

Superior Court of the District of Columbia



2023 Family Court Annual Report



Honorable Anita Josey-Herring
Chief Judge

March 31, 2024

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Executive Summary

Since the enactment of the District of Columbia Family Court Act of 2001¹, the Family Court has achieved many of the goals set forth in its Family Court Transition Plan submitted to the President and Congress on April 5, 2002. The following summarizes some of the measures, aimed at improving services for children and families, taken by the Family Court in 2023 in its continued efforts to achieve each goal.

- **Make child safety and prompt permanency the primary considerations in decisions involving children.**
 - The Family Court monitored key performance measures, including compliance with the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA)² and the performance measures in the *Toolkit for Court Performance Measures in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases*.
 - Family Court continued HOPE “Here Opportunities Prepare You for Excellence” Court in 2023. The program is a treatment court established to address the multiple needs of court-involved youth who are suspected of being, confirmed to be, or at risk of becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation. For youth in the delinquency system, HOPE Court offers a path to case closure for those who succeed and graduate. For youth in the neglect system, HOPE Court offers specialized services to assist youth and families to achieve their permanency goals.
 - The Counsel for Child Abuse and Neglect (CCAN) offered multiple trainings for panel attorneys throughout the year, including presentations on: Extreme Risk Protection Orders by the Office of the Attorney General (OAG); child development issues called “How Nature Promotes Resilience for Children”; Reducing Time in Foster Care by Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA); Traditionally Underrepresented Parents by Howard University School of Law; Early Childhood Development by Early Stages; Child Tax Credits and Neglect Registry Expungement by Mother’s Outreach Network; Court-Ordered Evaluations by the Assessment Center; Family Treatment Court; and Ethics by the D.C. Bar Counsel.
 - The Court Improvement Program (CIP) continued its collaboration with the Child and Family Services Agency and the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia to evaluate delays in achieving permanency in neglect cases. The CIP is working with the Agency using its permanency tracker to examine how Agency and Court processes can better manage case events before they result in delay. Specific causes of delay have been identified and further analysis is ongoing.
 - The CIP hired a contract supervisory social worker to set up a grant-funded program to provide social workers to CCAN attorneys representing parents in abuse and neglect cases. This innovative multidisciplinary approach will

¹ Pub. L. No. 107-114, 115 Stat. 2100 (2002).

² “ASFA” refers to the federal statute, Pub. L. No. 105-89, 107 Stat. 649 (1997), unless otherwise specified.

provide needed support to parents seeking to reunify with children who have been removed from their care.

- The CIP coordinated with the Family Treatment Court (FTC) to purchase laptops, using funds from a one-time federal grant for Covid-19 related technology needs. The CIP purchased 220 Chromebooks, protective cases, and operating systems software using grant funds. After security software is installed, the Chromebooks will be loaned to parents involved in neglect matters to enable them to attend virtual hearings during the pendency of the case.
 - Family Treatment Court (FTC) remains an invaluable treatment option for families with substance use disorders involved in the child welfare system. FTC, utilizing a grant from the Office Juvenile Justice Delinquency (OJJDP), hosted over 20 client-centered workshops and trainings. The OJJDP grant allowed FTC to provide incentives to participants as they achieved goals and reached recovery milestones. FTC enhanced the model to include Recovery Mentors, offering participants access to individuals with lived experience to support their recovery process. To date, more than 400 families have achieved reunification since its inception in 2003. FTC hosted its commencement in December 2023, honoring five parents who successfully completed the program, reunified with their children, and had their cases closed.
 - In neglect matters, the median length of time from removal to achievement of the permanency goal of reunification decreased from 20.7 months in 2022 to 17.9 months in 2023; the median length of time from removal to achievement of the permanency goal of adoption also decreased from 33.8 months to 32.9 months. Of the 447 children in foster care whose adoption was finalized in the past five years, only one reentered foster care.
- **Provide early intervention and diversion opportunities for juveniles charged with offenses to enhance rehabilitation and promote public safety.**
 - In 2023, Court Social Services Division (CSSD) conducted home visits, curfew monitoring, prosocial and restorative justice groups, family group conferencing, mentoring and tutoring both in-person and virtually.
 - CSSD screened 100% of all newly arrested youth, utilizing a Risk Assessment Instrument. This risk assessment tool is being evaluated over the next three years by Evident Change, a non-profit data and research firm, to determine if the assessment should be changed or replaced.
 - The CSSD Juvenile Intake and Delinquency Prevention Branch successfully screened 1,582 youth referred for delinquency matters and 1,025 youth referred for a status offense (truancy and persons in need of supervision (PINS)). The Branch installed 637 Global Positioning System (GPS) Electronic Monitors, a 34% increase from 2022.
 - CSSD completed over 37,000 community supervision and monitoring interventions for more than 1,000 pre-trial and post-adjudicated juveniles, including home and school visits and curfew monitoring.

- CSSD facilitated several delinquency prevention measures, including: (1) skill-building and empowerment groups; (2) conflict resolution youth group discussions; (3) therapeutic “Paint n Jam” sessions; (4) group reading of various books, including a companion activity by the author of one selection (“Blueprint To A Better You”) who conducted conflict resolution groups with youth at BARJ Drop-In Centers; and (5) several prosocial, youth-oriented activities and initiatives in the form of community outings.
 - CSSD collaborated with the Chief Judge of the Superior Court, Clerk of the Court, and Executive Office staff to develop and launch Succeeding in Our Academic Responsibilities (SOARs), a pilot literacy program aimed at improving school attendance and academic performance among targeted CSSD youth.
 - CSSD collaborated with the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement to provide programming on Friday and Saturday nights.
 - CSSD continued its participation on various committees and advisory groups, including the Juvenile Justice Committee of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee, a committee of D.C. juvenile justice system stakeholders that aims to identify effective measures in preventing juvenile crime, address the needs of court-involved youth and reduce recidivism.
 - CSSD supported the citywide Summer Safety Surge. CSSD coordinated recreational initiatives including Late-Night Hype carnival events, Late-Night Drip pool parties, and several ice cream socials across the city, which were commended by the MPD Youth Division as directly contributing to crime reductions across several communities.
 - CSSD continued to operate the Juvenile Behavioral Diversion Program, as an intensive non-sanction-based program, designed to link juveniles and status offenders to, and engage them in, appropriate mental health services and support in the community. The goal is to reduce behavioral symptoms that result in the youth’s involvement with the juvenile justice system and to improve the youth’s functioning in the home, school, and community.
- **Assign and retain well-trained and highly motivated judicial officers.**
 - The Family Court promoted the participation of Family Court judicial officers in national training programs on issues relating to children and families, including the National Center for State Courts’ Project ECHO for the Judiciary: Improving Outcomes for Justice-Involved Emerging Adults.
 - Family Court judicial officers attended mandatory monthly luncheon trainings on issues frequently arising in family court cases, and presentations from guest speakers on a variety of relevant topics.
 - The Family Court hosted its 21st Annual Interdisciplinary Conference entitled “Shame, Vicarious Trauma, and Self-Care” virtually on October 27, 2023. The conference featured A. Rachel Camp of Georgetown University Law Center and Kim Daulton of the Children’s Law Center, who shared their expertise and provided resources to enhance service delivery within the

communities served by Family Court. The conference also discussed self-care techniques to help court staff cope with vicarious trauma.

- Family Court judicial officers attended an annual in-service training on recent developments in family law and recently enacted legislation affecting the Family Court.

- **Promote Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR).**
 - The Court partnered with the Family Law Community of the District of Columbia Bar—a group of experienced family law attorneys—to conduct alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in domestic relations cases. In 2023, approximately 60 families were ordered to participate in the ADR program. The program includes a case evaluation component along with mediation.
 - Almost all (97%) of new abuse and neglect cases filed were referred to mediation, which is consistent with the mandate in the Family Court Act to resolve cases and proceedings through ADR to the greatest extent practicable while prioritizing child safety. Of the cases referred for mediation in 2023, 63 abuse and neglect cases (representing 108 children) participated in the mediation process.
 - The Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division of Superior Court also works to resolve domestic relations cases through ADR. In 2023, 480 cases were mediated, of which 178 cases (37%) were settled through mediation.
 - Family Court attorney negotiators assist litigants in reaching amicable solutions to domestic relations matters presented to the court. Attorney negotiators resolved through negotiation 223 (74%) of the 300 referred cases.

- **Instituted a hybrid work model to expand in-person access to justice and continue to use technology to process cases of children and families.**
 - All judges continued the use of both in-person and remote courtrooms.
 - Family Court continued both in-person and electronic case initiation for all case types. This includes adoption filings, through Box.com, and marriage license applications.
 - The Court accepted payments for certain court fees, fines, and costs either in-person or via the electronic payment portal, PromptPay.
 - Juvenile bench warrants and arrest warrants were processed both in-person and electronically.
 - Documents continue to be provided to the public and external stakeholders both in-person and electronically. This includes providing certified documents to the public and exchanging confidential documents securely with agency partners and the public through Box.com.
 - Family Court continued to utilize a call center that reroutes external calls to a central location, resulting in a dramatic reduction in calls to the individual branches and thus increased productivity in an uninterrupted environment. Customers speak to a live person and have their issues immediately addressed.

The Center assisted 53,318 customers in 2023. The Call Center has assisted over 350,000 customers since it began operations in April 2016.

- **Encourage and promote collaboration with the community and community organizations.**
 - Family Court regularly met with stakeholders and participated on numerous committees serving children and families, including the Abuse and Neglect Subcommittee, the Mental Health and Habilitation Subcommittee, the Domestic Relations Subcommittee, the HOPE Court Committee, the Family Court Juvenile Subcommittee, the Parentage and Support Subcommittee, the Education Subcommittee, the Family Court Training Committee, the Court Improvement Program Advisory Committee, and the Juvenile Intake and Arraignment workgroup.
 - Family Court collaborated with the D.C. Bar Family Law Community and other stakeholders on multiple training and educational programs.
 - Family Court worked closely with the Family Law Assistance Network (FLAN), a joint project of the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Center, the D.C. Affordable Law Firm, and the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia. FLAN offers D.C. residents free legal advice or representation in custody, child support, parentage, and divorce cases heard in the Domestic Relations Branch of D.C. Superior Court. The Self-Help Center referred 100 customers to FLAN in 2023. FLAN provided weekly onsite staffing to assist customers with legal advice.
 - Family Court worked with the Child Support Resource Center (CSRC), a joint project of Legal Aid and Bread for the City that offers free legal advice or representation in child support cases. The Self-Help Center referred customers to CSRC, which has onsite staffing at the court to better assist customers.

- **Provide a family friendly environment by ensuring materials and services are understandable and accessible.**
 - The Family Court Self-Help Center conducted 5,058 customer interviews in 2023. The Self-Help Center continued serving customers onsite and remotely, resuming services solely onsite in July 2023. The SHC continued to utilize volunteer lawyers and law students to expand its capacity to serve customers.
 - QR codes were created to make accessing electronic and remote services easier for court users. The QR codes are posted in various Family Court locations around the H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse.
 - A webpage, now available on the Family Court website, shows the approximate wait times for the Self-Help Center, Central Intake Center, and Marriage Bureau.
 - A workgroup within the Abuse and Neglect Subcommittee created a user-friendly Parent Guide to help parents understand the case process and the roles of individuals involved in the process. In the coming year, this guide will be made available to parents through a QR code that will be provided by social

workers at the inception of a case, as well as in the courtrooms where initial hearings are held.

We continue to implement new initiatives and sustain past initiatives to better serve children and families in our court system.

Introduction

The District of Columbia Family Court Act of 2001(Family Court Act)³, requires that the Chief Judge of the Superior Court submit to Congress an annual report on the activities of the Family Court. The report, summarizing activities of the Family Court during 2023, must include the following:

- (1) The Chief Judge’s assessment of the productivity and success of the use of alternative dispute resolution (see pages 18-24).
- (2) Goals and timetables as required by the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 to improve the Family Court’s performance (see pages 32-37).
- (3) Information on the extent to which the Family Court met deadlines and standards applicable under Federal and District of Columbia law to review and dispose of actions and proceedings under the Family Court’s jurisdiction during the year (see pages 24-55, 68-84, 99-102).
- (4) Information on: (a) the number of judges serving on the Family Court as of December 31, 2023; (b) how long each such judge has served on the Family Court; (c) the number of cases retained outside the Family Court; (d) the number of reassignments to and from the Family Court; and (e) the ability to recruit qualified sitting judges to serve on the Family Court (see pages 3-14).
- (5) An analysis of the Family Court’s efficiency and effectiveness in managing its caseload during the year, including an analysis of the time required to dispose of actions and proceedings among the various categories of Family Court jurisdiction, as prescribed by applicable law and best practices (see pages 24-55, 68-84, 99-102).
- (6) A proposed remedial plan of action if the Family Court failed to meet the deadlines, standards, and outcome measures prescribed by such laws or practices (see pages 42-55, 78-84, 105-107).

³ See *supra* note 1.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Family Court of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia is to protect and support children brought before it, strengthen families in trouble, provide permanency for children and decide disputes involving families fairly and expeditiously, while treating all parties with dignity and respect.

Goals and Objectives

The Family Court, in consultation with the Family Court Strategic Planning Committee, established the following goals and objectives to ensure that the court's mission is achieved. They remained the goals and objectives for continued improvement in 2023.

1. Make child safety and prompt permanency the primary considerations in decisions involving children.
2. Provide early intervention and diversion opportunities for juveniles charged with offenses to enhance rehabilitation and promote public safety.
3. Appoint and retain well-trained and highly motivated judicial and non-judicial personnel by providing education on issues relating to children and families and creating work assignments that are diverse and rewarding for Family Court judicial officers and staff.
4. Promote the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in appropriate cases involving children and families to resolve disputes in a non-adversarial manner and with the most effective means.
5. Use technology to ensure the effective tracking of cases of families and children; identification of all cases under the jurisdiction of the Family Court that are related to a family or child and any related cases of household members; communication between the court and the related protective and social service systems; collection, analysis and reporting of information relating to court performance and the timely processing and disposition of cases.
6. Encourage and promote collaboration with the community and community organizations that provide services to children and families served by the Family Court.
7. Provide a family-friendly environment by ensuring that materials and services are understandable and accessible to those being served and that the waiting areas for

families and children are comfortable and safe.

Judicial Resources in Family Court

On January 1, 2024, the Family Court consisted of 10 Associate Judges and 12 Magistrate Judges; five of the Magistrate Judges were assigned to hear abuse and neglect cases.

Length of Term on Family Court

In 2012, the D.C. Courts and Public Defender Service Act (D.C. Courts and PDS Act) became effective⁴. Section 4 of the law amended D.C. Code § 11- 908A to reduce the term of current and future Family Court Associate Judges from five years to three years. The following are the commencement dates of Associate Judges currently assigned to the Family Court.

<u>Associate Judges</u>	<u>Commencement Date</u>	
Judge Soltys	January	2019
Judge Becker	January	2022
Judge Higashi	January	2022
Judge Ranga	February	2022
Judge Crowell	January	2023
Judge Wellner	January	2023
Judge Sanchez	January	2023
Judge Crane	August	2023
Judge Briggs	January	2024
Judge Seoane López	January	2024

The following are the commencement dates of the Magistrate Judges currently assigned to the Family Court:

⁴ Pub. L. No. 112-229, 126 Stat. 1611 (2012).

<u>Magistrate Judges</u>	<u>Commencement Date</u>	
Magistrate Judge Johnson	April	2002
Magistrate Judge Breslow	October	2002
Magistrate Judge Fentress	October	2002
Magistrate Judge Albert	January	2006
Magistrate Judge Noti	January	2020
Magistrate Judge Wiedmann	January	2020
Magistrate Judge Beatty-Arthur	July	2020
Magistrate Judge Marblestein-Deare	August	2022
Magistrate Judge Chandler	July	2023
Magistrate Judge Jones	January	2024
Magistrate Judge Mulkey	January	2024
Magistrate Judge Vila	January	2024

Reassignments to and from Family Court

In October 2023, the Chief Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia issued judicial assignments for calendar year 2024. Those assignments became effective on January 1, 2024. Judge Soltys is now the Family Court Presiding Judge, and Judge Higashi is the Deputy Presiding Judge. As part of the reassignment, Judges Di Toro and Salerno and Magistrate Judges DeWitt, Medley, and Trabal left Family Court. Judge Rook retired on March 31, 2023. Judge Pittman was reassigned to the Civil Division in August 2023, and Judge Crane was temporarily assigned to his Family Court calendar; that assignment became permanent in January 2024. Other judges joining Family Court in January 2024 include Judges Briggs and Seoane López along with Magistrate Judges Jones, Mulkey, and Vila. Judge Sanchez joined Family Court in January 2023, and Magistrate Judge Chandler joined in July 2023. Judge Hertzfeld, who previously served in Family Court, was temporarily assigned to Judge Crowell’s Juvenile and Adoptions calendar in October 2023 when Judge Crowell went on military leave. Judge Seoane López and Magistrate Judges

Mulkey and Vila previously served in Family Court. Judges Briggs and Sanchez along with Magistrate Judges Chandler and Jones joined Family Court for the first time. Judges Crane, Sanchez and Seoane López are assigned to the Domestic Relations Calendar. Magistrate Judges Mulkey and Vila are assigned to the Parentage and Support Calendar. Magistrate Judge Chandler is assigned to a Domestic Relations and Parentage and Support Calendar. Magistrate Judge Jones is assigned to the Juvenile Intake and New Referrals Calendar along with the Juvenile Behavioral Diversion Program Calendar. Judges Briggs is assigned to the Juvenile and Adoptions calendar.

Below is a brief description of the education and training experience of the judges joining Family Court since January 2023.

Judge Briggs

Kendra Davis Briggs was nominated by President Joseph R. Biden Jr. to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia on November 3, 2021. Her nomination was confirmed by the United States Senate on December 15, 2022.

Judge Briggs was born in Miami, Florida. She received her Associate of Arts degree from Florida A&M University, her Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminology from Florida State University, and her Juris Doctor degree, cum laude, from the University of Miami School of Law.

While in law school, Judge Briggs served as a judicial law clerk to the Honorable Peggy A. Quince of the Florida Supreme Court. After law school, Judge Briggs worked as an associate at the law firms of Parks & Crump, LLC, in Tallahassee, Florida, and Shook, Hardy & Bacon LLP, in Washington, D.C. She specialized in complex civil litigation.

Immediately prior to her appointment as an Associate Judge, Judge Briggs served as an Assistant United States Attorney in the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia prosecuting civil rights, fraud, public corruption, violent crime, and narcotics cases. Judge Briggs also served as the 5th District Community Prosecutor focusing on building bonds of trust between the U.S. Attorney's Office and the community, enhancing public safety through education, and encouraging community participation in the criminal justice system.

As an Assistant United States Attorney, Judge Briggs investigated and tried numerous criminal cases in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia. During her tenure as an Assistant United States Attorney, Judge Briggs was awarded the 2020 U.S. Attorney's Award for Exceptional Performance as an Assistant United States Attorney, and several United States Attorney's Awards for Special Achievement.

Judge Crane

Laura E. Crane was nominated by President Joseph R. Biden Jr. to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia on July 14, 2022. Her nomination was confirmed by the United States Senate on December 15, 2022.

Judge Crane was born and raised in Rochester, New York. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Spanish from Duke University in 2003 and her Juris Doctor degree from Washington University School of Law in St. Louis in 2009.

After law school, Judge Crane moved to the District of Columbia and worked with attorneys at the Disability Rights Section of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice from 2009 to 2010. While there, she worked on cases seeking to

enforce compliance with the integration mandate of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Judge Crane then worked as a Litigation Associate at Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP in New York from 2010 to 2012 where her practice focused on securities litigation. She also had an extensive pro bono practice and received a Legal Aid Society Award in Recognition of Outstanding Pro Bono Service in 2012.

From 2012 to 2013, Judge Crane returned to the District of Columbia to serve as a judicial law clerk to the Honorable James E. Boasberg of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Following her clerkship, Judge Crane joined WilmerHale as a senior associate in the firm's government and regulatory litigation group.

In March 2014, Judge Crane was sworn in as an Assistant United States Attorney at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia. At the time of her appointment to the bench, she served as a Deputy Chief in the Federal Major Crimes Section, leading a section of prosecutors handling violent crime matters and firearms offenses in U.S. District Court. Prior to becoming a supervisor, Judge Crane prosecuted violent crime cases in D.C. Superior Court and U.S. District Court. During her tenure as an Assistant United States Attorney, Judge Crane was awarded the United States Attorney's Impact Award, the United States Attorney's Office Award for Exceptional Service, and two United States Attorney's Office Team Awards, as well as several United States Attorney's Awards for Special Achievement.

Judge Veronica Sanchez

Judge Veronica M. Sanchez was nominated by President Joseph R. Biden Jr. to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia on July 14,

2022. Her nomination was confirmed by the United States Senate on December 15, 2022.

Judge Sanchez was raised in South Florida. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Public Policy Studies from Duke University and her Juris Doctor degree from the UCLA School of Law.

After law school, Judge Sanchez served as a judicial law clerk to the Honorable Edward C. Reed of the United States District Court, District of Nevada. Judge Sanchez then clerked for the Honorable Melvin T. Brunetti, United States Circuit Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

In the fall of 2002, Judge Sanchez joined the Antitrust Division at the Department of Justice as a trial attorney through the Attorney General's Honors Program. At the Antitrust Division, Judge Sanchez investigated and litigated telecommunications and media mergers as well as civil non-merger violations of the antitrust laws. In October 2009, Judge Sanchez was sworn in as an Assistant United States Attorney in the District of Columbia, where she served for thirteen years until her appointment to the D.C. Superior Court bench. For the last two years, Judge Sanchez served as the Chief of the U.S. Attorney's Office's Major Crimes Section. In that capacity, Judge Sanchez led a section of approximately thirty prosecutors who investigated and prosecuted felony violent crime matters before the Superior Court.

As an Assistant United States Attorney, Judge Sanchez investigated and tried numerous criminal cases in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia. Judge Sanchez served as a senior trial attorney in the Homicide Section where she prosecuted homicide cases in

D.C. Superior Court. She also served as a senior trial attorney in the Fraud and Public Corruption Section of the U.S. Attorney's Office, investigating and prosecuting matters in the United States District Court. Judge Sanchez has been awarded several U.S. Attorney's Awards for Special Achievement.

Judge Seoane López

Judge Seoane López was nominated by President Joseph R. Biden Jr. in June 2021 and confirmed by the United States Senate in February 2022. Before becoming an Associate Judge, she served as a Magistrate Judge, having been appointed by Chief Judge Lee Satterfield in 2012.

Starting in 2009, Judge Seoane López served as the Bilingual Attorney Negotiator in the Domestic Violence Division of the District of Columbia Superior Court. Prior to joining the Court, she was an Assistant Attorney General in the Legal Services Section of the Child Support Division in the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia. After graduation from law school, Judge Seoane López served as a law clerk at both the Massachusetts Superior Court and the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

She is a 2002 graduate of the University of Wisconsin Law School. In 2002, she also received a Master of Arts from the University of Wisconsin Graduate School in Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian Studies. She graduated cum laude from Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts with a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice in 1997.

She served as the President of the Hispanic Bar Association of the District of Columbia. Judge Seoane López is the District 4 Secretary for the National Association of Women Judges.

Magistrate Judge Chandler

Cory M. Chandler was appointed by Chief Judge Anita Josey-Herring on July 20, 2023.

Judge Chandler has been a practicing attorney since 2000. Her legal practice focused on litigating cases involving child abuse and neglect, child support, domestic violence, and mental health. In March 2020, she was appointed as an Administrative Law Judge with the District of Columbia Office of Administrative Hearings. In this capacity, she presided over matters in the Licensing and Enforcement Division, conducting evidentiary hearings and deferential appellate reviews for cases involving various District agencies.

Prior to her judicial appointment, Judge Chandler served as the General Counsel for the Child and Family Services Agency for the District of Columbia. Throughout her tenure, she also played a pivotal role as a member of the D.C. Child Fatality Review Committee. Her exemplary service and outstanding leadership were recognized in 2018 when she received both the Champion Award and the Four Pillars Hero Award.

Judge Chandler's career in the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia spanned fifteen years, beginning in 1999. She started as an inaugural candidate for the Honors Program, working on abuse and neglect appellate briefs in the Appellate Division. Later, she transitioned to the Child Protection Section, where she prosecuted child abuse and neglect cases as an Assistant Attorney General. Judge

Chandler then became the Chief of Child Protection Section IV, supervising cases involving termination of parental rights and adoption. The following year, Judge Chandler was elevated to Assistant Deputy Attorney General and was appointed by Mayor Adrian Fenty as Chair of the D.C. Child Support Guideline Commission. Her career in the office culminated with her appointment as Deputy Attorney General of the Family Services Division where she had oversight of the Child Protection Sections, the Domestic Violence Section, and the Mental Health Section.

Judge Chandler is a proud native Washingtonian, born and raised in Southeast D.C. She graduated *cum laude* with her Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from Towson State University in 1996. She received her Juris Doctor from the Catholic University of America Columbus School of Law in 1999.

She is a member of several professional organizations including the National Association of Women Judges, Washington Bar Association Judicial Council, and the National Bar Association Judicial Council. She has been a member of the Greater Washington Area Chapter of the National Bar Association since 2011. Judge Chandler volunteers for the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland, National Harbor Chapter.

Magistrate Judge Jones

Judge Dorsey Jones was born in Washington, D.C., and raised in Silver Spring, Maryland. In 1986, he graduated from Howard University with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration - Accounting. While attending Howard University, Judge Jones was a member of Beta Alpha Psi, an honors accounting society. After graduation, he worked for several years as an auditor for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In 1993, Judge Jones graduated from the Georgetown University Law Center in 1993. While attending the Georgetown University Law Center, Judge Jones participated in the Criminal Justice Clinic. Judge Jones was employed as a law clerk for Van Grack, Axelson, Williamowsky, and Jacobs during his time as a student at Georgetown University and after graduation.

In June 1994, Judge Jones began his private practice as a solo practitioner, specializing in criminal defense cases. Most of his cases during the next 28 years were court-appointed criminal cases representing indigent defendants. He has represented clients in a wide variety of criminal cases ranging from misdemeanors to homicides.

Judge Jones was also a volunteer youth football coach for two different Washington recreation centers. He has also been a volunteer tutor for several programs and a mock trial judge for both high school and law school competitions.

Magistrate Judge Mulkey

Judge Shelly A. Mulkey received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from Tulane University and her law degree from the American University, Washington College of Law in 2001. Judge Mulkey is a former Dean's Fellow for Professor David E. Aaronson. Following law school, Judge Mulkey clerked for the Honorable Eric M. Johnson, Sixth Judicial Circuit of Maryland. She was previously an Assistant Attorney General in the Child Support Services Division of the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia and an associate attorney at the Law Offices of Alice Paré.

Judge Mulkey was most recently assigned to a Parentage and Support calendar. She previously handled cases involving child abuse and neglect, adoption, guardianship, divorce, custody, parentage, child support, and juvenile delinquency. She has also

conducted ex parte hearings on petitions requesting temporary protective orders in domestic violence cases.

