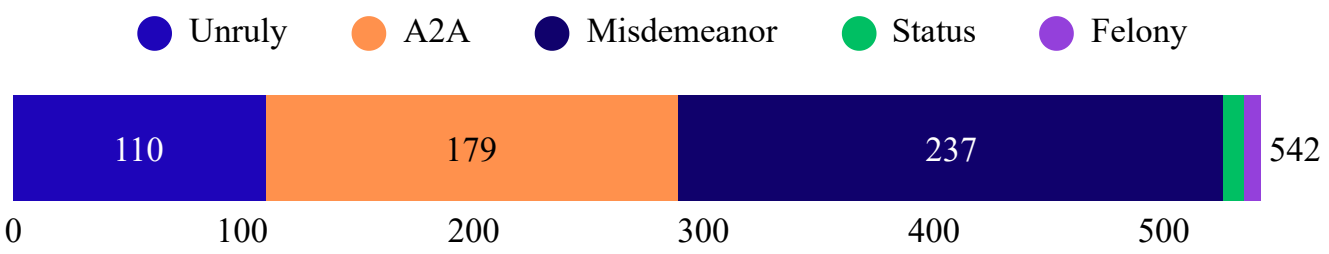
Lorain County Juvenile Court Assessment & Resource Center

The Court continues to operate the Assessment & Resource Center (AC), established in 2019 with RECLAIM funding from the Ohio Department of Youth Services. The AC provides early intervention and support services to youth and families. Its primary goals are to connect families to services quickly, divert youth from formal court involvement, and build lasting support systems beyond the Court's involvement.

Assessments

Assessment Specialists offer light case management services, helping families monitor progress, address barriers, and develop individualized case plans. Follow-up services are tailored to each family's needs, providing continued support that promotes progress and connection to resources.

2025 Assessment Center Referrals by Offense Type



2025 National Recognition & Initiatives

The Court continues to be a proud member of the National Assessment Center Association (NAC) and has achieved Silver Level recognition through NAC's Pathways to Excellence Program. In 2025, in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Youth Services and NAC, the Court implemented the Assessment Center Outcome and Reporting Network (ACORN), a national data system designed to standardize performance and outcome measures across assessment centers nationwide.

Diversion Services

Diversion Services provides early, preventative support to prevent formal court involvement. Diversion Specialists work with families to identify needs, create safety and success plans, and connect them to community resources. Services include short-term case management (up to 90 days), victim outreach, restitution coordination, and community service. The focus is on promoting accountability, supporting families, and fostering positive youth outcomes.

2025 Diversion Statistics

415	386	349
Diversion Cases	Cases Closed	Successfully Closed

A case is closed successfully when a youth complies with diversion case plan goals. Percentage of cases successfully closed in 2025:



TRUANCY

Under Ohio truancy laws, schools must file a Complaint in Juvenile Court against the youth and/or the youth's parents or custodians when legal requirements are met. Each youth Complaint must be reviewed for the **Alternative to Adjudication (A2A) Program** before any formal action is taken, as court involvement is a last resort.

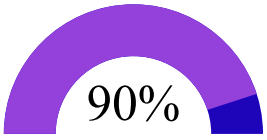
The Court's A2A Program, operated through the Assessment Center, works with families to identify and address barriers to school attendance. Adult cases may be referred to **Adult Truancy Conferences (ATC)**, an adult diversion option, after arraignment and with agreement from all parties.

In A2A or ATC, Assessment Center staff assess needs, address barriers, link families to services, and provide short-term support. A case is considered successful when the juvenile and/or family participate in diversion programming or when the juvenile's school attendance improves. When A2A or ATC cases are closed successfully, the underlying Complaint may be dismissed, and cases closed unsuccessfully may move forward with formal charges.

