



Washington County
Attorney's Office

Annual Report 2023



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MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTY ATTORNEY



Welcome to the Washington County Attorney's Office's 2023 Annual Report. The foundation for protecting and serving the people of Washington County starts with fielding the best team of attorneys and legal professionals possible. I am immensely proud of the people who make up this office. They are genuinely committed to doing the right thing, the right way, every time. I cannot say enough about the talent, dedication, and character of each and every one of this 60-person team. The rapidly changing post-pandemic environment is transforming the very work we do and the resources we utilize to do it. They rose to that challenge with enthusiasm and ingenuity to fulfil our mission of doing justice and meeting the needs of our growing, diverse community. After seeing our commitment and accomplishments, I am confident that you too will be impressed.

This report is both a high-level overview and a snapshot of our work in 2023. Over 2,372 people attended at least one of our 50 presentations for law enforcement training and community awareness, two critical parts of our core mission. Prosecutors filed 1,125 criminal complaints in 2023. Although still too high, the number of auto thefts decreased substantially and 2023 came and went without a single carjacking. Mental health, chemical dependency, and civil commitment referrals remain high, and we had the most commitments to treatment in any single year. The number of evaluations of a defendant's competency and claims of not guilty due to mental illness are also much higher than just a few years ago.

Child protection cases dropped in 2023 compared to the five-year average. Serious juvenile crime involving kids who are 14, 15, and 16 with stolen cars and guns or other serious offenses improved in 2023 but has yet to returned to pre-pandemic levels. Although relatively small in number, these cases involved multiple charges with outsized impacts that required a disproportionate amount of attention. Most of the Juvenile Division's cases, however, involved kids who made bad decisions, committed minor offenses, and completed diversion in lieu of criminal charges. We typically don't hear from them again. Our work with kids and families on the "front end" to address truancy issues has helped prevent children from becoming entangled in the juvenile justice system in the first place.

Cases of all types involve more and more digital evidence and complexity and require more time and technology to review and prepare. Despite these trends, productivity and efficiency in all divisions have increased. Together with the court and defense bar, we resolved the cases that had backlogged in the court system due to the pandemic and worked with court administration to establish remote court efficiencies going forward. We remain committed to our 14-day decision deadline for all referrals from law enforcement, and by the end of 2023 we were back into the preferred range of 7-day average turnaround. On a macro level, our strategic efforts are resulting in reduced crime and enhanced public safety. We joined the strong community response to stop pandemic crime trends, emphasized accountability for youth and adults alike, and focused on treatment and prevention. By working well together as a team to improve outcomes, we made our community a better place.

We are building on these accomplishments in 2024. As always, we welcome the opportunity to talk with you, be it at an event or through direct contact with our office. Thank you for taking the time to look at our review of 2023 and as you do know that we have set the bar even higher for 2024.

Thank you everyone for your support!

CRIMINAL DIVISION



Nick Hydukovich
Criminal Division Head



Thomas Wedes
Assistant Criminal Division Head

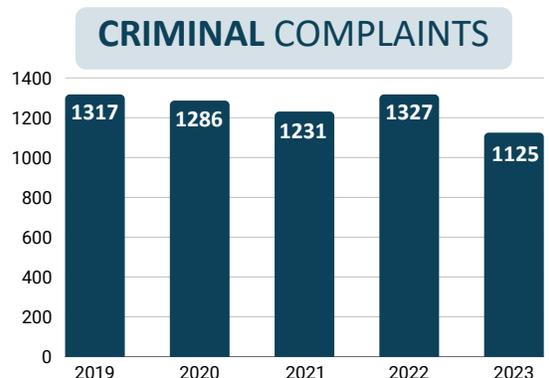
The Criminal Division prosecutes all felony and select gross misdemeanor crimes that occur in Washington County, and all misdemeanor crimes that occur in townships in the county. Twelve attorneys, five victim/witness coordinators, seven legal assistants, and one criminal analyst are assigned to prosecute the work of the Criminal Division. Each one has a caseload that includes all types of criminal offenses, from first-degree murder to sexual assault, drug trafficking, and aggravated robberies. The Criminal Division is led by Nick Hydukovich, Criminal Division Head, and Tom Wedes, Assistant Criminal Division Head.

During the past year, Criminal Division prosecutors have continued to hold violent criminals accountable. Our prosecutors earned a conviction for aiding and abetting second-degree murder in a case in which an innocent 14-year-old boy was senselessly killed in a shooting at a graduation party. After a two-week jury trial, the defendant was found guilty and sentenced to over 37 years in prison. A co-defendant who also fired at the victim later pleaded guilty to aiding and abetting second-degree murder. The two defendants fired a total of 40 gunshots in seconds during the shooting.

“Our prosecutors hold criminals accountable for their actions, and in doing so, ensure that victims are given a strong voice in the courtroom and beyond.”

Our prosecutors earned convictions in a variety of other serious crimes. A mother who killed her young child was convicted of second-degree murder after a trial. Several defendants were found guilty of sexual assaults against both children and adults and received lengthy prison sentences. A jury also returned over a dozen guilty verdicts against a man who swindled innocent victims and failed to pay income and sales taxes.

We vigorously prosecute high-level drug dealers, including those who sell drugs to others that result in the death of the buyer. At the same time, County Attorney Magnuson continues the work begun by previous County Attorney Pete Orput recognizing that a significant portion of lower-level drug- and theft-related crimes are the direct result of addiction. Accordingly, Criminal Division prosecutors actively engage drug users—not dealers—in our robust drug diversion program, which provides an opportunity in the right circumstances for drug users to complete the chemical dependency treatment and pro-social and cognitive skills programming necessary to lead sober and productive lives in lieu of a criminal conviction.





Both the Criminal and Juvenile Divisions continue to offer law enforcement the assistance of our automobile theft prosecutors in vehicle theft investigations and related crimes, such as carjackings and catalytic converter theft. Our office prioritizes these cases as well as the vital work done by the East Metro Sex Trafficking Task Force and our other task forces.