Judge Mulkey is a member of the Child Support Guideline Commission and the D.C. Superior Court's Committee on Pretrial Mental Examination and Urgent Care Clinic. She is the Secretary of the Hispanic Bar Association's Judicial Council. Judge Mulkey previously served as a co-chair of the D.C. Superior Court's education working group, participated on the D.C. Superior Court's Abuse & Neglect Subcommittee, and was a member of the Preparing Youth for Adulthood Committee. She is an active member of the Women's Bar Association of the District of Columbia and the Hispanic Bar Association of the District of Columbia, where she mentors attorneys. Judge Mulkey is a former mentor at Mentors, Inc.

Magistrate Judge Vila

Judge Jorge Vila was born in Queens, New York and raised in Puerto Rico. He received a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration in Accounting from the University of Puerto Rico and earned his Juris Doctor degree at InterAmerican University of Puerto Rico. He was a law clerk at the Superior Court in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and went on to do defense work at the Public Defender's Office in Caguas, Puerto Rico.

Prior to joining the court, Judge Vila was a member of the D.C. Bar for nine years and a member of the Counsel for Child Abuse and Neglect Attorney Panel for seven years. Judge Vila previously worked as an investigator and attorney for indigent defendants, as part of the Criminal Justice Act Panel.

Ability to Recruit Qualified Sitting Judges to Serve on Family Court

Since its inception, the Family Court has successfully recruited qualified judges to serve on the Family Court. Recruitment efforts were aided by enactment of the D.C. Courts and PDS Act⁵, in 2012, which reduced the term of current and future Family Court Associate Judges from five years to three years. As required by law, all Associate Judges currently serving in the Family Court volunteered to serve. A two-fold process has been implemented to replace those judges who choose to transfer out after completion of their term. First, there is an ongoing process to identify and recruit Associate Judges interested in serving on the Family Court, who have the requisite educational and training experience required by law. Second, Superior Court Associate Judges who are interested in serving but do not have the requisite experience or training required by the Family Court Act are provided the opportunity to participate in a quarterly training program, developed by the Presiding Judge. The training is designed to ensure that these judges have the knowledge and skills required to serve in the Family Court.

Given the overwhelming response from the Bar for the Magistrate Judge positions previously advertised, no recruitment difficulties are envisioned for future Magistrate Judge vacancies.

Training and Education

The Chief Judge of the Superior Court and the Presiding and Deputy Presiding Judges of the Family Court collaborate with the Superior Court's Judicial Education

⁵ *Id.*

Committee and the Family Court Planning Committee (the Training and Education Subcommittee of the Family Court Implementation Committee) to develop and provide training for Family Court judicial staff. This interdisciplinary committee consists of judicial officers, court staff, attorneys, social workers, psychologists, and other experts in child welfare. Family Court judicial staff consistently strive to enhance their skills and gain a deeper understanding of the issues facing the families and children navigating the complexities of the legal system.

Family Court judicial officers took advantage of several training opportunities in 2023:

In July 2023, the Family Court hosted a quarterly training titled *The Impact of the Pandemic on the Mental Health & Education of Teens*. There were 90 virtual attendees. On Friday, October 27, 2023, the Family Court, in conjunction with the Center for Education and Training (CET), held its 21st Annual Interdisciplinary Conference - *Shame, Vicarious Trauma, and Self-Care*. With 263 virtual attendees, the conference defined trauma and explored the experiences and impact of repeated trauma and loss along with the role of shame in trauma. A. Rachel Camp of Georgetown University Law Center and Kim Daulton of the Children's Law Center shared their expertise and provided resources to enhance service delivery within the communities served by Family Court. This training built upon prior Family Court trainings offered in 2022 that explored the role shame plays for litigants involved in Family Court, the role that vicarious trauma plays in all those who interact with people who have experienced trauma and imparted self-care techniques. The sessions were both educational and a reflection of the Court's dedication to understanding the multifaceted challenges families and children face.

Judges and court staff are consistently trained on current family law. During the year, Family Court law clerks and other employees also received training on topics to help them better assist the judges in the division. Some of the topics included: Evidence; Impeachment; Motions; Post-Conviction Motions; and Hidden Impact of System Involvement on Children. Family Court judges attended an annual in-service training on recent developments in family law and recently enacted legislation affecting the Family Court. The judges also participated in the Spring Judicial and Senior Managers Conference, entitled *A Changing Landscape Post-Pandemic in the Courts: Mental Health, DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging), & New Frontiers* and the National Center for State Courts' Project ECHO for the Judiciary: Improving Outcomes for Justice-Involved Emerging Adults.

Additionally, three new judicial officers joined the Family Court in 2023 and were trained in family law particular to their calendars as well as general family law. Those judicial officers changing calendars participated in mandatory in-service training on their respective calendars.

Beyond formal training, the Presiding Judge fostered a spirit of collaboration through weekly lunch meetings and mandatory monthly discussions for Family Court judicial officers to confer about issues involving Family Court cases and to hear from guest speakers on a variety of relevant topics. These gatherings provided a platform for sharing knowledge and discussing complex cases, further uniting the judicial officers in their common goals.

Five Family Court Judges participated in greeting domestic and international visitors, welcoming them to the D.C. Courts and giving them a short informational primer

on Family Law in the District. Some of the countries represented include Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Haiti, Kenya, Republic of Georgia, Senegal, and Uganda. This exchange of knowledge underscores the Family Court's role in a global community committed to justice and understanding.

The Counsel for Child Abuse and Neglect Branch (CCAN) of the Family Court, which oversees the assignment of attorneys in child welfare cases, conducts trainings for new child abuse and neglect attorneys, and coordinates additional trainings for current panel members, including a brown bag lunch series on important topics in child abuse and neglect practice. The trainings and brown bag lunches employ the skills of many stakeholders involved in the child welfare system and are designed to be interdisciplinary in nature. Sessions in 2023 included presentations on: Extreme Risk Protection Orders by the Office of the Attorney General (OAG); child development issues called *How Nature Promotes Resilience for Children*; Reducing Time in Foster Care by Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA); Traditionally Underrepresented Parents by Howard University School of Law; Early Childhood Development by Early Stages; Child Tax Credits and Neglect Registry Expungement by Mother's Outreach Network; Court-Ordered Evaluations by the Assessment Center; Family Treatment Court; and ethics by the D.C. Bar Counsel.

Family Court non-judicial staff also participated in a variety of training programs in 2023. Topics included: conflict resolution; active listening; time management; critical thinking; writing skills; best practices in customer service; building trust; emotional intelligence; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and stress management. While these

educational opportunities focused on a variety of topics, they all had the goal of moving the Court toward improved outcomes for children and families.

Alternative Dispute Resolution in Family Court

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in Family Court is provided through the Superior Court's Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division (Multi-Door). Both the Child Protection Mediation and Family Mediation programs facilitated by Multi-Door have proven to be highly successful in resolving child abuse and neglect cases and domestic relations cases. The programs had an equally positive effect on court processing timeframes and costs. These results provide compelling support for the continuation of these valuable public service programs.

ADR Performance Measures

The Multi-Door Division relies on outcome measures to assess the quantity and quality of ADR performance. Three performance indicators measure the quality of ADR:

- a) ADR Outcome – measures clients' satisfaction with the outcome of the mediation process (including whether a full agreement on the case was reached or if specific contested issues were resolved), fairness of outcome, level of understanding of opposing party's concerns, impact upon communications with other party, and impact upon time spent pursuing the case.
- b) ADR Process – measures clients' satisfaction with the overall mediation process, including their ability to discuss issues openly, fairness of the process, length of the session, and whether the participants perceived coercion by the other party or mediator.

- c) Mediator Performance – measures clients’ satisfaction with the mediators’ performance in conducting the process, including explaining the process and the mediators’ role, providing parties the opportunity to fully explain issues, the mediators’ understanding of the issues, whether mediators gained the parties’ trust, and any perceived bias on the part of the mediators.

These quality performance indicators are measured through participant surveys distributed to all participants in ADR processes at Multi-Door. Statistical measures include the satisfaction level of respondents with the overall ADR process, ADR outcome, and mediator performance. Multi-Door staff hold periodic meetings to review these statistical measures and determine initiatives to improve overall program performance. Performance indicators provide a measure of the extent to which ADR is meeting the objectives of settlement, quality, and responsiveness.

Child Protection Mediation Under the Adoption and Safe Families Act

In 2023, 178 new abuse and neglect cases were filed in the Family Court. Each case represents one child in Family Court. In mediation, however, each case represents a family, often with multiple children. Ninety-seven percent of the new abuse and neglect cases filed (112 families with 173 children) were referred to mediation, which is consistent with the mandate in the Family Court Act to resolve cases and proceedings through ADR to the greatest extent practicable while prioritizing child safety.⁶ Of those 112 families, 11 families (10%, representing 14 children) whose cases were filed in 2023

⁶ These multi-party mediations are structured to enhance safety: pre-mediation information is provided to participants; parents are included in the sessions; appropriate training is provided; and a layered domestic violence screening protocol is implemented by Multi-Door staff and mediators for cases with a history of domestic violence.

were offered mediation in 2024. Overall, mediation was offered to 101 families with 159 children in 2023. Of the 101 families offered mediation in 2023, 62% of the families (63 cases, representing 108 children) participated in the mediation process; 38% of the families (38 cases, representing 51 children) did not participate and their cases were not mediated.⁷

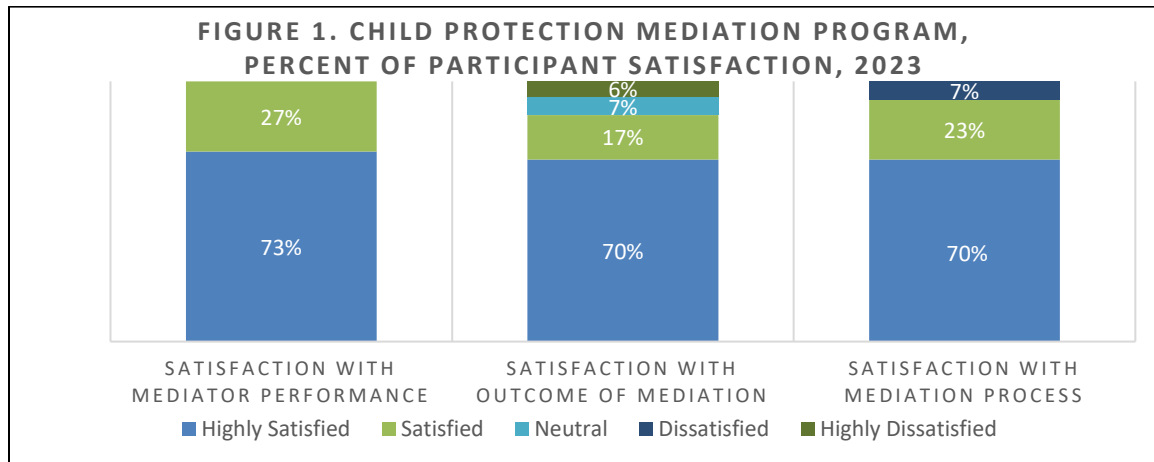
As was the case in 2022 for families participating in mediation, the court continued to settle a substantial number of cases through mediation that were offered to participate in the mediation process.⁸ In 2023, nearly all cases which went to mediation reached an agreement on jurisdiction, family services, or a plan to resolve the case. Of the 63 cases mediated, 13 (21% of cases representing 26 children) resulted in a full agreement. In these cases, the issue of legal jurisdiction was resolved, and the mediation resulted in a stipulation (an admission of neglect by a parent or guardian). In 47 cases (75% of the cases, representing 79 children) the mediation was partially successful, resolving significant family concerns. There were only 3 cases (5% of the cases, representing 3 children) in which mediation resulted in no agreement.

Qualitative measures, shown in Figure 1, illustrate satisfaction measures (highly satisfied and satisfied) of 100% for performance of the mediator(s), 87% for the ADR

⁷ Scheduled cases may not be held for the following reasons: (a) case dismissed by the court; (b) case settled prior to mediation; (c) case rescheduled by the parties; (d) case cancelled (e.g., domestic violence); and (e) case scheduled in 2023 for mediation in 2024. Family Court and Multi-Door have implemented measures to reduce the number of rescheduled cases to expedite case resolution.

⁸ In addition to the new abuse and neglect referrals, 20 post-adjudication cases were referred with issues of permanency, custody, visitation and/or post-adoption communication. Of those 20 cases that were referred in 2023, 19 cases were offered mediation in 2023 and one case was offered mediation in 2024. Of the 19 cases (representing 21 children), 84% (16 cases representing 17 children) mediated and 16% (3 cases representing 4 children) did not participate. Of the 16 cases that mediated, 50% (8 cases representing 8 children) reached full settlement on custody or post-adoption contact. Partial settlement was reached in 38% of the mediated cases (6 cases representing 7 children). No agreement was reached in 12% of the cases (2 cases representing 2 children).

outcome, and 93% for the ADR process.⁹



Domestic Relations Mediation

Mediation in domestic relations matters typically addresses issues of child custody, visitation, child support, alimony, and distribution of property. Domestic relations matters are often characterized by high levels of discord and poor communication, both factors which contribute to increasing the level of conflict.

A total of 799 domestic relations cases completed the mediation intake interview process and were referred to mediation in 2023.¹⁰ An additional 319 cases (40%) referred to mediation did not participate because they were found to be either inappropriate or ineligible for mediation or the parties voluntarily withdrew from the process.¹¹

Of the 480 cases mediated, 178 cases (37%) settled in mediation and 302 cases (63%) did not reach an agreement. Of the 178 settled cases, a full agreement was reached

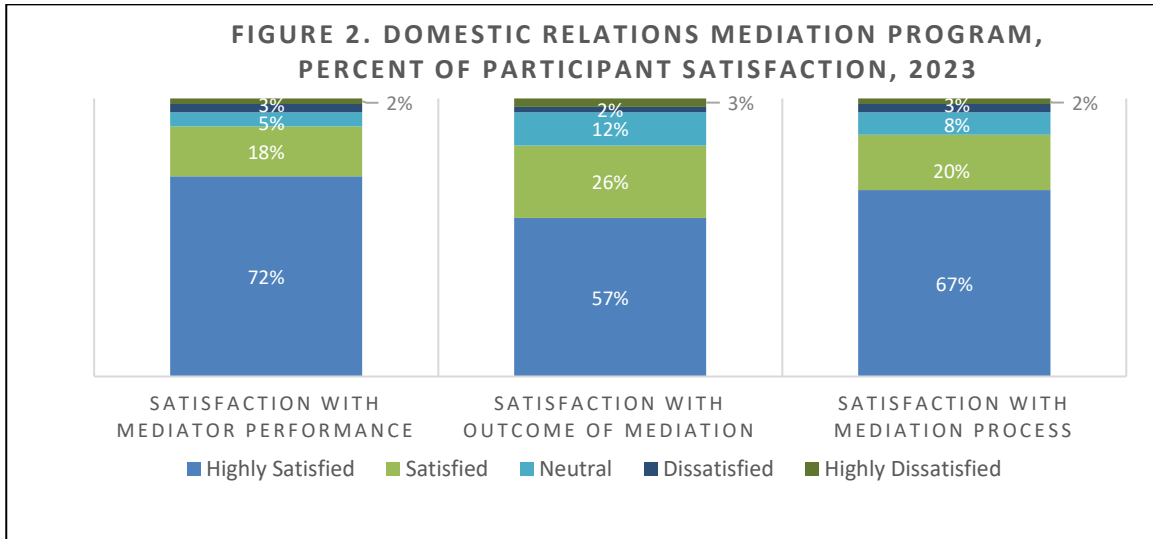
⁹ These statistics are based on data provided by the Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division.

¹⁰ There were 1,355 cases opened at intake. Prior to reaching mediation, 556 of those cases were closed at intake because at least one essential party did not complete the intake interview process or neither party responded to intake scheduling requests.

¹¹ Cases that did not participate in mediation include: 12 cases deemed inappropriate for mediation and 307 cases where at least one party failed to report to mediation or refused to mediate.

in 129 cases (72%); a partial agreement was reached in 49 cases (28%), resolving significant family concerns.

Qualitative outcome measures (Figure 2) show satisfaction rates (highly satisfied and satisfied) of 90% for the performance of the mediator(s), 83% for the ADR outcome, and 87% for the ADR process.



Family Court ADR Initiatives

The Family Court and Multi-Door have coordinated efforts to implement initiatives to support ADR consistent with the Family Court Act. In 2023, the Program for Agreement and Cooperation in Contested Custody Cases (PAC) was conducted remotely via Zoom. The objective of the program is to help participants improve working relationships and develop effective communication skills while prioritizing their children’s needs.

Twenty-four education seminars were conducted in 2023, which helped 285 parents understand the impact of custody disputes on co-parenting and how these disputes affect their children.

Additionally, the Family Court has attorney negotiators available to assist litigants in reaching an amicable solution to issues presented to the court. Attorney negotiators work with litigants to reach solutions on matters including, but not limited to, custody, divorce, visitation, child support, property distribution, and alimony. If the parties are able to come to an agreement on all the issues before the court, a court order will be issued. In 2023, 300 cases were referred to attorney negotiators; of those, 223 cases (74%) were resolved through negotiation. Family Court collaborated with the George Washington Law School to expand the program, having supervised law school students serve as volunteer student attorney negotiators. Twenty-four cases were negotiated by volunteer student attorney negotiators in 2023.

District of Columbia Bar, Family Law Community/Family Court ADR Program

In addition to domestic relations cases mediated through Multi-Door, the Court also has a partnership with the Family Law Community of the District of Columbia Bar. This group of experienced family law attorneys conducted ADR in domestic relations cases. Judges decide on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the parties and the lawyers, whether it is appropriate to refer a case to ADR for mediation. The parties, either pro se or with their counsel, agree to attend and participate in ADR for up to three hours, if property is at issue, and up to four hours, if issues of custody are involved. The parties agree to pay the ADR Facilitator at a reduced rate of \$200 per hour. As part of their participation in the program, ADR Facilitators agree to accept one pro bono case per year.

The ADR Facilitators are family lawyers with at least five years of experience in domestic relations practice and mediation training or experience. The program includes a

case evaluation component, along with mediation, in which parties and counsel are provided with an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of their respective positions.

In 2023, approximately 60 families were ordered to participate in the ADR program.

Family Court Operations Case Activity

There were 3,705 pending pre-disposition cases in the Family Court on January 1, 2023. In 2023, there were 9,973 new cases filed¹² and 237 cases reopened in the Family Court. During the same period, 10,447 cases were disposed. As a result, there were 3,468 cases pending in the Family Court on December 31, 2023 (Table 1).

TABLE 1. FAMILY COURT OPERATIONS CASE ACTIVITY, 2023

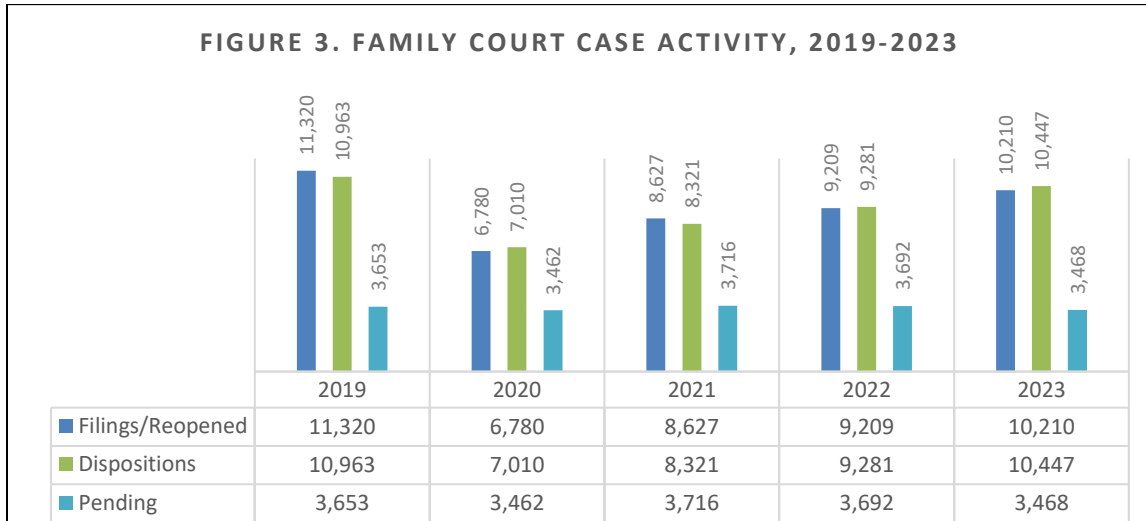
	Abuse & Neglect	Adoption	Divorce & Custody	Juvenile ^a	Mental Health	Parentage & Support ^b	Total
Pending Jan. 1 ^c	35	105	1,828	496	159	1,082	3,705
New Filings	178 ^d	164	4,275	1,209 ^d	2,974	1,173	9,973
Reopened	0	0	89	10	114	24	237
Total Available for Disposition	213	269	6,192	1,715	3,247	2,279	13,915
Dispositions	165 ^e	179	4,516	991 ^e	3,061	1,535	10,447
Pending Dec. 31	48	90	1,676	724	186	744	3,468
Percent Change in Pending	37.1%	-14.3%	-8.3%	46.0%	17.0%	-31.2%	-6.4%
Clearance Rate ^f	93%	109%	103%	81%	99%	128%	102%

- a. Includes cases involving Delinquency, PINS (persons in need of supervision), and Interstate Compact.
- b. Two types of order-related dispositions occur in Parentage and Support (P&S) cases: temporary and permanent support order dispositions.
- c. Pending figures for all case types except Abuse & Neglect and Juvenile were adjusted after an audit of caseloads.
- d. New filings do not reflect cases in pre-petition custody order status.
- e. Dispositions in Abuse & Neglect and Juvenile reporting do not include cases that were not petitioned.
- f. The clearance rate, a measure of court efficiency, is the total number of cases disposed divided by the total number of cases added (new filings and reopened cases) during a given time period. Rates over 100% indicate the court disposed of more cases than were added, thereby reducing the pending caseload.

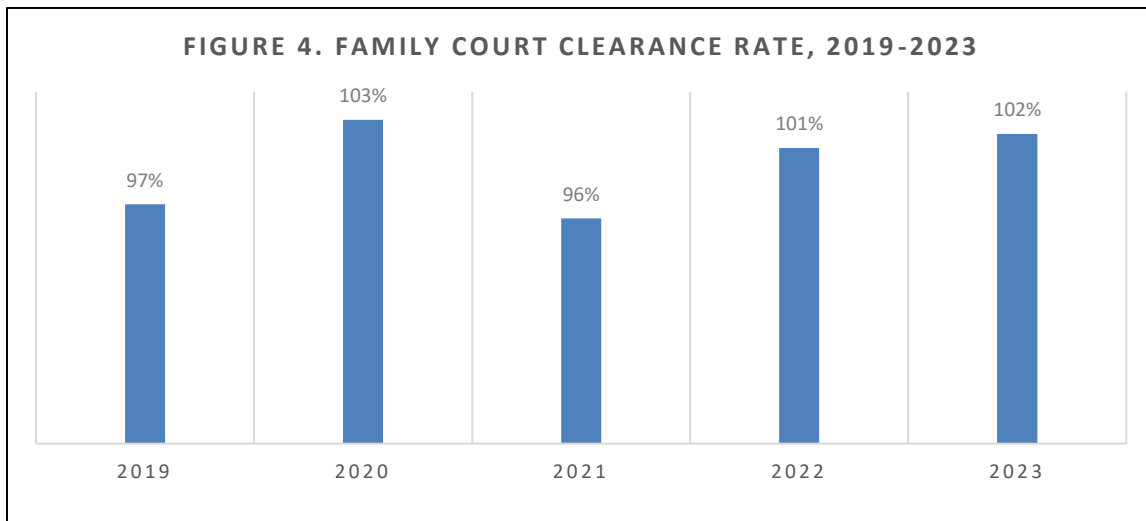
Over the past five years, the number of filings (including reopened cases) and the number of dispositions fluctuated (Figure 3). New filings/reopened cases decreased by

¹² New filings in Abuse and Neglect (34) and Juvenile (65) initiated with a pre-petition custody order were excluded from the 9,973 new cases filed unless a subsequent petition was filed in 2023. The exclusion of these cases more accurately reflects the cases available to be processed. Prior to 2018, those cases were included in the new filing category.

10% from 2019 (11,320) to 2023 (10,210) while dispositions decreased by 5% from 2019 (10,963) to 2023 (10,447).



An effective measure of whether a court is managing its caseload efficiently is its clearance rate. The clearance rate is the number of outgoing cases as a percentage of the number of incoming cases. To maintain a clearance rate of 100%, the court must dispose of one case for every new case filed or reopened. Disposing of cases in a timely manner helps ensure that the number of cases awaiting disposition, or the pending caseload, does not increase. The overall clearance rate for the Family Court in 2023 was 102%, an increase of 1% from 2022 (Figure 4).



Family Court Case Activity

New case filings in Family Court increased 10% from 2022 to 2023 (9,056 in 2022; 9,973 in 2023). New case filings increased in all case types except Abuse & Neglect cases. In 2023, the Family Court resolved 10,447 cases, a 13% increase in the number of dispositions from 2022 (9,281). While dispositions increased in Adoption, Divorce & Custody, Juvenile, and Mental Health cases, dispositions decreased in Abuse & Neglect and Parentage & Support cases.

A disposition does not always end court oversight and judicial involvement. In many Family Court cases, even after an order is entered, there is a significant amount of post-disposition activity. For example, dispositions in parentage and support cases include cases resolved through the issuance of either a temporary or permanent support order. Cases resolved through issuance of a temporary support order often have financial review hearings scheduled after disposition until a permanent support order is established. In addition, all support cases are subject to contempt and modification hearings that require judicial oversight. Child support orders entered in D.C. are valid until the child attains the age of 21 or is emancipated. In 2023, 1,095 post-disposition parentage and support motions were filed.

Domestic Relations cases are also subject to post-disposition activity such as motions for contempt and motions to modify or enforce custody or visitation; these motions can require significant judicial, administrative and courtroom management. In 2023, 3,308 post-disposition motions were filed in domestic relations cases.

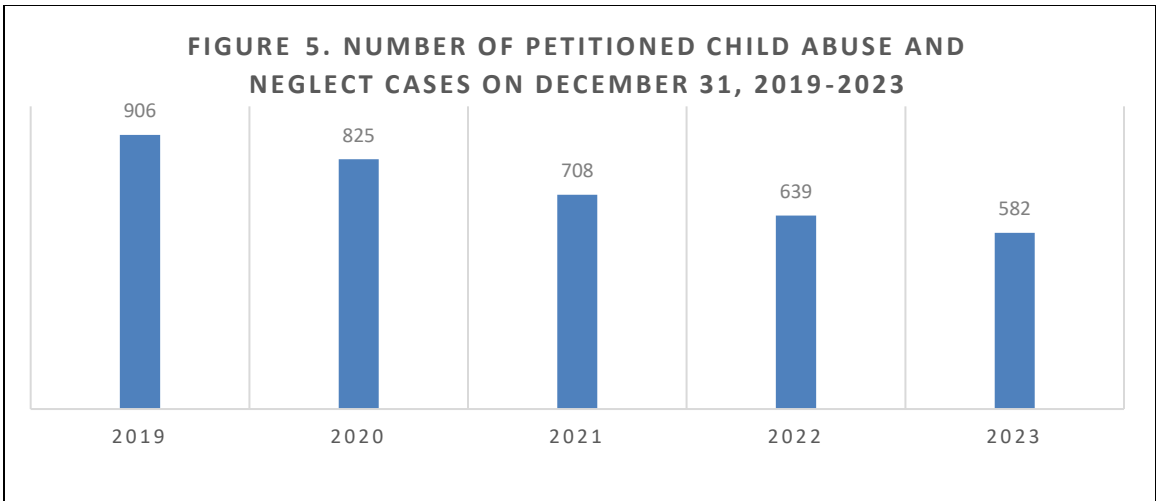
Mental Habilitation cases are considered disposed once an order of commitment or an order of voluntary admission is entered. In 2023, 496 post-disposition mental habilitation cases remained open, requiring annual judicial reviews to evaluate the need for continued

commitment.