2025 Juvenile Cases

198
Cases Filed

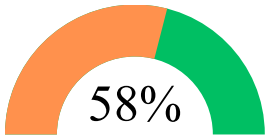
179
Referred to A2A



Cases Referred to A2A

104
A2A- Successful

74
A2A- Unsuccessful
1- closed neutral



A2A Success Rate

20 Adjudications
48 Cases Pending on 12/31/25

2025 Adult Cases

158
Cases Filed

25
Referred to ATC

22
ATC- Successful

2
ATC- Unsuccessful (1 neutral)

3- Guilty Findings

39- Pending on 12/31/25

2024-2025 School Year Cases

Juvenile	Adult
206 Cases Filed	141 Cases Filed
185 Referred to A2A	29 Referred to ATC
A2A Closed: 104 Successful 79 Unsuccessful / 2 Neutral	ATC Closed: 25 Successful 2 Unsuccessful / 2 Neutral
16 Adjudications	3 Guilty Findings

PRE-ADJUDICATION AND PRE-DISPOSITION

Pre-Dispositional Services (PDS)

PDS provides an alternative to detaining youth in the Detention Home. PDS Officers supervise youth in the community while the youth await court hearings, allowing them to stay at home, attend school, and receive treatment instead of being detained.

PDS serves youth ages 9–19 placed in the program by a judicial officer and offers monitoring (with or without a GPS), drug testing, regular contact, and referrals for services. Youth in PDS are assigned to one of three levels of supervision and may move between levels based on their progress. The three levels include: GPS House Arrest; non-GPS House Arrest; and Curfew.

Youth released from PDS are considered successful if they avoid detention while in the program. In 2025, 129 youth were released from PDS, and 97 youth were successfully released.

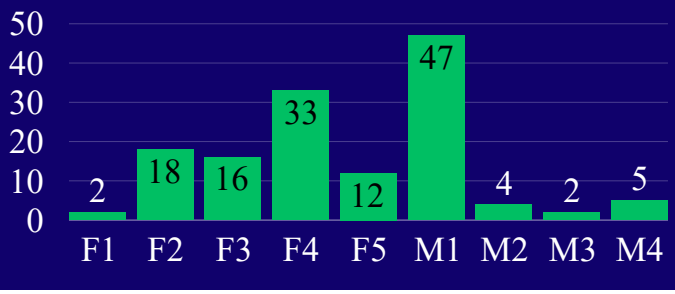
139

Youth Placed on PDS in 2025

32

Youth Placed on a GPS Monitor in 2025

2025 PDS Placements by Highest Offense Charged



Success Rate of Youth Released from PDS in 2025



75%

126

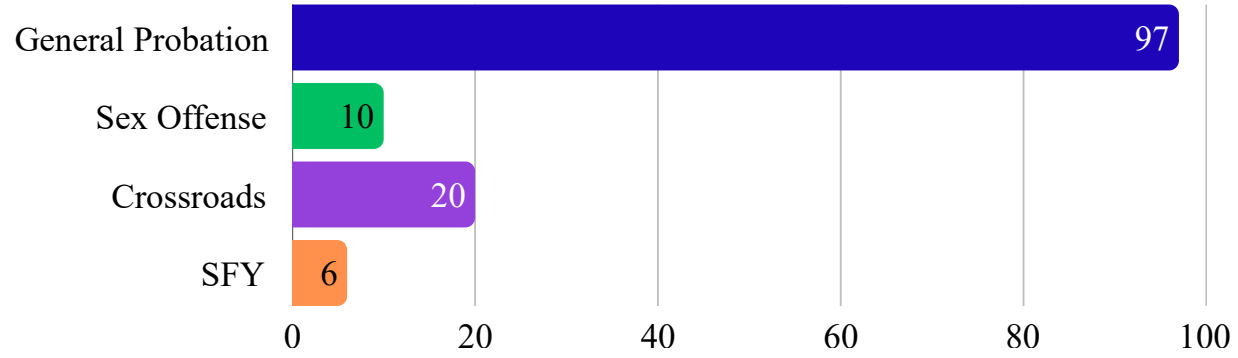
Youth Referred to I & R in 2025

Investigation & Referral

The Investigation & Referral (I&R) Department evaluates adjudicated juvenile offenders after court referral to determine appropriate services. Investigative Probation Officers interview the youth and family, complete assessments (MAYSI, OYAS), and make recommendations based on risk and needs. These may include supervision, counseling, community service, detention, or placement. Cases may also be referred for psychological evaluation if severe mental health concerns exist. Investigations are typically completed within 45 days, and officers coordinate services with community providers.