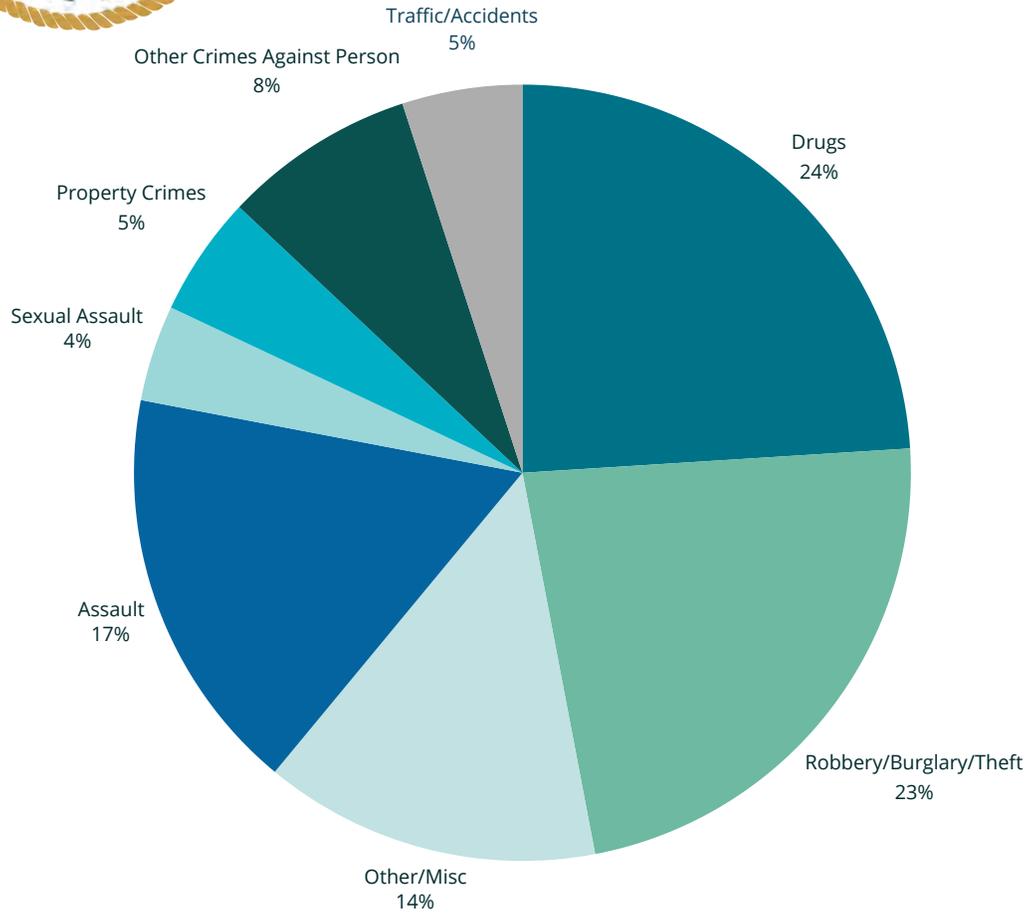
LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING PROGRAM



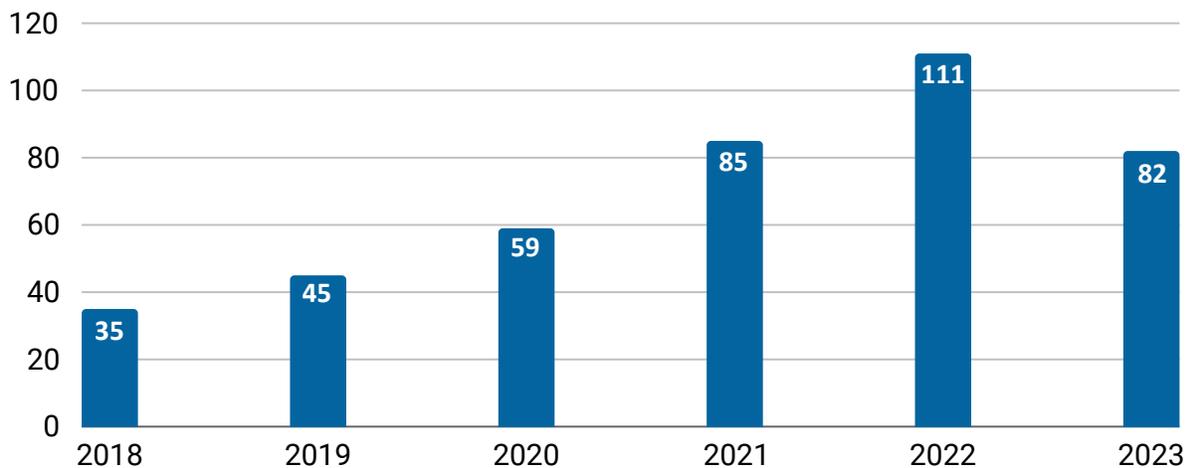
In 2023, County Attorney Magnuson formally announced the Washington County Attorney's Office Law Enforcement Specialized Training Program. This program provides a two-year curriculum of training courses for our law enforcement officers on a variety of topics, including basic investigative techniques, specific types of investigations, updates on new laws, and training for new officers. The courses, which are taught by attorneys from all divisions in the office, are resulting in even better outcomes in criminal prosecution and continued strong relationships between our prosecutors and law enforcement partners. The program is led by Assistant County Attorney Wade Kish, with the support of Tami Orput.



ADULT CASES BY CRIME TYPE 2023



FLEEING POLICE IN A MOTOR VEHICLE





SERVING VICTIMS OF CRIME

Serving victims is at the forefront of the mission of the Criminal Division. The five Victim/Witness Coordinators play crucial roles in our successes. Our mission is to protect the rights and aid victims and witnesses in understanding and participating in the criminal justice process. This includes addressing individual needs caused by victimization.

Our Victim/Witness Coordinators ensure that crime victims are informed of their rights. Minnesota law gives victims several rights, including the right to be informed of criminal charges being filed, to attend court hearings, to be informed of plea offers, to provide victim impact statements at the time of sentencing, to obtain restitution for losses suffered as the result of a crime, and to be informed of post conviction matters, including appeals and expungements. Victim/Witness Coordinators also work with community-based programs to help victims find resources and support groups in the community that can help the victim deal with the impact a crime in their life.

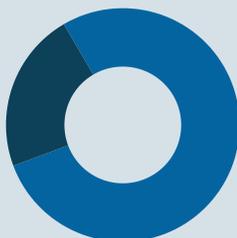
"Our goal is to make sure victims are informed, provided resources, and given the opportunity to have their voice heard."

Victim/Witness Coordinators also play a crucial role in preparing cases for trial. Coordinators work with victims and other witnesses to prepare them for the process of testifying at trial. Testifying can be a nerve-wracking, painful, and anxiety-inducing event. The coordinators accompany victims to court and make sure victims and other witnesses know when and where their testimony is needed. The coordinators also provide a crucial line of communication between the victims or witnesses and the assigned attorney who is working the case. The Victim/Witness Coordinators provide a necessary and vital role in the Criminal Division cases. One of the Victim/Witness Coordinators plays a similar role in the Juvenile Division, assisting victims of juvenile delinquency, traffic, and petty offenses.

In addition to their other duties, our coordinators act as a liaison to other criminal justice agencies, including the community corrections department and law enforcement.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Juvenile Case Victims
309



Adult Case Victims
1079

In 2023, our Victim/Witness Coordinators provided assistance to over 1,388 victims of crime.

EAST METRO HUMAN TRAFFICKING TASK FORCE



Scott Haldeman
Assistant County Attorney

The East Metro Human Trafficking Task Force (EMHTTF) is a multijurisdictional unit that is combatting the commercial sex trade across Washington County. Scott Haldeman is the Assistant Washington County Attorney assigned to the taskforce. Amanda Fehlen is a criminal analyst dedicated to the EMHTTF, and Shawna Kish provides victim/witness support and coordinator services.