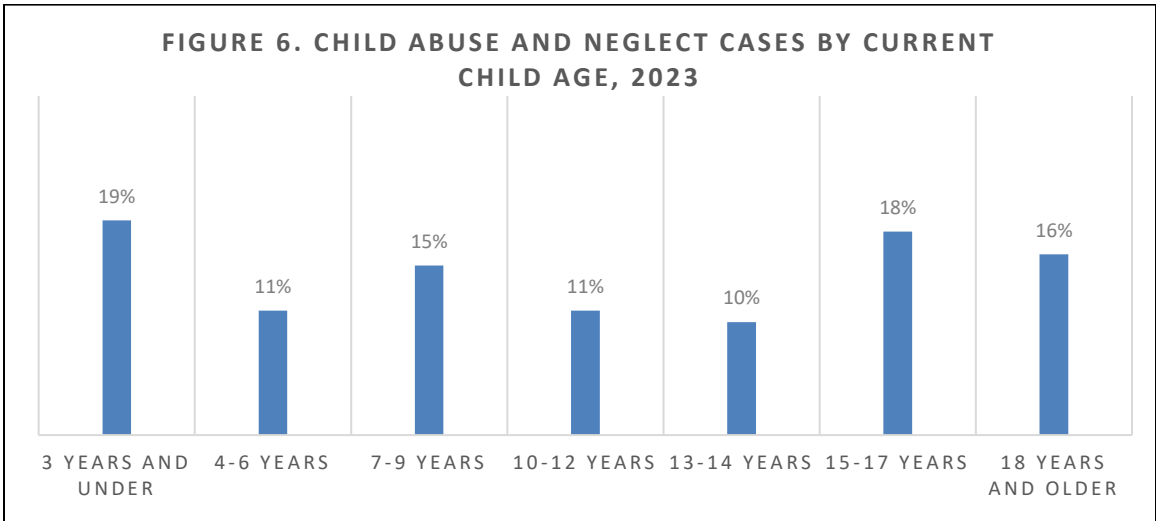
Juvenile cases are disposed at sentencing and stay open until sentence expiration or until the Family Court no longer has jurisdiction over the juvenile. In 2023, there were 588 post-disposition juvenile cases. Abuse and neglect cases remain open after disposition until either the permanency goal is achieved or until the Family Court no longer has jurisdiction over the respondent due to age. In 2023, 534 post-disposition abuse and neglect cases remained open and required regular judicial review until the child reached permanency either through placement in a permanent living situation or aged out of the foster care system.

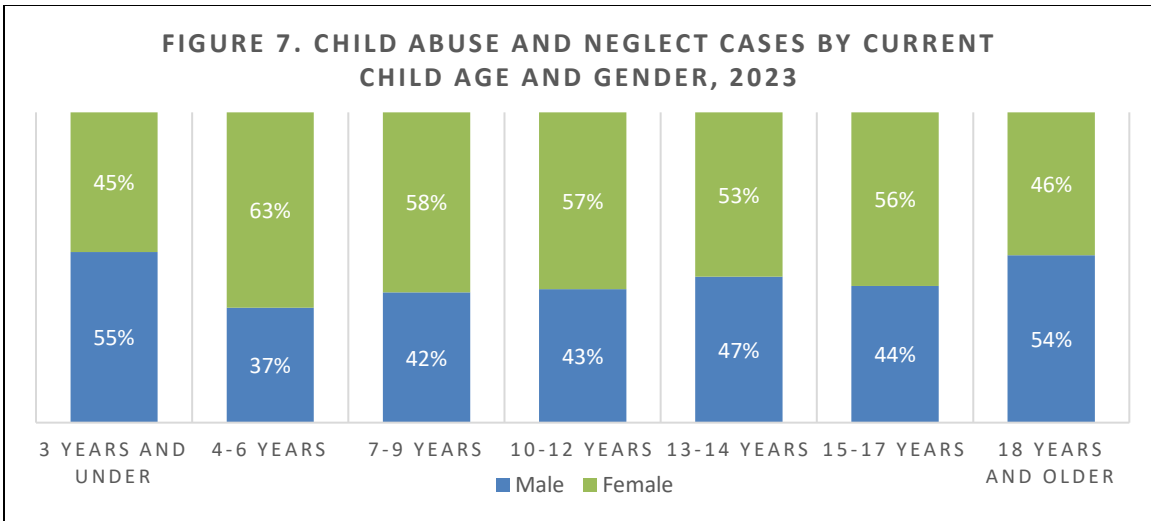
Abuse and Neglect Cases

In 2023, there were 582 children with an open abuse and neglect case under Family Court jurisdiction, representing a 9% decrease from 2022 (Figure 5). This includes children with open petitioned cases that are either undisposed (48) or in which a disposition hearing was held and then followed by regularly scheduled permanency hearings (534). Forty-eight of the 534 children with post-disposition cases are children with disrupted guardianship cases. There were 106 cases in pre-petition custody order status that are excluded from the total number (582).



Youth aged 15 and older accounted for 34% of all open abuse and neglect cases under Family Court jurisdiction (Figure 6). Nineteen percent of children were aged three years and under. Children aged 3 and under and 18 and older were more likely to be male while the remaining age categories were more likely to be female (Figure 7).

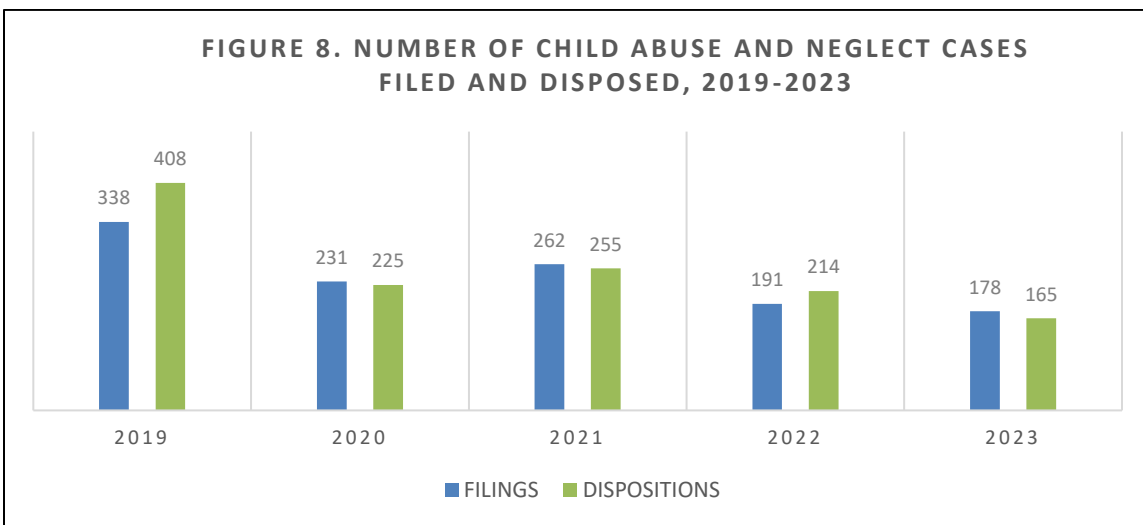




While this section pertained to all children with open abuse and neglect cases in 2023, the next section will focus on child abuse and neglect new referrals.

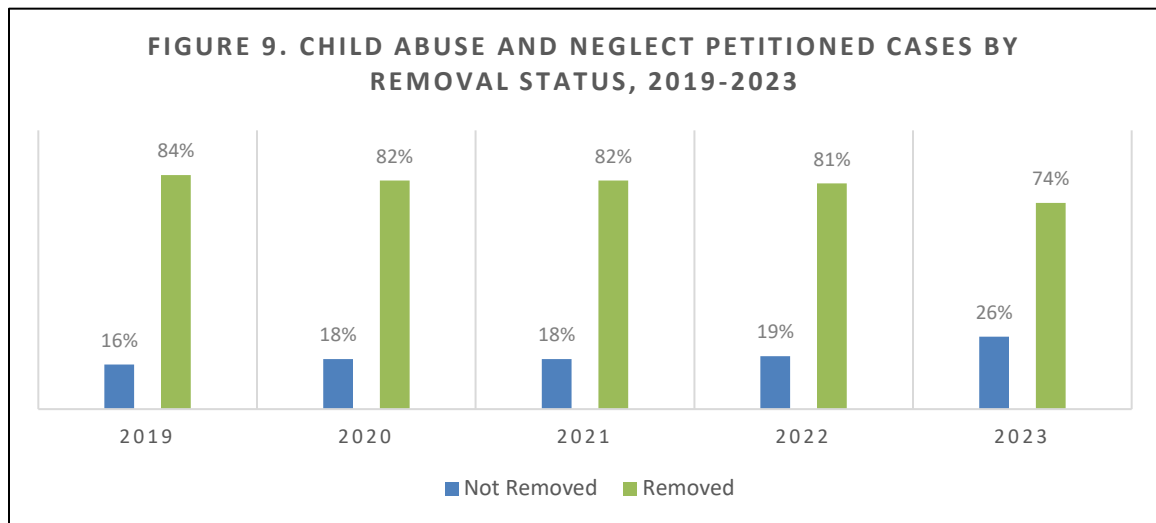
Children Referred to Family Court

In 2023, there were 178 new child abuse and neglect referrals filed and 165 child abuse and neglect cases disposed (Figure 8). At the end of 2023, of the 178 new referrals, 69% (123) had a completed disposition hearing, 26% (47) remained undisposed, and 5% (8) were dismissed.



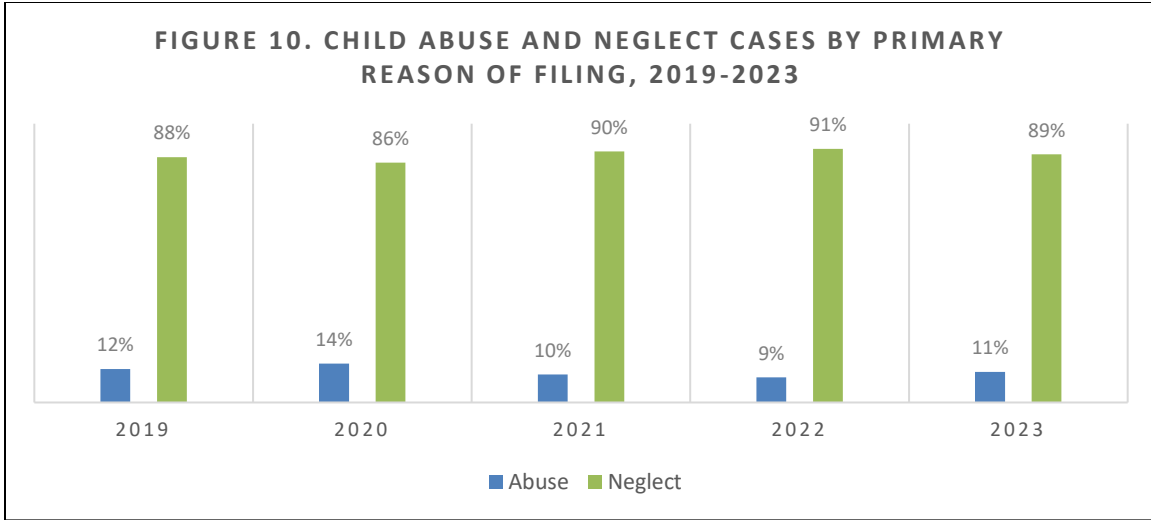
Fluctuations in the number of referrals to Family Court may be attributed to policy

changes at the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), such as handling more cases as “in home” cases. In-home supervision of cases by CFSA provides the family and the agency with an opportunity to address the family’s needs without court supervision. CFSA’s strategic agenda known as the “Four Pillars” strives to improve outcomes for children and families by reducing the number of children coming under Family Court jurisdiction through application of “Pillar One: Narrowing the Front Door.” This pillar was designed to decrease the number of entries into foster care through differential response and placement with kin.¹³

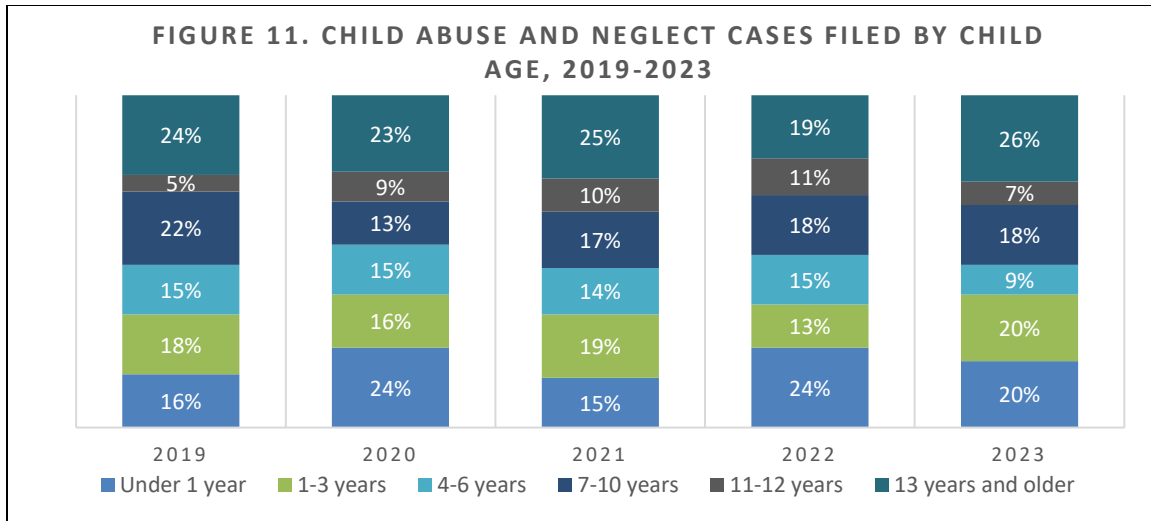


In 2023, children were removed from the home in 74% of petitioned cases while children remained in the home under protective supervision in 26% of petitioned cases (Figure 9). This represents the lowest percentage of removed petitioned cases in the last five years. In 2023, an allegation of neglect (89%) was the most likely reason for a youth to be referred to the Family Court (Figure 10).

¹³ Child and Family Services Agency, “Four Pillars.” CFSA.DC.GOV. <https://www.cfsa.dc.gov/page/four-pillars/>. Accessed March 19, 2024.



At the time of referral, almost half (49%) of new petitions were for children aged six and younger, with 40% for children aged three or younger (Figure 11). Given the vulnerability of children in these age groups, the Family Court and CFSA are continuing to review the needs of this population, especially as it relates to educational and developmental services and access to other early intervention programs. In 2023, 26% of new petitions to Family Court involved children aged 13 and older at the time of referral. The Family Court, CFSA, and other child welfare stakeholders continue to examine the implications of a larger population of older youth coming into care. The examination includes an assessment of resources available in the District to assist parents and caregivers in addressing this population’s needs before they come into care, as well as the need to identify and develop appropriate placement options once they are in care.



Transfer of Abuse and Neglect Cases to Family Court

Under the Family Court Act, if the term of a Family Court judge expires before the judge disposes of the case, the Presiding Judge must reassign the case to another Family Court judge. A non-Family Court judge can retain a case, with the approval of the Chief Judge, provided that: (1) the judge retaining the case has the required experience in family law; (2) the case is in compliance with ASFA; and (3) it is likely that permanency would not be achieved more quickly by reassigning the case within Family Court. In 2023, no judges leaving Family Court retained any abuse and neglect cases.

Compliance with D.C. ASFA Requirements

The District of Columbia Adoption and Safe Families Act (D.C. ASFA) establishes timelines for the completion of trials and disposition hearings in abuse and neglect cases.¹⁴ The timelines vary depending on whether the child was removed from the home. For a child removed from the home, the statutory timeframe within which the trial

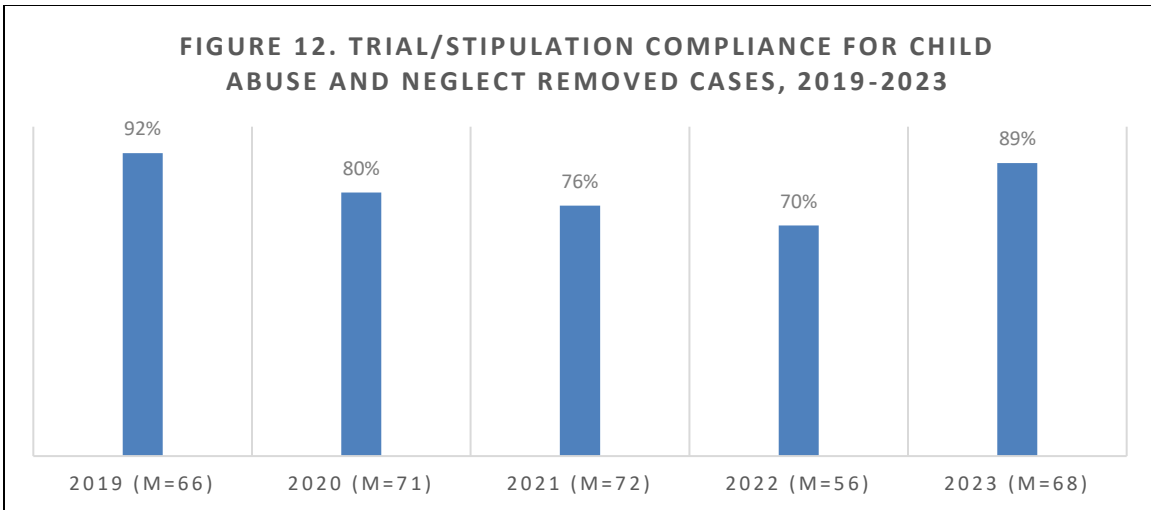
¹⁴ D.C. Law 13-136, 47 D.C. Reg. 2850 (2000), codified at D.C. Code § 16-2301 *et seq.*, (2000 Ed.).

or stipulation must be held is 105 days from the date of removal. For a child not removed from the home, the statutory timeframe within which the trial or stipulation must be held is 45 days from the petition filing date. The statute requires that trial and disposition occur on the same day, regardless of whether the child has been removed, but permits the court 15 additional days to hold a disposition hearing for good cause shown, if the continuance does not result in the hearing exceeding the overall deadline.

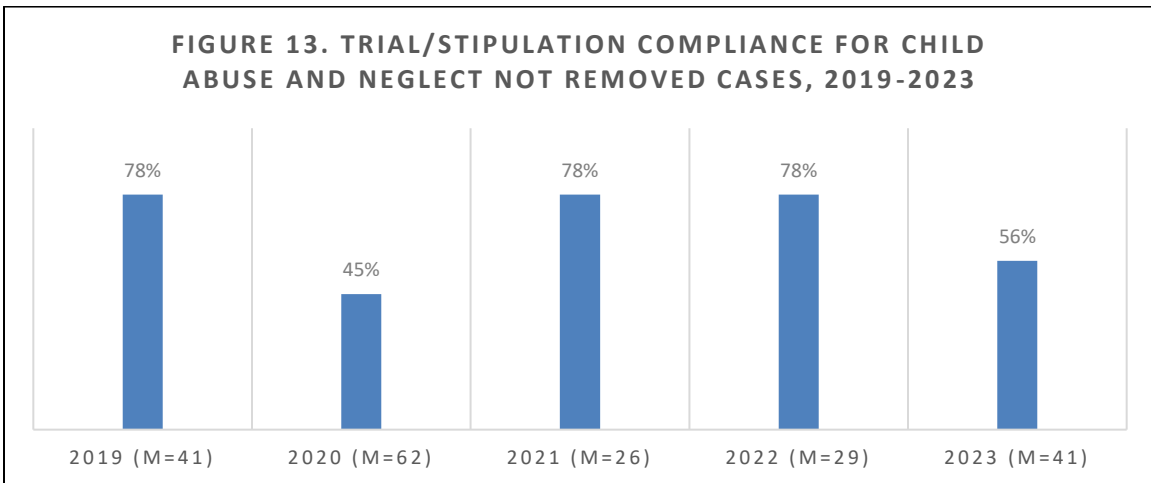
Trial/Stipulation of Abuse and Neglect Cases

In 2023, 74% of children referred to the court were removed from their homes (Figure 9). Eighty-nine percent of cases filed had a factfinding hearing in compliance with the 105-day ASFA timeline for trials in removal cases (Figure 12), an increase from 70% in 2022. In 2023, 6% of cases were out of compliance with the timeline, 4% of the cases were pending trial, and 1% of cases were closed prior to a factfinding hearing. The median time for a case to reach trial or stipulation was 68 days in 2023, an increase from 56 days in 2022.

A number of cases involved sibling groups with several parents and stepparents as parties, thereby increasing the complexity of the trial or stipulation events. In 2023, there were 33 sibling groups – one group with six siblings, four groups with five siblings, one group with four siblings, six groups with three siblings and 21 groups with two siblings.

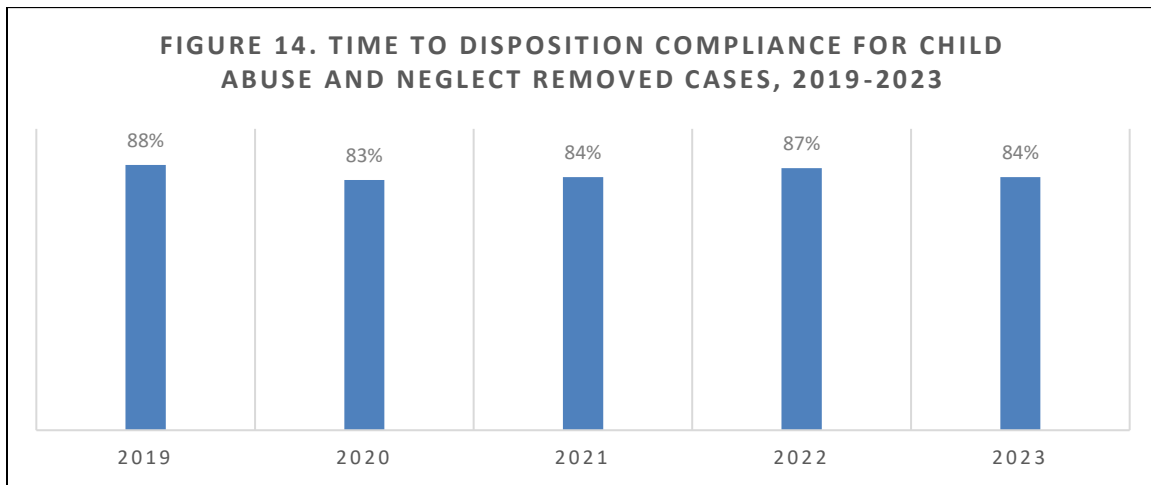


Twenty-six percent of children referred to the court were not removed from their homes (Figure 9). For children not removed from home, compliance with the timeline to trial or stipulation (45 days) decreased from 78% in 2022 to 56% in 2023 (Figure 13). In 2023, 34% of cases were out of compliance with the timeline and 10% of cases filed were closed prior to a factfinding hearing. The median time for a case to reach trial or stipulation was 41 days. As the number of abuse and neglect cases continue to decline, compliance rates are increasingly impacted by a small number of non-compliant cases; however, the Family Court will continue to monitor and track compliance in this area throughout 2024.

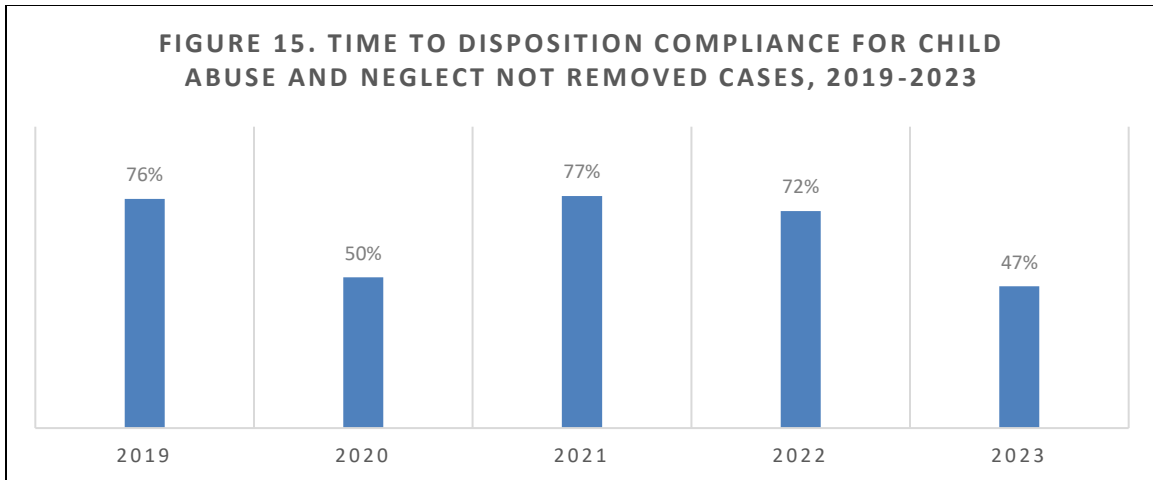


Disposition Hearings in Abuse and Neglect Cases

Among cases petitioned in 2023 where the child was removed, 84% held disposition hearings within the 105-day timeline (Figure 14). This number may increase as pending cases filed later in 2023 have disposition hearings in 2024. In 2023, the median time to disposition was 85 days. The two factors adversely impacting time to disposition are scheduling issues involving key witnesses, and legal complexities, which can cause delays as the parties work toward resolution prior to trial.

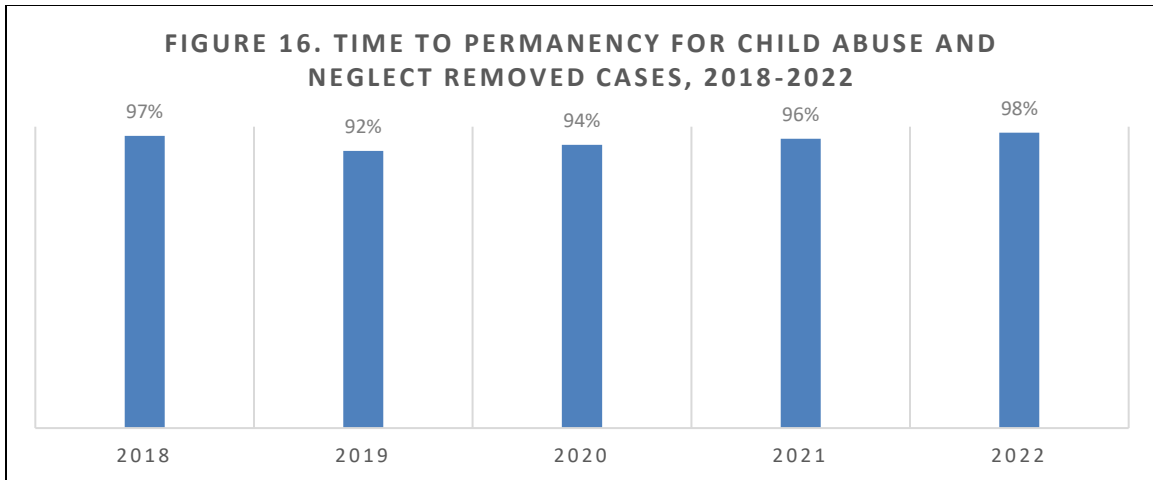


Among cases petitioned in 2023 where the child was not removed, 47% held disposition hearings within the 45-day timeline, a decrease from 72% in 2022 (Figure 15). This number may increase as pending cases filed later in 2023 have disposition hearings in 2024. The median time to reach disposition was 49 days.