DISPOSITION & POST-DISPOSITION

At disposition, a youth may be assigned to different types or levels of probation, and the Court can adjust that level of supervision at any time based on the youth's needs and progress. A brief description and the number of each placement used in 2025 is as follows:



GENERAL PROBATION serves moderate to high-risk youth who benefit from individual, community-based services rather than specific programs or intensive supervision. Youth follow a case plan that may include treatment, mentoring, or other services. Probation Officers (PO) monitor progress and use evidence-based practices to encourage positive change. POs stay in regular contact with the youth's family, school, and service providers, update case plans as needs change, monitor the completion of court orders, and provide the Court with progress updates, incentives, and sanctions. General Probation also supervises youth in the Juvenile Offender Program (JOP) and those placed in Community Correctional Facilities (CCF).

CROSSROADS EVENING REPORTING PROGRAM serves moderate to high-risk youth ages 13–18 who are at risk of removal from their home. The program includes a Reporting Phase (minimum 16 weeks) and Aftercare Phase (minimum 4 weeks). The Reporting Phase serves up to 16 youth with structured 4–8 p.m. hours, providing evidence-based cognitive therapy and pro-social skill-building to address criminogenic needs, along with life and career skills.

SEX-OFFENSE PROBATION serves juveniles adjudicated of a sexually oriented offense. Youth receive an assessment that guides recommendations for youth to receive community-based treatment or be placed in a residential or secure facility. Youth complete sex-offender specific treatment through community or residential providers.

SUCCESS FOR YOUTH (SFY) PROGRAM serves lower-functioning juveniles facing barriers such as mental health or substance use. In partnership with Catholic Charities, it provides case management, social skills training, computer literacy, and career/job skills, with twice-weekly group sessions.

PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS, SUPPORT, AND EDUCATION

Psycho-Educational Groups
2025 *Service Referrals Aimed at Reducing Risk*

AMP Project: Short-term mentoring for youth ages 13–17 to engage in positive community and school activities

ReNOUNce DeNOUNce: Programming for moderate to high-risk youth to prevent gun and gang violence

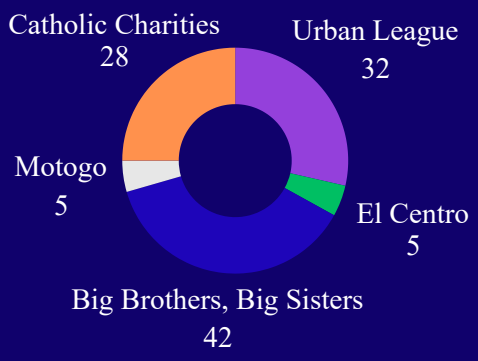
Keeping your Cool: Teaches youth thinking skills and anger management

Eduvention: Teaches skills aimed to address and prevent substance use

PREP: Provides youth life skills and sex education to support adulthood readiness

INDEPTH: Teaches youth about nicotine risks and how to quit vaping

The **Race, Equity, and Inclusion (REI) Coalition** is a collaborative of local grassroots organizations, mentoring programs, and agencies that promote the wellness and basic needs of youth of color. The Court received funding from the Department of Youth Services to create the REI Coalition. In 2025, $7,753.80 of grant funding was used, with referrals to the following:



RESTITUTION, PAYBACK PROGRAM, AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Restitution supports rehabilitation and compensates victims, with amounts set at disposition based on documented losses. The Court also offers a PayBack Program, allowing youth to earn up to $500 through tracked community service. Judges may additionally order youth to complete community service at approved sites.

$21,516.99	**$8,083.77**	**1,468**
Restitution Collected in 2025	Provided to victims through the PayBack Program in 2025	Community Service hours completed in 2025

DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES (ODYS) COMMITMENTS

When community rehabilitation is not an option due to the seriousness of an offense, a youth may be committed to ODYS and placed in a secure state facility. Alternatively, a youth may be placed in a Community Corrections Facility (CCF), a less restrictive residential treatment program. In 2025, the Court committed **21 youth** to ODYS and **18 youth** to a CCF. The following represents the level of offenses for 2025 ODYS commitments:



DEPARTMENT OF RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

Matt Koch, Director

Lorain County Juvenile Detention Home

The Lorain County Detention Home is a secure, 24-hour facility for juvenile offenders up to age 21 and is licensed by the Ohio Department of Youth Services. Judges and magistrates use a screening tool—considering offense severity, history, and risk—to determine if admission to detention is appropriate.