In addition to the three members of our office, the EMHTTF in 2023 also consisted of Sgt. Paul Stenglein of the Washington County Sheriff's Office, Brian Campbell of the Cottage Grove Police Department, and Joe Groppoli of the Oakdale Police Department. The task force continues to work closely with all jurisdictions in Washington County while working with the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and other trafficking task forces across the state. Additionally, the Department of Homeland Security provided integral resources that assist with undercover operations.

The EMHTTF spent a significant amount of time conducting recovery operations, where officers pose as buyers. Recovery operations are designed to provide human trafficking survivors resources and support rather than criminal prosecution. The task force addressed both the supply and demand of human trafficking by conducting undercover sting operations that lead to numerous arrests in Washington County.

“The East Metro Human Trafficking Task Force unites several jurisdictions across Washington County to combat the commercial sex trade and provide services and resources for victims.”

In 2023, the EMHTTF investigated 43 human trafficking cases in Washington County, with 25 of them involving young people. We successfully prosecuted a number of cases, including the owner of an illicit massage parlor in Willernie. This prosecution led to further investigations in the area and additional regulation of the massage business in Washington County. The task force also focused on recovering runaway youth to prevent the tragic potential of becoming trafficking victims. Outreach is an important part of drawing attention to this important issue. Members of the task force presented at several organizations and schools in 2023 to raise awareness, create connections, and spotlight ways for Washington County residents to become involved.



Washington County Tip Line
651-430-7825
National Human Trafficking
Resource Center Hotline
888-373-7888

DRUG TASK FORCE

The Washington County Drug Task Force (DTF) investigates cases involving the illegal sale, purchase, and possession of controlled substances. The DTF also investigates cases in which a person dies of an overdose after using a controlled substance.

The DTF is a partnership between the Washington County Sheriff's Office, Cottage Grove Police Department, Woodbury Public Safety Department, and Forest Lake Police Department. The DTF is also responsible for drug abuse prevention and education in the community. The Washington County Attorney's Office prosecutes offenses and litigates forfeiture proceedings based on DTF investigations.



In 2023, the DTF found that the price of major drugs we seized went down significantly. Methamphetamine went from \$6,000 a pound to about \$2,200 a pound. Fentanyl pills went from \$15-\$20 a pill to \$2 to \$3 a pill. The falling prices help fuel the continually growing crisis of drug addiction. The overall value of drug seizures was about \$2.3 million. This number includes the largest fentanyl pill seizure to date in Minnesota, approximately 280,000 pills (below). The DTF made 43 arrests and seized 14 guns and \$137,000 in cash and assets in 2023.

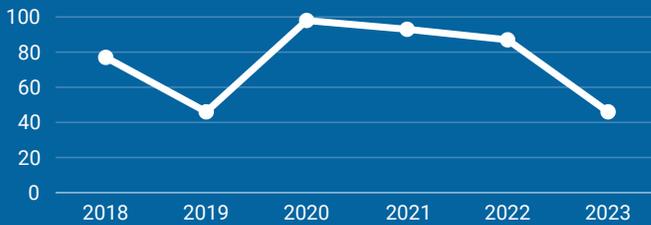


AUTO THEFT GRANT

The Washington County Attorney's Office dedicates a specific prosecutor to specialize in adult auto theft prosecution. By having a specialized prosecutor handling auto theft-related crime, we streamline the charging process and identify trends and patterns in criminal activity, allowing us to take an aggressive and proactive approach to auto theft prosecution. Our dedicated prosecutor also provides law enforcement training on auto theft investigations and community outreach so members of the community can lower their risk of becoming the victim of these types of crimes.



Justin Richardson
Assistant County Attorney



MOTOR VEHICLE THEFTS CHARGED BY YEAR

VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION UNIT

This office is committed to protecting the public from the dangers of fraud and other exploitation crimes, which are frequently directed at vulnerable adults with devastating personal suffering and economic consequences.

The best protection is public awareness and prevention before a crime happens. County Attorney Magnuson and our other attorneys continually conduct community outreach to alert and inform citizens about potential scams, swindles, and frauds. At these presentations, we educate the community about the different systems and resources available to protect vulnerable adults. Our commitment to increase public awareness about this growing issue in 2023 continues to extend beyond vulnerable adults to the entire community.

Our Criminal Division aggressively prosecutes offenders who financially or physically victimize the elderly and vulnerable. When necessary, our Civil Division attorneys intervene with court proceedings to establish protective guardianships and conservatorships over vulnerable adults.



Kari Lindstrom
Assistant County Attorney



Keshini Ratnayake
Assistant County Attorney

EXPUNGEMENT INITIATIVE

Prosecutors are ministers of justice and our office believes that we have a responsibility to help rehabilitated people who have paid their debt to society. Long after people have atoned for the harm they caused and fulfilled their obligations to the justice system, criminal records and the collateral consequences that follow serve as barriers to jobs, housing, education, and more, preventing people from serving as productive members of our community.



According to statutory criteria for certain low-level crimes, a person has an opportunity to expunge a criminal conviction by petition to the court or agreement with the prosecutor. Our office provides a service to people, if they qualify, to seal their criminal record at no cost to them. This opportunity is an economic benefit to society and reflects an understanding that rehabilitation and atonement should be rewarded. Also, in addition to maintaining credibility with the court by reducing unnecessary judicial process, avoiding unnecessary petitions and hearings has allowed us to concentrate resources on petitions related to more serious crimes. In 2023, we processed over 400 expungement-by-agreement cases.

VETERANS PROGRAM



Over the last 10 years, the Washington County Veterans Program has worked with hundreds of veterans in every branch of the U.S. military. Our highly successful program is a special partnership among the criminal justice system, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and local treatment providers. The veterans program promotes public safety while supporting veterans and their families through a coordinated effort among the veteran services delivery system, community-based services, and the court – thereby leaving no veteran behind.

This program recognizes the unique problems facing veterans and how problem-solving courts can help by recognizing the trauma-related disabilities that military men and women returning from active deployment develop and identifying resources to assist veterans. The program strives to identify veterans, offer them assistance, assess their needs, and help them solve their problems.

The Washington County program targets veterans currently facing prosecution in a Washington County criminal case. The overall goal is to divert veterans out of the traditional criminal justice process and into appropriate rehabilitative alternatives. Once the veteran has been screened, assessed, and approved for participation in the program, they will promptly begin a treatment regimen specific to their needs.

JUVENILE DIVISION



Tony Zdroik
Juvenile Division Head

“Our work involves both protecting children and promoting the public safety through diligent prosecution.”

The Juvenile Division prosecutes all juvenile delinquency, petty, and traffic cases occurring in Washington County. We also represent Washington County Community Services in child protection matters that involve children who have been abused or neglected by a parent or legal custodian. Additionally, the County Attorney’s Office devotes one prosecutor to handle all truancy matters. Through partnerships between schools, social workers, and this office, we provide services to families to address school attendance issues and avoid court intervention. The Juvenile Division has seven attorneys and four legal support professionals. Tony Zdroik, Juvenile Division Head, leads the division.