Compliance with ASFA Permanency Hearing Requirements

Both the D.C. and Federal ASFA require the court to hold a permanency hearing for each child who has been removed from home within 12 months of the child’s entry into foster care. Entry into foster care is defined in D.C. Code § 16-2301(28) as the earlier of 60 days after the date on which the child is removed from the home, or the date of the first judicial finding that the child has been neglected. The purpose of the permanency hearing, ASFA’s most important requirement, is to decide the child’s permanency goal and to set a timetable for achieving it. Figure 16 shows the court’s compliance with holding permanency hearings within the ASFA timeline. The level of compliance with this requirement has consistently remained high. Since 2018, 92% or more of removed cases had a permanency hearing within the required timeline. Cases filed in 2023 are pending a permanency hearing, and, if held timely, will increase the compliance rate.



Goal Setting and Achievement Date

ASFA requires that the Family Court set a specific goal (reunification, adoption, guardianship, custody, or another planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA)) and an achievement date for that goal at each permanency hearing. Judges are also required to raise the issue of barriers in achieving the permanency goal in the court hearings. Early identification of barriers leads to expedited resolution of issues and improved permanency success.

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) and the American Bar Association’s Center on Children and the Law have established best practices for the content and structure of permanency hearings mandated by ASFA, including what decisions should be made and how much time should be set aside for each hearing. In its publication, *Enhanced Resource Guidelines: Improving Court Practice in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases*, NCJFCJ recommends that permanency hearings be set

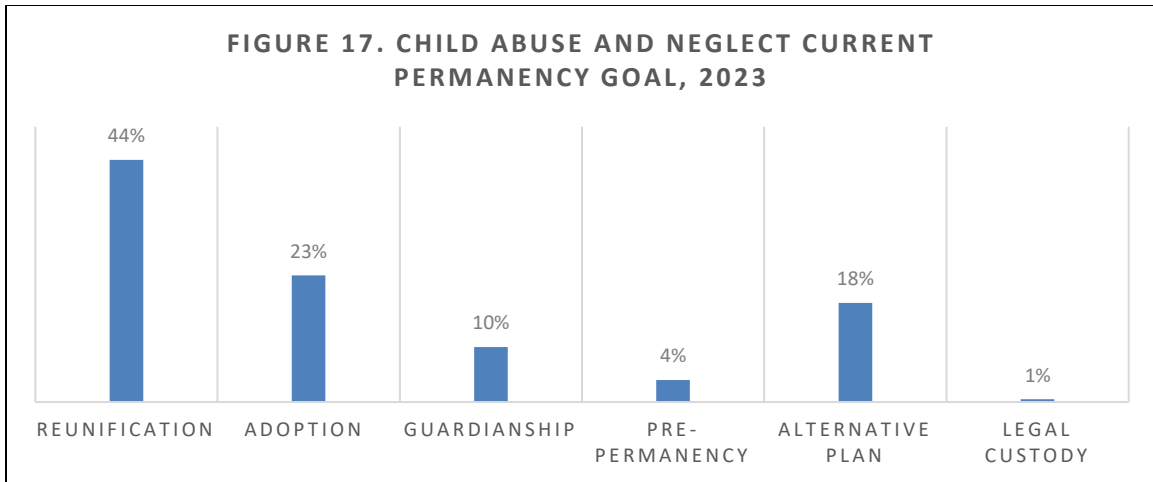
for 60 minutes.¹⁵ Family Court judges continue to report that the length of their permanency hearings meets or exceeds this standard.

Judicial officers are required to use a standardized court order for all permanency hearings. In 2012, the Family Court Strategic Planning Committee, through the Abuse and Neglect Subcommittee's court orders workgroup, reviewed, revised, and piloted the official court order forms for proceedings in these cases. The revised orders became effective on January 1, 2013, and are used in every courtroom. The orders not only meet the requirements of ASFA but also the requirements of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-351), the Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-239), and the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-608).

Barriers to Permanency

Figure 17 illustrates permanency goals for children including reunification, adoption, guardianship, legal custody, or another planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA). Pre-permanency cases (4%, 20) have yet to hold a disposition hearing, the earliest point at which a permanency goal would be set. Although the court has successfully established goals for children, each goal presents a unique set of challenges.

¹⁵ National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. (2016). *Enhanced Resources Guideline: Improving Court Practice in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases*. <https://www.ncjfcj.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/NCJFCJ-Enhanced-Resource-Guidelines-05-2016.pdf>



For children with the goal of reunification (44%), the primary barriers to reunification were related to the disability of a parent, the parent’s mental health issues, the need for the parent to receive substance abuse treatment, the need for the parent to obtain life skills training, and/or lack of adequate housing. For children with the goal of adoption (23%), obtaining appropriate housing and procedural impediments such as the completion of adoption proceedings were the most frequently identified barriers to permanency. The lack of adoption resources and issues related to the adoption subsidy were additional frequently cited barriers. For the 10% of children with the goal of guardianship, impediments such as completion of the guardianship proceedings, disabilities of the parent/caretaker, the need to receive substance abuse and other treatment, and issues related to the guardianship subsidy were barriers to achieving permanency.

Youth aged 15 and older comprised 34% of all children in foster care. Many of these children cannot return to their parents and do not wish to be adopted or considered for any other permanency option, making permanency difficult to achieve. In such cases, the court found it was in the youths’ best interests to set a goal of APPLA (18%).

Pursuant to federal requirements, CFSA and the Family Court continue to work to review permanency options and services available for older youth, including by working to reduce the number of youth with a goal of APPLA and the number of youth aging out of the child welfare system. Under the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014 (Preventing Sex Trafficking Act),¹⁶ only youth aged 16 and older are eligible for an APPLA goal.

The *Preparing Youth for Adulthood Program (PYA)*, created by the Family Court in conjunction with Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children of D.C. (CASA), has been an effective tool in helping older youth who remain in foster care through age 21 receive the support necessary to achieve independence. The program focuses on life skills development through positivity, empowerment and opportunity. Special advocates work with each youth on goal setting and achievement, building financial literacy and budgeting skills, and working on long-term housing, employment and education. The program emphasizes connection, as each older youth is paired with one adult special advocate who has committed to remaining in the youth's life after emancipation and will continue to mentor that youth as needed to create a more seamless transition out of care. The program works in tandem with CFSA's Office of Youth Empowerment on youth transitional planning, independent living services, educational and vocational training, and improved life skills training. The PYA is funded through the Court Improvement Program (CIP) grant, which was reauthorized and funded for 2023-2024.

¹⁶ Pub. L. 113-183, 128 Stat. 1919 (2014).

Family Treatment Court Program

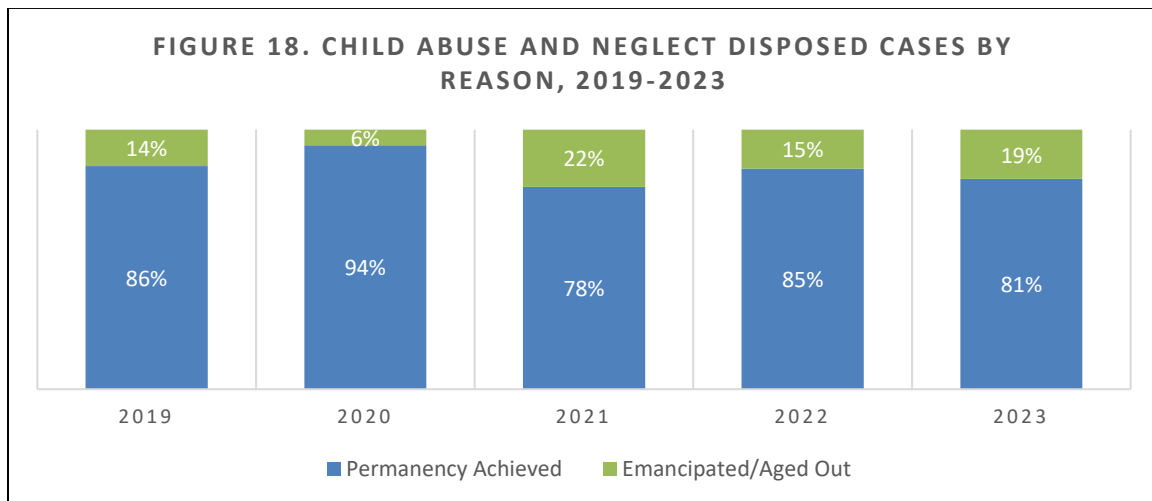
The Family Treatment Court (FTC), in operation since 2003, is a reunification program that supports mothers and fathers with substance use disorders to achieve and maintain their sobriety, while safely and promptly reunifying them with their children. FTC is a 12- to 15-month voluntary program which takes a holistic approach to helping participants break the cycle of addiction, shorten the out-of-home placement of children, and expedite permanency.

FTC, utilizing a grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), hosted over 20 client-centered workshops and trainings on topics including Trauma, Domestic Violence, Parenting, Opioids, and Fentanyl. The three-year grant provided participants with metro cards to assist with transportation to visits with their children, drug testing, and attending mandatory court hearings. The OJJDP grant allowed FTC to provide incentives (certificates, recovery material) to participants as they achieved goals and reached recovery milestones. FTC enhanced the model to include Recovery Mentors, offering participants access to individuals with lived experience to support their recovery process. FTC remains an invaluable treatment option for families with substance use disorders involved in the child welfare system. The success of the program is evidenced by the more than 400 families who have achieved reunification since its inception in 2003. FTC hosted its commencement ceremony in December 2023, honoring five parents who successfully completed the program, reunified with their children, and had their cases closed.

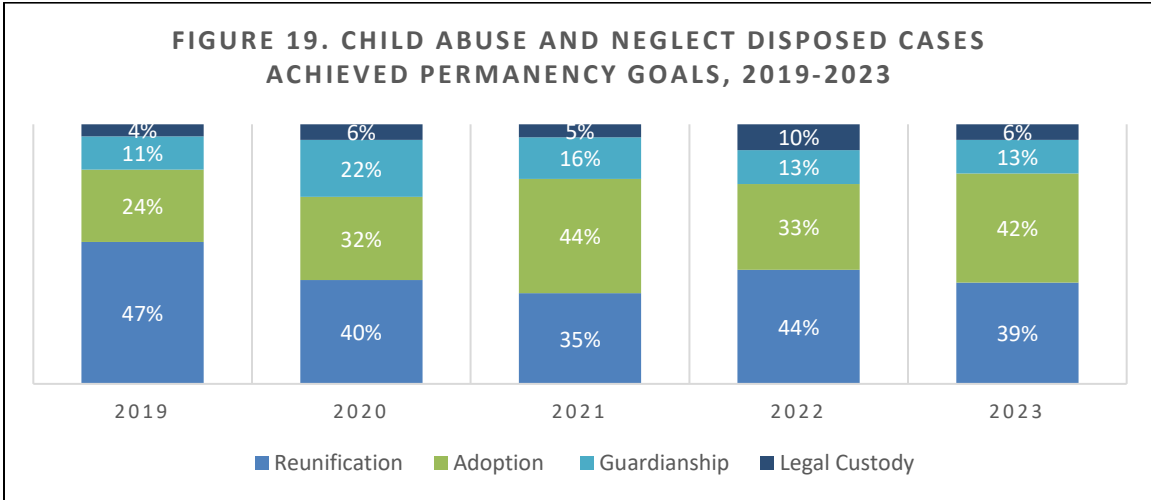
In addition to providing training to program participants, FTC facilitated 15 staff trainings and worked with the Department of Health to facilitate two courtwide NARCAN trainings.

Permanency Outcomes for Children

This section focuses on permanency outcomes for children following a disposition hearing. In 2023, Family Court judicial officers closed 211 post-disposition abuse and neglect cases. Eighty-one percent were closed because permanency was achieved, representing a decrease from 85% in 2022 (Figure 18). Nineteen percent of the cases were closed without reaching permanency, either because the child aged out of the system (16%, 34) or was emancipated (3%, 6).



In 2023, 42% of cases closed due to adoption, an increase from 33% in 2022. Thirty-nine percent of cases closed due to reunification, a decrease from 44% in 2022 (Figure 19). The percentage of cases that closed due to guardianship (13%) remained the same as the previous year. Six percent of cases closed due to legal custody, a decrease from 10% in 2022.



Nineteen percent of post-disposition cases were closed without the child achieving permanency, a decrease from 23% in 2022. This was due to the child reaching the age of majority or the child refusing further services from CFSA. CFSA established enhanced guidelines and procedures for social workers considering a goal of APPLA to ensure that the maximum number of children reach permanency. The court agreed to work with the agency to help monitor compliance with the requirements for recommending a permanency goal change to APPLA. The agency’s policy and the court’s monitoring are designed to ensure that only those children for whom no other permanency option is appropriate will receive a goal of APPLA.

The court is required, under the Preventing Sex Trafficking Act, to ensure that the youth participate in case planning. At each permanency hearing, CFSA must outline their intensive and ongoing efforts for family placement in addition to the success of those efforts, including attempting to locate biological family members using search engines and databases (including social media). Additionally, the court is required to ask the youth about the youth’s desired permanency outcome and make a judicial determination

as to why APPLA remains the best permanency goal and preferable to the child being returned home, adopted, placed with a legal guardian, or placed with a fit and willing relative. At each permanency hearing the agency is also required to specify the steps it is taking to ensure that the reasonable and prudent parent standard is being followed, and that the child has regular, ongoing opportunities to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities.

As required by the Preventing Sex Trafficking Act, the court measures its performance and monitors the outcomes of children under court supervision. Using the performance measures developed by the American Bar Association, the National Center for State Courts and the NCJFCJ, the court has developed baseline data in areas critical to outcomes for children. The *Toolkit for Court Performance Measures in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases*¹⁷ identifies four performance measures--safety, permanency, timeliness, and due process--which courts can use to assess their performance. Each measure has a goal, outcomes, and a list of performance elements that courts should consider when developing performance plans to assess their success in meeting the identified goals.

The Family Court performance measures of permanency and timeliness are discussed below. Performance information is also tracked for due process. Due process is thoroughly addressed in the District of Columbia, as counsel is appointed for all parents, guardians and custodians who meet the financial eligibility requirements, and guardians ad litem are appointed for all children.¹⁸

¹⁷ Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (2019). *Toolkit for Court Performance Measures in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases*. <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/library/toolkit-for-court-performance-measures-in-child-abuse-and-neglect-cases>.

¹⁸ D.C. Code § 16-2304 (2016); Superior Court Neglect Rule 42.

Data for each performance area is measured and restricted to cases filed and/or disposed of within a specific timeframe. A cohort analysis approach, based on when a case was filed, allows the court to examine its performance over time in achieving permanency for children, as well as allowing an assessment of the impact of legislative and/or administrative changes over time.

Performance Measure 1: Permanency

Goal: Children should have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Measure 1a: Percentage of children who reach legal permanency (by reunification, adoption, guardianship, legal custody, or another planned permanent living arrangement) within 6, 12, 18, and 24 months from removal.

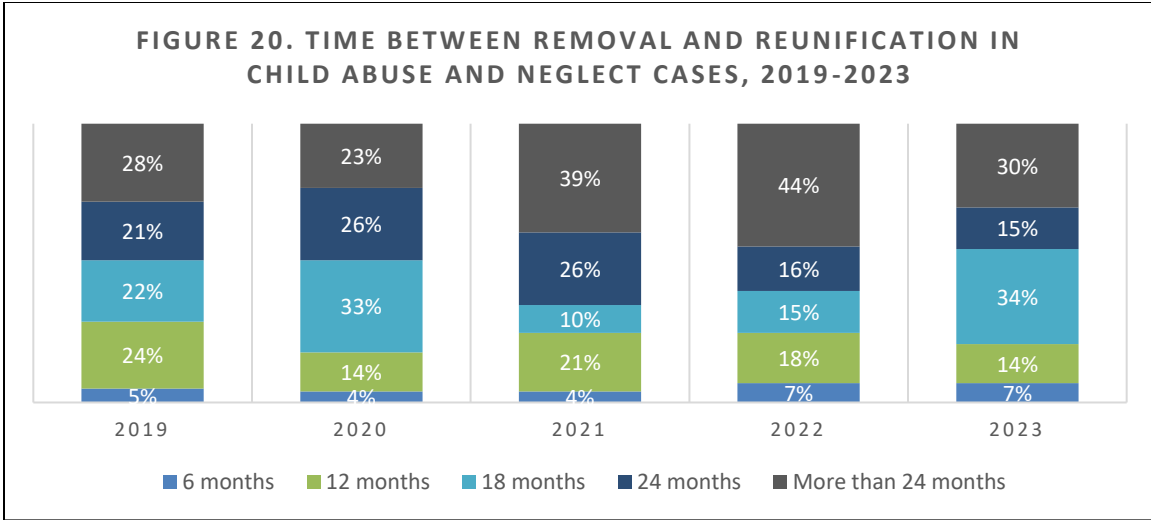
TABLE 2. MEDIAN TIME (IN MONTHS) FROM REMOVAL TO ACHIEVED PERMANENCY GOAL IN CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT CASES, 2019-2023

Year	Reunification	Adoption	Guardianship	Legal Custody
2019	18.0	33.6	34.8	15.3
2020	20.4	37.0	24.0	21.6
2021	22.8	30.2	32.9	20.7
2022	20.7	33.8	18.4	22.7
2023	17.9	32.9	28.6	25.6

Table 2 reflects median time (in months) to case closure. In 2023, the median time required to achieve permanency from time of removal decreased in reunification and adoption while increasing in guardianship and legal custody.

In 2023, 21% of children were reunified with their parents within 12 months of removal, 55% were reunified within 18 months, and 70% within 24 months (Figure 20).

Thirty percent of children were reunified in more than 24 months in 2023.

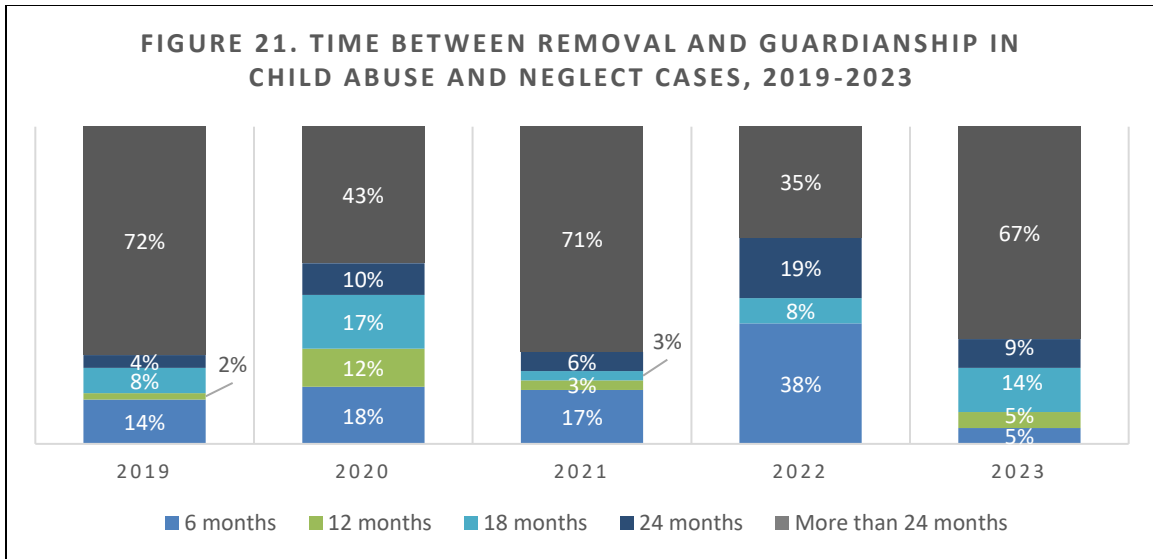


In 2023, 26% of children whose cases closed to adoption spent two years or less in care waiting for adoption finalization. The percentage of children who spent more than 24 months in care waiting for adoption finalization was the highest (74%) since 2020 (Table 3).

TABLE 3. TIME BETWEEN REMOVAL AND ADOPTION IN CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT CASES, 2019-2023

Year	12 months	18 months	24 months	> 24months
2019	1%	9%	15%	75%
2020	0%	6%	19%	75%
2021	0%	9%	20%	71%
2022	0%	16%	17%	67%
2023	3%	8%	15%	74%

As illustrated in Figure 21, 33% (7) of children spent 24 months or less in care before reaching permanency with a permanent guardian. At the same time, 67% (15) of youth spent more than 24 months in care before reaching permanency with a permanent guardian, an increase from 32% (9) in 2022.



Measure 1b. *Percentage of children who do not achieve permanency in the foster care system.*

In 19% (40) of the 211 cases that closed in 2023, the children did not achieve permanency because they aged out of the system (34) or emancipated (6) (Figure 18).

Reentry to Foster Care¹⁹

Measure 1c. *Percentage of children who reenter foster care pursuant to a court order within 12 and 24 months of being returned to their families.*

In 2023, none of the 67 cases that closed through reunification returned to foster care within 12 months (Table 4).²⁰ In 2022, two children returned to foster care within 12 months of reunification.

¹⁹ All reentry rates are based on the number of children returned to care in the District of Columbia. Children returned to care in other jurisdictions are excluded.

²⁰ The year listed is the year the initial case was closed. Children may return to foster care years after the initial case was closed, potentially increasing the number of children returned to foster care from what was previously reported. As the Annual Report presents the most recent data available, the number of children returned to foster care for cases closed in previous years may not match prior Annual Reports.

TABLE 4. NUMBER OF CHILDREN REENTERING FOSTER CARE AFTER REUNIFICATION, 2019-2023

Year	Number of Cases Closed by Reunification	Number of Children Returned to Foster Care after Reunification within 24 Months	Number of Months Before Return	
			12 Months or Less	13-24 Months
2019	201	10	5	5
2020	116	6	5	1
2021	96	4	2	2
2022	95	2	2	0
2023	67	0	0	0

Measure 1d(i). *Percentage of children who reenter foster care pursuant to a court order within 12 and 24 months of being adopted.*

There were 72 cases that closed to adoption in 2023. Since 2019, there was only one case closed to adoption in which children were returned to care; however, this was beyond the 24-month timeframe.

TABLE 5. NUMBER OF CHILDREN REENTERING FOSTER CARE AFTER ADOPTION PLACEMENT, 2019-2023

Year	Number of Cases Closed by Adoption	Number of Children Returned to Foster Care after Adoption	Number of Months Before Return	
			24 Months or Less	More Than 24 Months
2019	104	1	0	1
2020	89	0	0	0
2021	108	0	0	0
2022	74	0	0	0
2023	72	0	0	0

Measure 1d(ii). *Percentage of children who reenter foster care pursuant to a court order within 12 and 24 months of being placed with a permanent guardian.*

In 2023, 22 cases closed to guardianship with no disruptions (Table 6). In 2022, one guardianship case was disrupted within 12 months. In many instances, guardianship placements disrupt due to the death or incapacity of the caregiver. Consistent with statutory requirements, successor guardians are named, and those placements are

reviewed by the court. The cases are reopened to conduct home studies and background checks to ensure child safety prior to placement with the successor guardian.²¹

TABLE 6. NUMBER OF CHILDREN REENTERING FOSTER CARE AFTER PLACEMENT WITH A PERMANENT GUARDIAN, 2019-2023

Year	Number of Cases Closed by Guardianship	Number of Children Returned to Foster Care after Guardianship	Number of Months Before Return	
			12 Months or Less	13-24 Months
2019	49	3	2	1
2020	59	5	3	2
2021	43	5	4	1
2022	26	1	1	0
2023	22	0	0	0

Performance Measure 2: Timeliness

Goal: To enhance expedition to permanency by minimizing the time from the filing of the petition/removal to permanency.

Measures 2a-2e. Time to adjudication, disposition hearing and permanency hearing for children removed from home and children that are not removed.

See discussion under ASFA compliance, pages 32-37.

Termination of Parental Rights

Federal and local laws require that when a child has been placed outside of the home for 15 of the most recent 22 months from the date of entry into foster care, a motion for termination of parental rights (TPR) must be filed or a compelling reason to exempt the case from the TPR requirement must be documented.²² To comply with this requirement, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) is mandated to take legal action or file a TPR motion when children have been removed from the home in two instances –

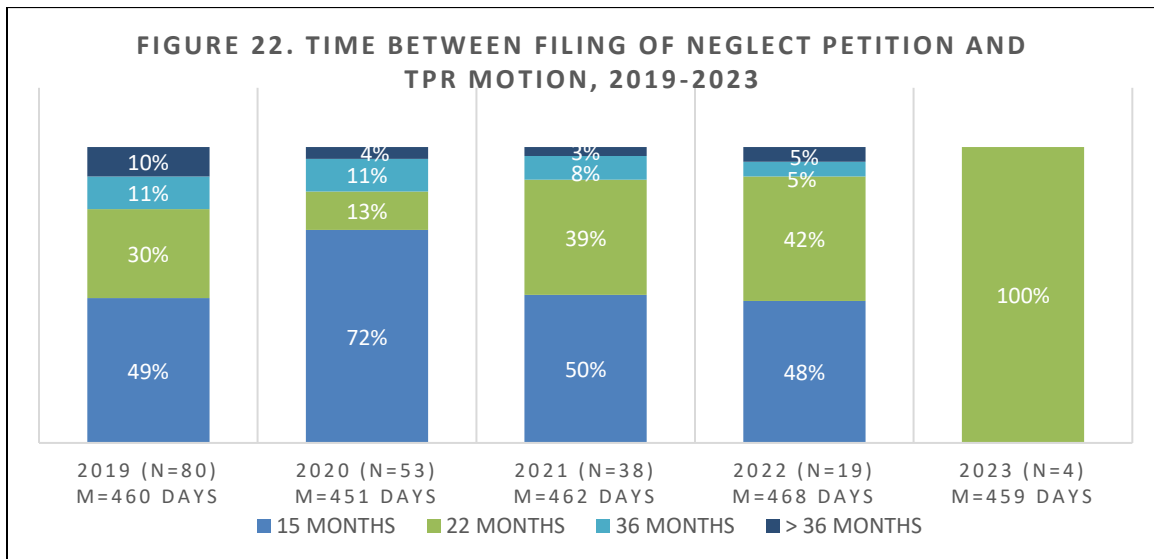
²¹ Administrative Order 16-02 enacts guardianship procedures which formalize the process for naming a successor guardian and requirements for performance of background and other checks, as well as home studies.