The facility has a total capacity of 44 beds—28 for males and 16 for females—all in individual rooms, as required by the Prison Rape Elimination Act. The Detention Home includes indoor and outdoor recreation areas, meals, classrooms, and medical care. The Detention Home has 35 employees, including administrative staff, shift supervisors, control room clerks, detention officers, nurses, and maintenance staff.

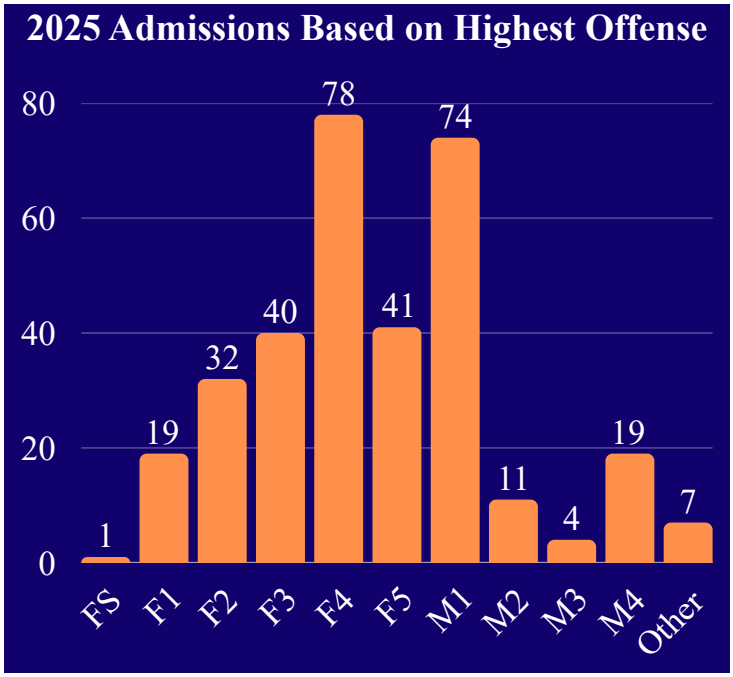
In 2025, the Court enhanced facility security with the installation of a new security control panel, supported by a $74,799 grant from the Ohio Department of Youth Services. The control panel serves as the central system to monitor all areas of the Detention Home to ensure safety and security.