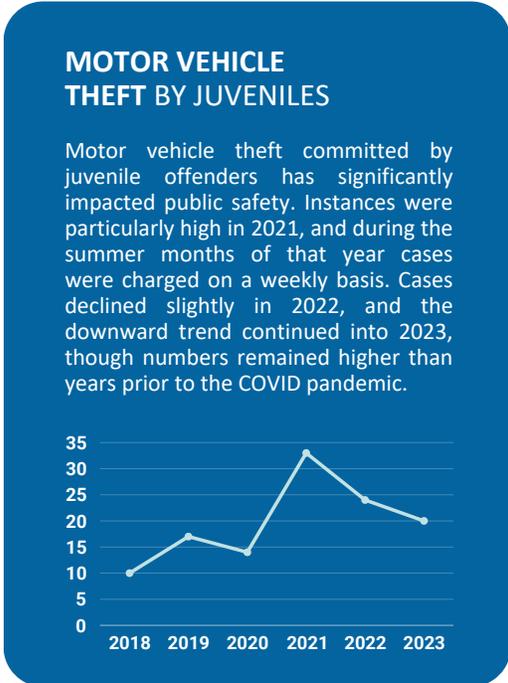
Juvenile prosecution in the Washington County Attorney’s Office is focused on promoting public safety through means that are fair and just, but also recognize the unique needs of children. These principles are outlined in the Minnesota Juvenile Code.

DIVERSION

This office recognizes that in many cases juveniles simply make bad decisions. These cases frequently involve minor offenses that do not significantly impact overall public safety. For those juveniles, our primary response is to utilize diversion programs that involve programming, supervision, support, and restorative justice. These programs hold the youthful offenders accountable for poor decisions while limiting their contact with the criminal justice system. In 2023 approximately 50% of all low-level offenses were referred to a diversion program. Most of these juveniles are not referred to our office again.

COURT INTERVENTION

However, sometimes diversion is not enough to address and prevent future delinquency. This small group of cases causes the most significant threat to public safety and we take them very seriously. They include juveniles using or possessing firearms, committing occupied home burglaries, stealing vehicles, and fleeing from law enforcement in motor vehicles. For those juveniles, we utilize all tools available to protect the public. These juveniles are often held in secure detention while the case is pending and are often the subject of a motion for certification to adult court or for extended jurisdiction juvenile (EJJ) prosecution – a blending sentencing provision that allows for both juvenile services and the possibility of adult court sanctions. Fortunately, the number of EJJ and certification cases is low – only 10 cases in 2023. That low number is consistent with filings in the previous five years and attests to the success of our commitment to education and diversion early in lives of the youth.



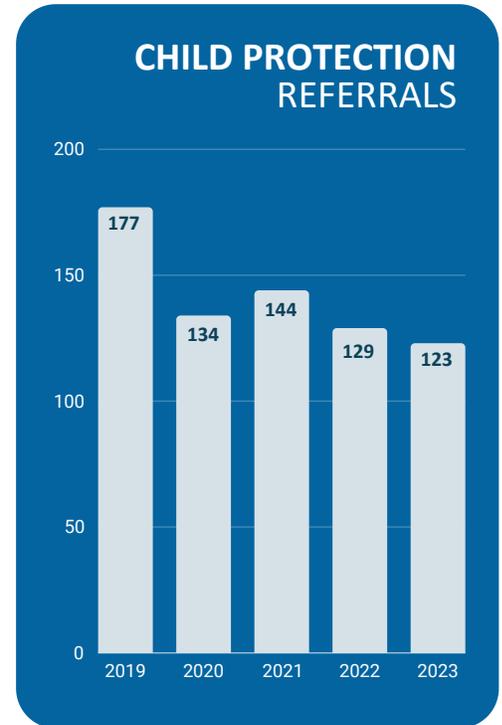
CHILD PROTECTION

The number of child protection cases was down in 2023 compared to the average number of cases received over the previous five years. Juvenile Division staff filed 36 child in need of protection or services (CHIPS) petitions and 38 termination of parental rights or other permanency cases in 2023. In the previous five years, those the numbers averaged 56 CHIPS filings and 44 permanency filings. Despite the slight decline in filings, these cases continue to take a great amount of effort from attorneys and support staff. The cases involve serious issues affecting the lives of Washington County children and families and involve regular advice and consultation with social workers from Community Services.

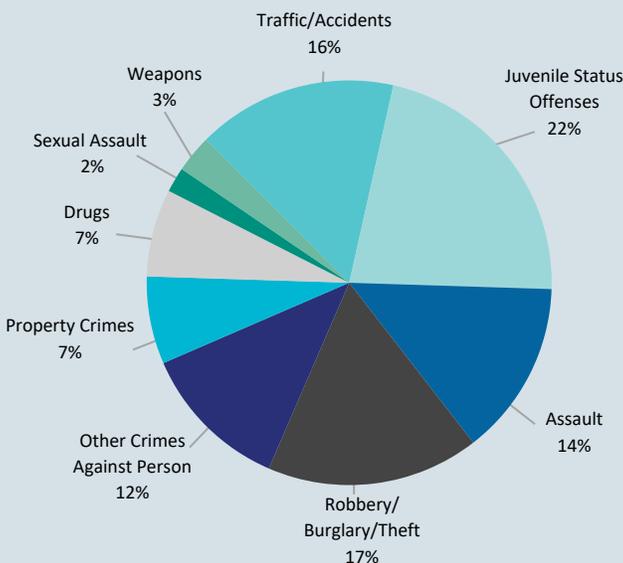
One of many positive aspects of child protection work is assisting Washington County Community Services with the filing and finalization of adoptions. In 2023, the Juvenile Division staff worked with and represented Community Services on 13 adoption cases. Since a change in the law in 2013, Community Services and the County Attorney's office has finalized the adoptions of 111 Washington County children who were previously placed in foster care through the child protection process. These adoptions permanently placed those children in supportive, stable homes and open the door to positive futures.

TRAINING

Due to the special issues involved in both juvenile prosecution and child protection, there are many opportunities to provide training to other partners in the juvenile justice system. The attorneys in the Juvenile Division bring a significant amount of experience and are regularly called upon both in Washington County and throughout the state to train others. In 2023, We provided training to over 750 individuals from several different disciplines, including social workers, law enforcement officers, judges, legislators, and other prosecutors.