²² See 42 USC § 675(5)(E) and (F).

first, when the child has been removed from the home for 15 of the most recent 22 months, as indicated above, or second, within 45 days of a goal of adoption being set.²³

Measure 2f(i). *Time between filing of the original neglect petition in an abuse and neglect case and filing of the TPR motion.*

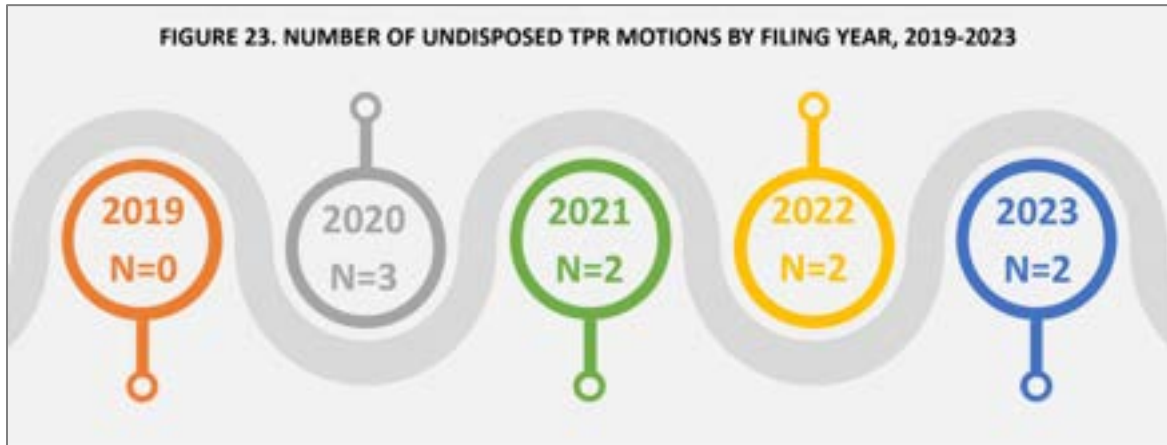
Figures 22 to 25 provide information on the court’s performance as it relates to the handling of TPR motions. Figure 22 depicts the compliance rates of TPR motions filed for the past five years. The median time between the filing of the original neglect petition and the subsequent TPR filing is listed in the figure under each year. In 2023, four TPR motions were filed, a decrease from 19 filed in 2022, and 38 TPR motions filed in 2021 (Figure 22). In 2023, the median time was 459 days. All motions were filed within 22 months. The status of TPR cases is reviewed by both the court and OAG on a quarterly basis to ensure that whenever a goal changes to adoption, a timely TPR motion is filed.



There are nine pending TPR motions that were filed during the five-year period

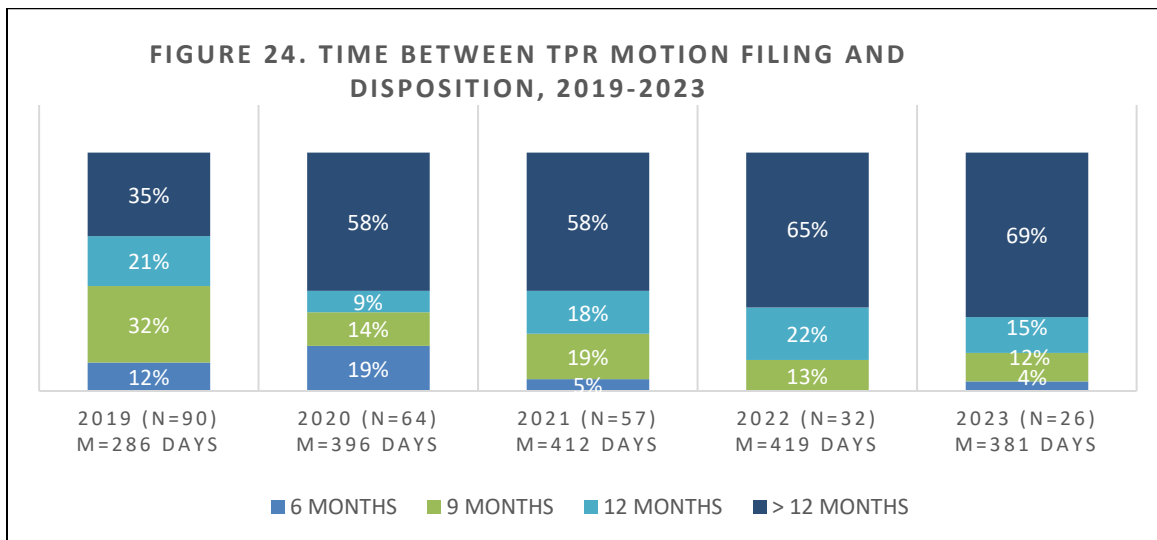
²³ D.C. Code § 16-2354(b) sets forth the criteria dictating under what circumstances a TPR can be filed, including the 15 out of 22 months’ timeline. The 45-day filing deadline is a policy set by the Office of the Attorney General to ensure timely action, rather than a deadline set by statute.

from 2019 to 2023 (Figure 23). Three motions filed in 2020 and two motions filed per year in 2021, 2022, and 2023 remain undisposed.



Measure 2f(ii). Time between filing and disposition of TPR motions in abuse and neglect cases.

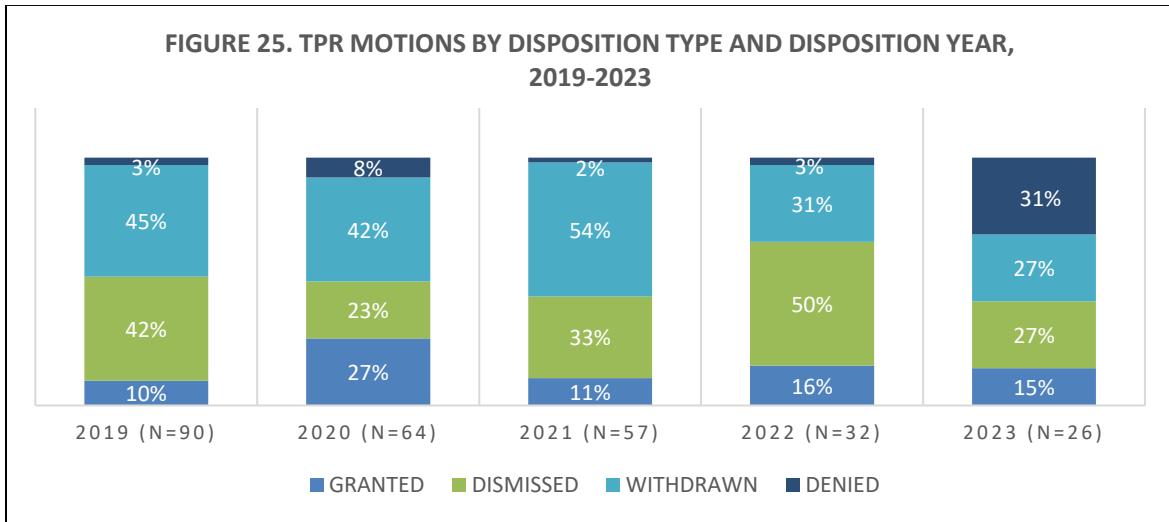
Twenty-six TPR motions were disposed in 2023 (Figure 24). The disposed motions were filed both in and prior to 2023. The median time between TPR filing and disposition was 381 days in 2023, representing a decrease from 419 days in 2022.



The government is under a statutory requirement to file a TPR, yet there is no statutory timeline requirement for the resolution of the TPR once it is filed. As a practical

matter, the TPR continues simultaneously with the adoption case and is dismissed at the time the adoption is granted, if it is not withdrawn for some other reason. The practice of terminating parental rights within the adoption case is based upon the District of Columbia adoption statute.²⁴

In 2023, of the 26 disposed TPR motions, 31% (8) were denied, 27% (7) were dismissed, 27% (7) were withdrawn, and 15% (4) were granted. The percentage of motions disposed by granted, and denied increased, while dispositions of dismissed and withdrawn decreased from the previous year (Figure 25).



Measure 2g. *Time between granting of the TPR motion and filing of the adoption petition in abuse and neglect cases.*

TABLE 7. NUMBER OF ADOPTION PETITIONS FILED BY TIME FROM TPR MOTION GRANTED, 2019-2023

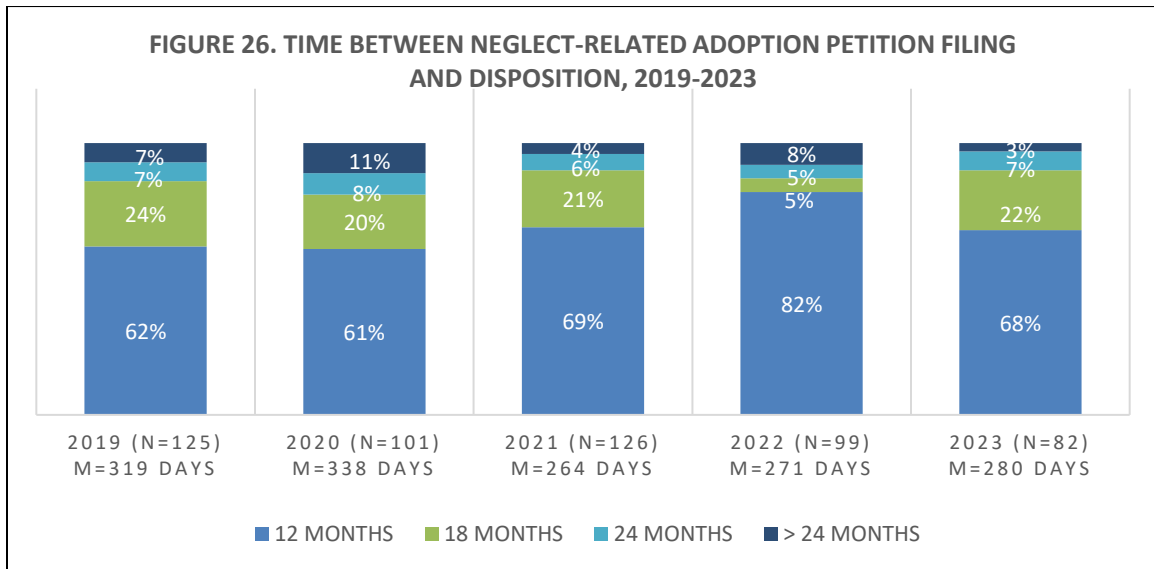
Year Filed	Number of Adoption Petitions Filed	Number of Adoption Petitions Filed Within:					Total Number of Granted TPRs (Year Disposed)
		1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	12 Months	More than 12 Months	
2019	3	0	1	0	0	2	10
2020	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
2021	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
2022	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
2023	0	0	0	0	0	0	4

²⁴ A determination as to whether the natural parents are withholding their consent to adoption contrary to a child's best interest requires the weighing of the factors considered in termination of parental rights proceedings, pursuant to D.C. Code § 16-2353(b). *See In re Petition of P.S.*, 797 A.2d 1219, 1223 (D.C. 2001).

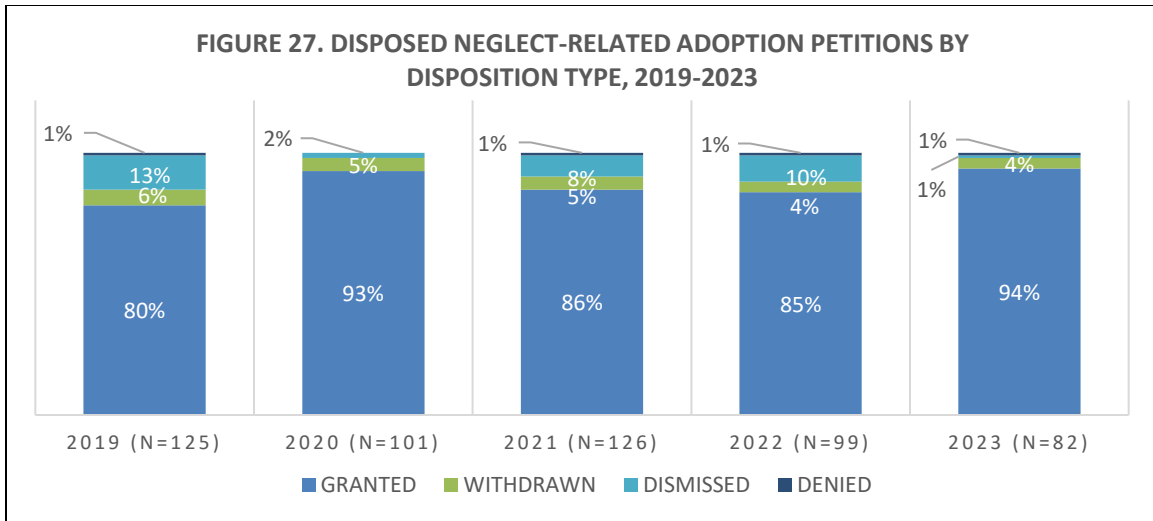
Table 7 depicts the time between the granting of the TPR motion and the filing of the adoption petition. Although four TPR motions were granted in 2023, no adoption petitions were filed.

Measure 2h. *Time between filing of adoption petition and finalization of adoption in abuse and neglect cases.*

Figure 26 illustrates the time to disposition (by disposition year) for adoption petitions filed both in and prior to 2023. Sixty-eight percent (56) of the adoption petitions (82) in 2023 were disposed within one year. The median time between the filing and finalization of the adoption petition increased from 271 days in 2022 to 280 days in 2023.



Of the 82 disposed adoption petitions, 94% (77) were granted, 4% (3) were withdrawn, 1% (1) were dismissed, and 1% (1) were denied (Figure 27). While the percentage of denied and withdrawn petitions remained stable, there was an increase in granted petitions, and a decrease in dismissed petitions from the previous year.



There are currently 51 pending adoption petitions filed between 2021 and 2023. This is an 11% decrease from the 57 pending adoptions reported last year. There are two undisposed adoption petitions filed in 2021, four filed in 2022, and 45 filed in 2023 (Figure 28).



Performance Measure 3: Due Process

Goal: To deal with cases impartially and thoroughly based on the evidence brought before the court.

Measure 3d. Percentage of children receiving legal counsel, guardians ad litem or CASA volunteers in advance of the initial hearing.

D.C. Code § 16-2304 requires the appointment of a guardian ad litem for all children involved in neglect proceedings. In 2023, a guardian ad litem was appointed for all children in advance of the initial hearing.

Measure 3e. Percentage of cases where counsel for parents is appointed in advance of the initial hearing.

D.C. Code §16-2304 also entitles parents to be represented by counsel at all critical stages of neglect proceedings and, if financially unable to obtain adequate representation, to have counsel appointed for them. In all cases where the parent met the financial eligibility criteria, counsel was appointed for the parent before or on the day of the initial hearing.

Mayor's Services Liaison Office

The Mayor's Services Liaison Office (MSLO), located at the H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse, was established pursuant to the Family Court Act of 2001. The mission of MSLO is to promote safe and permanent homes for children by working collaboratively with stakeholders to develop readily accessible services based on a continuum of care that is culturally sensitive, family-focused, and strengths-based.

The objectives of MSLO are to:

- a) Support social workers, case workers, attorneys, family workers, and judges in identifying and accessing client-appropriate information and services across District agencies and in the community for children and families involved in Family Court proceedings.
- b) Provide information and referrals to families and individuals.
- c) Facilitate coordination in the delivery of services among multiple agencies.
- d) Provide information to the Family Court on the availability and provision of services and resources across District agencies.

MSLO serves children, youth, and families who are involved in Family Court proceedings. The office is supported by 13 District of Columbia government agency

liaisons who are familiar with the types of services and resources available at their respective agencies and can access their agencies' information systems and resources directly from the courthouse. The agency liaisons respond to inquiries and requests for information concerning services and resources and consult with the assigned social workers or case workers to access available services for each child and/or family. Each liaison can provide up-to-date information to the court about whether a family or child is known to its system and what services are currently being provided to the family or child.

The following District of Columbia government agencies have staff physically located in MSLO during specific, pre-assigned days of the week:

- a) Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)
- b) District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
- c) Department on Disability Services (DDS)
- d) Department of Employment Services (DOES)

The following District of Columbia government agencies do not physically have staff at MSLO; however, they have designated MSLO liaisons who respond to requests for services and requests for information as needed:

- a) District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA)
- b) Department of Behavioral Health (DBH)
- c) Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS)
- d) Department of Human Services (DHS)
- e) Metropolitan Police Department: Youth and Preventive Services Division (MPD)
- f) Department of Behavioral Health: Addiction Prevention and Recovery Administration (APRA)
- g) Addressing Truancy Through Engagement and Negotiated Dialogue (ATTEND) program with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG)

Agency Realignment

During CY 2023, the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) underwent an administrative realignment, and the Mayor's Services Liaison Office (MSLO) returned to

CFSA's Office of Community Partnerships. In addition, during the mid-year mark of 2023, the Office of Community Partnerships underwent a name change and is now the Office of Thriving Families (OTF). OTF supports CFSA staff to connect agency-involved families with appropriate evidence-based and supportive services to meet their families' needs. OTF facilitates partnerships and service agreements to ensure primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention initiatives are in place to support children and families and to build capacity within the broader D.C. community. OTF's motto is "community lead, government supported," and emphasizes the importance of co-designing programs and services with individuals and families with lived experience with child welfare and District government agencies at large.

Since FY 2022, CFSA has been working closely with national partners as part of the Thriving Families, Safer Children initiative to transform the District from a child welfare system to a child and family well-being system. As a result, the network of community resources available to MSLO has expanded and the team has increased its reach of available service connections, including the District's 11 Families First D.C. (FFDC) Family Success Centers and five community-based Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaboratives (Collaboratives). These community-based providers receive funding from CFSA to provide cutting-edge multi-generational preventive and long-term support across all eight wards.

Referrals submitted on behalf of MLSO to OTF's community-based support network have continued to increase since the formal realignment. Referrals include parenting classes, safe sleep training, breastfeeding awareness, anger management workshops, and dress for success resources.

Data Management

MSLO's electronic intake system has been in place for the past year. This paperless referral form increases public accessibility, improves service connection/delivery, and provides a higher level of transparency during all phases of service delivery to all parties involved. MSLO's transition to an electronic intake system allows for streamlined data entry and tracking. The system was built using the web-based QuickBase platform, allowing for accessibility from CFSA and the Courts' computer networks.

New features include:

- electronic intake submission process
- built-in pre-screening capabilities
- the ability to upload official and supporting documents
- real-time progress tracking (internal and external)
- the ability to capture DEIB Information such as race, languages (primary and secondary), gender, disability status, veteran status, ward, and education level
- a comprehensive shared notes system to provide a collaborative workspace among service providers
- a process for all points of contact to receive a formal closure report that outlines connections and service completion dates
- one-step activation to reopen previous referrals within 12 months of initial submission

In addition, a QR code was created to link users to the newly developed landing page and service referral form from any preferred digital device with screening capabilities. A general email account was also created to track all incoming internal and external inquiries received from referral sources, including judicial officers, clients, stakeholders, partners, and the public.

Mayor's Services Liaison Office's Referral Process

Cases are referred to MSLO from a variety of sources, including by way of a court order, from guardians ad litem, social workers, family workers, attorneys, judges, and/or probation officers. The goal of the interagency collaboration within MSLO is to create a seamless system of care for accessing client information, appropriate services, and resources supporting families and children. The electronic MSLO referral form can be accessed from any website or by utilizing the new QR code. Once received by MSLO, referrals are screened, and cases are assigned to a MSLO core team member or appropriate agency liaison. The MSLO staff or agency liaisons connect with the family within 48 hours to directly provide services or solidify a service connection plan necessary to resolve the issue(s).

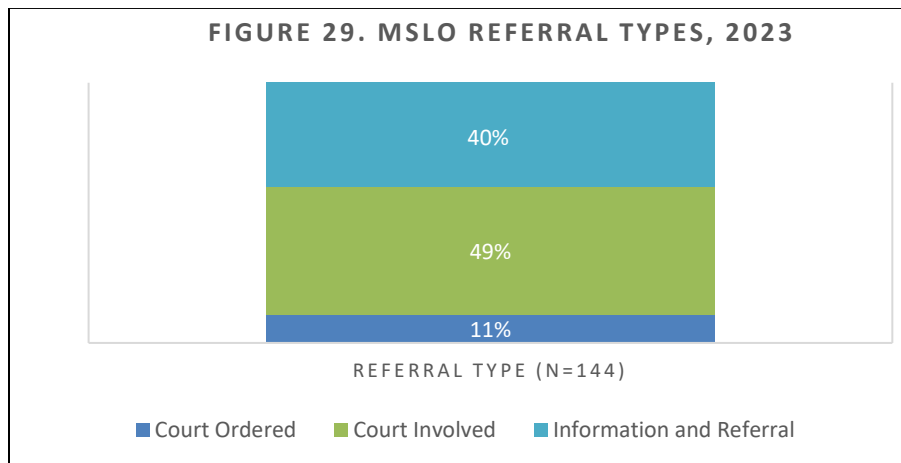
Between January 2023 and December 2023, MSLO assisted families referred from Superior Court Judges, Court Social Services Division (CSSD) and the following Family Court branches and programs:

- Domestic Relations Branch (DRB)
- Fathering Court
- Juvenile and Neglect Branch
- Parentage and Support Branch
- Self-Help Center

In addition, during this reporting period, the administrative process was amended permanently to accept self-referrals. If the self-referred person has a case on file with Family Court, MSLO will accept the referral for services. Once this information is verified, parents and guardians can receive assistance for up to 12 months.

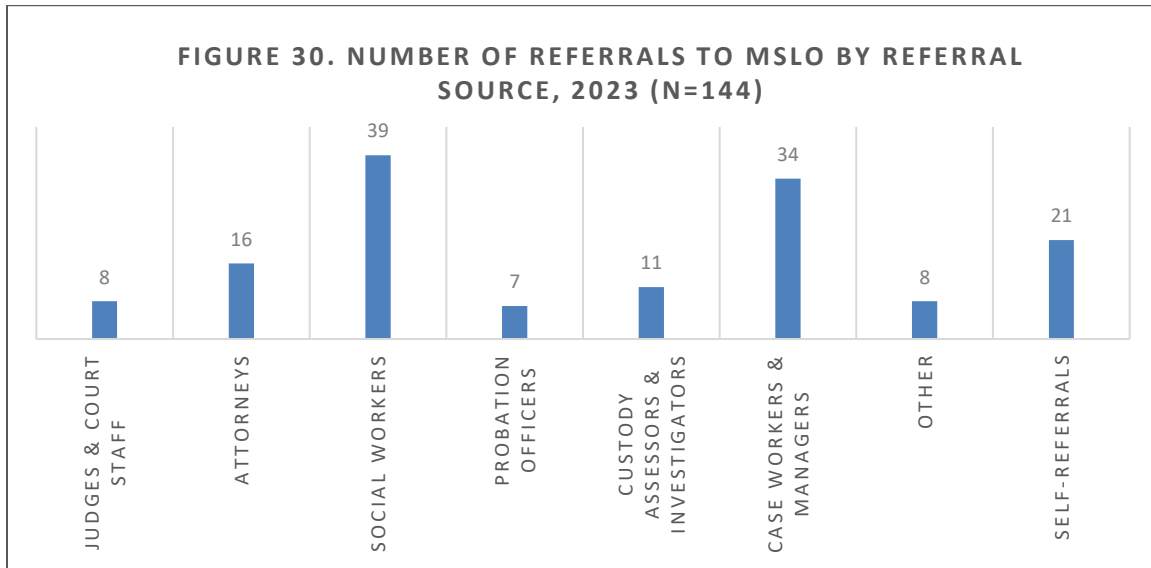
Calendar Year 2023 Statistics

In 2023, MSLO received 144 referrals, a 43% increase from the 101 referrals received in 2022. Each referral can request a maximum of six service connection categories: education, employment, disability, housing, mental health, and social and community supports. In 2023, a total of 223 service connections were submitted and addressed. Of the referrals, 16 (11%) were court-ordered, 71 (49%) were court-involved, and 57 cases (40%) were for information and referral, which captures all referrals that were not discreetly court-ordered or court-involved (Figure 29). Of the 40% indicated as information and referral, 21 were accepted self-referrals/walk-ins and 36 were OAG-ATTEND referrals.



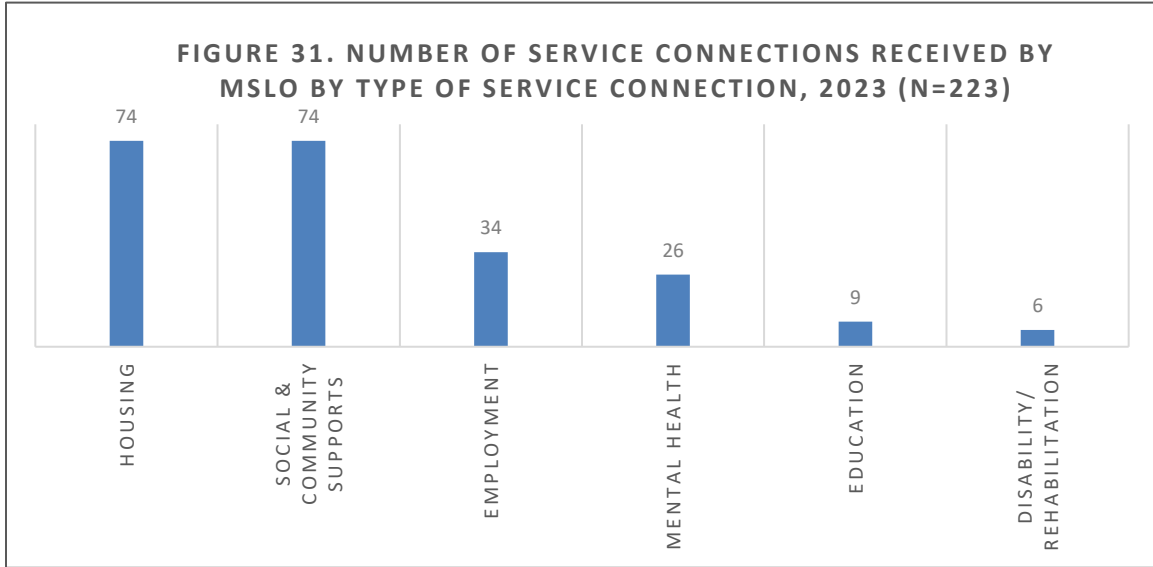
Referring sources in 2023 include: social workers (39, 27%), case workers and managers (34, 24%), self-referrals (21, 15%), attorneys (15, 10%), custody assessors and investigators (11, 8%), judges and court staff (8, 6%) (which includes judges (5) and court clerks (3)), probation officers (7, 5%), and other sources (8, 6%) (Figure 30). Other sources include victim specialists (2), resource development specialists (2), workforce

development specialists (2), senior assistant attorney generals (1), outreach services program specialists (1), and program specialists (1).



Referral sources seeking assistance on behalf of families required assistance with: (a) issues related to housing, such as transfers, inspections, and emergency housing; (b) social community support including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), as well as financial and food support; (c) employment information and assistance; (d) educational assistance including truancy, school placements, individualized education programs (IEPs), special education testing and due process, general educational issues and literacy information; (e) mental health evaluations and individual and family therapy; (f) disability and rehabilitation services; (g) domestic violence assistance; and (h) others.

Of those referred to the MSLO, the data for service connections requested include housing (74, 33%); social and community supports (74, 33%); employment (34, 15%); mental health (26, 12%); education (9, 4%); and disability/rehabilitation (6, 3%) (Figure 31).