2025 Admissions

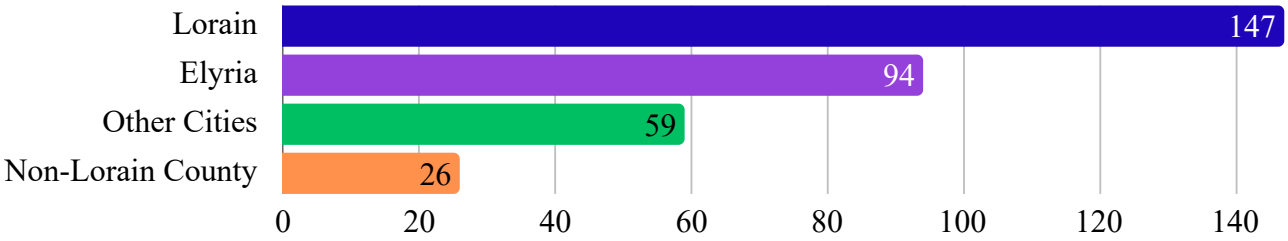
326 Admissions

32 Days Average Length of Stay

29.2 Average Daily Population



Admissions Based Upon Juvenile's City of Residence

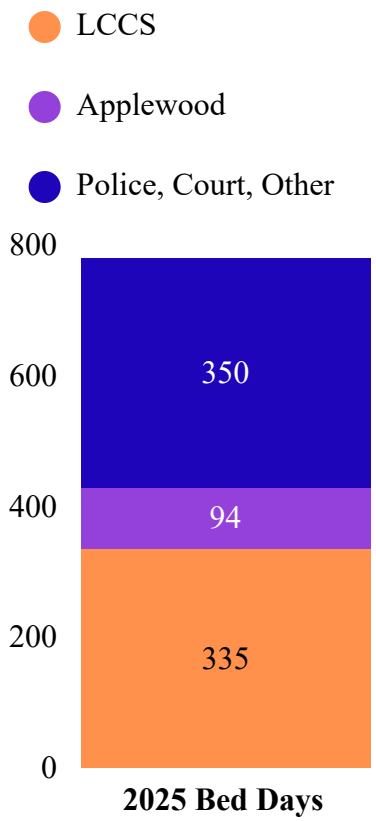


TURNING POINT SHELTER

Turning Point Shelter is a short-term emergency crisis shelter providing immediate, non-secure care for youth ages 12–17 facing abuse, neglect, domestic violence, trafficking, mental health crises, or behavioral issues. It houses up to 10 youth for stays of up to 13 days and offers 24/7 trauma-informed care by Turning Point staff, as well as the staff shared with the Detention Home (see below).

In 2025, the shelter had 134 youth admissions. The total number of bed days (days youth spent the night at Turning Point) was 779 in 2025. Referrals were received from Lorain County Children Services, law enforcement, Applewood Centers, the Assessment & Resource Center, and other mental health providers.

The facility is currently a CARF-accredited Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP); however, the Department of Children & Youth (DCY) granted the Court an accreditation waiver for future admissions. The Court will maintain its accreditation through 2026 but will not be seeking reaccreditation.



SHARED SERVICES

The Detention Home & Turning Point Shelter share services, including:

Medical Services

- Court has a contracted Medical Director
- Staff includes full-time and part-time nurses
- Youth receive a physical exam upon admission
- Nursing staff distributes medications and consults with medical providers

Mental Health Services

- Applewood Centers provides crisis care for youth
- Court contracts with Applewood Centers to provide ongoing mental health care to youth in the Detention Home
- Staff includes a full-time Social Worker

Educational Services

- Court contracts with Lorain County Educational Service Center to provide 2 full-time and additional part-time educators
- Youth have access to individualized computers for school work
- Focus on state proficiency testing