JUVENILE CASES BY CRIME TYPE



STAFF DIRECTORY



Rick Allen
Assistant County Attorney
Juvenile Division



Natalie Anderson
Legal Assistant
Criminal Division



Jenn Baltaian
Administrative Services Manager



Marc Berris
Assistant County Attorney
Criminal Division



Kris Braml
Legal Assistant, Senior
Juvenile Division



Pamela Brandt
Legal Assistant, Senior
Criminal Division



Stuart Campbell
Assistant County Attorney
Civil Division



Jamie Cole
Legal Assistant, Senior
Criminal Division



Patrick Collins
Assistant County Attorney
Civil Division



Jessie Dando
Victim/Witness Coordinator



Sumayah Dieng
Legal Assistant, Senior
Criminal Division



Kelley Doolan
Victim/Witness Coordinator



Bailee Earl
Legal Assistant
Criminal Division



Amanda Fehlen
Criminal Analyst



Karen Fontaine
Executive Assistant



Tom Frenette
Assistant County Attorney
Criminal Division



Scott Haldeman
Assistant County Attorney
Criminal Division



Tammy Harrison-Hiben
Legal Assistant, Senior
Civil Division



Emma House
Victim/Witness Coordinator



Jeniffer Hawthorne
Office Supervisor



Pam Hughes
Paralegal
Civil Division



Nick Hydukovich
Criminal Division Head



Andrew Jackola
Assistant County Attorney
Civil Division



Erin Johnson
Assistant County Attorney
Juvenile Division



Karen Kellner
Legal Assistant, Senior
Civil Division



Shawna Kish
Victim/Witness Coordinator



Wade Kish
Assistant County Attorney
Criminal Division



Beth Kraske
Office Specialist



Vicky Krawczeski
Paralegal
Civil Division



Jamie Kreuser
Assistant County Attorney
Juvenile Division



Joe Kvam
Legal Assistant, Senior
Juvenile Division



Theresa Leverty
Paralegal
Juvenile Division



Kari Lindstrom
Assistant County Attorney
Civil Division



Tricia Loehr
Assistant County Attorney
Juvenile Division



Kevin Magnuson
Washington County Attorney



Abigail Maruish
Assistant County Attorney
Civil Division



Scott May
Assistant County Attorney
Juvenile Division



Jenny Nelson
Office Supervisor



Jessica Oertel
Assistant County Attorney
Civil Division



Caitlin Ohrogge
Paralegal
Civil Division



Jeri Peck
Legal Assistant
Criminal Division



Laura Perkins
Public Information Manager



Richard Podvin
Assistant County Attorney
Criminal Division



Hannah Prokopowicz
Assistant County Attorney
Criminal Division



Keshini Ratnayake
Assistant County Attorney
Criminal Division



Justin Richardson
Assistant County Attorney
Criminal Division



John Ristad
Assistant County Attorney
Civil Division



Anne Senko
Legal Assistant
Juvenile Division



Sue Tice
Civil Division Head



Betsey Urbas
Assistant County Attorney
Juvenile Division



Christine VonDeLinde
Victim Witness Coordinator



Brent Wartner
First Assistant County Attorney



Thomas Wedes
Assistant Criminal Division Head



Kayla Wengronowitz
Assistant County Attorney
Criminal Division



Jaelyn Young
Legal Assistant
Criminal Division



Tony Zdroik
Juvenile Division Head



James Zuleger
Assistant County Attorney
Civil Division

TRUANCY



Betsey Urbas

Assistant County Attorney

In 2023, the Washington County Truancy Intervention Program continued to support students aged 12-17 years old and their families via both in-person connections and virtual forums to assist in removing barriers to consistent school attendance. A total of 511 students were referred to our initial stage of outreach, the Attendance Intervention Meeting, where Assistant County Attorney Betsey Urbas provided students and their families with useful information and guidance regarding the tremendous significance of high school graduation, the critical impacts of unaddressed truancy, and the vast range of supports and solutions to address inconsistent attendance.

“The Washington County School Attendance Intervention Program brings together children, parents, school staff, and County representatives as collaborative partners to foster consistent school attendance by identifying the causes of truancy, implementing effective interventions, and providing comprehensive support in order to give all children the educational opportunities they deserve.”

If the intervention meeting is not successful in changing conduct and attendance concerns remain, our truancy attorney works with Community Services to remove barriers to attendance by facilitating one-on-one school diversion meetings. In 2023, Betsy met with 210 students, their parents/guardians, Community Services social workers, and school staff to formulate individualized attendance support plans. Ultimately, 21 students were petitioned to court for higher levels of intervention and support. This steady, unwavering stream of support continued to prove effective in fostering academic success and quality of life for Washington County students by helping identify, alleviate, and remove barriers to school attendance and engagement. In addition, the truancy team worked diligently to meet with school administrators all over Washington County to review program updates and guidelines, to discuss and problem-solve unique situations to ensure the upmost support for students, and to strengthen the collaborative relationships that are imperative to the ongoing success of the program.

As part of ongoing outreach efforts, Betsey continued the office’s annual training for School Administrators and School Resource Officers on August 14, 2023. Attendees participated in this all-day, in-person training that covered critical issues, including adolescent drug use in the digital age, understanding the LGBTQIA+ community, Minnesota's new marijuana statutes, and other juvenile law updates. Attendees were also introduced to methods and practices focused on managing and addressing stress/anxiety, balancing energy levels, and handling big emotions in school and home. Attendees were provided valuable information regarding adolescent health and well-being through an in-depth review of the 2022 Minnesota Student Survey.

2023 PLEDGE TO GRADUATE

For the 2022 - 2023 school year, the office sponsored a drawing online with the purpose of recognizing and encouraging as many public students to graduate. In the drawing, students could sign a Pledge to Graduate from high school. The winners of the drawing could win a tablet or an iPad. This is the tenth year the County Attorney's Office has sponsored this event.



SOUTH WASHINGTON COUNTY ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL



MAHTOMEDI HIGH SCHOOL

CIVIL DIVISION



Sue Tice
Civil Division Head

"Civil Division attorneys are dedicated to addressing and solving the legal needs of every county department."

The Civil Division acts as Washington County's civil lawyer both inside and outside of the courtroom. The division consists of six experienced legal support professionals and nine attorneys whose mission is to provide timely, superior legal services. Our work is very diverse and touches the breadth of all legal issues faced by Washington County. The Civil Division does it all – protecting the rights of the vulnerable, supporting citizens' due process rights, and facilitating civil infrastructure and environmental projects. The division is led by Sue Tice, Civil Division Head.

PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE

The Washington County Attorney's Office remains steadfast in its efforts to protect its citizens who are unable to adequately care for themselves. The Civil Division is responsible for pursuing civil commitment and treatment petitions for individuals referred to the county who pose risk of harm due to mental illness, who are dangerous to the public due to mental illness, who are chemically dependent, who have a developmental disability, who are sexually dangerous persons, or who have sexually psychopathic personalities. The number of civil commitment referrals has risen each year since 2019. In 2023, the Washington County Attorney's Office received 220 commitment referrals.

GUARDIANSHIPS/CONSERVATORSHIPS

In 2023, Civil Division staff continued its long collaboration with the Washington County Community Social Service Adult Protection Division to assist community members in establishing guardianships or conservatorships for vulnerable adults who lack capacity for self-sufficient care and a support system to provide those vulnerable adults with necessary care and supervision. A 2023 example involves an incapacitated adult in need of 24-hour medication and professional care whose father and lifelong caregiver had recently passed away. We quickly obtained a court order granting an Emergency Guardianship, which allowed placement of the vulnerable individual in a group home providing necessary round-the-clock care.

MEDICAL ASSISTANT REIMBURSEMENT & ESTATE RECOVERY

Counties are required to recover costs that the Medical Assistance program pays for its members under certain circumstances. Medical Assistance is Minnesota's Medicaid program for people with low incomes. In 2023, we, in collaboration with Washington County Community Services, collected more than \$800,000 in reimbursement for Medical Assistance expenditures.