Continuing Initiatives

MSLO staff remains committed to Family Court initiatives, including: the Fathering Court, the Family Treatment Court, and the Addressing Truancy Through Engagement and Negotiated Dialogue (ATTEND) program. ATTEND, one of the more recent Family Court initiatives MSLO engages in, is a collaboration between the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) and the Superior Court of the District of Columbia to decrease truancy of younger children through parent engagement, dialogue, and linkage to community-based services. ATTEND is designed to help youth and their families address the underlying issues causing chronic absenteeism, while minimizing the likelihood of repeat referrals. The program aims to help families by diverting parents from criminal prosecutions and increasing attendance for some of the District’s most vulnerable children.

OAG has increased the number of D.C. schools served by ATTEND during the calendar year from seven to nine (four elementary schools and five middle schools). Cases are brought to the attention of the ATTEND team through reported cases of truancy and chronic absenteeism. MSLO receives referrals submitted electronically from the ATTEND staff to support additional service connections. MSLO experienced a growth in referrals received for assistance with the increased presence of OAG's ATTEND team in Wards 7 and 8 and plans underway to expand to Ward 4.

Self-Help Station

Conceptualized in 2023 and implemented in 2024, MSLO integrated a formal self-help station for Family Court families receiving MSLO services. The self-help station provides individuals access to a computer, use of a desk phone (local calls), and computer printing capabilities during office hours. This technological support, with a particular emphasis on self-referrals, will provide a supplementary layer of support and provides an excellent opportunity for MSLO team members to further engage District families. The 2024 Family Court Annual report will contain data on the utilization and effectiveness of the self-help station.

Staff Trainings

Each year, the MSLO team completes mandated training courses required by the Child and Family Services Agency. These trainings complement MSLO's in-person and virtual customer service delivery model. The introduction of training requirements in October 2023 highlight MSLO's engagement model and enhances the experience for both internal and external clients.

Trainings include but are not limited to:

- Disability and Inclusion
- LGBTQ – Cultural Competency
- Domestic Violence
- Taking Care of You – Self-care

Workforce Wednesday

To address rising employment needs in the District of Columbia, MSLO will collaborate with the Department of Employment Services (DOES) to provide monthly, in-person workshops to Family Court-involved parents and guardians. These sessions will be facilitated by an onsite staff member and will include:

- An in-depth overview of DOES programs and services
- Review of Empowering Programs (i.e., incentivized employment, educational, occupational and entrepreneurial programs)
- Outlining interview concepts and interview skills
- Information on Soft Skills vs Hard skills and the 5 Interview Styles
- Dress for Success - Interactive Session
- Mock interviews

Workforce Wednesday activities are slated to begin in March 2024.

Community Engagement

MSLO continues to support families through ongoing community engagement efforts. In partnership with the other divisions within CFSA's Office of Thriving Families, MSLO makes referrals to an array of community-based services and supports. Referrals may require an in-person follow-up by way of securing clothing donations, emergency baby formula, interactive play items, and other concrete resources to assist families. Such opportunities for direct family and community engagement are representative of the direct-service customer care model MSLO embodies.

New Initiatives in Child Abuse and Neglect

Court Improvement Program

The Court Improvement Program Advisory Committee held quarterly meetings to discuss programs funded by the current five-year grant. Co-chaired by the Presiding Judge and the Abuse & Neglect Program Manager, the committee is comprised of stakeholders in the child welfare community, including the court, Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), foster parents, former foster youth, the Department of Behavioral Health, and others. In June 2023, the Court submitted its annual CIP grant request and received approval.

The Court participated in several CIP-related programs, including the Permanency Mediation Program, which enhances existing mediation options by affording parents the option to mediate a permanency goal change from reunification to adoption and waive a sometimes lengthy and unpleasant evidentiary proceeding. The Permanency Mediation Program allows any participant in a neglect case to refer the case for permanency mediation prior to the first permanency hearing or any time CFSA recommends a goal change to adoption. Permanency mediation can be a first step in empowering parents to participate in permanency planning in cases where reunification appears to be unlikely. The program received fewer referrals in 2023 than in previous years. The CIP is planning to hold informational sessions in 2024 to reintroduce the Permanency Mediation Program to stakeholders, including CCAN attorneys, OAG attorneys, attorneys from the Children's Law Center, and the judges who preside over neglect matters.

To ensure that the Court and the Agency are meeting statutory requirements regarding the timeliness of filing a Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) motion, the

Attorney General's Office is raising the issue at every permanency hearing and asking the Court to document its findings with respect to TPR in the hearing order.

The CIP continued its collaboration with the Child and Family Services Agency and the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia to evaluate delays in achieving permanency in neglect cases. The Court and CFSA have collaborated to develop a list of common barriers to permanency so that they are able to track the sources of delays to permanency in each case, use that data to identify the most significant recurring barriers, and then take action to address those issues and ultimately reduce delays.

Near the end of the year, the CIP contacted OAG and CFSA to reconvene the Agency-Court Data Sharing workgroup. Prior to the pandemic, this workgroup conducted in-depth case reviews to identify systemic barriers to permanency. The CIP plans to create a judicial dashboard to track case benchmarks, including those related to timeliness and compliance with statutory deadlines in the coming years. The Agency-Court Data Sharing workgroup also plans to use the Agency's permanency tracker to help improve case management and reduce delays in permanency.

The CIP coordinated with the Family Treatment Court (FTC) to purchase laptops, using funds from a one-time federal grant for Covid-19 related technology needs. The laptops allowed FTC parents to attend virtual court hearings and communicate electronically with their attorneys and members of the FTC treatment team. The CIP also used funds to provide laptops and other computer equipment on-site at CFSA's community collaboratives. Additionally, the CIP purchased 220 Chromebooks, protective cases, and operating systems software using funds from the one-time federal grant. The CIP is installing necessary software updates and licenses on the laptops and plans to begin

distributing laptops to parents in neglect matters in the coming year. The one-time federal grant also permitted the purchase of 50 Adobe Sign one-year licenses to be offered to CCAN attorneys representing parents and children in neglect matters.

The CIP used grant funds to cover expenses for CCAN panel attorneys to attend three conferences, including those hosted by the National Association of Counsel for Children. CIP grant funds were also used to provide CCAN attorneys access to Language Line services to allow them to communicate with non-English speaking clients. Language Line allows CCAN attorneys to access an interpreter on the phone within minutes to provide interpretation services.

As a condition of receiving CIP grant funding, courts are required to engage in the design and implementation of a quality legal representation project aimed at improving legal representation for parents in the neglect system. The CIP is developing a multidisciplinary representation project that will make social workers available to work with parents' attorneys on select cases. To help implement this project, CIP formed a workgroup consisting of representatives from CFSA, OAG, the Court, and the CCAN bar. CIP also consulted with the ABA, other state CIPs, and the heads of multidisciplinary programs in other jurisdictions. In 2023, CIP hired a social worker consultant to help design and implement this project. The CIP plans to launch this as a two-year pilot project in 2024, using two social workers, along with the social worker consultant, to work with a limited pool of attorneys. The hope is that after the program is refined during the pilot program, it will be offered to a larger number of parents and to the entire CCAN bar.

Courtwide Forms Workgroup

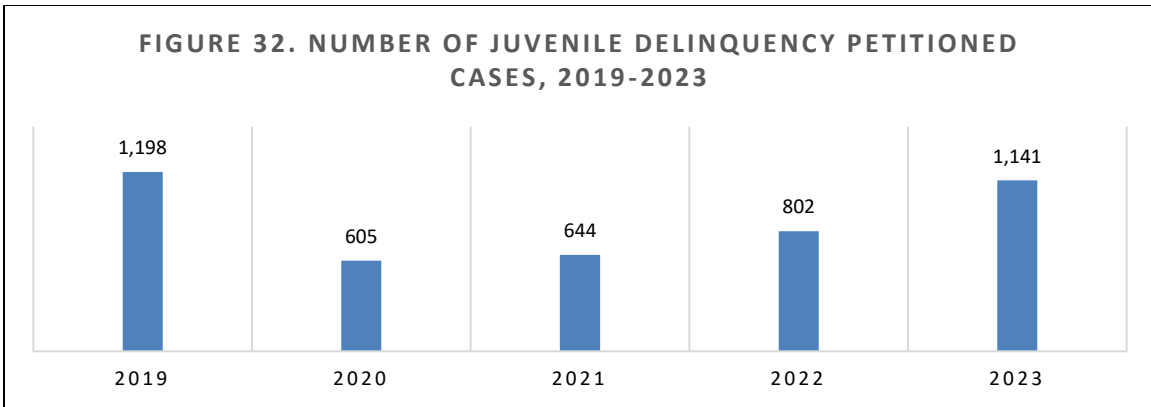
This group's mission is to standardize, consolidate, and maintain Superior Court's forms, to ensure court forms are accessible and in plain language, and to leverage technological advancements in the case management system to automate forms and streamline processes. In 2023, the group created a petition for a new Family Court case type, Vulnerable Youth Guardianship, along with updating forms related to records inspection, reappointing of guardians ad litem and appointing/reappointing of counsel in neglect cases.

Juvenile Cases

In 2023, there were 1,369 new juvenile filings in the Family Court, a 34% increase from 2022 (1,022). Ninety-five percent (1,295) of the filings were based on an allegation of delinquency, 4% (61) pursuant to an Interstate Compact Agreement (ISC),²⁵ and 1% (13) on a person in need of supervision (PINS) allegation.

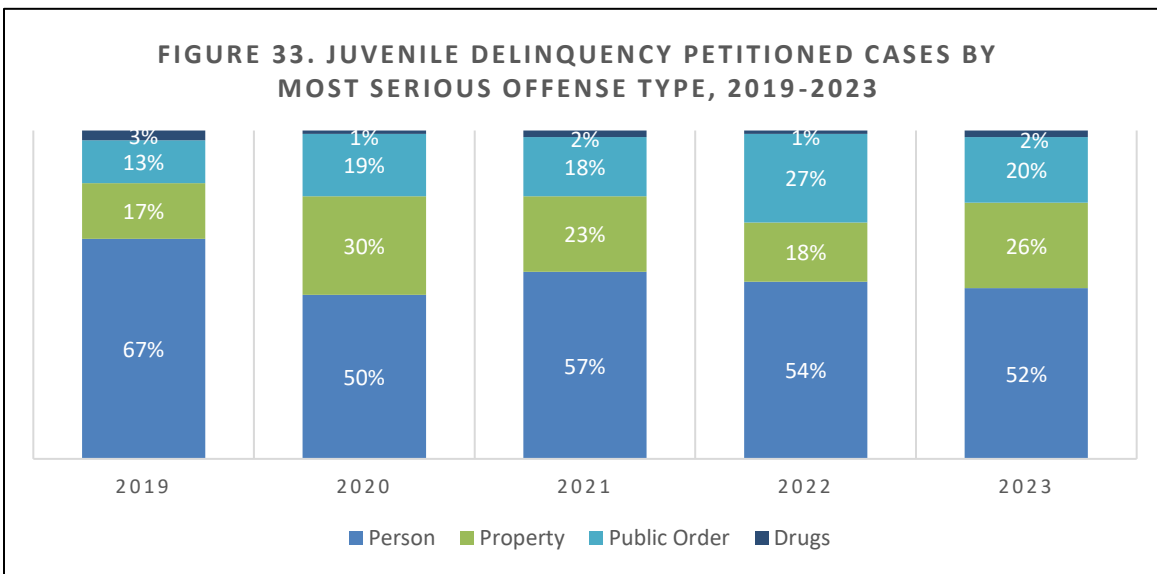
Of the 1,295 filings based on an allegation of delinquency, 88% (1,141) resulted in a formal petition filed by the OAG (Figure 32); this represents a 42% increase in petitions filed in 2022 (802). The following analysis focuses on the 1,141 cases petitioned in 2023.

²⁵ Interstate Compact cases are comprised of juvenile residents of the District of Columbia who were adjudicated in other jurisdictions, but who are referred to the Court to serve their probation under the supervision of the Court Social Services Division, as a courtesy to the referring jurisdiction.



Most Serious Offense²⁶

Fifty-two percent (598) of new delinquency cases petitioned in 2023 were for acts against persons, 26% (299) for property offenses, 20% (228) for public order offenses, and 2% (16) for drug law violations (Figure 33). Cases petitioned for acts against persons decreased by 2% (54% to 52%) from 2022.



The most common juvenile charges resulting in a petition were for weapons

²⁶ Juveniles charged with multiple offenses are categorized according to their most serious offense. For example, in a single case where a juvenile is charged with robbery, simple assault, and a weapons offense, the case is counted as a robbery.

offenses (18%, 202), unauthorized use of an automobile (16%, 178), unarmed robbery (12%, 134), carjacking (10%, 117), and simple assault (10%, 113) (Table 8).

Assault (39%, 231) was the leading offense charged for acts against persons. Assault includes simple assault (19%, 113), aggravated assault (10%, 57), assault with a dangerous weapon (9%, 53), and assault with intent to kill (1%, 8). Juveniles charged with robbery accounted for 37% (223) of new petitions for acts against persons which includes unarmed robbery (22%, 134) and armed robbery (15%, 89). Sixty percent of all juvenile cases charged with acts against property involved unauthorized use of an automobile (178), followed by larceny/theft at 15% (46). Most youth charged with acts against public order were charged with weapons offenses (89%, 202). All youth charged with a drug law violation were charged with drug sale or distribution (100%, 16).

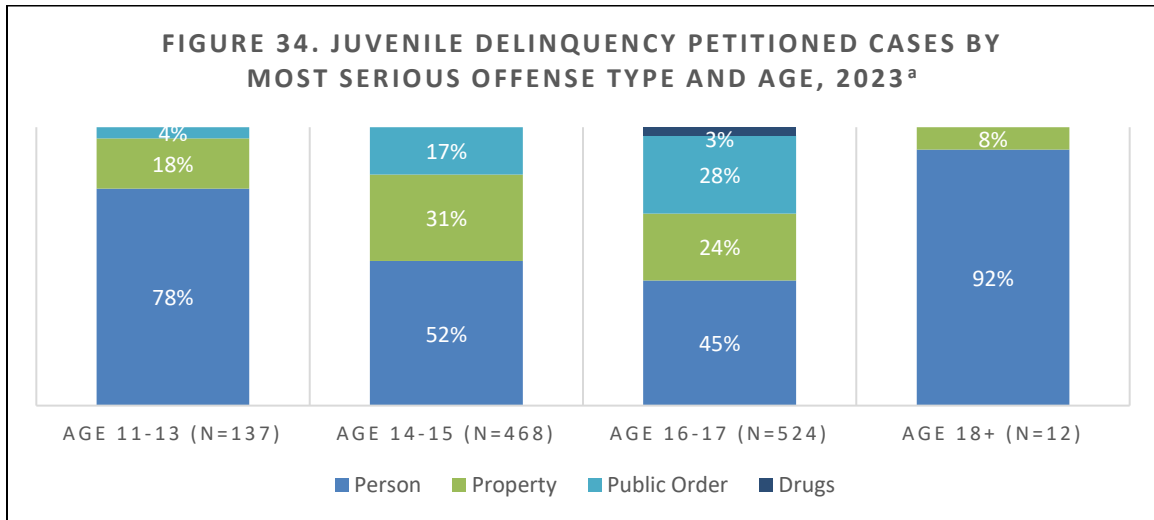
TABLE 8. NUMBER OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY PETITIONED CASES BY AGE AND MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE, 2023

Most Serious Offense ²⁷	Total Cases	Age 11	Age 12	Age 13	Age 14	Age 15	Age 16	Age 17	Age 18+
Acts Against Persons	598	1	31	75	92	151	135	102	11
Murder	6	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	2
Assault with Intent to Kill	8	0	0	1	1	2	2	2	0
Assault with a Dangerous Weapon	53	0	1	7	6	8	11	17	3
Aggravated Assault	57	0	3	11	6	16	11	10	0
Armed Robbery	89	1	6	7	11	21	23	17	3
Robbery	134	0	8	18	29	40	23	15	1
First Degree Sexual Abuse (Rape)	4	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	1
Other Violent Sex Offenses	3	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
Carjacking	117	0	11	11	13	38	36	7	1
Burglary I	8	0	1	1	1	0	1	4	0
Simple Assault	113	0	1	16	21	24	24	27	0
Other Acts Against Persons	6	0	0	1	0	0	3	2	0
Acts Against Property	299	0	11	14	69	76	73	55	1
Arson	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Burglary II	20	0	1	2	4	5	7	1	0
Larceny/Theft	46	0	3	1	12	9	9	11	1
Unauthorized Use of Auto	178	0	5	7	40	44	52	30	0
Property Damage	28	0	1	4	8	5	3	7	0
Unlawful Entry	12	0	0	0	2	6	1	3	0
Stolen Property	12	0	1	0	2	5	1	3	0
Other Acts Against Property	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Acts Against Public Order	228	0	2	3	29	49	66	79	0
Weapons Offenses	202	0	2	2	25	41	56	76	0
Disorderly Conduct	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Obstruction of Justice	9	0	0	0	0	3	4	2	0
Other Acts Against Public Order	16	0	0	0	4	5	6	1	0
Drug Law Violations	16	0	0	0	1	1	4	10	0
Drug Sale/Distribution	16	0	0	0	1	1	4	10	0
Total Petitions	1,141	1	44	92	191	277	278	246	12

²⁷ Juveniles charged with multiple offenses are categorized according to their most serious offense. Thus, data presented in this table does not provide a count of the number of crimes for which a juvenile was charged.

Most Serious Offense by Age

In 2023, 47% of all petitioned delinquency cases involved youth aged 16 or older at the time of petition. The median age of a petitioned youth was 15 years old. In 2023, the percentage of youth charged with crimes against persons was highest among youth aged 18 and older (92%, 11), followed by youth aged 11 to 13 (78%, 107) and aged 14 to 15 (52%, 243) (Figure 34). The percentage of youth charged with crimes against property was highest among youth aged 14 to 15 (31%, 145) and aged 16 to 17 (24%, 128). The percentage of youth charged with public order offenses was the highest for the 16 to 17 (28%, 145) age group followed by the 14 to 15 (17%, 78) age group. Youth charged with drug offenses were predominantly aged 16 to 17 (3%, 14) although two (less than 1%) were aged 14 to 15.



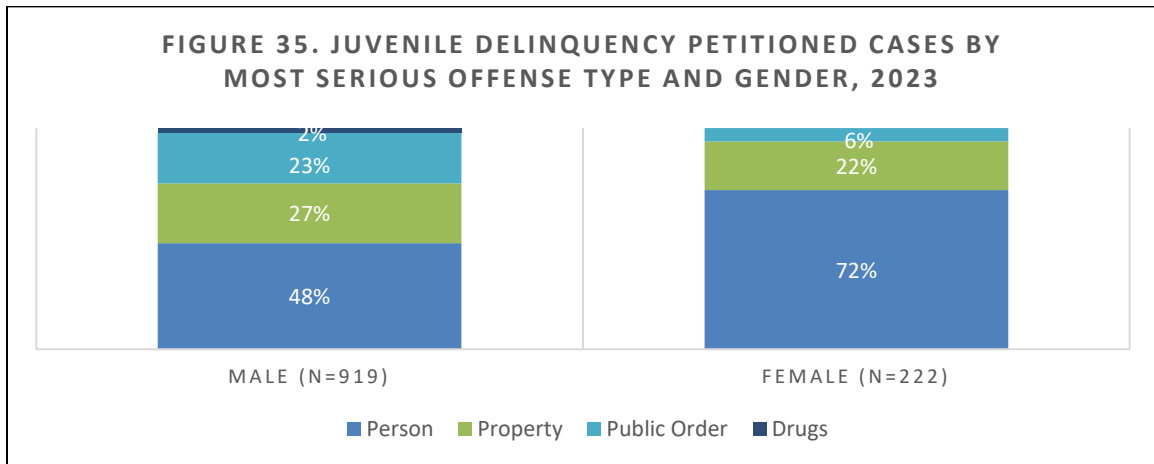
a. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. The 14 to 15 age group contains two drug offense cases.

Most Serious Offense by Gender

In 2023, male youth accounted for 81% (919) of petitioned delinquency cases while female youth accounted for 19% (222). A greater percentage of female youth were

charged with offenses against persons (72% compared to 48% for male youth).

Conversely, a higher percentage of male youth were charged with acts against property (27% versus 22%), acts against public order (23% versus 6%), and drug law violations (2% versus 0%) (Figure 35).



Among male youth charged with crimes against persons, 40% (176) were charged with robbery (unarmed and armed), 31% (134) were charged with assault (simple assault, aggravated assault, assault with a dangerous weapon, and assault with intent to kill) and 24% (107) were charged with carjacking (unarmed and armed) (Table 9). Among female youth charged with crimes against persons, 61% (97) were charged with assault (simple assault, aggravated assault, and assault with a dangerous weapon), and 30% (47) were charged with robbery (unarmed and armed).

The most common property offenses charged against male youth were unauthorized use of an automobile (59%, 147) and larceny/theft (16%, 39). For female youth, the leading property charge was unauthorized use of an automobile (63%, 31) followed by larceny/theft (14%, 7). Of youth charged with a public order offense, ninety-two percent (197) of male youth and 36% (5) of female youth were charged with a

weapons offense. All drug law violations (16) were male youth charged with drug sale/distribution.

TABLE 9. NUMBER OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY PETITIONED CASES BY MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE AND GENDER, 2023

Most Serious Offense ²⁸	Total Cases	Male	Female
Acts Against Persons	598	439	159
Murder	6	5	1
Assault with Intent to Kill	8	8	0
Assault with a Dangerous Weapon	53	35	18
Aggravated Assault	57	38	19
Armed Robbery	89	83	6
Robbery	134	93	41
First Degree Sexual Abuse (Rape)	4	4	0
Other Violent Sex Offenses	3	3	0
Carjacking	117	107	10
Burglary I	8	5	3
Simple Assault	113	53	60
Other Acts Against Persons	6	5	1
Acts Against Property	299	250	49
Arson	2	2	0
Burglary II	20	19	1
Larceny/Theft	46	39	7
Unauthorized Use of Auto	178	147	31
Property Damage	28	23	5
Unlawful Entry	12	8	4
Stolen Property	12	12	0
Other Acts Against Property	1	0	1
Acts Against Public Order	228	214	14
Weapons Offenses	202	197	5
Disorderly Conduct	1	0	1
Obstruction of Justice	9	6	3
Other Acts Against Public Order	16	11	5
Drug Law Violations	16	16	0
Drug Sale/Distribution	16	16	0
Total Cases	1,141	919	222

²⁸ *Id.*

Most Serious Offense by Detention Status

A child shall not be detained pending a trial or disposition hearing unless he or she is alleged to be delinquent and it appears that detention is required to protect the person or property of others, or to secure the child's presence at the next court hearing. *See* D.C. Code §16-2310(a). In addition, a child shall not be placed in shelter care pending a trial or disposition hearing unless it appears that shelter care is required to protect the child or because the child has no parent, guardian, custodian, or other person or agency able to provide supervision and care for him or her, and no alternative resources or arrangements are available to the family to safeguard the child without requiring removal. *See* D.C. Code § 16-2310(b). To detain a child, the Associate Judge or Magistrate Judge must also have probable cause to believe that the child committed the offense. In determining whether a youth should be detained, judicial officers consider a myriad of factors before making the detention decision. Factors taken into consideration include but are not limited to:²⁹

- a) the nature and circumstances of the pending charge;
- b) the record of and seriousness of the child's previous offenses, if any;
- c) whether there are allegations of danger or threats to any witnesses;
- d) the length of, and community ties related to, the child's residence in D.C.;
- e) the child's school record and employment record (if any); and
- f) record of the child's appearances at prior court hearings.

If the judicial officer determines that detention appears to be justified, the judicial officer has discretion to consider whether the child's living arrangements and degree of supervision might justify release pending adjudication. Notwithstanding the above factors, there is a rebuttable presumption that detention is required to protect the person or property of others if the judicial officer finds by a substantial probability that the child committed a dangerous crime or a crime of violence while armed, as defined in D.C. Code

²⁹ See Superior Court Juvenile Rule 106 which has not yet been amended but will be amended to reflect the changes warranted by the Comprehensive Youth Justice Amendment Act of 2016.

§ 16-2310(a-1), or committed the offense of carrying a pistol without a license.³⁰

In 2023, youth were detained prior to the factfinding hearing in 30% (346) of the 1,141 petitioned cases, representing the same percentage as 2022.³¹ Table 10 details information on the number of juveniles detained at initial hearing by the most serious offense charged, one of the many factors a judge must consider when deciding to detain a youth. In 2023, 50% (8) of youth charged with drug law violations, 41% (94) of youth charged with acts against public order, 29% (175) of youth charged with acts against persons and 23% (69) of youth charged with property crimes were detained prior to the factfinding hearing. In 2022, youth were detained prior to factfinding at the following rates: acts against persons (33%), acts against public order (33%), and property crimes and drug law violations (18%, respectively). All youth charged with murder (6) and assault with intent to kill (8) in 2023 were detained prior to factfinding.

Thirty-two percent (297) of male youth and 22% (49) of female youth were detained prior to trial in 2023, which is consistent with 2022. In 2023, 50% (174) of youth detainees were held in non-secure facilities (shelter houses), a 1% decrease from 2022. In 2023, 50% (172) of youth detainees were held in secure detention facilities, a 1% increase from 2022. In 2023, male youth accounted for 89% (153) of those detained in secure facilities and 83% (144) of those detained in shelter houses. Conversely, female youth accounted for 11% (19) of all youth detained in secure facilities and 17% (30) of all youth detained in shelter houses in 2023. This is an increase in the overall percent of

³⁰ The Secure D.C. Omnibus Amendment Act was signed into law on March 11, 2024. This legislation expands the definition of what is considered a “dangerous crime or crime of violence while armed,” which will significantly affect the standards by which a judge reaches decisions regarding pre-trial detention in the future.

³¹ For purposes of this report, a juvenile’s pre-trial detention status is the detention decision made at the initial hearing. It does not reflect any changes to a juvenile’s placement status, either before or after adjudication.

detained youth who were female. In 2022, female youth accounted for only 4% of all youth detained in secure facilities and 11% of all youth detained in shelter houses.

TABLE 10. NUMBER OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY PRE-TRIAL DETENTION CASES BY MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE TYPE AND DETENTION TYPE, 2023

Most Serious Offense ³²	All Detained Delinquency Cases						
	Total Cases	Securely Detained			Non-Securely Detained		
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Acts Against Persons	175	87	77	10	88	62	26
Murder	6	6	5	1	0	0	0
Assault with Intent to Kill	8	7	7	0	1	1	0
Assault with a Dangerous Weapon	24	13	12	1	11	9	2
Aggravated Assault	12	3	3	0	9	6	3
Armed Robbery	24	15	15	0	9	9	0
Robbery	26	8	5	3	18	12	6
First Degree Sexual Abuse (Rape)	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Carjacking	47	29	25	4	18	17	1
Burglary I	4	2	2	0	2	1	1
Simple Assault	22	3	2	1	19	6	13
Other Acts Against Persons	1	0	0	0	1	1	0
Acts Against Property	69	26	20	6	43	39	4
Arson	1	0	0	0	1	1	0
Burglary II	7	3	2	1	4	4	0
Larceny/Theft	5	3	2	1	2	2	0
Unauthorized Use of Auto	46	20	16	4	26	22	4
Property Damage	3	0	0	0	3	3	0
Unlawful Entry	1	0	0	0	1	1	0
Stolen Property	6	0	0	0	6	6	0
Acts Against Public Order	94	57	54	3	37	37	0
Weapons Offenses	87	53	52	1	34	34	0
Obstruction of Justice	2	0	0	0	2	2	0
Other Acts Against Public Order	5	4	2	2	1	1	0
Drug Law Violations	8	2	2	0	6	6	0
Drug Sale/Distribution	8	2	2	0	6	6	0
Total Cases	346	172	153	19	174	144	30

³² See *supra* note 25.