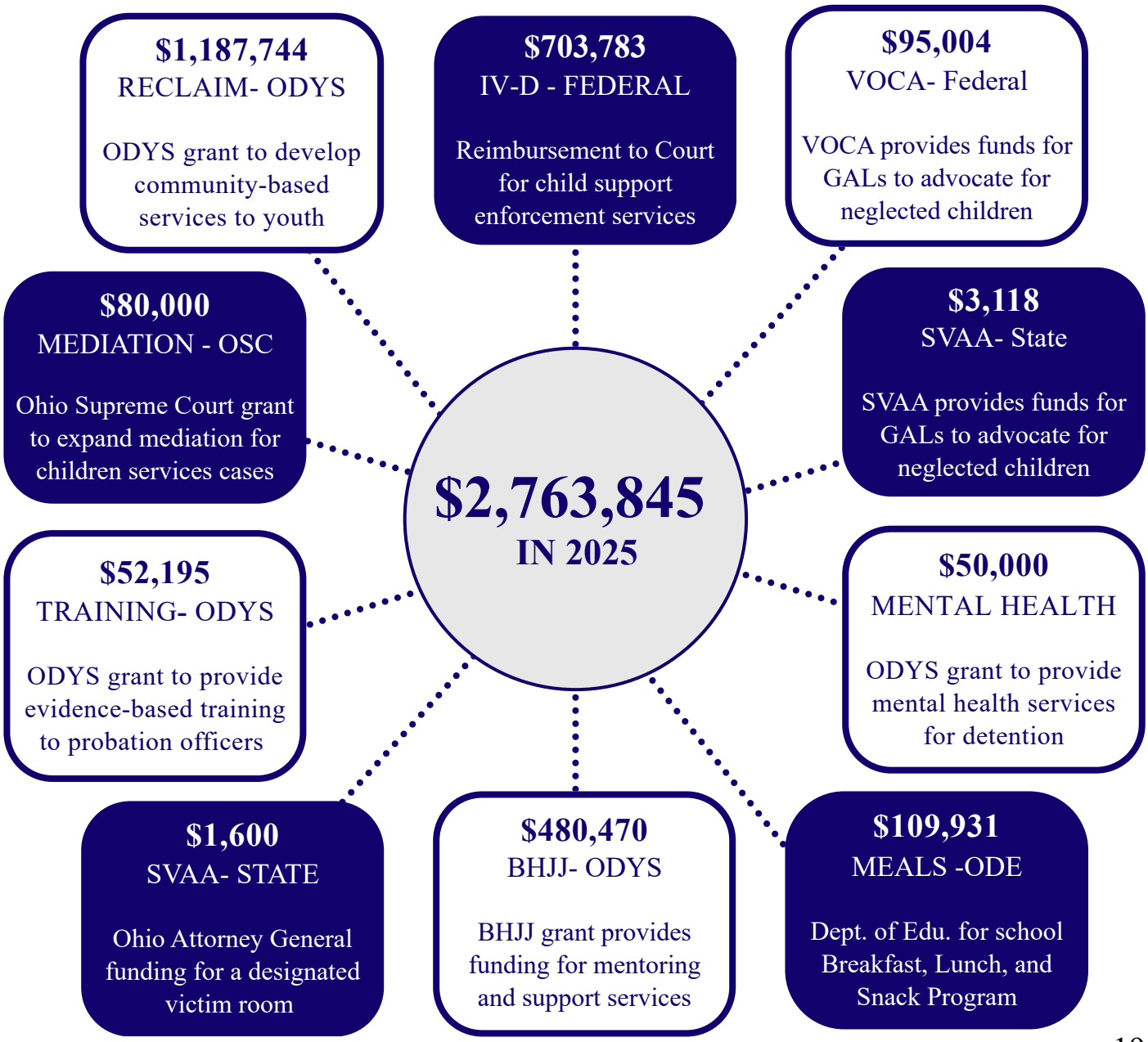
FISCAL DEPARTMENT

Kristen Richardson, Fiscal Director

The Lorain County Domestic Relations Court receives funding from the Lorain County Board of Commissioners as well as state, federal, and local grants. The County's General Fund provides the majority of the Court's annual budget. Funding is utilized for operational costs, staff salaries, and fringe benefits for over 160 Domestic Relations Court and Juvenile Court employees.

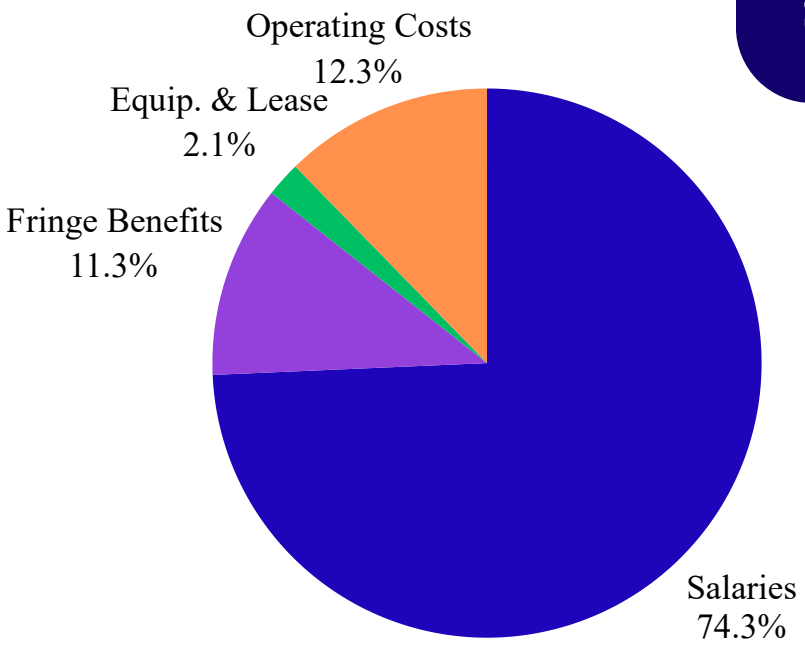
Grants & Reimbursements

The Fiscal Department manages the Court's annual budget, processes expenditures and deposits, reconciles accounts, and oversees payroll, benefits, purchasing, and attorney reimbursements. In 2025, it processed over $1,311,289 in state reimbursements for court-appointed counsel. The department also handles financial management, reporting, and audits for all state and federal grants. **Below is a summary of the grants and reimbursements awarded in 2025:**



2025 Expenditures

$13,399,686



2025 Revenue

$2,696,933