PROPERTY TAX APPEALS

The Civil Division represents Washington County in property tax appeals brought by Washington County property owners. In these cases, our attorneys and staff work in close collaboration with the County Assessor's Office to ensure that property tax assessments accurately reflect a property's fair market value. In 2023, approximately 130 tax petitions were filed.

IMPROVING THE ROADS

In 2023, we advised and assisted the Public Works Department in acquiring a section of public roadway (58th Street in Oak Park Heights) in order to allow traffic to flow uninterrupted north and south of Highway 36 in that location. In addition, the Civil Division attorney worked closely with the County Board of Commissioners, County Administration, and the Public Works Department staff to ratify a Prevailing Wage Policy that ensures fair wages for construction workers involved in Public Works projects.

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

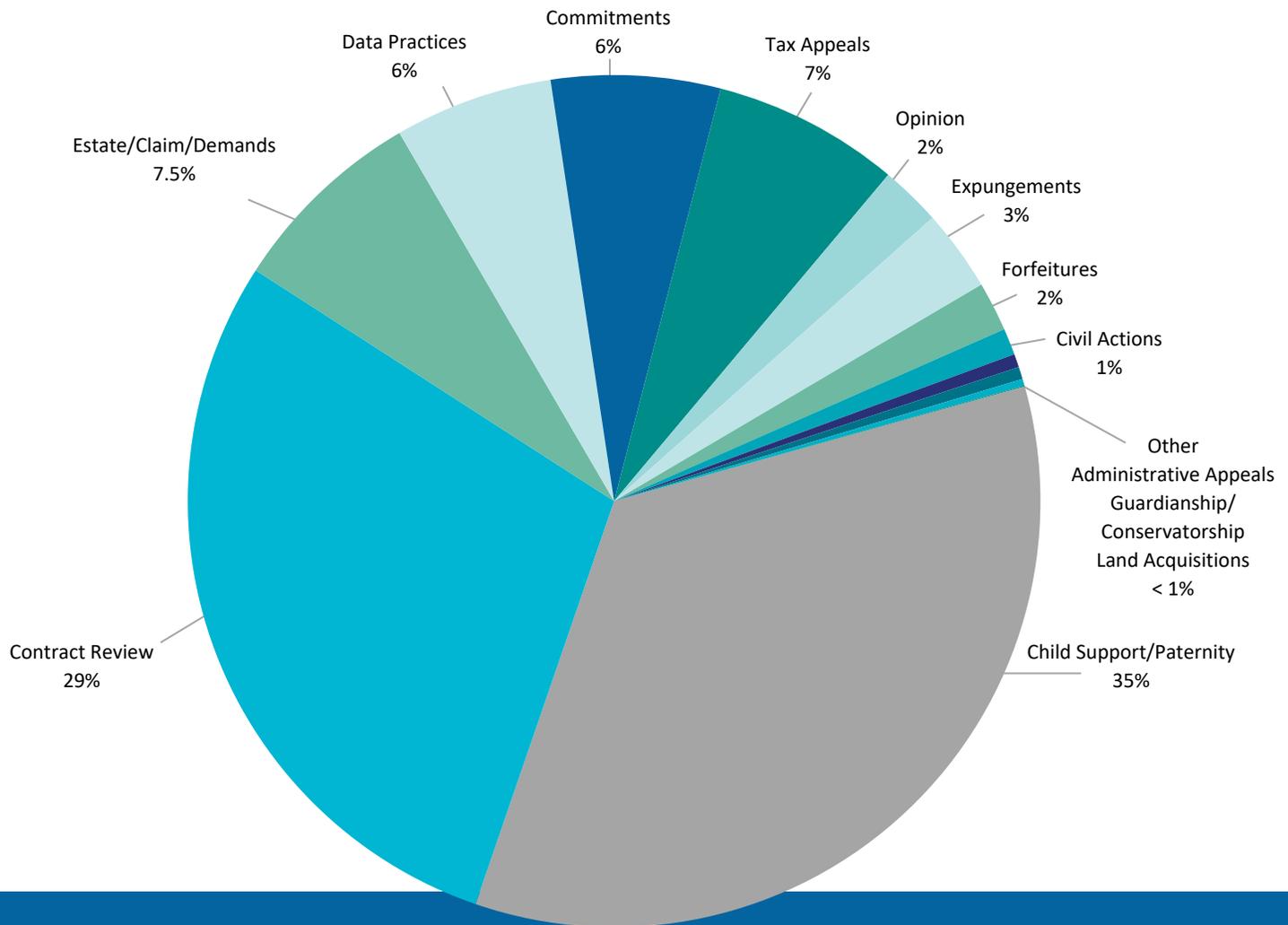
Civil Division staff continues to advise and represent the Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy (R&E) Board, which is a joint powers board that owns and operates the waste processing facility in the city of Newport. That facility is responsible for processing all garbage in the two counties. Processing at this facility results in reduced landfilled waste while converting a portion of the processed garbage into energy. Civil Division staff reviews all R&E contracts and grants which in 2023 amounted to approximately 350 document reviews.

ADVISORY ATTORNEY ROLE

In its role as advisory attorney, Civil Division attorneys provide legal advice to county leadership and to all county departments. Much of that work pertains to contracts, grants, and other agreements, including review of all draft contracts to ensure compliance with legal and policy requirements. Another example of our advisory role is providing legal advice and training to county departments and staff on a daily basis. We partner with subject matter experts in all departments to both prevent and to solve problems. As part of this effort, Civil Division attorneys provided over 450 hours of training in 2023.