Timeliness of Juvenile Delinquency Case Processing

Many jurisdictions, including the District of Columbia, have established case processing time standards for youth detained prior to trial. In addition to individual jurisdictions' time standards, several national organizations, including the American Bar Association, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ), and the National District Attorneys Association have issued guidelines for case processing in juvenile cases.³³

The guidelines, both at the state and national level, address the time between key events in a juvenile delinquency case. In general, these guidelines suggest that, for youth detained prior to trial, the maximum time between court filing and adjudication should be no more than 30 days, and the maximum time from filing to disposition should be no more than 60 days.

District of Columbia Code §16-2310(e) establishes timeframes for the trial or factfinding hearing for youth detained prior to trial in secure detention facilities and non-secure detention facilities or shelter houses. In certain instances, the court may extend the time limit for the factfinding hearing. *See* D.C. Code § 16-2310(e)(2)(A). Additionally, with good cause, the Attorney General may move for further continuances in 30-day increments.

As for the timeframe for disposition of juvenile cases, Superior Court Juvenile Rule 32 requires that the disposition hearing in cases of securely and non-securely detained youth is held within 15 days of adjudication. The D.C. Court of Appeals has

³³ See “Delays in Juvenile Court Processing of Delinquency Cases” by Jeffrey A. Butts conducted under the sponsorship of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1997), and “Waiting for Justice: Moving Young Offenders Through the Juvenile Court Process” by Jeffrey Butts and Gregory Halima conducted under the sponsorship of the National Center for Juvenile Justice (1996). Also see “Enhanced Juvenile Justice Guidelines: Improving Court Practice in Juvenile Justice Cases” (NCJFCJ) (2018) which establishes national best practices in the handling of juvenile delinquency cases.

held that the 15-day time requirement of Rule 32 is advisory rather than mandatory and that the trial court may extend the 15-day period for a reasonable length of time in order to obtain the predisposition report. *See, In re J.B.*, 906 A.2d 866 (D.C. 2006).

This report examines case processing standards for youth in four categories:

(1) Securely detained juveniles charged with murder, assault with intent to kill, armed robbery, first degree sexual abuse, and first-degree burglary: D.C. Code § 16-2310(e) allows 45 days from initial hearing to adjudication and Rule 32 allows an additional 15 days from adjudication to disposition, for a total of 60 days from initial hearing to disposition.

(2) Securely detained juveniles charged with any offense other than those identified in (1) above: D.C. Code § 16-2310(e) allows 30 days from initial hearing to adjudication and Rule 32 allows an additional 15 days from adjudication to disposition, for a total of 45 days from initial hearing to disposition.

(3) Non-securely detained juveniles charged with any offense: D.C. Code § 16-2310(e) allows 45 days from initial hearing to adjudication and Rule 32 allows an additional 15 days from adjudication to disposition, for a total of 60 days from initial hearing to disposition.

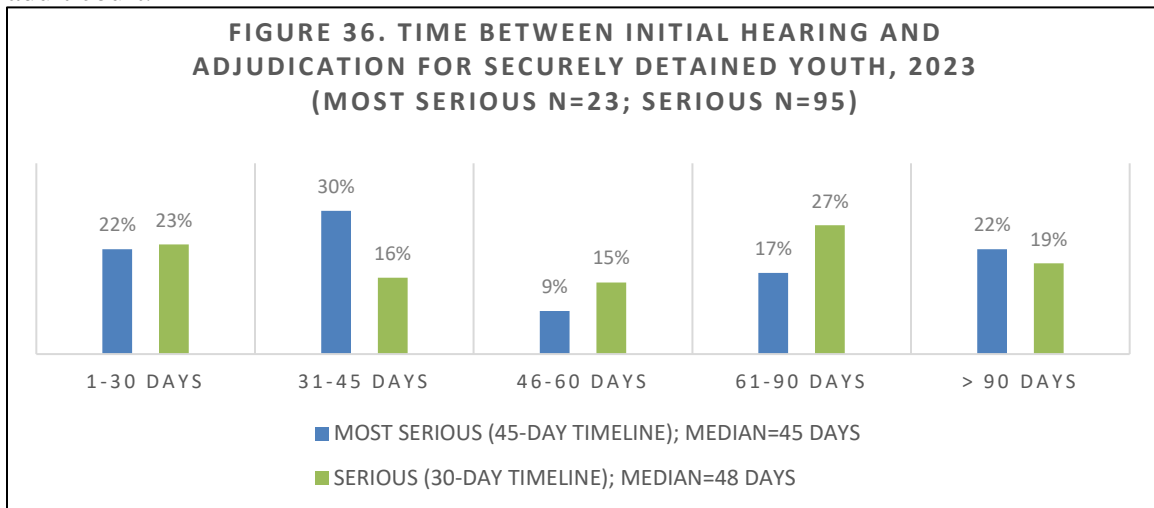
(4) Released youth: Administrative Order 08-13 allows 270 days for disposition. There is no Family Court statute or rule that dictates time standards for either adjudication or disposition for cases of youth released prior to adjudication.

Data on time to adjudication is based on the detention status of the respondent at the time of the initial hearing. In contrast, data on time to disposition is calculated based on the detention status of the respondent at the time of the disposition hearing. In

addition, court performance on time to disposition accounts for excludable delay stemming from the absence or unavailability of the child (custody orders) and the period of delay stemming from various examinations and assessments.

Securely Detained Juveniles

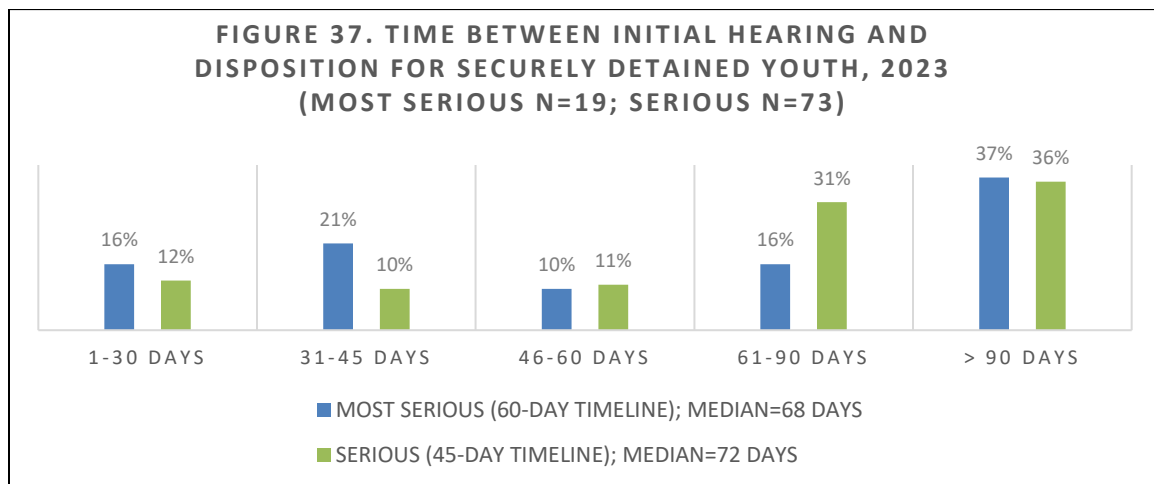
In 2023, 43 (25%) of the 172 securely detained juveniles were charged with murder, assault with intent to kill, armed robbery, first degree sexual abuse, or first-degree burglary as their most serious offense. As stated above, these cases require adjudication within 45 days and are subsequently referred to as “Most Serious.” An adjudication hearing occurred in 23 (53%) of the 43 cases (Figure 36). Fifty-two percent (12) of those adjudication hearings occurred within the 45-day timeframe. The median time from initial hearing to adjudication was 45 days; in 2022, the median time was 68 days. Of the remaining 20 securely detained most serious cases, 14 (70%) are pending adjudication, 5 (25%) were dismissed pre-adjudication, and 1 (5%) was transferred to adult court.



There were 129 securely detained juveniles who were charged with serious offenses (other than the most serious cases) and required to have their cases adjudicated within 30

days. These cases are subsequently referred to as “Serious.” Ninety-five (74%) of the 129 cases had an adjudication hearing, 23% (22) of which occurred within the 30-day timeframe (Figure 36). The median time from initial hearing to adjudication was 48 days; in 2022, the median time was 28 days. Of the remaining 34 securely detained serious cases, 18 (53%) are pending adjudication, 15 (44%) were dismissed pre-adjudication, and 1 (3%) was transferred to adult court.

Several factors contributed to the inability to adjudicate all cases of securely detained youth in a timely manner. These factors include, but are not limited to, the absence of an essential witness, unavailability of evidence, unavailability of an attorney, incomplete psychological, psychiatric and/or neurological tests, and difficulties in scheduling. The court will monitor and track how requests for continuances are addressed with the goal of reducing the number of continuances requested and granted.



The calculation of time to disposition includes case processing from initial hearing to disposition. Nineteen (83%) of the 23 adjudicated most serious cases in which youth were securely detained reached disposition in 2023 (Figure 37). Forty-seven percent (9) of the 19 cases were disposed within the 60-day timeframe. In terms of the

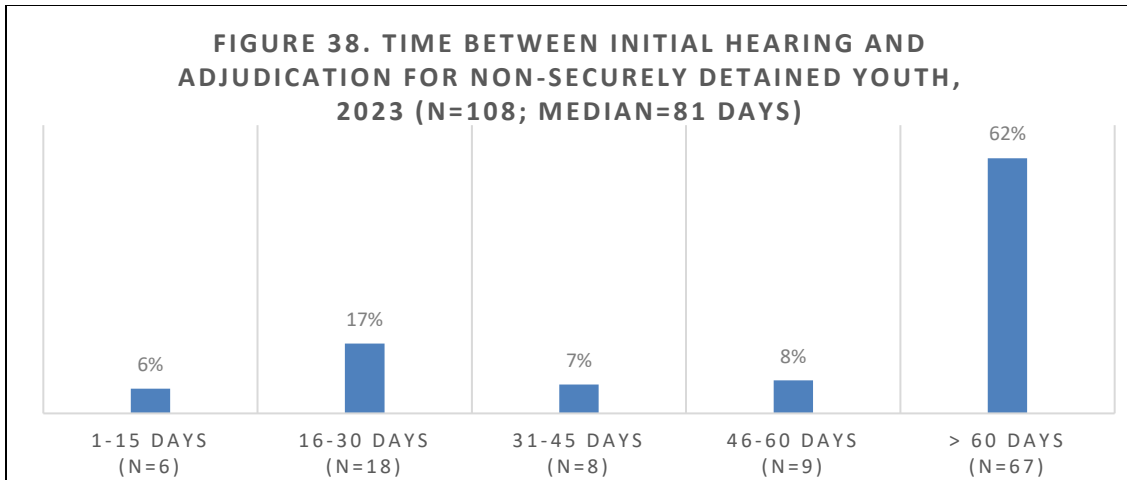
disposition of the 19 adjudicated most serious cases, nine (47%) were committed to DYRS, seven (37%) were placed on probation, and three (16%) went to a diversion program. The median time from initial hearing to disposition was 68 days.

Seventy-three (77%) of the 95 adjudicated serious cases in which youth were securely detained reached disposition in 2023. Twenty-two percent (16) of the 73 cases were disposed within the 45-day timeframe. Of the 73 adjudicated serious cases in which youth were securely detained, 42 cases (57%) were disposed as committed to DYRS, 23 cases (32%) were disposed as probation, and eight cases (11%) were disposed through a diversion program. The median time from initial hearing to disposition was 72 days.

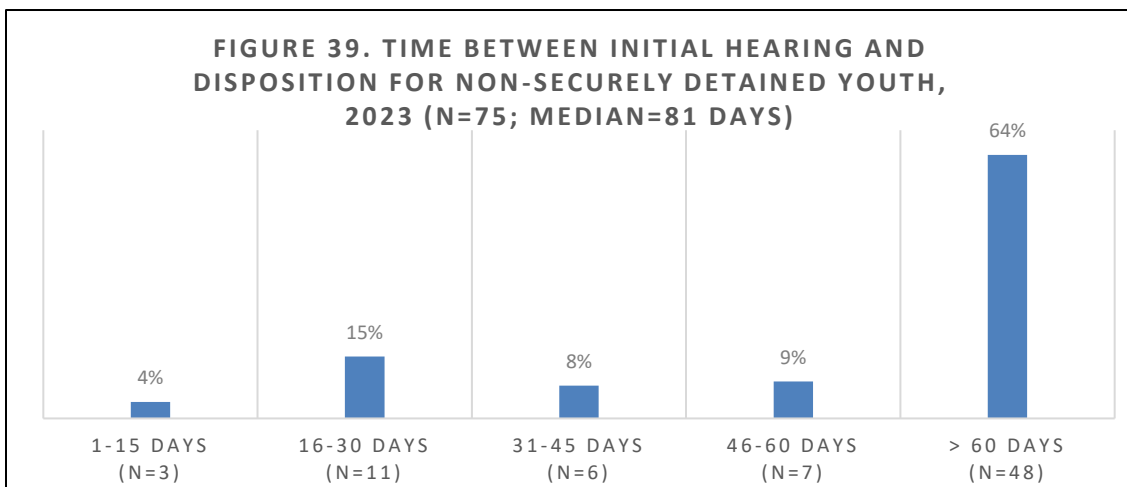
A major factor contributing to delays in disposition was the need to identify and obtain services or programs for the youth prior to disposition. Other factors included delays related to DYRS's ability to obtain placement, delays in receipt of required psychological and/or psychiatric reports, non-compliance with court orders, and youth being involved in other proceedings before the court.

Non-Securely Detained Juveniles

In 2023, 174 juveniles were detained in non-secure facilities or shelter houses prior to adjudication. Sixty-two percent (108) of non-securely detained juvenile cases reached adjudication (Figure 38). Thirty percent (32) of these adjudicated cases had timely adjudication hearings held within the 45-day timeframe, an increase from 24% in 2022. These 32 cases breakdown further as follows: 19% (6) had an adjudication hearing held within 15 days, 56% (18) in 16 to 30 days, and 25% (8) in 31 to 45 days. The median number of days to adjudication was 81 days, a decrease of one day from 2022.

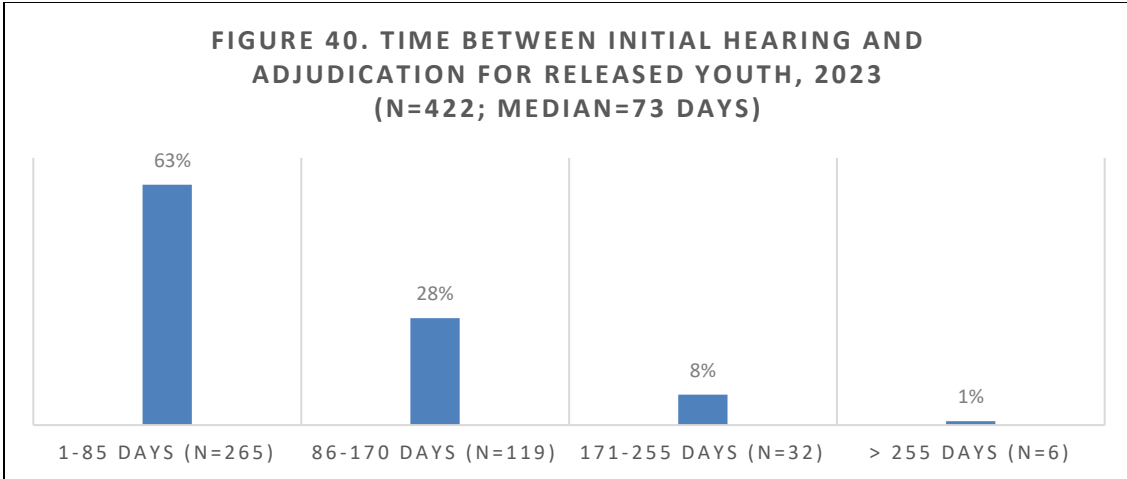


In 2023, 75 of the 108 adjudicated non-secure detention cases reached disposition. Twenty-seven (36%) cases were compliant with the 60-day timeframe (Figure 39). The median time to disposition was 81 days.

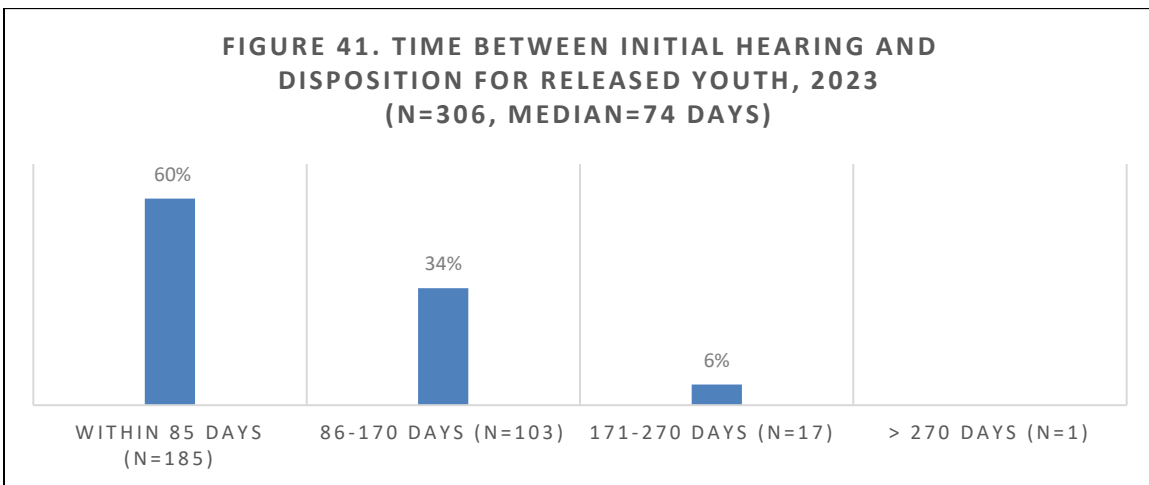


Released Juveniles

In 2023, 795 juveniles (70%) were released prior to adjudication. Of the 422 cases that had an adjudication hearing, 63% (265) were adjudicated within 85 days, 28% (119) in 86 to 170 days, 8% (32) in 171 to 255 days, and 1% (6) in greater than 255 days (Figure 40). This equates to a 99% compliance rate within the 255-day timeframe. In adjudicated cases, the median time to adjudication was 73 days.



In 2023, 306 adjudicated youth were released at the time of their disposition hearing (Figure 41). Sixty percent (185) of cases were disposed within 85 days, 34% (103) in 86 to 170 days, and 6% (17) in 171 to 270 days. One case was out of compliance with the disposition hearing held beyond the 270-day timeframe. The median time to disposition was 74 days, a decrease from 126 days in 2022. As with securely detained youth, a major factor contributing to delays in disposition was the need to identify and obtain services or programs for the youth prior to disposition. Other factors included examinations concerning mental competency, failure to appear, and non-compliance with a court order.



Family Court Social Services Division (CSSD)

The Family Court Social Services Division (CSSD) is responsible for screening, assessing, and presenting status offender cases in courtrooms JM-2 and JM-7, and juvenile delinquency cases in the New Referrals courtroom (JM-15). CSSD is further charged with managing cases, including supervising all pre-trial and post-adjudicated juveniles.³⁴ The population under supervision also includes youth under diversion agreements (e.g., Consent Decrees, Diversion Tracks I, II and III, Deferred Prosecution Agreements (DPA) and Deferred Disposition Agreements (DDA)), who are involved in what is commonly referred to as the front end of the District of Columbia's juvenile justice system. Additional juveniles involved in the front-end of the system include all newly arrested youth entering the Family Court in juvenile delinquency cases, status offenders (persons in need of supervision (PINS), truants, runaways, and youth referred for ungovernable behavior), and post-disposition probation youth. Additionally, youth committed to the Department of Youth Rehabilitative Services (DYRS), commonly referred to as the back end, are supervised by CSSD, until sentencing.

Through the Child Guidance Clinic, CSSD facilitates psychological, neuropsychological, psychoeducational, and comprehensive clinical risk (violence risk, psychosexual, etc.) evaluations. The division also facilitates restoration interventions, and staff is credentialed and equipped to conduct evaluations on competency to waive trial, Miranda rights and waiver of juvenile jurisdiction. CSSD administers validated assessment tools; these include its Risk Assessment Instrument (RAI), Social Assessment

³⁴ See District of Columbia Court Reform and Criminal Procedure Act, Pub. L. No. 91-358, 84 Stat. 473 (1970).

(SA), and Sex Trafficking Assessment Review (STAR) screening tool (developed by the division in 2015 and validated by CSSD). CSSD also administers the Conner Behavioral Rating Scale (CBRS), which helps ascertain behavioral health needs for youth. In 2023, RAI, STAR and Conner screenings and Social Assessments were routinely administered by intake probation officers (PO) located in the H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse during court operation hours and juvenile intake probation officers located at DYRS's Youth Services Center (YSC) during evening and weekend hours.

In 2023, CSSD, in collaboration with the D.C. Courts' Strategic Management Division (SMD) and Administrative Services Division (ASD), released a solicitation to revalidate the division's Risk Assessment Instrument (RAI). Evident Change, a non-profit data and research firm, was awarded the contract, which commenced in fiscal year 2024. Over the next three years, Evident Change will assess CSSD's existing RAI using routinely captured data and determine if the instrument should remain as is, undergo modifications, or be replaced with a new tool, which Evident Change would then validate. Evident Change will also assist CSSD in adopting a companion risk and needs tool to ensure alignment of supervision and service levels. The new tool will help classify individuals as low, medium, or high risk.

On average, CSSD supervised approximately 550 to 575 juveniles daily, comprised of pre-trial and post-disposition juveniles and status offenders. Youth under CSSD's supervision represented approximately 75 to 80% of all youth involved in the District's juvenile justice system. The division met the vast majority of objectives consistent with statutory requirements by combining emerging best practices in the field of juvenile justice and child welfare with traditional and evidenced-based best practices.

Working with a variety of juvenile justice stakeholders—including the Presiding and Deputy Presiding Judges of the Family Court, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), the Public Defender Services (PDS), the Georgetown Law Center, the Criminal Justice Attorneys (CJA), the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), DYRS and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD)—CSSD continued to successfully co-lead and support several problem-solving courts. The Family Court’s Juvenile Behavioral Diversion Program (JBDP) addresses the needs of youth struggling with behavioral health issues, while HOPE (Here Opportunities Prepare You for Excellence) Court addresses the needs of youth at highest risk for commercial sex exploitation and human trafficking. Through its multifaceted continuum of services, including Core Services Agencies responsible for the provision of mental health services, CSSD continued to identify and address Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) among its youth population.

JBDP continued to operate as a voluntary intensive graduated response program, designed to engage juveniles and status offenders in appropriate mental health services and support in the community. Following a determination of legal eligibility for JBDP by the OAG, CSSD, in partnership with DBH, considers factors such as amenability to treatment and community support to further assess a youth’s clinical eligibility. Youth eligible for JBDP are under 18 years of age and diagnosed with a behavioral or substance use disorder, according to the current version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders (DSM-5-TR). Each youth’s participation in the program typically ranges from three to twelve months; however, shorter or longer durations of time are permitted, depending on the level of engagement with services and achievement of therapeutic goals and objectives. From 2010 to December 2023, approximately 346 youth have successfully

completed the JBDP. Since the inception of HOPE Court in 2018, a total of 93 youth have been enrolled, 34 (37%) of whom successfully completed the program.

In January 2023, the Chief Judge of the Superior Court, Clerk of the Court, and Executive Office staff collaborated with CSSD to develop an initiative aimed at improving school attendance and academic performance among targeted CSSD youth. Out of this collaborative effort, Succeeding in Our Academic Responsibilities (SOARs), a pilot literacy program, was launched. SOARs provides youth with intensive tutoring, group book reading, engaging discussions, and nutritious meals at the BARJ Vocation Center. Notably, each youth is assigned a volunteer mentor from the D.C. Courts staff. SOARs averaged three participants daily. Among youth attending SOARs over multiple months, a youth attended SOARs 17 times on average. In 2024, CSSD will expand SOARs to include two co-ed cohorts: one meeting at the SE Vocation Center and the other meeting at the NE BARJ Drop-In Center. CSSD will also continue to operate the Alternative Suspension (AS) program, which requires youth suspended for less than 10 days to report to a BARJ Center daily to complete schoolwork supplied by the attending school. In 2023, a total of 35 youth attended the AS program for an average of 8 days.

CSSD expanded its array of services provided to youth to include Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress (SPARCS). SPARCS is a trauma-focused, evidenced-based intervention provided to youth in group settings. SPARCS is a client-centered initiative with a principal objective of assisting youth in building the requisite skills to support emotional regulation (e.g., increasing emotional intelligence, reducing explosive behavior, and managing impulsivity and aggression). SPARCS has been found to reduce incidences of aggressive behavior and promote more

prosocial interaction among adolescent peers. More than half of CSSD staff, in collaboration with local adolescent service providers, have been trained to utilize SPARCS techniques in group settings. SPARCS enables CSSD youth to interface and settle disputes absent escalated aggression, violence, and retaliation.

CSSD also completed training in Circles of Support, a nationally recognized best practice designed to provide support to law enforcement, juvenile justice officers and criminal justice practitioners in identifying signs and symptoms of vicarious (secondary) trauma resulting from engaging and interfacing with client populations. CSSD leveraged grant resources from a Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) Mentoring grant. Working with the SMD and ASD, CSSD identified a renowned behavioral health practitioner who specializes in providing training and technical support to first responders and public safety professionals. A series of trainings were facilitated in tandem with a host of group sessions involving CSSD probation officers and supervisory probation officers. Staff learned strategies for self-care and tangible ways to provide collegial support in their daily work at CSSD.

CSSD continued to serve on committees and advisory groups alongside court and external stakeholders aimed at addressing issues of D.C. residents. Among these include serving as: (1) a standing member on the Juvenile Justice Committee of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee (CJCC), a committee of D.C. juvenile justice system stakeholders that aims to identify effective measures in preventing juvenile crime, address the needs of court-involved youth and reduce recidivism; and (2) a long-standing member on the following advisory groups and committees: Juvenile Justice Advisory Group (JJAG); citywide Truancy Taskforce; Building Blocks D.C. Scientific and Expert

Advisory Board; D.C. Shooter Review Panel; Child Fatality Review Committee; Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility Review Committee; Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) and the Family Court's Juvenile Committee.

To increase in-person contact with youth and families, CSSD facilitated a host of delinquency prosocial measures including, but not limited to: (1) skill-building and empowerment groups; (2) conflict resolution youth group discussions; (3) therapeutic "Paint n Jam" sessions, during which youth were guided to express themselves through portrait painting; (4) group reading of various books, including a companion activity by the author of one selection ("Blueprint To A Better You") who conducted conflict resolution groups with youth at BARJ Drop-In Centers; and (5) facilitation of a host of prosocial, youth-oriented activities, including community outings during the winter, spring and summer school breaks. Activities and outings were identified and selected based on recommendations from youth and staff. Youth earned participation in these outings by complying with court-ordered conditions, measured by both attendance and participation.