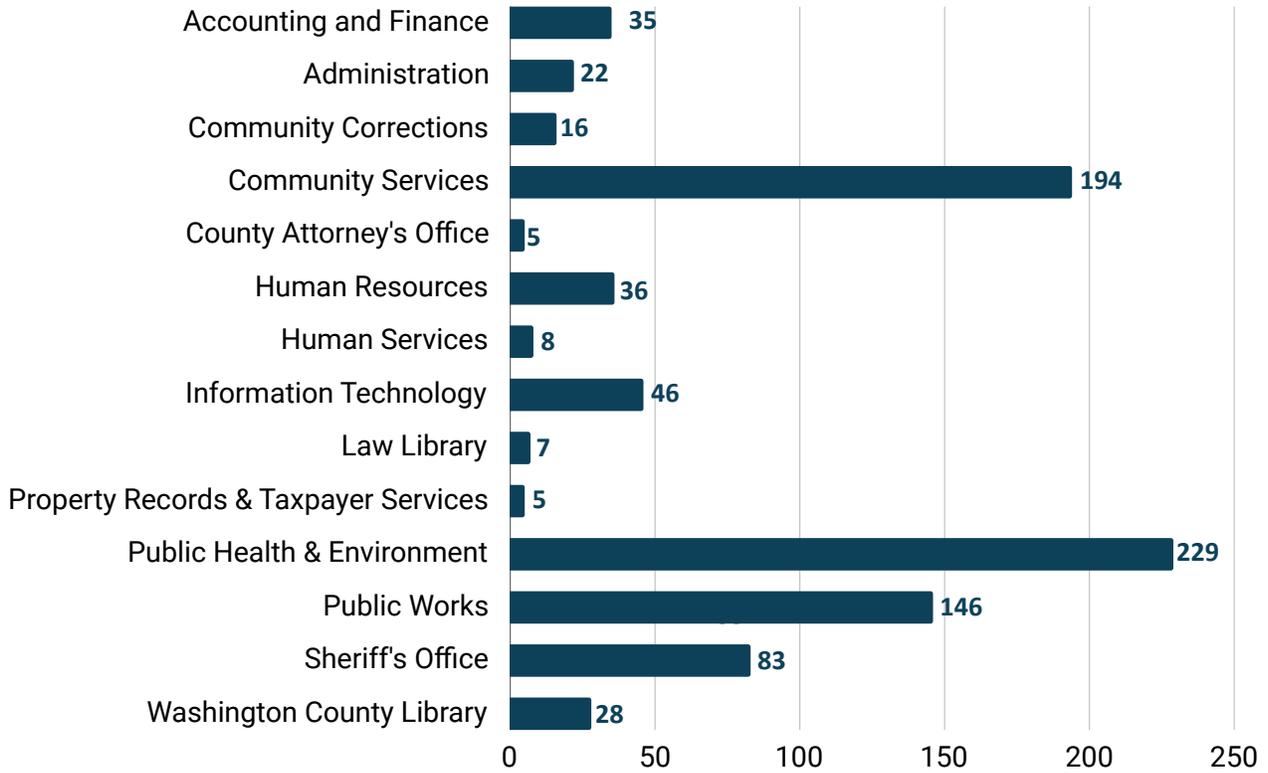
CIVIL DIVISION BY THE NUMBERS 2023



WORKLOAD DISTRIBUTION BY FILE ASSIGNMENTS

Child Support/Paternity	961	Opinions	64
Contract Review	801	Forfeitures	52
Estate/Claim/Demands	208	Civil Actions	28
Tax Appeals	197	Other	14
Commitments	178	Administrative Appeals	13
Data Practices	167	Guardianship/Conservatorship	7
Expungements	86	Land Acquisitions	1

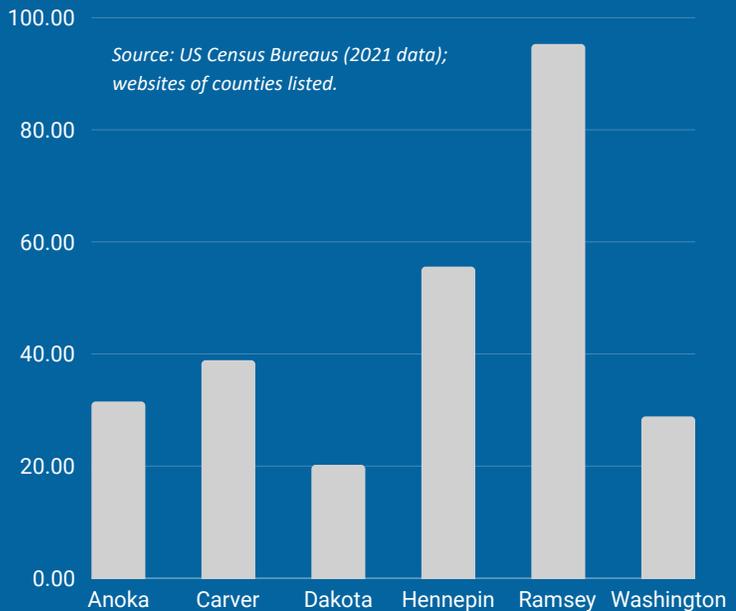
CONTRACT REVIEWS & LEGAL OPTIONS



SOUND FISCAL MANAGEMENT FOR LEGAL SERVICES IN WASHINGTON COUNTY

Cost Per Capita

Anoka County	\$31.52
Carver County	\$38.89
Dakota County	\$20.23
Hennepin County	\$55.59
Ramsey County	\$95.31
Washington County	\$28.86



ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION



DIVISION OVERVIEW

The Administrative Division is responsible for planning and executing a comprehensive range of administrative services that support the mission of the Washington County Attorney and the work of all divisions within the office. Under the direction of the County Attorney, it develops and implements operating policies and procedures to protect public safety while being fiscally prudent. Thanks to the County Attorney's fiscal restraint, the operating cost of the office is well below other metropolitan area offices.

The division is overseen by the First Assistant, Brent Wartner, who is the principal advisor to the County Attorney on Administrative matters. The Administrative Division provides guidance on the management and use of the office's financial, human, and physical resources, systems and information management, automated litigation support, case management, records management, and media relations. The administrative staff must work closely with all divisions to ensure compliance with and implementation of all policies, standards, and mandates of the office.



Brent Wartner
First Assistant County Attorney



SYSTEMS, INFORMATION AND OFFICE MANAGEMENT

Administrative Services Manager Jennifer Baltaian is responsible for the effective management of our \$8.4 million annual budget, support services matters, and technological resources and initiatives. During the past decade, progress in automation has tremendously increased the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the office. For example, the implementation of our case management system, Law Enforcement Network System (LENS), permits the sharing of information with other law enforcement agencies, such as the Sheriff's Office, District Court, local police departments, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, and outside governmental agencies, greatly increasing the overall efficiency of the office. Jennifer Baltaian, with the assistance of two supervisors (Jennifer Nelson and Jeniffer Hawthorne), is responsible for management of office legal support professionals consisting of 13 legal assistants, four paralegals, and two office specialist positions.



Jenn Baltaian
Administrative Services Manager

Office Supervisor Jennifer Nelson is responsible for the day-to-day workflow of the Juvenile and Civil divisions and supervises support staff responsible for data practices customer service. She also coordinates office operations and processes to ensure that policies and procedures are followed and updated as needed. Jenny manages special projects such as accounts payable, coordination of physical and digital evidence within the Juvenile Division to include coordinating with other agencies on the use and efficiency of programs related to that process, appellate services for state and federal court, and administrative duties of the Office's expungement program.



Jenny Nelson
Office Supervisor

Office Supervisor Jeniffer Hawthorne is responsible for the day-to-day workflow of the Criminal Division support staff and supervises the front desk staffing, operation, and customer service. She also coordinates office operations and processes to ensure that policies and procedures are followed and updated as needed. Jeniffer manages special projects such as accounts receivable and coordination and storage of physical and digital evidence within the Criminal Division, including coordinating with other agencies on the use and efficiency of programs related to that process.



Jeniffer Hawthorne
Office Supervisor

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MEDIA

As the **Public Information Manager, Laura Perkins** leads public information efforts for the County Attorney and staff, a position which she shares with the County Sheriff's Office. She serves as the liaison between the County Attorney's Office and the media, other governmental agencies, and the public. Laura facilitates the office responses to a variety of requests, including press releases and conferences, media requests for statements and interviews, and community events. While information regarding pending cases must be safeguarded to ensure effective prosecution, we balance this need with the public's right to know.



Laura Perkins
Public Information Manager

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE COUNTY ATTORNEY

The **Executive Assistant Karen Fontaine** works closely with the County Attorney and First Assistant in planning, developing, and implementing all aspects of the office. Karen participates in the operation, organization, and planning of the County Attorney's office for matters that affect the office, its duties, operations and responsibilities. She coordinates the office responses to a multitude of requests, community events, website content, published materials, and assists with public relations and media.



Karen Fontaine
Executive Assistant

CUSTOMER SERVICE

In 2023, the office of the County Attorney's main line handled over 3,000 phone calls and citizen requests. The processing and fielding each of these calls can range from case status inquiries to attorney and victim advocate assignments, directions, and other general inquiries. In addition, the office approved and processed 372 administrative subpoenas for business records related to criminal justice investigations.



Beth Kraske
Office Specialist



Ali Steger
Office Specialist

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Administrative Division prepares the long-and short-range strategic planning for the office, including participation in the county-wide strategic plan. The Administrative Division coordinates purchasing and inventory tracking to ensure fiscal responsibility and maintain the annual budget. We also pursue state and federal partnerships and funding in an effort to minimize requests for additional local funding.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT

The Social Activities Committee helps plan, organize, and execute office-wide social functions on various holidays. In 2023, the SAC has helped organize events for Halloween, Festivus, the Chinese New Year, and various other staff social events. The all-volunteer cast includes John Ristad, Scott Haldeman, Keshini Ratnayake, Jeri Peck, Jenny Hawthorne, Pamela Brandt, and Tricia Loehr.



STAFF SERVICE AWARDS | MILESTONES IN 2023



Tony Zdroik - 25 Years
Juvenile Division Head



Theresa Leverty - 15 Years
Paralegal



Jenny Nelson - 5 Years
Office Supervisor



Marc Berris - 5 Years
Assistant County Attorney



Jamie Cole - 5 Years
Legal Assistant, Senior

STAFF RECOGNITION

Staff celebrating 20, 25 and 35 years of employment were honored by the Board of Commissioners over breakfast at the Lake Elmo Inn Event Center. Staff also celebrated Administrative Professionals' Day in April at the Lake Elmo Inn.



CRIMINAL HEAVY HITTERS

The "Heavy Hitter" Award is a travelling trophy awarded to the prosecutor who has successfully tried a jury trial. That prosecutor keeps the bat symbolizing the award until another prosecutor has similar success in a jury trial. Our prosecutors obtained numerous convictions after trial in eleven felony cases in 2023. The charges ranged from murder to criminal sexual conduct to tax fraud.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH



NIGHT TO UNITE



WASHINGTON COUNTY FAIR





LAW ENFORCEMENT CEREMONY



COMMUNITY THREAD PRESENTATION



YOUTH SERVICES BUREAU GALA

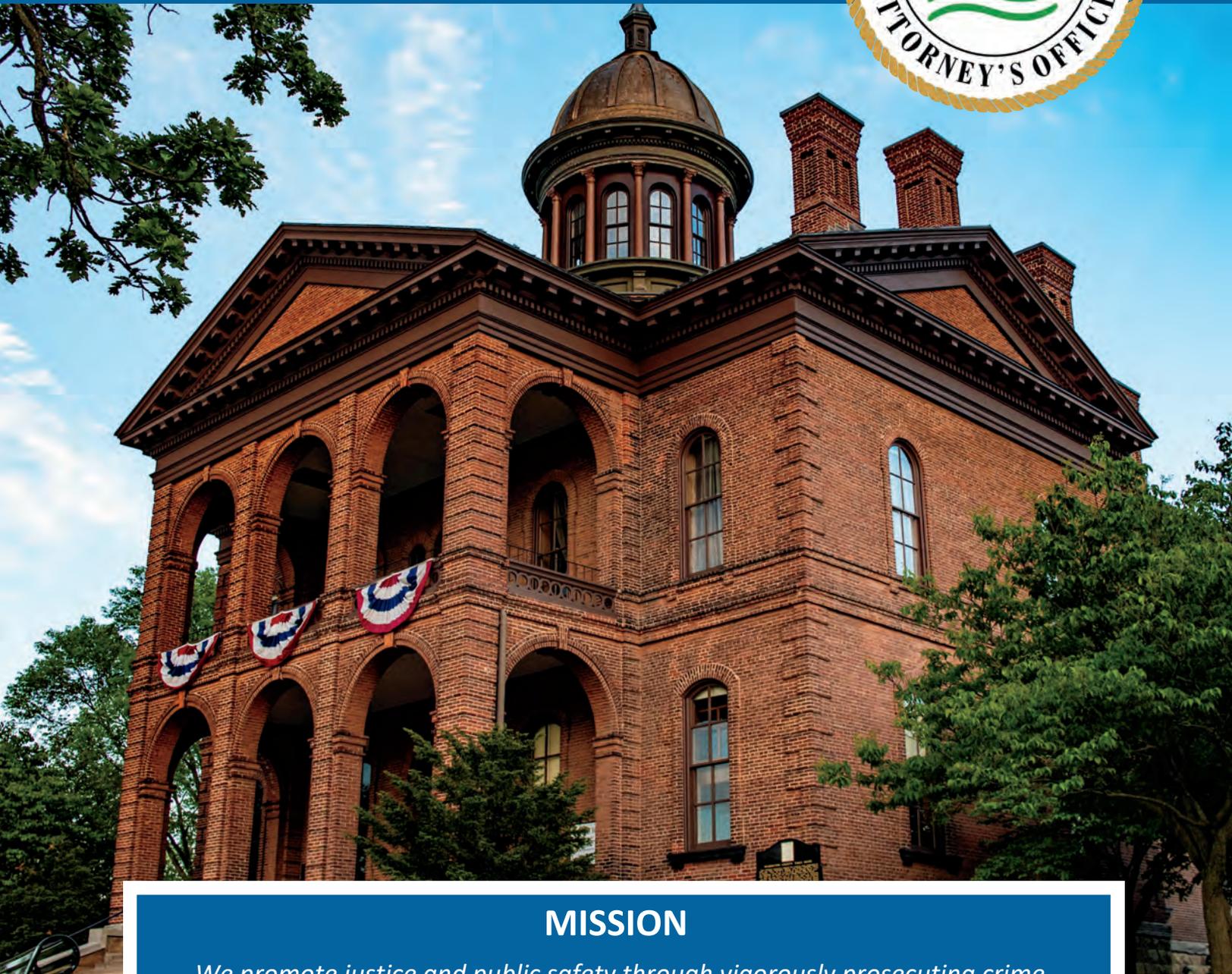


GOLD LINE

TRAINING

Training sessions have been presented to other county staff, attorneys, legal assistants, paralegals, social workers, judges, law clerks, child support officers, prison staff, law enforcement, and others.





MISSION

We promote justice and public safety through vigorously prosecuting crime, protecting those in need, and providing quality legal representation for Washington County.

Washington County: a great place to live, work and play... today and tomorrow.

This publication is made possible through the efforts of the Washington County Attorney's Office in association with local law enforcement agencies. Funds are utilized to convert property that aided in or was used in the commission of criminal offenses to a public benefit. No taxpayer dollars have been expended in the printing of this publication.