The division also collaborated with MPD, the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE) to enhance summer safety throughout the city on Fridays and Saturdays. CSSD concentrated its intensive engagement efforts on roughly 100 youth deemed high-risk for public safety or at risk for reoffending (approximately 20 to 25% of the daily population). Low, medium, and high-risk youth were engaged programmatically weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly based on their level of progress. CSSD also supported the citywide Summer Safety Surge, coordinated by the Office of the Mayor. Recreational initiatives such as Late-Night Hype,

featuring carnival style activities, and Late-Night Drip pool parties provided effective engagement for youth across the city.

In partnership with the MPD, CSSD maintained its Co-Located Absconder Initiative, developed more than a decade ago with a focus on locating youth with outstanding custody orders and returning those youth to court. The Co-Located Absconder Initiative ensures high-risk youth (designated based on offense charge(s), risk to reoffend and/or rate of recidivism) and youth who are not in contact with their probation officer (PO) are identified and provided comprehensive intensive services. CSSD ensured the Co-Located Absconder Team (CAT) led by MPD continued to bring youth into custody who failed to attend scheduled court hearings, absconded from court ordered placements, lost contact with their PO, or were alleged to have been involved in a crime under investigation. For CY 2023, CAT processed 503 custody orders, of which roughly 364 (72%) were resolved via formal retrieval by CAT.

CSSD staff also continued to convene onsite and virtual meetings at a team, regional, managerial and all-staff level, many of which were co-facilitated by Change Fusion, a management consulting firm working with the D.C. Courts.³⁵ During team meetings, staff and managers participated in breakout groups focusing on the D.C. Courts Values: Accountability, Excellence, Fairness, Integrity, Respect, and Transparency. CSSD continues to work on improvements in communication, commitment to excellence, engagement, trust, and team building.

Additionally, CSSD continued its division-wide in-house developmental and supportive efforts with staff in Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) philosophy and

³⁵ <https://change-fusion.com/>

principles to build and expand the knowledge and skills of CSSD staff. At its core, balanced and restorative justice principles hold that when a crime is committed, the victim, wrongdoer, and community are all impacted. The victim, wrongdoer, and community must all be restored to achieve balance. Guiding BARJ principles include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a) All human beings have dignity and worth. Accountability for those who violate the person or property of others means accepting responsibility.
- b) Parties (e.g., victim, wrongdoer, and community) should be a central part of the response to the crime.
- c) The community is responsible for the well-being of all its members.

Additional 2023 Highlights

- a) Continued access to designated BARJ Drop-In Centers (during hours when youth were not present) for pro se litigants in need of internet access for remote Superior Court matters, fostering increasing access to justice for District residents.
- b) Facilitated prosocial initiatives: Anti-Gun/Anti-Violence Awareness contest on Halloween, Ice Cream Socials across the city, and Summer Safety outreach.
- c) Continued to provide virtual individual and family counseling services facilitated by psychologists and interns of the Child Guidance Clinic.

CSSD Organization

CSSD is comprised of five branches, two of which have probation teams housed in satellite offices and BARJ Drop-In Centers strategically located across the city to serve specific populations. Branches include: (1) the Juvenile Intake and Delinquency Prevention Branch; (2) Child Guidance Clinic (CGC); (3) Information Contacts and Community Outreach (ICCO), which also oversees the Co-Located Custody Order Absconder Unit; (4) Region I Pre-Trial and Post-Disposition Supervision; and (5) Region II Pre-Trial and Post-Disposition Supervision. These branches operate under the Office of the Director.

Juvenile Intake and Delinquency Prevention Branch

The Intake Branch is comprised of Intake Units I (day intake) and II (night intake), and the Delinquency Prevention Unit (DPU), which is responsible for community relations, electronic monitoring, and transporting all eligible youth home following arrest when the parent/guardian/custodian is unable to retrieve their child. The Branch is also charged with screening, investigating, making recommendations, and presenting the cases of all newly referred youth in delinquency cases appearing in JM-15. Additionally, the Branch is responsible for screening and determining the status of all truancy referrals and the operation of all electronic monitoring services for CSSD youth.

In 2023, the Intake Branch successfully screened 1,025 youth referred for a status offense (truancy or persons in need of supervision (PINS)); in 2022, the Intake Branch successfully screened 239 youth referred for truancy. With respect to youth referred for delinquency matters, CSSD screened a total of 1,582 youth, a 20% increase from the 1,316 screened in 2022. Among youth screened for delinquency matters, 440 (28%) were female and 1,142 (72%) were male. The Intake Branch also successfully completed 637 Global Positioning System (GPS) Electronic Monitoring installations, an increase of 34% compared to 2022.

Consistent with core requirements of the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP), all youth referred to CSSD following arrest must be screened within a four-hour period, resulting in either a preliminary hold or release recommendation when court is in session and determination when court is not in session, prior to presentation of the case at the Initial Hearing. Building on accomplishments over the past four years, CSSD successfully:

- a) Screened 100% (1,582) of all newly-arrested youth utilizing a valid Risk Assessment Instrument (RAI), pre-trial social assessment, Conner baseline behavioral screening, and the Sex Trafficking Review (STAR) assessment. Among youth referred for a status offense, CSSD received and screened 1,025 referral packages. The Intake Branch also ensured 637 GPS Electronic Monitoring units were installed, consistent with each court order.
- b) Continued as a principal stakeholder on the CJCC's Juvenile Justice Committee and served as a principal member of the Juvenile Data Subcommittee, ensuring critical data detailing juvenile arrest, diversion, court involvement and overall front-end data trend analysis were accurately submitted.
- c) Continued to serve as a stakeholder on the Truancy Taskforce, a citywide initiative to address causes and reduce the incidents of truancy through coordinated meaningful intervention.
- d) Served as representative member on the D.C. Courts' Data Collection and Planning Committee, which consists of division representatives and executives within the Superior Court and is led by the Chief Judge.

Child Guidance Clinic

In 2023, the Child Guidance Clinic (CGC) resumed in-person evaluations in three locations: Youth Services Center (YSC); NE BARJ Drop-In Center; and the H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse. The CGC received 439 referrals for clinical forensic evaluations, an increase of 51% compared to 2022. Court-ordered evaluations encompassed psychological, psychoeducational, neuropsychological, sex offender risk, violence risk, competency, and emergency forensic evaluations in addition to the Sex Trafficking Assessment Review (STAR). Of the 439 referrals received, 314 (72%) were completed in 2023. The remaining 28% (125) were carried over to 2024, and in compliance with the timeline for which the evaluations were ordered. CGC completed 27% more evaluations in 2023 than the prior year (314 versus 248 in 2022).

CGC maintained its nationally recognized, pre-doctoral psychology internship training program accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA). Three

new interns joined CGC in 2023, selected from Gallaudet University, Spalding University, and Alliant University. The interns were chosen from a pool of roughly 80 applicants.

CGC psychologists assisted with the facilitation of emergency forensic evaluations, which are primarily conducted by psychiatrists contracted through the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH). Additionally, the juvenile sex offense prevention program, Sex Abuse Violates Everyone (SAVE), resumed in-person sessions for youth and parents, with competency attainment training provided utilizing a hybrid model. Additional highlights include:

- a) Maintained frequent and regular contact with youth. Provided individual therapy and crisis support to court-involved youth onsite in CSSD-supported locations, including limited use of secure virtual platforms based on the needs of youth and families.
- b) Attendance of CGC staff psychologists and interns at American Academy of Forensic Psychology (AAFP) trainings on topics such as “Competency Assessment,” “Ethics in Forensic Practice,” and “DSM-5 TR Implications for Forensic Practice.”
- c) Completion and submission of written self-study report for re-accreditation with the American Psychological Association (APA), encompassing an internal review and concurrent signed submission by the CSSD Director.
- d) Facilitated joint training with the Office of the Attorney General on competency to stand trial expert witness testimony.
- e) Continued clinic staff representation on various committees that support the mental health of the District’s youth. These committees include the Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) committee, the JBDDP Suitability Committee, CSEC Multidisciplinary Team, and stakeholder groups for JBDDP and HOPE Courts.

Information, Contracts and Community Outreach

The CSSD Information Contracts and Community Outreach (ICCO) team processed 519 referrals for youth court-ordered to attend BARJ Drop-In Centers. An additional 220 referrals were processed for community-based services to youth beyond attendance at BARJ Drop-In Centers. The referrals link youth to essential growth and development services such as mentoring, life skills, and tutoring sessions. As Contracting

Officer Technical Representatives (COTRs), ICCO oversaw a host of other contracts, including successfully securing the transition to a new provider for GPS Electronic Monitoring devices.

Additionally, this branch oversaw incoming and outgoing mail delivery, managed and maintained the division's fleet of vehicles, coordinated requests from the public, and provided general information about the division and staff contacts.

CSSD Region I and Region II Pre-Trial and Post-Disposition Supervision

Region I Pre-Trial and Post-Disposition Supervision (Region I) is comprised of four teams: (1) Southeast Satellite Office (SESO)/BARJ Drop-In Center; (2) Southwest Satellite Office (SWSO)/BARJ Drop-In Center; (3) Leaders Of Today in Solidarity (LOTS)/BARJ Drop-In Center; and (4) the High Intensive Supervision Team called Ultimate Transition Ultimate Responsibility Now (UTURN).

Region II Pre-Trial and Post-Disposition Supervision (Region II) is also comprised of four teams: (1) Northwest Satellite Office (NWSO)/BARJ Drop-In Center; (2) Northeast Satellite Office (NESO)/BARJ Drop-In Center; (3) Status Offender, Behavioral Health Diversion and HOPE Court Office (SOBHDHC) BARJ Drop-In Center; and (4) Interstate Probation Supervision Team.

In 2023, CSSD supervision Regions I and II achieved success across the majority of operational areas. Among the division's accomplishments, Regions I and II completed over 37,000 community supervision and monitoring interventions.

TABLE 11. REGIONS I AND II COMMUNITY SUPERVISION AND MONITORING ACTIVITY, 2023

Region	Average Daily Caseload	Completed Community Supervision and Monitoring Activity				
		Home Visits	School Visits	Curfew Checks	Curfew Calls	Total
I	280	3,052	1,707	5,414	9,808	19,981
II	293	2,181	1,411	5,843	8,371	17,806
Total	573	5,233	3,118	11,257	18,179	37,787

CSSD places significant emphasis on the development and adaptation of programs and the delivery of services and support to youth and families. Each engagement, from the inception of a youth and family’s contact with the court, is embraced as an opportunity to inspire, transform, and uplift the youth and family to the maximum extent possible. The cornerstone of CSSD’s adolescent milieu is a Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) approach to juvenile justice. In 2023, the division required all pre-trial youth to attend BARJ Drop-In Center afterschool programming for a period of 30 days for youth deemed a low-to-medium risk to public safety and 60 days for youth deemed a high risk to public safety. A total of 1,196 youth were under CSSD supervision in 2023, of which 519 (43%) attended BARJ Drop-In Center programming. Through enhanced efforts to increase participation among youth, BARJ attendance among youth has increased since the fall of 2023. To address the needs of court-involved youth, CSSD relies on a variety of activities, services, supports and resources to teach youth ways to process their emotions and thoughts, which in turn guides their interactions with others. This aligns with the BARJ philosophy that the victim, youth/family and community are all impacted when a crime occurs.

To encourage youth compliance, CSSD continued to utilize its graduated rewards and accountability matrix. In collaboration with clinicians, life skills coaches, mentors,

and tutors, CSSD encouraged attendance and participation among youth in BARJ evening programming, as well as winter and spring break activities and summer safety programming. Escorted youth and a subset of parents and siblings also attended outings, including visiting an amusement park, the Univer-Soul Circus, and the African American Museum, in addition to bowling, go-karting, and movie nights held in the community and at BARJ. The following highlights include educational, recreational, and therapeutic groups, as well as community service and public outings in which youth participated.

- a) Youth participated in prosocial groups facilitated via collaboration between CSSD staff and service providers. Daily groups and topics included: Accelerating the Aptitude of Children; Civic Empowerment and topical reviews of current local and national events; Drug Awareness Responsibility and Education; Anger Management; Developing Leaders for Life and Creating Legacies; Life Skills; Influencing Future Empowerment; and Anger & Emotional Management. Staff also facilitated circle groups focused on a host of topics including gun violence, mass incarceration, police use of force and development of coping skills.
- b) Youth attended a book signing event of local author Duane “Cousin Wayne” Cunningham in Southeast D.C. His book “*Blueprint to be a Better You*” chronicles the journey of a young man as he transitions to the responsibilities of adulthood.
- c) The CSSD BARJ Enhancements and Sustainability Committee took on the challenge of enhancing existing programming and developing new approaches, to include expanding the interface between activities and public safety, community service and services learning. Beginning in October 2023, monthly themes guided BARJ activities.
 - 1) The October theme was anti-gun and anti-violence.
 - 2) The November theme was “Giving Thanks.”
 - 3) The December theme was theme of “Giving Back.”
- d) Youth attending BARJ participated in various on- and offsite activities including a Union Station scavenger hunt, grocery store budget exercise, a monuments and memorials scavenger hunt, bowling, go-karting, and career day. BARJ attending youth also created vision boards to encourage envisioning productive lives post court-involvement and to promote positive future planning.
- e) In collaboration with mentors and tutors, youth participated in staff-coordinated spring break college tours, volunteered at an urban farm, and took part in the Adopt-A-Block clean-up initiative, focusing on the immediate blocks surrounding the BARJ centers.

Staff continue to engage with the community on a wide range of youth issues. Staff highlights from 2023 include:

- a) Continued participation in virtual and in-person public safety meetings, including, but not limited to: Police Service Area (PSA), Area Neighborhood Commission (ANC), and Civic Associations.
- b) Supported the citywide Summer Safety Surge: coordinated several ice cream socials across the city, which were lauded by the MPD Youth Division as directly contributing to crime reduction across several communities.
- c) Continued successful utilization of the national UNITY database for all states and territories. Maintained compliance with report submission.
- d) Continued participation in monthly Citywide Child Fatality Committee, allowing CSSD to partner with other citywide stakeholders in investigating and uncovering the causes of adolescent fatalities in the city.
- e) Continued participation in the citywide Multi-Disciplinary Treatment Committee targeting youth at-risk of or victimized by human trafficking and/or exploitation.

Mental Health and Habilitation Branch

The Mental Health and Habilitation Branch is responsible for the adjudication of cases related to the hospitalization and continued treatment of persons in need of mental health services and persons with intellectual disabilities, along with the accurate and secure maintenance of records resulting from these activities.

The Mental Health and Habilitation Branch recruits and provides volunteer advocates for persons with intellectual disabilities through the Mental Habilitation Advocate Program. In 2023, 19 advocates supported respondents in 36 cases. Four new advocates joined the program in 2023. Virtual quarterly trainings were conducted, including one with the Presiding Judge, and one to recognize advocates who reached service milestones of five, eight, twenty, and thirty years. The Disability Services Reform Amendment Act of 2018, which took effect on May 5, 2018,³⁶ comprehensively repealed

³⁶ D.C. Code §§ 7-1304.01-1304.13.

and amended the Citizens with Intellectual Disabilities Constitutional Rights and Dignity Act of 1978, ending new admissions and commitments of persons with intellectual disabilities and providing that, for current commitments, the court will terminate commitment unless there is informed consent for continued commitment. No mental habilitation cases were filed in 2023.

In 2023, 2,974 mental health cases were filed, and 114 cases were reopened. This is an 18% increase from 2022 in which 2,493 mental health cases were filed and 118 cases were reopened. Court performance measures, established by Administrative Order 09-12, require that 99% of cases filed are disposed within 60 days. The court disposed of 95% of the cases within that standard, the same as in 2022. Cases were disposed with an average time to disposition of 22 days, an increase of 3 days from the average in 2022.

Parentage and Support Branch

The Parentage and Support Branch is responsible for the adjudication of cases involving the establishment of parentage and support and the accurate and secure maintenance of records resulting from these activities. In 2023, 1,173 new parentage and support actions were filed in the Family Court and 24 cases were reopened. In 2023, the Office of the Attorney General initiated 79% (940) of parentage and support filings. The remaining 21% (257) were filed privately.

Federal regulations mandate that orders to establish support be completed in 75% of the cases within six months of the date of service of process and 90% of the cases within 12 months of the date of service (*see* 45 CFR § 303.101). The court did not meet these standards in 2023; forty-one percent of the cases were disposed or otherwise resolved within six months (180 days) of service of process and 59% within 12 months of

service of process. The court and D.C. Child Support Services Division continue to collaborate to ensure that cases are processed and resolved more efficiently and timely. In 2023, the Magistrate Judges continued to address cases using a hybrid schedule. Later in the year, a third Parentage and Support calendar was added to address parentage and support matters on three calendar days per week. Two Parentage and Support judges continued to schedule 72 cases per week and the third Magistrate Judge scheduled 56 cases per week. In April 2023, the Office of the Attorney General and Family Court launched Phase II of the Child Support Conciliation Program (Administrative Child Support Orders). Phase II allows parties to complete DNA testing before the initial hearing date at no cost to the parties. The program allows adjudications to be entered for minor children prior to the hearing date if the results are positive; if the results are negative, it allows the request for a dismissal prior to the hearing date. In addition to the DNA testing, Phase II also allows parties to consent to temporary and permanent orders prior to the initial hearing date.

The court, in collaboration with legal service providers Legal Aid D.C. and Bread for the City, maintains a Child Support Resource Center located in the anteroom of Courtroom JM-13. The attorneys staffing the Child Support Resource Center assist litigants, mostly respondents, by providing information and brief advice.

Domestic Relations Branch

The Domestic Relations Branch is responsible for the adjudication of divorce and custody proceedings, along with the accurate and secure maintenance of records resulting from these activities. In 2023, 4,275 new divorce and custody cases were filed in the Family Court and 89 cases were reopened.

The majority of divorce and custody cases met established disposition standards in 2023, including 95% of uncontested divorce cases, 61% of uncontested third-party custody cases, and 57% of uncontested custody cases. Additionally, 85% of the contested divorce cases, 84% of the contested custody third-party cases, and 79% of contested custody cases reached disposition within the nine-month standard. The court will continue to monitor and track this performance area and implement appropriate measures to improve compliance rates.

In 2023, Magistrate Judges continued to oversee initial hearings. This change, implemented in 2022, has improved judicial efficiency by allowing the assigned Associate Judges to focus on the later stages of litigation and cases which are ready to be resolved or scheduled for trial.

The Domestic Relations Branch provided additional services to litigants via an online portal through which litigants can request and receive certified copies electronically. In 2023, 669 requests for certified copies were successfully processed.

In response to legislation passed in 2023 regarding vulnerable youth, a new case type was created for cases of vulnerable youth guardianship.³⁷ Vulnerable youth are immigrant youth aged 18 to 21 who have been abused, abandoned, or neglected. This new legislation provides vulnerable youth a path to legal status through Special Immigrant Juvenile Status under federal law.

Family Court Self-Help Center

The Family Court Self-Help Center (SHC) is a free walk-in service that provides

³⁷ D.C. Code § 16-2339.01 *et seq.*

people without lawyers (self-represented parties) general legal information in a variety of family law matters, such as divorce, custody, visitation, and child support. Although the SHC does not provide legal advice, it does provide legal information and assistance to litigants, allowing them to determine which of the standard form pleadings is most appropriate, then explaining how to complete forms and how to navigate the court process. When appropriate, the SHC staff and volunteer facilitators refer litigants for legal assistance to legal clinics and programs in the community. Since the court began oversight of the program in March 2005, the SHC has served over 122,000 customers.

The Self-Help Center continued serving customers onsite and remotely, returning solely to full onsite services in July 2023. The SHC held two trainings for volunteer lawyers, one in June and the other in August, training 46 new volunteers. Relatedly, the SHC created a new online scheduling system to make it easier for volunteers to sign up for volunteer slots each month. The SHC also welcomed law school student volunteers in the spring and fall semesters, expanding the capacity of the SHC to serve its customers. D.C. KinCare Alliance, in collaboration with the Self-Help Center, was available on Mondays to provide brief legal advice and full representation for kinship caregivers (grandparents and other relatives).

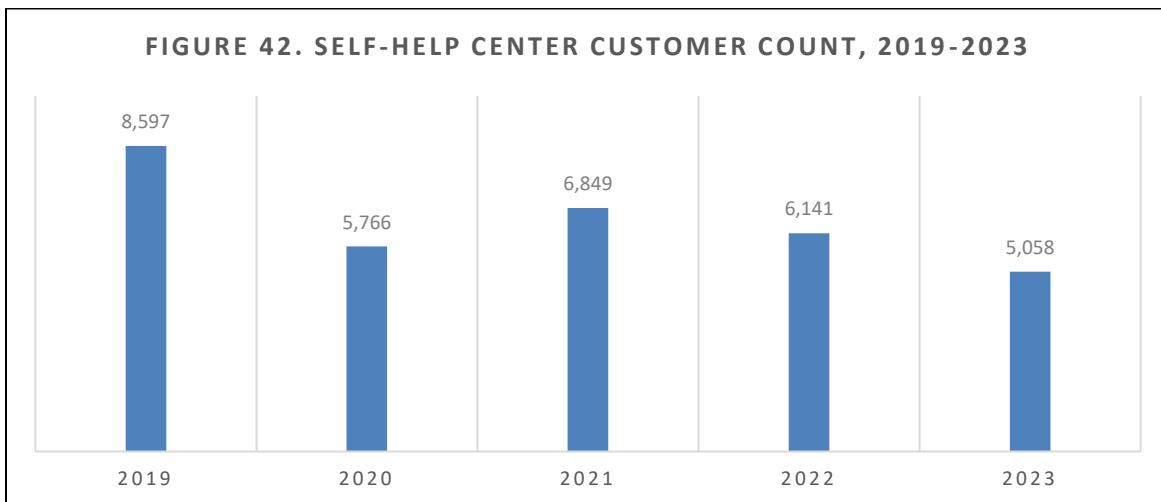
The SHC continued to refer customers to the Family Law Assistance Network (FLAN), a joint project of the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Center, the D.C. Affordable Law Firm, and the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia. FLAN offers pro se litigants confidential, free legal advice and/or representation in custody, child support, parentage, and divorce cases heard in the Domestic Relations Branch of D.C. Superior Court. FLAN staffs an office in the H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse, expanding service in the fall of 2023

from two to four days a week. The Self-Help Center referred 100 customers to FLAN in 2023.

The SHC also referred customers to the Child Support Resource Center (CSRC), a joint project of Legal Aid and Bread for the City that offers free legal advice or representation in child support cases. CSRC has onsite staffing at the court to better assist customers with legal advice.

Detailed below are a few of the findings from data collected for 2023:

- a) The SHC served 5,058 people in 2023, an 18% decrease from 2022 (Figure 42). This decline may be attributed to SHC offering services solely onsite beginning in July 2023; previously, approximately 150 customers per month were provided services remotely. The SHC plans to return to offering services remotely in 2024.
- b) On average, the SHC served 421 individuals per month in 2023, compared to 512 individuals per month in 2022.
- c) Approximately 70% of the customers served made less than 200% of the federal poverty guidelines for a family of four in 2023.
- d) As has been the case since 2006, a large majority of the parties seeking help from the SHC had issues related to custody (54%), divorce (14%) or child support (14%).



Advancements in Technology

In 2023, the Family Court built upon its hybrid service model, developing new tools to facilitate easier access to the court and court information. A webpage was developed and is available on the Court website that displays the approximate wait times for three Family Court walk-in branches: the Self-Help Center, the Marriage Bureau, and the Central Intake Center – three of the busiest offices in Family Court. The website is updated every 15 minutes, providing the public real-time data so they can make informed decisions before visiting the courthouse.

In another technological advancement, QR codes were developed to make accessing electronic and remote services easier for court users. The QR codes direct court users to the WebEx remote courtroom of each Family Court courtroom, allowing customers to enter their hearings more expeditiously. QR codes were also created to facilitate the use of Box.com for 1) submission of sensitive case processing documents or bulk files and 2) to allow partner agencies to access stored Family Court resources, such as the Counsel for Child Abuse and Neglect Parent Guide. These QR codes are posted throughout the Family Court in the H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse. Additional QR codes to direct litigants to information or other helpful resources are in development for 2024.

Conclusion

In 2023, the Family Court continued to build on the progress already made by our dedicated judiciary and personnel. Working alongside our community partners and stakeholders, the Court maintained its hybrid service model, permitting access to justice

both virtually and in-person. Despite an unprecedented number of judicial vacancies, the court continued in its mission of protecting and providing permanency for children, strengthening families, and deciding disputes fairly and expeditiously; the Court resolved 10,447 cases. On average, the Court Social Services Division supervised approximately 550 to 575 pre-trial and post-disposition juveniles and status offenders daily. The Court continued the use of remote courtrooms, electronic case initiation, fee payment, and other remote services to increase access to justice for court participants, including creating and posting QR codes linking to these services throughout the H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse. Our judicial officers and workforce were supported through education and training.

The Court continued to focus on abuse and neglect, termination of parental rights, and adoptions. In 2023, in neglect matters, the median length of time from removal to achievement of the permanency goal of reunification decreased from 20.7 months to 17.9 months; the median length of time from removal to achievement of the permanency goal of adoption also decreased from 33.8 months to 32.9 months. Of the 447 children in foster care whose adoption was finalized in the past five years, only one reentered foster care.

Although there was a 34% increase in the number of juvenile cases filed in 2023 as compared to 2022, the Family Court made progress in case processing times in certain classes of cases. Time to adjudication for both securely detained youth with most serious offenses and non-securely detained youth improved. Among securely detained youth with most serious offenses, 52% of adjudication hearings occurred within the 45-day timeframe, an improvement over the 33% in 2022. For non-securely detained youth, 30% of adjudication hearings occurred within the 45-day timeframe, an improvement from 24% in 2022.

Other enhancements for Family Court participants included: utilizing alternative dispute resolution to resolve appropriate cases; making available DNA testing for Parentage and Support cases at no cost prior to the initial hearing; continuing to operate the Self-Help Center, a free service to people without lawyers which offers general legal information in a variety of family law matters, including divorce, custody, visitation, and child support; developing a website to display customer wait-times in real-time for three Family Court offices; a call center available to the public five days a week, resulting in 53,318 phone calls being answered by a live person, not a recording; and many others.

There are specific areas for improvement in the Family Court. While time to permanency for removed cases improved since 2022, Family Court will closely monitor compliance with trial/stipulation and disposition timeframes for non-removed children in neglect matters to ensure timely scheduling of hearings. Additionally, the Court is working diligently to address the backlog of Parentage and Support cases and Domestic Relations cases resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing Associate Judge vacancy challenges. The Court remains committed to engaging stakeholders and community partners to ensure that all members of the community can access the Court, whether it be in-person or via the use of technology.

The Family Court is committed to meeting the changing and complex needs of young people and their families while expanding services and maintaining the safety and security of all with business before the Court. The judicial officers and staff will continue to utilize best practices, expanded technology, evidence-based policy making, and enhanced collaborations with our justice partners to promote child safety, prompt permanency, and enhanced rehabilitation for the good of the families of the District of Columbia.

Notes

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